

Discussion Paper to begin the process of drafting the Limerick City and County Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2024/5-2030

Introduction

Limerick City and County Council is beginning a process to draft a Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan in partnership with the Heritage Council. The aim of this plan will be to protect and enhance biodiversity within Limerick City and County. The new Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan will contribute to regional and national efforts to protect and enhance our natural heritage.

The aim of this discussion paper is to begin this process. To:

- Hear your views on nature/biodiversity/natural heritage
- Listen to your views on what actions are needed and
- Record, conserve and restore biodiversity in Limerick
- Make space for Nature

Submissions, views and observations will be welcome from individuals, businesses or from an agency or group that works to conserve and protect the natural elements of the environment that in turn will protect biodiversity.



Credit: WTML / Earnie Janes



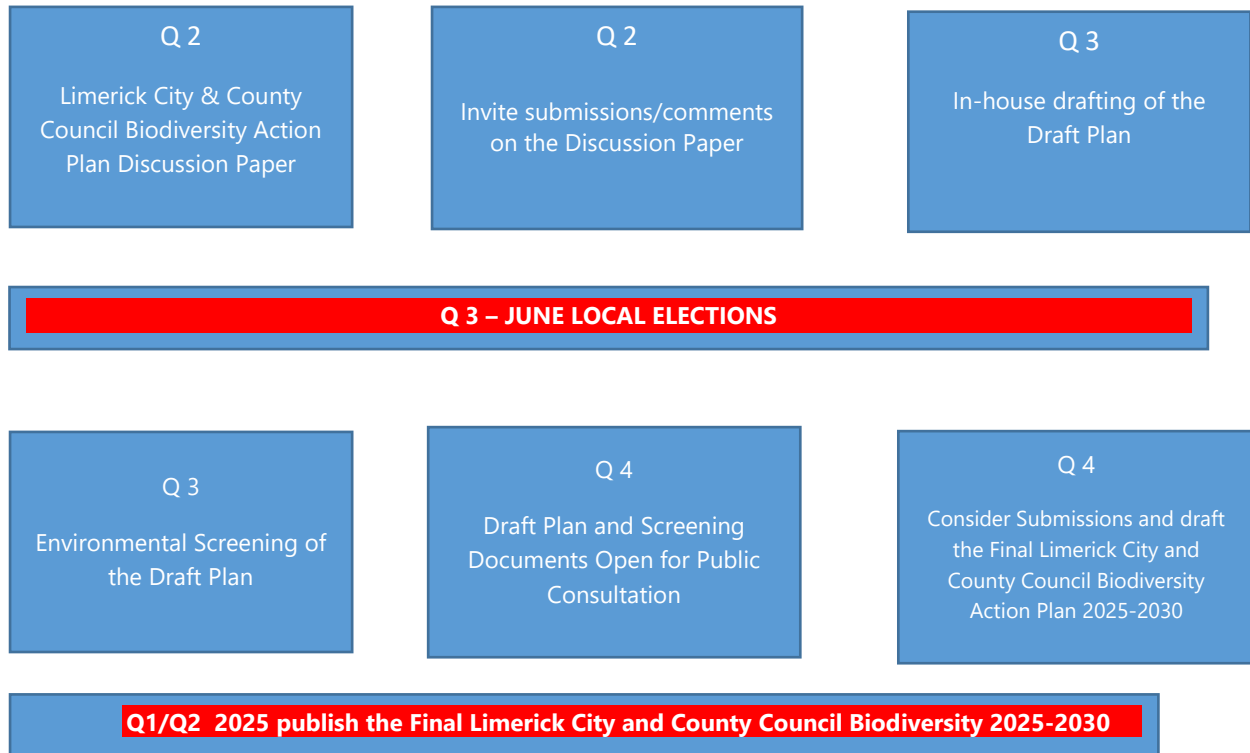
<https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/dunnock/>

A place to start



<https://thelastdaysofthunderchild.blogspot.com/2017/07/the-baby-dunnock-chicks-are-developing.html>

Provisional Time frame for drafting the LCCC Biodiversity Action Plan



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The process of drafting of the local biodiversity action plan is in line with the three pillars of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;

- Biosphere,
- Society and
- Economy
- All linked through partnership.



What is Biodiversity?

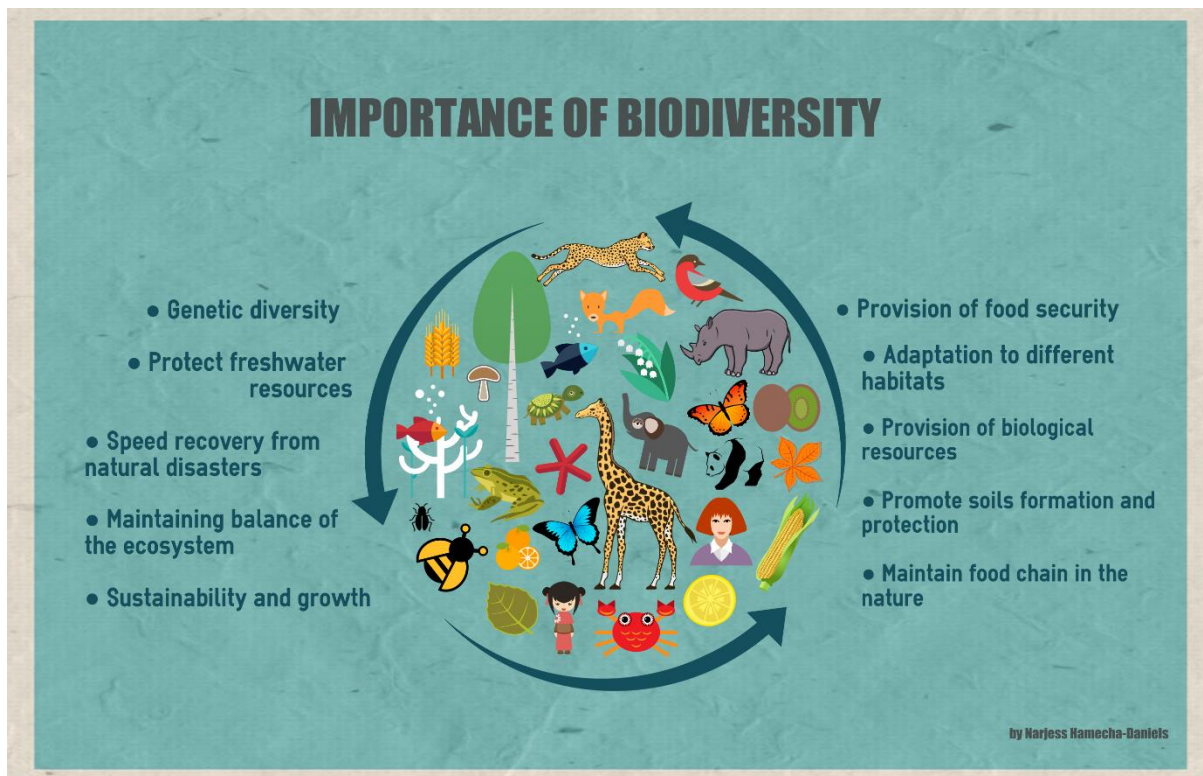


Image from <https://militzahidalgoeslee.wordpress.com/2017/11/14/biodiversity-in-the-anthropocene/>

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, in all its forms and all its interactions, (including humans). Locally it's the wealth and diversity of all living things in Limerick City and County. Human activity has significantly influenced and shaped the landscape of Limerick and the resulting environmental and land use changes have a wide-ranging effect on biodiversity. It is important that we are mindful in our decision making that:

- All life forms are interdependent.
- This interdependence forms ecosystems which ensures the survival of plants, animals (including humans) and micro-organisms.
- An ecosystem can be as large as the Shannon River Basin, or as small as a local patch of nettles in your back garden.
- Without the support of the other organisms within an ecosystem, life forms would not survive, much less thrive.
- This support requires that predators, prey, water, food, shelter, clean air and space remain in balance with each other and with the environment around them.

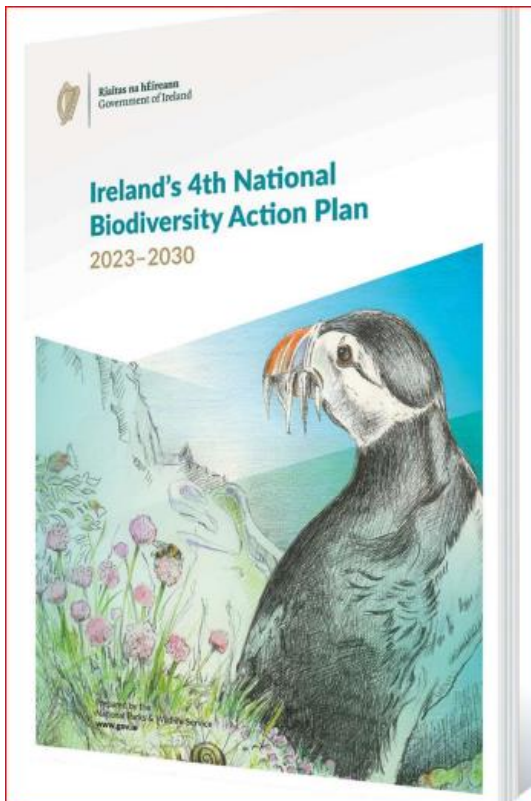
Why protect Biodiversity?

Biodiversity provides us with clean air, water, food, materials, medicines, health benefits, and recreation along with being a muse and continual resource for the arts. It supports pollination and soil fertility, regulates climate and protects us from extreme weather and other effects of climate change. It is these benefits that underpin our economy, health and wellbeing.

- One Irish study offered a conservative estimate that biodiversity contributes to at least €2.6 billion to the Irish Economy annually through the goods and services it provides. It is therefore essential to protect biodiversity, not only for the sake of protecting nature but also our own sustainability.

- The Irish Government declared a Biodiversity Emergency and set plans in place to address Biodiversity Loss. In Ireland, here are some examples of biodiversity decline;
- 33% species of bee is threatened with extinction
- 20% of Ireland's native flora are vulnerable to climate change in the period up to 2050
- 85% of protected habitats are in unfavourable conditions

Since Ireland declared the Biodiversity Crisis there has been a **Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity**, and the **4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)** has been published.



https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/files/4th_National_Biodiversity_Action_Plan.pdf

- It is an objective of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan that each Local Authority prepare a Local Biodiversity Action Plan which will provide a framework for the conservation and restoration of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level.
- The LCCC Biodiversity Officer will work with a representative group to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Limerick City and County.
- The 4th NBAP has identified five main pressures that impact on biodiversity.
 - Habitat Loss
 - Climate Change
 - Pollution
 - Over exploitation
 - Invasive Species

Biodiversity in Limerick City and County

Protected Areas

There are a number of internationally protected sites within the county. Sites designated of EU importance include 12 Special Areas of conservation (SACs), 3 Special Protection Areas (SPAs); collectively known as Sites of Conservation Importance (SCIs). These sites carry priority habitats and species and are referred to as the Natura 2000 Network and they are legally protected under the EU Habitats Directive. In addition to EU designations, we also have 4 nationally important Natural Heritage Area (NHAs), and thirty-seven proposed NHA's as places where plants and animals exist in a relatively natural state.

Limerick's SPA / SAC / NHA/WFS

SPA (3)
(Birds) Special Protected Area

Site Name: [River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA](#) (004077)

Site Name: [Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA](#) (004165)

Site Name: [Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA](#) (004161)

SAC (10)
(habitats) Special Area of Conservation

Site Name: [Askeaton Fen Complex SAC](#) (002279)

Site Name: [Ballyhoura Mountains SAC](#) (002036)

Site Name: [Barrigone SAC](#) (000432)

Site Name: [Blackwater River \(Cork/Waterford\) SAC](#) (002170)

Site Name: [Carrigeenamronety Hill SAC](#) (002037)

Site Name: [Clare Glen SAC](#) (000930)

Site Name: [Curraghchase Woods SAC](#) (000174)

Site Name: [Galtee Mountains SAC](#) (000646)

Site Name: [Glen Bog SAC](#) (001430)

Site Name: [Glenstal Wood SAC](#) (001432)

NHA(4)
Natural Heritage Areas

Your search returned 4 results.

Site Name: [Carrigkerry Bogs NHA](#) (002399)

Site Name: [Grageen Fen and Bog NHA](#) (002186)

Site Name: [Lough Gay Bog NHA](#) (002454)

Site Name: [Moyreen Bog NHA](#) (002361)

WFS (2)
Wildfowl Sanctuary

WFS-33	Lough Gur	Limerick
WFS-34	City of Limerick (part)	Limerick

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City & County Council

Limerick's pNHA's

- Inner Shannon Estuary - South Shore
- Curraghchase Woods
- Ardagh Church, Newcastlewest (Disused)
- Castlecornell (Domestic Dwelling, Occupied)
- Lough Gur
- Galtee Mountains
- Clare Glen
- Dromore & Black Lough
- Glen Bog
- Glenasur Wood
- Glenstal Wood
- Drumaklagh Bog
- Bilboa And Gortnagragh River Valleys
- Skeohill
- Fergus Estuary And Inner Shannon, North Shore
- Castlecree Wood
- Ballyhoura Mountains
- Ballynea Wood
- Ballynacourty Wood
- Courtrossel Wood
- Herbertstown Fen
- Loughmore Common Turbough
- Adare Woodlands
- Barrigone
- Tory Hill
- Knockasur Wood
- Tarbert Bay
- Ballymartin Marsh
- Ballyninch Marsh
- Cappagh Fen
- Gortnacromack
- Heathfield Wood
- Sturman Island
- Ballynabreen Bog
- Knockalshew Marsh
- Glenacorney River Valley
- Carrigwarrosilly Hill
- Ballyroe Hill & Northtown Hill

pnha Limerick

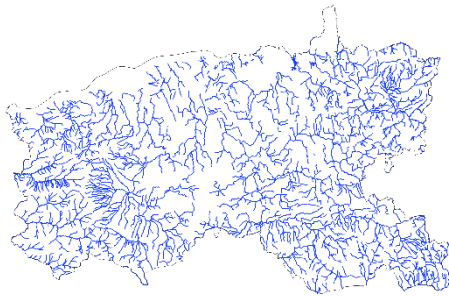
pNHAs (38)
Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City & County Council

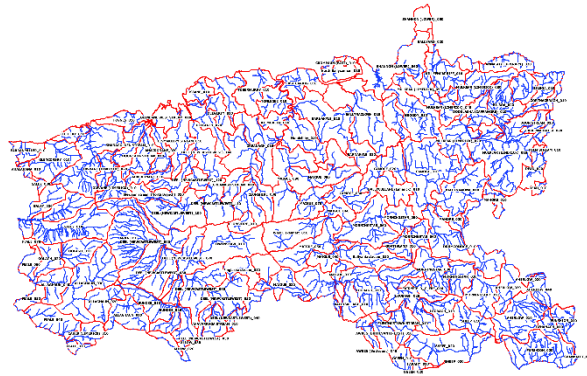
Catchments, Corridors & Connectivity

Other wildlife habitats in Limerick that are not designated sites provide corridors and steppingstones to the wider ecological network which enhances the richness and diversity of nature within the county. These include;

- Wetlands, Water Corridors, Rivers Stream & Ponds
- Woodlands, Hedgerows Scrub & Trees
- Urban Green Spaces & Parks



Rivers in Limerick County



Rivers & Sub Catchments in Limerick County

<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water>

Hedgerows are particularly important for biodiversity connectivity many of our annex species such as lesser horseshoe bats and barn owls favour feeding along the hedgerows. A recent LCCC survey on hedgerows in the county indicates that 40% of our hedgerows are in poor condition.

Threats to Biodiversity in Limerick City and County

Our ecosystems are under ever increasing pressure with many native species in decline or threatened. These pressures include agricultural practices, urban and domestic wastewater pollution, interference with and removal of native habitats, and an increase in commercial forestry, drainage, and the spread of invasive species.

Biodiversity is one of our biggest allies in reducing the impact of climate change. Healthy ecosystems need to be conserved to be increase resilience to climate impacts. The following headings constitute threats to biodiversity in the county and we need to plan and act in a way that minimises these threats:

- Climate change
- Climate Action and Mitigation
- Habitat loss and fragmentation – this includes poor management of hedgerows by cutting them in a ‘short back and sides’ fashion
- Pollution
- Invasive alien species
- Over exploitation
- Disturbance to Wildlife
- Nutrient enrichment
- Drainage

An Outline of Limerick City and County Council's Actions to Date to Support Limerick's Biodiversity



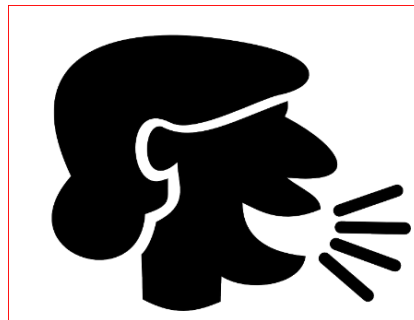
- LCCC Dev Plan Policy EH P1-4 along with associated objectives.
- Blue Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Metropolitan Area
- LCCC Tree Strategy is currently out for public consultation
- Swift and Barn Owl baseline surveys supported by the Heritage Council
- Westfields Wetland Management Plan
- Limerick Greenway Biodiversity Plan
- County Limerick Hedgerow Survey Report 2023.
- Staff training for planners organized by Heritage Officer
- The Council continue to support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and report annually on these actions to the National Biodiversity Data Centre
- LCCC is drafting a local pollinator action plan
- Limerick City and County Council's programme of biodiversity related events.
- European Projects: Current URBACT BiodiverCity and URBACT GreenPlace and the completed Health & GreenSpace
- LCCC environment has a positive social media presence @limerickenviron

Why is a Limerick City and County Biodiversity Action Plan required?

A County Biodiversity Action Plan increases focus on the issues facing Limerick.

- The Biodiversity Action Plan is a policy document setting out strategies for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through a series of targeted actions.
- There are challenges to face in creating a climate resilient country with no net biodiversity loss by 2030
- It is Limerick City and County Council intention to be proactive in supporting Limerick's biodiversity and the new Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan will bring more focus to that effort.

Have your say



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The Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan will be a framework document that sets out a series of actions for a five/six-year period to conserve and enhance Limerick's biodiversity.

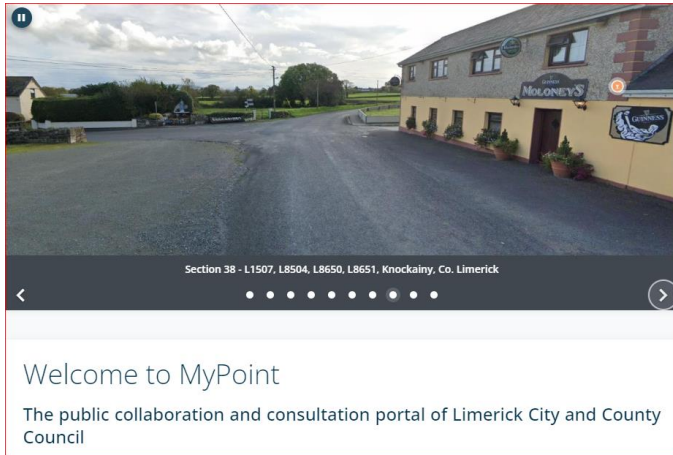
- We want to know your concerns and priorities in relation to Limerick's Biodiversity.
- What aspects of biodiversity do you want to see celebrated and conserved?

The information gathered will feed into Limerick City and County's new Biodiversity Action Plan, which will guide the implementation of priority biodiversity actions in the county for the duration of the Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan.

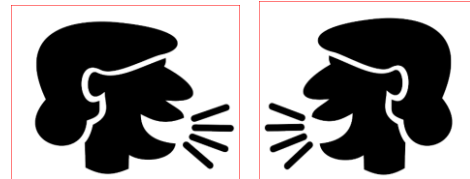
We want to hear your views and what do you think are the most important issues concerning biodiversity in Limerick such as:

1. Imagine Limerick in 2050 – what type of biodiversity would you like to experience in Limerick City and County.
2. How can we develop and protect the Ecological Network in the County?
3. What are the main threats to Limerick's biodiversity and natural heritage?
4. How can we provide for development while ensuring that we enhance and protect biodiversity and nature
5. Do you have an ideas for Citizen Science Projects that you think may support and enhance biodiversity in Limerick?
6. What are the most important priority actions that need to be taken to restore and enhance biodiversity in Limerick?
7. Do you have any innovative ideas on how we can gather and manage baseline data?
8. Think of your younger days. Have you noticed a biodiversity decline in your local area, what is missing now that was abundant in the past?

Have your say on this discussion document by close of business on **Monday 27th May 2024.**



[MyPoint](#)



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Face to Face Meetings & information Sessions

- Online submissions and observations on [MyPoint](#)
- Email the answers to the questions posed, your thoughts, suggestions and/or comments to biodiversityactionplan@limerick.ie or
- Come along to any of our biodiversity events and other information sessions keep an eye on @limerickenvirom twitter/facebook & Instagram and Limerick City and County Council social media for details.
- Send a written submission to Biodiversity Officer, Environment & Climate Action Team, Limerick City & County Council, Dooradoyle Limerick



By Email



By Post

Images from creativecommons.org

Deadline date for submissions is close of business Monday 27th May 2024.