



Spring 2022

Local Authority Pollinator Award Newsletter



SuperValu 
Tidy Towns



**National
Biodiversity
Data Centre** 
A Heritage Council Programme


Heritage Officer Programme
Celebrating 20 Years in Local Authorities

Making a difference for pollinators

As Tidy Towns, you are in a unique position of being able to bring different parts of your community together. So many of you have already done amazing things by working with schools, businesses, faith communities, farmers, and your local authorities to take actions for pollinators across your community.

A recent good news story comes from community group Hxgrow in Harold's Cross, Dublin. For some years they have been working hard to improve their urban neighbourhood for biodiversity. In March of this year, they spotted two bees they had never seen before. They sent the photos into us at the National Biodiversity Data Centre, and we were able to confirm they had seen a male and a female Hairy-Footed flower bee, the first known sighting of this species in Ireland, bringing our total to 100 different types of bee. What a great example of how community groups like yours can make a difference.

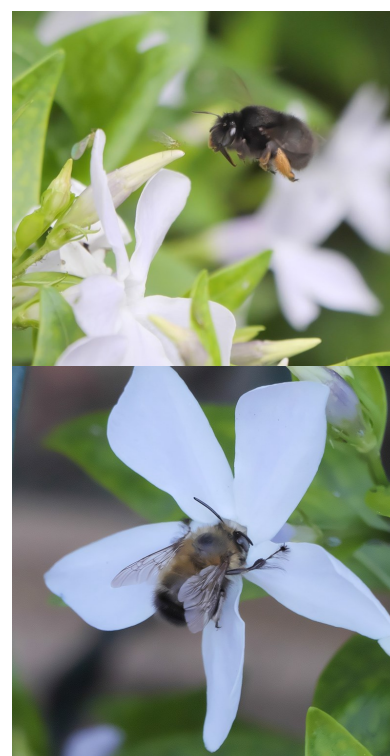
This newsletter is packed with top tips and stories from all around the country celebrating last year's winners and applicants, and the great work that is already taking place. Some of last year's winners kindly agreed to take part in a video talking about their experience with the Pollinator Award, and sharing some top tips for working towards the award. [You can watch this video here.](#) We hope you gain some inspiration and find encouragement, as we do, that together we are working towards an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive.

We would like to thank you sincerely for all you are doing to help create a more pollinator- friendly Ireland, and wish you every success in 2022.

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Team

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Right: A male (top) and female (bottom) Hairy-Footed flower bee in Dublin. Pics: Mary & Martin Molloy
Cover image: Caoimhe & Katie Hamilton from the Woodstown Junior Committee monitoring pollinators

Supporting Pollinators, Le Chéile



Dearbhala Ledwidge, Kilkenny County Council Heritage Officer and Chair of the Local Authority Pollinator Award Committee talks about the importance of working together to take actions for pollinators.

Collaboration is key to the success of the Local Authority Pollinator Award. It's a core principle of the national Tidy Towns programme, and is at the heart of the work of Local Authority Heritage Officers. *"Ní neart go cur le chéile", as they say.*

Heritage Officers established this special award, in partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre, 6 years ago and since then it has grown beyond our expectations. The backing of the network of 31 Local Authority Heritage Officers, and Biodiversity Officers, has been vital to the success of the award. In addition to funding and administering the award, we also work closely with communities and Tidy Towns groups, to raise awareness about supporting pollinators, as well as providing advice and resources.

Most, if not all, Local Authorities have signed a [Partnership Framework](#) with the National Biodiversity Data Centre committing to support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Heritage Officers are the key champions in the delivery of this commitment within local authorities. Working in collaboration with colleagues in Parks Depts, Environment, Planning and Municipal Districts we develop policies, deliver programmes, provide advice and resources, and report annually to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

The Pollinator Award actively encourages and rewards applicants to work with their local authority. In fact, Q. 6 on the application form (which is worth 10 points!) specifically promotes partnership approaches with local authorities. I encourage all Tidy Towns groups to contact the Heritage Officer in your City/County Council for advice, to share your plans for pollinators, and find out what your Local Authority is doing. A list of all Heritage Officers and their contact details is on page 32.

Thanks

On behalf of Local Authority Heritage Officers, a big thank you to all the Tidy Towns groups for the brilliant work that you do to support pollinators. It's a pleasure for us to work with you, and be inspired by the new

and creative ways you think of to help biodiversity. In particular, a sincere thanks for taking the time to enter the Local Authority Pollinator Award – we appreciate the extra time and commitment that it takes. I hope that you find it worthwhile. The measures that you take have certainly been very worthwhile in protecting pollinators and raising awareness in your communities. Thanks also to my colleagues on the Local Authority Pollinator Award Committee (list of committee members on page 32), to the national Tidy Towns Unit and to Una Fitzpatrick and Kate Chandler in the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Best of luck to everyone in the 2022 competition.

Dearbhala Ledwidge

**Chair, Local Authority Pollinator Award Committee
Heritage Officer, Kilkenny County Council**



Above: Local Authority Heritage Officers show their support for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan at a Heritage Training and Professional Development event co-ordinated by the Heritage Council, April 2022. Also pictured are Virginia Teehan, Chief Executive of the Heritage Council, along with Michael O'Brien (Head of Business Service) and Valerie Kelly (Community & Public Engagement Officer).

Top Ten Tips for Helping Pollinators

If you are entering the Pollinator Award for the first time, or are thinking about how to help pollinators in your community, it can be hard to know where to start. Here are the top ten actions for pollinators, recommended by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

1. Don't Mow, Let it Grow!

Reduce mowing to allow native wildflowers like Dandelions, Clover and Birds-foot Trefoil to naturally return over time.

Why?

This helps restore species-rich grasslands: a vital habitat providing food and shelter for pollinators. Species-rich grasslands have been decimated in Ireland in recent decades. By reducing mowing – even to once a month – you will help them to slowly return, one pocket at a time

Where?

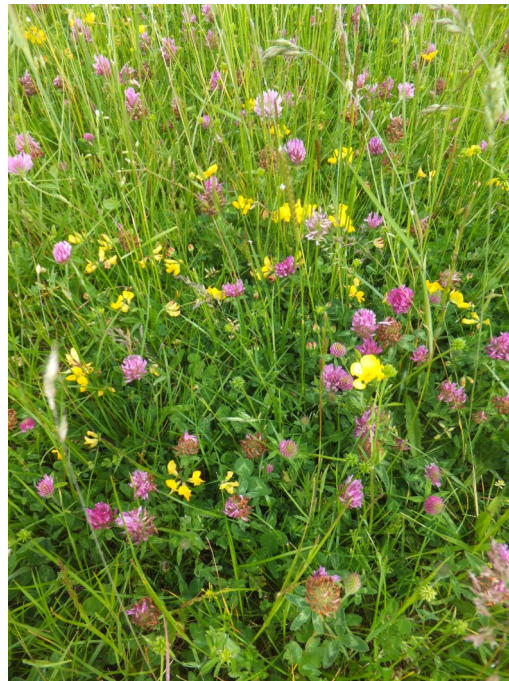
Everywhere! Roadside verges, lawns, schools, parks, field margins, farm lanes. Even tiny biodiversity meadows or margins are valuable.

Find out more with these resources:

[Pollinator-friendly Grass Cutting](#)

[Video: Top Tips for Creating a Wildflower Meadow](#)

[Video: Creating Meadows for Biodiversity](#)



Pollinator-friendly mowing (Dara Stanley)

2. Manage native hedgerows for biodiversity

The more blossom your hedgerow has in spring, the better it is for biodiversity. Allow hedges to grow into a natural A-shape profile rather than a neat box shape. Flowers grow on older wood, so avoid cutting annually – cut on a three-year rotation instead to allow them to flower in spring.

Why:

Native hedgerow plants such as Hawthorn and Blackthorn flower early, providing vital food for wild bees when they emerge from hibernation. Hedgerows are important nesting habitats for many creatures, forming vital corridors for nature.

Where:

Farms, parks, campuses, large schools, or gardens.

Find out more:

[How-to-guide: Hedgerows for Pollinators](#)



Common Carder Bee on Blackthorn. (Lill Dunne)

3. Plant pollinator friendly trees

Native trees and shrubs such as Willow, Hawthorn, Rowan, Crab Apple, and Holly support huge numbers of insects including pollinators. Plant a young tree in the autumn or winter, or grow them from seed.

Why:

Trees that blossom in spring are a low-maintenance, vital source of food for pollinators. Trees contribute to a healthy climate and biodiversity, supporting a rich variety of organisms such as lichens, mosses, birds, mammals, and insects.

Where:

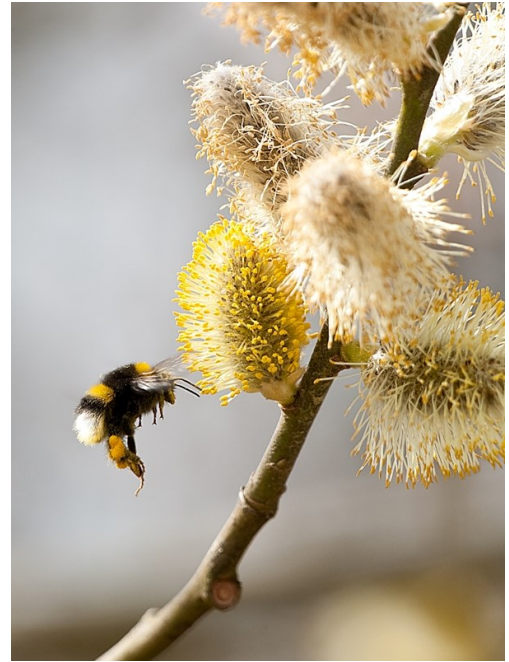
Anywhere there is space. Avoid areas that are already good habitats, or where you could create a biodiversity meadow or margin by reducing mowing.

Find out more:

[How to plant native trees for pollinators](#)

[How to grow native trees from seed](#)

[Native Biodiversity-friendly Trees](#)



4. Avoid using insecticides, fungicides and herbicides

These potent chemical cocktails are designed to kill various organisms. One of the best things you can do for pollinators is avoid using them. If you buy plants at a garden centre, ask if they have been treated with chemicals. Even 'bee friendly' labelled plants may have been treated with pesticides.

Why:

Insecticides have been found to kill, harm, and disorientate pollinators. Herbicides kill the 'weeds' that provide them with important food.

Where:

Everywhere!

Idea:

Instead of using herbicides, enjoy spotting the little wildflowers that pop up when you stop spraying. You can follow our social media campaign on this #PlantsToCelebrate

Note:

Herbicides should still be used to remove invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, with the appropriate training and professional advice.



5. Create nesting habitats for pollinators

Our ninety-nine species of wild pollinators nest in hedgerows, wild areas, dry stone walls, and even in the ground. To make a nesting habitat for them, just scrape back some bare earth, leave some areas to grow wild, or simply drill holes 10cm deep in unvarnished wood for solitary bees.

Why:

Wild pollinators need safe nesting habitats for shelter and protection from predators in order to survive and thrive, and to allow next year's pollinators to grow and develop.

Where:

Choose areas that are close to flowers. Bumblebees need food within about one kilometre of their nests, and solitary bees will only travel a few hundred meters. You could also protect an old stone wall, a south facing earth bank, a hedgerow, or reduce mowing.

Idea:

Create a small bee hotel out of reeds or bamboo stems. Hang it away from bird feeders at the start of spring and leave it alone for a year to see adult bees emerge the following spring.

Find out more:

[How to guide: Creating wild pollinator nesting habitat](#)



Waterford ring road with bare soil

6. Choose nectar and pollen-rich plants for community planters

There are plenty of beautiful plants you can choose for community planters that are rich in nectar and pollen. Bidens and Bacopa are great bedding plants for small containers and hanging baskets; and herbs such as Thyme and Rosemary provide food for you as well as for pollinators.

Why: Pollinators need flowers that produce lots of nectar (for energy) and pollen (for protein).

Where: Gardens, pots on a balcony, window boxes, public parks, schools, and businesses. Avoid adding these plants to the wider landscape.

Idea:

Plant bulbs such as Snowdrop, Crocus, and Grape Hyacinth in the autumn to provide early food for emerging pollinators the following spring. Or plant five fruit trees to create a mini orchard.

Find out more:

[Pledge your Garden: How to make a Pollinator friendly garden](#)

[Pollinator-friendly plants for your garden](#)

[Pollinator-friendly herbs](#)



Bidens in Limerick. (Peter Cuthbert)

7. Think twice about getting a hive of honeybees

On the island of Ireland, we have one honeybee species, and it is not in decline. Most honeybees are 'domesticated pollinators', living in hives and managed by beekeepers. Our ninety-nine wild bee species are under threat. If we have too many honeybee hives in the landscape, they can compete for food with our struggling wild pollinators. You should only get a honeybee hive if you want to start a new hobby, but it is not the best thing to do for biodiversity.

If you are thinking of getting a hive of honeybees, please get in touch with your local beekeeping association to learn how to keep healthy honeybees; avoid spreading disease to other hives and to our struggling wild pollinators.

Find out more:

[Blog: Is there competition between domesticated bees and wild pollinators?](#)

8. Be careful with wildflower seed mixes

You might be surprised to hear that sowing wildflower seed mixes can be detrimental to local biodiversity. Many wildflower seed mixes contain non-native species, and can inadvertently introduce invasive species.

Please avoid using them where possible. If you do decide to sow wildflower seed mixes, keep to garden settings, ensure they are native and of Irish origin, and never use in situations where natural habitat restoration is possible (Don't mow, let it grow). Alternatively, you could collect and sow seeds from local wildflowers.

Find out more:

[Blog: Spreading Seeds of Doubt: Fake 'wildflower' mixes](#)

[How-to Guide: Collecting and using pollinator friendly wildflower seed](#)

9. Don't install a large bee or insect hotel

Large bee hotels are attractive to humans, but not great for pollinators. They can encourage the spread of disease and attract predators. Avoid anything bigger than an average-sized bird box.

There are many other ways to provide nesting habitats for pollinators, such as providing wild areas of undisturbed long grass, and scraping back some bare earth.

If you want to make a bee hotel, make sure it is small, and position it away from bird feeders so the insects aren't easy targets.

Find out more:

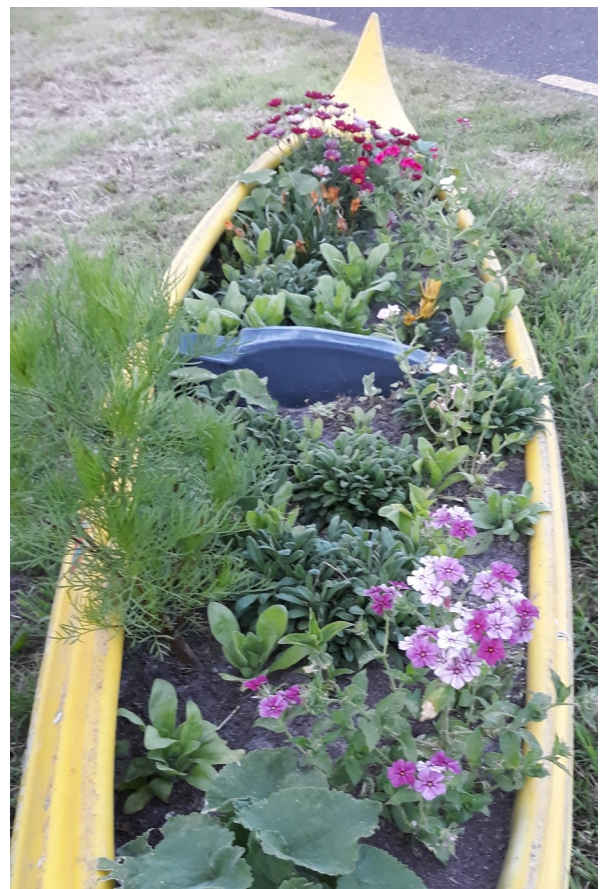
[How to guide: Creating wild pollinator nesting habitat](#)



10. Spread the word and get involved

Many people want to help pollinators and biodiversity, but it can be hard to know where to start, and know the right things to do. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website is full of resources tailored for different needs. Tell your friends and family about these top ten ways to help pollinators. As a Tidy Towns group, work talk to and work with your council, local schools, businesses, sports clubs and faith communities.

Change happens when word spreads. Even talking to just one person could lead to a change in how a crucial habitat is managed. If that person tells one person, and so-on, eventually we will have a network of habitats where pollinators can survive and thrive.



Top left: Bottle cap mural in Ferns
Top right: Preparing signs in Leighlinbridge
Centre left: Filming TG4's *Plean Bee* in Buncrana
Bottom left: Cutting the meadow with a scythe in Abbeyleix
Bottom right: Creative container planting in Castlegregory

2021 Local Authority Pollinator Award Winners

Congratulations to all winners and applicants of the 2021 Pollinator Award.

Since the award's inception in 2016, there have been almost 200 entries from towns and villages across the country.

According to feedback from Tidy Towns judges, over 80% of the general Tidy Towns entrants are following pollinator-friendly guidelines produced as part of the plan, even if they aren't entering the Pollinator Award.

Last year, €10,000 in prize money was provided by the Local Authority Heritage Officers. Every year, the standard of entries is growing and the committee behind the award continue to be inspired by what is being achieved. We were specially delighted with the number of entries we had this year (76 in total), and the fact that 55% of the entries were from new entrants.

National Winner of the Local Authority Pollinator Award

Buncrana Tidy Towns - €1,000

Winner of the Best Newcomer Award

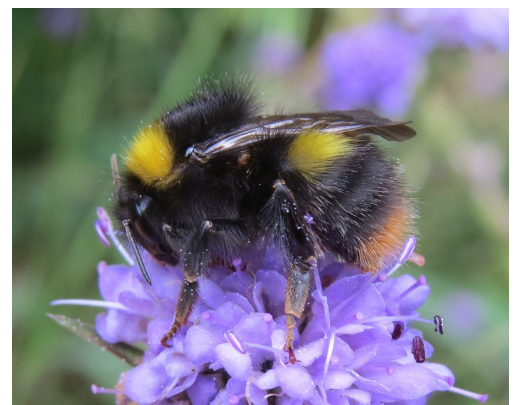
Woodstown Village Residents' Association - €1,000

Regional Winners Large Town:

- Dundalk Tidy Towns (Midlands & East) - €1,000
- Ennis Tidy Towns (South & Mid-West) - €1,000
- Clonmel Tidy Towns (South East) - €1,000
- Buncrana Tidy Towns (NorthWest & West) - €1,000

Regional Winners Small Town:

- Abbeyleix Tidy Towns (Midlands & East) - €1,000
- Castlegregory Tidy Towns (South & Mid-West) - €1,000
- Leighlinbridge Improvement Group (South East) - €1,000
- Belmullet Tidy Towns (NorthWest & West) - €1,000



Above: Great Yellow Bumblebee (Dara Stanley)
Below: Early Bumblebee

Buncrana Tidy Towns

Overall winner of the Pollinator Award & Regional Winner of Large Town Northwest & West

In 2021, Buncrana won the top prize for most pollinator-friendly town in Ireland for a second year in a row. Located on the Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal, Buncrana continues to excel in the Pollinator Awards having won regional awards in 2017 and 2018. Working in collaboration with Wild Inishowen and Donegal County Council, they have taken a range of actions to ensure pollinators are cared for in every corner of their community. All three featured in a TG4 documentary 'Plean B' on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan broadcast on World Bee Day last year.

Existing habitats such as hedgerows have been protected and enhanced with new flowering plants such as Hawthorn. Mowing has been reduced in key areas along roadsides and hedgerows, and vacant land has been repurposed as a wildflower meadow. A new community orchard has been planted with flowering fruit trees, as well as a new woodland walk with an event space.



Volunteers installing bee boxes at the Amazing Grace park wild meadow

Buncrana's pollinators have plenty of nesting places to choose from, with new bare earth banks and small bee homes built by volunteers and Donegal County Council. Flowering shrubs and trees have been planted such as Blackthorn and Willow. Buncrana's parks, roundabouts, and containers are a feast for the bees and the eyes with pollinator-friendly annuals and perennials, and they hope to make annual containers 100% pollinator friendly.

The scale of the work that has taken place across the community in Buncrana is inspiring. Local schools have planted mini bee gardens around the town and



Representatives from Buncrana Tidy Towns, Wild Inishowen & Donegal County Council

have left their pitches unmown over the school holidays; community pollinator planting workshops have been organised, and pesticides and herbicides have been replaced on the Shore Front with manual weeding in collaboration with Donegal County Council, and trials are taking place with environmentally friendly weed control mixture. On top of this, Buncrana have been helping track pollinator-friendly areas by adding these sites to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan mapping system and have also helped improve our understanding of bees by taking part in the Bumblebee Monitoring scheme.

Overall, Buncrana have led the way yet again with truly inspiring, cross-community work that proves by working together, it is possible to create a landscape for pollinators and for people.



Volunteers making homes for solitary bees

Top Tips from Buncrana:

“With a small team committed to protect and sustain our local biodiversity we have encouraged, and dare we say inspired others of every age and demographic to do the same. We are all our brother’s keeper, and this commitment to one another extends to our natural environment. Positive actions have rippling effects that are incalculable. Margaret Mead, a pioneering anthropologist, environmentalist and advocate of social justice once wrote, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.””

Sinéad Ní Bhroin, Buncrana Tidy Towns



Buncrana Tidy Towns & Wild Inishowen volunteers planting native trees at the historic Fort Dunree



Pollinator-friendly planting at the main roundabout in Buncrana



Donegal CoCo town gardener George McDermott, Buncrana Tidy Towns volunteer Karl King & Dr. Úna FitzPatrick from the National Biodiversity Centre during the filming of TG4 documentary Plean Bhe

Woodstown Village Residents' Association

Best Newcomer

Woodstown Village Residents' Association in South Dublin were deserving winners of the 'best newcomer' award, with an inspirational first-time application.

In 2020 the group finalised the Woodstown Village Pollinator Plan, working with the parks department in South Dublin County Council to change mowing regimes. Verges in Woodstown aren't mown until mid April, allowing dandelions to grow, and White Clover now flowers along their main avenue. One resident even created two attractive low-mow spirals at the entrance to the village.



Low mow spiral at the entrance to Wood-

A new hedgerow has been created along the M50, linking with existing hedgerows to create a seamless wildlife corridor from the Dublin hills down to the motorway. A 200+ year old double hedgerow by Woodstown Stream is being protected for its population of flowering trees such as Willow, Hawthorn, and Blackthorn, and bushes such as Bramble, Dog Rose, and Spindle. Woodland flowers like Lesser Celandine, Dog Violet and Cowslip occur in abundance by the stream. The area around the hedgerow and woodland is maintained with regular litter picking, and educational posts have been built to raise awareness of the area's biodiversity.

Crucially, Woodstown have seen the value of protecting existing potential habitats, including some that may have easily been overlooked, including dumped earth spoils and makeshift scrambler tracks

which is now their Pollinator Trail where wildflowers have naturally returned. Similarly, a large hill area is left as meadow, with many local bats very appreciative of the increasing moth numbers!

The Residents' Association have been particularly active in engaging with the community, using social media to raise awareness of local biodiversity, and running a 'pledge your garden for pollinators' campaign in which residents who signed up were offered free perennial pollinator plants.

They have also done great work engaging with local children, developing a junior committee who were crucial in recording bumblebees; butterflies; craneflies and hoverflies through Flower-Insect-Timed (FIT) counts. The group have sent the Junior Pollinator Plan to local schools, and have run Transition Year biodiversity activities and bilingual bug walks.

Plans in Woodstown are set to continue. Work is already complete on planting two pollinator-friendly roundabouts, as well as the addition of more native trees and 50 Flowering Fruit trees (DCs for Bees) along the Pollinator Trail. We look forward to seeing what happens next in Woodstown!



Top Tips from Woodstown

“Encouraging an appreciation of the importance of our wild habitats and natural wild flowers has been essential to our success in Woodstown Village, as our residents accepted the challenge to let the lawn mower rest a bit longer, and resist the urge to clear existing wild habitats to plant wildflower mixes. Our educational activities are alerting local people to the many actions simple actions they can take to help our pollinators and to appreciate the wonderful biodiversity that exists all around us! We were delighted to win this award and it will spur us on to create and protect more and more spaces for our Pollinators!”

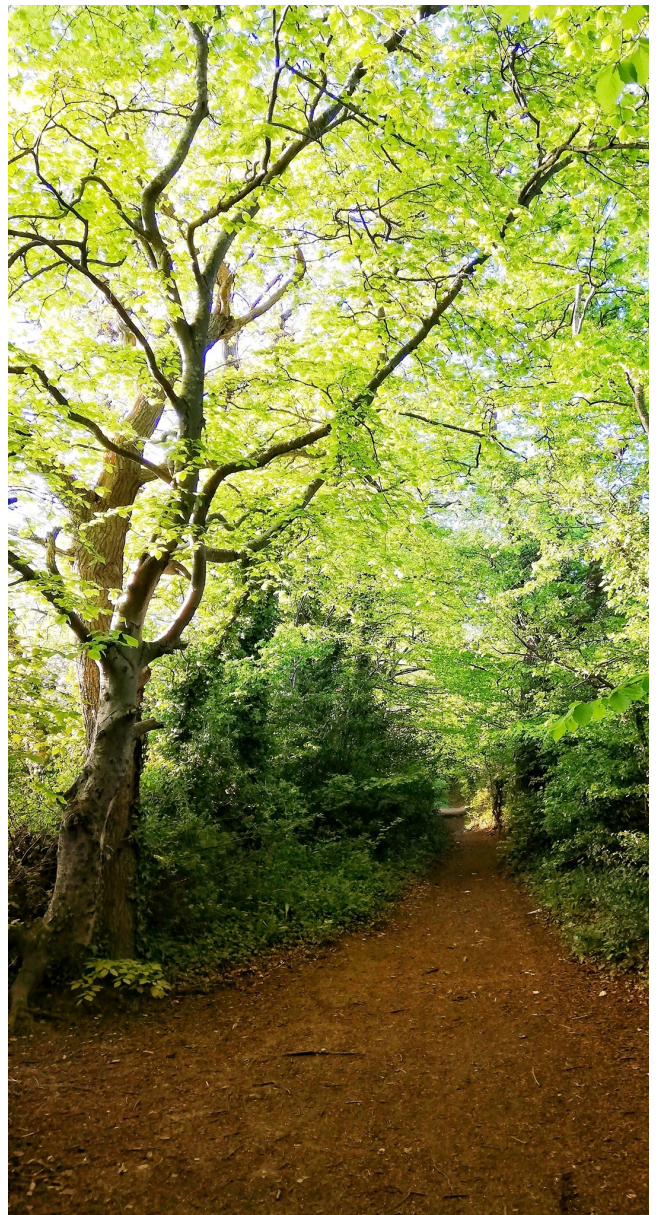
Clare Hamilton, Biodiversity Officer, Woodstown Village Residents’ Association



Planting an orchard



Caoimhe & Katie Hamilton from the Woodstown Junior Committee monitoring pollinators



The double hedgerow cared for by the group

Dundalk Tidy Towns

Large Town winner Midlands & East

Dundalk Tidy Towns in Louth made an impressive first entry to the Pollinator Award. All areas across Dundalk now benefit from reduced mowing, including roadside verges, a two-kilometre walkway along Navvy Bank, and the town's two Green Flag parks. This has already resulted in a noticeable increase in bees and insects at sites such as Louth County Council offices in the Millennium Centre.

The Tidy Towns in Dundalk are leading the way on the elimination of chemical weedkillers. All weed maintenance by the Tidy Towns is now done manually through hand weeding, burning, or the use of natural weedkillers. Louth County Council no longer uses pesticides and chemical weedkillers in the town's green area amenities, and have reduced their use on streets and public areas.



Hand weeding in Dundalk

The group have identified plenty of potential nesting habitats for pollinators around the town. The bare earth surrounding the 'Stumpery' in Ice House Hill Park provides a habitat for wild bees, and nearby branches, fallen leaves and wood chippings have been collected to provide a habitat for butterflies and other insects.

The Tidy Towns have also overseen extensive pollinator-friendly planting, including coastal perennials and native trees. In 2021, they planted thirty-five native trees, supplementing a stretch of native hedgerow which had been planted previously. Flowerbeds in the Ice House Hill Park have been planted with pollinator-friendly perennials such as Geranium (Cranesbill) species, Catmint, and Coneflower, and the Inner Relief Road has been planted with strips of bulbs. Where wildflower seeds are used, they are sourced locally, harvested from

along the Navvy Bank and Castletown River and sowed around these walks.



The 'Stumpery' habitat in Ice House Hill Park

In March last year, the group embarked on a large biodiversity project to create twelve pollinator areas across Dundalk, funded by the Louth Leader Partnership. Over eight hundred plants and native hedgerow such as Hawthorn, have been planted in various locations including approach roads and the town centre to ensure year-round variety, colour, and most importantly - food for bees.

Plenty of exciting work is in progress in Dundalk. The Tidy Towns are overseeing a project to provide biodiversity kits to all registered residents' associations in the town, providing them with native hedgerow plants and pamphlets on biodiversity, sustainability, and litter management.

The next part of their plan is working with the local schools. They are creating a newsletter for each school term, which will cover biodiversity, sustainability, local history, small plant areas that you can't access safely. Also get projects for the kids to do and many more items. They will also be offering plants, seeds and trees to the schools for the kids to plant in their schools.

The long term plan of the group is to engage a horticulturist to create a Habitat Map of Dundalk, which will highlight the biodiversity significance of each area in the town. We are looking forward to seeing this map, which will be available for anyone to download, and learning more about Dundalk's rich biodiversity.

Top Tips from Dundalk:

"Work with your local council they have a wealth of knowledge and they may be able to all your main stakeholders on board, the more people you have the more areas that are covered. We would like to thank Elias Mlimbia from Louth Coco for all his help and knowledge."

Helen Byrne, Dundalk Tidy Towns



Wild verges at Navvy Bank



Pollinator-friendly planting, Ice House Hill Park



The meadow at the Millennium Hall, June 2021



Pollinator information, Longwalk SC, Dundalk

Ennis Tidy Towns

Large Town winner South & Mid-West

Ennis Tidy Towns in Clare have worked collaboratively across their community to implement fantastic actions for pollinators, solidly grounded in the needs of these important insects.

In collaboration with Clare County Council, they are protecting existing habitats including flowering hedgerows, which are now only cut when necessary. Grassy verges in Lees Road Park are also protected, providing uninterrupted biodiversity corridors, which have already led to the appearance of Bee Orchids.

Working with the Ennis Community Employment Scheme, the group have created new nesting sites for solitary bees, drilling holes into wooden posts in Tim Smythe Park and on two roundabouts.

All council-owned roundabouts in Ennis are part of a Pollinator Roundabout Scheme; they are allowed to grow throughout the season with a regular cut on the outer perimeter to show this management is deliberate. No mowing or cutting is permitted before April.

The group are to be particularly commended for their inspiring work with their Biodiversity Zero Grazer, which was purchased with LEADER and Philanthropic Grant Aid. This is the first Zero Grazer on the island of Ireland, and is used to manage the areas in the Pollinator Roundabout Scheme. It will also be shared with community groups and non-profits as well as other sites managed by Clare County Council.



Foamstream in use in Ennis

Not stopping there, the group have funded a successful trial of using Foamstream as an alternative to weedkiller. Foamstream will become part of the weed management strategy in Ennis, which has a zero-use policy on pesticides, and instead advocates manual removal of plants or the use of a combination of water, vinegar and salt.

Crucially, surveys have taken place to record the biodiversity in Ennis. A local recorder for the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland surveyed areas such as the Tulla Road verge, and found an increase in the number of species from 39 in 2020, to 41 in 2021. This is a very high number for the space, and proof of the success of the pollinator management regime.



Species-rich verge on Lees Park Road

The group have also been doing excellent work with their wider community, supporting the Kevin Barry Avenue residents to develop a pollinator-friendly community garden on an area of waste land, and administering local awards for gardens and green areas which awards points based on pollinator-friendly management. They have also worked closely with Irish Rail to make the local rail station more pollinator friendly, resulting in a meadow area on the grounds, and have even partnered with a local Coder Dojo to develop a pollinator themed game.

The story of the group's success has spread far beyond Ennis; last year their work was featured in the Irish Wildlife Trust magazine, they were invited to present at the 2021 Burren in Bloom Webinar, and RTÉ Nationwide filmed a piece on their Zero Grazer and Pollinator Roundabouts Scheme. With such a great track record of trying new things, we can't wait to see what they try next!



Ennis Tidy Towns' Biodiversity Zero Grazer



Left: Kevin Barry Avenue residents' community garden

Below left: Pollinator bedding on approach to Ennis

Below right: One of the Ennis Tidy Towns' pollinator tiered planters



Clonmel Tidy Towns

Large Town winner South East

Among the many excellent actions they have taken for pollinators, Clonmel Tidy Towns in Tipperary should be particularly commended for their work with local schools, which has led to several exciting biodiversity projects in their community.

Their 'Bucket of Bulbs' project was a huge success, providing three local schools and a scout group with pollinator-friendly bulbs. The scout group members are now completing their Gaisce Award with the Tidy Towns. With a positive response, plans were put in place to extend this to all schools in Autumn 2021.

Inspired by the Junior Pollinator Plan, the group have encouraged five local schools to develop their own pollinator programs. Classes, groups, and individuals were invited to create videos, photos, and written projects for an exhibition with the local libraries. St Mary's Primary School have created a biodiversity garden, which they share with the (A.S.D.) preschool based in the school and the clients of the Senior Day Care Centre. The grass in the garden has three different mowing regimes, from weekly to 6-weekly, to demonstrate the benefits of reduced mowing. (All the plants are child friendly and chosen for their sensory nature and biodiversity. As both schools are closed for most of July and August, spring and autumn flowering plants were chosen.)

Unfortunately, the pandemic put a lot of this work on hold, but the Tidy Towns adapted to the changes, transforming a project to share seeds with local schools into a project distributing them to the wider community through the post office, credit union, and a local bank.

The group have built a strong relationship with their local authority, which has resulted in 50% of their planting being pollinator friendly in 2021, with plans to increase it to 100% over the next 5 years. They have also secured a reduced mowing regime, creating a pollinator corridor surrounding the town.

The Tidy Towns have strategically reached out to landowners in Clonmel, including the HSE and sports clubs, to encourage them to reduce mowing. St Mary's GAA Club have a new 6-week mowing regime, allowing half the area surrounding the pitch to grow and give rise to Dandelions and Clover.



Signage explaining pollinator-friendly management

The group never miss an opportunity to work with others in the community – together with C-Saw, a local mental health group, they maintain Toberhenna Park. In Stephen's Cemetery and Loreto Park, they have planted early spring pollen rich bulbs, hawthorn and wildflowers. They are also planning to install information boards to raise awareness of the biodiversity in each site. Working with Clonmel Applefest, they look after over 160 apple trees in 6 different locations, helping pollinators and celebrating Clonmel's local heritage as a centre of cider production.

In the wake of a challenging couple of years, Clonmel Tidy Towns have turned setbacks into opportunities, and have built new relationships. With such a creative and dynamic approach, we look forward to seeing what happens next in Clonmel.



St Mary's GAA Club have left over half the grass surrounding the pitch to thrive on a 6 week cycle.



Top right: Signs designed by Ciara Connelly and Sarah Loh for Clonmel Tidy Towns.

Centre right: Pollinator-friendly containers in Clonmel

Left: A path mown through the meadow

Below: Map of the biodiversity garden at Cherry Blossom ASD



Abbeyleix Tidy Towns

Small Town winners Midlands & East

Abbeyleix Tidy Towns in Laois have been hard at work on several habitat restoration projects in and around their town. The Abbeyleix Bog Project is the largest, covering a variety of habitats over 500 acres. A local artist was engaged to paint illustrations around the town of some of the wildlife found on the Bog, including pollinators. The strength of the work at Abbeyleix Bog hinges on collaboration with different groups and the involvement of the whole community, and this approach is reflected in their work for pollinators across the town.

The 'Neighbourwood' project in Balladine is one of the group's many excellent projects. This involved planting pollinator-friendly trees of local provenance including Rowan, Hawthorn, and a large patch of Willow. Ten percent of the area will be maintained as a long-flowering meadow.



Planting the Neighbourwood

Other simple but inspirational projects include the Incredible Edible window box and planter project. Pollinator-friendly herbs such as Rosemary, Sage, Thyme, Mint, and Borage were grown in planters and window boxes across the town, and the community were invited to snip away at the produce. The group also ran a successful plant swap for pollinator-friendly perennials in the organic community garden.

The Tidy Towns have made the most of social media to engage with the local community, producing a series of videos about biodiversity in the area, and running a biodiversity photography competition for people with smartphones.

With so many local meadows, it was great to read about the group making the most of these precious habitats by harvesting local wildflower seeds and donating them to suitable sites around the community. These meadows are cut once a year with a power scythe borrowed from the Laois Offaly Wildlife Trust. Working with the local Community Employment scheme, the group have built skills by organising training for their workers in using traditional scythes.

The group have taken steps to reduce use of chemicals in the town – they have purchased a power washer to clean footpaths without detergent, and their weed control is herbicide free. As a result, over 530 acres of land around Abbeyleix is chemical-free. In the future, the group will be working on a verge management project, and will continue to distribute native trees in the neighbourhood, as well as providing tuition on tree species and planting techniques.



Cocking the hay at St Michael's Church



Traditional meadow management



Top: Managing the Neighbourhood in Abbeylax

Centre: Orchard planting

Bottom: Sowing yellow rattle

Photos by Mark Clancy & Jim Fennelly



Castlegregory Tidy Towns

Small Town winner South & Mid-West

Castlegregory Tidy Towns have provided a wonderful haven for pollinators on the Dingle Peninsula. Their tree-planting work has been particularly inspiring – 4,500 native trees were added to the Future Nature Park, which also benefits from a reduced mowing regime. Flowering apple trees have been planted at the medical centre, and in Coolroe Wildflower Meadow the group have planted a native flowering hedgerow of trees and shrubs such as Hawthorn, Holly, Willow, Oak and Spindle.

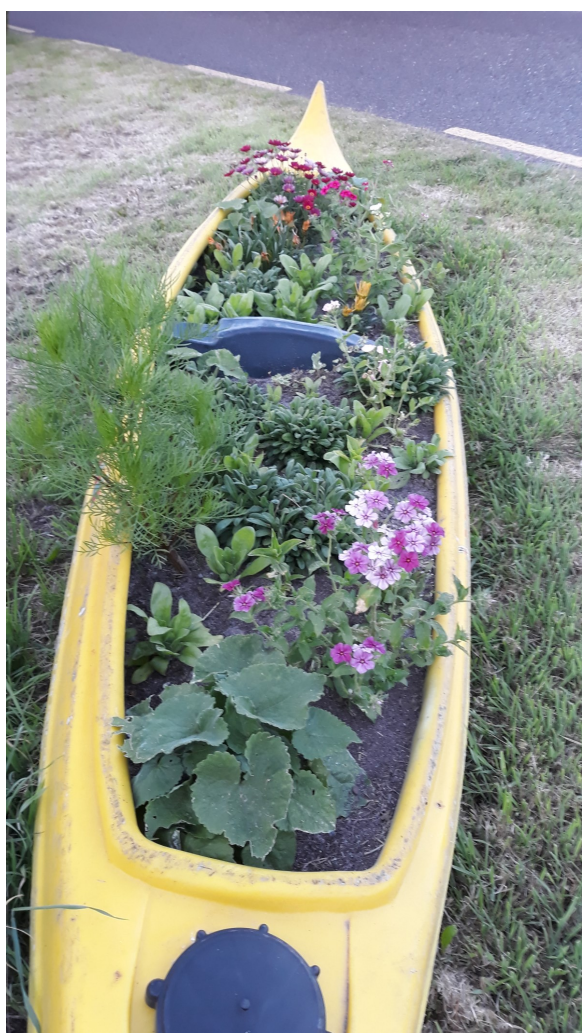
The town has many dry-stone walls, which make excellent nesting habitats for bees, and are managed sensitively, with signage installed in these areas to raise awareness of pollinators.

Planters and hanging baskets in the town are planted with pollinator-friendly flowers such as Verbena and

Bacopa, and mowing has been reduced in many areas across the town, with strimming carried out instead where needed.

The Tidy Towns use their own Facebook page, and the Castlegregory Information Centre Facebook Page to raise public awareness of pollinators, as well as a quarterly newsletter and the West Kerry Live magazine.

So what's next for Castlegregory? Big plans are afoot, including developing a badge and award scheme for pollinator-friendly and pesticide free businesses, and running community workshops in harvesting and sowing local wildflower seeds. We look forward to seeing these plans take shape and seeing Castlegregory prove yet again that you don't need to be a large town to make a huge difference to pollinators.



A creative container in Castlegregory



Signage on drystone wall habitat



Filling gaps in the hedge at Coolroe



Different types of pollinator-friendly roadside verges in Castlegregory

Leighlinbridge Improvement Group

Small Town winner South East

In Carlow, the Leighlinbridge Improvement Group have made a huge impact for pollinators across their community by encouraging the involvement of local sports clubs, businesses, and landowners, as well as undertaking many actions themselves.

Reduced mowing has taken place throughout the community including on roadsides and the wildflower bank, which is cut once a year as a long-flowering meadow. Mowing has been reduced at entrance points to the village, starting after the dandelions flower so this important early food source is protected.

The group have been engaging with local businesses and landowners to reduce mowing and protect existing habitats such as flowering hedgerows. The change in management in one of these areas has already resulted in the appearance of Yellow Irish, Meadowsweet, and Cuckooflower, and this land also now contains a 'managed for pollinators' sign. Similar work has taken place in an area traditionally used by the local scout group. At least half of this area is now left unmowed throughout the spring and summer, and also features a 'Don't mow, let it grow' sign.

The local GAA club are now using salt water instead of pesticides on their car park, and have planted a bed of native perennials including Birds Foot Trefoil sown from locally sourced seed.

A patch of land beside the school in Bawnogue has benefitted from a changed mowing regime which has already led to the emergence of Orchids. Children love running through the wavy path mown through the meadow to the school, and the school will use the land to teach children about wildflower meadows, bees, and butterflies.

The group have particularly excelled in pollinator-friendly planting. For the past two years, 100% of their planting has been pollinator-friendly. New seat planters beside the River Barrow include species such as Lavender, Scabious, and Wallflower, and have already proven popular with bees. The group have



A wildflower bank at the graveyard



The Pollinator Committee in Leighlinbridge

also planted 3,100 bulbs such as Crocus and Grape Hyacinth, and protect the Willow trees in a one-hectare area of river islands in the centre of the village, all of which provide important early food for pollinators.

Signage is used throughout the village to raise awareness of the various management projects, and the group have also made excellent use of Facebook and the local parish newsletter to explain the pollinator-friendly management in the area.

We look forward to seeing even more actions for pollinators in Leighlinbridge, as the Improvement Group's next goal is to encourage 20 gardens to pledge for pollinators in 2022!

Top Tips from Leighlinbridge

"Pick your area, Plan carefully, Manage minimally and enjoy the nature that Flourishes. Plan Ahead for Grass Management and Wild Meadows at the end of the Summer."

Mary Meaney, Leighlinbridge Improvement Group



Pollinator bed in the Garden of Remembrance



Preparing biodiversity signage



Paths through the meadow in the Bawnogue area



Old Leighlin Road Entrance



'Pollinator Vacation Resort'



Pollinator-friendly planting at Inn Yard

Belmullet Tidy Towns

Small Town winner NorthWest & West

The Mullet Peninsula in Mayo is home to Ireland's rarest bee, the Great Yellow Bumblebee. Belmullet Tidy Towns have implemented several plans to protect this bee, as well as carrying out extensive work across the community for pollinators and biodiversity generally.

Their unique initiative 'It's All About Bees and the Seas' has been hugely successful, winning first place in the national 'Together for Biodiversity' awards in 2019. A new logo reflects the rich biodiversity of the local area, which has helped raise public awareness of this important environment.

They have also been doing great work raising awareness around avoiding pesticides, which they no longer use unless dealing with Gunnera. In the summer of 2021, they organised a weeding event in a popular picnic area with the local Swimming Club and other volunteers, and used this opportunity to let people know that they are no longer using weedkillers.

The group protect several pollinator-friendly habitats around the town. Some of these areas will be included in new heritage and biodiversity walking trails, such as 'Slí an Uisce', where the group are arranging an ecologist survey to get a full picture of what is present in this area.

Pollinator-friendly planting takes place across Belmullet. The Tidy Towns have sourced plants such as Hebes from local slips, and have harvested and distributed thousands of local seeds. They have also planted 1,500 Crocuses and summer bulbs, and two orchards of flowering apple trees including Ard Cairn Russet, Clearheart and Kerry Pippin.

Belmullet Tidy Towns are in the unusual position of being able to help Ireland's rarest bee: the Great Yellow Bumblebee, which is now only found along the western coast in machair and flower-rich coastal habitats, mostly on farmland. Today, the Mullet Peninsula is the only place in Ireland thought to support a healthy population of these endangered bumblebees.

Building on the success of previous funding from LEADER in 2019, in 2021 the group secured funding for a European Innovation Partnership (EIP) project for the conservation of the Great Yellow Bumblebee, which will be developed in collaboration with Mayo County Council and a wide range of organisations. The aim of the project is to increase the range and abundance of the Great Yellow Bumblebee and will include a pilot a scheme with farmers to promote the conservation plan; the establishment of an incentivised, results-based, agri-environmental payment programme; and an awareness-raising scheme around the Great Yellow Bumblebee, other pollinators, and the importance of biodiversity-rich habitats.

We can't wait to see these plans develop, and commend the group for improving their landscape for biodiversity, pollinators, and in particular this rarest of bees.



Pollinator-friendly planting at Belmullet Docks



Traditional meadow management at Belmullet Community Hospital

Top Tips from Belmullet

Use the pollinator actions to do an audit of your town or village to see what you are already doing. You'll be amazed and it will give you the motivation to do more!

Margaret Tallott, Belmullet Tidy Towns



Crocuses at Áras Inis Gluaire



Town Centre roundabout - Crocosmia, Ladies Mantel, Nepeta, Shasta daisies



Before: Planting wildflower seeds harvested locally the previous year



After: Bruach na Canála (Theas) in June 2021

Other Stories from 2021

The winning towns are not the only ones taking excellent actions for pollinators. We were impressed by the high standard of work taking place up and down the country in last year's applications. Here is just a small selection of projects being carried out by last year's applicants.

Monaghan: Restoring apple trees

There were 50 apple trees over 100 years old in Monaghan which were not producing fruit. With a maintenance and pruning regime Monaghan Tidy Towns group are beginning to restore this valuable habitat.



Restoring old apple trees in Monaghan

Kilmaine: Pollinator-friendly mowing regime

The Kilmaine Village Enhancement group mow their village in two halves: one in the first fortnight of the month, and the remainder in the second fortnight, ensuring there is a constant food supply for pollinators.

Blessington: Weed brushing

Blessington Tidy Towns have been working with Wicklow County Council to have their new weed-brusher used in the town. This is believed to be the first of its kind used in Ireland. A series of large rotating wire brushes removes unwanted vegetation, keeping footpaths safe for pedestrians without damaging plants.



The weed brusher in Blessington

Skerries: Protecting the Large Carder Bee

Skerries Tidy Towns have developed a Biodiversity Action Plan aiming to reverse the decline of the rare Large Carder Bee, which is found in four areas in the town by linking, protecting, and extending the areas in which it is found.

Castleknock: Community composting project

Castleknock Tidy Towns have piloted a community composting project, facilitated by their local authority. Cuttings from long-flowering meadows will be combined with leaves from trees on Auburn Avenue to yield a source of compost for the group and locals.

Raheny: Biodiversity Corridor Project

Raheny Tidy Village Group worked with other community groups in north Dublin to map a pollinator corridor along the North Dublin Bay Corridor, identifying areas that need improvement and creating a plan to address these issues.

Ballon: Nectar café

Working with the local school, Ballon Improvement Group turned a roadside area beside the school into a pollinator garden and habitat, including a 'nectar café' and seat with water for the bees and an insect hotel.



Ballon's nectar café

Ferns: Bottle cap mural

Ferns Tidy Towns created a wildlife bottle cap mural at the Community Vegetable Garden depicting to raise awareness of local biodiversity, and the impact of plastic bottle caps on the environment. They use this area to run workshops including home composting, growing your own, water conservation and biodiversity.



The bottle cap mural in Ferns

Killanne: the Community Garden

Killanne Development Group's community garden is managed for pollinators and for people. By encouraging pollinator-friendly plants, letting some areas grow wild, and leaving some earth bare for ground nesting bees, they have created a wonderful habitat for wild bees.



Killanne's Community Garden

Tullahought: Hedgerow management

Tullahought Tidy Towns work with a local contractor to ensure the hedgerow is only cut late in the season – in December or January – so Ivy and Bramble are left as food and habitat for wildlife.



Sensitively managed hedgerow in Tullahought

Tips for your 2022 Pollinator Award Application

1. Try to adopt a whole town/village approach to your Pollinator Award entry

Where a project is limited to a small area, for example one town park, this can compare poorly with entrants who have taken a whole-town approach, with pollinator-friendly sites at various spots around the area.

2. Remember to protect what you have

This is a very important aspect of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Care should be taken not to remove good habitat in favour of new planting. For example, removing Bramble and Ivy to plant wildflower seed.

3. Please fill in the proper application form correctly

Some entrants do not fill in the application form but provide their own project descriptions. Unfortunately, no matter how impressive these entries are, this makes it very difficult to judge one application against the next. Points are awarded for each question, so if any are left out you will lose marks.

4. Keep to the word count

We are delighted to receive more entries for the Pollinator Award every year. To help us give each application the time and consideration it deserves, we ask that your application is no more than 3,000 words (max 10 A4 pages).

5. Make sure you are following the pollinator-friendly planting code

These are useful planting lists at the back of the [Local Communities guidelines](#), and further planting suggestions are available at pollinators.ie. Daffodils and tulips produce negligible pollen and nectar, so they are not beneficial in pollinator-friendly planting schemes. Care should also be taken to select local provenance when sourcing native wildflower seed, trees and shrubs.

6. Please include a map and captioned photographs in your application

By including a well labelled map of your town or village, and well captioned photos, you will help us fully understand your pollinator actions.

7. Log your actions for pollinators on our online mapping system

We would like to encourage you to log your actions for pollinators on our online mapping system - pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie. This helps us track the amazing work of community groups in creating pollinator-friendly habitats around the country.

8. Use the resources

There are many resources and how-to guides available at pollinators.ie, which are all free to download. The application form draws directly from the Community Guidelines, which provides evidence-based actions for pollinators, so make sure you are using these.



Key information



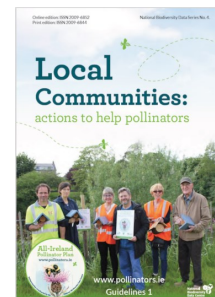
Application forms for the 2022 award are available here. The deadline for entries is **Friday 10th June**.

[Local Authority Pollinator Award 2022 \(English\)](#)

[Local Authority Pollinator Award 2022 \(As Gaeilge\)](#)

The Local Communities actions to help pollinators, and other resources, can be found at pollinators.ie

For more details contact your Local Authority Heritage Officer or pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie



Council Partners to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

We are delighted that almost all local authorities in Ireland have signed the council framework in support of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. This means they have agreed to take action for pollinators and support the ethos of the plan.

Local Authority Heritage Officers

Heritage Officers are employed by Local Authorities in partnership with the Heritage Council to provide a strategic heritage service for their City/County Council. If you have any queries about built, natural or cultural heritage in your area, please contact your Local Authority Heritage Officer.



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Local Authority Heritage Officer Network

Location of Heritage Officers

Carlow	Longford
Cavan	Louth
Cork City	Mayo
Cork County	Meath
Clare	Monaghan
Donegal	Offaly
Dublin City	Roscommon
Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown	Sligo
Fingal	South Dublin County
Galway City	Tipperary
Galway County	Waterford
Kerry	Westmeath
Kildare	Wexford
Kilkenny	Wicklow
Laois	
Leitrim	
Limerick	



Contact details for the Local Authority Heritage Officers

Local Authority	Heritage Officer	Email
Carlow County Council	Dr. Eoin O'Sullivan	esullivan@carlowcoco.ie
Cavan County Council	Anne Marie Ward	amcurley@cavancoco.ie
Cork City Council	Niamh Twomey	niamh_twomey@corkcity.ie
Cork County Council	Conor Nelligan	conor.nelligan@corkcoco.ie
Clare County Council	Congella McGuire	cmcguire@clarecoco.ie
Dublin City Council	Charles Duggan	Charles.duggan@dublincity.ie
Donegal County Council	Dr. Joe Gallagher	j.gallagher@donegalcoco.ie
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	Deirdre Black	dblack@dlrcoco.ie
Fingal County Council	Christine Baker	Christine.baker@fingal.ie
Galway City Council	Dr. Jim Higgins	jim.higgins@galwaycity.ie
Galway County Council	Marie Mannion	mmannion@galwaycoco.ie
Kerry County Council	Victoria McCarthy	VMcCarthy@kerrycoco.ie
Kildare County Council	Bridget Loughlin	bloughlin@kildarecoco.ie
Kilkenny County Council	Dearbhala Ledwidge	dearbhalaledwidge@kilkennycoco.ie
Laois County Council	Catherine Casey	ccasey@laoiscoco.ie
Leitrim County Council	Sarah Malone	smalone@leitrimcoco.ie
Limerick County Council	Tom O'Neill	heritage@limerick.ie
Longford County Council	Mairead Ní Chonghaile	mnichonghaile@longfordcoco.ie
Louth County Council	Brendan McSherry	brendan.mcsherry@louthcoco.ie
Mayo County Council	Dr. Deirdre Cunningham	dcunningham@mayococo.ie
Meath County Council	Dr. Loreto Guinan	lguinan@meathcoco.ie
Monaghan County Council	Shirley Clerkin	heritage@monaghancoco.ie shclerkin@monaghancoco.ie
Offaly County Council	Amanda Pedlow	heritage@offalycoco.ie
Roscommon County Council	Nollaig Feeney	nfeeney@roscommoncoco.ie
Sligo County Council	Siobhán Ryan	sryan@sligococo.ie
South Dublin County Council	Dr. Rosaleen Dwyer	rdwyer@sdublincoco.ie
Tipperary County Council	Roisin O'Grady	roisin.ogradys@tipperarycoco.ie
Waterford County Council	Bernadette Guest	bguest@waterfordcoco.ie
Westmeath County Council	Melanie McQuade	Melanie.mcquade@westmeathcoco.ie
Wexford County Council	Catherine McLoughlin	Catherine.mcloughlin@wexfordcoco.ie
Wicklow County Council	Deirdre Burns	dburns@wicklowcoco.ie

Local Authority Pollinator Award Committee

Dearbhala Ledwidge, Kilkenny Heritage Officer (Chair)
Amanda Pedlow, Offaly Heritage Officer
Siobhán Ryan, Sligo Heritage Officer
Bridget Loughlin, Kildare Heritage Officer
Deirdre Burns, Wicklow Heritage Officer
Roisin O'Grady, Tipperary Heritage Officer
Deirdre Black, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Heritage Officer
Una Fitzpatrick, National Biodiversity Data Centre
Kate Chandler, National Biodiversity Data Centre



An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta
agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is co-ordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Funding to assist implementation has been provided by the Heritage Council, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.