



Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030 Issues Paper



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Introduction

The Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030 will provide a framework for biodiversity action for the next 6 years with the aim of halting biodiversity loss in County Clare. It will be underpinned by the objectives of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan.

Clare County Council has an important role to play in the protection and management of biodiversity and in addressing climate adaptation and mitigation working in partnership with the Heritage Council. The Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030 will put forward an ambitious programme of actions to reverse the decline of biodiversity, to recognise the intrinsic value of the county's biodiversity assets and to ensure lasting benefits to society by 2030.



“Biodiversity in Ireland is valued, conserved, restored and sustainability used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people” - Ireland in 2050: Vision for Biodiversity (Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan)

What is Biodiversity and why is it important to County Clare?

Biodiversity refers to the different forms of life in an area. This includes all plants and animals (including humans), fungi, algae and all other microscopic life forms and the ecosystems of which they are part of. Each of these species and organisms work together to maintain balance and support life. Clare is one of the richest counties for biodiversity in Ireland ranging from our Burren landscape in the north, to the Shannon Estuary in the south, to Lough Derg in the east, to our rugged coastline and marine habitats in the west, and our diversity of wetlands, peatlands, natural watercourses, semi-natural grasslands and native woodlands scattered throughout.

Ecosystem services are all elements of nature that either directly or indirectly bring value to human well-being, and biodiversity is critical to underpinning these services.

Biodiversity provides ecosystem services such as food security through pollinators, clean water through functioning healthy wetland ecosystems; carbon capture through stocks tied to native woodlands and peatlands; flood prevention in the form of natural reservoirs linked to wetlands, coastal sand dunes and upland peatland habitats; education and research opportunities; amenity and recreation; and natural resources.



What habitats are in your local area?

How would you like to see habitats managed for biodiversity?

Ecosystem Services



Threats to Biodiversity

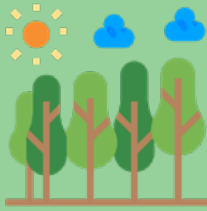
Biodiversity is undergoing a major decline worldwide. Dail Éireann declared a 'biodiversity emergency' for the first time in May 2019 with Ireland becoming the second country in the world to do so. This came at a time when the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES) published its global assessment on the state of the world's biodiversity and ecosystem services. The report shows that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and the rate of species extinction is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world now likely.

County Clare is not exempt from the effects of biodiversity loss. Causes of biodiversity loss are linked to:

- habitat loss and fragmentation
- climate change
- pollution (air and water)
- disturbance
- pesticide usage
- drainage
- inappropriate development
- Introduction and spread of invasive alien species
- Abandonment



“Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world” - Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES).



The most recent Article 17 reports (2019) prepared for the European Commission assessed 85% of EU habitats and 30% of EU listed species as being of 'Unfavourable' status (declining and deteriorating) in Ireland.



The State of the World's Birds report (BirdLife International, 2022) identified 63% of Irish birds as declining



the Regional Red List of Irish Bees has identified 50% of pollinators in decline with 1 species extinct



The Plant Atlas 2020 survey reports more than half of Ireland's native plant species in decline, with native grasslands suffering the largest decline



The Irish Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (2021) identified a 35% decline in the Irish butterfly population.

What do you think are the biggest threats to biodiversity?

How should we protect our biodiversity assets for future generations?

How can you help biodiversity?

Biodiversity and Climate Change

Climate change is disrupting natural patterns and processes of habitats and species in County Clare linked to extreme weather events and giving rise to the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. This has added significance when factoring in land use changes which decreases the resilience of our natural heritage assets to withstand the impacts of climate change. Biodiversity helps human well-being by providing nature-based solutions to adapt to ever increasing extreme weather events linked to climate change.

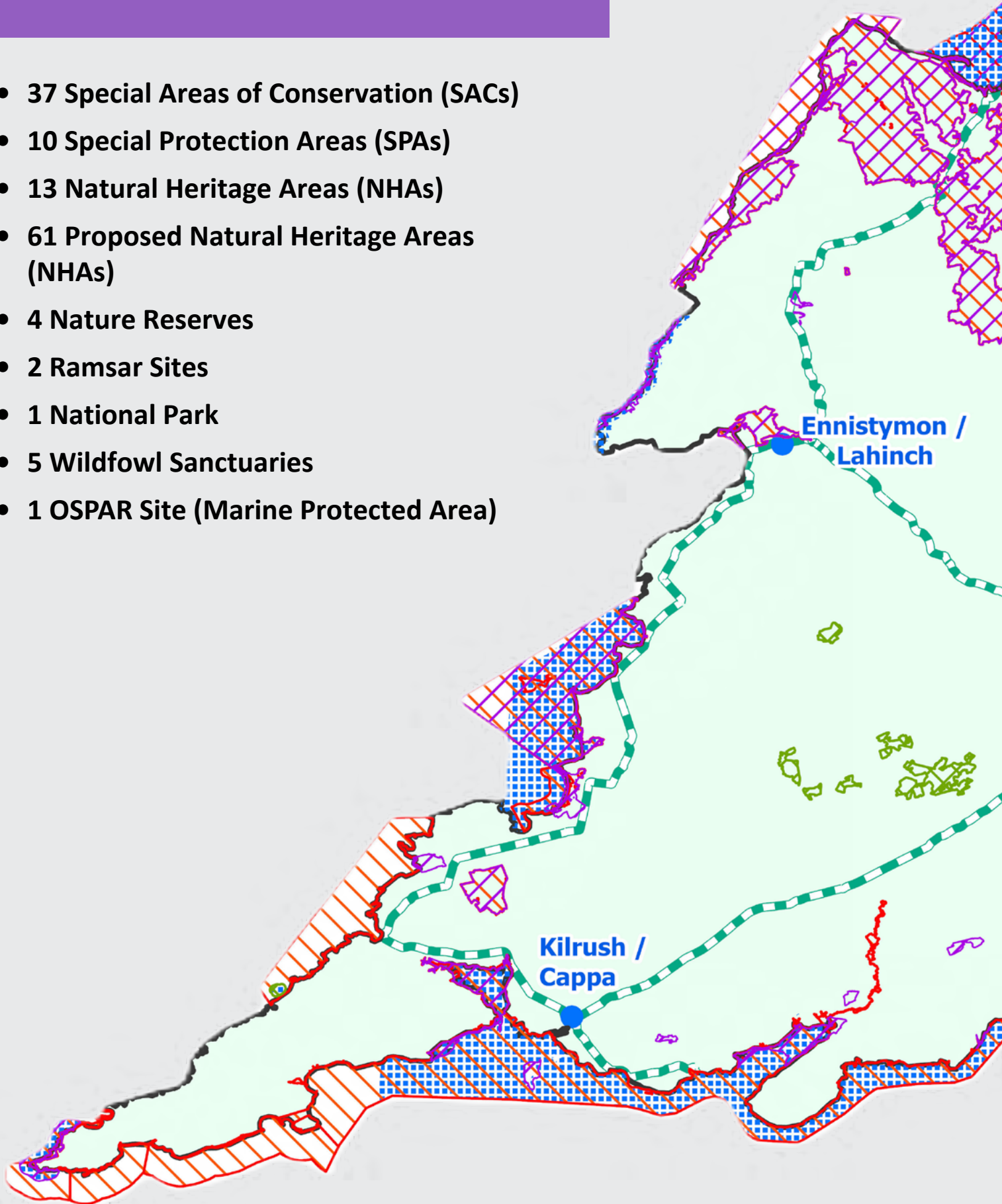
Objective 4 of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan aims to embed biodiversity at the heart of climate action with the aim of addressing climate change through restoring biodiversity. The link between biodiversity and climate change is enshrined in Irish law through the National Climate Objective that commits to achieve the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050. The development and implementation of a robust Biodiversity Action Plan for County Clare is an important step in addressing challenges linked to climate change and conserving Ireland's biodiversity for future generations.

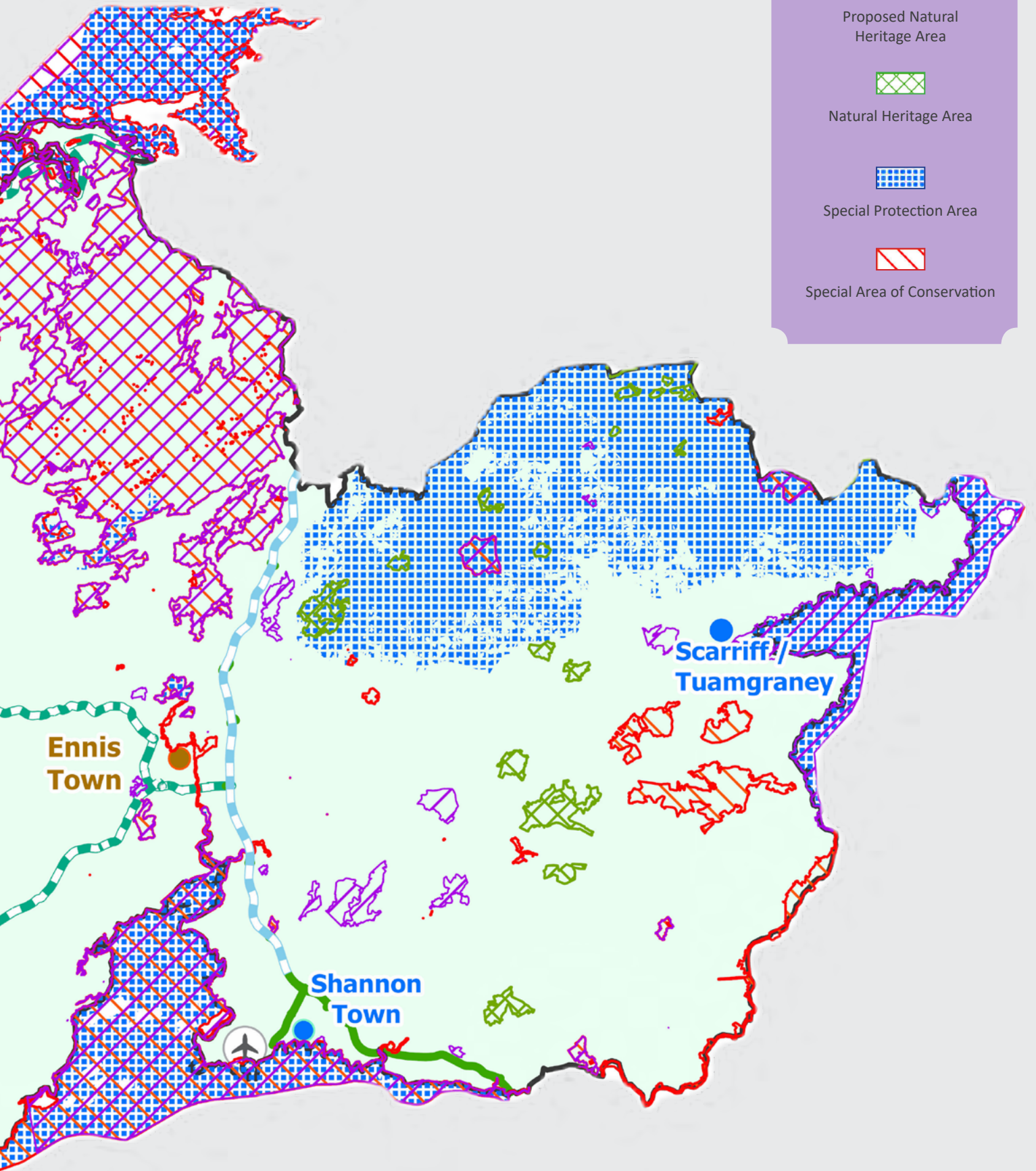
How can we create climate resilient ecosystems?

What biodiversity actions would you carry out to help climate change in your local area?

Sites of Nature Conservation Significance

- 37 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- 10 Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
- 13 Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)
- 61 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)
- 4 Nature Reserves
- 2 Ramsar Sites
- 1 National Park
- 5 Wildfowl Sanctuaries
- 1 OSPAR Site (Marine Protected Area)





What is the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030?



The Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030 provides a framework for biodiversity action for the next 6 years with the aim of halting biodiversity loss in County Clare. It will be underpinned by the objectives of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan which comprises six key overarching objectives. The Clare Biodiversity Action Plan will comprise an overall vision supported by a set of objectives/themes, targets, actions, and key performance indicators (KPIs) which will set the trajectory of how the plan will achieve its vision for biodiversity and address the Biodiversity Emergency at local authority level in County Clare. An emphasis is placed on actions that are measurable and achievable within the lifetime of the plan. The Clare Biodiversity Action Plan will run in parallel with the Clare County Heritage Plan 2024-2030 and take cognisance of the strategic biodiversity objectives outlined in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

Clare Biodiversity Action Plan Stages



Clare Biodiversity Working Group

In July 2023 the Clare Heritage and Biodiversity Forum was established representing diverse interest groups including elected representatives of Clare County Council, local authority representatives, statutory organisations, semi-state agencies, environmental non-government organisations, community groups, farming representatives and educational institutions.

Members will provide guidance, expertise and observations throughout all phases of the development and delivery of the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan. The working group also provides an opportunity for members to foster strong partnerships and collaborate on biodiversity projects and to deliver actions in the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2030.



Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

Objective 1 of the NBAP aims to adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity. This will ensure that financing for conservation and restoration is shared across the whole of government and that biodiversity initiatives are inspired and supported across the whole of society. The Clare Biodiversity Action Plan will support collaboration with a wide network of stakeholder groups across the county to translate national biodiversity actions into nature conservation and enhancement on the ground. In this regard, key stakeholder groups will have an opportunity to contribute their observations during the plan preparation process through public engagement and through online platforms.

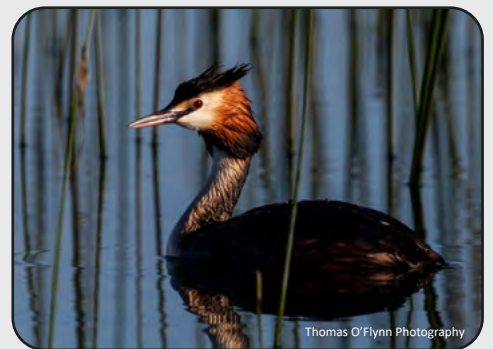
What actions should be considered for your local area in the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan?

What can be done to protect, restore and conserve biodiversity for future generations?

Key Biodiversity Projects

Clare County Council has delivered on key biodiversity actions throughout the lifetime of the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2023. Many of these have had far reaching positive impacts for communities, landowners and key stakeholder groups including:

- Appointment of a County Biodiversity Officer within Clare County Council supported by the Heritage Council.
- Clare County Council's Biodiversity Manual: Best Practice Guidelines (Clare County Council, 2021)
- County Clare Wetland Survey (2022-Present)
- Clare Barn Owl Project (2022-Present)
- Clare Swift Survey (2017-2020)
- Official Council Partner of the 'All Ireland Pollinator Plan' (2020)
- Shannon-Fergus Estuary Bird Survey (2017-2020)
- Clare Schools Biodiversity Programme (2023 – funded through the Heritage in Schools Scheme and separately Creative Ireland)
- Burrenbeo's Hare's Corner Initiative (funding the creation of ponds, mini-woodlands, native orchards and communications work package)
- Ennis Circuitscape Bat Study
- Burren Rare Flora Survey (2022-Present)
- Invasive species surveys, research and eradication programmes (River Shannon (Quagga Mussel), West Clare and Killaloe)
- Supporting outreach and communications initiatives such as Ardnaculla Summer School and the Shannon Dolphin Project)



What new projects should be considered in the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan?

How can we promote biodiversity effectively?

How You Can Get Involved....

Community Groups, individuals, stakeholders or groups/associations representing the interests of children, are all encouraged to make observations in forming the Clare Biodiversity Action Plan. We want to hear your views or on any other issues that you may consider important to be included in the County Biodiversity Action Plan. What are your top actions for biodiversity in your local area in County Clare? Could these actions be achieved in the plan? The information gathered will feed into Clare County Council's new Biodiversity Action Plan, which will guide the implementation of priority biodiversity actions in the county over the next six years. There are a number of ways you can share your views and make observations on the Biodiversity Action Plan which can be made between 3rd of May to the 4th of June inclusive by:

✉ biodiversity@clarecoco.ie

🖱 Online: through our online 'have your say' platform and questionnaire available at: <https://yoursay.clarecoco.ie/clare-biodiversity-action-plan-24-30>

✉ Post: Clare Biodiversity Action Plan, Planning Department, Clare County Council, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95 DXP2

In person public walk-ins. Details available at: <https://yoursay.clarecoco.ie/clare-biodiversity-action-plan-24-30>

The deadline for submissions is 4pm on Tuesday, the 4th of June 2024.

Clare County Council wish to acknowledge the role of the Heritage Council in funding the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme and in particular, supporting the preparation and implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan, in partnership with the Council

*This is your plan,
Your Opinion Matters..
Play Your Part for Biodiversity.
Make the Change!*



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