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Joint Foreword Cavan County Council Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive:



We are delighted to welcome the publication of the first Biodiversity Plan for County Cavan for the period 2025-2030.

The implementation of this plan is central to our commitment to the conservation and enhancement of the wonderful biodiversity and natural landscape of our County during a biodiversity crisis and climate emergency. Terms such as 'biodiversity crisis' and 'climate emergency' have become part of the everyday lexicon. This Plan is our response to these very real issues.

Our actions over the next five years must tell a story of positive change to reverse biodiversity decline. This Plan can only be successfully implemented through collaborative conservation in fostering strong partnerships with statutory agencies, community and voluntary groups, businesses, property owners, and NGOs.

Biodiversity is not just a nice concept or luxury; it is essential to our wellbeing. It is vital for things like food security to the manufacturing of medicines. Biodiversity means clean water, plant seed dispersal and disease control.

We must act collectively to prevent biodiversity loss, to protect our lakes and river systems, protect our wetlands and bogs, our native hedgerows and woodlands. We must also undertake pollinator initiatives, target invasive species and act to protect vulnerable species.

This Plan will place nature conservation and enhancement at the forefront of projects, policy and planning across County Cavan. It also calls on all of us to reconnect with nature!

We thank Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants, and particularly Jennifer McAree, for preparing this plan in conjunction with the Heritage and Biodiversity Offices of Cavan County Council with diligence, support and commitment to the process.

This plan is prepared after extensive review and consultation with interested parties guided by Ann Marie Ward, our Heritage Officer, Cathal Flood, the staff of Cavan County Council and the Cavan Biodiversity Steering Committee. We thank all of those who participated in that process, culminating in the approval of the plan by the Strategic Policy Committees of the Council and the Councillors.

We must all now work together to secure the benefits for our County of implementing this Plan.



***Cllr. John Paul Feeley,
Cathaoirleach.***



***Eoin Doyle,
Chief Executive.***

Foreword from the Heritage Council:



We are delighted to introduce the County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030. This milestone initiative brings national biodiversity policy to life at the local level, rooted in the unique landscapes, rich natural heritage, and community spirit of County Cavan.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme, established by the Heritage Council in partnership with the City and County Management Association, has been pivotal in embedding biodiversity at the heart of local decision-making. Through funding, training and the development of networks, this programme equips local authorities with the tools to address the challenges and opportunities in biodiversity conservation. In County Cavan, this work builds on a solid foundation laid by Cavan County Council's Heritage Officer, whose vision and commitment paved the way for the appointment of the County's Biodiversity Officer in 2025.

The inclusive approach to biodiversity by Cavan County Council — recognising the interdependence of natural, built, and cultural assets — is inspiring. The collaboration between the Heritage and Biodiversity Forums reflects a deep understanding of how people connect with their surroundings, valuing them as vibrant expressions of identity, memory, and place.

The development and delivery of a first County Biodiversity Action Plan for Cavan not only protect habitats and species but also fosters local engagement, pride, and climate resilience. The County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan embodies this ethos, drawing on community input, expert knowledge, and policy guidance to chart a course for sustainable, impactful conservation. As we face increasing environmental pressures, the implementation of this plan will be a testament to the strength of partnerships and the commitment of all involved.

The Heritage Council is proud to support Cavan County Council, the Biodiversity Officer, and local communities in the delivery of this ambitious and essential plan over the next five years.



**Virginia Teehan, Chief Executive,
The Heritage Council.**



**Dr Martina Moloney,
Chairperson, The Heritage Council.**

Acknowledgements

Cavan County Council would like to thank the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in supporting the preparation of this County Biodiversity Action Plan in association with Cavan County Council. In addition, Cavan County Council acknowledges the role of Anne-Marie Ward (Cavan County Heritage Officer), Jennifer Mc Aree & Billy Flynn of Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd for their determined efforts throughout the development and review of the plan, Cathal Flood and all interested parties who kindly took part in the consultation and review process. In particular, the support, advice and guidance provided by Cavan County Biodiversity Steering Group is acknowledged. Cavan County Council would like to thank the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Local Biodiversity Action Plan Funding towards the implementation of projects under this plan.



Executive Summary

This document is County Cavan's first dedicated Biodiversity Action Plan supported by the Heritage Council and the Biodiversity Officer programme. It is a 5-year plan for the period 2025-2030. The Plan has been prepared by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants on behalf of the Cavan Heritage Office in conjunction with the Cavan Biodiversity Office. It recognises the huge challenges faced in County Cavan (and throughout Ireland and the globe) in terms of biodiversity loss and habitat degradation. It also references the issue of climate change, which is interlinked with the biodiversity crisis. With these challenges come opportunities, however. This document attempts to lay out information and guidance to lay a cohesive framework for the conservation and enhancement of County Cavan's precious biodiversity and natural landscape.

The County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed through desk research and site visits, in addition to feedback from key stakeholders during a core consultation process held from late 2021 to early 2024. The consultation process involved tailored questionnaires and two stakeholder consultation meetings. Details of the consultation feedback are laid out in Appendix A. The process also involved the establishment of a Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, which met in April 2022. This Steering Group was carefully formed following contact with a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in and/or responsibility for aspects related to biodiversity across County Cavan. The Steering Group helped to guide the completion of the Plan and will monitor its future implementation, along with Cavan Heritage and Biodiversity Office, with a Biodiversity Officer now in the role within Cavan County Council. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening have also been carried out in respect of this Biodiversity Action Plan, under the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC Article 1 and the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 6(3) and (4), respectively. The Plan has gone through another thorough review phase since May 2025 that has incorporated legislative change, updated information (i.e. statistical data, species status, etc.) and updated actions. A final adjusted screening review for such changes in this process has since been completed.

This Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the Aims, Objectives and Vision for enhancing and conserving County Cavan's biodiversity. It provides key details on County Cavan's main natural attributes and habitats, such as the unique and beautiful drumlin landscape, hedgerows and woodland, species-rich grasslands and its rich network of wetlands, including its reputed 365 lakes. It outlines many of the species present in the county, including birds, insects and mammals. Several species and habitats are now under threat, not only in Cavan, but also nationwide. EU protected, Natura 2000 sites – that is, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) - and nationally protected Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) - in the county are listed and briefly described. However, there is also much emphasis throughout the Plan on sites and habitats which are not officially protected and the concept of County Biodiversity Sites or Areas (CBAs) is introduced. CBAs have local biodiversity significance and nature value, such as Fartrin Bog, potentially. West Cavan also boasts the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, which it shares with Co. Fermanagh. The Geopark is a UNESCO Global Geopark and is one of the jewels in County Cavan's crown. It is given particular attention in this Plan due to its unique geology, habitats and associated flora and fauna.

Based on analysis of the desk research collated, site visits and feedback from the consultation process, a set of 10 Strategic Themes were developed for the Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan. Each Strategic Theme comes with a set of Actions, which are tied in with expected Outcomes, Impacts and suggested Partner Organisations. Targets are also set for each Action within the 5-year timeframe of the plan – that is, whether they are estimated to be Short-term, Medium-term or Long-term. Actions are aimed at being practical and achievable, yet effective. Case studies are presented along with each Strategic Theme and have been subsequently updated in this iteration where possible. These provide examples of what has already been done or is currently being done to enhance and conserve aspects of biodiversity within County Cavan. These examples are aimed at providing inspiration to all readers, whether it be stakeholders or the general public, to take action for biodiversity. The success of the County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 is dependent not only on the work of the Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, but also on the work of the wider Cavan County Council. The plan's success will also be dependent on appropriate funding and resources to support the strategic themes and actions put forward. It will involve collaboration with various groups and organisations as vital partner agencies and will assist the wider citizens of County Cavan to achieve their biodiversity targets and protect the essential biodiversity of County Cavan that we all must cherish.





Aims of this Plan

The overall aim of the County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan (2025-2030) is to place nature conservation and enhancement at the forefront of projects, policy and planning across County Cavan.

The main aims are:

- conserve, protect and manage biodiversity throughout County Cavan in line with the Cavan County Development Plan (2022-2028).
- sustain the rich and diverse natural heritage of County Cavan for present and future generations.
- enable the people of County Cavan to further understand, cherish and celebrate their natural heritage.
- ensure that natural heritage related matters are communicated effectively to all sectors.

Objectives of this Plan

The Objectives of this Biodiversity Action Plan are:

1	To review biodiversity information for County Cavan and to prioritise habitats and species for conservation action
2	To collect data and use it to inform conservation action, research and decision making
3	To incorporate positive action for biodiversity into local authority actions and policy
4	To promote best practice in biodiversity management and protection
5	To facilitate the dissemination of biodiversity information
6	To raise awareness of County Cavan's unique biodiversity and encourage individuals and communities to become involved in its conservation.

Structure of this Plan

This Biodiversity Plan presents the key areas of biodiversity into a strategic plan for County Cavan. It contains 10 priority Strategic Themes for the county. These are aspects of biodiversity that are especially resonant or important for Cavan. An action plan is an integral part of the strategy that will be undertaken over the next five years to enable positive outcomes for the county's biodiversity.

Vision of this Plan

Biodiversity is all around County Cavan, from the bogs of the Cuilcagh Mountains to the scenic lakes, wetlands and grasslands within the lowland drumlin landscape for which Cavan is famed. Biodiversity also occurs in our towns and villages, whether it is a robin foraging for earthworms in our gardens or lichens colonising walls. The warmth and shelter of our houses supports biodiversity be it a house spider spinning a web in the corners of rooms or bats roosting under the eaves.

Cavan County Council Heritage & Biodiversity Office has produced this County Cavan Biodiversity Plan, which sets out a range of actions for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the county. It stimulates effective local action, creates awareness and promotes biodiversity at the local authority level. It involves a partnership approach which will be essential to its success.

The Cavan County Biodiversity Action Plan translates International, European and National legislation and obligations in relation to biodiversity at a local level. The preparation and adoption of this plan will provide a framework for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. It will assist sustainable planning and development and raise public awareness of biodiversity through engaging numerous groups and individuals from wide ranging sectors.

What we do – Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office

The Heritage & Biodiversity Office

Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office is responsible for protecting, enhancing and promoting the built and natural heritage of County Cavan. The latter takes a leading role for natural heritage with the introduction of the Biodiversity Officer role in 2025. The heritage aspect mainly covers architectural and cultural heritage while the biodiversity aspect mainly covers natural heritage, though the two can often be intertwined. The Heritage & Biodiversity Office is also involved in conserving protected areas of national and international importance in terms of habitats and wildlife. These areas include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), National Heritage Areas (NHAs) and RAMSAR sites, as well as the evolving concept of County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs), which is described later in this document.

Cavan County Heritage Forum & Cavan Biodiversity Steering Group

Cavan County Heritage Forum and Cavan Biodiversity Steering Group are multi-stakeholder groups, drawn from local authority elected representatives and staff, other agencies, non-governmental organisations, the voluntary sector and individual local experts. They advise on the development and implementation of the County Heritage Plans and the County Biodiversity Plans.

Vision for Cavan Heritage and Biodiversity

The Heritage Council part funds the network of Heritage Officers and Biodiversity Officers in Local Authorities across the country as part of the Biodiversity Officer Programme. The Heritage Council's vision is that the value of our heritage is enjoyed, managed, and protected for the vital contribution that it makes to our identity, well-being and future.

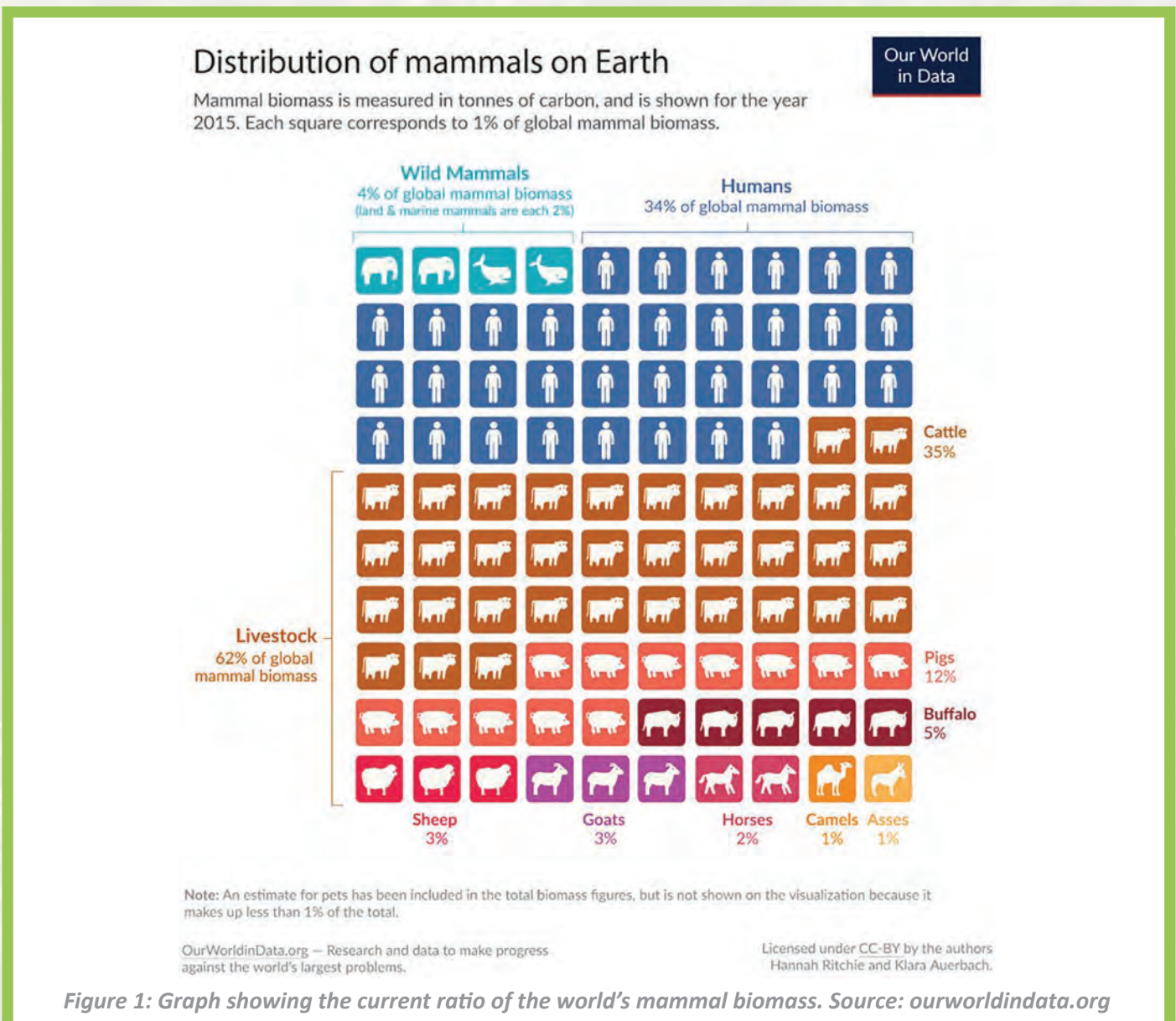
The guiding principle of Cavan County Heritage & Biodiversity Office is to ensure that "the unique and diverse heritage of County Cavan is conserved, sustained and, above all, cherished and celebrated by the people of the County." This will be achieved through the following aims:

- Cavan County Heritage & Biodiversity Office will conserve, protect and manage heritage throughout County Cavan.
- To sustain the rich and diverse heritage of County Cavan for present and future generations.
- To enable the people of County Cavan to cherish and celebrate their heritage.
- To ensure that heritage-related matters are communicated effectively to all sectors.



Challenges and Opportunities

According to the UN's Global Assessment Report (2025), one in four (or 1 million) species are now at risk of extinction on the planet. Over the past 50 years (1970–2020), the average size of monitored wildlife populations has shrunk by 73%, as measured by the Living Planet Index, with the steepest declines seen in freshwater ecosystems (85%) (WWF, 2024). This is the fastest decline in biodiversity ever experienced in history and is mainly being driven by a rapidly growing and urbanising human population, which is placing ever greater demands on natural resources for food, energy and consumer products. A study published by Ritchie (2022) on the distribution of the Earth's mammals shows that wild mammals now make up just 4% of the world's mammal biomass. The remaining 96% are composed of humans (34%) and livestock (62%). The dominance of humans over nature is clear.



Forests and wetlands are those faring worst in terms of habitat destruction, while soils are being degraded at an alarming rate. Consequently, over 40% of amphibians are threatened with extinction, according to a report by Rewild *et al* (2023). The latest State of the World's Birds report (BirdLife International, 2022) stated that nearly half of all bird species were found to be in decline, with many populations severely depleted. One in eight bird species globally is currently threatened with extinction. It is estimated that over 40% of insect species are declining and a third are endangered (Sánchez-Bayo & Wyckhuys, 2019). Habitat destruction,

and consequently species decline, often happens with the replacement of grassland with intensive crops, replacing ancient woodland with a plantation forest, or the clearing of forests to grow crops. Other key factors contributing significantly to the decline of biodiversity are climate change, pollution and invasive species.

Nationally, Ireland's biodiversity is experiencing its own crisis. A Climate and Biodiversity Emergency was declared by Dáil Eireann in May 2019, highlighting the immediate need for urgent action. Ireland became only the second country in the world to pass such a declaration after the UK. According to the most recent Article 17 reports sent to the EU under the Habitats Directive in 2019, just over half of the 60 legally protected species in Ireland are in 'favourable' condition (NPWS, 2019). Several important habitats and the species that depend on them are in poor or inadequate condition, including the Corncrake (*Crex crex*), Curlew (*Numenius Arquata*), Freshwater Pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*), and the once common Marsh Fritillary Butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*). Based on a 2006 Red List of Ireland's Bees, a third of our 99 bee species are threatened and listed as either critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2006). On the island of Ireland (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), an alarming 63% of our bird species are in serious trouble. Of the 211 species assessed, 54 (26%) were placed on the Red list (high conservation concern) and 79 (37%) on the Amber list (of medium conservation concern) (Gilbert *et al*, 2021).

County Cavan, like all other counties in the country, has seen a significant decline in biodiversity in recent times. While exact figures are difficult to find for the county specifically, going by the observations and monitoring carried out by various state bodies and communities, water quality has degraded and habitats unique to the county have been declining. Pressures include intensified agricultural practices, development, urban and domestic sewage pollution, interference with and removal of native habitats like trees and wetlands, as well as an increase in commercial conifer plantations in the west of the county.

What is Biodiversity?

'Biodiversity' is the shortened version of the term 'biological diversity'. It is all the different kinds of life in an area — the variety of animals, plants, fungi, bacteria and other microorganisms that make up our natural world. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life.



Why is Biodiversity important?

Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive. It has its own intrinsic value and without it the world as we know it would not exist. Biodiversity provides us with so much, including:

- fruit and vegetables and their insect pollinators.
- the animals that provide us with meat, dairy, fish and other food products.
- air purification, waste decomposition and important nutrient cycles.
- raw materials for fuel, building materials and the devices we now depend on every day.
- water supplies in rivers, lakes and other waterways.
- important moderation of droughts, floods, temperature extremes and the forces of wind.
- beautiful natural landscapes, which are the basis of much of the tourism industry.
- raw materials for traditional and modern medicines.

The biodiversity existing today is the result of some 3.5 billion years of evolution. It is the biological inheritance of the earth. Biodiversity is part of the daily lives of every one of us; it is fundamental to human existence and is essential to human survival. Biodiversity has important direct and indirect health and economic benefits as well as being intricately bound up in the cultural heritage of County Cavan.

Why a County Biodiversity Action Plan?

A biodiversity action plan is a policy document setting out strategies for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through a series of targeted actions. Since 2002, there has been a succession of National Biodiversity Plans published every four to five years. The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (2023- 2030) was published in January 2024 (DHLGH, 2024a) after a long-running public consultation process. The national plan highlights the key role that Local Authorities have in promoting biodiversity conservation and coordinating biodiversity issues at a more local level. A county biodiversity plan increases focus on the issues faced by a particular county, rather than the country as a whole. It also lays down a targeted set of aims, objectives and actions that help to ensure measures are taken to protect and enhance nature in this county. In addition to the National Biodiversity Action Plan, other key policy documents have influenced the development of the Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan. These are Heritage Ireland 2030: A Framework for Heritage, which was launched in February 2022, The Climate Action Plan 2023, the Cavan County Development Plan 2022- 2028 and the Cavan County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. Each of these documents includes significant emphasis on biodiversity (sometimes referred to as 'natural heritage'). The Climate Action Plan 2023 and the Cavan County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 acknowledge the climate and biodiversity crises and the inherent link between the two. They outline actions which support the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy.

How this Plan was Prepared

Cavan County Council and the Heritage Council commissioned Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants to undertake the preparation of this Biodiversity Action Plan, which included stakeholder consultation, desktop research and the preparation of several draft reports over a period of four years. This work was undertaken in accordance with existing guidelines at the time developed by the Heritage Council and published by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

A Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group has been established by Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office and Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants, including representatives from local government, government departments and agencies, academic institutions, environmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and representatives from local interest groups with support from the new Biodiversity Officer

(see the full list in Appendix D). The group has reviewed the information as well as strategic themes and actions laid out in the report. The Cavan Biodiversity Steering group has worked to develop and agree with the aims, objectives and actions recorded in this plan. Following that, the steering group aims to meet multiple times a year to monitor the progress of the plan and its actions where appropriate during the 5-year timeframe from 2025-2030. Upon the appointment of the Biodiversity Officer, consultation was undertaken on an individual basis and in collaboration with Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. It involved engaging with consultees for their feedback on the newest iteration of the plan via a review process following a delay in its progression. Newer members were also invited on board to consult with the Biodiversity Officer and Consultants as relevant to specific themes and actions (e.g. the East and West Cavan NPWS Conservation Rangers).

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening were carried out in respect of this Biodiversity Action Plan under the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC Article 1 and the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 6(3) and (4), respectively, and under the relevant legislation transposed under Irish law. As a non-statutory plan, the County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030 has been screened for the requirement for SEA under the requirements of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011. The Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08 states that screening for AA is of relevance to SEA screening in that “where following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach: An AA of the plan must be carried out, and In any case where SEA would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out.”

The AA Screening for the Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan was carried out by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. The AA Screening Conclusion states:

“The potential or likely impacts that will arise from the implementation of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan alone and in combination with other plans and programmes have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could potentially have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 Network. A finding of No Significant Effects Matrix has been completed and is presented in Section 4 of this Screening Statement. On the basis of the findings of this Screening for Appropriate Assessment of European Sites, it is concluded that the Draft Cavan County Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030 will not have a significant negative effect on the Natura 2000 Network and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.”

The SEA Screening was carried out by Clandillon Civil Consulting and Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. The final outcome of the SEA Screening was dependent on the comments of statutory bodies such as the EPA and relevant government departments. Comments were received from the EPA, Meath County Council and the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), which were each considered and included in the appropriate sections of this Biodiversity Action Plan. A review process of both the AA and SEA screening was completed in 2025, prior to the publication of the final version of this Biodiversity Action Plan.

County Cavan's Biodiversity

County Cavan has a beautiful drumlin landscape, unique to the South Ulster region, with an extensive system of interconnected lakes and rivers. While the drumlins and lake systems dominate to the east of the county, this gives way to grassland, woodland and the Cavan Burren to the west, with its limestone landscape, and related flora and fauna.

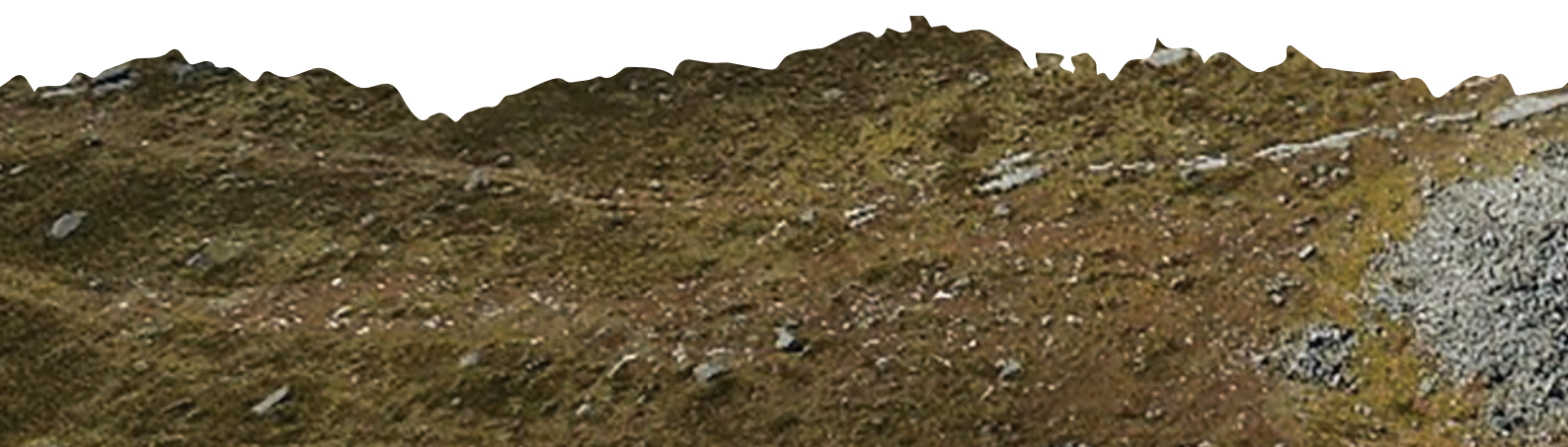
The main lake/river systems include the Erne catchment and the Annalee subcatchment. The River Erne rises between Ballyjamesduff and Cavan Town and flows south-west into Lough Gowna and Lough Oughter near Killeshandra, where it is also joined by the Cullies River. The Erne then flows north-east where it meets the Annalee River to the west of Butlers Bridge. The Annalee River drains the south-eastern part of the catchment, and is fed by the Bunnoe, Dromore, Knappagh, Madabawn, Laragh and Cavan Rivers. Past Ballyhaise, the Cavan River flows in from the south before the Annalee flows into the River Erne (EPA, 2018). It is a little-known fact that the River Shannon, Ireland's longest river, rises at Cuilcagh Mountain and the Shannon Pot in West Cavan.

There are several forest parks in County Cavan, associated with historical demesnes, including Killykeen, Deerpark, Dún na Rí, Dartrey and Bellamont, as well as Annagh Lough Wood and Ballyconnell Wood. These forest parks play a significant role in providing suitable habitat for a host of diverse plants (including woodland flora), birds, e.g. Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*) and mammals (e.g. Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), Pine Marten (*Martes martes*). While non-native conifer species such as Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) and Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) are often prevalent in each forest, they also consist of considerable amounts of mixed broadleaf woodland, including native species like Oak (*Quercus spp.*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), and non-natives such as Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

Wetlands are an important aspect of Cavan's landscape and biodiversity. Lough Oughter and its 70 inter-drumlin lakes is considered so significant in terms of wetland habitat that it was designated as a RAMSAR site (under the Ramsar Convention 1971), as a wetland of significant international importance. There are only 45 RAMSAR sites in Ireland (RAMSAR, 2014). Aquatic or wading birds that depend on this habitat and that live or visit Lough Oughter include the UCN Red-listed bird species Lapwing (*Vanellus Vanellus*) and Curlew. It also supports IUCN Amber-listed species such as Teal (*Anas crecca*), Wigeon (*Mareca Penelope*), White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) and Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*). Vegetation includes well-developed swamp and marsh communities and deciduous woodland, while the regularly flooded areas support various rare and specialist plant species.

Nationally and Internationally Designated Sites

The following sections briefly describe the UNESCO Geopark, as well as Irish- and EU-designated Natura 2000 sites across County Cavan and sites that may become important outside designation proposed (i.e. CBAs).



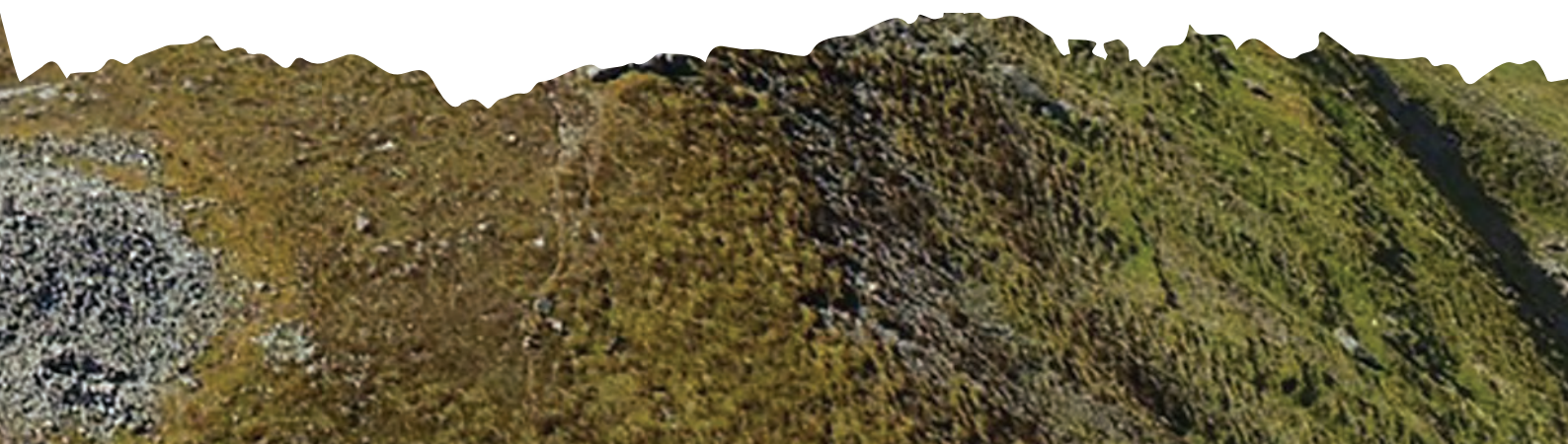


Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark

Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark covers an area over 1781km² in the counties of Cavan and Fermanagh. The Geopark is home to a fascinating variety of internationally important geology features, natural landscapes and historic relics. Impressive lakes, gently rolling drumlins and winding rivers are set against the dramatic backdrop of spectacular cliffs, rugged outcrops, hidden caves and a fabulous array of natural habitats and species. It also contains prehistoric tombs, Iron Age forts, early Christian monasteries, and Ulster Plantation Castles. See cuilcaghlakelands.org for more information.

EU designated Natura 2000 Sites and National Heritage Areas (NHAs)

There are a number of designated Natura 2000 sites across County Cavan, which are protected under EU Law. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within these sites. EU designated sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Area (SPAs), while nationally designated sites are called Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). The map below indicates the internationally protected sites in County Cavan.



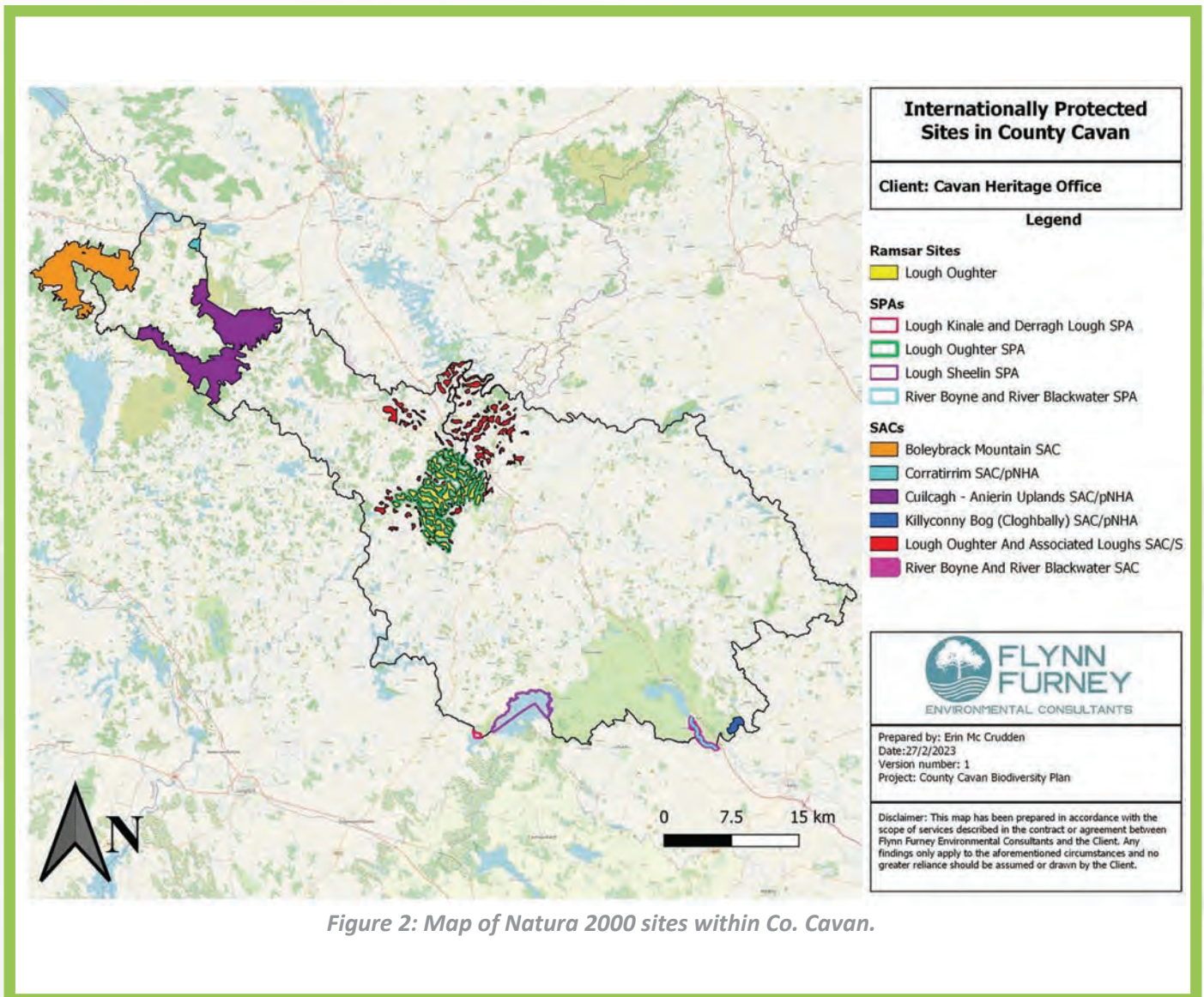


Figure 2: Map of Natura 2000 sites within Co. Cavan.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

Any development in or near a SAC should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated or proposed for designation. There are six ratified SACs in County Cavan indicated in the table below. These were former Candidate SACs (cSACs) that were sites submitted to the European Commission but not formally adopted until relatively recently. Candidate SACs are awarded the same level of protection as fully designated SACs but these sites are now ratified as of 2025.

SITE	STATUS	CODE
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	SAC	000006
Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs	SAC	000007
Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands	SAC	000584
Corratirrim	SAC	000979
Boleybrack Mountain	SAC	002032
River Boyne and Blackwater	SAC	002299

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

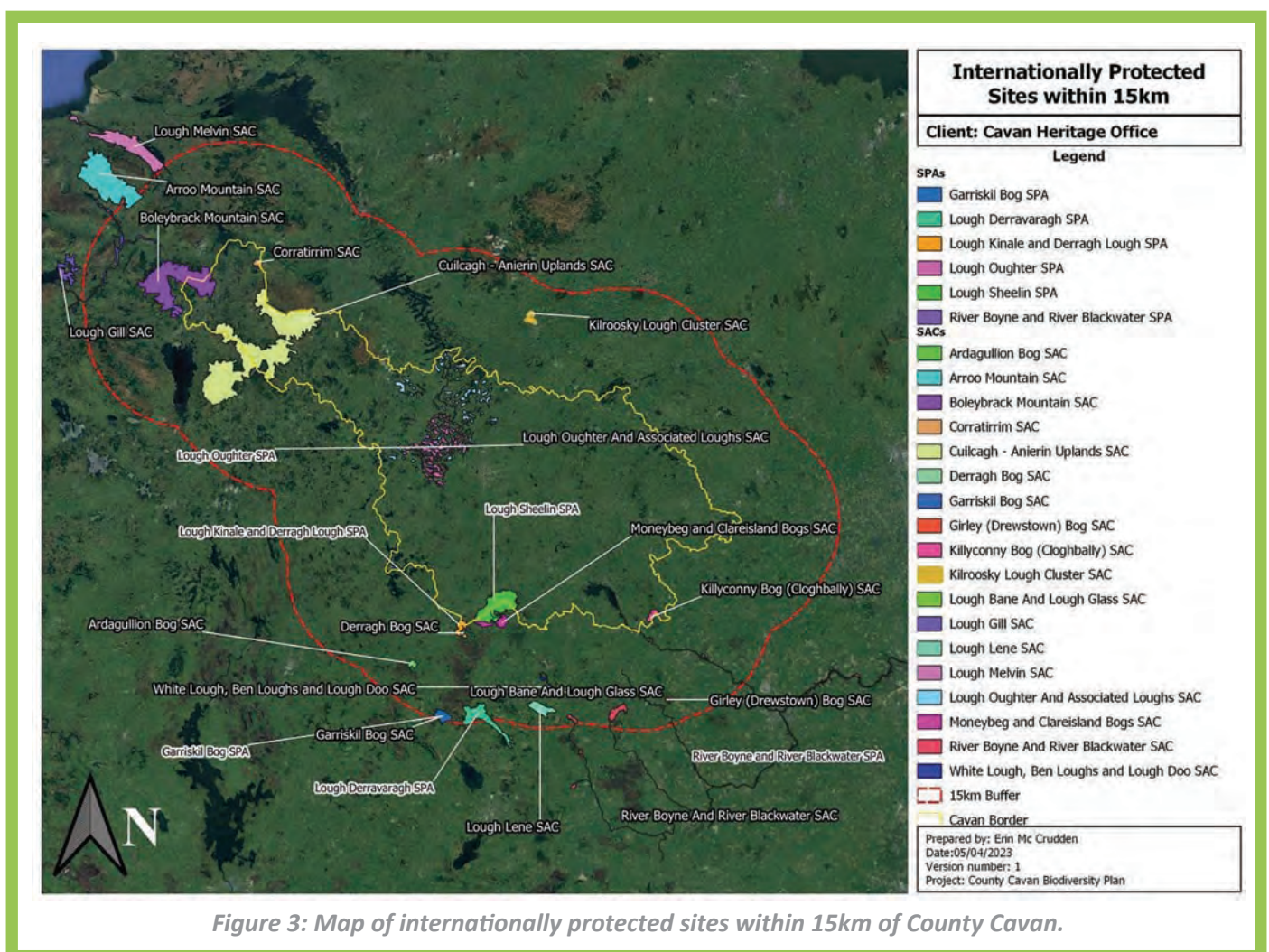
These are sites of importance for birds (and often of importance for other types of wildlife). The EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) requires designation of SPAs for listed vulnerable species. This includes sites with regularly occurring migratory species, including wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year. Development in or near a SPA should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. There are four SPAs in County Cavan, indicated in the table below.

SITE	STATUS	CODE
Lough Oughter	SPA	004049
Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough	SPA	004061
Lough Sheelin	SPA	004065
River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	SPA	004232



The following map shows Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs) within 15km of the County Cavan border. Boleybrack Mountain SAC straddles the Cavan/Leitrim border. Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands SAC crosses the Cavan/Leitrim/ Fermanagh borders, while Corratirrim SAC straddles the Cavan/Fermanagh border. Lough Sheelin SPA is shared with Counties Meath and Westmeath and Lough Kinale & Derragh Lough SPA crosses the Cavan/Longford/Westmeath borders, while the River Boyne & River Blackwater SAC/SPA cover Cavan/Louth/Meath/Westmeath. Derragh Bog SAC lies just south of Cavan in Co. Longford, while Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs also lie just south of Cavan in Counties Meath and Westmeath.

The other protected areas indicated on the map are located within or just at the outer edge of the 15km radius around Co. Cavan. These are Lough Melvin SAC, Arroo Mountain SAC, Lough Gill SAC, Kilrooskey Lough Cluster SAC, Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC, Garriskill Lough SAC, Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC, Lough Derravaragh SPA, Garriskil Bog SAC/SPA, Ardgullion Bog SAC, White Lough, Ben Loughs & Lough Doo SAC and Lough Lene SAC.



National Heritage Areas (NHAs)

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 substantially strengthened the protection for wildlife previously available under the Wildlife Act 1976. In particular, it provides for the designation and conservation of National Heritage Areas (NHAs). This is an area considered nationally important for the habitats present or that holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. Any development in or near a NHA should avoid significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. There are two NHAs and eighteen proposed NHAs in County Cavan. Proposed NHAs are subject to limited protection in contrast to fully designated NHAs. All NHAs and pNHAs in County Cavan are listed below.

SITE	STATUS	CODE
Dromore Lake pNHA	pNHA	000001
Bruse Hill	pNHA	000002
Cootehill Church	pNHA	000003
Lough Ramor	pNHA	000008
Mullanacre Upper	pNHA	000009
Slieve Rushen Bog	NHA	000009
Annagh Lough (Ballyconnell)	pNHA	000974
Blackrocks Cross	pNHA	000976
Clonty Hill	pNHA	000977
Cordonaghy Bog	pNHA	000978
Drumkeen House Woodland	pNHA	000980
Glasshouse Lake	pNHA	000983
Lough Garrow and Lough Gubdoo	pNHA	000984
Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough	NHA	000986
Lough MacNeen Upper	pNHA	000986
Lough Sheelin	pNHA	000987
Madabawn Marsh	pNHA	000988
Lough Gowna	pNHA	000992
Drumcor Lough	pNHA	001941

County Biodiversity Sites/County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs):

The Heritage Council has been working with a national working group involving NPWS, the Biodiversity Officer Network and relevant stakeholders to develop guidelines to assist local authorities in the identification and protection of locally important County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) through local biodiversity action plans (LBAPs) and the associated policies in county and city development plans. This initiative is looking at influencing County Development Plan policies seeking to protect county or local level biodiversity sites that may be unprotected or in some cases not identified or mapped. In these cases, ground truthing surveys can be utilized through local biodiversity funding. County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) are non-designated sites that contribute significantly to the ecological framework of a city or county. These sites, while not formally designated, play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity at a local level and can be adequately protected through the policies and objectives of a city or county development plan. The sites themselves offer essential ecosystem services to nearby communities and contribute to the overall ecological health of the region, as well as often being located near to designated sites. Fartrin Bog is an example of a potential candidate for the CBA site status.



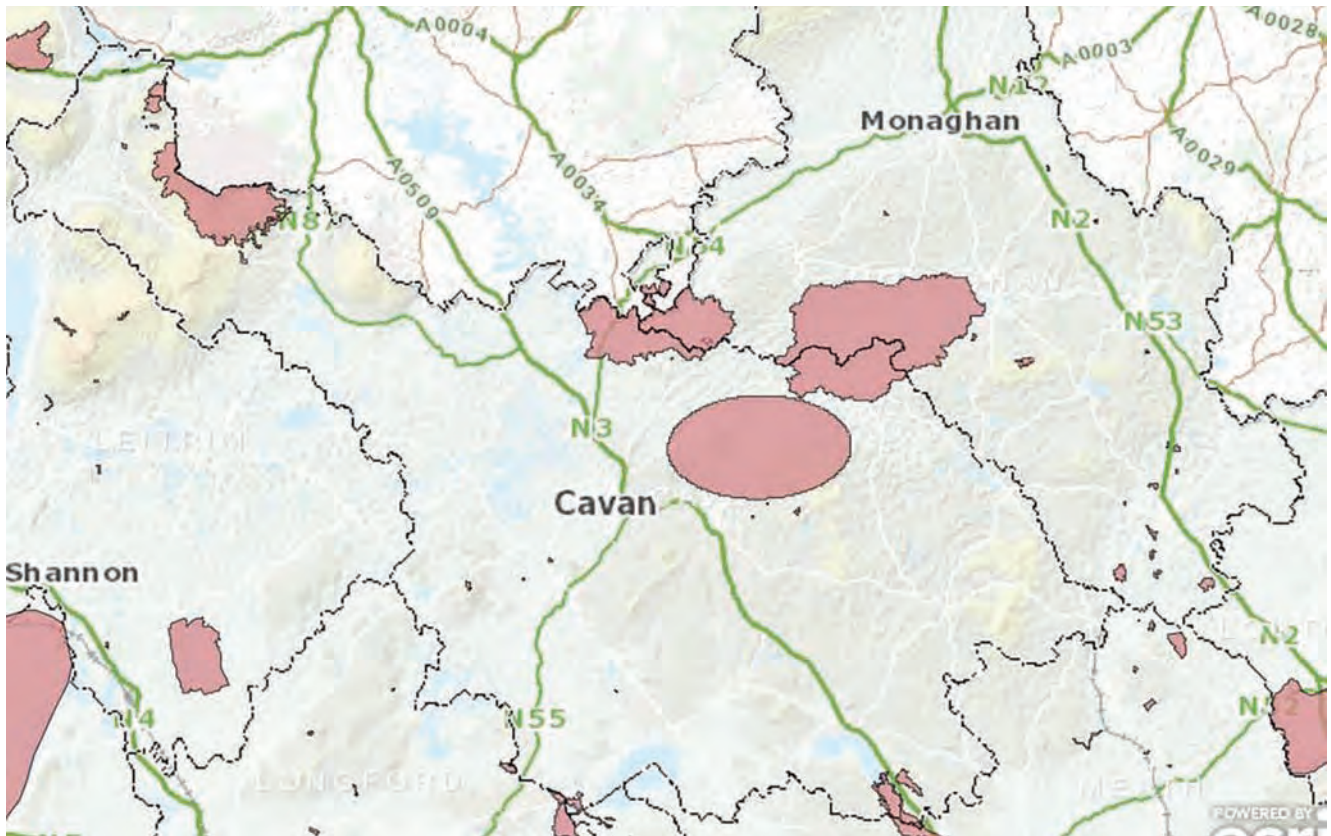


Figure 5: Overview of Cavan's County Geological Sites (CGS) audited by GSI in 2013. Source: gsi.ie.

There are a wide range of rock types across County Cavan. There is a sliver of Granite in Crossdoney, while northwest of the county, Carboniferous age rocks from around 340-320 million years ago are present in the form of thick limestones, overlain by thick sandstones, such as at Cuilcagh Mountain. A small portion of Cavan is composed of Permian and Triassic rocks, best seen in Monaghan, but which include gypsum deposits. The overall landscape of Cavan is most affected by the last Ice Age which left thick deposits of glacial till as drumlins, often combined into mega ridges of ribbed moraine. Disrupted drainage patterns provide a legacy of lakes and rivers interspersed amongst the ribbed moraines and drumlins. Peat also formed over time between the drumlin and ribbed moraine ridges, creating bogland (Parkes *et al*, 2013).

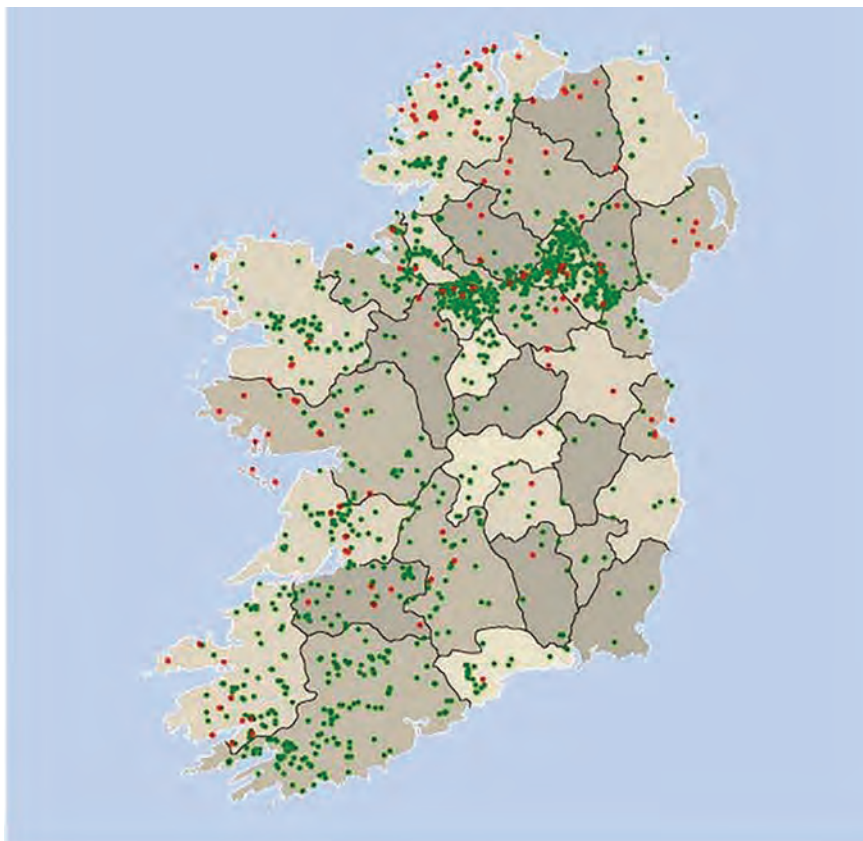
The importance of Cavan's geology and its 'geodiversity' should not be overlooked in regard to biodiversity. It is worth noting that geodiversity is biodiversity's silent partner and the foundation for other forms of biodiversity. The GSI report listed and summarised a range of sites – both small- and large-scale - across County Cavan in relation to their geological importance. All sites listed were categorised with a recommended Designation – a County Geological Site (CGS) and a Geological NHA. These sites are shown on the map below and presented in more detail in Appendix C of this document.



Drumlin Landscape

County Cavan is renowned for its beautiful hilly or 'drumlin' landscape, with lakes and wetlands lying in the numerous hollows in between. The name "drumlin", used internationally, comes from the Irish 'dromnin' meaning 'little ridge' or 'small, round-backed hill'. A drumlin is described as an oval or elongated hill, which was formed by the streamlined movement of glacial ice sheets across rock debris, or till. Drumlins are mostly found in broad lowland regions, with their long axes roughly parallel to the path of glacial flow. They come in a variety of shapes, but in general the glacier side is always high and steep, while the 'lee' side is smooth and tapers gently in the direction of ice movement (Meehan, 2011). Drumlins are often found in clusters and this can be seen in the 'drumlin belt', which stretches from County Down in the northeast, down to South Ulster via Counties Armagh, Monaghan and Cavan, and then upwards via Leitrim and south Donegal to the northwest coast. The ice during the last glaciation deposited ribbed moraines, crag-and-tails and drumlins that give the County Cavan its characteristic "basket-of-eggs" topography.

Ribbed moraines are large 'chains' of drumlins, which are oriented transverse to ice flow. It is worth noting that the ribbed moraine system on Lough Oughter is internationally important in its own right. The ribbed moraines found in this part of Ireland are described as 'mega scale' ribbed moraines and they are the largest found anywhere in the world. They are most clearly seen on an Ordnance Survey Map, or from the air or satellite image. The drumlin hills that are commonplace in this part of Cavan have formed on top of these ribbed moraines indicating a complex relationship between ice sheets and the underlying landscape. It is for this reason that the glacial landscapes of this part of Ireland are a focus for glacial research advances in the understanding of ice sheet evolution (Parkes et al, 2013). Drumlins are especially concentrated throughout the counties of Monaghan, Cavan and Leitrim. This is reflected in the placenames of these counties, which have the greatest concentration of variations of the word 'Droim' on the island of Ireland (see map below).



*Figure 6: The 'Drumlin Belt', concentrated through counties Monaghan, Cavan and Leitrim.
Source: logainm.ie and placenamesni.org.*

Lakes & Rivers

County Cavan is a 'wet' county with a rich source of wetland sites including lakes, rivers, bogs and floodplains. Cavan reputedly has 365 lakes – one for every day of the year! An image of each of these lakes has been captured for a book called 'Lakes of Cavan: One for Every Day of the Year' by Hu O'Reilly (2021). Cavan's lakes are mostly set within its vast network of drumlins that stretch throughout the county which were formed during the last glaciation. Both the River Erne and River Shannon, the longest rivers in Ireland, rise in County Cavan. The Shannon rises in the Geopark, West Cavan. The surface source of the Shannon is at the Shannon Pot, while the sub surface source is on Western Cuilcagh Mountain. The geology in the west of the county is mainly composed of limestone and due to this there is a hidden network of underground water systems, where rivers or lakes flow underground.

Lough Oughter is composed of a vast system of lakes and associated wetlands fed by the Erne River system, with an area of 1,464ha. Its network of interconnected lakes is an important Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in the county. It is also a designated RAMSAR site, meaning it is an internationally recognised wetland. Lough Oughter is described as being 'set in a lowland drumlin' with a 'complicated system of 70 inter-drumlin lakes and numerous basins along the Erne River'. The site includes open water, adjacent floodplain and drumlin slopes on islands, and isolated headlands. Vegetation includes well-developed swamp and marsh communities and deciduous woodland. Regularly flooded areas support various rare and specialist plant species. Substantial populations of waterbirds, including internationally important numbers of Whooper Swan and nationally important numbers of Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) and Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), are supported. The wintering Whooper Swan population represents 3% of the total European population, which is very significant in global terms (RAMSAR, 2014).

Other significant lakes in County Cavan include Lough Sillan, Lough Ramor, Lough Sheelin, Lough Gowna, Upper Lough Erne and Lough Macnean. Key rivers include the River Erne, Dromore, Blackwater, Annalee, Cladagh, Finn and Glyde. Together, these lakes and rivers make up an invaluable network of habitats and ecosystems in County Cavan that support a wide array of plant and animal species and support human life. They are also key to leisure activities such as angling and greatly benefit the county's tourism sector. Maintaining and improving the health of County Cavan's lakes and rivers is very important. They require particular care and protection for the benefit of all.

Bogs & Wetlands

Cavan has a rich network of wetlands, many of which interlink between its expansive landscape of drumlins. According to the 2021 Cavan Wetlands Map project (Foss *et al*, 2021), there are 714 areas of wetlands currently recorded for the county, of which 626 had no detailed background survey information. A series of targeted surveys to assess the ecological status of 477 of these undocumented wetlands began in 2023 and has been ongoing on a phased basis. There are several bogs in County Cavan that support a rich diversity of flora and fauna in their own right. These include Killyconny Bog, a raised bog designated as an SAC, and Slieve Rushen Bog, a NHA and blanket bog plateau in the Cuilcagh Mountains. There are other smaller patches of bog that are dotted around the county with no particular designation or protection. Several of these unprotected bogs are observed and surveyed by the West Cavan Bogs Association. Bogs and wetlands are essential to a healthy ecosystem, supporting a myriad of flora and fauna species, however they are under threat for several reasons, namely pollution from Forestry/Silviculture and Agricultural activities. Modifications through more intensive farming practices have also played their part. Damage to wetlands will be discussed further under the section 'Threats to Nature in Cavan'. County Cavan is privileged to have such an extensive network of wetlands and bogs, many of which would benefit from having greater awareness and protection, possibly via County Biodiversity Area (CBA) status.

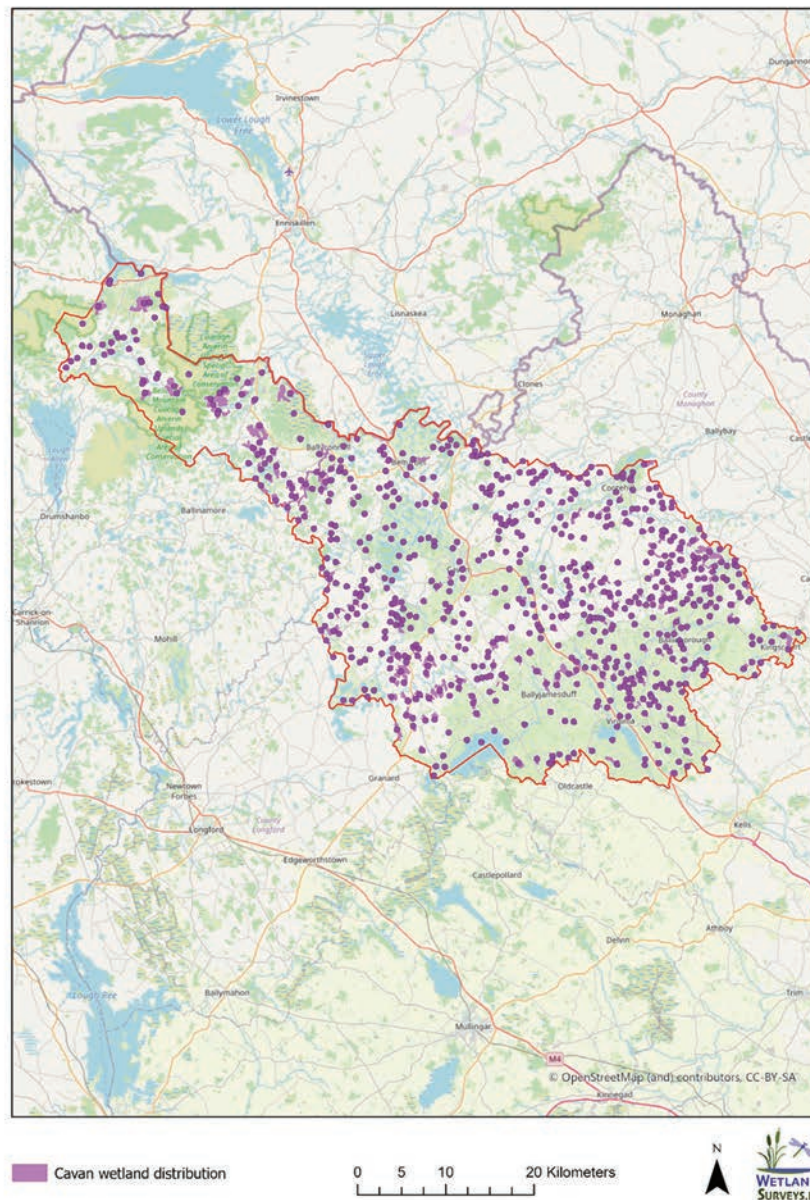


Figure 7: Map of County Cavan's bogs and wetlands. Source: Crushell et al 2025.

In the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Cavan County Development Plan 2014-2020, two undesignated wetlands were deemed important and worthy of inclusion in the Plan. The first was Tirlahode Lough and its associated habitats, situated between Cavan and Grousehall. It was considered a “quite exceptional site worthy of site survey, recognition and conservation”, approximately 10ha in area and further investigation was recommended. The other site highlighted is a wetland area between Cavan and Cootehill, south of the townland of Drung. It is a habitat of reedbed and tall sedge swamp and scrub, supporting mature White Willow (*Salix alba*) trees which support considerable quantities of invertebrates, including scarce species of moths. The site is approximately 6.25ha in size and straddles three townlands, Carrikateane, Killygarry and Corcloghan. It also forms part of the Annalee Catchment. It was acknowledged that these sites are “good locations as ‘stepping stones’ and sanctuaries for species” as well as being “essential as part of flood control”. Fartrin Bog in Ballyconnell was also featured in the SEA report and was considered to be equal if not better than most of the pNHAs designated in the county. It contains EU Annex I habitats and remains unprotected under legislation. There are also further heath and raised bog areas near to Fartrin which used to form a network of interconnecting wetland habitats and would have formed part of the “Bealaheady Mountain”.

Species Rich Grasslands & Heathlands

There are still areas of important species-rich grassland in County Cavan, especially in the west of the county. These provide excellent habitats for many breeding birds and mammals, as well as supporting a vast array of insects such as bee, butterfly, moth and dragonfly species. Species-rich grasslands are some of the most threatened yet overlooked habitats in Ireland. They are under threat after several decades of intensified agriculture, which favours monoculture over multi-species swards. There has been a recent shift towards sowing multi-species swards due to rising fertiliser costs, and for environmental and animal health reasons; however, this is still in its infancy. A study by BEC Consultants in 2009 included surveys of species-rich grassland sites across County Cavan, with most of these occurring in West Cavan. Species-rich grassland types that were recorded on these sites included dry neutral or calcareous grassland, acid grassland, neutral wet, rushy grassland, marsh and tall herb communities, as well as mildly acidic rushy pastures and *Molinia* meadows.



Species-rich, calcareous grassland in Killeshandra. Source: Heather Bothwell.

In addition, the SEA carried out for the Cavan County Development Plan (2014-2020) highlighted areas that were brought forward by NPWS. Many of these included bog and heathland areas that it was understood have been overlooked for protection to date. Areas around Slieve Rushen were highlighted for their “heath, heath-grassland, heather, upland bog, species rich grasslands, and mosaics of the above (some on which the legally protected butterfly Marsh Fritillary occur and depend)”. It was felt these were omitted from the Slieve Rushen NHA designation as they are EU Annex I habitats in their own right and require protection. These include the townlands at Mullinacre Upper, Corneen and Carrowmore, possibly on the adjoining townlands and on the Swanlinbar side.

The SEA report also included sections from the NPWS featuring Small White Orchid (*Pseudorchis albida*) habitats in West Cavan, as well as Limestone/Calcareous and Heath Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) scrub. Small White Orchids and Calcareous scrub are now relatively rare and are found in the areas around Glangevlin to Dowra to Lough MacNean/Corratrim/Moneygashel/Skeagh. However, they have been under threat in recent times. White Orchids are legally protected under the Flora Protection Order 1999, Section 21 of the Wildlife Acts and as such it is felt their remaining habitats in West Cavan are of national significance. The rare and protected Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas Aurinia*) butterfly is known to be present in these lands, which is also worth noting.

In East Cavan, notable areas where heaths remain are at Bruse Hill and Loughanleagh. However, these areas are also under threat, with significant heath destruction occurring at Loughanleagh in early 2023 and unfortunately further damage subsequently. In a 2002 study of Loughanleagh, there were three species of Heather recorded – Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell (*Erica cinerea*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*). Bilberry or ‘Fraughan’ (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) is also widespread and abundant on the mountain, with scattered areas of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Willow species (*Salix spp.*) and various ferns and mosses. Bruse Hill is another area of high biodiversity value with relatively large areas of Heather and Gorse scrub as of 2023. These habitat types support a wide array of birds and small mammals; however, they continue to be under threat from scrub clearing methods, notably burning. This will be discussed in more detail in the ‘Threats to Nature in Cavan’ section.

Woodlands & Hedgerows

In County Cavan, just 10.1% of the county’s land area is covered in forest (DAFM, 2025). The most recent figures show that 59% of this tree cover is composed of conifer species and 41% is broadleaf species (DAFM, 2023). In recent times the number of conifer species being planted in the county has been declining, with a move towards increasing the number of native broadleaves. In 2024, of the 97ha planted with trees, 75ha (or 77.3%) of this were broadleaf (DAFM, 2025). There are a few remaining old demesnes in the county covered by mixed broadleaf woodland. These include Farnham Estate bordering Cavan town, which has about 280 hectares of mixed woodland and Cole’s Estate in Cloverhill, which contains approximately 20 hectares of mature Oak *Quercus spp.* As well as about 30 hectares of mixed woodlands (Teagasc, 2021a). Elsewhere, there is a significant Oak plantation near Ballyhaise Agricultural College and Annagh Lough Woods is worth noting for its biodiversity value, while Ballyconnell Demesne is considered to have a very important native woodland, classed as Long-Established Woodland (LEW). Currently, one of the biggest threats to County Cavan’s tree population is Ash Dieback Disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*). This disease has been decimating thousands of Ash trees across the country over the past two decades.

With regard to hedgerows, County Cavan is the county with the most hedgerow cover in Ireland, according to Teagasc (2021b). In terms of ‘non-forest hedgerow, scrub and woodland’ (HSW) present in the county, Cavan was estimated by Teagasc to have 20,000 ha (covering 10.4% of the county) in 2011, which was the second highest amount, after County Monaghan (DAFM, 2025). Counties around the midlands and the border tend to have the highest density of hedgerows with smaller fields due to the type of farming undertaken there (mostly pastoral/grazing land use). The practice of hedge removal and severe hedge cutting in recent decades has decimated large areas of habitat used for nesting and cover for many of our bird species, e.g. Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*).





An image from Cavan Hedgerow Survey 2024. Source: Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants.

Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark

Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark encompasses some of the finest landscapes in Counties Cavan and Fermanagh and in 2008 became the world's first cross border geopark. UNESCO Global Geoparks are places where outstanding geological heritage is used to support sustainable development through conservation, education, community engagement and sustainable tourism. Global Geoparks became an official programme within the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2015. To become a UNESCO Global Geopark, a region must have geological heritage of international significance. Geoparks encompass people in tandem with place. Places that have an important history to tell, places of archaeological significance, places with fascinating plants and wildlife and landscapes full of intriguing folklore. UNESCO Global Geoparks aim to not only help to protect these wonderful places but also commit to benefiting the local economy and communities by attracting people to the area using the beauty and intrigue of the natural environment.

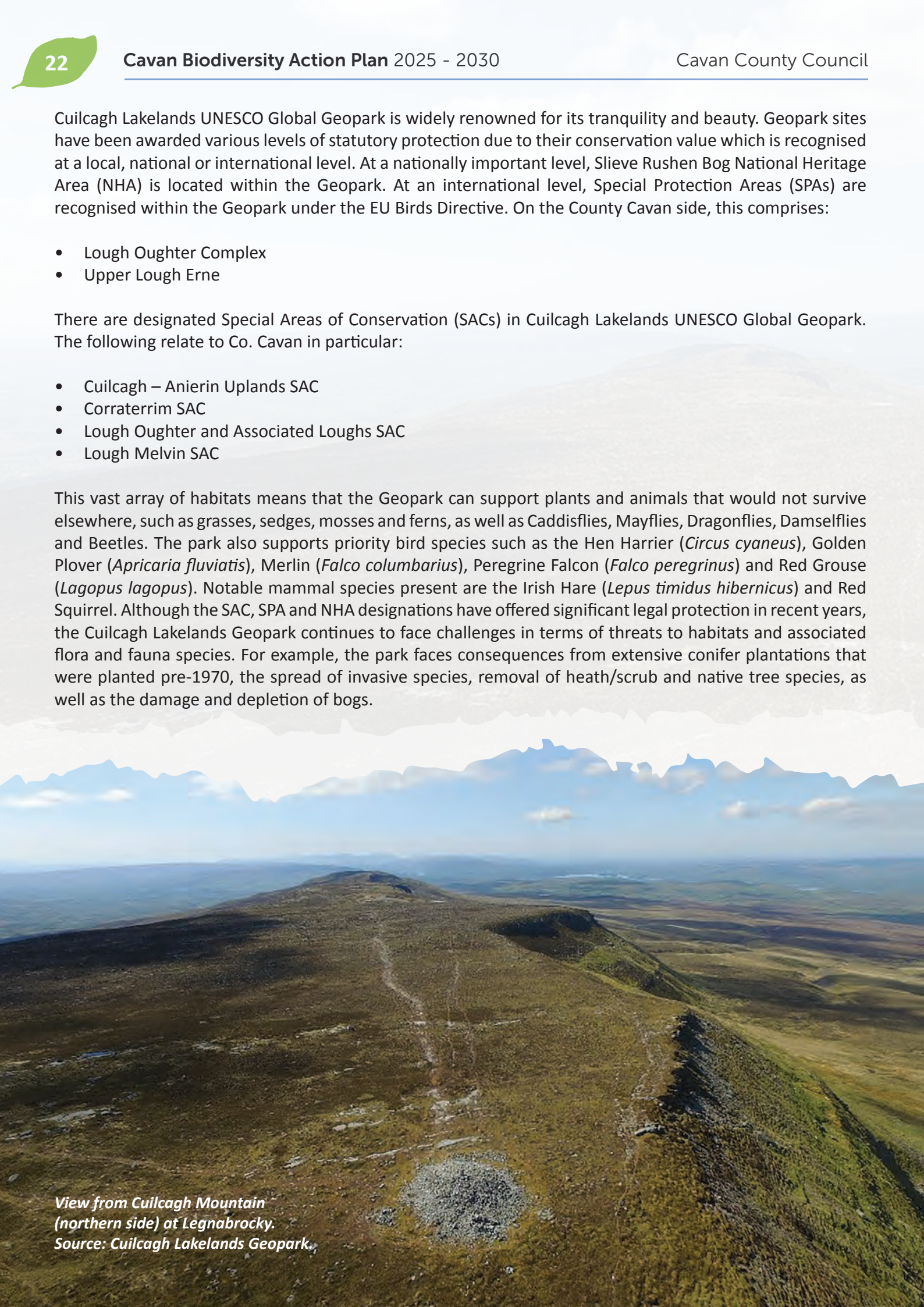
Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark is widely renowned for its tranquility and beauty. Geopark sites have been awarded various levels of statutory protection due to their conservation value which is recognised at a local, national or international level. At a nationally important level, Slieve Rushen Bog National Heritage Area (NHA) is located within the Geopark. At an international level, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are recognised within the Geopark under the EU Birds Directive. On the County Cavan side, this comprises:

- Lough Oughter Complex
- Upper Lough Erne

There are designated Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark. The following relate to Co. Cavan in particular:

- Cuilcagh – Anierin Uplands SAC
- Corraterrim SAC
- Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC
- Lough Melvin SAC

This vast array of habitats means that the Geopark can support plants and animals that would not survive elsewhere, such as grasses, sedges, mosses and ferns, as well as Caddisflies, Mayflies, Dragonflies, Damselflies and Beetles. The park also supports priority bird species such as the Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Golden Plover (*Apricaria fluviatis*), Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*). Notable mammal species present are the Irish Hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*) and Red Squirrel. Although the SAC, SPA and NHA designations have offered significant legal protection in recent years, the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark continues to face challenges in terms of threats to habitats and associated flora and fauna species. For example, the park faces consequences from extensive conifer plantations that were planted pre-1970, the spread of invasive species, removal of heath/scrub and native tree species, as well as the damage and depletion of bogs.



*View from Cuilcagh Mountain
(northern side) at Légnabrocky.
Source: Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark.*



*Cuilcagh Lakelands staff undertaking monitoring training on the blanket bog at Cuilcagh.
Source: Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark.*

The Geopark collaborates and works in partnership with a range of statutory, voluntary, community and business partners to help improve the understanding, preservation and conservation of the area's heritage. For example, the CANN (Collective Action for the Natura Network) Project was a recent, successful cross-border environment project (2017-2022), funded by the EU's INTERREG Programme, which aimed to improve the condition of protected habitats and to support priority species found within Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland and Scotland, allowing the region to meet key EU biodiversity targets and ensuring the future of these internationally important habitats and species.

One of the CANN Projects focused on developing a Conservation Action Plan for both the Cuilcagh Mountain SAC (Northern Ireland) and Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands SAC (Republic of Ireland) and generating an up-to-date habitat map for the site. These documents were completed and will be used to inform conservation decisions and management strategies, with an overall aim to guide the site towards a favourable conservation status. Bog restoration on almost 100ha of blanket bog have already been trialed with landowners on the Fermanagh side (Cuilcagh Mountain SAC). Local landowners were engaged to restore almost 100ha of blanket bog in two areas of Cuilcagh Mountain SAC using best practice techniques from across Ireland and the UK. Initial results have shown notable improvements in the blanket bog habitats, and this activity was just one example of what could be achieved across this landscape going forward. The Geopark, in partnership with Cavan County Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, NPWS, Coillte and local landowners, have secured £1.5 million, through the Shared Island Peatland Challenge Fund and Peace Plus 'Peat+ project' to implement a suite of actions in key areas to build on existing conservation efforts.

Threatened Species in Ireland

Threatened Bird Species

There are numerous bird species now under threat for a variety of reasons in Ireland. Under the most recent Birds of Conservation Concern List 2020-2026 for Ireland (determined by the RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland), the declining numbers of certain bird species has meant a significant increase in those making the Red and Amber lists, which is very worrying. Of the 211 species assessed, 54 (26%) were placed on the Red list, 79 (37%) on the Amber list and 78 (37%) on the Green list (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021). The plight of the Corncrake is well known and tragically this once widespread bird has been pushed to the brink, surviving only in remote parts of the west of Ireland. Unfortunately, other bird species like the Curlew and Barn Owl *Tyto alba* are heading in a similar direction and will be on the path to extinction if we humans do not take action immediately.

Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026

Red-list species (high conservation concern)

<p>Breeding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quail Grey Partridge Red Grouse Black-necked Grebe Stock Dove Nightjar Swift Corncrake Leach's Storm-petrel Woodcock Red-necked Phalarope Kittiwake Puffin Bazorbill Barn Owl Golden Eagle White-tailed Eagle Red Kite Kestrel Wood Warbler 	<p>Breeding continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ring Ouzel Common Redstart Whinchat Meadow Pipit Grey Wagtail Twite Yellowhammer <p>Passage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turtle Dove Balearic Shearwater Curlew Sandpiper <p>Wintering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bewick's Swan Long-tailed Duck Velvet Scoter Goldeneye Scaup Slavonian Grebe 	<p>Wintering continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey Plover Bar-tailed Godwit Black-tailed Godwit Knot Purple Sandpiper Snowy Owl Redwing <p>Breeding and Wintering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eider Common Scoter Pochard Shoveler Oystercatcher Golden Plover Lapwing Curlew Dunlin Shipe Redshank
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For more information, please see Gilbert G, Stanbury A and Lewis L (2021), "Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026". Irish Birds 9: 523-544

The categorisation of species as breeding, wintering etc. refers to the populations against which BoCCI criteria were applied





Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026

Amber-list species (medium conservation concern)

<p>Breeding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goosander Garganey Spotted Crane European Storm-petrel Fulmar Manx Shearwater Gannet Shag Little Ringed Plover Common Sandpiper Mediterranean Gull Little Tern Roseate Tern Common Tern Arctic Tern Sandwich Tern Great Skua Black Guillemot Common Guillemot Short-eared Owl Marsh Harrier Hen Harrier Goshawk Kingfisher Merlin Chough Skylark Bearded Reedling House Martin 	<p>Breeding continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swallow Sand Martin Willow Warbler Starling Spotted Flycatcher Northern Wheatear Goldcrest House Sparrow Tree Sparrow Greenfinch Linnet Pied Flycatcher Western Yellow Wagtail <p>Passage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cory's Shearwater Ruff Spotted Redshank Wood Sandpiper Little Gull Black Tern Wryneck Tree Pipit <p>Wintering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent Goose Barnacle Goose Greylag Goose Greater White-fronted Goose 	<p>Wintering continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smew Pintail Black-throated Diver Great Northern Diver Bittern Turnstone Brambling <p>Breeding and Wintering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mute Swan Whooper Swan Red-breasted Merganser Shelduck Tufted Duck Gadwall Wigeon Mallard Teal Great Crested Grebe Coot Red-throated Diver Cormorant Ringed Plover Black-headed Gull Common Gull Lesser Black-backed Gull European Herring Gull
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For more information, please see Gilbert G, Stanbury A and Lewis L (2021), "Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026". Irish Birds 9: 523-544

The categorisation of species as breeding, wintering etc. refers to the populations against which BoCCI criteria were applied





Threatened Species in Cavan

While there are numerous species under threat across Ireland, the species below have been chosen more particularly in terms of their relevance to County Cavan. By highlighting these species, it is hoped that actions can be laid out and subsequently acted upon to help reduce threats within the county and to support their populations before circumstances worsen further. While there are other species within the county that are also under threat, those described below have been carefully chosen based on information received from various sources, e.g. BirdWatch Ireland (BWI) - Cavan Branch, National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Northern Ireland (NI) and local naturalists.

Red Listed Birds

Curlew

The Curlew is one of the most iconic birds of the Irish countryside. Sadly, the Curlew, along with other breeding wader species, has suffered drastic declines in recent years and has almost disappeared. 90% of the Irish breeding population has been lost since the 1970s. A national survey carried out between 2015 and 2017, funded by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and conducted by BirdWatch Ireland and others, found that only 138 pairs remain (and has since been decreasing). They are likely to cease to be a breeding species within the next decade unless conservation efforts stepped up. In County Cavan, it is thought there are a few pairs of Curlew remaining in the Lough Macnean area, bordering with County Fermanagh. There is opportunity here to initiate a cross-border project to help support remaining pairs in the last push to save this species in Ireland, possibly in collaboration with the Breeding Waders EIP, which has become established at specific wader action zones in Ireland following its launch in 2024.



Swift Nest Sites were identified at this derelict site with established nest boxes during the West Cavan Swift Survey in Swanlinbar. Many of the Cavan Swift Nest sites were found in derelict buildings with 36% found in just of two of them in the 2025 report supported through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF) from NPWS.

Swift

The Swift (*Apus apus*) is an iconic bird that has traditionally migrated to Ireland every year for the summer months before flying back to tropical Africa to winter there. They spend most of their life in flight, feeding, mating and even sleeping in the air. Unfortunately, these birds are now on the Red List as their numbers have declined hugely in recent decades, mainly due to a reduction in places to nest, as well as other factors like a reduction in food (insect) availability and climate change. A recent Swift Survey carried out by BirdWatch Ireland (Finney & Birtwistle, 2024) in East Cavan for Cavan County Council revealed that 180 Swift nests were confirmed across 10 out of 13 towns and villages surveyed. Two-thirds of East Cavan's breeding Swift population was found to be within four towns – Cootehill, Belturbet, Bailieborough and Ballyjamesduff, with the highest density in Cootehill. While the results are relatively positive, populations in several towns are considered extremely vulnerable, due to their reliance on a very small number of buildings.

Swifts usually nest in crevices of buildings, such as under the eaves, however many of these sites have been disappearing due to stricter building regulations and loss of old buildings. It is imperative to protect existing nest sites if Swift populations are to be retained in East County Cavan, in addition to providing additional nesting space through tailored nest boxes and bricks. The West Cavan Swift Survey (Adcock, *et al*, 2025) recorded 159 Swift nests across six towns and villages, with Cavan Town recording seventy-five nests. A combined 339 Swift nests were recorded across sixteen towns and villages in Co. Cavan in 2024 and 2025. Noteworthy in these surveys was the importance of derelict sites, with thirty-six percent of the West Cavan Swift Population occurring in two derelict buildings: St. Felim's old hospital, Cavan (24 nests) and the Bawnboy Workhouse, Bawnboy (34 nests). Both buildings are due for redevelopment and offer significant opportunities for incorporating swift 'bricks' at relatively low cost.

Barn Owl

Unfortunately, the Barn Owl's (*Tyto alba*) numbers have declined rapidly in recent decades across Ireland. It is a scarce resident, now present mainly in central and southern Ireland. A recent study by Birdwatch Ireland (Oakes *et al*, 2024) for Cavan County Council, revealed that there are signs of some recovery after a period of extensive decline. The most probable cause for the recent population increase of Barn Owls in County Cavan is due to the spread of introduced species of small mammals, namely the Greater, White-toothed Shrew (*Crocidura russula*) and the Short-Tailed Field Vole (*Microtus agrestis*). However, only seven breeding pairs were identified in the study, with a high proportion (83%) of suitable sites that are not currently occupied by Barn Owl. There is a long way to go before the Barn Owl population can return to the extensive breeding range it enjoyed 50 years ago. In 2025, further monitoring and collaboration with Birdwatch Ireland led to some nest box site installation in Co. Cavan and a workshop in Ballyhaise Agricultural college with Teagasc and NPWS support.



Barn Owl numbers have declined due to loss of habitat and available food, mostly rodents, which have in recent times often been killed off by rodenticide. This in turn can poison Barn Owls that feed on them. An increasing number are also meeting their deaths on our roads due to the presence of more extensive road networks and the availability of suitable habitat and prey along these routes. Barn Owls nest mostly in ruined buildings, in outbuildings like barns or sheds and sometimes in mature trees. They do use specially constructed nest boxes, however, and various projects around Ireland have helped to encourage them by installing these boxes at suitable sites. It is worth exploring options to help protect and grow Barn Owl populations in County

Cavan. Education in the use of, or phasing out of, rodenticide could be key to protecting Barn Owls, as well as the installation of tailored nest boxes in appropriate locations.

Snipe

The Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) is a migratory wading bird that resides in wetland areas among reedbeds. They nest on the ground, usually concealed in a grassy tussock, in or near wet or boggy terrain. Their young leave the nest soon after hatching. The Snipe has a highly dispersed distribution in winter. They forage across a variety of wetland and damp habitats and particularly high concentrations are found on the fringes of lowland lakes. There are Snipe present in County Cavan, however, as with most wading bird species, their habitat is increasingly under pressure. Protection of wetland sites is key to their survival.

Kestrel

The Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) is a small bird of prey that is now Red listed in Ireland due to steep population declines in recent decades. It nests in trees, buildings or in cracks in cliffs and will also use old crows' nests. It is found in a wide variety of open habitats including coasts, moor land, farmland, wetlands, roadside verges and town parks. Changes in land-use practices are reducing prey availability and making it harder for Kestrels to feed and raise chicks. A PhD project was recently based on a Mannok quarry site in County Cavan, in association with Queen's University Belfast. It involved monitoring breeding Kestrels via a live nest camera. This is a good opportunity to raise awareness and support the work happening here, which will help to highlight the challenges faced by this species.



Red Grouse

The Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*) is a Red-listed bird species found on mountains, moorland and lowland blanket bogs and raised bogs, where it is associated with heather, required for food, shelter and nesting. As a 'game' species it has benefited from past management of heather moorland. It is quite rare in Ireland and is mostly confined to Wicklow, Laois, Waterford and along the western seaboard from Donegal to Kerry. It is also found in a few pockets inland, including within County Cavan, at Slieve Rushen. A successful conservation project for Red Grouse has been running since 2007 by Glenfarne Gun Club (Co. Leitrim) on Boleybrack Mountain, which straddles both Counties Leitrim and Cavan. The project is also supported by the NPWS and the Heritage Council and has been recognised at EU level.



Lapwing

Another migratory wader, the Lapwing (*Vanellus Vanellus*) is now at Red-listed status due to loss of habitat. Wintering distribution in Ireland is widespread. Large flocks have been recorded in a variety of habitats, including most of the major wetlands, pasture and rough land adjacent to bogs. The Lapwing is monitored under the Irish Wetland Bird Survey and a dedicated survey called 'Project Lapwing'. This distinctive bird is a frequent visitor to Cavan's wetlands, notably at Lough Oughter, and would benefit from focused monitoring and protection in the county.

Amber Listed Birds

Hen Harrier

Cavan is one of the few counties in Ireland where the IUCN Amber-listed Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) still thrives in places. This is because they favour heath moorland and semi-natural grasslands, which are still intact in areas of West Cavan in particular. Breeding birds are confined largely to heather moorland and young forestry plantations, where they nest on the ground. The species has been declining, most likely due to the loss of quality moorland habitat due to agricultural changes and maturing forest plantations, along with pressures from recreational activities, invasive species (e.g. *Rhododendron ponticum*), loss of scrub and natural habitats, fragmentation, wildfires and burning and erosion of peatlands. Hen Harriers are known to be present at Slieve Rushen, County Cavan. The site is monitored by the NPWS and breeding pairs are present there. According to the 2022 NPWS Hen Harrier Survey (Ruddock *et al.*, 2024), the national Hen Harrier population has declined by one third since 2015, to an estimated maximum of 106 breeding pairs, and its breeding range has contracted by 27% for the same period. A review of data for those sites covered between 1998 and 2022 indicates a 59% long-term decline in population. Nearly one third of pairs in the Slieve Rushen (Leitrim/Cavan) region appear to have been lost since 2015, although a few novel pairs were located during 2022 around Cuilcagh Mountain, which held the majority of pairs. The overall steep decline may prompt the Red-listing of Hen Harrier for the next publication of the Birds of Conservation Concern of Ireland. The Hen Harrier Project operates in six SPAs designated for breeding Hen Harrier across Ireland, however, there has been no project to date in County Cavan. Support for Hen Harriers in the county is currently confined to initiatives under agri-environmental schemes run by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine. Ideally the Hen Harrier Project should be extended to include the Slieve Rushen area, and/or indeed other areas of Cavan that are identified as important for this species.

Swallow

The Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), our iconic summer visitor, is now under threat in Ireland for a variety of reasons, including climate change, which is leading to shifting migration patterns. There are fewer flying insects present for them to feed on and fewer nesting sites available, due in part to changing farming practices. It is then more difficult for them to set up home and for their chicks to survive. Creating small openings and providing simple nest structures in outbuildings is a great way to encourage Swallows to nest.

House Martin

The House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*) is generally an urban based bird or associated with nesting under the eaves of buildings. Unfortunately, it is now Amber-listed and like its cousins the Swift and Swallow, has experienced declines due to a reduction in nesting site availability and feeding opportunities. This species can be helped by encouraging people to retain or install specially made House Martin nest sites on their buildings.

Sand Martin

Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*) are similar to the House Martin and Swallow, but slightly smaller. They breed in burrows dug into riverbanks or quarries. These breeding sites are vulnerable to predation by American Mink (*Neogale vison*) and Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). Feeding birds disperse widely, favouring wetlands and rural areas. Again, they are Amber-listed for several reasons, including a decline in nesting habitats and feeding opportunities. Tailor-made Sand Martin walls or banks are a good way to attract these threatened species to nest at suitable sites, e.g. as seen at Thomastown, Co. Kildare and Trim, Co. Meath.



Common Tern

Unlike the name suggests, the Common Tern (*Sterna Hirundo*) is not that common and has few breeding sites remaining in County Cavan. The species is now Amber-listed for several reasons, potentially due to habitat loss, water quality, predator activity and human disturbance. It can be found at sea or on large inland lakes, migrating to Ireland from West Africa each summer. Two sites of significance for the Tern in Cavan are Farnham Lake and Lough Gowna, on the border with Co. Longford. A Common Tern Survey was completed in 2021 by naturalist Heather Bothwell at Farnham Lake which included some recommendations for protecting Tern populations there.

Invertebrates

Many invertebrate (insect) orders merit our attention, including species of bee, beetle, dragonfly and damselfly. Insects are essential for the proper functioning of all ecosystems, as food for other creatures, pollinators and recyclers of nutrients. Worldwide, more than 40% of insect species are declining and a third are endangered, according to a study published in the journal 'Biological Conservation' (Sánchez-Bayo & Wyckhuys, 2019). The rate of extinction is eight times faster than that of mammals, birds and reptiles. The total mass of insects is falling by a precipitous 2.5% a year, suggesting they could vanish within a century. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has reported that based on eight species where there is enough data to analyse in Ireland, bumblebee numbers have dropped by 17% since 2012. Since 2008, Ireland has lost 6% of its butterflies, based on the 15 species with sufficient data. Not only is this a huge concern in insect terms, but it also means that other animal species further up the food chain such as birds and bats have fewer food sources, which has repercussions for the whole ecological food web.



Bees

While a range of insects carry out pollination, such as butterflies, moths and hoverflies, bees are by far the most prolific pollinators. In Ireland, there are 99 bee species – one honeybee, 21 bumblebees and 77 solitary bee species. Wild bees are responsible for the most pollination. One third of our bee species is threatened with extinction in Ireland. This is because the amount of food (flowers) and safe nesting sites in our landscapes has drastically reduced in recent times. Bees are vital for pollinating crops, wildflowers and trees, which in turn creates a healthy ecosystem. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) programme, run by the National Biodiversity Data Centre, has a brilliant library of resources for all types of groups and individuals to avail of, at pollinators.ie. Cavan County Council, as well as community groups (notably Cavan Tidy Towns who won an AIPP award in 2025 for their efforts) and organisations across County Cavan, have already signed up to the AIPP and made positive changes in their area to help bees, e.g. planting pollinator-friendly flowers and shrubs, creating 'bee banks' and mowing less to encourage natural wildflower meadows to emerge. The more groups who sign up and take action across the county the better - for bees and humans!



Butterflies

Marsh Fritillary

The Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas Aurinia*) Butterfly is one of Ireland's few legally protected butterflies. It is protected under Annex II of the European Union Habitats and Species Directive; however, this does not mean it is the only moth or butterfly species under threat. In fact, several are at threatened or near threatened status. However, in one respect, the Marsh Fritillary can act as an 'umbrella' species which can help to protect a variety of other threatened insect and plant species. For instance, the Marsh Fritillary prefers species-rich, wet or marshy grasslands containing the wild plant Devil's-Bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), which it relies on for its life cycle. Many butterfly species also rely on such habitats to survive, therefore if an area is protected due to the Marsh Fritillary, other species such as Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), Large Heath (*Coenonympha tullia*) and the Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*) may be conserved in the process. Marsh Fritillary is present in parts of the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark and monitoring/conservation schemes have been happening there in the recent past.

Small Heath

The Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) is a small butterfly that favours dry, semi-natural grassland habitat. Its status is now 'Near Threatened' on the IUCN Red List. The species used to be widespread in Ireland but is now locally extinct in places, seeming to prefer the drier, coastal areas. It is drawn to a varied sward height with fine grasses and flowers like Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) and Devil's-Bit Scabious. Its decline is suspected to be due the intensification of agriculture, the reseeded of grassland and the loss of habitats. Areas of dry, rich grasslands in West Cavan contain suitable habitats for the Small Heath.

Large Heath

The Large Heath (*Coenonympha tullia*) is similar to the Small Heath, but larger and often with more eye spots. It is found in bogland areas and due to loss of habitat and larval foodplant (the Hare's-tail Cottongrass), it has become 'Vulnerable' under the IUCN Red List. It has been spotted in boggy areas of Cavan, e.g. Fartrin Bog. Adult food plants include Heathers, Hawkweeds (*Hieracium spp.*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*).



Cinnabar Moth.
Source: Louise
Mac Elwain.

Moths

Like butterflies, many moth species depend on specific grassland, boggy or woodland edge habitats to feed and complete their life cycles. Due to the reduction of available habitats and food sources, many moth species' numbers have dwindled considerably. Again, County Cavan's remaining moth and butterfly strongholds such as Cuilcagh Geopark, bogs such as Fartrin, and long-established woodland or rich grasslands attract more species of moths and butterflies. For instance, the rare Poplar Lutestring (*Tethea or or*) was detected in West Cavan, the Grey Mountain Carpet (*Entephria caesiata*) at Cuilcagh and the Sprawler (*Asteroscopus sphinx*) on species-rich farmland and old woodland near Killeshandra (as recorded on mothsireland.com).

Mammals

Ireland has a relatively small number of mammals compared with other European countries, including our nearest neighbours, the UK. The mammals we do have are faring differently depending on how they are affected by human intervention, including habitat loss, food availability and climate change. Some of these mammal species are outlined below, detailing their various threats, status and levels of protection.

Bats

The bat is an often-overlooked mammal that surrounds us and which lives and feeds in a range of habitats, e.g. waterways, woodlands, hedgerows and old buildings. They are nocturnal creatures and insectivores, with a particular fondness for moths. Bats are protected by law in the Republic of Ireland under the Wildlife Act 1976 and subsequent amendments. It is an offence to intentionally disturb, injure or kill a bat or disturb its resting place and any work on a roost must be carried out with the advice of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). However, bat populations are under threat from a range of sources, such as hedgerow removal, increased artificial lighting, climate change, increased use of pesticides and lack of building roosts.

There are nine species of bat so far confirmed resident in Ireland, including: Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*), Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri*) and the Common and Soprano Pipistrelles – (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*). Several of these species are found in County Cavan and there is also a Cavan Bat Group in existence. In fact, the Nathusius' Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), only in Ireland since the 1990s, was first trapped and ringed in the Republic of Ireland in 2018 in Killeshandra by Virginia-based bat expert Dr Tina Aughney. Bat Conservation Ireland run a range of voluntary bat monitoring schemes such as the Car-based Bat Monitoring project, All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey and Brown Long-eared Bat

(*Plecotus auritus*) Roost Monitoring. These schemes need support and public attention in order to support bats, which should be encouraged going forward. In addition, protecting bats and their roosts needs to be highlighted during planning and development projects in County Cavan.

Badger

The Badger (*Meles meles*) is a large omnivorous mammal, instantly recognisable by its white head with conspicuous dark stripes through the eyes. The badger is a highly social animal, living in small groups (or clans) in burrow systems known as setts. A very large main sett can possess 300m of tunnel and 20 or more chambers. Setts are often utilised by generations of badgers! However, Badgers are under threat for several reasons, including habitat loss, lower food availability and road mortalities. Most notably however, their numbers have dwindled due to Badger culling (both legal and illegal) over the last few decades as they have been implicated in the spread of bovine Tuberculosis (TB). This creates tension between the farming community and the need for Badger protection, especially regarding beef and dairy farms, which are prevalent in many parts of County Cavan. The level of infection and transmission between Badger and bovine is complex and may be misunderstood, however. A vaccine has been developed for Badgers which will hopefully help to reduce TB transmission rates in a more humane way than culling. Badgers are protected under the Wildlife Acts (Wildlife Act, 1976; Wildlife Amendment Act, 2000) and under Appendix III of the Berne Convention. It is against the law to harm Badgers or to damage/interfere with their setts.

Red Squirrel

The Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) is Ireland's native squirrel and has been present here since the last Ice Age. Its existence has been greatly threatened by the introduction of the American non-native Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) to Ireland in 1911, due to competition for food and resources, as well as the spread of the Squirrel Pox Virus, which is carried by the Greys but affects Reds more severely, often fatally. Red Squirrel numbers have decreased substantially in the last century, but the Grey has found it difficult to spread across the west of the country. In recent years it is thought the resurgence of the Pine Marten has helped to increase Red Squirrel numbers in certain parts of the country. This is because it is easier for them to predate on the non-native Grey Squirrel, which has not evolved over time here with the Pine Marten, like the Red Squirrel has. An All-Ireland



Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey, published by the NPWS (Lawton *et al.*, 2019), showed that in the counties of Cavan, Monaghan, Fermanagh and Meath, Greys have reduced significantly, if not disappeared, and have often been replaced by Reds. County Cavan's forests likely contain some populations of Red Squirrels, but there is great opportunity for more surveys and studies. The Red Squirrel is protected under the Wildlife Act (1976) and Wildlife (Amendment) Acts (2000 & 2010) and the Bern Convention (Appendix III), therefore it is an offence to harm them or damage their dreys.

Pine Marten

The Pine Marten (*Martes martes*) is one of the most elusive and rarest mammals in Ireland. By the 20th Century it was almost extinct in large areas of the country due to hunting and loss of habitat, which is mainly scrub and woodland. They are also slow reproducers compared with other species. In recent years, however, they have made a comeback in many parts of the country due to greater legislative protection. Their population increase has also coincided with a positive resurgence in native Red Squirrels and a reduction in non-native Grey Squirrels, as described in the previous section on the Red Squirrel. Pine Martens are omnivorous and

eat a varied diet which includes berries, fruits, small mammals, invertebrates, birds and amphibians. The species is protected under the Wildlife Act 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. They are also included in Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 and Appendix III of the Bern Convention 1979.

Irish Hare

The Irish Hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*) is the only species of the Lagomorph family native to Ireland, unlike the Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and Brown (or European) Hare (*Lepus europaeus*), which were introduced here. It is a subspecies of the Mountain Hare that is unique to Ireland. Irish Hares are elusive and emerge mainly at night. They prefer undisturbed grassland as their habitat. Main threats to the Irish Hare population are changes in farming practices, the increased use of farm machinery, high livestock densities and the decrease in species-rich grassland and hedgerows. The ongoing pursuits of hunting and hare coursing are also a threat to the species and remain contentious issues. The Irish Hare is protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 & 2000, EU Directive 92/43 Annex V and the Bern Convention Appendix III. It is possible the Irish Hare is still faring well in the species-rich and less intensively farmed areas of West Cavan, however this would need research and monitoring to be confirmed.



Hedgehog

The Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) is one of the best-known mammals resident in Ireland, often seen in domestic gardens. The Hedgehog's diet is mainly insectivorous, it forages at night and hibernates during the winter months. While it is widespread, the Hedgehog has undergone drastic population declines in the last century due to loss of habitat and fragmentation, mainly from intensified agricultural practices and other human activities. In the UK, the hedgehog population was estimated at 30 million in the 1950s, but by the 1990s this had declined to 1.5 million. Joining up habitats as ecological corridors, such as hedgerows and linking gardens in communities, e.g. 'Hedgehog Highways' can have huge positive benefits for Hedgehogs. The European Hedgehog is protected under Appendix III of The Bern Convention and under the Wildlife Act (1976) and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.



Otter

The Otter (*Lutra lutra*) is an elusive mammal that lives in aquatic habitats across Ireland, namely rivers, canals and lake systems, but also along estuaries and rocky seashores. The Otter and its habitat are protected under the EU Habitats Directive which requires that Ireland reports on the status of the species at regular intervals. The Otter is listed by the IUCN as 'near threatened' at European level. The overall status of the Otter population in Ireland is uncertain, with some studies suggesting a decline, while others suggest it remains widespread. In the last National Otter Survey (Reid *et al.*, 2013), the Otter was judged to be in Favourable or 'Good' status. Threats and pressures to the Otter include river corridor management such as culverting, canalisation and dredging as well as pollution, oil spillages and road traffic. The National Otter Survey took place between 2023-2024 via a number of organisations, including the NPWS. The final report is expected to

be published sometime in 2025. As Cavan is a 'wet' county, with lots of potential Otter habitat, it would be a great opportunity to take part in monitoring sightings of the animal, plus any possible holt sites, spraints, 'slides' and pawprints. These sightings can be recorded on the NBDC website, at biodiversityireland.ie.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Ireland has only one species of reptile – the Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and just three species of native amphibian: the Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), the Natterjack toad (*Epidalea clamita*) (confined to sand dunes in Kerry and Wexford); and the Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*).

Smooth Newt & Common Frog

Both frogs and newts have suffered from loss of wetland habitat in recent decades. Both species are only found in still or slow-moving water, so the preservation of ponds, ditches and wetlands is essential to their survival. In a nationwide Newt Survey commissioned by the Irish Wildlife Trust (Meehan, 2013), Smooth Newts were found to be scarce in agricultural landscapes, though it transpired that man-made habitats, particularly garden ponds and quarries, are now significant components of the newt's natural habitat. Newts can also be found in bogland habitats. The survey highlighted the importance of protecting these habitats for amphibians. Frogs will also benefit from the preservation and enhancement of wetland habitat, whether it be ponds, bogs, quarries, ditches and other areas of standing water. As Cavan is a 'wet' county, taking actions to protect amphibians and carry out monitoring would be of great benefit to their success.



Common Lizard

The Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), is Ireland's only native terrestrial reptile. Ideal habitats for the species are south-facing, damp tussocky grassland, scrub covered hillsides, dunes or banks, and woodland tracks, and it also resides in peat bogs, dry grasslands and heathlands. Reptiles are cold blooded (ectotherms), so they rely on environmental heat sources to regulate their body temperature. Sandy/rocky places with a quick escape route are preferred basking spots, where the individual flattens its body whilst basking to absorb heat over greatest surface area possible. Their refugia are thought to be present below ground or beneath rocks/woodpiles. The Common Lizard is hard to spot due to being elusive and fast-moving, though it does live in a surprising number of habitats. It does however, particularly like basking on rocks and stone walls, which are more common in West Cavan, especially in and around the Geopark.



Threats to Nature in County Cavan

Water Pollution

County Cavan, as with most counties in Ireland, is increasingly being affected by water pollution issues. The most polluted lakes in Ireland are located in the Cavan/Monaghan region, where water bodies are known to have poorly draining soils and elevated Phosphorus concentrations. The main pressure on water quality in County Cavan, and across Ireland, is Agriculture. The loss of excess nutrients (primarily nitrogen and phosphorus) from farming activities, both in the yard and across the farm, is the main issue. This is often accompanied by the loss of fine sediment, which is harmful to aquatic life. Hazardous chemicals such as those found in pesticides and animal health products can also negatively affect water quality and are especially worrying when detected in drinking water (EPA, 2024a).

Cavan is a rural county with a tradition of agriculture, where livestock farming (including dairy, beef, pig and poultry), is prominent, especially in the east of the county. In recent decades, as farming has become more mechanised and intensive, this has placed further pressure on lakes and river systems. Coupled with the poorly draining soils and undulating geomorphology of the county, this added pressure has been negatively affecting water quality.

Apart from agriculture, the other main activities having a deleterious effect on water quality are changes to hydromorphology (e.g. land drainage and channelisation), forestry, urban wastewater, and domestic wastewater, as well as Abstraction, Invasive Species, and Industry (EPA, 2024a).

All these pressures combined mean that rivers and lakes are declining in water quality, which in turn negatively affects the flora, fauna and ecosystems that rely on them to survive. Ultimately this is leading to a significant decline in biodiversity.

In terms of groundwater, Cavan is not one of the counties in Ireland most dependent on this source for drinking water, but the risk is still serious for specific areas. As the groundwater in Cavan is largely contained within limestone, karstic springs are especially vulnerable to pollution since the flow is mainly within fissure conduits that allow rapid transmission of pollution from source to water supply. The opportunity for microbial attenuation of pollutants is far less in limestone fissures than it would be in granular deposits, which act as natural filters (Parkes *et al*, 2013).

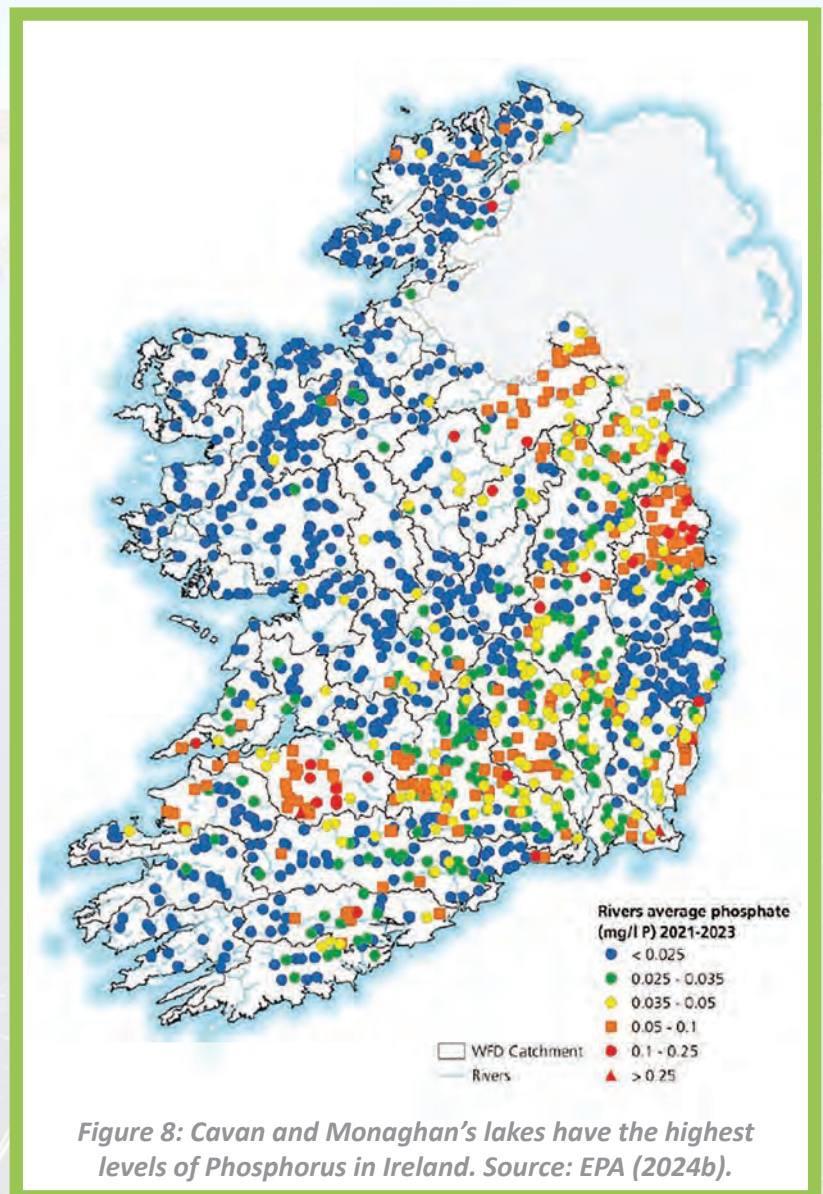


Figure 8: Cavan and Monaghan's lakes have the highest levels of Phosphorus in Ireland. Source: EPA (2024b).

Targeting Agricultural Measures (2023 R2)

TargetingAgMeasures

- Navy Flag - phosphorus/sediment losses
- Orange Priority Flag - high nitrate
- Orange Flag - risk of nitrate losses (review PIP-N)
- Navy & Orange Flags - phosphorus/sediment and nitrate losses
- Navy & Red Flags - point source and phosphorus/sediment losses
- Navy, Red & Orange Flags - point source, nitrate and phosphorus/sediment losses
- White Flag - Protect measures

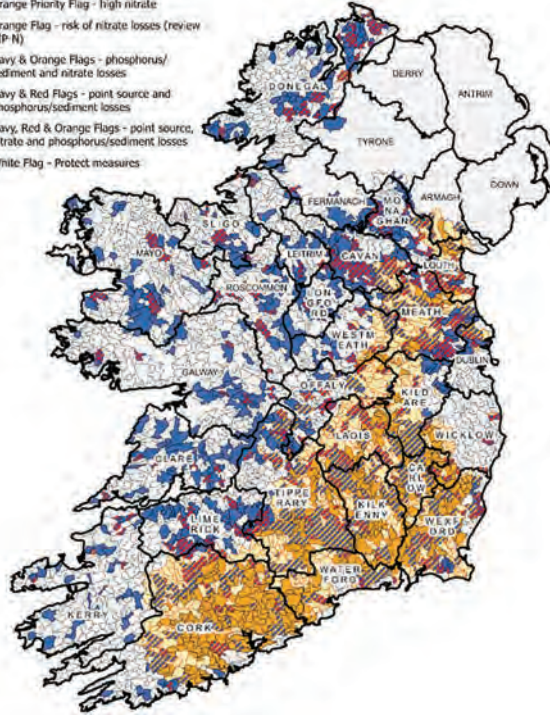


Figure 9: Map showing the focus areas for targeting nutrient issues stemming from Agriculture. Source: EPA (2024c).

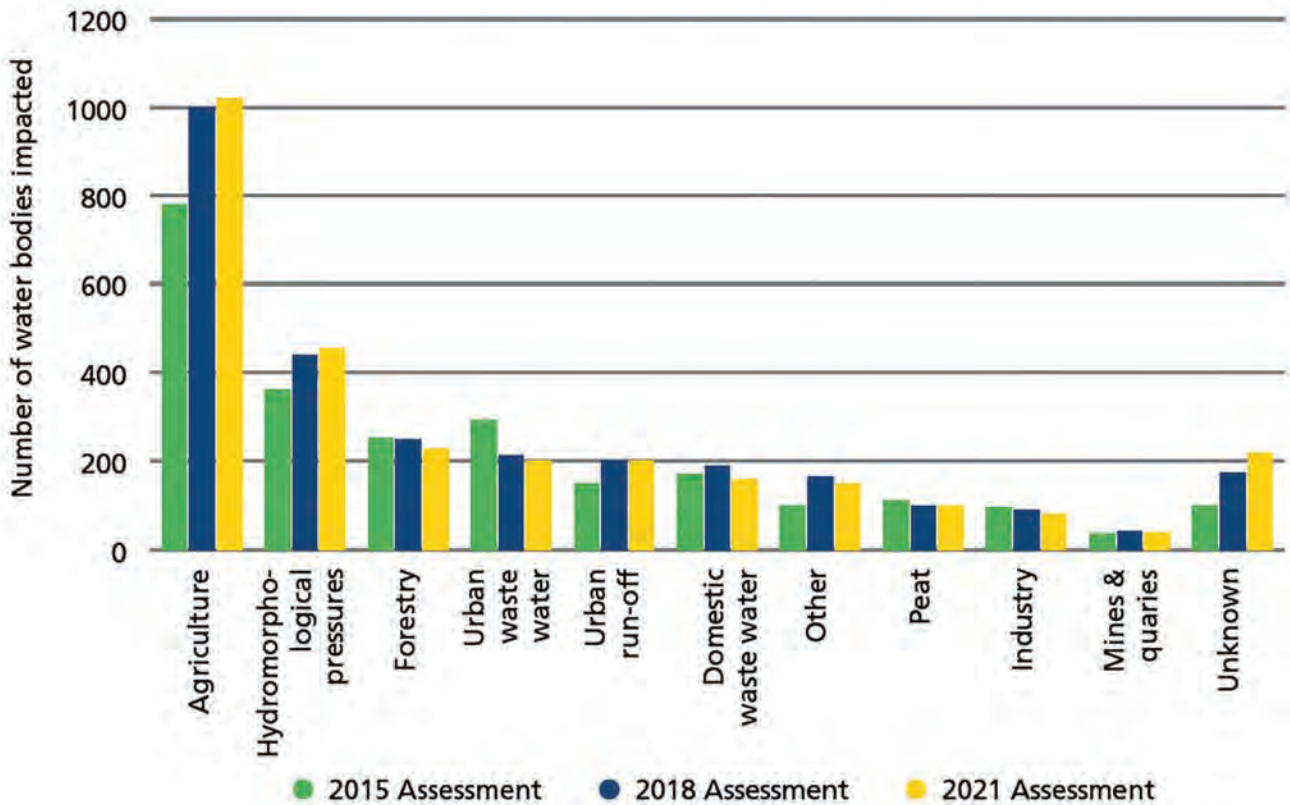


Figure 10: Number of at-risk water bodies impacted by pressures affecting ecological status in 2015, 2018 and 2021 (EPA, 2022).

Habitat Loss & Fragmentation

Like most other parts of Ireland, County Cavan has suffered from a heavy loss in important habitats and species in recent times. In terms of key habitat loss and degradation, this involves native woodlands, hedgerows and wetlands. Together, these habitats create vital wildlife or 'ecological corridors' for a wide range of birds, insects and mammal species across large areas. When these corridors are connected and healthy, animals can move freely and safely between them, and as they can cover a wider area, they have more access to prey and a greater range of mates to create stronger genetic diversity. However, when these habitats are removed or fragmented, ecological corridors are weakened, and it makes it more difficult if not impossible for many species to travel between areas. This can have a devastating effect on wildlife populations over time, and it is often very difficult to replace these habitats once they are lost. By conserving existing woodlands, hedgerows, and wetlands, as well as restoring and creating new ones where appropriate, ecological corridors can remain intact, allowing wildlife to thrive.

'Green infrastructure' is another, wider-reaching term often used to describe the linking of wildlife habitats and green spaces throughout rural and urban areas. This describes a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services to humans and wildlife. These services include water purification, air quality, climate mitigation and adaptation and spaces for recreation. Indeed, a county recreation plan has also been completed (2025-2030) with a county outdoor recreation forum which aims to progress green infrastructure, amidst other biodiversity services. By adopting this joined-up thinking approach in terms of development in County Cavan throughout towns, villages and the rural landscape, ecological corridors can be preserved, extended and created for the benefit of all. There is heavy emphasis on green infrastructure in the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, which is very positive for the county's citizens and biodiversity. It is important to note, however, that green infrastructure must be implemented in an ecologically sensitive manner in order to have optimum effect for the wildlife living among us.

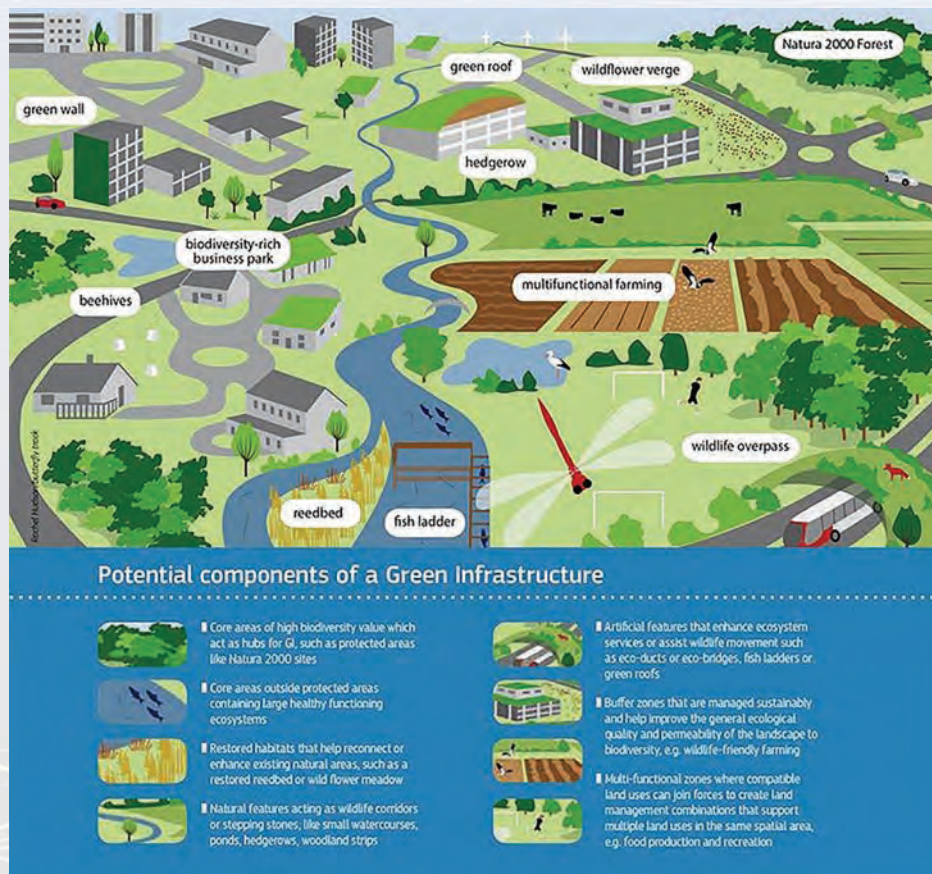


Image: European Commission (2014)

Urbanisation & Hard Surfaces

While Cavan is still a relatively rural county, population increase means there has been, and continues to be, further expansion of urban and suburban areas. This is resulting in an increased demand on our natural resources, such as water. Run-off is a natural process where rainfall, not infiltrated into the soil, finds its way naturally from catchment areas into streams and rivers, and eventually, the oceans. In urban areas, the natural water cycle is disrupted by the presence of vast amounts of impermeable surface cover that modifies natural infiltration, surface reflectivity and evapotranspiration. In addition, temperatures in urban areas have an Urban Heat Effect as vast areas infrastructure can resemble 'heat islands' and affect changes to precipitation patterns. In urban areas, where natural infiltration is reduced, rainfall runoff can be 400% greater in volume than in rural areas and prone to extreme flows in severe rainfall events (DHPLG, 2022). Furthermore, the runoff from urban areas can include a toxic accumulation of pollutants, washed off from impermeable surfaces into receiving water bodies, including substances like microplastics and resistant chemical compounds. This polluting effect has been identified by the EPA as one of the primary sources of pollution from urban areas, alongside discharges from urban wastewater systems.

The impact of extreme rainfall events is also increasing with climate change. Recent research, based on an analysis of European flooding records from 1960 to 2010, suggests that increasing autumn and winter rainfall has already resulted in increasing floods in north-western Europe, including Ireland (DHPLG, 2024b). In recent years, increased flooding in places like the Shannon Callows has shown the multiple effects of increasing precipitation events causing flooding but also the effect of over-drainage and hydromorphological pressures. This is increasing both the level of pollution from urban runoff and the flood risk arising from the greater volume of that run-off from the often largely impermeable urban area. Nature-based Solutions (NBS) offer an alternative way to install more permeable surfaces, often allowing for vegetation to establish and retain excess runoff, while slowing down water flow and helping to filter out toxic compounds.

Reduction in Hedgerow Cover

Healthy hedgerows can be viewed as 'linear woodlands', containing a complex network of habitats and associated plant and animal species that are established over generations. The practice of hedge removal and severe hedge cutting in recent decades in Ireland has decimated large areas of habitat. Hedgerows are used for nesting, feeding and cover by many of our bird species, e.g. Blackbird, Wren, Dunnock, Chaffinch and Blue Tit, as well as for small mammals like bats, wood mice and hedgehogs. Hedgerows are also vital sources of food for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and moths. Counties around the midlands and the border region tend to have the highest density of hedgerows, with smaller fields, and Cavan has the longest length of hedgerows per hectare (Teagasc, 2021b).

A hedgerow survey conducted by Giorria Environmental Services (2006) found many cases of species-rich hedges and the length was considered very long in relation to other counties that had been surveyed at the time. Hedgerows in the west of the county were found to be more species-rich than those in the east. It was suggested that County Cavan has managed to retain more of its hedgerows over time due to the type of farming (mostly pastoral), which still benefits from having smaller fields for boundary, shelter and protection reasons. A follow-up hedgerow survey of County Cavan was undertaken in 2023 for Cavan Heritage Office by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants, with the report of findings published in 2024. Many of the findings are concerning and demonstrate the degradation and loss of hedgerows in County Cavan over the last two decades.

The 2006 and 2024 hedgerow surveys followed the Hedgerow Appraisal System (HAS) developed by Foulkes

et al. in 2005 and 2012, respectively. A representative sample of hedgerows is surveyed under the HAS method, and this is used to determine the overall condition, species profile and extent of hedgerow across an area. The 2024 Cavan HAS survey covered 16.8 km² (similar to the 2006 survey), representing approximately 1% of the total study area. The 2024 hedgerow survey found that since 2006, 6.58km of hedgerows in County Cavan has been removed, which equates to 4.2% of the total hedgerow area surveyed. This means the annual hedgerow removal rate is estimated at approximately 0.25% in County Cavan over 17 years. This is equivalent to over 447km, which is the distance from Malin Head, Co. Donegal to Skibbereen, Co. Cork. The primary reasons for hedgerow removal were deemed to be for agriculture (63%), residential expansion (24%), and road development (7%).

Predominant hedge species recorded (in 2024) were Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) (93%), followed by Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) (53%), and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) (32%). The most prevalent sampled hedgerow trees in Cavan were Ash (54%), followed by Hawthorn (43%) and Willows (24%). Over one fifth (35%) of Ash trees showed signs of 'significant' and 'severe' Ash dieback with only 4.4% recorded as healthy trees. Just under 42% of the sample hedges were recorded as being 'species-rich' (meaning they contained an average of four native woody shrub species or more). The extent of 'gappiness' in hedgerows has increased since 2006, with only 8% recorded as 'complete'. Just under half of hedgerow banks showed signs of bank erosion, with poaching recorded as the main cause. Lines of trees have become more frequent due to lack of management, with an increase of 32% since 2006. Approximately half of Cavan's hedgerows sampled scored as 'Unfavourable.' One positive note however, found that there has been an increase in wider margins, showing perhaps the benefits of agri-environmental schemes in some areas. This study included recommendations which are designed to help to inform future policy and projects to protect and enhance hedgerows across County Cavan. The County Cavan Hedgerow Appraisal Survey 2024 was launched along with this Biodiversity Action Plan, with an accompanying video on 'Hedgerows of Cavan', available on the Cavan County Council website.

Reduction in Woodland Cover

The area of forest in Ireland is estimated to be 808,848 ha or 11.6% of the total land area. The total conifer cover equates to 61.2% of the total area, while the broadleaf cover equates to 27%. In terms of tree species composition, Sitka Spruce is by far the most common, at 50.6%. The most common broadleaf species is recorded as Birch (*Betula spp.*), at 8.1% of overall national forest cover. In County Cavan, there are 19,635 hectares of tree cover, which is 10.1% of the county's land area (DAFM, 2025). The most recent figures show that 59% of this tree cover is composed of conifer species and 41% is broadleaf species (DAFM, 2023). In the period 2013-2024, there has been a noticeable downward trend in the planting of conifer species in County Cavan. In 2024, of the 97ha planted with trees, 75ha (or 77.3%) of this were broadleaf (DAFM, 2025). There are a few remaining old demesnes in the county covered by mixed broadleaf woodland, including Farnham Estate, Cole's Estate and Ballyconnell Demesne. A key issue now affecting treelines and hedgerows across County Cavan is Ash Dieback Disease. Over half (54%) of the trees recorded in the 2024 Cavan Hedgerow Survey were Ash. Over one fifth (35%) of these showed signs of 'significant' and 'severe' Ash dieback, with only 4.4% recorded as being healthy.

At one time, forests covered 80% of Ireland's land surface and most of these would have been native species such as Oak, Ash, Hazel, Willow sp., Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Birch and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Despite the low woodland figure in County Cavan, there are still sections of important, long-established native woodland in the county that are worth recording, mapping and protecting so that they can be preserved and managed into the future. Such woodlands are among Ireland's richest and most complex habitats. A draft report called 'Restoring Coillte's Plantation on Old Woodland Sites (POWS)' was submitted to Coillte in response to its Consultation on Forest Five Year Plans Review 2021-2025. It included information on Ireland's Ancient &

Long-established Woodlands (ALEW) which was detailed in a study compiled by Perrin & Daly (2010). The report requested that 'Coillte restores all of its POWS to semi-natural woodland, and that this should follow best practice'.

Ancient Woodland (AW) is woodland dating from c. 1650, while Long-established woodland (LEW) dates from c.1830. Both types are extremely rare in Ireland, especially AW. While County Cavan is not likely to have any AW remaining, it does still have pockets of LEW. Those included on Coillte's ALEW inventory are Bellamont Forest, Kingscourt Forest Park, and Deerpark. Dunaweel Wood, east of Killeshandra, is considered a LEW but is not listed on Coillte's ALEW inventory. It is possible there are other pockets of LEW in the county that have not yet been identified. County Cavan's remaining old woodlands must be mapped and managed sensitively so that they can be recognised and protected into the future. This should be prioritised along with hedgerow conservation measures. These measures, in addition to extending and creating new woodlands, would greatly help to strengthen the county's ecological corridors, in turn boosting habitats and associated plant and animal species.

Deterioration of Bogs & Wetlands

Cavan has a rich network of wetlands, many of which interlink between its expansive landscape of drumlins. A mapping study undertaken by Foss et al. (2021) of Wetland Survey Ireland, identified an astonishing 714 wetland sites across County Cavan. Surveys of a proportion of these wetlands were subsequently undertaken by Foss et al. in 2023 and 2025. A map of these sites is available on the Wetland Surveys Ireland website. Wetlands are crucially important for biodiversity and provide habitats for a range of wading birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and invertebrates. A wetland is an area of land that is saturated with water either permanently or seasonally, and where the water table is near or at the surface. Ireland's wetland habitats range from the very small (like a freshwater spring) to habitats which dominate the Irish landscape such as lakes, rivers and bogs. They are home to a large diversity of plant and animal species and form an important network of ecological sites for many species in terms of migration.

Unfortunately, despite important progress made in recent decades to restore and protect bogs and wetlands, they continue to be among the world's most threatened ecosystems, owing mainly to ongoing drainage, conversion (most often to agricultural lands), pollution, and over-exploitation of their resources. County Cavan is no exception to this. The following activities are the main reasons for wetland damage/destruction, as outlined by Foss et al. (2023): Agriculture, Sylviculture (forestry), Mining (namely peat extraction and quarrying), Transportation & Service Corridors, Urbanisation, residential and commercial development, pollution from various sources and natural system modifications. In Ireland in general, the following activities were listed as the main reasons for degradation of Ireland's wetlands (Foss et al., 2021):

- national and local drainage schemes, or the embankment of rivers which can result in catastrophic floods during high rainfall periods when the drained land results in rapid surface water run-off;
- past forestry schemes on bogs, which often did not produce the timber crop envisaged at the time of afforestation; and
- extraction of peat on an industrial scale on raised bogs which continues to have a detrimental effect on the national peatland resource and carbon emissions.



Figure 12: The four main categories of ecosystem services provided by wetlands.
Image: Wetland Surveys (2024).

A total of 11 recommendations is laid out in the latest published County Cavan Wetlands Survey Report (Foss *et al*, 2023). These include further Inventory Work on those wetland sites with little or no recorded data, an increase in Site Designations where indicated, Enhanced Planning Controls, Ongoing Maintenance of the County Cavan Wetland Map Site Database and GIS Dataset, Hydrological Assessments and Management and Restoration of sites, and Control of Invasive Species.

Reduction of Semi-natural Grasslands

Information on species-rich grasslands in County Cavan is difficult to source, but a report by BEC Consultants (2009) gives an indication of where the remaining species-rich grassland sites are across Counties Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Monaghan. Cavan still has a relatively high number of sites with a range of grassland types, mostly semi-natural in composition. The map below shows the sites highlighted in red, with most occurring in West Cavan, within the Geopark landscape and towards the Leitrim border.

The types of species-rich grasslands recorded were:

- Dry neutral or calcareous grassland including semi-improved swards
- Upland acid grassland
- Neutral wet, rushy grassland, marsh and tall herb communities
- Mildly acidic rushy pastures and Molinia meadows

Out of 66 sites surveyed in County Cavan, the following were chosen as the top six species-rich grassland sites: Manragh Upper, Moneen, Moneensauran, Gubnafarna, Drumcrow and Bellavalley. Sites were scored for their conservation value, however the highest score, for Manragh Upper, was 63.6%, while the next down, Moneen, was at 54.74%. This shows that even those sites which scored highest are likely under threat themselves. It would be beneficial to resurvey these sites within County Cavan, over a decade on, to determine their current conservation status. Species-rich grasslands are often undervalued but they have untold benefit for biodiversity.

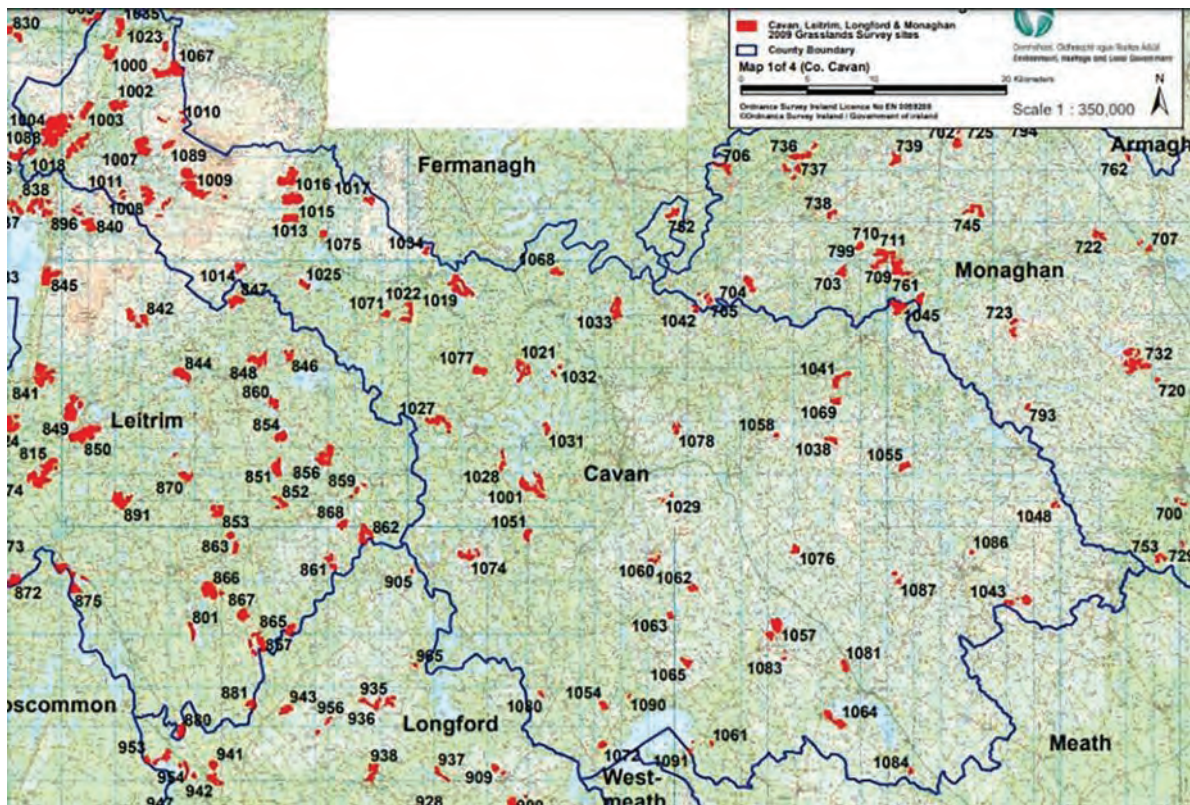


Figure 13: Map of species-rich grasslands identified in Co. Cavan. (BEC, 2009).

Heath & Scrub Clearance

Heath/scrub clearance is a contentious issue that has persisted over many decades. Areas of scrub, including Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Heath provide very important habitats for biodiversity, with various ground-nesting birds such as the Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), Curlew and Red Grouse making their homes there. They also provide food and refuge for many butterflies, e.g. Small Heath and moths, e.g. Latticed Heath Moth (*Chiasmia clathrata*). Over time however, many of these habitats and species in County Cavan (and elsewhere in Ireland) have been affected by damage caused via scrub/heath removal and over-grazing, as livestock farming became more popular and intensive. Over time, areas of heath and scrubland have been greatly affected by cutting and burning practices as farmers try to make their lands more productive, especially in upland areas where these habitats occur. Under Section 40 of the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended 2000), it is illegal to clear scrub between 1st March and 31st August in order to help protect habitats during the bird nesting and breeding season. Many agri-environmental groups and individuals advocate a balance between farming and habitat conservation through careful scrub removal where it is encroaching too far, so that both grazing and heath/scrubland can exist simultaneously. An example of this is the Burren Beo Trust based in the Burren, County Clare. Perhaps lessons can be learned from this approach in parts of County Cavan, for instance in the Cuilcagh Mountain vicinity, at Bruse Hill, Loughanleagh, Slieve Rushen and Killyconny Bog.

Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

Invasive alien species (IAS) have become a serious issue in recent times. These are non-native plants and animals that can take hold and completely dominate both aquatic and terrestrial areas, lowering biodiversity levels. As they proliferate, they push out native species, allowing them little to no space and/or nutrients to survive and thrive as they once did. Controlling and eradicating IAS has become increasingly challenging and expensive across Europe, including in Ireland. A total of 88 species are listed on the European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. No. 374 of 2024). This includes offences under 17(1) whereby a person shall not –

- (a) introduce into the State,
- (b) keep, including in contained holding,
- (c) breed, including in contained holding,
- (d) import into, export from or transport within the State, except for the transportation of species to facilities in the context of eradication,
- (e) place on the market,
- (f) use, exchange or offer for exchange,
- (g) permit to reproduce, grow or cultivate, including in contained holding, or
- (h) release into the environment,

an invasive alien species on national concern. There are further restrictions on vector materials and exceptions on Fallow deer (*Dama dama*) and Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*).

The IAS of particular concern in County Cavan include Nuttall's waterweed (*Elodea nuttallii*), Crayfish plague (*Aphanomycosis*), Asian clam (*Corbicula fluminea*), Quagga mussel (*Dreissena bugensis*) and Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). The potential for more IAS to spread within the county is always imminent. One key way to prevent this is to raise awareness throughout the county, encourage reporting of invasive species locations and to take effective biosecurity measures. A feasibility study was prepared by an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) working group formed in 2023, with a particular focus on Nuttall's Waterweed. This group includes representatives from Cavan County Council, including Cavan Heritage Office, along with LAWPRO, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and local angling clubs. Based on the results of this study, trials have been proposed to target certain areas affected by Nuttall's Waterweed, e.g. sections of Lough Oughter. An information video was developed on this invasive and its local effects supported by the Heritage Officer. It is important that the recommended actions, including the trial studies, of this feasibility study, are carried out to ensure this problem species can begin to be eradicated from County Cavan's water bodies. The AIS working group has reconvened in 2025 after a transition period and is looking at measures within the original study to follow up on.

In addition to aquatic-based habitats, it is worth noting that invasive species also continue to adversely affect County Cavan's terrestrial habitats, with more serious examples including Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). Invasive plants that mainly affect County Cavan's forest parks include Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*). *R. ponticum* is listed on the First Schedule list, while *P. laurocerasus* is currently not, despite being regarded as an 'Invasive species with risk of High Impact' by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC).

Climate Change

Climate change, driven by human activities, has caused global surface temperatures to rise by 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels over the period 2011-2020 (IPCC, 2023). 2024 was the warmest year on record globally,

and the first year where global temperatures were 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2025). According to Met Éireann, Ireland has become 0.7°C warmer and 7% wetter when comparing the 1961-1990 and 1991-2020 periods. Climate change is already having an effect on weather patterns and ecosystems in Ireland and will continue to do so in the years to come. Increased rainfall, combined with the infill of wetlands and removal of hedgerows and native woodland, means that flooding is becoming more prevalent. An increase in temperatures and prolonged periods of drought is also becoming an issue, meaning water availability is prone to becoming more restricted during high summer. The changing climate is having an effect on the emergence of plant and animal species in spring, causing confusion in nesting and breeding patterns. Increased temperatures can cause heat stress in certain species, which can be fatal. A spring warming in recent years has seen an advance in the timing of key phenological phases of a wide range of organisms, including trees, birds and insects. For example, higher temperatures in late winter or early spring result in butterflies appearing earlier in the year and birds shifting their migration patterns. The pace of future change will cause stress to ecosystems which are unable to adapt quickly. Once certain species begin to go out of sync, it can upset whole ecosystems, which is very difficult to reverse.

Legal Responsibilities – Legislation and Policy

International Legislation & Policy

EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

The Habitats Directive ensures the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species. Some 200 rare and characteristic habitat types are also targeted for conservation in their own right. Adopted in 1992, the Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional requirements. It forms the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy with the Birds Directive and establishes the EU wide Natura 2000 ecological network of protected areas, safeguarded against potentially damaging developments. Natura 2000 sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which cover a variety of habitats/species and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which cover particular bird species.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European level as well as at Irish level. The Habitats Directive is the legal basis for the designation of SACs in Ireland. Most Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are in the countryside, although a few sites reach into town or city landscapes, such as Dublin Bay and Cork Harbour. The Habitats Directive lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within SACs. Irish habitats include raised bogs, blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machair (flat sandy plains on the north and west coasts), heaths, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries and sea inlets. There are 25 Irish species which must be afforded protection and these include Salmon, Otter, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) and Killarney Fern (*Vandenboschia speciosa*).

Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects

Any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site must be subject to appropriate assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. Competent authorities may only agree to a plan or project after having ascertained that it will not have a significant impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. Some projects that will cause significant negative impact may still be permitted, in the absence of other alternatives, for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature). Where this arises, EU countries must introduce compensatory measures to ensure the

overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network. This procedure is regulated under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

Article 7 of the Habitats Directive extends the scope of its Article 6(2), 6(3) and 6(4) to the Birds Directive. Therefore, any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on a special protection area must be subject to appropriate assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. Competent authorities may only agree to a plan or project after having ascertained that it will not have a significant impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site.

Some projects that will cause significant negative impact may still be permitted, in the absence of other alternatives, for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature). Where this arises, EU countries must introduce compensatory measures to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network. This procedure is regulated under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.



EU EIA Directive (85/337/EEC)

The Habitats Directive contributes to ensuring biodiversity in the European Union by conserving natural habitats and wild fauna and flora species. It sets up the 'Natura 2000' network, the largest ecological network in the world. Natura 2000 comprises special areas of conservation designated by EU countries under this directive and special protection areas are classified under the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC).

EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)

The Birds Directive seeks to conserve all wild birds in the EU by setting out rules for their protection, management and control. The Directive covers birds, their eggs, nests and habitats. EU countries must take action to maintain or restore the populations of endangered species to a level which is in line with ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking into account economic and recreational needs. Measures must be set in place to preserve, maintain or re-establish a sufficient diversity and area of habitats for all bird species. These measures mainly involve the:

- creation of protected areas
- upkeep and management of habitats inside and outside the protected areas, and
- re-establishment of destroyed biotopes, and the creation of new ones.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

Under the Birds Directive, EU countries must create special protection areas for threatened species and migratory birds, with conditions favourable to their survival, situated in the birds' natural area of distribution (i.e. where they naturally occur). Particular attention is paid to wetlands. The special protection areas form part of the Natura 2000 network of protected ecological sites. This Directive also puts in place general protection for all species of wild birds in the EU. In particular the following are banned: deliberate destruction or capture of wild birds; damage to nests; taking or keeping eggs; deliberate disturbance which put conservation at risk, and trading or keeping live or dead birds, the hunting of which is banned.

RAMSAR Convention

The RAMSAR Convention was established in 1975 to protect wetlands across the world, after it was recognised that these habitats were under increasing pressure and threat from manmade activities. The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands, including all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands and peatlands. Countries where wetlands are listed for protection under RAMSAR must adhere to three key pillars:

1. work towards the wise use of all their wetlands;
2. designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the "Ramsar List") and ensure their effective management;
3. cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.

There is a total of 45 sites identified as Ramsar sites in Ireland. These are recognised as wetlands that are of significant value for nature. In County Cavan, Lough Oughter has been designated as a RAMSAR site since 1996, as well as being an SAC and SPA.

EU Water Framework Directive

The European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) was signed into law in October 2000. It requires EU member States to achieve water quality of at least 'good status' in rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters, by 2027 at the latest. The WFD mandates public participation, recognising the value of local knowledge and community involvement in decision making processes. The WFD is implemented through River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) in three six-year cycles, with each cycle providing an opportunity to assess water conditions at different stages and set out actions to achieve water quality objectives. Many of the habitats and species listed for protection in both the Birds and Habitats Directive are water dependent, meaning the WFD has an important role to play in the protection of biodiversity in Ireland.

EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR)

The EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) came into effect on August 18th, 2024, and is immediately and directly applicable to all member states. It is the first continent-wide extensive law of its kind. It is a core element of the EU Biodiversity strategy. It entails specific, legally binding targets for nature restoration, covering terrestrial, marine, freshwater and urban ecosystems. The regulation targets the restoration of degraded ecosystems and especially areas such as wetlands with the most potential to capture and store carbon, as well as attempting to mitigate and reduce the impact of natural disasters i.e. extreme weather events. Our ecosystems are in alarming decline with more than 80% of habitats in poor condition. The restoration of these habitats will cover wetlands, rivers, forests, grasslands, marine ecosystems and the species they are home to. The overall actions will look at increasing biodiversity, maximising the services nature does for us such as cleaning our water and air, pollinating crops and protecting us from floods, limiting global warming to 1.5°C and building up Europe's resilience and strategic autonomy, halting natural disasters and reducing risks to food security.

According to the latest Article 17 report on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland with NPWS (2019), 85% of our habitats are in unfavourable condition. The latest report for 2025 is in progress. Within two years, each member state is required to prepare a National Restoration Plan detailing how the restoration targets will be met with Ireland's plan scheduled for completion by September 2026. This will involve setting baselines, creating restoration goals and quantifying areas to be restored. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is coordinating the development of Ireland's National Restoration Plan. Article 4 of the Nature Restoration Regulation relates to the restoration of terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems and is focused on delivering the objectives of the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive. It includes ambitious targets for re-establishing and improving the condition of the habitats listed under Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive, including habitats such as wetlands in County Cavan such as Killyconny Bog and the Lough Oughter & Associated Loughs SAC.

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by all UN Member States, including Ireland, in 2015. These Goals provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve nature both on land and in water. The Goals that particularly link with County Cavan's Biodiversity Action Plan are:

- SDG 3: To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- SDG 6: To ensure access to safe water sources and sanitation for all.
- SDG 11: To make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- SDG 12: To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- SDG 13: Taking urgent action to tackle climate change and its impacts.
- SDG 15: To sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.
- SDG 17: To revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.



Irish Legislation

Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended 2000)

The Wildlife Act, 1976, is the principal national legislation providing for the protection of wildlife and the control of some activities that may adversely affect wildlife. The Wildlife Act, 1976, came into operation on 1 June 1977. It was the only major legislation concerned with wildlife that was passed in the previous 45 years. It replaced the Game Preservation Act, 1930, and the Wild Birds (Protection) Act, 1930. The aims of the Wildlife Act, 1976, are to provide for the protection and conservation of wild fauna and flora, to conserve a representative sample of important ecosystems, to provide for the development and protection of game resources and to regulate their exploitation, and to provide the services necessary to accomplish such aims. The Wildlife Act was then amended in 2000 to include several further objectives, including: to provide a mechanism to give statutory protection to NHAs; provide for statutory protection for important geological and geomorphological sites, including fossil sites by designation as NHAs; improve some existing measures, and introduce new ones, to enhance the conservation of wildlife species and their habitats; enhance a number of existing controls in respect of hunting, which are designed to serve the interests of wildlife conservation; broaden the scope of the Wildlife Acts to include most species, including the majority of fish and aquatic invertebrate species which were excluded from the 1976 Act.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, commits Ireland to reach a legally binding target of net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and a cut of 51% by 2030 (compared to 2018 levels). Under the 2021 Act, Ireland's national climate objective requires the State to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy. Our statutory national climate objective and 2030 targets are aligned with Ireland's obligations under the Paris Agreement and with the European Union's objective to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels and to achieve climate neutrality in the European Union by 2050. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 now gives legal underpinning to climate action by the public sector. It requires all public bodies to perform their functions in a manner consistent with Ireland's climate ambition. Local authorities, in particular, have a pivotal role to play in the decarbonisation transition, including through spatial planning, the provision of public housing and transport infrastructure, and the maintenance of biodiversity.

Planning & Development Act 2000

Under Section 9 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, Planning Authorities must make a development plan every 6 years. Under Section 10 of the Act, it is mandatory for Development Plans to include objectives for the conservation and protection of the environment including, in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed.

National Policy

National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

The 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 the ways in which we value and protect nature. The 4th NBAP was developed with the support, advice and input of the interdepartmental Biodiversity Working Group and the independent Biodiversity Forum. Ireland's 4th NBAP aims to protect and restore nature across the country. It had a lengthy consultation process, partly due to the Citizen's Assembly

on Biodiversity Loss occurring in the interim, in addition to the time taken to make the new plan supported by law. The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 introduced a new public sector duty on biodiversity. The NBAP 2023-2030 is the first national biodiversity action plan to be backed by legislation. The legislation provides that every public body, as listed in the Act, is obliged to have regard to the objectives and targets in the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

Actions in the NBAP 2023-2030 include expanding National Parks, tackling invasive species, strengthening efforts on wildlife crime and working with communities. Key recommendations from the Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss are also addressed. The 4th NBAP strives for a "whole of government, whole of society" approach to the governance and conservation of biodiversity. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to "act for nature".

The 4th NBAP's Vision for Biodiversity in Ireland in 2050 is as follows: *"Biodiversity in Ireland is valued, conserved, restored and sustainably used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people."* The five strategic Objectives within the NBAP are:

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 4th NBAP can be viewed and downloaded [here](#).

Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan. The purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to provide a programme of actions which will eventually lead us to meeting our national climate objective of seeking and achieving, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were agreed by the government in July 2022.

A draft of the Plan was agreed by government in December 2023 and following the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA), and a six-week public consultation, the completed version of the CAP24 was approved by government on the 21st of May 2024. The plan can be subject to minor editorial changes online. The Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon the previous year's plan by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The plan provides the guidance for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and to hit net zero by no later than 2050, as committed to in the previous Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

National Development Plan 2021-2030

The revised National Development Plan (NDP) was published in October 2021. It sets out a ten-year capital expenditure framework that will support Ireland's transition to a low-carbon society over the period to 2030. The revised NDP incorporates an investment package of €165 billion across all sectors of the economy. The investment it will support is necessary to meet our climate ambition, in areas such as renewable electricity generation, retrofit and public transport. The revised NDP was also informed, for the first time, by a climate and environmental assessment of the impact that each proposed measure was likely to have on seven specific climate and environmental outcomes: Climate mitigation; Climate adaptation; Water quality; Air quality; Waste and the circular economy; Nature and biodiversity; and the Just transition.

National Peatlands Strategy 2016

The National Peatlands Strategy contains a comprehensive list of actions, necessary to ensure that Ireland's peatlands are preserved, nurtured and become living assets within the communities that live beside them.

National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out to protect and value Ireland's important and vulnerable habitats, landscapes, natural heritage and green spaces. It identifies the importance of interrelationships between biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and green spaces.

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2015-2020 and 2021-2025

The main objectives contained within the AIPP include:

- Making farmland, public land and private land in Ireland pollinator friendly
- Raising awareness of pollinators and how to protect them
- Managed pollinators – supporting beekeepers and growers
- Expanding our knowledge of pollinators and pollination service
- Collecting evidence to track change and measure success.

WATER ACTION PLAN 2024: Ireland's River Basin Management Plan

The Water Action Plan, launched in 2024, is the latest river basin management plan for Ireland. It sets out measures that are necessary to protect and restore water quality in the country. The overall aim of the plan is to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed and that freshwater resources are protected to maintain and improve Ireland's water environment. The primary causes of the decline in Ireland's water quality are the increasing loss into water of polluting phosphorus and nitrogen from farmland, inadequately treated wastewater and physical impacts on water bodies, due to river barriers and drainage of lands and rivers. New targeted and effective measures are required to address declines in water quality and to protect those areas where progress has been made. In addition to improving overall water quality, overall water management is vital to addressing and adapting to the impacts of climate change, with many of the required measures having co-benefits for climate mitigation and biodiversity. The table below shows the suite of measures outlined in the Water Action Plan 2024 (DHLGH, 2024b).



Table 8.1 Summary of measures to deal with the main significant pressures on water quality from the third iteration of the National River Basin Management Plan (Water Action Plan 2024) 2022–2027

Sector/pressure	Measure
All pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of the Areas for Action programme, which builds further on the Priority Areas for Action programme managed by the Local Authority Waters Programme
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening of the Nitrates Action Programme and associated Good Agricultural Practice Regulations (S.I. No. 113/2022) to reduce nutrient pollution Strengthening of measures in the CAP Strategic Plan to improve water quality, including conditionality, ecoschemes and the results-based Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme Implementation of a national agricultural inspection plan overseen by the EPA and supported by new inspectors in local authorities Commitment of €60 m to a Farming for Water EIP to support the implementation of targeted measures on farms to protect water quality
Hydro-morphology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of a new legislative regime to manage the impacts of pressures on the physical condition of waters Investment in the National Barriers Programme led by Inland Fisheries Ireland. Improving fish migration in the Lower River Shannon (at the Parteen and Ardnacrusa dams)
Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of new support measures in the Forestry Programme 2023–2027 to protect water quality Increase in the area of forest with appropriate water setbacks Introduction of incentives to create new native forests to provide water services
Urban waste water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued investment by Uisce Éireann in improvements to waste water infrastructure, prioritising waters where urban waste water is a significant pressure Investment in new waste water infrastructure in villages not served by public waste water collection systems

CAP, Common Agricultural Policy

Source: DHLGH, 2024

Figure 14: Summary of measures to target the main significant pressures on water quality in the Water Action Plan (DHLGH, 2024b).

County & Regional Policy

Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028 follows rationale based on an ‘ecosystem services and natural capital’ approach. In other words, the plan is informed by considering natural ecosystems, taking account of the services that ecosystems provide and involving people through public consultation. Reference is also made to contributing to the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Chapter 10 of the County Development Plan focuses on Natural Heritage, which is an interchangeable term with Biodiversity. In this chapter, Cavan County Council states that it “will protect the natural heritage of the county in accordance with higher level national and regional policy.” It refers to the implementation of the Cavan County Biodiversity Action Plan and the Cavan County Heritage Plan with the aim of promoting “greater understanding of natural heritage in the county and encouraging greater public participation”. The Cavan County Development Plan lays out a list of nine ambitious Natural Heritage (NH) objectives, which are:

- NH1: Conserve, protect and manage the County’s natural heritage assets for future generations while encouraging appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the amenity value for the present generation.

- NH2: Maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits that may be derived from the conservation and management of Cavan's Natural Heritage and green infrastructure.
- NH3: Support the implementation of relevant actions in the National Biodiversity Plan, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and the National Peatlands Strategy.
- NH4: Implement, in partnership with Cavan County Heritage Forum, relevant stakeholders and the wider community, Cavan County Heritage and Biodiversity Plans and any revisions thereof.
- NH5: Integrate biodiversity consideration into all Cavan County Council activities through the County Biodiversity Action Plan process.
- NH6: Ensure the protection of species of flora and fauna afforded legal protection under Irish and European Legislation.
- NH7: Assess the impact on biodiversity of proposals for large developments, particularly those on greenfield sites, or in environmentally sensitive areas. Such developments must include measures for the enhancement and protection of biodiversity.
- NH8: Promote the conservation of biodiversity outside of designated areas, including features such as wetlands, woodlands, hedgerows and uplands.
- NH9: Working in close partnership with the Heritage Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Fisheries Boards, Fáilte Ireland, Office of Public Works, Geological Survey Ireland to deliver on the strategic actions of the current Cavan County Heritage Action Plan and the Cavan County Biodiversity Action Plan or subsequent plans adopted within the lifetime of the development plan.

There are a range of policies laid out in Chapter 10 for both designated and non-designated sites of natural heritage importance in County Cavan. There is also a separate section on Geological Heritage, with a focus on the UNESCO Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark and a set of objectives. In addition, there are sets of targeted objectives for the other special features of County Cavan's natural heritage and landscape, including Wetlands; Woodlands, Trees, Hedgerows & Stonewalls; Landscape Character Areas; Scenic Routes, Forest Parks and Major Lakes.



The shore at Lough Macnean, Blacklion. Source: Jennifer Mc Aree.

Climate Action Policy for County Cavan

Cavan County Council has a Climate Action Team, comprising a Climate Action Coordinator and a Climate Action Development Officer. A Community Climate Action Programme has been developed for the county and a Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 was published in February 2024 following a public consultation process.

Cavan County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The Cavan County Council Climate Action Plan sets out how the local authority can help tackle climate change and promote a range of mitigation, adaptation and other climate action measures, to help deliver on the national climate obligations and the Government's overall National Climate Objective. The 5 Strategic Goals of the Climate Action Plan are: Governance and Leadership, Built Environment and Transport, Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure, Communities Resilience and Transition, and Sustainability and Resource Management. While all themes connect climate action with biodiversity to some extent, the Strategic Goal of 'Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure' is especially relevant to the Cavan County Biodiversity Action Plan. This Strategic Goal includes the following Objectives (Section 3.8, pg. 61):

- To promote and protect our environment and its biodiversity and water catchments as key enablers of climate adaptation and mitigation across the county, through the delivery of sustainable services, including those with a focus on nature-based solutions, in collaboration with sectors and communities.
- To promote green infrastructure as a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, while also enhancing biodiversity.
- To protect peatlands from further degradation.

Climate and Biodiversity are recognised as being interdependent throughout the Climate Action Plan, and the following excerpt (pg. 61) is just one example which expresses the thinking behind Cavan County Council's dual approach:

"Investing to maintain and enhance the natural environment will provide a range of benefits that help to manage and reduce the risks of climate change and help build resilience by reducing soil erosion, absorbing and slowing water run-off, providing cooling and shading in urban areas, increasing wildlife and biodiversity and contributing to health and wellbeing."

Emission reduction opportunities for Cavan County Council are laid out under Table 2.5 (pg. 30) of the Climate Action Plan, as follows:

- Enhance biodiversity, ecosystems, and habitats.
- Plan, design, develop and integrate high quality green spaces.
- Plant and maintain trees in urban areas.
- Promote, protect, and restore carbon rich habitats.

Where opportunities arise, the Heritage & Biodiversity Office and the Climate Action Office will work together to deliver on relevant projects and actions.

Community Climate Action Fund

The Community Climate Action Fund was initially launched in 2024 by Cavan County Council, in conjunction with the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE). The overall objective of the fund is to support and empower communities, in partnership with Cavan County Council, to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities to take climate action at a local level. Projects must deliver a direct positive impact on climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or helping communities adapt

to the consequences of climate change. Under Strand 1 of the CCAF in 2024, 17 Cavan community groups shared funding of €439,000 to deliver climate action projects in their respective communities. This fund has relaunched in 2025 and will continue to support communities across county Cavan on an annual basis. Given the links to the Climate Action Plan and partner actions for the Biodiversity Office, there are lots of opportunities for collaboration in the community space with grants like this supporting biodiversity and climate friendly initiatives.

Northern and Western Regional Assembly: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy values the importance of the natural heritage asset and the importance of conserving, enhancing and protecting our biodiversity whilst sustainably managing it to safeguard for future generations. The strategy also addresses the need to build climate resilience in our local communities and the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050.

Biodiversity Officer for County Cavan

Until recently, the Heritage Officer oversaw the planning and implementation of both Heritage and Biodiversity projects in County Cavan. In May 2025, Cavan's first Biodiversity Officer took over the management of biodiversity projects (that is, anything related to natural heritage), while the Heritage Officer continues to mainly manage projects related to built and cultural heritage in the county. This follows the announcement in 2021 by then Minister of State for Heritage & Ecological Reform, Malcolm Noonan T.D., that a Biodiversity Officer was to be made available to local authorities across Ireland (of those that do not yet have one in place). Almost all local authorities now have their own Biodiversity Officer in place. The role of Biodiversity Officer now allows for more capacity to represent the natural heritage of County Cavan, to apply for relevant funding, and to develop and implement plans and policy to benefit biodiversity. The roles of Heritage Officer and Biodiversity Officer now come under the Heritage & Biodiversity Office of Cavan County Council.

Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group

This Steering Group was established to oversee the development of the County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan (2025-2030) to ensure it is as comprehensive and achievable as possible within the set timeframe. Following the publication of the Plan, there will be at least two meetings (or more depending on certain project requirements) organised per year by the Cavan County Council Biodiversity Office within the Heritage team. This is to ensure that the plan is kept on track to meet its objectives. For the Steering Group list, see Appendix D.

Cavan Monaghan Citizen Science Network

There are several groups across County Cavan that strive to protect and enhance biodiversity in their areas, including numerous Tidy Towns groups, LoughanLeagh & Muff Heritage Trust, BirdWatch Ireland Cavan Branch (BWI Cavan Branch), West Cavan Bogs Association (WCBA), the network of Group Water Schemes, Friends of Castle Lake Catchment, Killyconny Bog Project and more. Equally there are fantastic groups in County Monaghan, neighbouring County Cavan, such as Friends of the Upper Annalee, Friends of the Dromore, Irish Wildlife Trust (IWT) Monaghan Branch and Emyvale Tidy Towns who are active biodiversity community groups and engaged in wonderful citizen science. The Biodiversity Office proposes, in conjunction with the Monaghan Biodiversity Office, facilitating a connection between these groups via the establishment of a Citizen Science Network and annual conference at a suitable venue to incorporate activities such as moth trapping, river sampling or practical demonstrations. This Network would aim to further develop citizen science and biodiversity recording in the region, to strengthen the data quality, to inform local planning policy long-term, support biodiversity training and enhance dialogue between science and society. Participation

will involve annual meetings with a framework or terms of reference to be developed for the network with its own aims and themes supporting biodiversity objectives in Cavan and Monaghan. A portal or webpage with details of each group, possibly story mapped on GIS that is linked to the Heritage and Biodiversity Office webpage, would be a useful and effective way to keep various groups and interested individuals engaged. An active citizen science network that meets a few times a year to share updates and ideas would help to strengthen ongoing work and targets of each group involved. This could also be a good opportunity for all to share their respective knowledge and skills, and to explore funding opportunities together to further support their actions for biodiversity improvement in the region.

Climate Action Team

The Climate Action team, comprising a Climate Action Coordinator and a Climate Action Development Officer, was established relatively recently in Cavan County Council. The team aims to work with communities in County Cavan to address climate change through a series of climate actions that improve energy efficiency and carbon sequestration. This includes actions for biodiversity, such as mini forests, forest schools, dispersed orchards, community gardens and pollinator projects. Both the Climate Action Team and Heritage & Biodiversity Office aim to align their plans and projects where possible in order to achieve best results for both climate and biodiversity in the county.

Cavan Climate Action Hub (CAAH)

In 2023, the Cavan County Local Development (CCLD) team commissioned and completed a 'Cavan Climate Action Hub' (CAAH) feasibility study, with funding support from LEADER. The CCLD hopes to establish a staffed CAAH, which in turn could be a facility to gather/share information of resources available to support environmental groups. There is potential to align with the work being carried out by the future CAAH, regarding biodiversity projects.

Teagasc (Ballyhaise Agricultural College)

Teagasc has a significant presence in County Cavan, with Ballyhaise Agricultural College being a centre for the main functions of Teagasc. It offers an advisory and education service to farmers, including dairy research with a current focus on clover inclusion in pasture, with an aim of reducing chemical nitrogen. Ballyhaise Agricultural College offers a brilliant opportunity to engage with the farming community, especially those who are in training to enter an agricultural career. While there are already several initiatives happening at the college in terms of incorporating biodiversity into farming activities, there is much scope to expand on these and enhance the communication between the Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, the College and various other farming groups across the county. Targeted projects and open lines of communication between the various groups could have a very positive impact on the future of nature protection in County Cavan. In fact, there is a pNHA on the college farm and an SAC less than 500m from the college site. The 'National Teagasc Knowledge Transfer Programme' is working closely with The Heritage Council on biodiversity. The plan is to engage the new Biodiversity Officers with Teagasc advisors in each region in the promotion of biodiversity, with joint events such as Hedgerow Week, which features an annual public event in Teagasc Agriculture College Ballyhaise.

Integrating Green Infrastructure into all Developments

The Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028 highlights green infrastructure as being key to building sustainable communities across County Cavan, most notably in terms of urban areas. In fact, there are just over 100 references to 'green infrastructure' throughout the document, showing its importance within

future development in the county. It will be important to make green infrastructure a central aspect of all future planning, which will not only benefit biodiversity, but humans too, in terms of reducing flooding and the effects of urban heating, as well as helping to achieve cleaner air and water. The County Plan defines Green Infrastructure in the following terms in Section 7.14 Roads and Infrastructure Climate Context and Development Objectives:

‘Green Infrastructure serves a wide variety of important functions including but not limited to; provision of habitat, increase biodiversity, ecological corridors, climate change adaptation and mitigation, water treatment, water retention, local amenity provision, air quality improvement, cultural and heritage preservation, a mental restorative environmental and flood mitigation.’ There is also reference here to the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy: ‘Biodiversity protection relies heavily on quality Green Infrastructure, defined as a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services in both rural and urban settings.’

Under the Natural Heritage Development Objectives (Section 10.5 Natural Heritage in County Cavan), specifically, the following objective is stated: NH2 *‘Maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits that may be derived from the conservation and management of Cavan’s Natural Heritage and green infrastructure.’*

In terms of Public Open Space Development Objectives (Section 13.4.8), the following is stated: POCOS 03 *‘Ensure that residual land in developments can be used for the provision of green infrastructure including community food programmes/allotments and areas for pollination.’*

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)

Nature-based Solutions (NBS) is a systemic and sustainable approach to urban planning and design that seeks to mimic the process of natural water balances through “Water Sensitive Urban Design” (DHLGH, 2024c). In the National Biodiversity Action Plan, actions are included for Nature based solutions incorporation in coastal and marine areas, wastewater infrastructure and water quality protection, with a push to systematically integrate their methods into urban planning, including in public spaces, infrastructure, and building design (DHLGH, 2024a). Sustainable Urban Development Systems (SuDs), such as water-sensitive urban design, can help mitigate the potential for environmental degradation in the form of biodiversity loss, pollution of our water bodies, and increased flood risk as the demand for development to accommodate a growing housing demand continues to increase (DHLGH, 2022).

The Water Action Plan 2024 (DHLGH, 2024b) identifies urban runoff as a significant contributory factor to waterbody quality and quantity pressures in Ireland. In the context of urban drainage design, NBS should mimic those natural processes of drainage, providing a solution that is more sustainable, and not based on hard engineering. NBS are required to adhere to all four pillars of SuDS: water quantity, water quality, amenity and biodiversity benefits. Successful NBS reduces pollution and flood risk, improves biodiversity and achieves a greener, more pleasant urban environment. The Cavan County Climate Action Plan (Action N11) highlights the promotion of NBS in terms of flood risk mitigation.

NBS can also be interpreted in terms of river restoration measures, e.g. via measures like willow spiling, protect against erosion and aid water quality, and installation of micro wetlands, which are also important for carbon sequestration. An example of a community leading the way with NBS is the village of Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath. Their ecological water management plan, funded by LEADER and supported by LAWPRO, led to NBS installation, including Rain Gardens, Planters, Swales and a Reed Bed system for certain domestic dwellings. This led to more than 70% of previously lost surface water being saved from entering sewage overflow to the River Boor.



*Ballinahown in County Westmeath are implementing an ecological water management plan for their village including Raingardens and Swales. Note the graphical signage of Geashill rain garden and swales in County Offaly above showcasing how their bioretention system works. Mullagh covered later have their own wetlands as well.
Photo credit: Ballinahown Community Development and Geashill Tidy Towns.*



Figure 15: Diagram showing urban SuDS in action.

Designating 'County Biodiversity Sites/Areas'

The Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028 refers to designating County Biodiversity Sites (which may tie into the CBAs concept) within the lifetime of the County Plan and to protect these sites' ecological integrity. Under Section 10.8 Local Sites of Biodiversity Value and Non-Designated Sites, the County Plan outlines the following objective:

NHND2 'Conserve the existing wide range of flora, fauna and wildlife habitats in the county through the preservation of ecological corridors and networks vital to the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. To designate County Biodiversity Sites within the lifetime of this plan and to protect the ecological integrity of these sites.'

Countywide Habitat Mapping

County wetland surveys and hedgerow surveys have been carried out in the past and will continue to be undertaken into the future. This builds on the data and mapping available for County Cavan. There is much scope to improve on this to better understand the state of existing habitats (e.g. hedgerows, wetlands, woodlands), the challenges faced and to have the ability to plan targeted actions to improve and protect habitats county-wide. The continuation of habitat mapping is also listed as a key objective in the Cavan County Development Plan (2022-2028). Under Section 10.8 Local Sites of Biodiversity Value and Non- Designated Sites, the following objective is outlined:

NHND4 'Continue habitat mapping of the county to enable planning for the future development in a sensitive and sustainable manner and this mapping to inform the development management policy.'



A visit to Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark.



Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan Strategic Themes

There are 10 Strategic Themes laid out in this Biodiversity Action Plan, each with a set of specific Actions to be achieved within the 5-year timeframe of the Plan – 2025-2030. These Actions are based on the biodiversity of County Cavan and the challenges facing it, which are described in the earlier sections of this document. Actions are laid out in relation to expected Outcomes and Impacts, with suitable Partner Organisations put forward in each case. Actions are colour-coded based on the Targets – that is, the length of time they are expected to take and the year/s they should be completed by, within the Plan’s timeframe. Ongoing projects are included as Long-term Actions. Certain actions may also relate to developing partners during the length of the plan. All Actions are listed together in Appendix B. The timeframes for Actions are colour coded as follows:

SHORT TERM – 2025-27

MEDIUM TERM – 2026-28

LONG TERM – 2028 - 2030 OR ONGOING 2025-2030

1. Biodiversity in Communities

While Cavan is a relatively rural county with a strong farming tradition, it also has a large network of towns and villages, most of which have their own community groups and organisations (e.g. Tidy Towns, Residents’ Associations, schools and social/sporting clubs). Many of these groups are already working hard to improve biodiversity in their own place and have completed many successful projects to date. However, like any voluntary organisation, they need support, and projects require a certain amount of funding and guidance to ensure they get off the ground. The following table outlines actions related to community groups, that can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

1. Actions to support Biodiversity Initiatives in Communities across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Aid the progression of existing biodiversity action plans (BAPs) and associated training courses for community groups across County Cavan.	Progression and implementation of plans and training in biodiversity for key communities across the county.	Putting biodiversity at the top of the agenda and increasing awareness of nature in local communities.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, Cavan County Local Development (CCLD), Tidy Towns groups, sports clubs, etc.	Support the development and progression of BAPs and associated training courses for community groups across County Cavan. 2025 - 27
2.	Expand on biodiversity training & workshops for Cavan County Council staff, including County Councillors.	Increased awareness of and respect for biodiversity and its protection across all sectors of Cavan County Council.	Incorporating biodiversity into a range of plans and activities across the various sectors in the County Council.	All departments of Cavan County Council, ecologists and other relevant experts.	Biodiversity training course completed by all Cavan County Council departments. 2025 - 27

3.	Annual County Cavan Biodiversity Conference to be hosted in the county.	Conference on various biodiversity themes each year in County Cavan. Potential for networking and knowledge sharing.	Greater awareness of biodiversity among the public and across organisations.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council.	Annual conference to commence in 2026. 2025-2027
4.	Establish Citizen Science Network and annual conference for Cavan-Monaghan. This network will aim to cohesively collect data, foster biodiversity interest and help inform policy.	Network and conference established to encourage and promote citizen science and recording across Counties Cavan & Monaghan.	Improved knowledge and skills in citizen science across Counties Cavan & Monaghan. Increase in NBDC records for each county.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Monaghan Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Monaghan Co Co, NBDC, Heritage Council.	Network to be established in 2026. Annual Citizen's Science Conference to commence. 2026-28.
5.	Update of Cavan Co Co Heritage Office website to include a more extensive Section on Biodiversity. To include 'story mapping' - GIS.	Creating a 'go-to' section of the site for information on biodiversity within the county, and an inventory of community groups from across Cavan.	Developing a useful, 'one-stop-shop' source of information on biodiversity in the county with links to other useful resources and websites.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office and Cavan Co Co Communications Office, GIS Officer.	Complete Biodiversity webpage update, with ongoing maintenance from then on. 2026 -28.
6.	Promoting biodiversity via the Arts, e.g. booklets, nature-themed murals in towns/villages, biodiversity themes incorporated into Arts events & festivals. Team up with local artists.	Featuring biodiversity themes via Arts events and projects throughout Co. Cavan would highlight biodiversity in a fun and positive way.	Encouraging local people to think about biodiversity and appreciate the beauty of nature in both urban and rural settings.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Arts Office, Tidy Towns groups, Town Teams, Community and Sports Clubs, Local/Irish artists, Climate Action Team.	Host/complete at least one biodiversity-themed event or project in County Cavan each year via the Arts, e.g. murals, sculptures, art exhibitions, etc. Ongoing, 2025-2030.
7.	Promotion of biodiversity via events and an enhanced communications presence, e.g. 'Bioblitzes', 'walks & talks', social media, radio slots, short films, etc.	Increased interest and enthusiasm, especially among young people, to take an interest in biodiversity, and to recognise and record various species.	Getting people, especially young people, more involved. Improve biodiversity interest, species identification and recording.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Tidy Towns groups, Geopark, BWI, WCBA, LAWPRO, AIPP, The Anglo Celt, Northern Sound, Facebook, Instagram, etc.	Events and promotions during Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week each year. Ongoing, 2025-2030.

Local community groups, in particular Tidy Towns groups, often play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity in their locality. The following two case studies from the villages of Killeshandra and Mullagh, are included to show what community groups are doing to conserve and enhance biodiversity in County Cavan. These case studies demonstrate that great things can be achieved by community groups. These groups require support in order to ensure projects are brought to fruition and to continue the great enthusiasm for nature that has been stirred throughout the county.

Community Biodiversity Habitat Enhancement & Leadership Training – CCLD

In 2024, Cavan County Local Development (CCLD) commissioned the project 'Community Biodiversity Habitat Enhancement & Leadership Training'. The aim of the project was to protect and enhance County Cavan's biodiversity through improved local awareness and knowledge. The training was designed to enable participants to apply learning to protect and enhance biodiversity in their local area, whilst encouraging members of the community to become involved in their biodiversity projects. The training was delivered by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants between March and June 2025, in addition to guest speakers, who included Peatland Ecologist Roisín Donnelly, Ornithologist Eric Dempsey, and NPWS Conservation Rangers for East and West Cavan. Over 50 participants from 17 groups across three locations in County Cavan took part, with topics including nature legislation, protected sites, mammals, birds, wildflowers, trees & hedgerows, water quality, birds, pollinators and invasive species. A group trip to Cuilcagh Boardwalk on the Cavan/Fermanagh border followed in June 2025. A total of 11 biodiversity action plans were completed by participating groups, with the aim of seeking funding to implement the actions proposed at each relevant location. Feedback on the course was very positive and has equipped several community groups with the knowledge, skills and inspiration needed to protect and enhance biodiversity in an effective manner within their localities.



Group field trip to Cuilcagh Boardwalk in June 2025, the final event for the Cavan Biodiversity Course.

Case Study - Killeshandra

Killeshandra has an active Tidy Towns group that strives to get environmental and biodiversity projects off the ground. An extensive biodiversity survey was carried out in Killeshandra in 2014, which identified key habitats and species throughout the village. A further local biodiversity action plan (2025) is in progress with funding from Community Foundation Ireland. The Committee works closely with local national schools, businesses and church groups in order to highlight biodiversity in the area and make positive changes in and around the village. Projects include the creation of a looped walk, pollinator plan initiatives, installation of wildlife cameras and native tree planting. An area of amenity grassland in Killeshandra is managed with a 'low-mow' cutting regime and this is being trialed in other small sections of the village too, e.g. the Killeshandra Loop Walk. Some areas have seen the re-emergence of Orchids following a period of low- maintenance mowing.

Regular nature-themed events are organised on a range of topics in the area, e.g. on moth trapping and bog/wetland walks. The Tidy Towns Committee has planted 50 apple trees in conjunction with local creamery Lakeland Dairies, as well as other mini orchards, funded by the 'DC for Bees' project. A Swift box project involving installation of tailored Swift boxes on school buildings was also developed by the local national school (also an An Taisce Green Flag School). This work has continued with the installation of Swift boxes in the old bank building. Sand Martin boxes were installed in the creamery yard (yet to be successful). The group has experimented with sowing Yellow Rattle in grassland, working with the Fire brigade and the church. The group hopes to involve the GAA. Further the biodiversity friendly management of the strand is proposed. The group also plans to foster the recognition of the Long-Established Native Woodland (LEW) in the vicinity of the town and to promote nature corridors.



Drone shot of Togher Lough. Source: West Cavan Bogs Association.

Case Study – Mullagh

Mullagh Sports Partnership embarked on an ambitious project in 2019 to create a biodiversity walking trail of approx. 950m in length, alongside the development of a new gaelic football sports pitch. The biodiversity walkway project was supported with funding from the 'Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014-2020' (administered by CCLD). The community group received just over €171,000 funding for their project: for the development of the Biodiversity Walkway including preliminaries, construction, landscaping, construction of riparian wetlands, boardwalk, lighting, benches and interpretative panels. A Geodiversity study conducted by an ecologist in 2019 noted the presence of an esker, a feature of glacial deposition dating back over 10,000 years and this has been incorporated into the biodiversity trail. This esker is one of only four surviving in

County Cavan. Landscaping along part of the linear walkway has been designed to improve biodiversity and to show some of the principal vegetation types which have been present in the Mullagh area from the last Ice Age to the present. Interpretive panels are in place to describe this natural vegetation. Existing Leylandii hedging around the original community sports ground has since been replaced incorporating some native tree/hedgerow species. This element as well as new Norwegian pine ball stops and fencing was funded through Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Another part of the biodiversity trail passes alongside the Mullagh Lough Stream (known locally as the Mill Stream). A small wetland area of approx. 600 m² has been created here, fed by this stream and some natural percolation. An intersection was created from the Mill Stream to allow some of the flowing water to divert from the river to the wetland and exit back into the river downstream. All drainage from the football pitch is channelled into the wetland where it is filtered by specially chosen wetland planting before flowing back into the Mill Stream. There are two board walks over this wetland which is home to Moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) and ducks and an artificial Otter holt has been installed as has a specifically designed duck feeder. The wetland project was partly funded by the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) and the group sought the expertise of an environmental consultant with specialist expertise in wetland projects. The biodiversity trail was completed in late 2021 and is now open to the public, with access via the Sports Centre.

In addition, in 2022, the Mullagh Sports Partnership was successful in receiving just over €150,000 LEADER funding for another environmental project. This project focused on the provision of an Amenity Access Area incorporating sustainable urban drainage patterns (SuDS) for onsite water/drainage management. It includes the following: the provision of 30 car park spaces including disabled and family parking areas, a bicycle parking area, an outdoor classroom and equipment to facilitate future biodiversity and environmental education. A specially designed swale/rainwater garden takes some of the rainwater draining from the roof of the adjacent Sports Centre as well as the drainage from the permeable paving and asphalt of the car park area. A native biodiversity hedge and trees and pollinator friendly planting frames this area. In 2025, with some funding from the Municipal Districts Grant Scheme it is planned to install a pollinator-friendly flower bed in Mullagh's club colours of blue and white (CLG Cuchulainn).



Mullagh Wetland. Source: Seamus Yore.

2. Protecting Lakes & River Systems

County Cavan has a unique landscape and geography consisting of a large network of interconnected lakes, rivers and drumlins that are key to the county's natural and cultural heritage. They support a wide range of birds, fish, mammals, amphibians, invertebrates and plants. However, Cavan's lakes and river systems are threatened with a range of pressures, including increasingly intensive agricultural practices, domestic outputs and climate change. Invasive species are also a key threat to Cavan's water bodies, which is detailed under Strategic Theme 9. By placing renewed focus on these special water systems and engaging with various individuals, groups, and relevant governmental bodies, it will be possible to improve their quality and status. The following table outlines actions that can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan to protect lake and river systems in Cavan, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

2. Actions to help protect Lakes, River Systems and Water Quality in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Form practical working group systems and have regular correspondence with a range of related groups focused on water quality projects.	Facilitate and improve communication and coordination between groups and individuals involved with projects on maintaining water quality.	Improved communication will lead to greater efficiency of groups, collaborators and hopefully better Water quality achievements.	Cavan Biodiversity & Heritage Office, Cavan Co Co Environment Section, NFGWS, LAWPRO, Uisce Éireann, IFI, IFA, ASSAP (Teagasc), Farming for Water, ACRES, CCLD.	Form Targeted Water Quality Working Group system. Annual or biannual meet- up/s with specific focus. 2025-2027
2.	Public awareness campaigns on water usage, chemicals, septic tanks and pesticide use. (e.g. video campaign on pesticides)	Wider public awareness of water quality issues in the county and how everyone's actions can have an effect on local water supply, lakes & rivers, etc.	Ultimately, people taking action to Improve water quality in households and businesses across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co Water Section, Cavan Co Co Environment Section, EPA, NFGWS, LAWPRO, Uisce Éireann.	Organise campaign to encourage improved water practices in the home/business. 2026 - 28
3.	Citizen science training and awareness raising events on water quality – linking in with relevant organisations, e.g. Citizen Science Network events. See Biodiversity and Communities (Strategic Theme 1).	Equipping individuals and community groups with the skills to monitor water quality in their area through online, visual and on-site training.	Increasing knowledge on water quality, providing valuable skills in the community to help protect local rivers and lakes.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, LAWPRO, Cavan Libraries, NFGWS, Irish Water, Cavan Co Co Water Section, Cavan Co Co Environment Section, EPA, Geopark.	Aid organisation and promotion of events each year, e.g. LAWPRO events/ training, Cavan- Monaghan Science Festival. Ongoing 2025- 2030.

<p>4. Support Nature Based Solutions (NBS) and green infrastructure such as riparian buffer zones, wetlands projects, rain gardens and SuDs (Sustainable urban drainage systems) features where appropriate for biodiversity enhancement.</p>	<p>Helping projects with NBS/ SuDs features and supporting knowledge sharing where appropriate to aid water quality and monitoring so building on existing knowledge in space.</p>	<p>Increasing knowledge and capacity in the NBS space for Cavan County Council. Support projects where possible that aid water quality such as flood alleviation or improving water quality aligned to water action plan.</p>	<p>Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, LAWPRO, NFGWS, Irish Water, Cavan Co Co Water Section, Roads section, EPA, Geopark, Cavan Climate Action Team.</p>	<p>Deliver training and advice capacity in supporting NBS projects or helping with such projects to aid water quality.</p> <p>Ongoing 2025-2030.</p>
<p>5. Explore opportunities for implementing actions on farms to protect water quality and biodiversity, e.g. creating riparian buffer zones, wetlands, Fencing, Willow Spiling, etc.</p>	<p>Encouraging the farming community to conserve biodiversity by taking action to protect local water quality.</p>	<p>Better results in terms of reducing water pollution and improving water quality across County Cavan.</p>	<p>Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Teagasc Ballyhaise, LAWPRO, NFGWS, ASSAP, NPWS, IFA, ACRES Breifne, Farming for Water, Boyne Rivers Trust.</p>	<p>Incorporate topics related to improved water practices on the farm into biodiversity communications, events and campaigns, involving partner organisations.</p> <p>Ongoing, 2025-2030.</p>



View of Mullagh Lough. Source: Seamus Yore.

Case Study - Crosserlough and Erne Valley GWS

The National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) has been the driving force behind several initiatives that aim to protect water bodies at source, and at the same time highlighting the importance of biodiversity. Pesticides are a particular issue for various group water schemes, with just one drop of pesticide/weed killer — the equivalent of the amount of residue found on a pesticide bottle's foil cap — enough to contaminate a 30km stretch of a stream. Their use also has a damaging impact on biodiversity and the wider aquatic environment.

After piloting several successful projects in County Roscommon, the NFGWS is rolling these out across the country, including in County Cavan. One of these initiatives is the 'I've planted a tree and my garden is pesticide free' initiative. Over 1,000 trees have been given to schoolchildren across 11 primary schools in County Cavan, encouraging householders to grow native trees and stop using pesticides.

To date the 'I've planted a tree and my garden is pesticide free' initiative has been rolled out by Crosserlough Group Water Scheme and Erne Valley Group Water Scheme, with pupils in the local community each receiving a native tree to plant at home along with educational materials that raise awareness about the dangers that pesticides pose to drinking water and the wider environment. The aim is to help improve the water quality of Graddum Lough and Garty Lough, while simultaneously supporting the health and wellbeing of the habitats and species that rely on them (including humans!).

In addition to the 'I've planted a tree...' initiative, the Local Authorities Water Programme (LAWPRO) has also provided funding for five families in the Erne Valley GWS catchment to get involved in the art of beekeeping. The award-winning 'Let It Bee' initiative provides bees, equipment and mentorship to each family and is also aimed at raising environmental awareness in the community.

In late 2023, Crosserlough GWS also participated in a new 'Orchards for Farmers' initiative, whereby heritage apple orchards were given to a number of farming families in the GWS, to plant at home and manage in a pesticide free manner, further helping to help promote the links between water quality and biodiversity. The trees were all native apple trees, and some were actually specific to County Cavan, e.g. the Cavan Sugarcane. This initiative has been very well received by the participating Group Water Schemes to date and the NFGWS aim to continue to roll it out with more Groups Water Schemes across the country.

Case Study - Gowlan GWS

Gowlan GWS is another scheme that has taken measures to protect its local water supply (which is Garvagh Lough) and its associated biodiversity. The GWS led the installation of fencing around the lake, along with supplying water troughs for the livestock animals and stiles for fishermen to gain access for fishing. A margin of at least 10m of native trees such as Willow sp. have been planted where necessary, to create an effective buffer zone between the farmland and lough. The Gowlan GWS water protection project was supported with funding from the 'Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014-2020' (administered by CCLD). Catchment Care and the NFGWS supported Gowlan GWS to ensure the project was completed and the project achieved the support of 12 surrounding landowners, which is a brilliant result. Rainwater harvesting is also being carried out at the GWS site.

3. Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark

The Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark is a unique landscape with important geological, natural and cultural heritage aspects for County Cavan and the greater region. Geodiversity can be described as the variety of rocks and minerals, landforms, soils and geological process and which are celebrated and interpreted within the Geopark area. Geodiversity influences our built, cultural and natural heritage and is often referred to as 'biodiversity's silent partner'. The Geopark is home to a large array of habitats, flora and fauna, some of which are protected nationally and internationally. The Geopark is also a place of natural beauty which is of great importance to the local tourism industry. While it is important that people continue to live within the Geopark and visit it for leisure activities, the Geopark needs to be recognised for its importance to biodiversity and geodiversity and thus measures need to be put in place to protect it as such. The following table outlines actions tailored to the Geopark that can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

3. Actions to protect and support Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Biodiversity Management Plan for various public-facing and Cavan County Council-owned sites across the Cavan side of the Geopark, e.g. Shannon Pot, Moneygashel, Whitefather's Cave, Lower Lough Macneil Park.	Develop biodiversity action/management plans for various council owned sites in terms of grass maintenance, tree planting, pollinator friendly planting, etc.	Encourage more biodiversity into Cavan County Council owned areas that will enhance public areas around the Geopark.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, NPWS, CCLD, County Outdoor Recreation Forum.	Develop targeted Biodiversity Management Plan for Cavan Co Co-owned sites across the Geopark. 2025-27.
2.	Assist with a volunteering programme to ensure a regular team is available to help maintain and enhance biodiversity at the Geopark.	Regular volunteers available to carry out activities such as litter picking, path maintenance, invasive species removal.	Increasing manpower to maintain the Cavan side of the Geopark, as well as encouraging local interest and a sense of 'ownership' at the park.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Volunteer Centre, LAWPRO, local volunteer groups and clubs, CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum.	Aid Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark to establish an active volunteering programme. 2025-27

3.	Develop a Conservation Project for the Geopark, with a focus on conserving its unique habitats and species.	Tailored project for biodiversity rich habitats and species, e.g. grasslands, boglands, lakes, butterfly and bird species.	Protect the habitats & species that have managed to be conserved to date and ensure they will be protected into the future.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, NPWS.	Develop a Conservation Project for threatened and unique habitats and species across the Geopark. 2026 - 2028
4	Support development of partnerships, funding opportunities, research studies and conservation actions on the ground.	More support in terms of people and resources to implement conservation projects.	Ensure that conservation projects can be carried out in a targeted, effective way.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, NPWS, private farmers/ landowners, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum.	Partnerships developed and funding for a Conservation Project has been applied for. 2026 - 2028
5.	Regular eco-themed events and programmes and incorporate citizen science network events at the Geopark.	Demonstrate why the Geopark is so important to conserve and protect in terms of biodiversity (along with its archaeological, physical and cultural features).	Greater knowledge about the Geopark within County Cavan and a greater willingness to protect and understand its significance, including its unique biodiversity.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Sports Partnership, Cavan PPN, NPWS, UNESCO, CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum., Cavan Climate team.	One biodiversity-themed walk at the Geopark in conjunction with Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office each year. Ongoing, 2025-2030.

Case Study – Conservation Volunteer Projects and CANN Project

As part of the Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) project funded through INTERREG, Ulster Wildlife, in partnership with a range of stakeholders, including Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, developed conservation action plans for both Cuilcagh Mountain SAC (Northern Ireland) and Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands SAC (Republic of Ireland). Through this, Ulster Wildlife engaged with more than 50 landowners across the two sites to discuss current pressures and threats as well as future management. This work highlighted the impacts on priority habitats across the sites but also protected species such as Hen Harrier and Golden Plover. The conservation action plan now sets out a vision and recommendations for habitat and species work to

bring improvements for nature across the landscape. These include everything from the development of species action plans to controlling invasive conifers and restoring eroded blanket bog.

A key deliverable of the project was initiating one of these actions to restore eroded blanket bog. Local landowners were engaged to restore almost 100ha of blanket bog in two areas of Cuilcagh Mountain SAC using best practice techniques from across Ireland and the UK. Initial results have shown notable improvements in the blanket bog habitats, and this activity was just one example of what could be achieved across this landscape going forward. Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark is working in partnership with colleagues in Cavan County Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Coillte and local landowners progressing key elements of this project having secured approximately £1.5 million, through the Shared Island Peatland Challenge Fund and Peace Plus 'Peat+' project' to implement scientific monitoring, develop a suite of Peatland Management Plans, deliver Habitat and Species Restoration actions, develop and deliver education, engagement, volunteering and capacity building programmes for local schools, communities and landowners within . Through cross-border partnerships, the project will focus on key areas on Cuilcagh Mountain and Lough Navar in West Fermanagh to enhance knowledge transfer, ensure coordinated, long-term conservation efforts are agreed and fill gaps in engagement, while contributing to national climate and biodiversity goals.



*Staff monitoring & training session at Cuilcagh Mountain.
Source: Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark.*



*View from Cuilcagh Mountain.
Source: Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark.*



4. Protecting Bogs & Wetlands

Bogs and wetlands are often overlooked habitats, but their protection is vitally important to maintaining a healthy biodiversity and climate. Cavan has an extensive network of raised bogs and wetlands that have been under threat for many decades, primarily due to cutting and drainage practices for fuel and farming, respectively. Local groups such as the West Cavan Bogs Association, Killyconny Bog Project and wetland studies under the Wetland Survey of Ireland have helped to raise the profile of these habitats in recent years. However, a greater focus needs to be placed on bog and wetland restoration across the county if these important habitats are to survive into the future. The following table outlines actions to protect bogs and wetlands that can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

4. Actions to protect and enhance Cavan's Bogs & Wetlands					
	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Install educational signage at key bog and wetland sites – seek support from conservation groups to identify key sites and suitable locations.	Signage with information on bog & wetland biodiversity, especially at unprotected bog and wetland sites.	Informing locals and visitors about the rich biodiversity present in our remaining bogs and wetlands will help to raise their profile and encourage conservation.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, WCBA, Killyconny Bog Project, Environmental Consultancy.	Install biodiversity signage on at least two key County Cavan bog & wetland sites. 2025-27.
2.	Influence the Green Cert Curriculum - Explore potential for establishing lectures within modules at Teagasc (Ballyhaise) on bogs and wetlands.	Developing modules at Teagasc Agricultural College, Ballyhaise, along with conserving the on-site wetland. Raise the profile and importance of managing bogs and wetlands for biodiversity, flood management, etc.	Farmers emerging from the agricultural college, Ballyhaise may be encouraged to put what they have learned about bogs and wetlands into practice.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, NPWS – Waterlands Project, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, WCBA, Killyconny Bog Project, Environmental Consultancy, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), Climate Action Team.	Work to establish module or training on bogs and wetlands at Teagasc. 2025-27.

3.	Promotion of wetlands, wetland studies and related education programmes.	Complete Phase III study report and share all wetland studies online and across the public domain.	Increased knowledge of Cavan's bogs and wetlands will help support their protection and potentially future funding opportunities.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Irish Wetland Surveys, Killyconny Bog Project, WCBA, NPWS, Geopark, Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Irish RAMSAR Wetland Committee, Climate Action Team.	Promotion of Phase II of Cavan Wetlands Survey, plus completion and promotion of Phase III. 2026 - 28
4.	Include 'Wetland Ambassador Programme' as a component of the Citizen's Science Network.	Recognition of landowners striving to protect wetlands in Co. Cavan and their priority habitats i.e. transition mire, etc.	Educating the farming community and wider public about the types and value of wetland habitats being conserved.	Geopark, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Office, Irish Wetland Surveys, Farming for Nature, Burren Beo, DAFM, ACRES-Breifne.	Promotion and launch of Wetland Ambassador Programme within Citizens' Science Network. 2026-28
5.	Increased support for communities involved with bog restoration, e.g. funding, training clinics and inclusion within the Citizen Science Network.	Raising awareness among the public of the importance of bogs and wetlands in the county in terms of biodiversity, climate change, flood protection, etc.	Greater awareness in the public domain could mean better understanding and protection measures, especially for those bogs not currently protected under legislation.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Killyconny Bog Project, WCBA, NPWS, LAWPRO, Geopark, Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Irish RAMSAR Wetland Committee, Climate Action Team.	At least one event per year focusing on bogs & wetlands, e.g. on World Wetlands Day. Ongoing 2025-2030.

Case Study - Killyconny Bog Project

Killyconny Bog is one of the six SACs in County Cavan. It is 191 hectares in area and is located outside the historic town of Mullagh. The bog was designated legislative protective status under national and EU law, due to being an EU Habitats Directive Annex I Priority Habitat 'Active raised bog' and a 'Degraded raised bog still capable of natural regeneration.' It is one of the few remaining raised bogs in the northeast of Ireland and remains relatively intact. The bog supports a wealth of flora and fauna, including forty-five bird species such as the Curlew, Meadow Pipit and Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*). A strong community group of volunteers initially worked to get the bog designated as an SAC in 1997 and they have strived since to maintain this status by protecting and enhancing the site's biodiversity. Their projects to date have included the EU LIFE 'Living Bog'

funded project, which involves rewetting of the north, south and west sections. These includes installing new peat and plastic dams to block drainage channels which have been causing the bog to lose water. Disturbed peatland surfaces are being improved to enhance the capacity of both lobes of the bog to restore through greater hydrological connectivity, improving its ecological condition and coherence. By re-wetting the disturbed and ditched habitats, a higher water table will be created, benefitting a range of rare bog species and in time, a more sustainable natural raised bog habitat will be restored to Killyconny Bog. While the area of active raised bog has degraded substantially since the 1990s, much of the remaining degraded bog has the potential to respond well to the rewetting projects occurring under the 'Living Bog' project. Detailed surveys of birds, bats, moths, and butterflies have also been undertaken at Killyconny Bog over the years. The group has conducted an arachnid survey and is conducting a master's thesis into the benefits of bogs for mental health and wellbeing. A video detailing an oral history of Killyconny Bog and its importance to the local community has been produced. The group has organised Bog Walks, Art on the Bog Days, school visits, lectures, and other events to highlight to raise awareness of this unique habitat. A Recreation Management Plan has been produced. Current projects include the production of a publication 'The Story of Killyconny Bog' and a Feasibility Study on the development of a Killconny Bog Trail and Cycleway. A major challenge is to achieve improved access in an ecologically sensitive manner.



View at Killyconny Bog. Source: Barbara Carolan.

Case Study - West Cavan Bogs Association

West Cavan Bogs Association (WCBA) is a registered charity, run by a voluntary group of people with a particular interest in conserving and raising awareness of bogs in the West Cavan area. These bogs are mainly privately-owned and not currently under any form of statutory protection but are potentially ideal sites to be highlighted as County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs). These bogs focused on are mostly situated in the areas of Tullyhaw, Tullyhunco and lower Loughtee. The WCBA regularly surveys and records the interesting species on these bogs, e.g. Moths, Butterflies and Damselflies. They have created YouTube videos, including 'Looking for Luna: the quest for the Irish Damselfly', as well as an interactive, virtual reality website so that people can experience bogs such as Fartrin and Aughaween remotely. They are also undertaking a project to record and archive people's memories of the West Cavan bogs.

The WCBA benefited greatly from a Creative Ireland Climate Action grant given to composer Ian Wilson in 2024. This enabled information meetings, and field trips to learn about bogs. It also started hydrological measurements on the bog. With funding from LAWPRO in 2025, WCBA commissioned a detailed restoration plan for one area of bogland known to NPWS as Fartrin South, (although a large part lies in the townland of Aughaweena). The aim now is, with the support of landowners, to source funding to put the restoration plan into action. Restoring Aughaweena Bog will help counter habitat loss for Large Heath, which is found on these bogs. The colony of Irish damsel fly found at Togher Lake and surrounds is the only one found in Co Cavan during recent survey work. Work to restore Aughaweena bog will help to counter the degradation of cutover bog habitat quality, which has contributed to this species' national 'vulnerable' status. The restoration approaches outlined in the restoration report aim to enhance habitat quality by rewetting the bog, supporting specialist species associated with this habitat whilst also improving ecological connectivity between the peatland and surrounding habitats (e.g. other areas of peat, native woodlands and lakes). Restoration efforts will therefore facilitate a more natural species movement, benefiting biodiversity and strengthening the resilience of interconnected habitats. This is only part of the complex of bogs and there remains high quality habitat in Fartrin north and Clontygrigny in need of restoration. Such projects highlight the inherent worth of County Cavan's bogs and help to raise their profile. The work of the WCBA and similar organisations should be supported, which would in turn help to secure the fate of the County Cavan's vulnerable bogs.



Members of the WCBA surveying for invertebrates at bog in West Cavan. Source: Aisling Blackburn.

5. Biodiversity Focus on Forest Parks

County Cavan is in the fortunate position of possessing several large forest parks, mostly associated with historical demesnes. These include Killykeen, Dún na Rí and Deerpark Forest parks, which are regularly used by locals and visitors for leisure activities, in addition to Annagh Lough Wood outside Cavan town. These forests are composed of both non-native coniferous and native broadleaf tree plantations that are important for both biodiversity and climate in the region. While maintained and well-loved and utilised, these forest parks require more focused attention in terms of biodiversity enhancement, and replacement of conifers with more native broadleaf in time. They will also require targeted removal and management programmes for invasive species such as Rhododendron and Laurel (detailed under Strategic Theme 9). The following table outlines actions that can be achieved to encourage more biodiversity in forest parks and plantations, within the timeframe of this plan, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

5. Actions to enhance Biodiversity Focus on Forest Parks in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Raising awareness of biodiversity within forest parks, e.g. walks & talks and Citizen Science events.	Holding events involving the public, e.g. Bioblitzes, Bird Surveys, Fungi foraging.	Gathering of important data each year, recording of various species present in forest parks, encouraging people to get involved and have fun while learning about biodiversity.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, local Volunteer and community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, Heritage groups, Geopark, Climate Action Team, CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum.	Hold at least one forest park related event each year during Biodiversity Week or Heritage Week. 2025-27
2.	Supporting Coillte and forest park managers with biodiversity actions plans in its forest parks across County Cavan. Discussion and sharing of biodiversity plans for forest parks where possible.	Increasing knowledge and discussion around biodiversity for County Cavan's Forest parks.	Increasing the effectiveness of biodiversity action plans across forest parks in County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, public, Geopark, Climate Action Team, CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum.	Contact with Coillte on a yearly basis to discuss and contribute to biodiversity plans for Cavan's Forest parks. 2026-28.
3.	More information signs on tree, flora and fauna species present in forest parks.	Highlighting key tree, flora and fauna species around forest parks, how they interact and benefit biodiversity.	Creating an understanding and appreciation of the species present in County Cavan's forests and encouraging their protection.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, private landowners (where necessary), Geopark, CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum.	Install relevant biodiversity signage in at least three of Cavan's key forest parks. Ongoing 2025-30.

Case Study - Skerrig Forest School

A Forest School exists at Hilltop, Skerrig between Shercock and Cootehill, County Cavan, on the lands of the 5th generation of the Dempsey family. Marian and Packie established a mainly native broadleaf woodland in 2006 in an area of relatively low native woodland cover when it was decided that their holding was too small for a viable working farm. Their vision was to provide a sanctuary for their family and future generations and visitors along with many diverse habitats among the trees, in the meadow and in two fully stocked manmade lakes. The tree species include Oak, Alder, Birch and Scots Pine, along with the mandatory conifer species

of Sitka Spruce and Norway Spruce. The planned Woodland Improvement Scheme will further develop the existing flora and fauna which includes Red Squirrel, Woodpecker, Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Moorhen, Pine Marten, along with various bee, dragonfly, butterfly and wildflower species.

The Forest School provides a wide range of outdoor experiences for children and adults of all ages and abilities by choosing to engage in activities that support their physical, cognitive, emotional and social wellbeing. Connection with trees provides knowledge and appreciation of woodlands and the vital part the living tree plays in human survival and climate change outcomes. Through woodland art and bushcraft, animal tracking, cooking, shelter-building, camping and fire-making activities, an understanding and duty is nurtured towards eco care along with skills in self-sufficiency and survival techniques.

The regional Social Farming Network provides clients from the local Adult Support and Training Centre for forest walks where they experience the calm and emotional regulation the forest offers. The forestry students from the nearby Ballyhaise Agricultural College carry out their practical training operations in the forest and a forestry student exchange programme exists with colleges in Finland. Marian is a former primary teacher, with training in outdoor pursuits and forest school leadership. Packie has a lifetime of connection with local wildlife, is adept in heritage farming skills and has an appreciation for timber quality and usage though over 50 years in the construction industry. Skerrig Forest School's development journey can be viewed on Youtube via 'Let's Talk Forestry'- Episode 5. See also irishforestschoollassociation.ie.



Activities at Skerrig Forest School, led by Marian Dempsey. Source: Marian Dempsey.

6. Native Hedgerows & Woodlands

As a predominantly rural county, Cavan still has a relatively extensive network of native hedgerows, with some pockets of native woodland. However, like many counties, a substantial number of hedgerows and native woodlands have been poorly maintained or removed across County Cavan and continue to be under threat. As hedgerows and native woodlands are such important wildlife habitats and 'corridors', they must be further protected, monitored and enhanced. By doing so, these biodiversity havens and beautiful heritage features of our landscape can be preserved into the future. While Cavan has a relatively low amount of woodland cover, there are pockets of long-established woodland (LEW) still remaining that require recording and conservation. It is important to recognise that older hedgerows and woodlands have built up richer,

more complex ecosystems over time, so it is important to prioritise protecting these over planting new trees and hedges as far as possible. The following table outlines actions to protect and expand County Cavan's native hedgerow and woodland cover, which can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

6. Actions to conserve and expand hedgerows and woodland cover in County Cavan					
	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Launch and promote the County Cavan Hedgerow Survey 2023-24.	The county hedgerow survey 2023-24 is shared and promoted with Council staff, relevant organisations and the wider public.	The current state of County Cavan's hedgerows is determined. Recommendations should address the key issues identified, in order to protect and enhance hedgerows across the county.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Climate Action Team.	Launch & promote County Cavan's second hedgerow survey (2023-2024). Publicise findings and devise follow-up actions. 2025-27
2.	Collaborative dispersed Urban Orchard Project for Cavan Town (and potentially other urban centres in Co. Cavan).	Establish an Urban Orchard Project for Cavan town, following best practice examples.	A Dispersed Urban Orchard will ensure that fruit trees are planted across Cavan town, encouraging pollinators while educating people about the importance of trees and biodiversity.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Tree Council of Ireland, Native Woodland Trust, Tidy Towns, Wild Work, Climate Action Team.	Create a Dispersed Urban Orchard project for Cavan Town (and potentially other urban centres in Co. Cavan). 2025 - 27.
3.	Explore opportunities with Teagasc Ballyhaise and agri-environment schemes regarding more eco-friendly hedge & tree management and planting on farms.	Explore potential for talks, demonstrations and modules to encourage management of hedgerows and native tree planting on farmland for biodiversity.	Most hedgerows are situated on farmland throughout the county, so any modules and training for young farmers and land management advisers could have a positive effect on the county's hedgerows in future.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), ACRES-Breifne, Climate Action Team.	Hold at least one hedgerow workshop/course at Teagasc, Ballyhaise. 2026-28

4.	Provide training and develop Tree & Hedgerow Conservation Strategy and/ or guidance document for County Council staff, e.g. Planning & Roads Dept and hired contractors to ensure ecologically sensitive hedge cutting.	Prepare guidance document or focused management plan for Cavan Co Co Planning & Roads Dept with clear instruction on eco-friendly hedge cutting for new developments and Council-managed hedges.	A guidance document or conservation strategy on hedge cutting will help to ensure Council-owned and roadside hedgerows are conserved. This will help to conserve hedgerows during development and hedge-cutting periods.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), hired hedge-cutting contractors, Climate Action Team.	Provide training and guidance for relevant Cavan Co Co staff (e.g. Planners, Road Engineers) on hedgerow maintenance and conservation. 2026-28.
5.	Devise Ash tree management guidelines within a native tree strategy (N16 – Action in County Climate Action Plan) to aid awareness and assist with replacement strategy on Cavan County Council lands.	Plan ahead for Ash Dieback, e.g. planting a mix of suitable native trees and careful Ash tree management on Council lands in place of Ash trees affected by Ash Dieback (ADB) Disease and promote awareness.	Working with stakeholders, farmers and landowners to promote good practices for tree management and creating awareness of ash dieback will help support a wider strategy with national remit.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, Tree Council of Ireland, Native Woodland Trust, Tidy Towns, Geopark, Climate Action Team.	Include guidance on managing Ash trees affected by Ash Dieback during hedgerow conservation workshops and guidance for Cavan Co Co staff. Ongoing 2025-2030
6.	Educating the public on native hedge and tree planting and maintenance via workshops, events and other awareness projects, e.g. digital resources.	Organise workshops in planting, laying and maintenance of hedgerows during Heritage Week, Hedgerow Week, etc.	Raise awareness of the importance of hedgerows for biodiversity through the planting and maintenance of native hedges through hands-on demonstrations	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), National Tree Council, Native Woodland Trust, Tidy Towns, Climate Action Team.	Hold native hedgerow maintenance and planting workshops/ courses with the public each year. Ongoing 2025-30

<p>7. Identify, survey and map native long- established (LEW) woodland sites in the County (possible CBAs). Make LEWs a priority to ensure their conservation with the support of the national Maynooth University LEW mapping project. (Early 2026 update).</p>	<p>Create maps of native LEW sites across County Cavan that still exist. e.g. Bellamont, Kingscourt, Deerpark Forest Parks, Dunaweel, etc. Areas of woodland that once existed (according to historical OSI maps) could also be included.</p>	<p>The creation of native woodland maps would help to record those that currently exist across County Cavan and help to ensure their protection. Include comparative study with OSI maps.</p>	<p>Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, OSI, Coillte, private landowners, Tree Council of Ireland, Native Woodland Trust, Maynooth University.</p>	<p>Complete map of County Cavan's Long-Established Woodlands (LEW). Ongoing 2025-30</p>
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Case Study – Golden Ways project

The Golden Ways project was initiated by Cavan Heritage Office, in collaboration with local communities and Creative Ireland to highlight the rich natural and cultural heritage of rural areas. County Cavan has approximately 2,400 km of primary, secondary and tertiary roads. Rural roads and lanes are part of the fabric of the countryside. As well as transport links, these roads and their surroundings are home to a wealth of physical heritage in terms of their natural and vernacular features, such as hedgerows, walls and gates. There is also a vast cultural heritage associated with the communities that live and have lived along these roads, in terms of place names, fieldnames, local characters, stories and traditions, giving each road its unique character. The Cavan Golden Way is an initiative of the Heritage Office of Cavan County Council to support and promote communities who have identified sections of rural road. Reports were completed for Cavan Heritage Office under the Golden Ways project in August 2021 by hedgerow expert Neil Foulkes include Brankill, Corlough, Skeagh, Shruhagh and Templeport. These reports provided a baseline recording of the hedgerows in each location, identified hedgerows of Historical and / or Ecological Significance, identified hedgerows in favourable condition and provided management recommendations aimed at maintaining hedgerows or restoring them to, favourable condition. Biodiversity Planning documents were further developed with a local ecologist for the region for areas like Brankill, Skeagh and Templeport (Jampa Ling) in 2023 and 2024 with Invasive Species removal also taking place at the latter site for Rhododendron.

7. Conserving High Nature Value Farmland

County Cavan still retains a noticeably higher proportion of semi-natural grasslands compared with many other counties. These grassland types include: Dry calcareous & neutral grassland (GS1), Dry meadows & grassy verges (GS2), Dry-humid acid grassland (GS3), Wet grassland (GS4) and Marsh (GM1). Such grasslands provide important habitat for a range of declining flora and threatened bird species. Semi-natural grasslands continue to be under threat from activities such as land drainage and soil fertilisation practices, often for conversion of land to Improved agricultural grassland (GA1). These precious grasslands require increased protection and a focus on better maintenance programmes in County Cavan. The following table outlines actions that can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan to help conserve HNV farmland, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

7. Actions to Conserve High Nature Value (HNV) Farmland in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Promotion of HNV farming practices, e.g. local farm walks and talks and guidance materials.	Demonstrate examples of good HNV practices and associated cost benefits on the ground and how these can be implemented on farms across the county.	Encourage and inspire farmers and landowners across the county to adopt various practices to support biodiversity on their farms.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, Farming for Nature, interested farmers/landowners and agri-environmental consultants.	Promote HNV practices via guidance materials and walks and talks with landowners taking action for biodiversity on their farms. 2025-27
2.	Establish pilot project with landowner/s aiming to protect local HNV grassland habitats.	Set up pilot projects with interested farmer/s in an area of species-rich grassland with support of partner agencies.	Establishing species-rich grassland projects with farmer/s in HNV farmland areas will help to encourage conservation of semi-natural grasslands in County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Irish Grasslands Project, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, interested landowners and agri-environmental consultants, Climate Action Team.	Establish one small pilot project with the aim of protection and enhancement of semi-natural grasslands on HNV farmland. 2026-28
3.	Undertake a semi-natural grassland survey in Co. Cavan. (Comparative survey with 2009 study).	A follow-up report, similar to the 2009 Irish Semi-natural Grasslands Survey (by BEC Consultants), with a focus on County Cavan, should be carried out across the county.	A study of the species-rich grasslands remaining in the county would build up data and help to identify sites requiring protection.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Irish Grasslands Project, Climate Action Team, GIS Officer.	Complete and launch a follow-up semi-natural grassland survey for Co. Cavan. 2028-30
4.	Digital and ecological literacy guidance for landowners in Biodiversity and HNV farming i.e. schemes, legislation, grants, concepts, etc.	Demonstrate efforts and hopefully results of engagement with landowners in terms of funding clinics, legislation, biodiversity literacy for HNV, etc. (Also open to communities and staff)	Landowners will be empowered to protect their local biodiversity, understand the mechanisms for doing so and be knowledgeable of the designations/legislation that affects them.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, ACRES Breffni, Climate Action Team, GIS Officer, Environmental consultancies.	Host at least one event focused as an ecological and digital literacy clinic in space targeted at landowners and HNV farming during the duration of the plan. Ongoing 2025-2030

Case Study - Shackleton Farm

The Shackleton family run a suckler to beef farm in County Cavan which has been certified organic for almost 30 years. The 200-acre farm consists of a diversity of grasslands, woodlands and semi natural habitats. Grazing by a herd of Aberdeen Angus cross cows with Stabiliser, Belted Galloway and Limousin genetics takes place on the grassland. Alongside permanent pastures and sown red clover swards, the farm has extensive areas of semi-natural habitats including rare lowland hay meadows, bogs, wetland (Mullagh Lake), woodland, hedgerows, and stone walls. New habitats have been created, such as a 40-acre woodland of mixed conifer and hardwood which has been managed as agroforestry in the past; hedgerows and an ornamental garden all of which support a varied bird population. The farm has traditional orchards, bee hives and is self-sufficient in vegetables. Monitoring of birds and insects for the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) is ongoing. A boardwalk and birdwatching hide have been constructed along the edge of the farm's lake. The farm hosts farm walks and a publicly accessible nature walk passes through the farm and the explanatory information panel along this route on the farm is curated by the owners. The Shackletons are fully committed to their approach to farming and are enthusiastic about sharing this knowledge and experience online, with groups, the local community and schools.



Angus crossbreed cows grazing on species-rich grassland at the Shackleton farm. Source: Jane Shackleton.

Case Study - Loughanleagh and Bruse Hill

Loughanleagh near Bailieborough and Bruse Hill near Arvagh, are two sites in County Cavan that are important in terms of heathland/scrubland habitats, as well as cultural heritage and overall natural beauty. Loughanleagh or 'Loch an Leighis', meaning 'lake of the cure', is a place rich in history and biodiversity that has experienced its fair share of human interference over the years, namely from commercial forestry and turf cutting. Unfortunately, the lough has long 'disappeared'. The area is monitored by a local group called Loughanleagh Muff & Heritage Trust, which has been active in striving to protect the area for many years. The Trust commissioned a 10-year Masterplan (2022-2032) for Loughanleagh in 2021, which places a focus on key projects designed to conserve the area, e.g. striving for nature reserve status, developing a tailored biodiversity plan and exploring the potential for sustainable tourism (McAdam Consulting, 2022). Currently,

Bruse Hill is designated as a pNHA but Loughanleagh has no official designation. Unfortunately, this fact has led in recent years to significant removal of some of the biodiversity rich heathlands locally, with conversion to improved grassland. It is a good example of sites without designated protection and loss of what could have been a potential County Biodiversity Area (CBA). There are projects in the pipeline via Cavan County Council, e.g. a walking trail. A small-scale BRIDE or Burren Beo type project replication may be suitable for these types of locations, in agreement with local landowners.



Views over the landscape at Loughanleagh. Source: Loughanleagh Muff & Heritage Trust.

8. Pollinator Initiatives across County Cavan

Cavan County Council has signed up to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) which means it is committed to implementing pollinator-friendly initiatives* in the coming years. This will hopefully set an example for the county, or at least those towns and villages which have not yet signed up to the AIPP. Alongside this, there is much potential to support and encourage pollinators to thrive across County Cavan. This has already begun in the form of the Pollinator Friendly Towns and Villages Initiative, which will be discussed in this section's case study. The following table outlines actions for pollinators that can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

**It is important to note that in no instance does the County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan recommend replacing natural or semi-natural habitat with manmade habitat (e.g. removing semi-natural grassland to plant wildflower seeds). A qualified specialist (e.g. ecologist, botanist) should survey an area in such cases before any action is taken.*

8. Actions to encourage and support Pollinators across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Further promotion of All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP). Ensure AIPP key measures within the guidelines are followed by Cavan County Council.	As a partner organisation of the AIPP, Cavan County Council must comply with its policy guidelines.	Being signed up to the AIPP as a Partner means that AIPP measures must be adhered to, e.g. 'low-mow' regimes. It highlights the AIPP throughout County Cavan, encouraging other groups to sign up too.	Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Council maintenance contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups. CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum.	Further promotion of AIPP within Cavan County Council and to the general public. 2025-27
2.	Develop a biodiversity management plan for Cavan Town grounds and public spaces.	Develop a biodiversity management plan to implement measures throughout Cavan town and county on council lands, e.g. 'low-mow' regimes in parks, verges, vacant spaces.	A biodiversity management plan for council lands would help to ensure that a set biodiversity standard would have to be adhered to around the county.	Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Geopark, Council maintenance contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups, Climate Action Team.	Complete a biodiversity management plan for Cavan Co Co grounds and public spaces. 2025-27
3.	Extend the Pollinator friendly towns & villages initiative out across Co. Cavan.	Increased awareness of and respect for biodiversity and its protection across local communities in County Cavan.	Giving individuals and groups the knowledge to implement projects locally.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Tidy Towns groups, sports clubs, residents' associations, community gardens, Graveyard Network, etc.	Extend Pollinator friendly towns & villages initiative out across County Cavan. 2027-28
4.	Incorporate biodiversity projects into County Council heritage conservation projects.	Ensure biodiversity elements are included in all community and council led conservation projects.	Space for nature will be included in the conservation of old buildings and spaces across the county which are council or community - led.	Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Council contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups, community groups, ecologists.	Biodiversity initiatives are incorporated into conservation projects. Ongoing 2025-30

<p>5. Strongly influence reduction of pesticide use by County Council as a statutory requirement of the National Biodiversity Action Plan by supporting development of policy for council.</p>	<p>Reduce pesticide use by Cavan County Council on council grounds and across all settings, including footpaths, roadsides, housing estates and parks.</p>	<p>Cavan Co Co must lead the way in reducing pesticide use. Weedkiller is toxic to wildlife and banning its use on council lands may encourage community groups and households to avoid it too.</p>	<p>Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Council maintenance contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups, community groups, Geopark, Cavan Climate Action Team, Roads Section.</p>	<p>Influence reduction in pesticide use via policy guidance on lands maintained by Cavan Co Co via Pesticide Training and other initiatives.</p> <p>Ongoing 2025- 2030.</p>
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Case Studies

Cavan Pollinator friendly towns and villages initiative

The ‘Pollinator friendly towns and villages’ initiative was carried out in towns and villages across County Cavan in recent years in response to the increasing importance placed on biodiversity in the national Tidy Towns competition. Small but effective projects were begun in Butlersbridge, Blacklion, Glangevlin, Bawnboy, Killeshandra and Ballyconnell. These projects included the creation of pollinator friendly planting plans, planting of native trees and shrubs along riverbanks, erecting pollinator signage and planting native wildflowers. Other actions included the creation of native wildflower seedbanks through identification and collection of seed from flowers and trees in various areas, sharing of knowledge between groups and planting pollinator friendly species in baskets and pots. Other aspects were the encouragement of butterfly species recording for citizen science, accessing small grants, as well as linking in with authorities and businesses to become involved and sign up to the AIPP. Awareness raising and promotion of projects were considered key to successful pollinator projects. The County Hedgerow Survey, looking at the extent and condition of hedgerows of county Cavan, would feed into this, as well as the Cavan Graveyard Network’s work in the area following a return to nature policy and the encouragement of light-touch maintenance with guidelines produced. Pollinator and biodiversity friendly awareness has been further supported by the Heritage and Biodiversity Office in County Cavan through initiatives like the Golden Ways project and the Council’s adoption of the All-Ireland Pollinator plan (AIPP).

Wild Work initiative – CCLD

In 2022 Cavan County Local Development (CCLD) partnered with SECAD Partnership CLG and West Limerick Resources to bring a range of innovative biodiversity training opportunities to the county. This was comprised of six core biodiversity training modules which explored the Irish landscape and its natural networks, along with Wild Work in Action, training in seed saving and biodiversity management of public lands, all of which was delivered by biodiversity experts. The training was enhanced by the development of an online Wild Work Toolkit containing a range of virtual reality and e-learning activities to support the learning, added to by the participants themselves as they experienced the training in their own place.



Wild Work workshops in action. Source: David Stafford.

Bawnboy Workhouse Conservation

The Bawnboy Workhouse Preservation Committee has been working with Cavan County Council for many years to preserve the historical Bawnboy Workhouse. Among the built heritage objectives for the site, there was a biodiversity plan produced in 2022 by Bawnboy Tidy Towns in relation to nature conservation on the site, e.g. conserving the nearby long-established woodland (LEW) and natural grassland (to support pollinators and other wildlife), in addition to installing Swift boxes during conservation works. A conservation management plan is in progress for the site and local invasive species management has been investigated. The plan for the works on the roof of the site will have to note important wildlife factors such as local bat life and also the fact the site produced the highest recorded colony of Swift Nests (34) in the most recent West Cavan Swift Survey (2025), which was supported by the Local Biodiversity Action Fund via NPWS and the local branch of Birdwatch Ireland in Cavan.

9. Targeting Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

As described under the section 'Threats to Nature in County Cavan', invasive alien species (IAS) are non-native plants and animals that can take hold and completely dominate both aquatic and terrestrial areas, lowering the biodiversity value. They are often very difficult if not impossible to remove once they take hold and have the capacity to spread very easily. The IAS of particular concern for aquatic habitats in County Cavan include Nuttall's waterweed, Crayfish plague, Asian clam, Quagga mussel and Giant Hogweed. The IAS particularly affecting terrestrial habitats are Japanese Knotweed, Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel. Non-native mammal species are making their way across Ireland, e.g. the Greater White-toothed Shrew, Bank Vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) and Field Vole are known to be spreading nationwide, threatening native Pygmy Shrews (*Sorex minutus*) and Field Mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) populations. The potential for more IAS to spread within the county is always imminent. One key way to prevent this is to raise awareness throughout the county, encourage reporting of invasive species locations and to take effective biosecurity measures. In addition, a feasibility study is proposed by Cavan Heritage Office in conjunction with LAWPRO and other bodies which aims to consider the practicality of managing IAS on a county-wide basis.



9. Actions to target Invasive Alien Species (IAS) across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Promote issue of IAS and the importance of biosecurity across the county, e.g. via Citizen Science Network, training, workshops.	Greater awareness among groups and public around invasive species and adopting biosecurity measures.	Reduce and avoid spread of invasive species in County Cavan's lakes and rivers.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NFGWS, LAWPRO, angling clubs, Teagasc, IFI, NPWS, NBDC, IFI, Tidy Towns, TÚS, CE Schemes, Tourism Office, CCLD, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Invasive Species Ireland.	County-wide campaign and signage on relevant IAS affecting key lakes and river systems. 2025-27
2.	Encourage the use of native plants for amenity planting and stocking in communities across the county.	Greater awareness among the public that planting native tree & hedge species over non-native is best and what plants to avoid.	Reduce and avoid spread of IAS in local communities across the county. Greater awareness of species to avoid and species that are best for biodiversity.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, angling clubs, local volunteer and community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, TÚS, CE Schemes, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), local suppliers, climate action team.	Campaign to promote native plant species and to avoid invasive species. 2026-28
3.	Biosecurity and invasives species training for Co Co planners, engineers and Contractors developing a biosecurity code of practice.	Greater awareness and knowledge among Co Co staff to avoid introduction and spread of IAS during construction and development.	Reduce and avoid spread of IAS during development of Council projects throughout County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co Planning & Environment, IAS Working Group NBDC. County outdoor recreation forum.	Training for relevant Cavan Co Co staff to avoid spread and transfer of IAS during their work. 2026-28

4.	Support actions arising from IAS studies with partner agencies. Linked to IAS working group.	Targeted projects to eradicate IAS, e.g. Nuttall's Waterweed trial studies.	Reducing and eradicating the spread of damaging aquatic IAS across County Cavan to protect native habitats and species.	Aquatic Invasive Alien Species Working Group - Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, LAWPRO, Biosecurity Consultant, NPWS, NBDC, IFI, BSBI, Invasive Species Ireland, local angling groups, etc.	Support trials proposed for Nuttall's Waterweed at specific locations across Co. Cavan. Ongoing 2025-30
5.	Campaign to monitor and record non-native mammal species, utilizing the Citizen Science Network, e.g. White-toothed Shrew, Voles.	Link in with citizen scientists and community groups across Co. Cavan to monitor and record the spread and range of invasive mammals with the NBDC.	Helping to track the spread of invasive mammal species across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, LAWPRO, WCBA, NPWS, NBDC, Invasive Species Ireland, CCLD, County outdoor recreation forum.	Monitoring and recording of invasive mammal species are boosted across the community. Ongoing 2025-30
6.	Create a map of IAS 'hotspots' in specific areas.	Map of existing IAS locations that is dynamic and can be updated to include sightings.	Knowledge of exact locations of IAS will assist the relevant bodies to keep track of where IAS 'hotspots' are, making it easier to prevent their spread and undertake targeted projects.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, LAWPRO, angling clubs, local volunteer and community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, Heritage groups, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Invasive Species Ireland, GIS Officer.	Create a dynamic mapping project of key IAS hotspots throughout Co. Cavan. Ongoing 2025-30
7.	Targeted IAS removal programmes for terrestrial invasives, e.g. Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel.	Gradual removal of invasive species from forest parks, several of which have issues with Rhododendron and Laurel, which are harmful to native biodiversity.	Removal of invasive species will allow native species to prosper. Involving local volunteer and community groups will enhance the process.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, TÚS, CE Schemes, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), NBDC, Invasive Species Ireland, Cavan Volunteer Centre.	Hold Volunteer IAS removal events once a year, with a focus on Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel in Forest Parks. Ongoing 2025-30

Case Studies: IAS Volunteer Projects

WORKING GROUP

There are a number of dedicated volunteer projects across Ireland that focus on the removal of invasive alien species (IAS). These include Conservation Volunteers Projects that target some of the worst affected sites in the country, the Burren Beo Trust and Killarney National Park. Perhaps these types of projects can be replicated in County Cavan, with a focus on the worst-affected forest parks that are infested with Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel. Projects and campaigns to target the spread of aquatic IAS would also be worthwhile. These initiatives may also sprout from the establishment of the Cavan-Monaghan Citizen Science Network, with its own focused aims and objectives, with potential for some invasive species removal/recording projects. The existing Council working group on Aquatic Invasive Species produced a guidance video in 2023 on Nutall's Waterweed. They are currently looking at seeking further funding to support implementation of measures from an INVAS feasibility study referenced on the invasive in the Lough Oughter system.

10. Targeted Projects for Vulnerable Species

As outlined in the Threatened Species section, there is a growing number of species now on the IUCN and Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI) lists nationwide, and several of these are relevant to County Cavan. Several insect and mammal species are also under threat and need our help. The following table outlines actions that can be achieved within the timeframe of this plan aiming to conserve some of these species, along with expected outcomes, impacts and potential partner organisations.

10. Actions to help conserve vulnerable Species in County Cavan

10a Actions to help conserve vulnerable Bird Species in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Curlew (Red List species). Identify sites along the border with Leitrim and Fermanagh where the Curlew has been sighted (e.g. Lough Macnean). Potential for cross-border project.	Team up with groups trying to save the Curlew from extinction, e.g. Lough Macnean. Establish projects to protect the species. Ask the public to report sightings on the website.	Assist in the movement to save the Curlew from extinction and help protect those that survive, e.g. at Lough Macnean along the border with Counties Leitrim and Fermanagh.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, BWI Cavan Branch, Curlew Conservation Programme*, NPWS, RSPB NI, BTO, Breeding Waders EIP, Citizen Science Network. <i>*programme concluded.</i>	Establish cross-border project to protect Curlew at Lough Macnean and/or another location where Curlews are known to remain in Co. Cavan. 2025-27

2.	Swift (Red List species). 'Swift Streets' - bricks/ boxes in new builds or established buildings and promotion, led by recommendations from County Swift Surveys.	'Swift Streets' will be established across County Cavan. Led by findings from the Cavan Swift Surveys. Tied to Swift Ambassador style programme.	Swift populations will be protected and supported. Projects will also raise awareness of their plight.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, BWI Cavan Branch, NPWS, Swift Conservation Ireland, NBDC, Citizen Science Network, Climate Action Team.	Establish and promote 'Swift Streets' across County Cavan, guided by the County Swift Surveys. 2026-28
3.	Barn Owl (Red List species). Ongoing monitoring, awareness and promotion, led by recommendations from County Barn Owl Surveys.	Greater monitoring and awareness of Barn Owls across the county, including main threats, e.g. rodenticide use, habitat loss.	Protect and strengthen barn owl populations across Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, BWI Cavan Branch, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Awareness raising and promotion of Barn Owl conservation, guided by the County Barn Owl Surveys. 2026-28
4.	Accommodation of birds during Council conservation projects, e.g. for old bridges and buildings. Include wildlife-friendly lighting, Dark Skies initiatives, etc.	Ensure that nest sites and habitats of vulnerable species are accommodated during conservation projects e.g. Sand Martins, Dippers.	Conserving and/ or replacing suitable nest sites and habitats ensures species are less likely to abandon areas during/ after conservation projects.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, BWI Cavan Branch, Bat Conservation Ireland, Dark Skies Ireland, Tidy Towns groups, hired contractors, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Ensure birds are accommodated by conserving and/ or replacing nest sites and habitats for all Council-led conservation projects. Ongoing 2025-30.

10b Actions to help conserve vulnerable Invertebrate Species in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Awareness raising of native bee species – Honeybee, Bumblebees, Solitary and Mining Bees.	Sign up to and implement measures of the AIPP to increase habitats and food sources for our struggling native bees.	Greater awareness and protection of native bee species across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, contractors, TÚS, Tidy Towns groups, AIPP, Climate Action Team, Cavan Beekeepers, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Workshops & events to promote native bee species in Cavan – monitoring & recording. 2025-27

2.	Awareness raising and habitat protection for Butterfly & Moth species.	Support projects to conserve threatened Moths and Butterflies and raise their profile in the public eye.	Supporting initiatives to protect threatened butterflies and moths in County Cavan will help to conserve the species, their habitat and inform the public.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Marsh Fritillary Monitoring Scheme, Butterfly Conservation Ireland, Moths Ireland, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Hold at least one butterfly/ moth themed event during Biodiversity or Heritage Week. 2026-28
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10c Actions to help conserve vulnerable Mammal Species in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Otter - raise awareness regarding protection of Otters and their habitats, informed by the National Otter Survey completed in 2023-2024.	Ongoing monitoring and protection of Otters and their habitat in Co. Cavan	Ensure the survival of Otters and their wetland habitats across County Cavan into the future.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Coillte, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, ACRES-Breifne, NBDC, Citizen Science Network, Nature Network Ireland.	Otter monitoring and protection across County Cavan. 2025-27
2.	Promotion and protection of bat species, e.g. lighting guidance, conservation of roosts & foraging habitat.	Ensure bat roosts and habitats are protected and consider lighting schemes guided by Dark Skies Lighting Guidance.	Increased awareness, appreciation and protection for bats and their habitats across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Bat Conservation Ireland, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Ensure bat protection measures are included in council planning and development process. Raise awareness of bats across the county. 2026-28
3.	Raise awareness regarding protection of Badgers and their habitats, based on scientific facts.	Support for Badger conservation in County Cavan, e.g. habitat protection and support for TB vaccination programmes.	Ensure the survival of Badgers and their habitats across County Cavan into the future.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Coillte, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, ACRES-Breifne, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Awareness programme for Badger protection across County Cavan, among public and farming community tied to existing research. Ongoing 2025-30

4.	Monitoring trends of threatened mammals – e.g. Red Squirrel, Pine Marten, Stoat (<i>Mustela erminea</i>), Irish Hare.	Ensure that native mammal populations are monitored and recorded to identify conservation trends.	Conservation of and appreciation for native mammal species across Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Coillte, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, ACRES-Breifne, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Promotion of monitoring and recording of native mammals across Co. Cavan. Ongoing 2025-30.
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10d Actions to help conserve vulnerable Amphibian and Reptile Species in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Frogs & Newts – Support awareness raising of amphibians and their habitats, e.g. wetlands, bogs, ponds, ditches, quarries.	Greater understanding of amphibians, their populations and their habitats across Co. Cavan.	Ensure the conservation of amphibians across the wetland habitats of Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, NBDC, IWT, WCBA, The Herpetological Society of Ireland. Citizen Science Network.	Hold at least one amphibian themed event during Biodiversity or Heritage Week. 2025-27
2.	Common Lizard - Support awareness raising of lizards and their habitats, e.g. scrub, stone walls, peat bogs, dry grasslands and heathlands.	Greater understanding of lizards, their populations and their habitats across Co. Cavan.	Ensure the conservation of lizards across the scrub, grassland, limestone and bog habitats of Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, NBDC, IWT, WCBA, the Geopark, The Herpetological Society of Ireland, Citizen Science Network.	Hold at least one reptile (lizard) themed event during Biodiversity or Heritage Week. 2026-28



Case Study - Barn Owl Survey

BirdWatch Ireland, in conjunction with Cavan County Council, undertook a Barn Owl Survey to monitor the Barn Owl population and nesting sites in the county in 2024. These surveys are undertaken every few years, with recommendations made on how to protect and enhance populations based on the findings. BirdWatch Ireland encourages members of the public to record sightings of live and deceased Barn Owls on their website via the Barn Owl Survey webpage, in addition to nest sites or potential nest sites, and existing or potential locations for Barn Owl nest boxes.

Case Study - Swift Survey

Swift Surveys were undertaken by Birdwatch Ireland in conjunction with Cavan County Council, in East Cavan in 2024, with a survey being completed for West Cavan in 2025. Several volunteers helped to carry out these surveys across the county. Identification of Swift nest sites means they are more likely to be conserved, in addition to the potential for introduction of tailor-made Swift Boxes or 'bricks' into new builds and renovations. This was a careful coordination between Cavan County Council for site access and the local branch of Cavan BirdWatch, offering an amazing example of citizen science in action to inform local planning on biodiversity.



Participants attending the West Cavan Swift Survey summer stroll event in Cavan Town supported by the local biodiversity action fund through NPWS and Cavan County Council Biodiversity office.

Photography throughout the Plan is by Aisling Blackburn – WCBA, Heather Bothwell - WCBA, Cathal Flood, Geashill Tidy Towns, Loughanleagh Muff & Heritage Trust, Barbara Carolan, Seamus Yore, Jane Shackleton, Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Jennifer Mc Aree - Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd, Louise Mac Elwain, Isabel Rofo Duggan, Vera Farrelly and Ruth Hannify, Sligo Biodiversity Officer.



Appendix A - Consultation Feedback

Survey Questionnaires: October – December 2021

1. What do you think makes Cavan unique in terms of nature, wildlife and landscape?

A wide range of suggestions were made here in terms of what is unique in Cavan. The interconnected lakes, drumlins and wetlands, and Cavan Burren were most frequently mentioned, along with raised bogs, floodplains, forests and hedgerows. The Cuilcagh mountains, Lough Oughter, Lough Ramor and forest parks were highlighted, as was the contrast between the East and West Cavan landscapes in general. The rural aspect of the county, including intensive agriculture, especially in East Cavan, were also aspects highlighted. Cavan being the source of the Shannon and Erne river system was included in the feedback also. Phrases like 'unspoilt natural beauty' and 'beautiful scenery' stood out. The array of wild and wintering birds were mentioned as standouts in the county, as was the diversity of flora and fauna in general.

2. Which aspects of biodiversity would you like to see focused on in the new Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan? For example, the conservation of a certain habitat type or species.

A huge number of suggestions were given as to what should be focused on in the new biodiversity plan. Key topics mentioned were the prevention and eradication of invasive species, protection of water courses, hedgerows, grasslands, woodlands, as well as the preservation of wetlands, bogs and marsh lands. Drainage of wetlands was highlighted as an issue. Proper maintenance of hedgerows, increased planting of trees to offset the impact of Ash Dieback Disease and water catchment protection were highlighted. An overall approach leading to a 'decrease in habitat fragmentation' and enhancement of all habitats was also noted. One submission expressed an 'urgency to attend to the problem of algal bloom in our lakes that results from fertiliser and slurry run off and discharges from sewage systems.'

Community-focused biodiversity action plans were proposed, as well as 'clean-ups' of lakes and rivers and bog re-wetting. The creation of more 'cut n' lift' regimes and sharing equipment in order to carry out such regimes was suggested. Stricter rules on hedge cutting, fertilizer spreading and tree cutting were also proposed. Concern was raised over the 'decimation' of hedgerows in the county, which was described as 'having serious impact on biodiversity at every level' - for birds, mammals and insects /pollinators.

An increase in broadleaf planting over conifers was proposed, as was the creation of wildflower meadows and strips on public (& private) parks and roadsides to provide essential wildlife corridors. Red Squirrels and wild bees were highlighted for conservation, as were Curlews, birds of prey (e.g. Barn Owl), wild Irish Hare, bats, pollinators, waterway habitats and other endangered species. It was felt that historic native woodlands should be preserved. The possibility of building on existing schemes and initiatives in County Cavan was mentioned. Native flower seed collection was proposed, followed by planting, instead of buying commercial foreign seed. Killyconny Raised Bog was highlighted as being an essential carbon store and habitat for many bird, bat, butterfly and moth species. It was felt that the bog requires improved access, signage, and good quality information panels.

3. Are there any particular areas, towns or villages that stand out for you in County Cavan as being eco-friendly? Please name these if there are.

The Cavan Burren, Killykeen and Dún na Rí Forest Parks, Lough Sheelin hinterlands and West Cavan were highlighted here. Tree planting initiatives in Bailieborough, community actions in Killeshandra and a Zero Waste initiative in Belturbet were mentioned, as were Kingscourt, Cavan Town, Blacklion, Ballinagh, Arvagh, Shercock, Bailieborough, Killinkere, Butlersbridge, Bawnboy, Redhills, Ballyhaise, Glangevlin, Mullagh and

Dowra. Over the past 4 years we have planted over 30,000 native trees and hedging. Maghera was highlighted as having a great pollinator plan in place, while it was stated that Bailieborough community

association have planted over 45,000 native trees and plan to plant 15,000 per annum for the next 10 years. CABÚ by the lakes at Killykeen Forest Park were described as only using eco-friendly organic detergents and soaps, being very focused on protecting wildlife habitats, little or no weed control and very strict policies on the use of plastics, strict recycling rules and 'fully trained and competent staff that value the environment'.

4. Are there any biodiversity measures you may have seen in other counties you would like to see implemented in County Cavan?

The need for a Biodiversity Officer at senior grade in Cavan County Council was highlighted under this query. Examples such as Bride River project, Co. Cork and Abbeyleix Bog, Co. Laois arose. Visitor centres, walkways, trails, greenways and converted railway tracks were among the suggestions, as was the Ballybay Wetlands Centre and Dunhill Wetlands Project in Waterford. The creation of meadows in towns and villages around North Antrim was suggested as an example, in reference to the 'Don't Mow, Let it Grow' campaign. Fingal's local biodiversity plans with each tidy towns group and the actions funded were highlighted, as were Dublin City Council's and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's pesticide/herbicide reduction/elimination policies. One person noted that hanging baskets and window boxes in towns around Ireland are being planted with bee friendly flowers.

One suggestion was more rewilding of council owned sites, government buildings, more availability of bat boxes and bird nesting /feeding sites and less grass cutting on verges. Another was the creation of biodiversity corridors, protection of lake and river shores and biodiversity-focused management of public and community lands. The Lough Carra project with local farmers in County Mayo was highlighted, along with the Claddagh Glen in County Fermanagh. Other examples given were the Kiltewan Heritage Trail and Cloonlarge Loop on the east side of Co. Roscommon. Lough Lene in County Westmeath was mentioned as being a 'clean' lake, something which could be replicated in Cavan. A 'Wild Nephin' type project at Lough Oughter was put forward and bog/wetland projects in County Fermanagh and Clare were referred to also. The inclusion of conservation volunteer groups was suggested as an option too. The Burren in Co. Clare and indeed Co Cavan, seem to have a major ecological priority.

5. What, in your opinion, might make more people become engaged in biodiversity across the county?

Better knowledge and understanding were the key aspects here in terms of making people more engaged in biodiversity across County Cavan. Outreach via Tidy Towns groups, schools (primary and secondary), further education colleges and Education & Training Boards were suggested as the best ways to drive this message home. The 'growing awareness, knowledge and skills of the positive impact biodiversity can have on wellbeing, social and societal benefits for economy, tourism, angling and jobs' was highlighted by one contributor. Access to guides/nature information which people can access when in parks/walking trails via their smartphones was suggested. 'Biodiversity programmes for farmers, industry and the wider community to explain the circle of life and how it affects each and every one of us' was another standout statement.

Best practice, high profile examples of biodiversity projects and funding for implementation of projects was highlighted, along with raising awareness through all avenues and communicating what is being currently being done by individuals, groups, businesses and the council. Events in which whole family could get involved as a unit similar to Ireland's fittest family or 'Biodiversity supporters'. A directory of services and organisations that can support communities was suggested, with more accessibility and promotion of the River Trust, Eco Unesco, SWAN, NFGWS, and whatever other organisations need to support implementation of what is needed. A supplement in 'The Anglo Celt' on biodiversity topics was another idea put forward, as well as the erection of simple information boards that would help people identify unique species and hides to

watch birds from. Holding bioblitz events, conducting biodiversity surveys, networking opportunities, photo competitions and wildlife cameras were suggested and support for the 'Wild Work' programme also.

6. Have you any other suggestions for the County Cavan Biodiversity Plan?

Some of the following suggestions were made under other questions which are more appropriate as answers to this question. These included the preparation of catchment management plans and encouraging a more active interest in developing EIP (European Innovative Partnership) projects that engage farmers in biodiversity enhancement initiatives. Other suggestions included open demonstration/model farms where those from non-farming backgrounds can gain more of an appreciation for nature, as well as funding/resources for planting trees and wildflowers in non-public areas, workshops on native seed collection and growing plants and establishing community gardens. Support for rewilding of farmland, implementation and updating of legislation on spraying of glyphosate, slurry and livestock numbers were highlighted. Stricter pollution penalties were suggested to reduce river and lake pollution, along with wetland conservation and highlighting the protected species in the county. Increased awareness on the proper installation and maintenance of septic tanks and promotion of environmentally friendly farming schemes were other ideas mentioned.

One submission stated that "all Co Council community funding needs to give priority to sustainability and biodiversity projects". Others felt it was important to link in with other organisations and programmes to have a complimentary approach to biodiversity efforts. The development of more outdoor activities was highlighted a few times e.g. walking trails, community allotments, education initiatives on the importance of biodiversity / pollinators in schools and for community groups, as well as grant assistance to promote the aforementioned activities. Hedge cutting and slurry spreading practices were mentioned in several places.

Another suggestion included the possibility of setting up management agreements between community organisations and landowners. According to one contributor, nearly all of the bogs in Cavan are privately owned by farmers/ landowners, so that working with agencies to create small locally focused EIPs (EIP-AGRI projects) would be beneficial, e.g. the Burren Programme. Another submission highlighted the need to "get all sectors of the local authority involved as all have a role to play e.g. Roads, MD Offices, Environment, Waste Management, Planning, C&E, Water Services/Irish Water". It was suggested that all public bodies in the county should have a biodiversity plan for their property and should be required to report on their actions every two to three years. This included initiatives such as planting of native trees in the small pockets of "Council owned land which are currently not used and so small as to be unviable for much else", that each village should have an area of woodland, and that plans should be made for wildlife corridors through County Cavan.

One person suggested that all of the public amenity sites across the county including trails and walkways should have biodiversity surveys carried out and signage erected to highlight what is there. Another felt that biodiversity should be integrated into the County Development Plan with serious, meaningful policies aimed at protecting and promoting biodiversity. Farming was highlighted as being vital to the Cavan economy, and that recognising the role of farmers and agriculture are very important for protecting biodiversity. It was stated: "These landowners have possibly the greatest potential to impact biodiversity positively". One idea was to create incentives for farmers to keep waterways clean through engagement and collaboration and to disseminate such information widely. Regarding the Cavan Biodiversity Plan itself, a mid-plan review was proposed, and to keep it as a live document, "not something that's done and shelved".

Public consultation sessions

1st session – local government bodies and agencies – 14th December 2021

Q1. What's unique about Cavan?

In terms of what is unique in Cavan, the answers here were like some of those from the survey questionnaires. These were: wetlands, differences in the landscape across the county (between east & west) and the Geopark and lakelands were highlighted.

Q2. What aspects of biodiversity should the plan focus on?

A few key suggestions were made here. Biodiversity signage was considered very important, e.g. what species of bat occur in a particular location or what type of fish are in a particular lake, etc. Coarse fishing is very important for County Cavan, and it was suggested that signage would help with that. It was felt that community groups are struggling with wetland and bogland areas that don't have any designations. There are only two fully-designated NHAs in the county. It was expressed that lots of protected wetland areas are under threat also and these would be an iconic group that could be focused on also.

Q3. What might make people more engaged with biodiversity in Co. Cavan?

More engagement with schools was a key suggestion here, starting with national schools, especially if these are near areas close to biodiversity/protected areas. Education is considered so important for sustainability. The importance of hedgerows and protected flora and fauna was highlighted, and information received could be brought home, starting with pilot schools. Woodland walks were suggested too.

It was thought that the Heritage in Schools programme is very important, but that natural heritage isn't included enough and there should be a push for more natural heritage. Also, support for NGOs and citizen science in the county regarding engagement for projects was proposed. LAWPRO will be trying to roll out a few projects for County Cavan. It was felt that citizen science is the best way to engage people at a high level. In addition, it was felt that the arts are a great way to include people, through music, drama, art and photography. It was expressed that there is something of a renaissance occurring for natural heritage following Covid-19, but it's a whole exercise itself to engage with people. Hedgerows definitely need to be focused on.

It was highlighted that Teagasc has a relatively new programme on biodiversity, and it was suggested to get some biodiversity specialists in to talk to the students at Ballyhaise Agricultural College. Teagasc also has an agricultural sustainability project called Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) which was referred to during the meeting. It was mentioned that the next LEADER programme will be focused on biodiversity and climate action and that the funding will have a huge emphasis on biodiversity, with further training also being a feature. Linking up with other agencies was discussed and the development of roadmaps for groups to follow. It was suggested the plan should include case studies. It was accepted that the challenge will be the inclusion of a wider network of groups (within the county's PPN for instance) that do not usually consider biodiversity in their work or projects.

Regarding the Strategic Themes laid out in the interim draft report, meeting participants seemed happy with those proposed. Regarding case studies, some projects were pinpointed, such as the Group Water Schemes in West Cavan and biodiversity trails in Mullagh and Laragh. The Mullagh Biodiversity Trail includes an esker and integrated wetland and Killeshandra were mentioned as being active in regard to Citizen Science projects. The Shackleton Farm near Mullagh was also highlighted as a great example of a biodiversity friendly farm.

2nd session – local community groups and organisations – 16th December 2021

Q1. What's unique about Cavan?

No new responses were forthcoming as many participants had already submitted their feedback in the recent questionnaire survey.

Q2. What aspects of biodiversity should the plan focus on?

According to the NFGWS, there are 22 regulated Group Water Schemes in County Cavan, and it was felt this is a good opportunity to feed into the County Cavan biodiversity plan. The NFGWS have created a biodiversity guide for all their GWS sites. It was felt the biodiversity plan would be a good way to focus members and enhance links to water quality. GWS projects in other counties have several biodiversity related projects and they are likely to transfer these to Cavan also. In terms of Loughanleagh, its importance was stressed, and it was highlighted that ecological studies have been done on it in the past. Heath has been eroded there, and previous studies outline and endorse its significance. It is felt that these areas should be better protected.

Q3. What might make people more engaged with biodiversity in Co. Cavan?

In regard to the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, they completed a Community Biodiversity Project with Community Funding and have produced a basic habitat map. They are working with landowners around Dowra, and this is helping to stimulate community engagement, including getting Conservation Volunteers involved. It was stressed that practical conservation is a wonderful structure within which to work with people and allows them to develop community ownership and to spend time working together. It was agreed by all that people and communities are key features in conservation.

In terms of the Strategic Themes listed in the interim draft report, feedback was positive. On the subject of community groups working with watercourses, it was stated they “should get all the support that they need” and that the profile of riparian zones should be elevated, as well as the Shannon Pot. Another suggestion was to focus on Cavan’s forest parks, and that a strategic theme should be working with semi-state and commercial forestry outfits.

One participant stated there is so much to cover in regard to biodiversity in County Cavan. For instance, they feel that Cavan is very good for long-established woodlands and this hasn’t been acknowledged and there are lots of little patches of oak woodland and these are special (e.g. in Killeshandra), and north-facing drumlin slopes are often wooded. There are sites where there is really good moth diversity. There is a need to avoid a “one size fits all” approach, and the variation in species habitats is the essence of biodiversity. For example, there is a diversity of grassland sites, lakes of different character and townland boundary hedgerows of great importance.

The Forest School near Cootehill was suggested as a case study for the plan. They are part of the Irish Forest School Association network and have planted a 4-hectare mixed species forest there. It was felt there is a need for more forestry in the county that is not associated with a commercial outfit or community group.

A local agricultural consultant and farmer expressed the need to engage with farmers and farming families. They suggested that getting children out onto farms is important, e.g. by holding farm walks, and that children can bring the message home. Farmers can be very agreeable to biodiversity, but the non-biodiversity friendly farmers tend to be more vocal. The key is to engage with farmers, schools and have biodiversity days! It was also confirmed that agri-environmental topics would be included in the plan. The possibility of outreach at cattle marts was put forward by NFGWS as an example for engaging with farmers directly on biodiversity and they have had good success with successful source protection projects that include education and engagement initiatives.

Another participant suggested that the Department of Social Protection badly needs to sign up to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. This would draw in the likes of RSS and Tús and it was proposed if this could be done at county level, as it would help to get the people on the ground involved.

Appendix B – Overall Table of Actions for Biodiversity in County Cavan 2025-2030

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (2025-27)

1. Actions to support Biodiversity Initiatives in Communities across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Aid the progression of existing biodiversity action plans (BAPs) and associated training courses for community groups across County Cavan.	Progression and implementation of plans and training in biodiversity for key communities across the county.	Putting biodiversity at the top of the agenda and increasing awareness of nature in local communities.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, Cavan County Local Development (CCLD), Tidy Towns groups, sports clubs, etc.	Support the development and progression of BAPs and associated training courses for community groups across County Cavan. 2025 - 27
2.	Expand on biodiversity training & workshops for Cavan County Council staff, including County Councillors.	Increased awareness of and respect for biodiversity and its protection across all sectors of Cavan County Council.	Incorporating biodiversity into a range of plans and activities across the various sectors in the County Council.	All departments of Cavan County Council, ecologists and other relevant experts.	Biodiversity training course completed by all Cavan County Council departments. 2025 - 27
3.	Annual County Cavan Biodiversity Conference to be hosted in the county.	Conference on various biodiversity themes each year in County Cavan. Potential for networking and knowledge sharing.	Greater awareness of biodiversity among the public and across organisations.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council.	Annual conference to commence in 2026.

2. Actions to help protect Lakes, River Systems and Water Quality in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
4.	Form practical working group systems and have regular correspondence with a range of related groups focused on water quality projects.	Facilitate and improve communication and coordination between groups and individuals involved with projects on maintaining water quality.	Improved communication will lead to greater efficiency of groups, collaborators and hopefully better Water quality achievements.	Cavan Biodiversity & Heritage Office, Cavan Co Co Environment Section, NFGWS, LAWPRO, Uisce Éireann, IFI, IFA, ASSAP (Teagasc), Farming for Water, ACRES.	Form Targeted Water Quality Working Group system. Annual or biannual meet-up/s with specific focus. 2025-2027

3. Actions to protect and support Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
5.	Biodiversity Management Plan for various public-facing and Cavan County Council-owned sites across the Cavan side of the Geopark, e.g. ShannonPot, Moneygashel, Whitefather's Cave, Lower Lough Macnean Park.	Develop biodiversity action/management plans for various council owned sites in terms of grass maintenance, tree planting, pollinator friendly planting, etc.	Encourage more biodiversity into Cavan County Council owned areas that will enhance public areas around the Geopark.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, NPWS.	Develop targeted Biodiversity Management Plan for Cavan Co Co-owned sites across Geopark. 2025-27.

6.	Assist with a volunteering programme to ensure a regular team is available to help maintain and enhance biodiversity at the Geopark.	Regular volunteers are available to carry out activities such as litter picking, path maintenance, and invasive species removal.	Increasing manpower to maintain the Cavan side of the Geopark, as well as encouraging local interest and a sense of 'ownership' at the park.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Volunteer Centre, LAWPRO, local volunteer groups and clubs.	Aid Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark to establish an active volunteering programme. 2025-27
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4. Actions to protect and enhance Cavan's Bogs & Wetlands

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
7.	Install educational signage at key bog and wetland sites – seek support from conservation groups to identify key sites and suitable locations.	Signage with information on bog & wetland biodiversity, especially at unprotected bog and wetland sites.	Informing locals and visitors about the rich biodiversity present in our remaining bogs and wetlands will help to raise their profile and encourage conservation.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, WCBA, Killyconny Bog Project, Environmental Consultancy.	Install biodiversity signage on at least two key County Cavan bog & wetland sites. 2025-27.
8.	Influence the Green Cert Curriculum - Explore potential for establishing lectures within modules at Teagasc (Ballyhaise) on bogs and wetlands.	Developing modules at Teagasc Agricultural College, Ballyhaise, along with conserving the on-site wetland. Raise the profile and importance of managing bogs and wetlands for biodiversity, flood management, etc.	Farmers emerging from the agricultural college, Ballyhaise, may be encouraged to put what they have learned about bogs and wetlands into practice.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, NPWS – Waterlands Project, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, WCBA, Killyconny Bog Project, Environmental Consultancy, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), Climate Action Team.	Work to establish module or training on bogs and wetlands at Teagasc. 2025-27.

5. Actions to enhance Biodiversity Focus on Forest Parks in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
9.	Raising awareness of biodiversity within forest parks, e.g. walks & talks and Citizen Science events.	Holding events involving the public, e.g. Bioblitzes, Bird Surveys, Fungi foraging.	Gathering of important data each year, recording of various species present in forest parks, encouraging people to get involved and have fun while learning about biodiversity.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, local Volunteer and community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, Heritage groups, Geopark, Climate Action Team.	Hold at least one forest park related event each year during Biodiversity Week or Heritage Week. 2025-27

6. Actions to conserve and expand hedgerows and woodland cover in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
10.	Launch and promote the County Cavan Hedgerow Survey 2023-24.	The county hedgerow survey 2023-24 is shared and promoted with Council staff, relevant organisations and the wider public.	The current state of County Cavan's hedgerows is determined. Recommendations should address the key issues identified, in order to protect and enhance hedgerows across the county.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Climate Action Team.	Launch & promote County Cavan's second hedgerow survey (2023-2024). Publicise findings and devise follow-up actions. 2025-27

11.	Collaborative dispersed Urban Orchard Project for Cavan Town (and potentially other urban centres in Co. Cavan).	Establish an Urban Orchard Project for Cavan town, following best practice examples.	A Dispersed Urban Orchard will ensure that fruit trees are planted across Cavan town, encouraging pollinators while educating people about the importance of trees and biodiversity.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Tree Council of Ireland, Native Woodland Trust, Tidy Towns, Wild Work, Climate Action Team.	Create a Dispersed Urban Orchard project for Cavan Town (and potentially other urban centres in Co. Cavan). 2025 - 27.
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7. Actions to Conserve High Nature Value (HNV) Farmland in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
12.	Promotion of HNV farming practices, e.g. local farm walks and talks and guidance materials.	Demonstrate examples of good HNV practices and associated cost benefits on the ground and how these can be implemented on farms across the county.	Encourage and inspire farmers and landowners across the county to adopt various practices to support biodiversity on their farms.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, Farming for Nature, interested farmers/landowners and agri-environmental consultants.	Promote HNV practices via guidance materials and walks and talks with landowners taking action for biodiversity on their farms. 2025-27

8. Actions to encourage and support Pollinators across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
13.	Further promotion of All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP). Ensure AIPP key measures within the guidelines are followed by Cavan County Council.	As a partner organisation of the AIPP, Cavan County Council must comply with its policy guidelines.	Being signed up to the AIPP as a Partner means that AIPP measures must be adhered to, e.g. 'low-mow' regimes. It highlights the AIPP throughout County Cavan, encouraging other groups to sign up too.	Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Council maintenance contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups.	Further promotion of AIPP within Cavan County Council and to the general public. 2025-27
14.	Develop a biodiversity management plan for Cavan Town grounds and public spaces.	Develop a biodiversity management plan to implement measures throughout Cavan town and county on council lands, e.g. 'low-mow' regimes in parks, verges, vacant spaces.	A biodiversity management plan for council lands would help to ensure that a set biodiversity standard would have to be adhered to around the county.	Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Geopark, Council maintenance contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups, Climate Action Team.	Complete a biodiversity management plan for Cavan Co Co grounds and public spaces. 2025-27

9. Actions to target Invasive Alien Species (IAS) across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
15.	Promote issue of IAS and the importance of biosecurity across the county, e.g. via Citizen Science Network, training, workshops.	Greater awareness among groups and public around invasive species and adopting biosecurity measures.	Reduce and avoid spread of invasive species in County Cavan's lakes and rivers.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NFGWS, LAWPRO, angling clubs, Teagasc, IFI, NPWS, NBDC, IFI, Tidy Towns, TÚS, CE Schemes, Tourism Office, CCLD, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Invasive Species Ireland.	County-wide campaign and signage on relevant IAS affecting key lakes and river systems. 2025-27

10. Actions to help conserve vulnerable Species in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
16.	Curllew (Red List species). Identify sites along the border with Leitrim and Fermanagh where the Curllew has been sighted (e.g. Lough Macnean). Potential for cross-border project.	Team up with groups trying to save the Curllew from extinction, e.g. Lough Macnean. Establish projects to protect the species. Ask the public to report sightings on the website.	Assist in the movement to save the Curllew from extinction and help protect those that survive, e.g. at Lough Macnean along the border with Counties Leitrim and Fermanagh.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, BWI Cavan Branch, Curllew Conservation Programme, NPWS, RSPB NI, BTO, Breeding Waders EIP, Citizen Science Network.	Establish cross-border project to protect Curllew at Lough Macnean and/or another location where Curlews are known to remain in Co. Cavan. 2025-27
17.	Awareness raising of native bee species – Honeybee, Bumblebees, Solitary and Mining Bees.	Sign up to and implement measures of the AIPP to increase habitats and food sources for our struggling native bees.	Greater awareness and protection of native bee species across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, contractors, TÚS, Tidy Towns groups, AIPP, Climate Action Team, Cavan Beekeepers, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Workshops & events to promote native bee species in Cavan – monitoring & recording. 2025-27
18.	Otter - raise awareness regarding protection of Otters and their habitats, informed by the National Otter Survey completed in 2023-2024.	Ongoing monitoring and protection of Otters and their habitat in Co. Cavan	Ensure the survival of Otters and their wetland habitats across County Cavan into the future.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Coillte, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, ACRES-Breifne, NBDC, Citizen Science Network, Nature Network Ireland.	Otter monitoring and protection across County Cavan. 2025-27
19.	Frogs & Newts – Support awareness raising of amphibians and their habitats, e.g. wetlands, bogs, ponds, ditches, quarries.	Greater understanding of amphibians, their populations and their habitats across Co. Cavan.	Ensure the conservation of amphibians across the wetland habitats of Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, NBDC, IWT, WCBA, The Herpetological Society of Ireland. Citizen Science Network.	Hold at least one amphibian themed event during Biodiversity or Heritage Week. 2025-27

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (2026-28)

1. Actions to support Biodiversity Initiatives in Communities across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Establish Citizens' Science Network and annual conference for Cavan-Monaghan. This network will aim to cohesively collect data, foster biodiversity interest and help inform policy.	Network and conference established to encourage and promote citizen science and recording across Counties Cavan & Monaghan.	Improved knowledge and skills in citizen science across Counties Cavan & Monaghan. Increase in NBDC records for each county.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Monaghan Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Monaghan Co Co, NBDC, Heritage Council.	Network to be established in 2026. Annual Citizen's Science Conference to commence. 2026-28.

2.	Update of Cavan Co Heritage Office website to include a more extensive Section on Biodiversity. To include 'story mapping' - GIS.	Creating a 'go-to' section of the site for information on biodiversity within the county, and an inventory of community groups from across Cavan.	Developing a useful, 'one-stop-shop' source of information on biodiversity in the county with links to other useful resources and websites.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office and Cavan Co Co Communications Office, GIS Officer.	Complete Biodiversity webpage update, with ongoing maintenance from then on. 2026 -28.
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2. Actions to help protect Lakes, River Systems and Water Quality in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
3.	Public awareness campaigns on water usage, chemicals, septic tanks and pesticide use. (e.g. video campaign on pesticides)	Wider public awareness of water quality issues in the county and how everyone's actions can have an effect on local water supply, lakes & rivers, etc.	Ultimately, people taking action to improve water quality in households and businesses across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co Water Section, Cavan Co Co Environment Section, EPA, NFGWS, LAWPRO, Uisce Éireann.	Organise campaign to encourage improved water practices in the home/business. 2026 - 28

3. Actions to protect and support Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
4.	Develop a Conservation Project for the Geopark, with a focus on conserving its unique habitats and species.	Tailored project for biodiversity- rich habitats and species, e.g. grasslands, boglands, lakes, butterfly and bird species.	Protect the habitats & species that have managed to be conserved to date and ensure they will be protected into the future.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, NPWS.	Develop a Conservation Project for threatened and unique habitats and species across the Geopark. 2026 - 2028
5.	Support development of partnerships, funding opportunities, research studies and conservation actions on the ground.	More support in terms of people and resources to implement conservation projects.	Ensure that conservation projects can be carried out in a targeted, effective way.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, NPWS, private farmers/ landowners, Teagasc (Ballyhaise)	Partnerships developed and funding for a Conservation Project has been applied for. 2026 - 2028

4. Actions to protect and enhance Cavan's Bogs & Wetlands

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
6.	Promotion of wetlands, wetland studies and related education programmes.	Complete Phase III study report and share all wetland studies online and across the public domain.	Increased knowledge of Cavan's bogs and wetlands will help support their protection and potentially future funding opportunities.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Irish Wetland Surveys, Killyconny Bog Project, WCBA, NPWS, Geopark, Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Irish RAMSAR Wetland Committee, Climate Action Team.	Promotion of Phase II of Cavan Wetlands Survey, plus completion and promotion of Phase III. 2026 - 28
7.	Include 'Wetland Ambassador Programme' as a component of the Citizen's Science Network.	Recognition of landowners striving to protect wetlands in Co. Cavan and their priority habitats i.e. transition mire, etc.	Educating the farming community and wider public about the types and value of wetland habitats being conserved.	Geopark, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Office, Irish Wetland Surveys, Farming for Nature, Burren Beo, DAFM, ACRES-Breifne.	Promotion and launch of Wetland Ambassador Programme within Citizens' Science Network. 2026-28

5. Actions to enhance Biodiversity Focus on Forest Parks in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
8.	Supporting Coillte and forest park managers with biodiversity actions plans in its forest parks across County Cavan. Discussion and sharing of biodiversity plans for forest parks where possible.	Increasing knowledge and discussion around biodiversity for County Cavan's Forest parks.	Increasing the effectiveness of biodiversity action plans across forest parks in County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, public, Geopark, Climate Action Team.	Contact with Coillte on a yearly basis to discuss and contribute to biodiversity plans for Cavan's Forest parks. 2026-28.

6. Actions to conserve and expand hedgerows and woodland cover in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
9.	Explore opportunities with Teagasc Ballyhaise and agri-environment schemes regarding more eco-friendly hedge & tree management and planting on farms.	Explore potential for talks, demonstrations and modules to encourage management of hedgerows and native tree planting on farmland for biodiversity.	Most hedgerows are situated on farmland throughout the county, so any modules and training for young farmers and land management advisers could have a positive effect on the county's hedgerows in future.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), ACRES-Breifne, Climate Action Team.	Hold at least one hedgerow workshop or course at Teagasc, Ballyhaise. 2026-28
10.	Provide training and develop Tree & Hedgerow Conservation Strategy and/or guidance document for County Council staff, e.g. Planning & Roads Dept and hired contractors to ensure ecologically sensitive hedge cutting.	Prepare guidance document or focused management plan for Cavan Co Co Planning & Roads Dept with clear instruction on eco-friendly hedge cutting for new developments and Council-managed hedges.	A guidance document or conservation strategy on hedge cutting will help to ensure Council-owned and roadside hedgerows are conserved. This will help to conserve hedgerows during development and hedge-cutting periods.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), hired hedge-cutting contractors, Climate Action Team.	Provide training and guidance for relevant Cavan Co Co staff (e.g. Planners, Road Engineers) on hedgerow maintenance and conservation. 2026-28.

7. Actions to Conserve High Nature Value (HNV) Farmland in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
11.	Establish pilot project with landowner/s aiming to protect local HNV grassland habitats.	Set up pilot projects with interested farmer/s in an area of species-rich grassland with support of partner agencies.	Establishing species-rich grassland projects with farmer/s in HNV farmland areas will help to encourage conservation of semi-natural grasslands in County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Irish Grasslands Project, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, interested landowners and agri-environmental consultants, Climate Action Team.	Establish one small pilot project with the aim of protection and enhancement of semi-natural grasslands on HNV farmland. 2026-28

8. Actions to encourage and support Pollinators across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
12.	Extend the Pollinator friendly towns & villages initiative out across Co. Cavan.	Increased awareness of and respect for biodiversity and its protection across local communities in County Cavan.	Giving individuals and groups the knowledge to implement projects locally.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Tidy Towns groups, sports clubs, residents' associations, community gardens, Graveyard Network, etc.	Extend Pollinator friendly towns & villages initiative out across County Cavan. 2027-28

9. Actions to target Invasive Alien Species (IAS) across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
13.	Encourage the use of native plants for amenity planting and stocking in communities across the county.	Greater awareness among the public that planting native tree & hedge species over non-native is best and what plants to avoid.	Reduce and avoid spread of IAS in local communities across the county. Greater awareness of species to avoid and species that are best for biodiversity.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, angling clubs, local volunteer and community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, TÚS, CE Schemes, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), local suppliers, climate action team.	Campaign to promote native plant species and to avoid invasive species. 2026-28
14.	Biosecurity and invasives species training for Co Co planners, engineers and Contractors developing a biosecurity code of practice.	Greater awareness and knowledge among Co Co staff to avoid introduction and spread of IAS during construction and development.	Reduce and avoid spread of IAS during development of Council projects throughout County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co Planning & Environment, IAS Working Group NBDC.	Training for relevant Cavan Co Co staff to avoid spread and transfer of IAS during their work. 2026-28

10. Actions to help conserve vulnerable Species in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
15.	Swift (Red List species). 'Swift Streets' - bricks/boxes in new builds or established buildings and promotion, led by recommendations from County Swift Surveys.	'Swift Streets' will be established across County Cavan. Led by findings from the Cavan Swift Surveys. Tied to Swift Ambassador style programme.	Swift populations will be protected and supported. Projects will also raise awareness of their plight.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, BWI Cavan Branch, NPWS, Swift Conservation Ireland, NBDC, Citizen Science Network, Climate Action Team.	Establish and promote 'Swift Streets' across County Cavan, guided by the County Swift Surveys. 2026-28
16.	Barn Owl (Red List species). Ongoing monitoring, awareness and promotion, led by recommendations from County Barn Owl Surveys.	Greater monitoring and awareness of Barn Owls across the county, including main threats, e.g. rodenticide use, habitat loss.	Protect and strengthen barn owl populations across Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, BWI Cavan Branch, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Awareness raising and promotion of Barn Owl conservation, guided by the County Barn Owl Surveys. 2026-28
17.	Awareness raising and habitat protection for Butterfly & Moth species.	Support projects to conserve threatened Moths and Butterflies and raise their profile in the public eye.	Supporting initiatives to protect threatened butterflies and moths in County Cavan will help to conserve the species, their habitat and inform the public.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Marsh Fritillary Monitoring Scheme, Butterfly Conservation Ireland, Moths Ireland, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Hold at least one butterfly and/or moth themed event during Biodiversity or Heritage Week. 2026-27

18.	Promotion and protection of bat species, e.g. lighting guidance, conservation of roosts & foraging habitat.	Ensure bat roosts and habitats are protected and consider lighting schemes guided by Dark Skies Lighting Guidance.	Increased awareness, appreciation and protection for bats and their habitats across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Bat Conservation Ireland, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Ensure bat protection measures are included in council planning and development process. Raise awareness of bats across the county. 2026-28
19.	Common Lizard - Support awareness raising of lizards and their habitats, e.g. scrub, stone walls, peat bogs, dry grasslands and heathlands.	Greater understanding of lizards, their populations and their habitats across Co. Cavan.	Ensure the conservation of lizards across the scrub, grassland, limestone and bog habitats of Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, NBDC, IWT, WCBA, the Geopark, The Herpetological Society of Ireland, Citizen Science Network.	Hold at least one reptile (lizard) Themed event during Biodiversity or Heritage Week. 2026-28

LONG-TERM ACTIONS (2028-30) OR ONGOING (2025-30)

1. Actions to support Biodiversity Initiatives in Communities across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
1.	Promoting biodiversity via the Arts, e.g. booklets, nature-themed murals in towns/villages, biodiversity themes incorporated into Arts events & festivals. Team up with local artists.	Featuring biodiversity themes via Arts events and projects throughout Co. Cavan would highlight biodiversity in a fun and positive way.	Encouraging local people to think about biodiversity and appreciate the beauty of nature in both urban and rural settings.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Arts Office, Tidy Towns groups, Town Teams, Community and Sports Clubs, Local/Irish artists, Climate Action Team.	Host/complete at least one biodiversity-themed event or project in County Cavan each year via the Arts, e.g. murals, sculptures, art exhibitions, etc. Ongoing, 2025-2030.
2.	Promotion of biodiversity via events and an enhanced communications presence, e.g. 'Biolblitzes', 'walks & talks', social media, radio slots, short films, etc.	Increased interest and enthusiasm, especially among young people, to take an interest in biodiversity, and to recognise and record various species.	Getting people, especially young people, more involved. Improve biodiversity interest, species identification and recording.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Tidy Towns groups, Geopark, BWI, WCBA, LAWPRO, AIPP, The Anglo Celt, Northern Sound, Facebook, Instagram, etc.	Events and promotion during Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week each year. Ongoing, 2025-2030.

2. Actions to help protect Lakes, River Systems and Water Quality in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
3.	Citizen science training and awareness raising events on water quality – linking in with relevant organisations, e.g. Citizen Science Network events. See Biodiversity and Communities.	Equipping individuals and community groups with the skills to monitor water quality in their area through online, visual and on-site training.	Increasing knowledge on water quality, providing valuable skills in the community to help protect local rivers and lakes.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, LAWPRO, Cavan Libraries, NFGWS, Irish Water, Cavan Co Co Water Section, Cavan Co Co Environment Section, EPA, Geopark.	Aid organisation and promotion of events each year, e.g. LAWPRO events/training, Cavan-Monaghan Science Festival. Ongoing 2025-2030.

4.	Support Nature Based Solutions (NBS) and green infrastructure such as riparian buffer zones, wetlands projects, rain gardens and SuDs (Sustainable urban drainage systems) features where appropriate for biodiversity enhancement.	Helping projects with NBS/SuD features and supporting knowledge sharing where appropriate to aid water quality and monitoring so building on existing knowledge in space.	Increasing knowledge and capacity in the NBS space for Cavan County Council. Support projects where possible that aid water quality such as flood alleviation or improving water quality aligned to water action plan.	Cavan Heritage and Biodiversity Office, LAWPRO, NFGWS, Irish Water, Cavan Co Co Water Section, Roads section, EPA, Geopark, Cavan Climate Action Team.	Deliver training and advice capacity in supporting NBS projects or helping with such projects to aid water quality. Ongoing – 2025-2030.
5.	Explore opportunities for implementing actions on farms to protect water quality and biodiversity, e.g. creating riparian buffer zones, wetlands, Fencing, Willow Spiling, etc.	Encouraging the farming community to conserve biodiversity by taking action to protect local water quality.	Better results in terms of reducing water pollution and improving water quality across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Teagasc Ballyhaise, LAWPRO, NFGWS, ASSAP, NPWS, IFA, ACRES Breifne, Farming for Water.	Incorporate topics related to improved water practices on the farm into biodiversity communications, events and campaigns, involving partner organisations. Ongoing, 2025-2030.

3. Actions to protect and support Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
6.	Regular eco-themed events and programmes and incorporate citizen science network events at the Geopark.	Demonstrate why the Geopark is so important to conserve and protect in terms of biodiversity (along with its archaeological, physical and cultural features).	Greater knowledge about the Geopark within County Cavan and a greater willingness to protect and understand its significance, including its unique biodiversity.	Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, Cavan Co Co, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Sports Partnership, Cavan PPN, NPWS, UNESCO.	One biodiversity-themed walk at the Geopark in conjunction with Cavan Heritage Office each year. Ongoing, 2025-2030.

4. Actions to protect and enhance Cavan's Bogs & Wetlands

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
7.	Increased support for community involved with bog restoration, e.g. funding, training clinics and inclusion within the Citizen Science Network.	Raising awareness among the public of the importance of bogs and wetlands in the county in terms of biodiversity, climate change, flood protection, etc.	Greater awareness in the public domain could mean better understanding and protection measures, especially for those bogs not currently protected under legislation.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Killyconny Bog Project, WCBA, NPWS, LAWPRO, Geopark, Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Irish RAMSAR Wetland Committee, Climate Action Team.	At least one event per year focusing on bogs & wetlands, e.g. on World Wetlands Day. Ongoing 2025-2030.

5. Actions to enhance Biodiversity Focus on Forest Parks in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
8.	More information signs on tree, flora and fauna species present in forest parks.	Highlighting key tree, flora and fauna species around forest parks, how they interact and benefit biodiversity.	Creating an understanding and appreciation of the species present in County Cavan's forests and encouraging their protection.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, private landowners (where necessary), Geopark.	Install relevant biodiversity signage in at least three of Cavan's key forest parks. Ongoing 2025-30.

6. Actions to conserve and expand hedgerows and woodland cover in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
9.	Devise Ash tree management guidelines within a native tree strategy (N16 – Action in County Climate Action Plan) to aid awareness and assist with replacement strategy on Cavan County Council lands.	Plan ahead for Ash Dieback, e.g. planting a mix of suitable native trees and careful Ash tree management on Council lands in place of Ash trees affected by Ash Dieback (ADB) Disease and promote awareness.	Working with stakeholders, farmers and landowners to promote good practices for tree management and creating awareness of ash dieback will help support a wider strategy with national remit.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, Tree Council of Ireland, Native Woodland Trust, Tidy Towns, Geopark, Climate Action Team.	Include guidance on managing Ash trees affected by Ash Dieback Disease during hedgerow conservation workshops and guidance for Cavan Co Co staff. Ongoing 2025-2030
10.	Educating the public on native hedge and tree planting and maintenance via workshops, events and other awareness projects, e.g. digital resources.	Organise workshops in planting, laying and maintenance of hedgerows during Heritage Week, Hedgerow Week, etc.	Raise awareness of the importance of hedgerows for biodiversity through the planting and maintenance of native hedges through hands-on demonstrations each year.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Teagasc (Ballyhaise), National Tree Council, Native Woodland Trust, Tidy Towns, Climate Action Team.	Hold native hedgerow maintenance and planting workshops and/or courses with the public each year. Ongoing 2025-30
11.	Identify, survey and map native long-established (LEW) woodland sites in the County (possible CBAs). Make LEWs a priority to ensure their conservation with the support of the national Maynooth University LEW mapping project. (Early 2026 update).	Create maps of native LEW sites across County Cavan that still exist. e.g. Bellamont, Kingscourt, Deerpark Forest Parks, Dunaweel, etc. Areas of woodland that once existed (according to historical OSI maps) could also be included.	The creation of native woodland maps would help to record those that currently exist across County Cavan and help to ensure their protection. Include comparative study with OSI maps.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, OSI, Coillte, private landowners, Tree Council of Ireland, Native Woodland Trust, Maynooth University.	Complete map of County Cavan's Long-Established Woodlands (LEW). Ongoing 2025-30

7. Actions to Conserve High Nature Value (HNV) Farmland in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
12.	Undertake a semi-natural grassland survey in Co. Cavan. (Comparative survey with 2009 study).	A follow-up report, similar to the 2009 Irish Semi-natural Grasslands Survey (by BEC Consultants), with a focus on County Cavan, should be carried out across the county.	A study of the species-rich grasslands remaining in the county would build up data and help to identify sites requiring protection.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, Irish Grasslands Project, Climate Action Team, GIS Officer.	Complete and launch a follow-up semi-natural grassland survey for Co. Cavan. 2028-30

13.	Provide Digital and ecological literacy guidance for landowners in Biodiversity Space and HNV farming i.e. schemes, legislation, funding, concepts, etc.	Demonstrate efforts and hopefully results of engagement with landowners in terms of funding clinics, legislation, biodiversity literacy for HNV, etc. (Also open to communities and staff)	Landowners will be empowered to protect their local biodiversity, understand the mechanisms for doing so and be knowledgeable of the designations/legislation that affects them.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Heritage Council, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, Geopark, ACRES Breifne, Climate Action Team, GIS Officer, Environmental consultancies.	Host at least one event focused as an ecological and digital literacy clinic in space targeted at landowners and HNV farming during the duration of the plan. Ongoing 2025-30
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8. Actions to encourage and support Pollinators across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
14.	Incorporate biodiversity projects into County Council heritage conservation projects.	Ensure biodiversity elements are included in all community and council led conservation projects.	Space for nature will be included in the conservation of old buildings and spaces across the county which are council or community-led.	Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Council contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups, community groups, ecologists.	Biodiversity initiatives are incorporated into conservation projects. Ongoing 2025-30
15.	Strongly influence reduction of pesticide use by County Council as a statutory requirement of the National Biodiversity Action Plan by supporting development of policy for council.	Reduce pesticide use by Cavan County Council on council grounds and across all settings, including footpaths, roadsides, housing estates and parks.	Cavan Co Co must lead the way in reducing pesticide use. Weedkiller is toxic to wildlife and banning its use on council lands may encourage community groups and households to avoid it too.	Cavan County Council, Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, AIPP, Council maintenance contractors, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Tidy Towns groups, community groups, Geopark, Cavan Climate Action Team, Roads Section.	Influence reduction in pesticide use via policy guidance on lands maintained by Cavan Co Co via Pesticide Training and other initiatives. Ongoing 2025-2030.

9. Actions to target Invasive Alien Species (IAS) across County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
16.	Support actions arising from IAS studies with partner agencies. Linked to IAS working group.	Targeted projects to eradicate IAS, e.g. Nuttall's Waterweed trial studies.	Reducing and eradicating the spread of damaging aquatic IAS across County Cavan to protect native habitats and species.	Aquatic Invasive Alien Species Working Group - Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, LAWPRO, Biosecurity Consultant, NPWS, NBDC, IFI, BSBI, Invasive Species Ireland, local angling groups, etc.	Support trials proposed for Nuttall's Waterweed at specific locations across Co. Cavan. Ongoing 2025-30
17.	Campaign to monitor and record non-native mammal species, utilizing the Citizen Science Network, e.g. White-toothed Shrew, Voles.	Link in with citizen scientists and community groups across Co. Cavan to monitor and record the spread and range of invasive mammals with the NBDC.	Helping to track the spread of invasive mammal species across County Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, LAWPRO, WCBA, NPWS, NBDC, Invasive Species Ireland.	Monitoring and recording of invasive mammal species are boosted across the community. Ongoing 2025-30

18.	Create a map of IAS 'hotspots' in specific areas.	Map of existing IAS locations that is dynamic and can be updated to include sightings.	Knowledge of exact locations of IAS will assist the relevant bodies to keep track of where IAS 'hotspots' are, making it easier to prevent their spread and undertake targeted projects.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, LAWPRO, angling clubs, local volunteer and community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, Heritage groups, TÚS, CE Scheme, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Invasive Species Ireland. GIS Officer.	Create a dynamic mapping project of key IAS hotspots throughout Co. Cavan. Ongoing 2025-30
19.	Targeted IAS removal programmes for terrestrial invasives, e.g. Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel.	Gradual removal of invasive species from forest parks, several of which have issues with Rhododendron and Laurel, which are harmful to native biodiversity.	Removal of invasive species will allow native species to prosper. Involving local volunteer and community groups will enhance the process.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Coillte, community groups, e.g. Tidy Towns, TÚS, CE Schemes, Rural Social Scheme (RSS), NBDC, Invasive Species Ireland, Cavan Volunteer Centre.	Hold Volunteer IAS removal events once a year, with a focus on Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel in Forest Parks. Ongoing 2025-30

10. Actions to help conserve vulnerable Species in County Cavan

	Action	Outcome	Impact	Partner Organisations	Targets
20.	Accommodation of birds during Council conservation projects, e.g. for old bridges and buildings. Include wildlife-friendly lighting, Dark Skies initiatives, etc.	Ensure that nest sites and habitats of vulnerable species are accommodated during conservation projects e.g. Sand Martins, Dippers.	Conserving and/ or replacing suitable nest sites and habitats ensures species are less likely to abandon areas during/after conservation projects.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, Heritage Council, BWI Cavan Branch, Bat Conservation Ireland, Dark Skies Ireland, Tidy Towns groups, hired contractors, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Ensure wildlife is accommodated by conserving and/ or replacing nest sites and habitats for all Council-led conservation projects. Ongoing 2025-30.
21.	Raise awareness regarding protection of Badgers and their habitats, based on scientific facts.	Support for Badger conservation in County Cavan, e.g. habitat protection and support for TB vaccination programmes.	Ensure the survival of Badgers and their habitats across County Cavan into the future.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Coillte, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, ACRES-Breifne, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Awareness programme for Badger protection across County Cavan, among public and farming community, tied to existing research. Ongoing 2025-30
22.	Monitoring trends of threatened mammals – e.g. Red Squirrel, Pine Marten, Stoat (<i>Mustela erminea</i>), Irish Hare.	Ensure that native mammal populations are monitored and recorded to identify conservation trends.	Conservation of and appreciation for native mammal species across Co. Cavan.	Cavan Heritage & Biodiversity Office, Cavan Co Co, NPWS, IWT, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Coillte, Teagasc Ballyhaise, IFA, ACRES-Breifne, NBDC, Citizen Science Network.	Promotion of monitoring and recording of native mammals across Co. Cavan. Ongoing 2025-30.

Appendix C - Geological Sites in County Cavan (GSI)

No.	Site Name	Location (ITM, nearest town/village)	Geological Feature	Recommended Designation/s
1	Pollprughlisk	616483E 828830N (Swanlinbar)	Karst limestone cave	CGS; Geological NHA
2	Western Cuilcagh (Overview)	605775E 835600N (Blacklion, Glangevlin, Dowra)	Extensive area of upland karst	CGS; Geological NHA
3	Western Cuilcagh - Burren Forest	607080E 834250N (Blacklion)	Karst surface and glacial erratics	CGS; Geological NHA
4	Western Cuilcagh - Corratirrim	607650E 836010N (Blacklion)	Limestone pavement with clints and grykes	CGS; Geological NHA
5	Western Cuilcagh - Garvagh Lough	607612E 833308N (Blacklion)	Lake with glacial till bed.	CGS; Geological NHA
6	Western Cuilcagh - Pollnaowen	606982E 833200N (Blacklion)	Small karstic river sink	CGS; Geological NHA
7	Western Cuilcagh- Shannon Pot	605332E 831753N (Blacklion)	Spring rising and source of the River Shannon	CGS; Geological NHA
8	Western Cuilcagh – White Father’s Caves/ St Augustine’s Cave	605274E 837528N (Blacklion)	Cave system with open streamway between sections	CGS; Geological NHA
9	Cormeen Quarry	653000E 803744N (Stradone)	Small quarry with ‘Moffatt Shale’ formations	CGS; Geological NHA
10	Moneycass Glebe	654312E 804660N (Stradone)	Rock exposures with fossils	CGS; Geological NHA
11	Swanlinbar River	619226E 827100N (Swanlinbar)	Stretch of river bed with exposed bedrock including limestone and shale	CGS
12	Bruse Hill Quarry	631466E 798476N (Arvagh)	Quarry with green greywackes, red shales and minor spilitic lavas	CGS
13	Carrickallen Quarry	656450E 804110N (Stradone)	Quarry with ‘Moffatt Shale’ horizons and greywacke sandstone	CGS
14	Drumcarban	635593E 798976N (Crossdoney)	Small outcrops along lakeshore with Granite and Quartz	CGS
15	Blackwater Valley	663660E 782360N (Virginia)	Pitted Sandur sediments with Quartz and Greywackes	CGS
16	Bruse Hill	664471E 784020N (Virginia, Mullagh)	Crag and tail ridge with Quartz-Greywacke	CGS
17	Cuilcagh Mountain	612600E 826700N (Swanlinbar/Blacklion)	Long plateau-like ridge of sandstone and shale upland straddling Cavan and Fermanagh	CGS
18	Cuilcagh Meltwater Channels	614200E 823230N (Swanlinbar)	Three deep gullies OF shale/ limestone that were formed by meltwater erosion on the southeastern flank of Cuilcagh Mountain	CGS

No.	Site Name	Location (ITM, nearest town/village)	Geological Feature	Recommended Designation/s
19	Lough Kinale-Lough Sheelin Deltas	639600E 781970N Finnea/Mount Nugent	Deltas formed on bedrock composed of Lower Carboniferous limestone	CGS
20	Mid-Cavan Drumlinised Ribbed Moraines	654000E 811000N Cavan/Cootehill /Stradone	Field of ribbed moraines forms part of the largest field of ribbed moraines found anywhere in the world	CGS
21	Rockcorry-Cootehill Ribbed Moraines	666000E 891000N (Cootehill/Rockcorry)	Field of ribbed moraines forms part of the largest field of ribbed moraines found anywhere in the world	CGS
22	Scotshouse-Red-hills Cross-cutting Ribbed Moraines	644600E 818000N (Redhills,/Scotshouse)	Field of ribbed moraines forms part of the largest field of ribbed moraines found anywhere in the world	CGS
23	Western Cuilcagh - Legeelan Quarry	606696E 833988N (Blacklion)	Limestone Quarry	GCS; Geological NHA
24	Crossdoney Granite Quarry	637600E 800444N (Crossdoney)	Granite Quarry. The only known granite body in County Cavan.	CGS
25	Tullydermot Falls	614935E 824797N (Swanlinbar)	Waterfall on the Cladagh/ Swanlinbar River, occurring on a sandstone formation.	CGS
26	Kill	642601E 790507N (Kilnaleck)	Kilnaleck Shale Formation within which carbonaceous layers have been altered to coal. The only known location in the country where coal is found in Lower Palaeozoic rocks.	CGS
27	Redhills/Claragh	646877E 815675N (Redhills)	Exposed rocks with red, ferruginous shales. Former iron mining site.	GCS; Geological NHA
28	Dromod Spa Well	620025E 826607N (Swanlinbar)	Small, natural spring rising from limestone bedrock.	CGS

Appendix D - County Cavan Biodiversity Plan - Steering Group

The County Cavan Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group is composed of representatives from the following organisations. This list is correct at the time of writing the Plan, but may change over the timeframe of the Plan, 2025-2030. Some members have moved positions but are still acknowledged below.

Member	Organisation
Heather Bothwell	BirdWatch Ireland (Cavan Branch), West Cavan Bogs Association (WCBA) & Killeshandra Tidy Towns
John Matthews (since retired)	National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) – Conservation Ranger, West Cavan
Maurice Eakin (since moved positions)	NPWS - District Conservation Officer
Ben Malone	Meath County Council - Biodiversity Officer
Jimmy McVeigh	Regional Coordinator, Border Region (LAWPRO)
Eoghan Connaughton	Community Water Officer - Cavan, Louth and Monaghan (LAWPRO)
Martina O'Neill	Fermanagh Omagh District Council - Countryside Management Officer - Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark
Grainne O'Connor	Cavan County Council - Manager - Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark
Colm O'Callaghan	Cavan County Council – Senior Executive Officer, Environment Section
Allison Treanor	Cavan County Council – Senior Executive Scientist, Environmental Section
John Toland	Cavan County Local Development (CCLD) - Senior Rural Development Officer
David Stafford	Cavan County Local Development (CCLD) - Rural Social Scheme Development Officer and Wild Work
Bernie McGovern	Cavan County Council - Horticulturalist
John Kelly	College Principal – Teagasc, Ballyhaise
Adrian Smyth/Mark Farrelly	National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) - Biodiversity & Development Officer/Education, Information and Research Officer
Mairead Sheridan	Cavan County Council - Forward Planning
Kieran Moloney	Coillte – Environmental Manager
Ailish Keane	Inland Fisheries Ireland – Senior Environmental Officer
Chantel Carr	National Biodiversity Data Centre - Shared Island Biosecurity and Citizen Science Officer
Desmond Gough	Jampa Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre, Bawnboy
Cllr Brendan Fay	Elected Representative (Independent) - Cavan County Council
Cormac McCarthy	Environment & Heritage Officer - Waterways Ireland
Seamus Dolan	Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) - Vice Chair, Dairy Committee
Paddy Denning	IFA - Environmental & Rural Affairs Committee and Cavan Heritage Forum – Farming Representative
Christopher Liu	NPWS Conservation Ranger, East Cavan.
Paul O'Doherty	NPWS Conservation Ranger, West Cavan
Brona Keating	Cavan County Council, Climate Action Team Coordinator
Leona Galligan	Cavan County Local Development (CCLD), Outdoor Recreation Officer.
Joanne Hayes	Cavan County Council – Tourism Officer
Brenda Montgomery	IFI District Officer, Lough Sheelin.

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