SDCC Páirceanna Parks

Pollinator Action Plan

2026 - 2030

Read Online: sdcc.ie

For illustration reference see www.pollinators.ie

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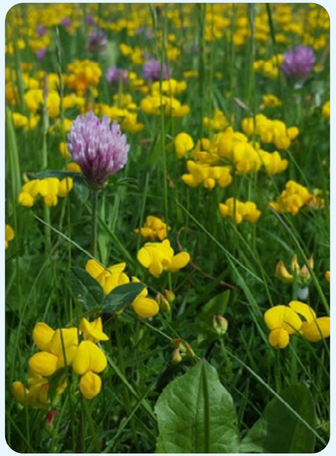
Vision

South Dublin will be a connected and resilient county where pollinator- and biodiversity-friendly habitats support nature, strengthen climate resilience, and enhance quality of life for all who live, work and do business here.

This Vision sets out the long-term ambition that guides all actions within the Pollinator Action Plan 2026–2030

Bee Orchid - *Ophrys apifera*



Red Clover - *Trifolium pratense*
Birds - foot trefoil - *Lotus corniculatus*

Common-spotted Orchid - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*
Red Clover - *Trifolium pratense*
Meadow Buttercup - *Ranunculus acris*

Foreword

Pamela Kearns | Mayor

Colm Ward | Chief Executive

Foreword

As Mayor of South Dublin, I am very proud to launch South Dublin County Council's Pollinator Action Plan 2026–2030. Based on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, this document outlines 30 tailored actions that South Dublin County Council has committed to implementing within our county in support of pollinators. We have adopted and tailored these actions to create a focused and achievable programme for our county, one that reflects both our responsibilities and our ambitions for a healthier, more biodiverse South Dublin.

Pollinators are essential to the wellbeing of our environment, our food systems, and our communities. Yet in Ireland today, one-third of our bee species are threatened with extinction. This decline is driven by the loss of food sources and safe nesting habitats across our landscapes. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan reminds us that reversing this trend requires collective effort, from farmers and local authorities to schools, community groups, businesses, and residents. It is only by working together that we can create an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive.

South Dublin County Council has been supporting pollinators on public land for many years. We have also worked closely with community groups, residents' associations, and schools to raise awareness of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and to encourage pollinator-friendly actions at a local level. This new Pollinator Action Plan strengthens that work by setting out 30 targeted actions that we believe are both meaningful and achievable over the lifetime of the plan. It represents our commitment to protecting biodiversity, enhancing habitats, and addressing the rapid decline in pollinator populations.

Alongside the Council's work in parks and open spaces, our communities have a vital role to play. The success and positive impact of this plan depend on shared stewardship. If residents or community groups are interested in improving their areas for pollinators, whether through reduced mowing, bulb planting, or other supportive measures we encourage them to contact the SDCC Customer Care system Customer Care - SDCC.

Together, we can ensure that South Dublin County remains a place where nature is valued, pollinators are protected, and future generations inherit a landscape rich in life, colour, and possibility.

Cllr. Pamela Kearns
Mayor South Dublin County

Summary of Key Achievements 2021 - 2025

210 ha of **meadows mapped** and managed (+51% above 139 ha target) this is made up of 190 ha long flowering (198 sites) and 20 ha short flowering (53 sites)

Year-on-year **biodiversity improvements** confirmed through ongoing surveys and monitoring

Cut-and-collect framework established for **meadow management**

Native wildflower seed harvested from existing meadows and **resown to enhance** new or less established sites

Collaboration with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to produce a **"How To Guide for Local Authorities"**

Tymon Park: **Pollinator Award Winner** (2019, 2022) and Highly Commended (2023, 2024). **Waterstown Park came highly commended** in 2024 and 2025.

Regular **biodiversity & pollinator walks** with Park Rangers

Current meadow practices **prevent 116 tonnes of CO_2 emissions** annually

Eco - tourism promoted through the Great Grasslands of Ireland initiative

Glyphosate - free parks, playgrounds, and public gardens since July 2017

14 mini-woodlands created with 30,030 native trees (including 900 in Sean Walsh Park pilot)

7.5 million **pollinator - friendly bulbs** planted across 90 sites (2.51 ha)

1,720 km of hedgerows mapped and over 400km of hedgerows are being managed; restoration work ongoing

Stakeholder walks and talks hosted to encourage **local participation**

Measures introduced have had a **positive impact** on both biodiversity and community wellbeing

Tree canopy: **14% coverage** (3,124 ha) with **932,500** trees (125,000 on Council lands)

Social media campaign generated over **2 million interactions**

Active engagement with residents, **environmental groups**, and sports clubs on new pollinator locations

Community **Hedgerow Restoration** Programme to launch and trial in 2026

All new landscape schemes include **pollinator - friendly planting**

Pollinator webpage launched with meadow maps, educational resources, videos, and QR linked signage

"Protect what we have - Identify and protect existing areas that are already good for pollinators."

SDCC Pollinator Action Plan 2026 to 2030
follows on from the success of the Pollinator Action Plan 2021-2025

SDCC Pollinator Action Plan 2026 to 2030

Purpose of this Plan

This Pollinator Action Plan sets out how South Dublin County Council will protect and enhance habitats for pollinators across Council owned land and through the Council's wider roles in planning, design, operations, and community engagement. It is a practical plan for the period 2026 – 2030, building on the achievements of the previous SDCC Pollinator Plan (2021 to 2025) and aligning with the objectives of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. The Plan focuses on actions that can be delivered through Council functions, supported by monitoring, public communication, and partnership working.

Strategic Context and Alignment

Irish pollinators are in decline, driven primarily by habitat loss and reduced availability of food and nesting resources across the landscape. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan provides the national framework for coordinated action and sets out a shared approach across public bodies, landowners, communities, and other sectors. SDCC's Plan aligns with that framework and translates its objectives into local delivery on public land, with particular emphasis on habitat management, reduced chemical reliance, nature-based land management, and public participation. The Council recognises that pollinator measures deliver wider co-benefits, including biodiversity recovery, climate resilience, improved landscape quality, and community wellbeing.

Legislative and Policy Framework

Delivery of this Plan is guided by national and EU policy commitments, including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021–2025, the National Biodiversity Action Plan, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, and the Local Authority Climate Action Plan. At county level, the South Dublin County Development Plan includes policies on biodiversity, green infrastructure, habitat protection and climate adaptation. This Plan supports these obligations by embedding pollinator - friendly principles in land use planning, public realm design, operations and long term management.

Why Pollinators Matter

Importantly, managing habitats with bees in mind delivers benefits far beyond bees alone. Many of the actions that support bees, such as managing diverse native wildflowers, reducing pesticide use, and providing undisturbed nesting areas, also create favourable conditions for a wide range of other pollinators, including butterflies, hoverflies, moths, beetles, and other beneficial insects. By taking a pollinator-friendly approach to habitat management, we strengthen entire pollinator communities, enhancing biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, and the long-term health of landscapes.

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Pollinator-friendly parks and public spaces also deliver important benefits for people. Diverse, nature-rich landscapes enhance visual appeal and create more pleasant places to walk, rest, and spend time, supporting physical activity, mental wellbeing, and social connection. Access to biodiverse green spaces has been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, and support overall public health, particularly in urban areas. Meadow areas, trees, and flowering plants also provide shade and cooling during hot weather, help to manage surface water during heavy rainfall, and reduce noise and air pollution. By designing and managing public spaces with pollinators in mind, councils create healthier, more resilient environments that support both biodiversity and quality of life for residents and visitors.

Pollinators are a critical component of functioning ecosystems and food production. Approximately 78% of European flowering plants rely on animal pollination, and the majority of fruit, vegetable, and seed crops depend to some degree on insect pollinators.

In Ireland, pollinators make a significant and measurable contribution to food production and the wider economy. Beyond agriculture, pollinators play a fundamental role in maintaining healthy landscapes. By enabling plant reproduction, they support the availability of seeds and fruits that sustain birds, mammals, and other wildlife, and they contribute to nutrient cycling and soil health.

Pollinator Habitats

Pollinator - friendly habitats, such as meadows, hedgerows, wetlands and woodlands, also form a core part of green infrastructure by linking parks, rivers, and open spaces into connected ecological networks. These habitats improve landscape resilience by helping to regulate microclimates, reduce surface water runoff, support carbon storage, and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events such as heatwaves and intense rainfall. South Dublin is a densely populated and rapidly developing county where competition for land is high and public open space is under constant pressure. In South Dublin, urbanisation, fragmentation of habitats, and intensive land management have historically reduced the availability of food and nesting resources for pollinators. For this reason, protecting and enhancing biodiversity through how land is planned, designed, and maintained is essential to maintaining ecological balance and quality of life for residents.

As a local authority, South Dublin County Council has a unique and influential role in shaping these outcomes. The Council directly manages significant areas of parks, open spaces, green corridors, cemeteries, road verges, and public realm spaces, and it also influences development through planning policy, design standards, procurement, and capital projects. This places SDCC in a strong position to embed pollinator-friendly practices across its operations, ensuring that biodiversity considerations become routine, consistent, and long-term rather than reactive or project-specific.

Economic Contribution of Pollinators

The economic contribution of pollination by wild bees was assessed as £1,800 or €2,400 per hectare. The National Biodiversity Data Centre outlines that pollinators contribute €53 million to the Irish economy each year. (NBDC estimate)

Are Pollinators Declining in Ireland?

More than half of Ireland's bee species have undergone substantial declines in their numbers since 1980. Three species have become extinct. One third of Ireland's 98 bee species are threatened with extinction. Six species are critically endangered, ten are endangered, and fourteen are vulnerable. Overall, three species are extinct, forty two have declined by more than 50 per cent, eleven have declined by 30 to 50 per cent, thirty six are considered stable, and nine have expanded.

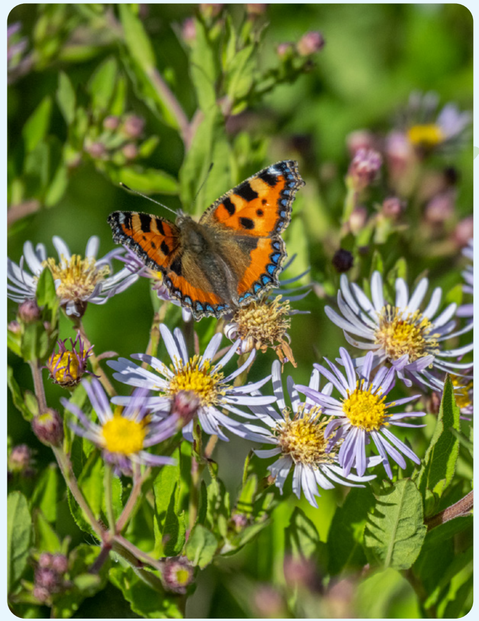
What Pollinators Need

Pollinators need two basic things: a continuous supply of food and safe places to nest and shelter. Food is provided by pollen and nectar from a wide range of flowering plants, and it must be available throughout the season, particularly from early spring through autumn. Nesting and shelter needs vary by species but include long grass, bare ground, hedgerows, cavities in wood, and undisturbed areas free from pesticide exposure.

Common Cowslip - *Primula veris*

A key risk for pollinators is the "hunger gap", particularly in spring when there may be insufficient flowering resources. Addressing this requires a stronger emphasis on native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and appropriate planting schemes that provide forage across the full season, as well as management regimes that protect nesting and overwintering habitats.

Pyramidal Orchid - *Anacamptis pyramidalis*
Six-spot Burnet - *Zygaena filipendulae*



Michaelmas Daisy - *Symphyotrichum spp.*
Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly - *Aglais urticae*

Bees

A Queen Buff-Tailed Bumblbee - *Bombus terrestris*

Bumblebees

In early spring, queens are establishing nests. In the early days of the nest it is estimated that a Bombus terrestris queen may have to visit as many as 6,000 flowers per day to get enough nectar to maintain the heat needed to brood her eggs. During spring and summer, nests are growing and workers are active. In autumn, queens are fattening up ready for hibernation. Bombus terrestris queens need to weigh at least 0.6g to successfully hibernate and emerge the following spring.

Solitary Bees

Sixty-two species, representing approximately 80 per cent of Ireland's wild bees, are mining bees that nest in bare ground or south or east facing banks of exposed soil, sand, clay, or peat.

Progress to Date and Baseline

SDCC has established a programme of pollinator habitat creation and management, delivered primarily through Parks and Public Realm operations and supported by monitoring, data collection, and partnership working.

At the time of publication, the Council manages approximately 210 hectares of meadows across South Dublin, exceeding the 139 hectare target set in the 2019 – 2025 Plan. This includes 190 hectares of long flowering meadows across 198 sites and 20 hectares of short flowering meadows across 53 sites. These areas are mapped, actively managed, and maintained using a cut and collect regime designed to reduce soil fertility, increase plant diversity, and improve habitat quality for pollinators.

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>> Continued Progress to Date and Baseline

Year on year ecological monitoring and site surveys have been undertaken to track changes in habitat condition and inform management decisions. Locally harvested native wildflower seed is collected from established "donor" meadows and used to enhance species poor or recently disturbed sites, strengthening ecological connectivity and retaining locally adapted plant genetics.

The Council is glyphosate free in all parks, playgrounds, and public gardens, and overall herbicide use across maintenance operations has continued to decline. This reflects a sustained shift towards mechanical and manual weed control, with chemical use limited to targeted situations where necessary.

Additional habitat measures delivered to date include the planting of approximately 7.5 million pollinator-friendly bulbs across 90 sites (covering 2.51 hectares), and the mapping of 1,720 kilometres of hedgerows, 400km of which are managed hedgerows. Tree canopy now covers approximately 14 per cent of South Dublin, with an estimated 932,500 trees in total in private and public land, including around 125,000 on Council-owned land. Within the first few months of 2026, during the preparation of this document, the number of Mini Woodlands increased from 14 in 2025, with 30,030 native trees planted, to 19 Mini Woodlands and a total of 44,200 native trees planted by the end of April 2026.

Tymon Park has received national recognition through Pollinator Awards in 2019 and 2022 and was highly commended in 2023 and 2024. Waterstown Park has also been recognised through the Pollinator Awards, receiving highly commended status in 2024 and 2025. SDCC Park Rangers regularly deliver Pollinator and Biodiversity Walks to increase public awareness and understanding of habitat management practices.

Meadow management also delivers climate co-benefits. Current practices are estimated to avoid approximately 116 tonnes of CO_2 emissions per year through reduced mowing and associated fuel use, alongside increased carbon storage in soils and vegetation.

Tymon Park Long Flowering Meadow

Desired Outcomes 2026-2030

The Council's desired outcomes for the Pollinator Action Plan 2026–2030 are the creation and protection of a connected, resilient network of pollinator- and biodiversity-friendly habitats across South Dublin.

By 2030, the Council will aim to have a more extensive and better connected meadow network, improved habitat quality in species-poor areas, protected and strengthened hedgerows as key ecological corridors, more pollinator-supportive tree and planting schemes, and, where possible, a greater area of reduced-mow and low-intervention land providing nesting and overwintering habitat.

Waterstown Park

Scope and Where this Plan Applies

This Plan applies to Council owned and Council managed lands and will be delivered through the Council's core functions. Key land types include parks and open spaces, road verges and green corridors, cemeteries, housing estate greens and public amenity areas, SuDS and drainage features, civic buildings and community facilities, and partnership sites such as schools and community gardens.

The approach is distributed across the county rather than concentrated in a small number of flagship sites, ensuring that pollinators can move through a connected network of habitats.

Delivery Approach

Delivery of this Plan will be integrated into SDCC's day to day operations, maintenance contracts, capital projects, and design standards so that pollinator - friendly practices become standard across Council work rather than dependent on individual projects or teams. Implementation will be coordinated across relevant sections of the Council, including Parks and Public Realm, Planning, Climate Action, Roads, Water

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>> Continued Delivery Approach

Services, and Community, to ensure a consistent approach from design through to maintenance.
The Council will continue to work in partnership with national bodies, local communities, schools, and Tidy Towns groups to share knowledge, align efforts, and support practical action on the ground.

Staff will be supported through targeted training, clear operational guidance, and practical tools so that pollinator-friendly land management can be delivered consistently across all sites and services.
Pollinator - friendly principles will be embedded within relevant planning policies, development management processes, and design standards, including requirements for hedgerow retention, native planting, and the integration of green infrastructure in new developments where feasible.

Where appropriate, pollinator - friendly requirements will be reflected in maintenance specifications, contract briefs, and capital project design stages.
Overall coordination of this Plan will sit within the Parks and Public Realm Section, with delivery supported through cross departmental collaboration with Planning, Climate Action, Roads, Water Services, and Community.

Griffeen Valley Park

Mapping, Monitoring, and Reporting

The Council will monitor delivery of this Plan in a proportionate and evidence based way, focusing on measurable outcomes rather than activity alone. Meadows, hedgerows, mini woodlands, wetlands, and other pollinator features will continue to be mapped and updated within SDCC's GIS systems, with key datasets shared annually with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Progress on this Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Corkagh Park

Willow Structure in Tymon Park

Climate, Chemical Use, and Responsible Land Management

The Council will treat biodiversity protection and climate action as integrated objectives. Meadow expansion and improved habitat management will continue to reduce mowing frequency where appropriate, increasing carbon storage and reducing operational emissions. The Council will refine and apply methods to quantify these benefits and report findings to inform future land management decisions. Chemical use will be minimised wherever practical through the prioritisation of mechanical and manual weed control.

Engagement, Education, and Public Communication

Public understanding and support are essential for the successful delivery of this Plan, particularly where changes in land management are visible, such as reduced mowing and the creation of meadows. The Council will continue to use clear signage, consistent branding, and accessible online content to explain its approach. The SDCC Pollinator webpage, alongside the Council's social media channels, will remain the primary platforms for public updates and information.

Common Blue Butterfly - *Polyommatus icarus*
Birds - foot trefoil - *Lotus cornicula*

Hoverfly - *Syrphids*
Common Hogweed - *Heracleum sphondylium*

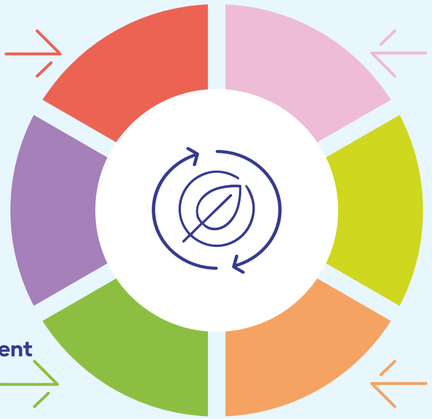
How the Community Can Help

Residents, schools and community groups can support pollinators by reducing pesticide use, planting native flowering species, leaving areas of long grass, protecting hedgerows, creating small wildflower patches and participating in SDCC biodiversity programmes. These simple actions strengthen local habitats and help maintain a connected network of pollinator - friendly spaces."

Actions 2026 – 2030

The actions below set out what the Council will deliver over the period of this Plan. They are grouped under strategic themes to support implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

30 Actions Over Six Themes



Habitat Protection, Restoration & Creation
Actions 1 - 9

Engagement, Education & Awareness
Actions 25 - 30

Policy, Planning & Governance
Actions 10 - 12

Mapping, Monitoring & Data
Actions 21 - 24

Climate, Land Management & Operations
Actions 13 - 16

Demonstration Projects & Good Practice
Actions 17 - 20

Tymon Park – species rich meadow

Actions 1-9

Habitat Protection, Restoration & Creation

Seed collection Tymon Park

1. Manage, restore and protect semi natural habitats and their native plant species on Council owned land, enhancing biodiversity and supporting pollinator populations. Including Long Flowering Meadows, Short Flowering Meadows and Bulb Planting Areas.

2. Explore opportunities to expand and strengthen SDCC's meadow network by 5% over the lifetime of the Plan by identifying suitable new locations for long-flowering and short flowering meadows.

3. Undertake countywide surveys to identify species poor meadows and recently disturbed soils and assess their suitability for donor seed collection. This will boost native plant diversity, improve habitat quality, and strengthen ecological connectivity across the county.

4. Undertake baseline surveys of newly established Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICWs), and Attenuation Basins. Repeat surveys every two years, and collate monitoring data to guide management.

Actions 1-9

Habitat Protection, Restoration & Creation

5. Protect, restore and enhance existing mature hedgerows for biodiversity, connectivity and cultural heritage, while also planting new hedgerows where appropriate to strengthen ecological corridors.

6. Ensure all SDCC operations, projects and new developments promote stepping stone habitats and habitat variety, including native tree planting where possible, to support pollinator diversity and wildlife year round, with planting schemes designed to provide successional forage and shelter for pollinators.

7. Increase the proportion of pollinator - friendly perennial and seasonal planting in public displays, including hanging baskets, planters and ornamental beds.

8. Explore opportunities to identify areas of Council-owned land that may be suitable to be left uncut or subject to reduced mowing regimes for a minimum period of three years, with the potential to provide foraging resources, nesting and over-wintering shelter for pollinators and other beneficial wildlife, while supporting improved habitat connectivity and ecosystem function.

Tymon Park Aerial View

9. Where appropriate identify, designate and manage a network of Nature Nodes, areas protected and enhanced for biodiversity where natural processes take precedence and management is minimal, across suitable Council owned land, to support pollinators, wider biodiversity and long-term habitat resilience.

Actions 10 - 12

Policy, Planning & Governance

Native Crab Apple – *Malus sylvestris*

10 Where appropriate embed pollinator - friendly principles, targets and actions across all relevant Council strategies, policies, plans, and design standards, including those relating to architecture, planning, and governance.

11 Ensure hedgerow retention, restoration and enhancement are embedded within planning policy and development management through the South Dublin County Council Green Space Factor, which assigns a high weighting to preserved hedgerows and prioritises their protection, enhancement and pollinator value as high quality green infrastructure in all applicable developments.

12 Ensure that, where possible, a minimum of 75% of ornamental planting in new public realm, park and infrastructure projects consists of pollinator - friendly species.

Actions 13 - 16

Climate, Land Management & Operations

13 Explore opportunities to better understand the wider environmental benefits of meadow management, including reduced mowing and changes in soil health, carbon sequestration and incorporate these insights into future land management planning.

14 Continue to explore opportunities for anaerobic digestion as a sustainable method of processing organic waste and generating biogas.

15 Herbicides are not used in public parks, gardens and playgrounds; where herbicide use elsewhere cannot be avoided, the Council will continue to apply best practice and prioritise mechanical and manual weed control.

16 Targeted herbicide use against invasive species can be a responsible environmental action. Removing invasive plants allows native species to recover, resulting in healthier habitats and improved support for pollinators, while avoiding blanket or routine pesticide application.

Grass collection Tymon Park

Actions 17 - 20

Demonstration Projects & Good Practice

Hedgerow restoration in Jobstown Park

17 Fund and deliver demonstrator pollinator projects on Council owned land, including the expansion of mini woodland projects in partnership with community groups and schools.

18 Promote and integrate natural solitary bee nesting habitats within parks and green spaces by incorporating features such as deadwood piles, untreated logs and drilled timber as part of park management, hedgerow planting and mini-woodland projects, and support community groups to adopt similar approaches through practical guidance and workshops.

19 Promote pollinator positive seasonal land management practices, including participation in initiatives such as Bulbs Not Bonfires, to protect overwintering pollinators.

20 Explore the feasibility of developing and trialling a pilot dispersed orchard network as a demonstrator pollinator habitat project on Council-owned land, beginning with selected National Schools participating in, or opting into, the Junior Pollinator Plan (All-Ireland Pollinator Plan).

Actions 21 - 24

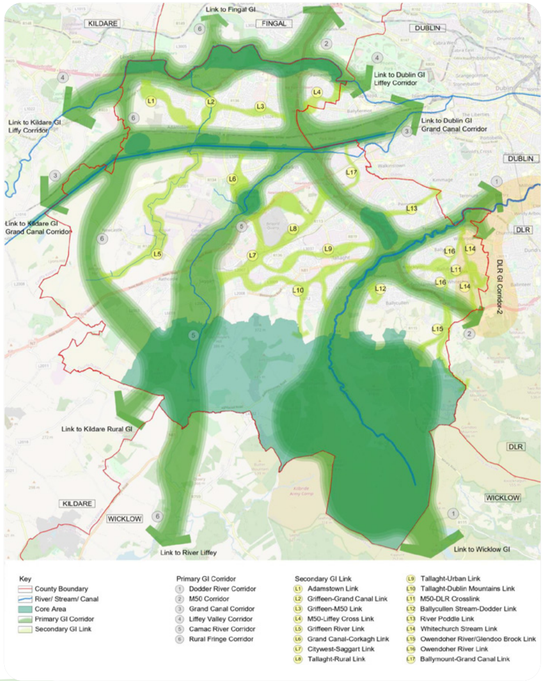
Mapping, Monitoring & Data

21 Develop an interactive Green Infrastructure Map for South Dublin identifying parks, rivers, wetlands, woodlands, meadows and hedgerows, illustrating how these habitats connect to support pollinator movement, and publish it on the SDCC Pollinator webpage with accessible public data layers.

22 Continue to develop and establish a standardised biodiversity recording and monitoring programme for meadows, mini woodlands, wetlands and pollinator features, uploading data annually to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The Council will also explore appropriate practices and technologies to support mapping, monitoring and the effective delivery of pollinator actions.

23 Map and monitor invasive species across the county to prevent them from outcompeting native plants that support pollinators. Update mapping data regularly to track progress on control and eradication efforts.

24 Map and monitor hedgerows across Council owned land and priority green infrastructure corridors to establish a comprehensive network database.



Actions 25 - 30

Engagement, Education & Awareness

25 Install signage identifying pollinator - friendly habitats on Council owned land, rolling out new pollinator branding as resources allow.

26 Continue to promote and distribute pollinator - friendly guidance to relevant sectors, including the development of video content highlighting pollinator initiatives and best practice.

27 Continue to promote and support the Junior Pollinator Plan in local schools by providing guidance and resources, facilitating expert-led talks, and delivering Park Ranger led visits to local parks to support pollinator education, in line with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Actions 24 - 30

Engagement, Education & Awareness

28 Continue to facilitate and deliver training sessions for staff, community groups and stakeholders on pollinators and practical actions to support them.

29 Continue to support a dedicated Pollinator Award for community groups within the Tidy Towns competition to recognise and encourage community led pollinator action.

30 Support community involvement in pollinator protection by sharing practical guidance, tools and learning opportunities that enable local action and long term stewardship.

Actions Homeowners Can Take for Pollinators

Recommended by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and South Dublin County Council

Dandelions - *Taraxacum officinale*

1) Recognise the Value of Small Spaces
The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan emphasises that gardens and private outdoor spaces can play an important role in creating a connected network of pollinator-friendly habitats across Ireland. Even small spaces, such as a backyard, balcony, or window box, can help by providing "pitstops" for pollinators, particularly in built-up areas where natural habitat may be limited. The Plan recommends focusing on three essentials for pollinators: food (nectar and pollen), shelter (nesting habitat), and safety from chemicals.

2) Protect What's Already There
A key recommendation is that residents should first identify and protect any areas already valuable for pollinators. Gardens often contain overlooked features that provide important food or shelter, such as naturally occurring wildflowers, flowering hedgerow plants, patches of long grass, dry stone walls, or small areas of bare soil. The Pollinator Plan advises that protecting these existing resources is one of the easiest and most effective first steps in supporting wild pollinators.

3) Mow Less and Let Flowers Bloom
The Plan also recommends reducing mowing in grassy areas to allow native wildflowers to return naturally over time. Closely mown lawns can offer very little nectar and pollen, whereas reduced mowing allows common native flowers, such as dandelions and clovers, to bloom and provide food for pollinators. Importantly, the Pollinator Plan notes that this approach is often preferable to sowing "wildflower" seed mixes, as naturally regenerating native wildflowers better support local pollinators and can be achieved simply by mowing less and managing clippings appropriately.

4) Plant for Pollinators Throughout the Year
In addition to changing mowing regimes, the Pollinator Plan encourages residents to undertake pollinator-friendly planting to ensure there are nectar- and pollen-rich flowers available throughout the pollinator season, helping to avoid "hunger gaps" when little is in bloom. This can be done at any scale, including through pots, window boxes, and hanging baskets, which are particularly useful where space is limited. The Plan further advises that single-flowered varieties are generally more beneficial than double-flowered forms, and that some commonly used ornamental plants may provide little nectar or pollen value.

5) Add Flowering Trees and Shrubs Where Possible
Where space allows, residents are encouraged to incorporate trees and shrubs that benefit pollinators, particularly native species that provide blossom early in the year when other food sources can be scarce. The Pollinator Plan highlights the value of native hedgerow and tree species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, rowan, willow, and crab apple, as well as the biodiversity benefits of maintaining flowering hedgerows and garden shrubs. These features not only support pollinators but can also enhance wider garden wildlife value.

6) Create Nesting and Shelter Areas
Another important focus is to provide nesting habitat for wild pollinators. The Pollinator Plan highlights that most bees do not live in hives; instead, many nest in the ground, in long grass, in hedgerows, and in cavities in wood or stonework. Residents can support these species by leaving some areas undisturbed, retaining long grass over winter, preserving walls or banks where appropriate, and providing small patches of bare soil for ground-nesting bees.

7) Avoid Pesticides and Chemicals
To protect pollinators and ensure their food sources remain safe, the Pollinator Plan strongly recommends eliminating or avoiding pesticide use in gardens, including insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides. These chemicals can harm pollinators directly and indirectly by contaminating nectar and pollen. The Plan also advises residents to be cautious when purchasing plants, as some may have been treated with pesticides even if marketed as "bee friendly."

8) Put Wild Pollinators First
The Pollinator Plan further advises that introducing honey bee hives should not be viewed as a primary biodiversity action, as Ireland's wild pollinators (bumblebees and solitary bees) are the groups most at risk. The Plan recommends that actions in gardens should prioritise supporting wild pollinators through habitat, food, and reduced chemical use, rather than adding managed honey bee hives as a default conservation measure.

9) Choose Bulbs The Pollinator Plan encourages residents to pledge their garden for pollinators and to record their actions on the National Biodiversity Data Centre's "Actions for Pollinators" mapping system. This helps build a visible network of pollinator-friendly gardens and supports the wider tracking of progress in creating landscapes where pollinators can survive and thrive.

Wood Anemone - *Anemone nemorosa*

Primrose - *Primula vulgaris*

Species Crocus - *Crocus vernus*

Snowdrops - *Galanthus nivalis*

Lesser Celandine - *Ficaria verna*

Common Knapweed - *Centaurea nigra*

10) Take the Pledge and Record Your Actions

Where homeowners are looking for recommended bulb mixes which benefit our pollinators, here are a few recommended species - early-flowering bulbs such as Crocus and Grape Hyacinth can provide vital resources, with Allium offering later summer forage. Additional pollinator-friendly bulb options highlighted by the Plan include Snowdrop, Winter Aconite, Wood Anemone, Snake's-head Fritillary, Camassia, Star-of-Bethlehem, and Autumn Crocus (choose single-flowered varieties). As with other ornamental planting, bulbs should be used in gardens and managed settings and not allowed to spread into natural or semi-natural habitats.

Avoid "wildflower seed mixes" as a substitute for native wildflowers, AIPP repeatedly warns these can do more harm than good and recommends encouraging native flowers by **reducing mowing** instead. More often than not these are not native seed to Ireland.

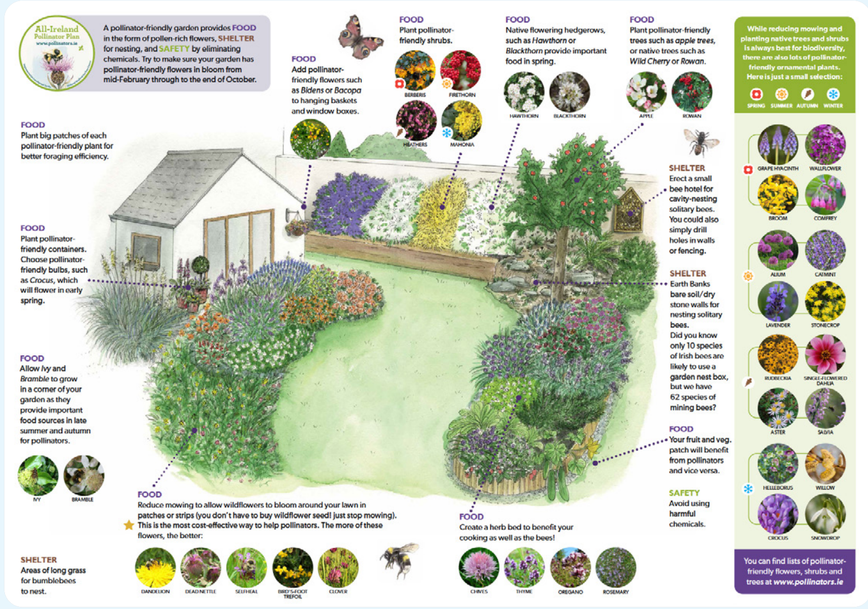
Hoverfly - *Scaeva selenitica*

Red Spider Beetle - *Ptinus tectus*

Black Honeybee - *pis mellifera mellifera*
Sweet Box in Springtime

Buff-Tailed Bumble Bee - *Bombus terrestris*
Blackberries in Autumn time

All Ireland Pollinator Plan extra resources for communities and homeowners



Pledge your Garden for pollinators » All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan – Pledge your Garden: Pledge your Garden for pollinators

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan – Gardens guidance: Gardens

National Biodiversity Data Centre – Actions for Pollinators map: Actions for Pollinators

Biodiversity Friendly Measures

The benefits of including biodiversity/ pollinator - friendly zones around our playgrounds and play spaces for children

Biodiversity-friendly measures are not confined to designated zones; they can also be integrated into playgrounds and their surrounding landscapes through appropriate management. In many cases, this can be achieved through relatively simple changes, such as adjusting mowing regimes so that grass is allowed to grow longer in suitable locations, enabling native flora to establish naturally over time.

Where play areas are located beside existing natural features, such as woodland edges or watercourses (for example, the playground at Tymon Park), these adjoining habitats can further strengthen the ecological value of the site and provide additional opportunities for children to experience nature close to where they play. SDCC sees this, where feasible, as an opportunity to support pollinators while also creating more nature-rich places that encourage children to play outdoors and build a meaningful connection with nature. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan highlights the value of community spaces that benefit both pollinators and people, including spaces that engage the senses and support biodiversity across the seasons.

Playground, Tymon Park

Evidence also indicates that outdoor and nature-based play supports children's physical activity, wellbeing, social development, and learning, with benefits linked to time spent outdoors and in green spaces. In practice, these outcomes can be supported by enhancing the "soft" landscape around play areas, such as boundaries, verges, adjacent woodland edges and, where present, water features, so that habitat is created along margins and in suitable adjoining spaces, while leaving core play surfacing and equipment unchanged.

SDCC believes there is space for both to co-exist together where it's possible. Measures may include pollinator-friendly planting using a mix of trees, shrubs, and flowering plants to provide nectar and pollen throughout the year, reducing mowing in appropriate margins to allow native wildflowers to return over time, and supporting nesting habitat by retaining small areas of long grass or patches of bare ground where suitable.

Conclusion

South Dublin County Council has made considerable progress in protecting and enhancing habitats for pollinators, engaging communities, and embedding biodiversity across our county. These achievements demonstrate our collective commitment to creating a greener, healthier, and more resilient South Dublin.

Meadow Cutting Schedule
SDCC manages long-flowering and short-flowering meadows on a programmed cutting schedule that reflects ecological best practice and the operational scale of the Council's work. Meadows are cut from early spring until the end of April, and cutting recommences from the first week of August onwards. This protects the peak flowering and seed-setting period while ensuring there is sufficient time for the Council's operations teams to complete works across a large and dispersed network of meadow sites. Short-flowering meadows where grass is typically cut 3 to 5 times per annum during the growing season to maintain their structure and encourage repeated flowering.

Acknowledgements
South Dublin County Council acknowledges the support of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan team, Elected Members, local community groups, Tidy Towns, schools, volunteers, and Council staff whose ongoing work and commitment make delivery of this Plan possible.

Playground, Tymon Park

Glossary of Key Terms

To support ease of reading and ensure consistent interpretation of the terms used throughout this Plan, a brief glossary is included. It brings together core ecological and land management terminology referred to in the actions and implementation sections, providing clear, accessible explanations without interrupting the main body of the document. These definitions reflect established usage within the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and SDCC's operational practices.

Pollinator: Animals such as bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths that transfer pollen between flowers and enable plant reproduction.

Bumblebee: A social bee species that forms small seasonal colonies, with queens establishing nests in spring.

Solitary Bee: A non-social bee that nests individually in soil, bare ground, cavities, or wood.

Long-Flowering Meadow: Grassland managed with one annual cut, cut in the spring or autumn typically.

Short-Flowering Meadow: Grass allowed to grow and generally cut 3 to 5 times per annum, allowing periodic flowering between cuts.

Cut-and-Collect: A mowing regime in which grass is cut and then removed to reduce soil fertility and increase wildflower diversity.

Reduced-Mow / No-Mow Area: Land left uncut for extended periods to provide food, nesting and overwintering habitat for pollinators.

Nature Node: An area designated for biodiversity where natural processes are prioritised and management is kept to a minimum.

Donor Meadow: A species-rich meadow used as a source of locally collected wildflower seed for habitat restoration.

Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW): A designed wetland system that naturally treats water while providing pollinator and wildlife habitat.

Native Species: Plant species that occur naturally in Ireland and support native biodiversity.

Hedgerow Network: Connected hedgerows that form ecological corridors supporting the movement of wildlife and pollinators.

Successional Planting: Planting designed to ensure continuous flowering and forage availability from early spring through late autumn.

Pollinator-Friendly Planting: Flowering plants selected specifically to provide nectar, pollen or shelter for pollinators.

Herbicide-Free Zone: Areas where chemical weed control is not used.

Targeted Herbicide Application: Minimal, controlled use of herbicides only where necessary, typically for managing invasive species.

Invasive Species: Non-native plants that spread aggressively and displace native species.

Ecological Corridor: A connected route of habitats that enables pollinators and other wildlife to move across the landscape.

Baseline Survey: The initial ecological assessment used to measure future habitat change.

Biodiversity Monitoring: Ongoing surveys that record habitat condition, plant diversity and species presence.

Carbon Sequestration: The process of capturing and storing carbon in vegetation and soils.

Community-Led Meadow: A pollinator habitat created or maintained by residents, schools or community groups.

Pollinator Awareness Signage: Signs explaining why areas are managed for pollinators, such as reduced mowing or meadow creation.

Junior Pollinator Plan: A school-focused version of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan encouraging student involvement.

SDCC Páirceanna Parks

Pollinator Action Plan

2026 - 2030

Dodder Valley Park

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