



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma  
Leitrim County Council



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council

# Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan for Co. Leitrim 2025 – 2030 Discussion Paper

October 2024

[www.leitrim.ie](http://www.leitrim.ie)



*Photo by Hans Visser*



*Photo & Cover Photo by Rebeccah Cogan*



*Photo by Urszula Kacperek*

## **Introduction**

Leitrim County Council is preparing a new Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) supported by the Heritage Council. Following the launch of the 4<sup>th</sup> National Biodiversity Action Plan this year, all Local Authorities are required to have a Local Biodiversity Action Plans in place by the end of 2026. With the recent appointment of a Biodiversity Officer, under the Heritage Council's Biodiversity Officer Programme, Leitrim County Council are commencing this process and plan to finalise a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan in 2025. The aim of the plan will be to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity within County Leitrim over the next five years.

This short discussion paper is the start of that process. Its purpose is to kickstart dialogue on biodiversity - outlining issues and potential solutions. It should open the door for everyone in the County to give their views on nature and the environment, in your local area, and within Co. Leitrim. It is important that we hear your ideas on how we should be addressing the biodiversity crisis at a local level. This is your opportunity to highlight the key issues affecting biodiversity in your locality and assist in identifying what we should be aiming to achieve over the period of the LABAP 2025 – 2030.



*Photo by Urszula Kacperek*



*Photo by Rebecca Cogan*

## What is Biodiversity and why does it matter?

Biodiversity is a term that describes the variety of life on earth. It comprises all living things from plants, birds and mammals, to insects, microbes and fungi and the ecosystems – bogs, forests, river, oceans, grasslands etc. – that they are part of. Healthy ecosystems are vital for human health and wellbeing, underpinning food production and food security, giving us clean water and fresh air, protecting against climate change, providing the basis of many modern medicines and enriching our lives both culturally and spiritually. Over 31,000 species have been recorded in Ireland and its surrounding seas and many more have yet to be discovered.

In May 2019 Ireland became the 2<sup>nd</sup> country in the world to declare a Climate & Biodiversity crisis. Biodiversity is in trouble across a range of species and habitats. Biodiversity faces many risks at a local, national, and global level that have contributed to an overall loss in wildlife, species extinctions and habitat loss.

To halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity it is essential to employ a whole of ecosystem approach. While individual species conservation can achieve success in the short term, species require healthy functioning habitats to maintain long term stable populations.

Humans depend on healthy ecosystems to provide us with the following:

- Fresh water
- Food
- Clean air
- Resources e.g. wood, paper, medicines
- Flood control
- Climate regulation
- Recreation & Amenity
- Culture & History

These are called ecosystem services that are essential for life on earth and without them, life would become very inhospitable for humans.



*Photo by Alan Hillen Photography*

**“TO PROTECT OURSELVES, WE MUST PROTECT NATURE”**

**Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin,  
Chair of the Citizens’ Assembly on Biodiversity Loss in Ireland**

## Biodiversity in Ireland

Scientific assessments of the state of nature in Ireland have found that 85% of our EU protected habitats are in unfavourable status, with almost half (46%) demonstrating ongoing declines. This is having negative impacts on wildlife. Almost a third of our EU protected species are in unfavourable status, over half of native Irish plant species have declined. Over half of our 100 bee species have undergone substantial declines and 30% are threatened with extinction. 21% of breeding and 52% of key wintering bird species were reported to have short term declining trends. Almost half of our lakes (46%) and rivers (45%) are not meeting biological quality targets according to EPA’s 2023 Indicators Report.

## Threats:

We are living through a period of significant biodiversity decline globally. There are recognised threats to biodiversity that have an impact at a local and national level. Our local biodiversity is facing pressures which is resulting in declines in species richness and species abundance.

Biodiversity is one of our biggest allies in reducing the impact of climate change. Healthy ecosystems need to be conserved to increase resilience to climate impacts. As we transition to a biodiversity rich and climate neutral economy by 2050, we must tackle climate breakdown at a local level.

The main threats being faced for biodiversity both nationally and locally in Co. Leitrim include:

- Climate change
- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Invasive alien species
- Pollution
- Disturbance to wildlife by human activity
- Overexploitation
- Land drainage
- Agriculture
- Monoculture Forestry



Human behaviour patterns are driving biodiversity loss and transforming these behaviour patterns is essential if we are to reverse the trends of loss. Therefore, we all have a role to play in the protection and restoration of nature.

The 4<sup>th</sup> National Biodiversity Action Plan, 2023 – 2030, strives for a “Whole of Government, Whole of Society” approach to the governance and conservation of biodiversity. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to “act for nature”.

### Ireland in 2050 – A Vision for Biodiversity

*Biodiversity in Ireland is valued, conserved, restored and sustainably used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.*



### Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan

2023–2030

### Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP):

The 4<sup>th</sup> National biodiversity action plan contains an action for all local authorities to develop their own Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan by the end of 2026. The National Biodiversity Action Plan also sets out an action for biodiversity officers to be appointed in each Local Authority. The Heritage Council has worked with Local Authorities and funded the rollout of the Biodiversity Officer Programme. Biodiversity Officers are the vital link between national policy and local action. In addition to collecting data, carrying out conservation projects and raising awareness, Biodiversity Officers advise the local authority on biodiversity related issues and its obligations in relation to the protection of biodiversity.



The LABAP will be a document setting out the overall objectives and actions for conserving and enhancing biodiversity in Co. Leitrim. It will also aim to achieve the objectives in the National Biodiversity Action Plan that the Local Authority has responsibility for. The LABAP will help to direct the council's response to the biodiversity crisis.

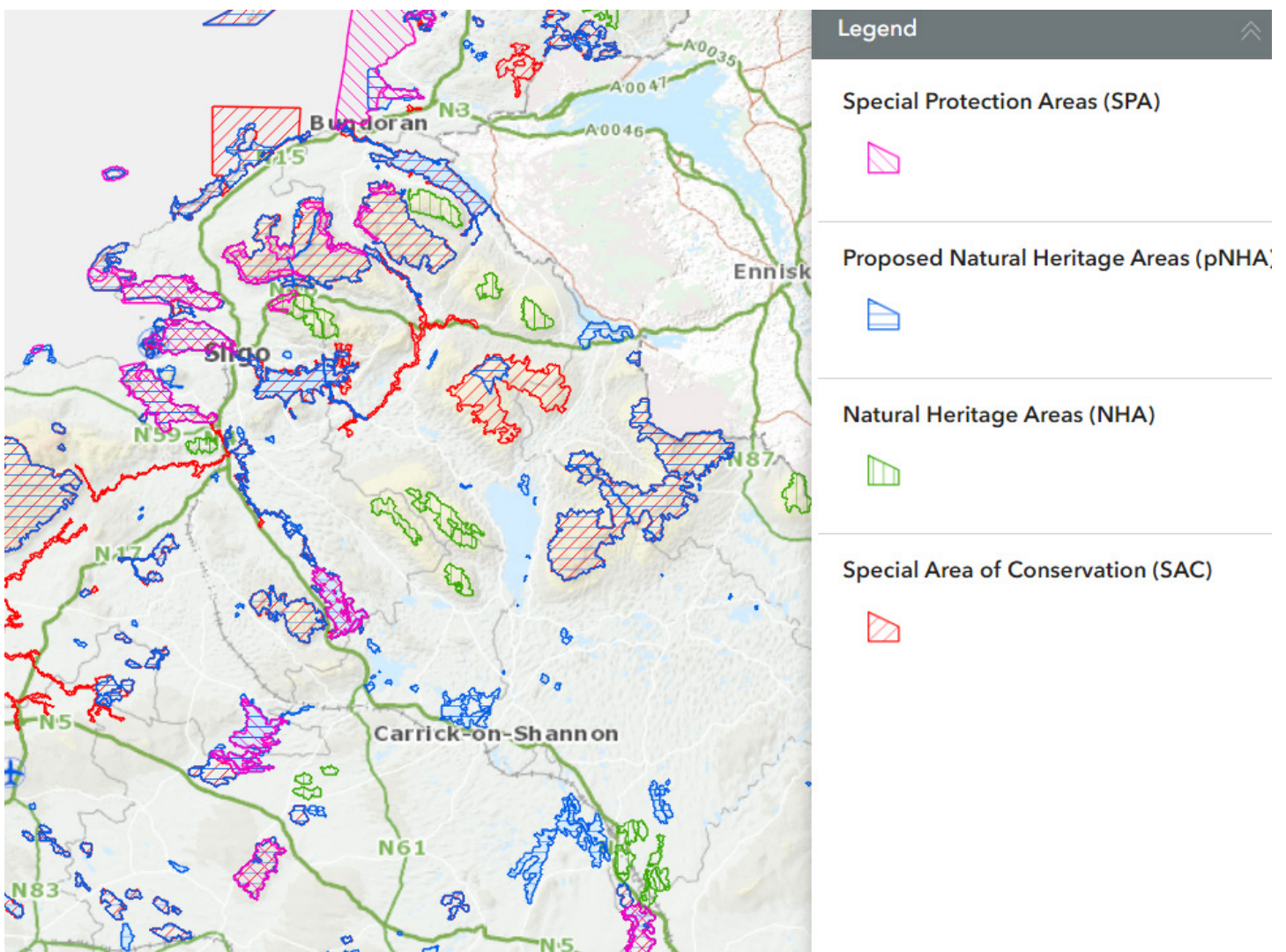
## Biodiversity in Co. Leitrim

Co. Leitrim contains a diversity of habitats including peatland, wetland, woodland, grassland, freshwater and coastal habitats. The northern section of the county is hilly and dominated by the Dartry Mountain range which was formed from a glaciated limestone plateau. The southern section of the county is flatter with drumlins, and the River Shannon being a dominant landscape feature with its associated floodplains as important habitats for many species of flora and fauna.



## Designated Sites:

Species and habitats of international, national and regional importance are protected through the designation of specific areas. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are areas of European importance specifically for bird species. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are of European importance for particular habitats, plants and animals other than birds. SPAs and SACs are referred to as the Natura 2000 network and are legally protected under the EU Habitats Directive.



Source: NPWS Mapviewer

Special Protection Area	Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)	Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)
Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA (004187)	Arroo Mountain SAC (001403)	Aghavoghil Bog NHA (002430)
	Ben Bulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex SAC (000623)	Aghnamona Bog NHA (000422)
	Boleybrack Mountain SAC (002032)	Cashel Bog (Leitrim) NHA (001405)
	Bunduff Lough and Machair/ Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC (000625)	Cloonageeher Bog NHA (001423)
	Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands SAC (000584)	Corracramph Bog NHA (001420)
	Glenade Lough SAC (001919)	Corry Mountain Bog NHA (002321)
	Lough Gill SAC (001976)	Crockauns/Keelogyboy Bogs NHA (002435)
	Lough Melvin SAC (000428)	Dough/Thur Mountains NHA (002384)
		Rinn River NHA (000691)

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are nationally protected under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Proposed NHAs (pNHAs) are undesignated sites of significance for wildlife and habitats.

There are also 28 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) in Co. Leitrim. These sites are of significance for wildlife and habitats.

Other important habitats in Co. Leitrim that are not designated sites provide wildlife corridors to the wider ecological network and add biodiversity value to the county. These include wetlands, rivers, lakes, woodlands, hedgerows, grasslands, road verges, green urban spaces, gardens and parks.

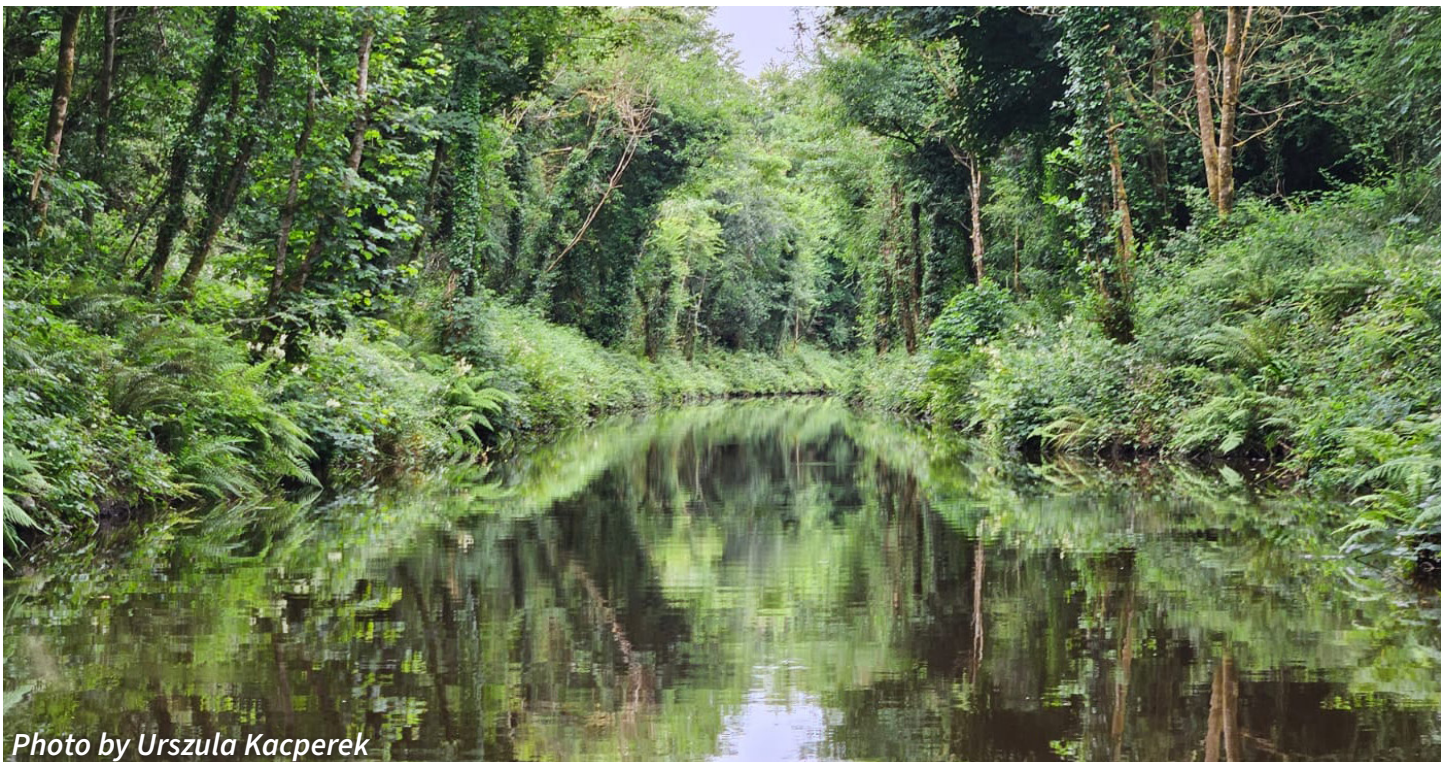


Photo by Urszula Kacperek



*Photo by PomInPerth*

## **Aim of the Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan**

To record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of biodiversity among the people of the area.

The LABAP is designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at the local authority level. It will outline the objectives and actions needed to protect and enhance biodiversity within a specific local authority area. The LABAP provides the context for Leitrim County Council to work with and support local communities, agencies, NGOs and landowners.

## **Biodiversity Working Group:**

The biodiversity working group is a non-statutory advisory group established by the local authority to provide observations and advice on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the LABAP. The role of the working group is to collaborate with the Biodiversity Officer in developing the plan, providing feedback and assistance in the implementation of the objectives and actions, to monitor progress and to evaluate the impacts of the plan.

Membership of the biodiversity working group will be representative of the diversity of the local population, reflecting the range of geographic, biodiversity expertise and population interests and may be drawn from the following sectors:

- Community and voluntary groups
- Local heritage and biodiversity organisations or groups
- Local Authority
- Environmental NGO's
- Local elected representatives
- Local development and business
- State agencies of relevance to biodiversity conservation
- Educational institutions
- Agricultural representatives



*Photo by David Wynne*

Everyone has a role to play in the protection and restoration of nature and it is important that we all play our part. Action for biodiversity has increased significantly in recent years, with a strong emphasis being placed on collaboration with landowners and local communities to enable a collective response to the challenge.



*“It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living.”*

**Sir David Attenborough**

*Photo by Urszula Kacperek*



## Pre-Draft Public Consultation

Before the process begins, Leitrim County Council would like to start a discussion and hear your views on nature, listen to your ideas on how we should be addressing biodiversity loss and what actions you think are needed to protect and conserve biodiversity in Co. Leitrim.

### Here are some questions for you to consider:

- What are your main concerns or issues regarding Biodiversity in Co. Leitrim?
- Have you noticed a biodiversity decline in your local area, what is missing now that was abundant in the past?
- Are there any important habitats or species that you consider locally distinctive that may also be of national importance?
- How can we develop and protect the Ecological Network in the County?
- What are the priority actions for biodiversity that you think should be carried out in Co. Leitrim over the next five years?
- What new projects should be considered in the Biodiversity Action Plan?
- What is your vision for Biodiversity in Co. Leitrim?

### Your Opinion Counts

We want to hear your opinion! Sharing your views helps to recognise local issues and needs and will shape biodiversity objectives and actions for Co. Leitrim.

#### Online Survey:

<https://www.leitrim.ie/council/services/biodiversity/>

#### E-mail:

[leitrimbiodiversity@leitrimcoco.ie](mailto:leitrimbiodiversity@leitrimcoco.ie)

#### By Post:

FAO: Biodiversity Officer, Leitrim County Council,  
Aras an Chontae, St. George's Terrace,  
Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim

\*All submissions by post or by email must be clearly marked "Pre-Draft Submission; Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030"

#### In Person:

Visit one of the following drop-in events to engage directly with the Biodiversity Officer to discuss your views and ideas for Biodiversity in Co. Leitrim.

Municipal District	Venue	Date	Time
Ballinamore	Ballinamore Library	15/10/2024	5pm - 7pm
Carrick-on-Shannon	Carrick-on-Shannon Library	16/10/2024	2pm - 4pm
Manorhamilton	Manorhamilton Library	18/10/2024	10am - 12pm

**All submissions must be received by 5pm on Friday 1st November 2024**

### Next Steps:

All submissions received will be reviewed and a Draft Biodiversity Action Plan will be prepared in collaboration with the Biodiversity Working Group. The Draft Biodiversity Action Plan will then go on public display over a public consultation period.

*Leitrim County Council wish to acknowledge the role of the Heritage Council in funding the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme and in particular, supporting the preparation and implementation of the Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.*



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