

## Local Authority Members Climate and Biodiversity Action Workshop - Dec 4th 2019

### Summary of Outcomes from the Workshop Session on Biodiversity

#### Local Authority Best Practice Examples.

- Declaration of a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency
- Inclusion of young people in Climate and Biodiversity SPCs
- Biodiversity Officers employed by 6 local authorities
- Joint Staff and Elected Representatives voluntary Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Committee (Meath)
- Pollinator plan implementation including:
  - roundabout planting
  - Grass and lawn management
- Hedgerow preservation
- Compost and leaf moulding programmes
- Designated areas for biodiversity
- Native tree planting <https://treecouncil.ie/tree-advice/native-species/>  
<https://www.treesontheland.com/>
- DCC Tree Policy, Tree Officer and a Tree Strategy. Galway City Tree Officer just appointed
- Combating native species including Bracken
- Wetlands mapping and protection (Ballybay Wetlands Centre, Monaghan)
- The Bride Valley <https://www.thebrideproject.ie/>
- Harper Island  
<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/lifestyle/outdoorsandgarden/the-islands-of-ireland-sanctuary-at-harpers-island-903456.html>
- No pesticides or herbicides in Leitrim Co Co
- Support for Community Gardens
- Working with artists
- Working with Tidy Towns
- Beehives in the Community
- Working with the LAWCO Offices

- Burren Beo
- <https://ediblelandscape.ie/>
- Single use plastics policy
- Environment SPC also focuses on sustainable agriculture
- Councillors with small pots of funds for local discretionary grants
- Rewilding areas of council land
- Working with Local Environmental Networks

Does your local authority have a Biodiversity Plan or other Plans and programmes that require actions on biodiversity and if so have the agreed actions been delivered on?

- Freestanding Biodiversity plans in some places, but some are well out of date. (10yrs)
- Biodiversity Plan incorporated into Heritage Plan in others
- Linked to County Development Plans
- Delivery of the plans not clear in some cases

What are the constraints that have impacted on delivery of these plans, and what opportunities have arisen as a result of them?

- Budget is crucial for delivering any actions – if it's not in the annual budget, it won't happen
- Other resources
- Division of staff institutional/outsource
- Motivation of officials
- Expertise – everyone in the Council should have at least a good understanding of the issues
- User friendly data and presentation of information
- Absence of links with Academia

Please list all the people in the Council that are involved in protecting and enhancing biodiversity?

- In a few Councils Biodiversity is included in the title of one of its SPCs
  - All SPCs should include Biodiversity in their discussions

Every Local Authority has great potential to positively impact on Biodiversity, so who else should be involved?

- Work across all directorates in the Council
- All SPCs
- EAOs
- Energy officers
- Area Engineers and all other engineers

## What are the internal barriers to implementing existing and new actions to protect and enhance biodiversity?

- General lack of awareness of the Biodiversity Plans
- Very low implementation in some cases
- Lack of ambition in some plans
- Heritage and Biodiversity Officers aren't really a part of the council decision-making structures
- Absence of Biodiversity Officers
- Heritage Officer role is too broad
- Poor national leadership means the local authorities are limited in their ability to act
- Biodiversity is a niche interest in many local authorities
- Biodiversity Plans are under pressure from the drive for local development, and the relationship between the Councillors and the heritage officers and Planning Dept needs to be good
- Serious lack of budget for biodiversity
- Land ownership
- Lack of awareness of elected councillors re the legislation
- SPCs
  - as a mechanism doesn't really work.
  - Too few meetings
  - Poor scheduling leads to absence of other sector reps
- Lack of collaboration between NGOs, farmers etc
- Lack of contact with nature
- Lack of ambition regarding Biodiversity actions which is likely to be linked to lack of staff/financial resources/knowledge
- Need MEPs to alert local authorities to EU funding streams
- Poor information leading to poor decisions that then have to be undone
- Ignorance re spraying
- Removing herbicides leads to increased management costs
- Absence of joined up thinking. Directors of Services – silo thinking
- Access to data for land owned by LA
- Red tape can prevent ideas being implemented
- Training of Councillors
- EU funding applications require huge time resources
- National Development Plan (NDP) fails to focus on biodiversity
- The term biodiversity- doesn't always connect with people. Preferable to use nature & wildlife.
- Shifting baseline syndrome- people can only empathise with loss of species and habitats that were familiar to them in their youth. The range decreases with every generation.
- Level of awareness in the Council Chamber.
- Gross under-resourcing of the NPWS

- Perceived lack of power of Elected Members to make decisions compared with relative perceived power of City County Managers Association ( CCMA)
- National roads legislation undermines biodiversity protection
- Misunderstandings regarding the hedgerow cutting legislation.
- Sitka Spruce Plantations
- An Bord Pleanála are not interested in Biodiversity
- Strategic Infrastructure Act has undermined local democracy

The loss of Biodiversity is of concern to many, so who are your allies in the community, and where can you find new ones?

- 3 main Government Depts: DCHG, DCCAE, and DHPLG
- Farmers
- Tidy Towns
- PPNs
- IEN/LENs
- Local ENGOS
- Academics (pairing with Councillors?)
- Bee-keepers
- Community Gardens
- Schools
- Funding experts
- Academic institutions
- MEPs
- Heritage Committees including promotion of folklore
- Transition Towns
- Town Teams
- Coillte
- Fáilte Ireland and local tourist groups
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local businesses
- GAA
- Community Councils/Coops
- Heritage Council
- LAWCOs
- LEADER
- Men's Sheds
- Local festivals
- Local media
- NRA

- Other politicians
- Scouts
- GIY

### Possible Actions

- Strong National Leadership needed for Local Authorities to follow
- Can we run a separate workshop for the Director of Services of each council in each region/county?
- Set up a network
- Resources needed for biodiversity if we are serious
- Establishment of River Trusts
- High Nature Value Farming
- Retailers – on board for biodiversity
- Strong engagement with reviews of County and City Development Plans