



Resource Pack for Community Biodiversity Action Plans



Meadowbrook Community Garden



Introduction

This Resource Pack was developed for the successful grantees from Community Foundation Ireland's Biodiversity Fund 2023 and the panel of ecologists assembled by Community Foundation Ireland. It is intended to act as a guide for both the community groups and the ecologists they chose to hire to assist them with their Community Biodiversity Action Plan. The resource pack was developed with our lead ecologist Hannah Hamilton with major input from the training day held with our panel of Ecologists to ensure we standardise our approach to creating a Community Biodiversity Plan nationwide. We have prepared this document in order to inform successful applicants with the necessary resources and to define engagement and interaction with the community groups. It is not intended to act as a skeleton instruction book and we would encourage each group to individualise it to their region and to personalise the plan in the best way to engage and inform your local community.

We are also encouraging community groups to document the process of building and creating the Community Biodiversity Action Plan to share on social media. We are on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn we would encourage you to keep track of your progress through events, workshops, site visits etc. on your own social media with the hashtag #biodiversity. Where appropriate, you must mention Community Foundation Ireland on any promotional material associated with this grant you can contact us if you would like to use our logo. For further information look over our Media Kit on our website at communityfoundation.ie

The Resource Pack to give to successful applicants includes:

- Overview of Biodiversity Fund 2023.
- Timeline
- Role of Ecologist
- Directory of ecologists
- Guidance documents and tools on Community Biodiversity Action Plan
- Information on key data sources
- Important local contacts and stakeholders (with a national stance)
- Guidance for Community Outreach



OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE FUND – BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN & PROJECTS GRANTS 2022

How was the grant developed?

- **Panel of experts: We convened a panel of stakeholders including** academics, independent ecologists, NGOs and Heritage Officers as well as our experienced grants executives.
- **Need for scientific engagement:** We established that communities would need support from ecologists to understand local context and determine priorities based on evidence
- **Need for a plan of action:** The idea is to support action but also to support engagement in local planning by helping communities to understand what they can do themselves and where/how to engage with other stakeholders for example the local council, businesses, landowners/managers, etc.
- **Need for ecological knowledge to be disseminated:** The majority of local communities need assistance in understanding how to gather data, where to access maps, how to engage with citizen science initiatives, basically how to demystify a complicated area.

Aim

The grants scheme has been devised to enhance biodiversity in communities throughout the country by combining the expertise of qualified ecologists with the skills, experience and enthusiasm of local community groups.

Criteria

- Grants will support community groups who wish to carry out ecological studies in their local areas to developing a Community Biodiversity Action Plan & Project.
- Priority was given to projects that:
 - Focussed heavily on engaging the wider community
 - Demonstrated an intention and capacity to work closely with local landowners/managers and with their chosen ecologist to produce a coherent, accessible and achievable Community Biodiversity Plan
- The Fund will not cover: Core or ongoing overhead costs of grantee organisations, equipment costs, promotion of religious causes, work that has already taken place, non-charitable activities, general political donations, sponsorship or fundraising events, work taking place outside the Republic of Ireland. **It is important to note that this funding is not to support any actions arising from the biodiversity action plan.**



Three Grant Types

Strand 1: Grants of up to €5,000 for community groups to work with an ecologist to classify their local habitats, assess their condition and extent, map them, and define a suite of actions to enhance biodiversity

Strand 2: Grants of up to €7,500 for community groups who carry out the above work in collaboration with one or two land managers/owners to classify habitats at landscape scale with a focus on field boundaries (hedgerows, treelines and stone walls), assess their condition and extent, map them and define a suite of actions to enhance biodiversity

Strand 3: Grants of up to €10,000 for community groups who carry out the above work in collaboration with three to five land managers/owners to classify habitats at landscape scale with a focus on field boundaries (hedgerows, treelines and stone walls), assess their condition and extent, map them and define a suite of actions to enhance biodiversity

TIMELINE

- Successful grantees notified in January 2024 and payments to be disseminated shortly after.
- Studies will be carried out by qualified ecologists between **January 2024 and Spring 2024**.
- Funded community groups will be expected to submit a Progress Report in **August 2024**, and a second Progress Report in February 2025.
- Final Community Biodiversity Action Plans to be submitted by funded community groups to Community Foundation Ireland by **June 2025**.
- Each ecologist will be expected to submit their collected data to the National Biodiversity Data Centre by the end of **June 2025**.

ROLE OF ECOLOGIST

1. Develop Community Biodiversity Plans with four key aspects:
2. Maps (condition/extent)
3. Inventory (species lists)
4. Actions (what/why/when/how/where)



5. Linkages (who)
6. Participate in outreach and engagement activities with community groups such as site visits and walking the area to be surveyed.

NOTE: The area to be covered by each project varies and we encourage community groups to work closely with their chosen ecologist to assess the area that was discussed in your application form and follow the advice of the ecologist regarding any changes that need to be made.



Ecologist training day July 9th with former Community Foundation Ireland CEO Tina Roche



GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN & PROJECT

Structure of the Community Biodiversity Action Plan & Project (CBAPP's) should be guided by, but not limited to, the following.

Reminder for the ecologists; ensure the report is accessible and in the Community Group's language – i.e. if they want Latin names, use them. If not, don't.

Community Action Biodiversity Plan Structure:

1. ½ page summary

Part 1: Descriptive

- Introduction (the aim of Community Biodiversity Action Plan and Project, how it came about, how it was developed, the local area, how the group was formed and information regarding the group)
- Maps
- Photos
- Diagrams
- Consultation
- Desktop research – what data are available? What needs to be collected?
- Land history – old OS Maps, local histories, place names/stories, etc.
- Surveys and inventory – outline the surveys that were done and note the important or significant species and/or habitats

Part 2: Proscriptive

- Start with a SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) for local biodiversity which links the descriptive to the prescriptive
- **Table of Actions – link to map** / Responsibilities for actions
- Linkages
- Action funding opportunities (e.g. Leader, corporate sponsorship of individual actions, etc.)
- Appendix
- Methodologies for data collection
- Data sources for desk study (References)
- Species list (including Latin, Irish and common names, plus info on whether native or not, invasive, pollinator-friendly)



2. Mapping

- Typically a geocoded habitat map using Fossitt Level 3, showing the location, condition and extent of different habitat types within the area
- Maps should be undertaken using the Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping (Smith et al., 2011) and any subsequent habitat assessment methodologies available on npws.ie. Habitat maps should be shared with National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- Use whatever mapping system you're familiar with: qGIS + app, mymaps.ie, Siteworks (see Smith et al. for required data fields)
- Hedgerows should be assessed with Hedgerow Appraisal System (Foulkes et al.)
- Watercourses should be assessed using macro-invertebrate scoring comparable with the EPA
- In large areas (Grant 2 and Grant 3 especially), focus on semi-natural habitats
- Use Bing maps for base layer images to draw from but don't publish them due to copyright
- Community Groups can create artistic or paper versions of the maps ecologists develop
- Be sure to reference the old OSI maps
- Indicator species should be identified on the map – think about them in terms of being of conservation concern, invasive, or dominant
- Hedgerows should be assessed with regard to the Hedgerow Appraisal System (Foulkes et al.)
- Watercourses should be assessed in the easiest way possible – contact LAWPRO/W&C Officers, look to the Small Stream Classification Index, OPAL, Councils may have WQ data, or you might be able to request a Q-Value biotic sampling be done at a specific site.



3. Inventory

Compile an ecological inventory for the area, as follows:

- Typically a list of flora and fauna (both native and non-native) that is known within the survey area, with as much new information as possible gathered within the survey timeframe.
- Observed species data must be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre and to NPWS where relevant.
- Species data must be submitted in the provided National Biodiversity Data Centre template and emailed to info@biodiversityireland.ie
- Start with a desk study, figure out what the gaps are and plan fieldwork on that basis.
- Use Scannell & Sinnott for common names, botanical names in appendices, Irish names.
- Keep the full species list in the Appendix.
- For specialist support (e.g. botanical, fauna, bats, aquatic), contact other ecologists from the panel.
- The level to which you classify species should be guided by the level of detail needed to inform the action.
- If you need help with aquatic vegetation, look for upcoming BSBI trainings.
- Observed species data must be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre in the provided template and to NPWS where relevant.

4. Actions

A suite of actions to enhance biodiversity by habitat type, to include the following for each action:

- **What?** A detailed description of the action
- **Why?** Rationale for the action– make it local and relevant, add in extra benefits where possible (food, foraging, history, folklore, culture)
- **Where?** Specific location for the action (geocoded)
- **When?** Time of year/season for action to be undertaken
- **How?** Clear implementation methods/techniques
- Plus a **simple, high-level ranking scale** for each action, e.g. effort, expense, complexity, timeframe (short, medium or long-term)
- Where possible/relevant, include information on monitoring. Seek to tie monitoring protocols into engagement/outreach.



- Keep actions simple, S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) and relatively low in number (or spread over the duration of the plan – 3 to 5 years)
- Look at the Tidy Towns plans for actions/ideas, use the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions and tailor them for use in the CBAPs.
- Seek to embed ‘long-term’ thinking to ensure actions can easily be managed beyond the lifespan of the CBAP (e.g. hay meadow vs wildflower meadow).

5. Linkages

The Community Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP) should demonstrate clear connections to:

- Important local contacts and stakeholders for example Heritage Officers etc.
- Existing national, regional and local Biodiversity Plans and longer-term goals (Sustainable Development Goals SDGs, new CBD plan to replace Aichi Targets expected by November 2020)
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 – Ireland’s overarching strategy for biodiversity conservation –
<https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/National%20Biodiversity%20Action%20Plan%20English.pdf>
- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 – a national strategy for pollinator conservation, including a range of actions and many sub-guides for different sectors including farmers, businesses and communities - <https://pollinators.ie/>
- Info on key data sources (e.g EPA Envision Maps, NPWS Map Viewer, National Biodiversity Data Centre)
- NPWS Maps – maps showing Special Areas of Conservation (habitats), Special Protection Areas (birds) and Natural Heritage Areas -
<http://webgis.npws.ie/npwsviewer/>
- Biodiversity Maps – maps and datasets on mammal, bird, fish, invertebrate and plant species, plus lists of those that are protected, threatened or invasive -
<https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>



- Biodiversity information resources. Individuals and/or organisations that can offer support, guidance and training (see below for further information)
- Support with links to funding opportunities, e.g. LEADER, corporate sponsorship of specific actions, etc.

County Heritage Officers

County Heritage Officers play a key role in promoting heritage awareness, developing policy and providing advice and information on local as well as national heritage issues. A list of all the Heritage and Biodiversity Officers in Ireland, along with their contact info can be found at - <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/our-work-with-others/county-heritage-officers>

National Parks & Wildlife Service

The role of National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is: to secure the conservation of a representative range of ecosystems to maintain and enhance populations of flora and fauna in Ireland. To designate and advise on the protection of habitats and species identified for nature conservation (Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) having particular regard to the need to consult with interested parties. NPWS Rangers – a map of all the National Parks and Wildlife Service District and Regional Officers, with contact info - <https://www.npws.ie/>

The National Biodiversity Data Centre

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national organisation which collects and manages data on Ireland's biodiversity in order to document our wildlife resource and to track how it is changing over time. More information can be found at <https://biodiversityireland.ie/>

Recent projects undertaken by the NBDC include:

- Biodiversity Maps – Ireland's first biodiversity data and mapping portal - <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>
- Ireland's Citizen Science Portal: Ireland's national portal for the submission and collection of biological records. - <http://bioblitz.ie/>
- Invasive species tracking and policy support - <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/invasive-species/>
- The all-Ireland Biodiversity Monitoring Programme - <https://biodiversityireland.ie/monitoring/>
- Explore Your Shore: <https://exploreyourshore.ie/>



- Invasive Species recording – <https://invasives.ie/>
- Operation of National Biodiversity Indicators - <https://indicators.biodiversityireland.ie/>
- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan - <https://pollinators.ie/>

Environmental Protection Agency

The Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for protecting and improving the environment as a valuable asset for the people of Ireland. It operates independently under the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. EPA Maps – maps with details about soils, water quality, habitat - <http://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/EnvironmentAndWellbeing>

Local Authority Waters Programme

The programme is a shared service working with Local Authorities and state agencies to develop and implement River Basin Management Plans in Ireland, as required under the EU Water Framework Directive - <http://watersandcommunities.ie/about/>

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was created to provide policymakers with regular scientific assessments on climate change, its implications and potential future risks, as well as to put forward adaptation and mitigation options - <https://www.ipcc.ch/>

BirdWatch Ireland

The largest independent conservation organisation in Ireland - the primary objective of BirdWatch Ireland is the protection of wild birds and their habitats in Ireland. Carry out extensive scientific research and survey work into Ireland's birds. Operate applied conservation projects and manage a network of reserves nationwide. Prepare and advocate policies to protect and conserve Irish birds and their habitats. Promote the importance of wild birds and biodiversity through field education, dedicated media and to the national media. – <https://birdwatchireland.ie/>

Bat Conservation Ireland

Bat Conservation Ireland (Caomhantas Ialtog na hÉireann) is a Charity dedicated to the conservation of Ireland's bats. They promote conservation of bats by disseminating



educational materials, giving talks and leading bat walks, carrying out nationwide surveys and monitoring of bats, acting as an umbrella group for the local bat groups and providing a central repository for bat records - <https://www.batconservationireland.org/>

The Irish Wildlife Trust

The Irish Wildlife Trust has branches around Ireland who organise events and conservation activities in their County. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact your local branch (<https://iwt.ie/get-involved/our-branches/>). If you are interested in setting up a branch in your County, please contact enquiries@iwt.ie

Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

The BSBI is for everyone who cares about the wild plants of Britain and Ireland. Since 1836, they've been promoting the study, understanding and enjoyment of British and Irish botany. They have a huge number of resources on their website - <https://bsbi.org/>

Rivers Trust

The Rivers Trust is the umbrella organisation for 60 local member Trusts, they are the only group of environmental charities in the UK and Ireland, dedicated to protecting and improving river environments for the benefit of people and wildlife. Member Trusts are independent community-led charitable organisations, recognised as important deliverers of education, water management advice and practical conservation work, from source to sea – improving land, rivers and wetlands at a catchment or river basin scale. Find your local Trust here <https://www.riverstrust.org/>

Inland Fisheries Ireland guidance

Please see below a graphic that shows the geographical layout of Inland Fisheries Ireland and lists the Directors in each River Basin District. If ecologists have any queries about the appropriateness of any of the proposals contained in their biodiversity plans, IFI's local environmental officers can be contacted at the phone numbers below.



Inland Fisheries Ireland, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal

Milton Matthews +353 (0)71 9851435

Inland Fisheries Ireland, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

David McInerney + 353 (0)52 6180 055

Inland Fisheries Ireland, Dublin, Dublin

Brian Beckett +353 (0)1 2787022

Inland Fisheries Ireland, Limerick, Limerick

Amanda Mooney +353 (0)61 300238

Inland Fisheries Ireland, Macroom, Co. Cork

Sean Long +353 (0)26 41222

Inland Fisheries Ireland, Galway, Galway

John Conneely +353 (0)91 563118

Inland Fisheries Ireland, Ballina

John Conneely +353 (0)96 22788



These are some of the resources you may need when carrying out your Community Biodiversity Action Plan & Project however each group will also have many more resources that are specific to their own area such as Tidy Towns, Men's Sheds, Green Schools, Heritage in Schools Programmes, 3rd Level Institutions, Local businesses and landowners (e.g. Coillte), Fishing Clubs, Church Groups, Local History Groups (place names, fishing hole names, field names – logainm.ie, placenames.ie).



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The objective of the grant funding is to enhance biodiversity in communities throughout the country by combining the expertise of qualified ecologists with the skills, experience and enthusiasm of local community groups.

The community group/organisation has the responsibility of ensuring the requirements of the funding are carried out effectively which includes the Community Biodiversity Action Plan & Project engaging and facilitating the knowledge transfer to the local community. Ecologists should **also engage in community outreach including;**

- Delivering a minimum of **one public talk/workshop/ event** as a part of the project, with promotional support provided by the community group.
- Initial walkover meeting and final walkover meeting (post-data collection to bring CBAPP to life), these can be lined up with other events e.g. Heritage Week, Biodiversity Week, Tree Week, etc.
- Involve communities in **data collection**, support them to engage in **species ID** and use **citizen science** methods to collate and share data with National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- Use these opportunities to clearly communicate with each other in order to manage expectations about the project and answer questions. Community groups should be prepared for the meetings and encourage as many members of the local community to participate or be prepared to disperse the information afterwards.
- Ensure communities learn as much about their local biodiversity as possible by helping them to understand the **qualities of habitats** in their local area and how they interact, the **unique challenges/opportunities** in their area, and the **level of complexity/collaboration/investment** needed to address them.
- Ecologists should ensure to support the groups so that they are not reliant on the ecologist to deliver the plan. Involve local champions wherever possible.
- A minimum of one public talk/workshop/walk/event as a part of the project, with promotional support provided by the community group. Events can be themed to add interest/value, e.g. history/place names, folklore, foraging, oral histories, etc. Build it around the community's interests.
- Support communities to **make contact** with NPWS Rangers, Local Authority Heritage Officers and LAWPRO Community Water Officers to raise awareness and/or involve them in the project.



In 2021 we received a huge level of interest in this grant round from across the country with over 170 applications with nearly a million euro requested. Community Foundation Ireland supported the fund with €200,000 from our Social Change Fund and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht donated a further €100,000 and we were also funded €69,000 by a private donor. Overall we were able to provide funding to 56 successful applicants with a minimum of one in each 26 county receiving support.

Contacts

For any issues regarding this document or information regarding the Environment and Nature Fund please contact Community Foundation Ireland by email at info@foundation.ie. Or if you have any other queries please don't hesitate to contact Jason Coulter at jcoulter@foundation.ie