

South Dublin County Council

CLIMATE CHANGE NEWSLETTER

08/2022

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS EDITION

Nature-based solutions are critical in climate change adaptation and mitigation; they can play an important role not only for biodiversity and ecosystems, flood prevention and carbon sequestration, but also in temperature regulation, erosion prevention, and filtering pollutants from the air and water.



Protecting and Enhancing our Green Infrastructure

A Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy was incorporated into Chapter 4 of the recently produced South Dublin County Council County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The GI Strategy provides an overarching vision to “Promote the development of an integrated GI network for South Dublin County working with and enhancing existing biodiversity and natural heritage, improving our resilience to climate change and enabling the role of GI in delivering sustainable communities to provide environmental, economic and social benefits”.

In South Dublin we manage over 1,700 hectares of parks and open spaces – these are composed of natural, semi-natural and artificial parks and open spaces across the county. In developing the GI Strategy, a more detailed assessment of

the existing green infrastructure in the County was carried out. The County’s parks, rivers, waterbodies and habitats were mapped in detail – an exercise which highlights our existing strengths and potential opportunities to further expand and enhance the County’s GI network.

The Strategy identifies five key themes which will help deliver a stronger, more resilient GI Network:

- Biodiversity
- Sustainable Water Management
- Climate Resilience
- Recreation & Amenity (Human Health & Wellbeing)
- Landscape, Natural, Cultural & Built Heritage

The strategy recognises that although there are variations in the distribution and quality of the Green Infrastructure across the county, the assets come together to create a complex integrated network of components whose total value is greater than the sum of their parts.

To deliver an effective GI Strategy South Dublin cannot work in isolation. While the South Dublin GI Strategy identifies core areas, corridors and stepping-stones as essential key components delivering an effective GI Strategy, it is vital we work with the adjoining local authorities of Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council, Wicklow County Council and Kildare County Council.

To read the Green Infrastructure Strategy please go to Chapter 4 of the South Dublin County Council County Development Plan 2022 – 2028. <https://www.sdcc.ie/en/devplan2022/stage-2-draft-plan/chapter-4-green-infrastructure/>

Pollinator Plan Update

The South Dublin County Council Pollinator Action Plan 2021-2025 sets out a broad range of actions that the Council has committed to implementing up to 2025. All actions are based on reversing the decline in bee populations in Ireland.

Works carried out on our meadows in previous years have started to pay dividends with spectacular displays of wildflowers across the county right throughout the summer period.

In 2021 145 hectares of parkland were managed as natural meadows. Natural meadows operate on a reduced mowing regime. This typically involves mowing and collecting the grass just once a year, allowing wildflowers to bloom and set seed, aiding bees, other pollinators, nesting birds, and wildlife by providing food and shelter.

The cutting and removal of clippings reduces nutrient levels in the soil particularly nitrogen, encouraging wildflowers to naturally colonise the area. Not cutting the meadows at all would add to the fertility of the soil, encouraging grasses to grow which suppress the wildflowers in the seedbank.

In Spring, half the meadows are cut, leaving the rest to grow over summer. In the autumn, we allow the wildflowers to seed before they are cut and collected. Meanwhile the late summer meadows are left uncut over winter to provide hibernation habitats for insects and seeds for winter birds.

This carefully managed and sustainable way of increasing biodiversity promotes wildflower habitats and food sources for pollinators. Ongoing botanical and insect surveys are part of our natural meadow management and will guide future management practices.

In 2021 the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan was incorporated across Council plans including the new County Development Plan. In addition to the natural meadow management, additional planting included pollinator friendly bulbs on roadsides, perennial planting schemes, ornamental wildflower meadows at prominent locations across county, and the planting of fruit and other trees



recommended in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Communication of pollinator friendly work was ongoing with the implementation of a Communications Strategy, the publishing of our Pollinator Plan booklet and its distribution in schools and to community groups, and the production of a video to promote the plan.

New grassland management techniques and the sustainable use of meadow cuttings were and will continue to be investigated, while funding was given to research on alternatives to herbicides for public spaces and to the National Tidy Towns Pollinator Award prize fund.

This year we are expanding the natural meadowland managed area to 163 hectares. Urban planting will continue to transition to pollinator supporting methods, with pollinator planting to be included in some urban roundabouts this year. Research will investigate maintenance regimes most suitable for introducing meadows into smaller open space areas.

Communication and engagement will remain central with additional training videos for groups interested in improving their areas for pollinators. Policy will continue to underline the actions through the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Sustainable Drainage Systems guidance document, and the Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of the forthcoming County Development Plan 2022-2028.



Biodiversity Action Plan Update

Biodiversity refers to the variety of plant and wildlife on earth and the wide variety of places where all of the above interact with each other. Here in Ireland, the biodiversity crisis is showing us the damage caused to the natural world through human activities.

South Dublin County Council's Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-2026 outlines a series of objectives and actions that aim to achieve the protection and enhancement of the County's biodi-

versity, while ensuring that the County's residents, businesses, and visitors continue to enjoy and benefit from the many services that nature provides. The Plan contains actions under three headings: Getting to Know What We Have; Telling the Story; and Leading the Way.

Collecting ecological data by surveying what exists in the County provides the evidence base for informed biodiversity decision-making. For example, final baseline surveys for pollinator sites (action 1.1iii of the Plan) in Tymon Park, Waterstown Park, and Lucan Demesne are revealing a very encouraging diversity of plants and pollinating insects, supporting the previous policy of making space for nature and the future rationale for continuing to do so.

Current grass maintenance programmes are maximising this diversity by reducing mowing frequencies, thereby allowing populations of flowers and insects to complete their life cycles and grow in number. Our grass maintenance schedule will reflect the results of the baseline surveys to ensure the optimal approach, helping us to achieve actions in 'leading the way'.

In 2022, action 1.1iv of the plan will begin, with the undertaking of a phase 1 desktop wetland survey of the county, in order to further identify sites for study. Managing the spread of non-native invasive species (action 1.1ii) is an ongoing response, helping native biodiversity to take its place. Meanwhile, communication of our work to the public continues to ensure the rationale for our

approach is clear.

Species-richness also keeps habitats functioning in a healthy manner. This builds resilience in nature to the challenges that climate change will bring. The objective, therefore, is to retain, enhance, and maintain a rich diversity of species in the natural world.

The growing baseline of biodiversity data for Tymon Park will be used to calculate the park's capacity to capture and store carbon. This information will further demonstrate the benefits of ecology in our public parks and will highlight the role biodiversity will play in helping us to adapt to climate change.



New South Dublin Climate Website

In June South Dublin County Council launched our new Climate Action website: www.southdublinclimate.ie

The website aims to inform the citizens of South Dublin on climate change by providing practical solutions to reducing carbon emissions at individual and local levels, with tailored information for individuals and families, businesses and for anyone active in the community.

It also aims to inform and educate the citizens of South Dublin on the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2019 – 2024, providing transparency on the execution of the plan and progress towards achieving our targets.

News in Brief

New SuDS Guidance Documents for Developers and Householders Published

In the last edition of this newsletter, we highlighted how Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can manage urban runoff by allowing a more natural surface water drainage regime to be implemented.

This year South Dublin County Council published two SuDS guidance documents:

- The Sustainable Drainage Explanatory Design and Evaluation Guide is primarily intended for those designing SuDS for new developments within South Dublin. The Guide supports the planning process, where SuDS schemes which form part of planning applications are assessed by South Dublin County Council against the Policies and Standards set out in the South Dublin County Development Plan and the requirements outlined by the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study.
- The Householders Guide to Sustainable Drainage aims to help residents of the county incorporate SuDS into their own gardens.

Both guides can be viewed on our new climate change website. <https://www.sdcc.ie/en/climate-action/what-we-are-doing/flood-resilience/flood-resilience-actions/flood-risk-management/implement-and-demonstrate-suds-guidelines-in-own-buildings-and-land-sdzs-and-laps.html>

Launch of Climate Conversation 2022

The Climate Conversation 2022 is now open. People across the country are invited to have their say on how we can all play our part in securing our sustainable future. Climate Conversation 2022 will feed into, and shape, the next iteration of the national Climate Action Plan.

People can, using an online questionnaire, give their views on shopping; reuse and recycling; food and food waste; heating our

homes and sustainable living; our local environment; and climate change. People can also have their say on how actions in these areas by individuals, communities and Government can help us realise the ambition of becoming a carbon-neutral society. <https://climateconversations.citizenspace.com/decc/climate-conversations-2022/>

You don't need to be a climate expert for your opinion to be valued, the goal being to hear from as many people across the country as possible. The Climate Jargon Buster is a useful resource to use in tandem with the questionnaire. <https://climatejargonbuster.ie/>

The closing date for submissions is 5.30pm 9 September 2022.

Dublin Climate Action Week

The second Dublin Climate Action Week will take place from Monday 12th to Saturday 17th September 2022. The week, which is being organised and delivered by the partnership of South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Codema – Dublin's Energy Agency and the Dublin Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), will showcase the ongoing efforts, ambitions and the collaborative approach of the four Dublin local authorities in addressing climate action.

A number of regional and local events covering a range of climate topics will be delivered as part of Dublin Climate Action Week 2022 and the full programme of events will be available in August on the DCAW22 website www.dublinclimateactionweek.ie.



The banner features a blue and white geometric design on the left and a scenic photograph of a lake and hills on the right. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout.

12 – 17 September 2022

DUBLIN CLIMATE ACTION WEEK

To find out more visit www.dublinclimateactionweek.ie
Join us at **#DCAW22**

**Local Authorities
Leading on Climate Action**

- Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council
- Codema
Dublin Energy Agency
- CARO
12 – 17 September 2022
- dlr
Comhairle Contae na hÉireann
- Comhairle Contae Fingal
Fingal County Council
- Comhairle Contae Átha Cliath
South Dublin County Council

Taking Action, Together