

SDCC Pollinator Plan Update.

In April 2021 South Dublin County Council launched the SDCC Pollinator Action Plan 2021-2025 (<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/environment/pollinators/sdcc-pollination-action-plan.pdf>). The Pollinator Action Plan is based on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and sets out a broad range of actions that South Dublin County Council have committed to over the next five years.

The local Pollinator Action Plan by SDCC represents the Council's commitment to promoting habitats and food sources for pollinators in this county and addressing the rapid decline in our bee populations.



Pyramid Orchid

To support the Pollinator Action Plan launch, South Dublin County Council released a video that explains why this work is being undertaken (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCLZArN1oTY>). The video contains images of parks right across South Dublin County. In all areas, South Dublin County Council has had huge support from local Councillors and members of the public for pollinator-friendly initiatives.

For many years South Dublin County Council has been taking actions to support pollinators on public land. We have also worked with local community groups, residents' associations and schools to help raise awareness of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Alongside the Council's work, the community also have a part to play to ensure the success and positive impact of implementing the actions listed in this plan and we thank them for their ongoing support.

Pollinator Supporting Maintenance regimes:

South Dublin County Council (SDCC) manages approx. 1500 hectares of parks (54 parks) and open spaces. SDCC signed the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in 2019 and have implemented a reduced mowing regime over the past number of years. This is new way in how local authorities manage grassland, moving from a fortnightly mowing regime to mowing once or twice a year on a seasonal basis. This reduced level of grass cutting allows wildflowers to flower and set seed, providing additional opportunities for pollinating insects which are currently challenged by landscape change of use, habitat loss and chemical usage.



Wildflower Meadows Tymon Park

In 2018 SDCC began formally mapping and identifying wildflowers meadow locations to support pollinators on public land. SDCC staff believed that as landscape managers wildflower meadows should be managed in a formal way. SDCC Public Realm staff and the Heritage Officer visited each site to identify any potential botanical and pollinator value. After the 2018/2019 assessment SDCC had 90ha of natural meadows in parks and open spaces, this has increased year on year to 139ha in 2021. These actions require copious planning, consultation and co-ordination with internal and external stakeholders as well as budgetary planning.



Example of GIS Mapping in Tymon Park

In 2019/2020 SDCC Public Realm secured addition funding to allow meadow mowing: including cut, lift and remove + treatment in accordance with waste management Act 1996. The by-product (meadow grass) is then recycled as feed to cattle on the foothills of the Dublin Mountains during the winter months. Collecting the meadow grassland depletes the soil of nitrogen, allowing natural wildflowers to grow and establish during the following years. This is a carefully managed and sustainable way of returning biodiversity to our natural areas while promoting wildflower habitats and food sources for pollinators.



Pollinator Surveys:

South Dublin County Council (as part of the Biodiversity Plan) have carried out audits and insect surveys on wildflower meadows in 2020 and 2021 and we are expecting the full reports on these shortly. These surveys have displayed a wide variety of insect life, in some cases quite rare species have been discovered. Allowing wildflower meadows to flourish and flower has become popular with citizens of South Dublin.

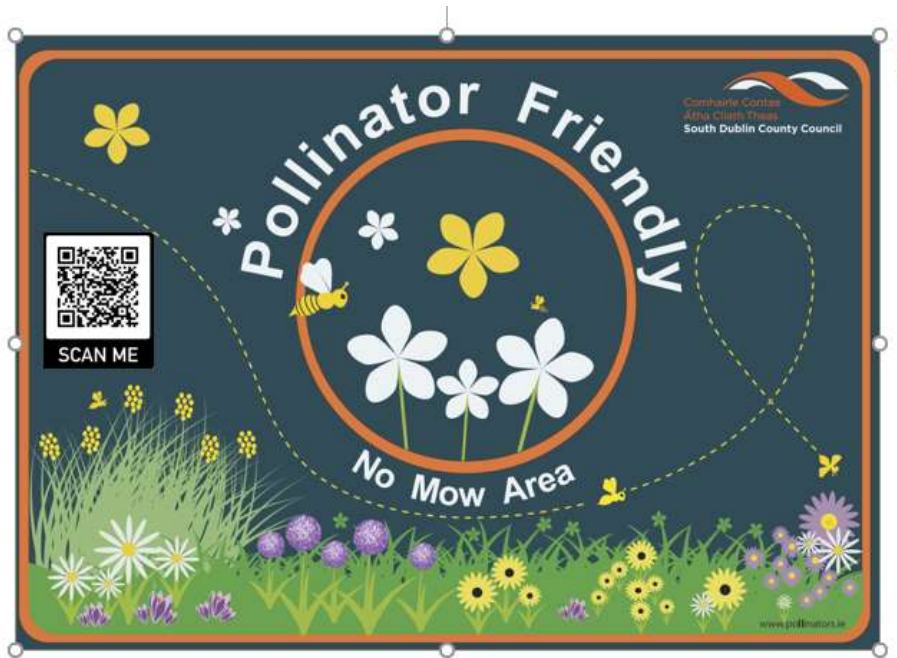


Bee orchids

Public Engagement and Communication:

Events and Community gatherings have been difficult over the past number of years but SDCC have moved to the virtual space and, over the last year, have ran a social media campaign to promote pollinator protection and the actions SDCC have taken to promote pollinators. For instance, in the past 4 months, 64 tweets resulted in a total of 176,310 responses from members of the public. On the ground we have used SDCC 'Managed for Wildlife' & 'Lets Create a Buzz' signs to assist with education on the councils' actions and the results have been positive to date.

If people seek additional information on pollinators they can scan the QR code located on the signs, which directs people to a SDCC web page where they can view our local pollinator action plan & video.



SDCC pollinator signage and QR code.

In addition to the above SDCC have worked with various local community groups, residents' associations and schools to help raise awareness of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and advised regarding actions they can take to make their local area more pollinator friendly. Local citizens in general support the initiative and requests have been received for further areas to be managed for pollinators. SDCC enables customer feedback and proposals through the Councils 'fix your street' app.



A variety of wildflowers Lucan Demesne

Bulb Planting:

In addition to the great work that has been undertaken by our operations staff over 290,000 bulbs were planted throughout the county in the past year, 85% of the bulb mix are pollinator friendly. Daffodils are interplanted with pollinator friendly bulbs such as Tulips, Cammasia & Alliums. Daffodils mark the locations of the pollinator bulbs and reduces the likelihood of mowing the spring bulbs as they come up in April/May. Daffodil planting allows long grass, wildflowers/dandelions, etc to grow, which acts as a habitat hub, food sources & ecological corridors for bees and other pollinators.



Cammasia flowering at a focal point of the county

Going Forward:

SDCC will continue to implement the Pollinator Action Plan. Looking to the future, we as an organisation are really keen to expand the number of meadows and a further expansion of meadowlands in 2022 is planned.

In addition; we are currently scoping out the requirements for a trial of a series of short meadows with 6-week cuts, across the County. This is for areas such as residential open spaces and along road verges and it has the potential to vastly expand the area we can manage for increased pollinators activity.

We hope to update the National Biodiversity Centre in the next year with findings from this trial.