



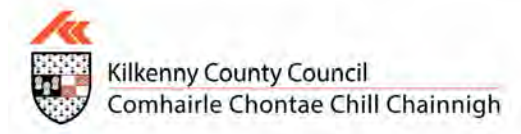
DESIGNING AND DELIVERING
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2030

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Prepared for:

Kilkenny County Council



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Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan SEA Screening Report for Kilkenny County Council

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this SEA Screening Report to Kilkenny County Council for their Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.

This project is funded by Kilkenny County Council and the Heritage Council. The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme is delivered in Partnership with the Heritage Council.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Kilkenny County Council (KCC) is in the process of preparing a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for its functional area (the Plan Area) for the years 2025-2030. The aim of the LABAP is to promote biodiversity conservation at local authority level.

KCC appointed Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) to conduct SEA and AA Screening of the LABAP.

This report documents the SEA Screening undertaken to identify the need for full SEA for the LABAP. This Screening Report should be read in conjunction with the corresponding AA Screening Report and the LABAP.

1.2 Background to Biodiversity Action Plans

LABAPs must be prepared in accordance with The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). These guidelines provide best practice guidance to local authorities on preparing and implementing biodiversity conservation actions within their functional area. These guidelines advise that LABAPS *'should aim to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.'*

LABAPS are designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at local level. Local authorities are required to develop a compelling vision for their LABAP and a set of clear, measurable and achievable objectives for biodiversity conservation in their functional area. LABAPs are developed by local authority Biodiversity Officers with the support of a dedicated Biodiversity Working Group. Public engagement and consultation must be undertaken at the Pre-draft and Draft Plan stages of the Plan-making process. All submissions from stakeholders and members of the public should be considered during the development of a LABAP.

LABAPs should serve to define targeted and focussed action for promoting biodiversity conservation through the functions of a local authority in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes. LABAPs should be in harmony with and support the land use planning framework, including City and County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

LABAPs - as non-statutory land use plans - should be screened for the need for SEA and AA.



2. SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview of SEA

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme.

SEA aims to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

SEA of plans and programmes is required by European Directive 2001/42/EC ('the SEA Directive'). For a specific range of land-use plans, this Directive is transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

For all other relevant plans and programmes in Ireland (including other types of plans in the land-use planning sector), the SEA Directive is transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

2.2 Overview of the SEA Process

The SEA process comprises the following steps:

- Screening – the process whereby a decision is made on whether a particular plan or programme other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would require SEA. This report relates to this stage of the SEA process.

The following steps are necessary if a plan or programme requires SEA:

- Scoping – Scope and level of detail in the environmental assessment is decided upon, in consultation with the identified statutory bodies;
- Environmental Assessment - An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the relevant plan or programme;
- Preparation of an Environmental Report;
- Consultation of the plan or programme and associated Environmental Report;
- Evaluation of the submission and observations made on the plan or programme and environmental report; and
- Provision of an SEA Statement, identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final plan or programme



SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when plans or programmes – which give rise to individual projects – are being developed. It is noted that SEA should result in more sustainable development through the systematic appraisal of policy options.

2.3 Legislative Context

LABAPs, as non-statutory land use plans, require to be screened for the need for SEA in accordance with the requirements of:

- The SEA Directive, particularly Articles 3(3), 3(4) and 3(5) in relation to ‘screening’; and,
- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No 435 of 2004), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011)(termed 'SEA Regulations' from this point onward), particularly Schedule 1, which sets out the *'Criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment.'*

2.4 Overview of the SEA Screening Process

The first step of the SEA process is to carry out SEA Screening to determine the need for SEA of a plan or programme.

The first stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is the carrying out of a 'Pre-screening Check' (also known as a 'Stage 1 Applicability'). This allows rapid screening-out of a plan or programme that is clearly not going to have any environmental impact and screening-in of those that do require SEA. The second stage in determining whether a plan or programme requires SEA is known as 'Stage 2 Screening.' The purpose of this stage is to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment and whether SEA must be carried out in conjunction with a plan or programme. The application of environmental significance criteria is important in determining whether an SEA is required. Annex II of Directive 2001/42/EC sets out the statutory criteria that should be addressed when undertaking this stage. This process is typically undertaken following a broad 8-step approach, as depicted in Figure 2-1.

The first environmental significance criterion relates to the characteristics of the plan or programme, having regard to: the degree to which the plan or programme sets out a framework for other projects and activities; the influence of the plan or programme on other projects, plans or activities; the role of the plan for integrating environmental considerations to promote sustainable development; environmental issues of relevance to the plan or programme and the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of EU legislation on the environment.

The second environmental significance criterion refers to the characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected, having regard to; the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects; the cumulative nature of the effects; the transboundary nature of the effects; the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values or intensive use; the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European or international protection status.



Figure 2-1: SEA Screening steps as per the EPA's Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening

2.5 Relevant SEA Guidance

This SEA Screening has been carried out in accordance with and having appropriate regard to the following guidance documents primarily:

- Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening (EPA, 2021).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022)
- SEA of Local Authority Land-Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources (EPA, 2024)

2.6 Appropriate Assessment and Relationship to SEA Screening

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) be carried out where a plan or project is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 Site. Natura 2000 Sites in Ireland include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Areas of Protection (SPAs).

The first step is to establish whether AA is required for the plan or project. This is referred to as Screening for AA and the purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in relation to the site's conservation objectives.



Screening for AA is relevant to Screening for SEA where it is found that a plan may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 Site, or where such an impact cannot be ruled out taking a precautionary approach, an appropriate assessment of the Plan must be carried out, and in any case where a SEA is not otherwise required.

Article 3(c) of the SEA Directive requires that an SEA is carried out on a plan or programme wherever such a plan or programme requires an AA under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Therefore, where the LABAP requires an appropriate assessment, it will also require an SEA.

This SEA Screening Report and the LABAP is accompanied by an AA Screening Report which should be read in conjunction with this document. The AA Screening Report concluded *'beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information, that the plan, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant (negative) effect on European sites.'*



3. LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

3.1 Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan

The overarching aim of the LABAP is to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.

The following Strategic Objectives are defined in the LABAP:

- Provide Biodiversity Leadership at Local Level
- Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations
- Manage Public Open Spaces for Biodiversity
- Conduct Habitat Mapping and Monitoring to Support Data-Driven Management Decisions
- Record and Monitor Protected Species
- Foster Engagement and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action

A series of Actions have been defined in the LABAP under each Strategic Objective. The higher-level Objectives are broader in scope, while the Actions underpinning the Objectives are more defined and measurable. These are presented in Table 3-1.



Table 3-1: LABAP Strategic Objectives and Actions

Objective	Action Code	Target	Action
Provide Biodiversity Leadership at Local Level	1.1	A Biodiversity Working Group established of stakeholders to champion biodiversity in Co. Kilkeny	Meet 4 times a year One joint meeting with the Heritage Forum. The Chief Executive and elected members invited to a special meeting to inform them of issues and opportunities present in Kilkeny
	1.2	A better understanding of biodiversity created across the organisation, top down, bottom-up approach.	Create specific biodiversity learning modules for staff induction, elected members, planners, engineers and outdoor staff
	1.3	Funding and opportunities for biodiversity themed projects promoted across sectors in Kilkeny	Create a directory for funding sources and promote opportunities locally
	1.4	Biodiversity reporting refined to include qualitative and quantitatively documentation of biodiversity action on council led projects	Transparently report on biodiversity actions progress Devise and activate a system to capture data on biodiversity-based complaints
	1.5	NBS best practice promoted into Council design projects.	Showcase demonstration the Council's NBS projects
	1.6	A criterion created to prioritise publicly owned sites that could be enhanced for biodiversity	Audit of Council properties to determine sites for enhancement
	1.7	Local training and education providers exploring potential of increasing biodiversity training opportunities locally	Assess opportunities with local training and education providers to support biodiversity education and boost biodiversity recording capacity.
	1.8	A biodiversity online-platform signposting locations of data resources and provide a depository for county studies	Audit resources on Kilkeny Heritage.ie Develop a strategy to improve access to biodiversity mapping and studies. Launch New Platform
	1.9	Public organisations with properties increasing actions for biodiversity enhancement	Identify potential public body projects Offer support and advice to ensure successful delivery.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action
Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations	2.1	Expedite the reduction of glyphosate-based chemicals by Kilkenny County Council	Calculate usage annually Determine reduction pathway
	2.2	Establish an overview of the presence of Alien Invasive Species on public land	Co-ordinate an internal mapping function to identify and manage sites of concern
	2.3	Build training capacity and awareness for hedgerow maintenance and retention.	Implement training Provide guidance to landowners on retention, translocation methods and cutting maintenance
	2.4	Ecological research informing planning policies to retain and restore ecological corridors and pathway to protect locally important habitats and species.	Draft policies based on advancing ecological surveys and studies to inform future planning and development.
	2.5	Audit sensitive species and habitats before Council bridge maintenance projects	Identify and capture biodiversity opportunities during bridge maintenance works with appropriate stakeholders.
Manage Public Open Spaces for Biodiversity	3.1	Enhancement of green and blue corridors connectivity including the protection of riparian vegetation, instream connectivity and habitat networks	Determine a procedure to prioritise the blue/green corridors for mapping the connectivity of public green and blue corridors Identify gaps and restore ecological connectivity. Map pollinator foraging network in urban areas.
	3.2	Pollinator-friendly mowing practices formalised	Map areas of semi natural grasslands on public grounds Increase % of short flowering meadows by completing pilot trials and expand where suitable. Complete an audit of % land in public meadow.
	3.3	Protection of Urban Trees in Kilkenny City	Develop a tree strategy to include a baseline of tree canopy cover, identify species diversity and tree health.
	3.4	Adoption of dark sky biodiversity friendly lighting policy for public spaces whilst maintaining standards for safety and security concerns	Integrate dark sky protocols into Council developments. Audit Council properties to determine if artificial light reduction is possible



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action
	3.5	Public parks and amenity trails management plans in operation	Audit number of parks and amenity trails Complete a management plan for each
Conduct Habitat Mapping and Monitoring to Support Data-Driven Management Decisions	4.1	Non-designated sites of local biodiversity importance that currently has no statutory protection identified and local protection sought	Identification completed by research and field studies Develop a mechanism for sites to be considered for local protection under the County Development Plan
	4.2	Community Biodiversity Action Plans influencing communities' vision when consulting on local area plans, and village renewal proposals to retain ecological connectivity	Promote the development of Community Biodiversity Action Plan that include habitat mapping of urban areas
	4.3	A visual storyboard to present biodiversity hotspots in the county to highlight project opportunities	Create a county storyboard that identifies all the statutory protected sites, ancient woodlands and known biodiversity hotspots and include biodiversity projects to inform and track biodiversity rich sites and biodiversity projects
	4.4	Protection of wetland sites	Review the County Kilkenny Wetland Survey and prioritise recommended actions
	4.5	Protection of Hedgerows	Complete audit of Kilkenny hedgerows and prioritise future projects on enhancing ecological connectivity between biodiversity rich sites
	4.6	Protection of Ancient Woodlands	Identify, map and determine a pathway to secure the conservation and restoration of Kilkenny's Ancient Woodland habitat
	4.7	Water quality data easy to source and understand	Farm inspection team to collaborate with agricultural sector, Nore Vision, IFI, Teagasc and LAWPRO to complete water quality assessments and communicate issues impacting water quality and promote actions to improve water quality
	4.8	Water quality data easy to source and understand	Promote annual data from the EPA RMCEI Plan that illustrates the work completed by the Environment Section Communicate the findings of the EPA Annual Water Quality Reports to raise awareness of water quality issues.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action
Record and Monitor Protected Species	5.1	Strong synergies existing between Kilkenny County Council and the National Biodiversity Data Centre and other NGO's	Promote national monitoring schemes locally to encourage participation.
	5.2	Students have strong interest in biodiversity and species recording	Promote the Heritage Council's "Heritage in Schools Programme" Support biodiversity programs under Kilkenny County Council's Green School Programme. Promote/develop school supports to engage students in species identification
	5.3	Strong citizen science participation rate in Kilkenny	Support and promote local NGOs such as the Kilkenny Naturalist Field Club and Kilkenny Birdwatch Ireland Branch
	5.4	Annex II and IV species of the Habitats Directive presence and distribution documented	Kilkenny County Council to commission surveys
Foster Engagement and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action	6.1	Kilkenny Citizens Informed about biodiversity	Assist in the dissemination of Biodiversity promotional material, promoting funding streams, training opportunities, field days and workshops Build a portfolio of talks, workshops Promote Biodiversity Week (May) and Heritage Week (August) annually
	6.2	Leverage creative, cultural and artistic initiatives to enhance engagement on biodiversity issues	Encourage and support artists whose work promotes ecological awareness and biodiversity and enables individuals to connect with nature
	6.3	Pollinator Friendly Actions Widespread throughout communities	Support local initiatives that engage the public using the sectoral themed resources from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
	6.4	Agricultural biodiversity enhancement projects widespread	Promote field days, demonstration walks, workshops and field days that educate farmers on biodiversity practices. Distribute biodiversity farm packs as part of the Council's Farm Survey visits. Collaborate with LAWPRO to highlight the uptake, successes and outcomes of their EIP programme



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action
	6.5	Private landholdings biodiversity enhancement projects widespread	Support and promote demonstration events that lead to a better understanding of options for landowners to increase the biodiversity value of landholdings.
	6.6	Community tree nurseries promoting local provenance widespread	Determine the methodology for set up Identify interested parties Identify training requirements Identify possible funding avenues
	6.7	Wide appreciation of soil health, and benefits known of home compost and leaf mould	Promote soil science Promote compost free gardening, Promote leaf mould as an alternative source to compost
	6.8	A greater understanding of actions the general public can take to take to assist biodiversity	Complete awareness campaigns highlighting how households can lower nutrient loading in river catchments e.g. Greener Cleaning, Septic Tank Maintenance.
	6.9	Water conservation widespread across all sectors	Promote water conservation across sectors, providing the linkage to importance to biodiversity protection. Promote rainwater harvesting across different sectors



3.2 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

The LABAP sits within a hierarchy of plans and has been informed by and is consistent with the aims and objectives of other plans, programmes and strategies developed at national, regional and local levels. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

National Level

- Project Ireland 2040 : National Planning Framework (2018).
- Heritage Ireland 2030: A Framework for Heritage (2022).
- Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (2023).
- The 4th National Biodiversity Plan 2023 - 2030 (2024) (discussed further in Section 3.1.1 below).
- Climate Action Plan (2024).

Regional and Local Level

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the region.
- The County Development Plan for the local authority functional area.
- The Local Authority Climate Action Plan for the local authority functional area.
- The Heritage Plan for the local authority functional area.

3.2.1 The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to protect and value nature. 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.' This plan provides the overarching arching framework for delivering biodiversity conservation through LABAPs.

This National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. The five overarching objectives to address new and emerging issues include the following:

- Objective 1 - Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
- Objective 2 - Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
- Objective 3 - Secure Nature's Contribution to People
- Objective 4 - Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
- Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

The NBAP contains actions pertaining to the preparation to LABAPs under *Objective One: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity* and *Objective Three: Secure Nature's Contribution to People*, including the following:



Table 3-2: NBAP Actions pertaining to the preparation to Local Biodiversity Plans

Action Number	Action
1C5	The Heritage Council will publish updated guidelines for the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans and their integration with City and County Development Plans
1C6	All Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan adopted by the end of 2026 which is subject to regular review and revision processes in line with relevant guideline standards
3A3	Local Authorities will work to identify and respond to opportunities for enhancing the biocultural value of GBUE through appropriate design strategies, the use of visual and performing arts, and enhancing equity of access and promoting use of GBUE by community groups, and integrating cultural services in local biodiversity action plans

Local Authorities are expected to align their LABAPs with national commitments defined in the NBAP to ensure a cohesive approach to biodiversity conservation across the country.



4. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

This section of the report documents the SEA Screening undertaken.

Stage 1 Applicability Analysis was undertaken initially. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.1 of this report (Table 4-1 and Table 4-2).

Stage 2 Screening Analysis was then undertaken. This analysis is detailed in Section 4.2 of this report (Table 4-3, Table 4-4 and Table 4-5).

4.1 Stage 1 - SEA Applicability Analysis

Table 4-1: SEA Applicability Analysis

SEA Applicability Analysis	
Status of Plan/Programme (P/P) Maker	
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	The LABAP has been prepared by a local authority.
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	The LABAP is required by administrative provisions. The local authority is required to prepare the LABAP by the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030. The NBAP has been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The NPWS is an executive agency within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) of the Government of Ireland.
Nature of the Plan/Programme	
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	LABAPs are non-statutory land use plans.
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No.
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No.
Exemptions	



SEA Applicability Analysis	
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No.

Table 4-2: Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis

Summary of SEA Applicability Analysis	
Applicability Analysis Criterion	Outcome (Yes or No)
Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	Yes
Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	Yes
Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	Yes
Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	No
Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	No
Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	No
Conclusion	
Having regard to the SEA Screening Process defined in Section 2,4, it has been concluded that Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis is required to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and whether a full SEA of the plan is needed.	



4.2 Stage 2 - SEA Screening Analysis

To inform the Stage 2 SEA Screening Analysis, an evaluation of the potential environmental effects of LABAP Actions has been undertaken. This evaluation is presented in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3: Evaluation of Potential Environmental Effects of LABAP Actions

Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Provide Biodiversity Leadership at Local Level	1.1	A Biodiversity Working Group established of stakeholders to champion biodiversity in Co. Kilkenny	Meet 4 times a year One joint meeting with the Heritage Forum. The Chief Executive and elected members invited to a special meeting to inform them of issues and opportunities present in Kilkenny	This action pertains to the establishment of a Biodiversity Working Group of stakeholders to champion biodiversity in Co. Kilkenny. This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in Kilkenny. It will help ensure the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements in all areas in which the council provides services and will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.2	A better understanding of biodiversity created across the organisation, top down, bottom-up approach.	Create specific biodiversity learning modules for staff induction, elected members, planners, engineers and outdoor staff	This action promotes biodiversity related training with an aim to improve understanding of biodiversity across the organisation. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within Kilkenny. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	1.3	Funding and opportunities for biodiversity themed projects promoted across sectors in Kilkenny	Create a directory for funding sources and promote opportunities locally	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity by promoting and providing funding for biodiversity themed projects across sectors in Kilkenny. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	1.4	Biodiversity reporting refined to include qualitative and quantitatively documentation of biodiversity action on council led projects	Transparently report on biodiversity actions progress Devise and activate a system to capture data on biodiversity-based complaints	This action relates to more transparent biodiversity reporting in Kilkenny that has increased qualitative and quantitative documentation. It will underpin and support effective implementation of plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.5	NBS best practice promoted into Council design projects.	Showcase demonstration the Council's NBS projects	This action will help to increase the integration of Nature Based Solutions (NBS) practices in projects by raising awareness on projects within the council that use this NBS approach. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the local authority as an organisation. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	1.6	A criterion created to prioritise publicly owned sites that could be enhanced for biodiversity	Audit of Council properties to determine sites for enhancement	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Kilkenny by identifying council land which can be enhanced for biodiversity. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	1.7	Local training and education providers exploring potential of increasing biodiversity training opportunities locally	Assess opportunities with local training and education providers to support biodiversity education and boost biodiversity recording capacity.	This action promotes biodiversity related training and education opportunities locally. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within Kilkenny. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement in the community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	1.8	A biodiversity online-platform signposting locations of data resources and provide a depository for county studies	Audit resources on Kilkenny Heritage.ie Develop a strategy to improve access to biodiversity mapping and studies. Launch New Platform	This action promotes biodiversity related data and resource access through the provision of an online biodiversity platform. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related knowledge and expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within Kilkenny. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	1.9	Public organisations with properties increasing actions for biodiversity enhancement	Identify potential public body projects Offer support and advice to ensure successful delivery.	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Kilkenny by identifying public body projects where increased biodiversity enhancement can be facilitated. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations	2.1	Expedite the reduction of glyphosate-based chemicals by Kilkenny County Council	Calculate usage annually Determine reduction pathway	This action supports the prevention and reduction of glyphosate-based chemicals used by Kilkenny County Council that may affect biodiversity components in the county. It is inherently positive in nature. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	2.2	Establish an overview of the presence of Alien Invasive Species on public land	Co-ordinate an internal mapping function to identify and manage sites of concern	This action will prevent and minimise the spread of invasive species in Kilkenny by enhancing understanding on the current state of invasives on public land. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, such as native species and habitats, that are at risk due to invasive species spread. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	2.3	Build training capacity and awareness for hedgerow maintenance and retention.	Implement training Provide guidance to landowners on retention, translocation methods and cutting maintenance	This action supports the protection and enhancement of hedgerows in Kilkenny through the provision of training and education on hedgerow maintenance. Hedgerows are an integral biodiversity feature and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	2.4	Ecological research informing planning policies to retain and restore ecological corridors and pathway to protect locally important habitats and species.	Draft policies based on advancing ecological surveys and studies to inform future planning and development.	This action proposes the implementation of policies to advance the carrying out of ecological surveying and studies to gain better knowledge on ecological corridors and pathways in the county. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	2.5	Audit sensitive species and habitats before Council bridge maintenance projects	Identify and capture biodiversity opportunities during bridge maintenance works with appropriate stakeholders.	This action supports the integration of biodiversity consideration and improvements within council bridge maintenance projects. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects, outside of what has already been considered and mitigated under land use planning framework SEA and AA processes.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
Manage Public Open Spaces for Biodiversity	3.1	Enhancement of green and blue corridors connectivity including the protection of riparian vegetation, instream connectivity and habitat networks	<p>Determine a procedure to prioritise the blue/green corridors for mapping the connectivity of public green and blue corridors</p> <p>Identify gaps and restore ecological connectivity.</p> <p>Map pollinator foraging network in urban areas.</p>	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Kilkenny through better understanding and improvement of green and blue corridors. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. The improvement and enhancement of these green and blue corridors does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects, outside of what has already been considered and mitigated under land use planning framework SEA and AA processes.
	3.2	Pollinator-friendly mowing practices formalised	<p>Map areas of semi natural grasslands on public grounds</p> <p>Increase % of short flowering meadows by completing pilot trials and expand where suitable.</p> <p>Complete an audit of % land in public meadow.</p>	This action will support the conservation of pollinators, a key species, present in Kilkenny and connected areas. The actions aim at establishing more pollinator-friendly mowing practices. It has the potential to generate a positive effect for this key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.3	Protection of Urban Trees in Kilkenny City	Develop a tree strategy to include a baseline of tree canopy cover, identify species diversity and tree health.	This action supports the protection and enhancement of Urban trees in Kilkenny City by developing a tree strategy. Urban trees are an integral biodiversity feature and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	3.4	Adoption of dark sky biodiversity friendly lighting policy for public spaces whilst maintaining standards for safety and security concerns	<p>Integrate dark sky protocols into Council developments.</p> <p>Audit Council properties to determine if artificial light reduction is possible</p>	This action supports the control and management of lighting in Kilkenny by adopting a dark sky biodiversity friendly lighting policy for public spaces. It will contribute to preventing and reducing the impact of lighting on light sensitive species, such as bat species. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	3.5	Public parks and amenity trails management plans in operation	<p>Audit number of parks and amenity trails</p> <p>Complete a management plan for each</p>	This action is aimed at quantifying the number of public parks and amenity trails within Kilkenny and establishing management plans for these facilities. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. This is a result of more effective and focused management that can lead to more targeted biodiversity improvements. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
Conduct Habitat Mapping and Monitoring to Support Data-Driven Management Decisions	4.1	Non-designated sites of local biodiversity importance that currently has no statutory protection identified and local protection sought	<p>Identification completed by research and field studies</p> <p>Develop a mechanism for sites to be considered for local protection under the County Development Plan</p>	This action proposes the identification and protection of non-designated sites of local biodiversity importance that currently has no statutory protection identified. This will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.2	Community Biodiversity Action Plans influencing communities' vision when consulting on local area plans, and village renewal proposals to retain ecological connectivity	Promote the development of Community Biodiversity Action Plan that include habitat mapping of urban areas	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in Kilkenny through the development of Community Biodiversity Action Plans. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.3	A visual storyboard to present biodiversity hotspots in the county to highlight project opportunities	Create a county storyboard that identifies all the statutory protected sites, ancient woodlands and known biodiversity hotspots and include biodiversity projects to inform and track biodiversity rich sites and biodiversity projects	This action proposes creation of a county storyboard that highlights the biodiversity hotspots in Kilkenny. This will aid in the identification of areas where there are opportunities for projects. It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.4	Protection of wetland sites	Review the County Kilkenny Wetland Survey and prioritise recommended actions	This action supports the protection of wetland sites within Kilkenny. Wetlands are an integral biodiversity feature and provide a variety of ecosystem services. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	4.5	Protection of Hedgerows	Complete audit of Kilkenny hedgerows and prioritise future projects on enhancing ecological connectivity between biodiversity rich sites	This action supports the protection and enhancement of hedgerows in Kilkenny. Hedgerows are an integral biodiversity feature in the plan area and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	4.6	Protection of Ancient Woodlands	Identify, map and determine a pathway to secure the conservation and restoration of Kilkenny's Ancient Woodland habitat	This action supports the protection and enhancement of Kilkenny's Ancient Woodlands. Ancient woodlands are an integral biodiversity feature with complex ecological interactions and act as important habitat and ecological corridors. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
	4.7	Water quality data easy to source and understand	Farm inspection team to collaborate with agricultural sector, Nore Vision, IFI, Teagasc and LAWPRO to complete water quality assessments and communicate issues impacting water quality and promote actions to improve water quality	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to attaining water quality data within Kilkenny. This will help in the understanding and communication of issues impacting water quality and promote actions to improve water quality. Thus, will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	4.8	Water quality data easy to source and understand	Promote annual data from the EPA RMCEI Plan that illustrates the work completed by the Environment Section	This action facilitates the increased awareness of water quality issues through the promotion of water quality data collected within Kilkenny by the EPA. This will help in the understanding of issues impacting water quality and promote actions to improve water quality.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
			Communicate the findings of the EPA Annual Water Quality Reports to raise awareness of water quality issues.	Thus, will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
Record and Monitor Protected Species	5.1	Strong synergies existing between Kilkenny County Council and the National Biodiversity Data Centre and other NGO's	Promote national monitoring schemes locally to encourage participation.	This action aims to create and foster a collaborative approach between Kilkenny County Council and the National Biodiversity Data Centre and other NGOs to encourage local participation in national monitoring schemes. It will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.2	Students have strong interest in biodiversity and species recording	Promote the Heritage Council's "Heritage in Schools Programme" Support biodiversity programs under Kilkenny County Council's Green School Programme. Promote/develop school supports to engage students in species identification	This action promotes biodiversity related education in students through various nature-focused programmes. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement in students within the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.3	Strong citizen science participation rate in Kilkenny	Support and promote local NGOs such as the Kilkenny Naturalist Field Club and Kilkenny Birdwatch Ireland Branch	This action promotes increased participation in citizen science projects within Kilkenny. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement in the community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	5.4	Annex II and IV species of the Habitats Directive presence and distribution documented	Kilkenny County Council to commission surveys	This action will support the conservation of a key Annex II and IV Habitats Directive species present in Kilkenny and connected areas by documenting their distribution and presence through surveys.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
				It will underpin and support effective implementation of the plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. It has the potential to generate a positive effect for this key species and for biodiversity generally. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.
Foster Engagement and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action	6.1	Kilkenny Citizens Informed about biodiversity	Assist in the dissemination of Biodiversity promotional material, promoting funding streams, training opportunities, field days and workshops Build a portfolio of talks, workshops Promote Biodiversity Week (May) and Heritage Week (August) annually	This action will aid awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity related initiatives among citizens by increasing awareness of the biodiversity-related resources and activities available. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement throughout the wider community. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6.2	Leverage creative, cultural and artistic initiatives to enhance engagement on biodiversity issues	Encourage and support artists whose work promotes ecological awareness and biodiversity and enables individuals to connect with nature	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to improving biodiversity in Kilkenny by leveraging creative, cultural and artistic initiatives to promote ecological awareness. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement amongst citizens. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6.3	Pollinator Friendly Actions Widespread throughout communities	Support local initiatives that engage the public using the sectoral themed resources from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to supporting the conservation of key pollinator species present in Kilkenny and connected areas by supporting local initiatives that engage the public on aspects of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. It has the potential to foster further interest in biodiversity protection and enhancement amongst citizens.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
				This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6.4	Agricultural biodiversity enhancement projects widespread	<p>Promote field days, demonstration walks, workshops and field days that educate farmers on biodiversity practices.</p> <p>Distribute biodiversity farm packs as part of the Council's Farm Survey visits.</p> <p>Collaborate with LAWPRO to highlight the uptake, successes and outcomes of their EIP programme</p>	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to improving biodiversity in Kilkenny by engaging with farmers on ways in which they can enhance biodiversity within the agricultural sector. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise among farmers and underpin and support biodiversity improvements on agricultural land. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6.5	Private landholdings biodiversity enhancement projects widespread	Support and promote demonstration events that lead to a better understanding of options for landowners to increase the biodiversity value of landholdings.	This action will promote awareness among landowners in Kilkenny on private landholdings biodiversity enhancement actions. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6.6	Community tree nurseries promoting local provenance widespread	<p>Determine the methodology for set up</p> <p>Identify interested parties</p> <p>Identify training requirements</p> <p>Identify possible funding avenues</p>	This action utilizes collaboration with community tree nurseries to promote the use of native species in Kilkenny. The promotion of native species of local provenance has the potential contribute to ecological diversity and sustainability. This action has the potential to have positive effects for biodiversity, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Objective	Action Code	Target	Action	Potential Environmental Effects
	6.7	Wide appreciation of soil health, and benefits known of home compost and leaf mould	Promote soil science Promote compost free gardening, Promote leaf mould as an alternative source to compost	This action will promote a wider appreciation of soil health, and benefits known of home compost and leaf mould. It has the potential to foster further interest in soil science and health within the community which has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6.8	A greater understanding of actions the general public can take to take to assist biodiversity	Complete awareness campaigns highlighting how households can lower nutrient loading in river catchments e.g. Greener Cleaning, Septic Tank Maintenance.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity in Kilkenny. It aims to educate homeowners on ways in which they can lower nutrient loading in river catchments. This will lead to improved river quality which will contribute to the effective delivery of the plan and biodiversity improvements generally. This action will not result in the occurrence of a real, significant adverse environmental effects in and of itself.
	6.9	Water conservation widespread across all sectors	Promote water conservation across sectors, providing the linkage to importance to biodiversity protection. Promote rainwater harvesting across different sectors	This action is aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Kilkenny through improved water conservation. It has the potential to generate positive effects on biodiversity components, such as habitats and key species, as well as co-benefits for other environmental components. It does not have the potential to generate any adverse environmental effects.



Table 4-4: Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Environmental Effects - Characteristics of the Plan

Potential Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:	
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	<p>The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the plan area, including local authority controlled lands. The LABAP defines a vision for biodiversity in the plan area, and strategic objectives, aims and targets for achieving this vision. The LABAP proposes a number of biodiversity management related projects and activities, including projects and activities at specific areas. These projects and activities all relate to biodiversity protection and enhancement, however.</p> <p>The LABAP does not propose or support any intensive land use or development projects outside the land use planning framework and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.</p> <p>Considering the Precautionary Principle enshrined in European Union (EU) environmental law, the Objectives and Actions in the LABAP should be assessed having regard to criteria defined in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.</p>
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	<p>The LABAP is defined as a Tier 2 Local Action Plan under The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). The LABAP is therefore a lower order plan in the context of the European, national, regional and local plan hierarchy.</p> <p>Local Action Plans set out specific objectives and actions for managing and protecting heritage in a particular area, such as biodiversity, archives, archaeology, heritage engagement, education etc., within the context of a higher order heritage related plan, for example. Each Local Action Plan is developed by a Working Group that includes representatives from relevant stakeholders and is led by heritage professionals within the local authority. The LABAP fits into this tier of plans.</p> <p>The LABAP supports the development of lower order area specific biodiversity management plans and supports the implementation of biodiversity related measures defined in inter-related plans, including the County Development Plan.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	<p>The LABAP supports and promotes the integration of biodiversity protection and enhancement measures into development and activities occurring in the plan area and supports ecological sustainability. The LABAP does not, however, stipulate specific development planning requirements and will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.</p>



Potential Significant Effects

Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:

<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme</p>	<p>Biodiversity in the plan area faces a number of known threats and pressures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development (residential, commercial, infrastructural and agricultural), • Agricultural activity and expansion, • Urbanization, • The spread of invasive species, • Pollution (e.g., air, noise, water, light pollution), • Climate change, • Recreational activity, • Land abandonment, • Urban wastewater, • Changes in the hydrological environment. <p>These threats and pressures may cause a range of negative impacts on biodiversity, including habitat loss, reduction and fragmentation; disturbance to key species; reduction in species density, impacts on designated sites and locally important non-designated sites present or connected to the plan area, or changes to indicators of conservation value (i.e. water quality, air quality, habitat quality).</p> <p>The LABAP defines a variety of actions to address these threats and pressures.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g., plans linked to waste-management or water protection)</p>	<p>The LABAP is a non-statutory land use plan. It does however support the achievement aims of EU nature-related legislation at a local level, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, • Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869 (the 'Nature Restoration Law'), • Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ('the Birds Directive'),



Potential Significant Effects

Characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular to:

- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive'),
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended,
- Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy ('the Water Framework Directive'),
- European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722/2003), as amended ,
- Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy ('the Marine Strategy Framework Directive'),
- European Communities (Marine Strategy Framework) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 249/2011), as amended,
- Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks ('the Floods Directive'),
- European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 122/2010), as amended,
- Directive 2006/113/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the quality required of shellfish waters ('the Shellfish Waters Directive'),
- European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 268/2006), as amended.



Table 4-5: Criteria for Determining Potential for Significant Effects - Characteristics of the Effects

Potential for Significant Effects	
Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:	
<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</p>	<p>The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the plan area. It defines the biodiversity actions that support and promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice biodiversity management and improvement, • Local authority biodiversity protection and enhancement initiatives, • The improvement of biodiversity on local authority controlled lands, • Biodiversity training and awareness events, • Biodiversity education and training, • Planting of native species (i.e. trees, shrubs, plants etc.) • Ecological surveying and mapping to identify areas of risk from threats and pressure and areas for targeted biodiversity protection/enhancement action, • Collaborating with key stakeholders and the public to achieve biodiversity aims. <p>The range of actions defined in the LAPAP have the potential to have a range of likely, slight to very significant, temporary to long-term, positive environmental effects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive effects on biodiversity, including habitats, key species, designated sites and locally important non-designated sites. • Indirect positive effects on water quality and hydrology - e.g., through the promotion of the use Nature Based Solutions in drainage management and the protection of the aquatic environment. • Positive effects on population and human health - e.g., - through the protection and enhancement of areas of biodiversity that provide amenity value, and support public health and well-being. • Positive effects on the soils environment - e.g., biodiversity has the potential to improve soil quality, structure and function. • Positive effects on Climate - e.g., through the promotion of areas of enhanced biodiversity that can contribute to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) sequestration levels, and protect against the effects of climate change related events (i.e. floods, erosion etc.).



Potential for Significant Effects

Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive effects on landscape and visual amenity - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage that contributes to scenic value and visual amenity. <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. They have been carefully reviewed and it has been concluded that these actions do not have the potential to have unintended negative effects on the receiving environment.</p> <p>The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. There is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.</p>
The cumulative nature of the effects	<p>The LABAP is in harmony and consistent with inter-related plans, including land use plans relevant to the plan area, higher order heritage related plans, the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, the national Climate Action Plan and the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. The range of positive effects that may be realised by the implementation of the LABCAP have the potential to interact and combine with positive effects associated with biodiversity measures defined in these inter-related plans to create larger, more significant positive effects.</p> <p>All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to interact and combine with negative effects associated with measures defined in these inter-related plans or projects to create larger, more significant negative effects.</p>
The transboundary nature of the effects	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in or connected to the plan area. These effects will be relatively localised however given that the LABCAP is local action plan. These effects have the potential to be transmitted to areas surrounding and outside the local authority functional area via environmental pathways. It is unlikely most of these effects will be transmitted Northern Ireland or any other country outside of Ireland however given the distance from the local authority functional area to these other countries and the lack of direct environmental pathways from the functional area to these countries. Actions in the LAPAB that may benefit migratory birds have some degree of potential to create positive effects beyond the national boundary of Ireland, however.</p>



Potential for Significant Effects

Characteristics of the Effects and the Area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:

	The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the ability to be transmitted beyond the national boundary of Ireland.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents)	The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to create risks to human health or the environment.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects on the receiving environment present in the plan area or connected to the plan area via environmental pathways, including elements that may up the receiving biodiversity environment such as habitats, key species, designated sites and non-designated locally important sites.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	<p>The LABAP has the potential to generate positive effects that contribute to enhanced biodiversity and natural heritage; enhanced water, soil or air quality in the plan area, and more sustainable, ecologically diverse land use.</p> <p>The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that may affect special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (including built or archaeological heritage), or contribute to the exceedance of environmental quality standards, in the plan area.</p> <p>The LABAP does not support or promote intensive land use or development projects that may create negative environmental effects.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive land-use 	
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, community or international protection status	<p>There are a variety of sites designated for their ecological value (e.g., Special protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, proposed Natural Heritage Areas) present in and connected to the plan area. The actions in the LABAP have been carefully designed to support the protection and enhancement of these designated sites.</p> <p>There are sites in the plan area that are designated for their landscape and visual amenity value. The implementation of the LABAP has the potential to have positive effects on landscape and visual amenity generally and such designated sites - e.g., through the promotion of natural heritage settings that contributes to landscape character, scenic value and visual amenity.</p>



Table 4-6: Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

Summary of SEA Screening Analysis

Having regard to the evaluation undertaken in Table 4-3 and the Stage 2 Screening Analysis undertaken in Table 4-4 and Table 4-5, it is concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.



5. CONCLUSIONS

An SEA Screening Assessment was undertaken to determine the need for an SEA for the Kilkenny County Council LABAP. It has been concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP. The principal reasons for this are as follows:

- The LABAP does not introduce any source of negative environmental effect.
- All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. There is no requirement to integrate further environmental considerations into the LABAP given its intrinsic nature, its stated aims and objectives, and the potential positive effects associated with its actions.
- The LABAP is in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes.
- The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects.
- The LABAP is not a statutory land use plan. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent.

Therefore, a full SEA of the LABAP is not required.

This conclusion has been made in light of all consultation submissions received from Environmental Authorities defined in the SEA Regulations, as well as the screening for the Draft Plan Amendments. Further details on both aspects are provided in Section 5.1 and Section 5.2 respectively.

5.1 Consultation

The local authority has consulted with the following Environmental Authorities on the above conclusion.

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Development Applications Unit
- Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine

A copy of the Draft LABAP, and the Draft SEA Screening Report and the Draft AA Screening Report prepared were sent to the Environmental Authorities. The Environmental Authorities were given 4 weeks to make submissions on the Draft LABAP and the accompanying environmental reports. An overview of submissions received from Environmental Authorities and how these were considered in the Plan-making process is presented in Table 5-1.



Table 5-1: Consultation with Environmental Authorities

Environmental Authority	Submission Detail	Considered Response
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Proposed SEA Determination If a proposed determination hasn't been made, you should determine whether the implementation of the proposed Plan or Programme would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The criteria to consider are set out in Annex II of Directive 2001/ 42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (The SEA Directive) and in Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended).	Noted. An SEA Screening Determination will be made in due course. The SEA Screening has been completed having regard to criteria to consider are set out in Annex II of Directive 2001/ 42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (The SEA Directive) and in Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended).
	You should take into account the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 1 into account in making its determination as to whether the Plan or Programme would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.	Noted. The SEA Screening has been completed having regard to the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended).
	Guidance on the SEA process, including an SEA pack and checklist available on our website at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-resources-and-guidance/ . We recommend that you take the available guidance into account in making your SEA Screening Determination and incorporate the relevant recommendations as relevant and appropriate to the Plan or Programme.	Noted. The SEA Screening process shas been completed in accordance with all relevant SEA guidance.



Environmental Authority	Submission Detail	Considered Response
	EPA SEA Screening Guidance Our Good Practice Guidance for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening (EPA, 2021) provides specific stand-alone guidance to assist plan or programme makers and SEA practitioners. It focuses primarily on plans/programmes in the non-land use sector in Ireland and includes an elaboration of the steps needed for screening, the legislative landscape underpinning SEA screening, and step-by-step process and templates to assist in preparing the required documentation.	Noted. The SEA Screening process has been completed in accordance with all relevant SEA guidance.
	Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Planning Authorities The Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2022) provides advice on carrying out SEA in the land-use planning sector for those plans listed in S.I. No.436 of 2004, as amended. These plans comprise regional, county and local plans, including Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, County or City Development Plans, variations of Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes for Strategic Development Zones. The Guidelines replace previous guidance for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities published in 2004.	Noted. The SEA Screening process has been completed in accordance with all relevant SEA guidance.
	Information on the EPA's recent State of the Environment Report and other available resources and tools provided.	Noted. These resource have been utilised where necessary during completion of the SEA Screening and AA Screening Assessments.



Environmental Authority	Submission Detail	Considered Response
	Future amendments to the Plan Where changes to the plan or programme are made prior to finalisation, or where modifications to the plan or programme are proposed following its adoption, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects in accordance with the 4 criteria set out in Schedule 1 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended) of the SEA Regulations, as appropriate.	Noted.
	Appropriate Assessment You should ensure that the plan or programme complies with the requirements of the Habitats Directive where relevant. Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the key findings and recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and the plan or programme.	Noted. An AA Screening Report was produced for the Plan, and it can be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information, that the plan, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites.
	Environmental Authorities Under the SEA Regulations, prior to making your SEA determination you should consult with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection Agency; • Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, • Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications; and, • Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. 	Noted. Consultation with relevant Environmental Authorities has been undertaken.



Environmental Authority	Submission Detail	Considered Response
	<p>SEA Determination</p> <p>As soon as practicable after making your determination as to whether SEA is required or not, you should make a copy of your decision, including, if appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection in your offices and on your website.</p> <p>You should also send a copy of your determination to the relevant environmental authorities consulted</p>	Noted.



5.2 Draft Plan Amendments

This document is consolidated version of the SEA Screening Report which has been updated in response to submissions received during the consultation period and considering amendments that were made to the original Draft Plan.

These Plan amendments arising from the consultation submissions and post-consultation Plan-making process have been subject to further SEA Screening assessment. This assessment is presented in Appendix 2 of this document.

The amendments have been concluded to be either neutral or positive in nature due to the following reasons:

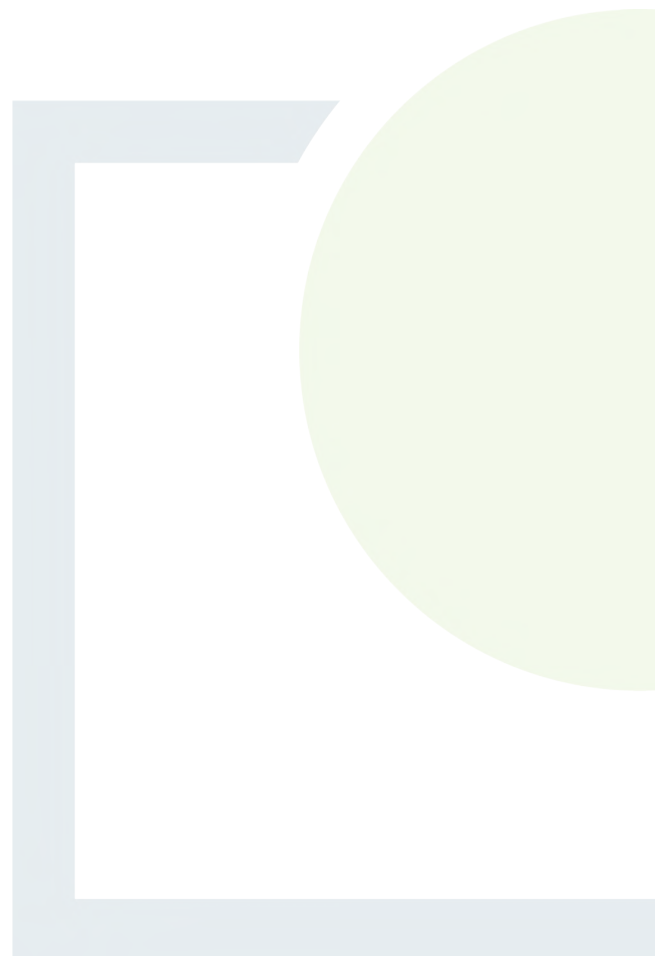
- Several amendments are clerical in nature and will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment
- Where additional actions have been introduced, they have been assessed to be positive for biodiversity, flora and fauna, without the potential for any negative impacts to any other environmental receptor.



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APPENDIX 1

Consultation Responses from
Environmental Authorities



Ms Bernadette Moloney
Biodiversity Officer
Community and Culture Section
Kilkenny County Council
John Street
Kilkenny

28th November 2024

Our Ref 241106.01

Re. SEA Screening for Kilkenny's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030

Dear Ms Moloney,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 20th November 2024, in relation to the Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030 and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening.

The EPA is one of the statutory environmental authorities under the SEA Regulations. In our role as a SEA environmental authority, we focus on promoting the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Plan and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the plan. Our functions as an SEA environmental authority do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans or programmes.

Where we provide specific comments on plans and programmes, our comments will focus on the EPA's remit and areas of expertise (in particular water, air, climate change, waste, resource efficiency, noise, radon and the inter-relationships between these and other relevant topics e.g. biodiversity), as appropriate and relevant to the particular Plan.

Proposed SEA Determination

If a proposed determination hasn't been made, you should determine whether the implementation of the proposed Plan or Programme would be likely to have significant

effects on the environment. The criteria to consider are set out in Annex II of Directive 2001/ 42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (The SEA Directive) and in *Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I No. 435 of 2004, as amended)*.

You should take the relevant criteria set out in *Schedule 1* into account in making its determination as to whether the Plan or Programme would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Guidance on the SEA process, including an SEA pack and checklist available on our website at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-resources-and-guidance-/>.

We recommend that you take the available guidance into account in making your SEA Screening Determination and incorporate the relevant recommendations as relevant and appropriate to the Plan or Programme.

EPA SEA Screening Guidance

Our [*Good Practice Guidance for Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) Screening*](#) (EPA, 2021) provides specific stand-alone guidance to assist plan or programme makers and SEA practitioners. It focuses primarily on plans/programmes in the non-land use sector in Ireland and includes an elaboration of the steps needed for screening, the legislative landscape underpinning SEA screening, and step-by-step process and templates to assist in preparing the required documentation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Planning Authorities

The [*Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities*](#) (DHLGH, 2022) provides advice on carrying out SEA in the land-use planning sector for those plans listed in S.I. No.436 of 2004, as amended. These plans comprise regional, county and local plans, including Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, County or City Development Plans, variations of Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes for Strategic Development Zones. The Guidelines replace previous guidance for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities published in 2004.

State of the Environment Report – Ireland’s Environment 2024

In October 2024, the EPA published the latest iteration of our 4-yearly State of the Environment Report. This report should be considered and integrated as appropriate, in implementing the plan or programme over its lifetime. It is available at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-environment-report-/>.

Available Guidance & Resources

Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including:

- [SEA process guidance and checklists](#)
- [SEA Spatial Information Sources Inventory](#)
- Topic specific SEA guidance (including [Good practice note on Cumulative Effects Assessment](#) (EPA, 2020), [Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring](#) (EPA, 2020), [Integrating climatic factors into SEA](#) (EPA, 2019), [Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA](#) (EPA, 2015), and [Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment](#) (EPA, 2012))

You can access these guidance notes and other resources at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-topic-and-sector-specific-guidance/>

EPA SEA WebGIS Tool

Our SEA WebGIS Tool has been updated recently and is now publicly available at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA>. It allows public authorities to produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area. It is intended to assist public authorities in SEA screening and scoping exercises.

Catchments.ie

Our <https://www.catchments.ie/maps/> website provides a single point of access to water quality and catchment data from the National WFD monitoring programme.

EPA AA GeoTool

Our AA GeoTool application has been developed in partnership with the NPWS. It allows users to select a location, specify a search area and gather available information for each European Site within the area. It is available at: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool>

Future amendments to the Plan

Where changes to the plan or programme are made prior to finalisation, or where modifications to the plan or programme are proposed following its adoption, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 1 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended) of the SEA Regulations, as appropriate.

Appropriate Assessment

You should ensure that the plan or programme complies with the requirements of the Habitats Directive where relevant. Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the key findings and recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and the plan or programme.

Environmental Authorities

Under the SEA Regulations, prior to making your SEA determination you should consult with:

- Environmental Protection Agency;

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
- Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications; and,
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

SEA Determination

As soon as practicable after making your determination as to whether SEA is required or not, you should make a copy of your decision, including, if appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection in your offices and on your website. You should also send a copy of your determination to the relevant environmental authorities consulted.

If you have any queries or need further information in relation to this submission, please contact me directly. I would be grateful if you could send an email confirming receipt of this submission to: sea@epa.ie.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Eleanor Ryan'.

Eleanor Ryan

SEA Section

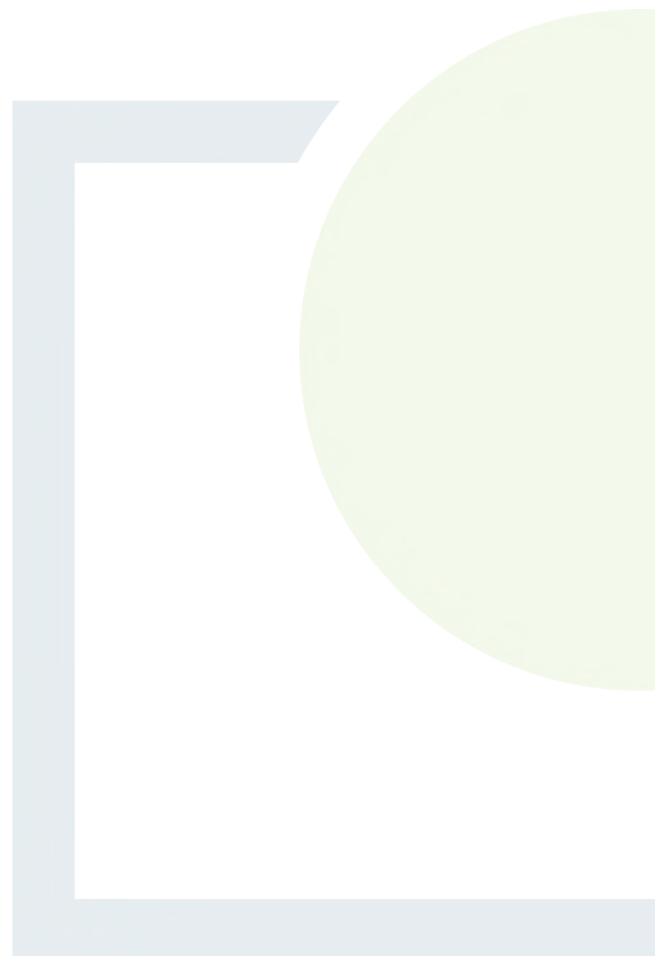
Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring



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APPENDIX 2

SEA Screening of Draft Plan
Amendments



Overview

The SEA Screening of the Amendments to the Kilkenny Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 has been completed. This assessment is presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: SEA Screening of Plan Amendments

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
Provide Biodiversity Leadership at Local Level	1.1	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>A Biodiversity Working Group established of stakeholders to champion biodiversity in Co. Kilkenny</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Meet 4 3 times a year and One joint meeting with the Heritage Forum. The Chief Executive and elected members invited to a special meeting to inform them of issues and opportunities present in Kilkenny</p>	<p>The amendment has been made in reflection of operational capacity of the Local Authority.</p> <p>The amendment is clerical and administrative/operational in nature and will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment.</p>
	1.2	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>A better understanding of biodiversity created across the organisation, top down, bottom up approach.</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Create specific biodiversity learning modules-opportunities for staff induction, elected members, planners, engineers and outdoor staff</p>	<p>The amendment is clerical and administrative/operational in nature and will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment.</p>
	1.4	<p>The following text has been removed:</p> <p>Biodiversity reporting refined to include qualitative and quantitatively documentation of biodiversity action on council led projects</p>	<p>The following text has been removed:</p> <p>Transparently report on biodiversity actions progress Devise and activate a system to capture data on biodiversity-based complaints</p>	<p>The amendment has been removed and effectively replaced by the new amendment for 1.4. The amendment will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment.</p>

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
	1.4	<p>The following target has been introduced:</p> <p>Transparent reporting of biodiversity complaints captured by Kilkenny County Council</p>	<p>The following action has been introduced:</p> <p>Devise and activate a system to capture data on biodiversity-based complaints</p> <p>Report published annually</p>	<p>The amendment has replaced the former Target and Action for 1.4. Similar to the previous text, the action relates to more transparent reporting in County Kilkenny pertaining to biodiversity-complaints. The amended action will underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. It will not result in the occurrence of any real, significant adverse environmental effects, in and off itself .</p>
	1.5	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>NBS best practice integrated promoted into Council design projects.</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Showcase Council's NBS Projects as best practice demonstration the Council's NBS projects</p>	<p>The amendment has been made to showcase the Council's projects relating to Nature Based Solutions (NBS) practices and these best practices integrated in Council-designed projects. Such projects will be undertaken under the governing land-use planning framework, i.e. the Kilkenny County Development Plan or any applicable Area Plans.</p> <p>The amendment is positive for biodiversity, flora and fauna due to biodiversity enhancement measures, as well potential positive effects for the soils and water environments. No adverse effects have been identified in relation to this amendment.</p>
	1.6	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>A criterion created to prioritise Kilkenny County Council publicly owned sites that could be enhanced for biodiversity enhancement</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Devise a Criteria Audit of Council properties to determine sites suitability for biodiversity enhancement</p>	<p>The amendment pertains to the preparation of a Criteria Audit of Council-owned properties to determine suitable sites for biodiversity enhancement measures.</p> <p>The amendment will underpin the implementation of the Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan and have a positive effect on Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna. No adverse effects have been identified in relation to this amendment.</p>

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
	1.7	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Local training and education providers providing exploring potential of increasing biodiversity training opportunities locally</p>		The amendment is clerical in nature and will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment.
Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations	2.1	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Expedite the reduction of Reduce glyphosate-based chemicals used by Kilkenny County Council</p>		<p>The amendment augments the Target and the ambition of the policy by actively aiming for a reduction in the amount of glyphosate-based chemicals used by the Local Authority.</p> <p>The resultant reduction in pesticide use will have a positive effect on the receiving environment (biodiversity, flora and fauna and the soils and water environments).</p> <p>The amended Target will not result in any negative effects on the environment.</p>
	2.2	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Establish an overview of the presence of Alien Invasive Species on public land mapped</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Co-ordinate an internal mapping function to identify and manage sites of concern</p>	<p>The amendment changes the scope of the Target and Action by clearly defining the methodology for establishing and understanding the presence and extents of Alien Invasive Species in the Plan Area.</p> <p>The amendment will underpin the implementation of the Plan and contribute to the protection of native floral and faunal species. The amendment will not result in any negative effects on the receiving environment.</p>

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
	2.3	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Build training capacity and awareness for hedgerow maintenance and retention. Protection of hedgerows</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Implement training and build capacity in hedgerow maintenance, retention and translocation</p> <p>Develop a viable approach to hedgerow and tree maintenance regimes, that prevents no unnecessary or undue damage to biodiversity, whilst ensuring adequate road safety that is integrated and integral to the tendering process for such services.</p> <p>Provide guidance to staff and landowners on retention, translocation methods and cutting maintenance</p>	<p>The amendment modifies the text of the original target to focus solely on the protection of hedgerows. This is proposed to be done through the capacity-building for hedgerow maintenance, retention and translocation, and the development of a viable approach for hedgerow and tree maintenance regimes that will prevent unnecessary and undue damage to receiving biodiversity.</p> <p>The amendment is positive for biodiversity, flora and fauna, as it underpins biodiversity enhancement and protection and the effective implementation of the Plan. In and of itself, the amendment will not introduce a source of negative impact on the receiving environment.</p>
	2.4	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Ecological research informing planning policies Policies, informed by ecological research, to retain and restore ecological corridors and pathway to protect locally important habitats and species.</p>	<p>The Action has been amended to add the following text:</p> <p>Draft Policies based on advancing ecological surveys and studies to inform future planning and development</p>	<p>The amendment for the Target is largely clerical in nature and serves to clarify that policies that are informed by ecological research will be prepared for the protection of ecological corridors.</p> <p>Added text for the Action will contribute to biodiversity improvements within the County through the inclusion of relevant policy in the County Development Plan (which is subject to its own SEA and AA processes).</p>

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
			Contribute to the preparation of the County Development Plan to consolidate biodiversity policy	<p>This is positive for biodiversity, flora and fauna and will result in potential co-benefits for interacting environmental receptors (soil and water).</p> <p>In and of itself, the amendment will not result in any adverse environmental effects.</p>
	2.5	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Audit sensitive species and habitats before County Council bridge maintenance projects provide biodiversity enhancements</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Audit bridges for sensitive species. Identify and capture biodiversity opportunities during bridge maintenance works with appropriate stakeholders, including IFI, BCI and BWI.</p>	<p>The amendment has included the intention to audit bridges in the Plan Area for recording the presence of sensitive species. This will underpin the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan and contribute to the repository of biodiversity information. This in turn will assist with the identification for biodiversity enhancement opportunities, which will lead to positive effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna.</p> <p>The amendment also serves to clarify which will be relevant in collaborating with for biodiversity considerations and improvements within council bridge maintenance projects.</p> <p>The amendment will not result in any adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
Manage Public Open Spaces for Biodiversity	3.5	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Public parks and amenity trails management plans in operation managed to maximise biodiversity enhancement</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Audit number of parks and amenity trails</p> <p>Complete Prioritise and complete biodiversity a management plans for each location</p>	<p>The amendment is largely clerical in nature and serves to clarify that amenities will be managed to maximise biodiversity enhancement and prioritises the completion of biodiversity management plans for each of these amenity locations.</p> <p>The amendment, in and of itself, will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment.</p>
Conduct Habitat Mapping and Monitoring to Support Data-Driven Management Decisions	4.1	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Non-designated Sites of local biodiversity importance that currently has no statutory protection identified and local protection sought mapped and protected</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Identification completed by research and field studies</p> <p>Develop a mechanism for sites to be considered for local protection under the County Development Plan</p> <p>Identify and map non-designated sites of Local Biodiversity Importance sites, in line with Heritage Council Guidance, to aid the implementation of County Development Plan biodiversity policies.</p>	<p>The amendment relates to the clarification of the sites that are locally significant to County Kilkenny from a biodiversity perspective. These sites are to be identified, mapped and protected in line with Heritage Council guidance and County Development policy.</p> <p>The amendment will underpin and support the implementation of the Plan and lead to more targeted and focused biodiversity enhancements, therefore leading to positive effects for biodiversity, flora and fauna. The amendment, in and of itself, will not result in any significant adverse effects on the receiving environment.</p>

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
	4.2	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Community Biodiversity Action Plans influencing communities' Communities champion ecological connectivity when considering town regeneration /vision when consulting on local area plans, and village renewal proposals to retain ecological connectivity</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Promote the development of Community Biodiversity Action Plan that include habitat mapping of urban areas that highlight the importance of ecological connectivity. This is particularly important to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, to encourage the management of features in the landscape which are a major importance for flora and fauna as required under Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p>	<p>The amendment has been made to clarify the role of communities in biodiversity enhancement within the planning process. This will involve the potential development of a Community Biodiversity Action Plan which will focus on the importance of ecological connectivity.</p> <p>The amendment will foster community engagement and interest in the community and contribute to the effective delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general, resulting in positive effects for biodiversity, flora and fauna.</p> <p>In and of itself, the amendment will not result in any adverse environmental effects.</p>
Record and Monitor Protected Species	5.4	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council informed on national surveys relating to Annex I, II and IV species of the Habitats Directive and Annex I of the Habitats Directive presence and distribution documented</p>	<p>The text of the Action has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council to commission surveys to stay informed of national surveys, collaborate with agencies if further research or monitoring required on a local level.</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council promote findings to safeguard habitat and species.</p>	<p>The amendments relates to the clarification of information sources and possible collaborations with other relevant groups. The amendment also introduces a clause to promote the findings of biodiversity surveys relating to Annex I, II and IV species as listed in the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>The amended action will support the effective implementation of the Plan, potentially leading to more focused and target biodiversity improvements. It has the potential to generate a range of positive effects for biodiversity, flora and fauna (the listed species in particular). The amendment, in and of itself, does not have the potential to result in any adverse environmental effects.</p>

Objective	Action Code	Proposed Amendment		SEA Screening Assessment
		Targets	Action	
Foster Engagement and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action	6.2	<p>The text of the Target has been amended to the following:</p> <p>Leverage creative, cultural and artistic initiatives to enhance engagement on biodiversity issues.</p>		The amendment is clerical in nature and will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment.
	6.7	Biodiversity education and engagement activities having equitable access	The education programme will be designed to be diverse to cater to a wide audience. The education programme will incorporate staff training, biodiversity courses, library talks and walk and talks. An annual educational schedule will be devised.	<p>This amendment has introduced a new target and action, which intends to introduce a new, accessible education programme aimed at a wide audience. This action has the potential to support biodiversity enhancement in the County through community engagement.</p> <p>The amendment is positive for biodiversity, flora and fauna, and will not result in any adverse significant effects on the receiving environment.</p>
	6.78, 6.89, 6.910			<p>These amendments relate to the change in the numbering of actions and targets, through the introduction of an additional action (6.7). No changes have been made to the text of the targets or actions themselves.</p> <p>The amendment is clerical and therefore will not have any interactions, positive or negative, with the receiving environment.</p>



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