

## Update SDCC Pollinator Action Plan. September 2022



*Tymon Park.*

2022 has been a very successful year to date. Work that was carried out on our meadows in previous years has really started to pay dividends with spectacular displays of wildflowers across the county throughout the summer period (<https://youtu.be/xLMnl7uLtys>). This is very encouraging, and we expect that the meadows will continue to improve as the management practices continue year on year.

We are getting overwhelmingly positive response from the elected members and the general public, and we are leading the way in the local authority sector in terms of implementing the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Recently the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) has tweeted congratulating SDCC on the way the Council is managing the landscape with over 160ha of long flowering meadows now managed for pollinators.

### **Long Flowering Meadows**

Presently (in Aug/Sept 22) over 100ha of long flowering meadows are being cut and collected by a contractor working on behalf of the Council (the remaining 60 ha was cut in spring). The meadow mowing generates over 3,700 tonnes of grass cuttings which is re-used as fodder.

Meadow management is an essential part of the Council's actions to improve habitats for pollinators. Some of the meadows are cut at the end of the flowering season while others are left to overwinter and are cut later in the Spring to provide winter hibernation places for insects and their larvae.

Cutting meadows at any time of the year may generate concern from the public, as many people believe meadows are purely natural ecosystems that require no intervention. This, however, is not the case. If the council did not properly manage the meadows most would return to rank grassland and lose their benefits to pollinators. To increase awareness regarding required meadow

management we have released a wildflower meadow life-cycle video to communicate this process: (<https://youtu.be/MiUAwnfNlcs>)

The meadow management techniques used by SDCC are aligned with best practice and are supported by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and requires the meadows be cut once per year, either in autumn or spring, with grass cuttings removed. This depletes the soil of nitrogen, allowing natural wildflowers to grow and establish. The areas that SDCC manage for pollinators has grown from 90ha in 2019 to over 160ha in 2022, this figure is growing year on year.



*Tymon Park 2022.*

To view SDCC existing long meadow map please visit:

<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/environment/pollinators/long-meadow-pollinator-map-2022.pdf>

### **Short Flowering Meadows**

SDCC are also currently conducting a County wide trial on short flowering meadows. This involves areas which were previously cut every two weeks, adopting a reduced mowing regime where we will cut and collect the grass 5 times per annum. Short flowering meadows are designed for public open space and residential areas where long meadows aren't suitable but where we want to allow more biodiversity value in these grassed areas. The trial locations are spread throughout South Dublin County and comprise of 10 hectares in total. In the summer of 2022 SDCC released an educational video on short flowering meadows: (<https://youtu.be/O22QfKnt1eM>).

The short-flowering meadows initiative has the potential to be an environmentally beneficial way of managing public open space and is an objective within the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. The cutting and collecting programme will allow short flowering species to flower and set seed and will reduce the overall competition from grass species as the ground is depleted from nitrogen. This initiative has the potential to vastly expand the areas we manage for pollinators. If the trial is successful residents' associations can request areas within their estates be left for short meadows to promote



pollinator food sources and habitats. This type of management is suitable to allow flowers such as dandelions to flower but where natural meadows would not be suitable. The selection criteria are very stringent to ensure this initiative doesn't hinder future or existing use of public open space. The trial has been very successful to date and SDCC plan continue this successful management approach.

To view SDCC short meadow map please visit:

<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/environment/pollinators/short-meadows-2022-rev2.pdf>

For more information on long or short meadows please visit:

<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/environment/pollinators/> or <https://pollinators.ie/>

### **Urban Planting & Bulb Schemes**

In addition to our meadows SDCC Public Realm Improvement Works include seven urban pollinator friendly perennial schemes which have been completed in 2022. These schemes are located at Sean Walsh & Tymon Park entrances, Belgard Square North/East junction, Stocking Wood, Rathfarnham Village, Tallaght Village and Whitestown Way. Pollinator friendly perennial plants are excellent sources of pollen and nectar. The planting scheme is densely planted to provide an array of visual colour as well as being more attractive to our pollinators. The planting scheme has been designed to provide a food source from spring through to autumn as well as providing habitats and nesting materials/value for birds and insects.

In Autumn and Winter SDCC plan on planting over 2.5 million pollinator friendly bulbs in various locations of the county. These bulbs will provide additional soft ecological corridors as well as vital resources for hungry pollinators.



*Bulb planting in Lucan Demesne*

### Raising Awareness and Social-Media

SDCC have continued our social media campaign to promote pollinators and the actions set out in the AIPP/SDCC Pollinator Action Plan:

<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/environment/pollinators/sdcc-pollination-action-plan.pdf>

On the ground we have installed over 80 new SDCC specific 'Managed for Wildlife' & 'Lets Create a Buzz' signs to assist with education on the councils' actions and results have been positive to date. If people want more information on pollinators, they can scan the QR code located on the signs, which directs people back to SDCC web page where they can view our local pollinator action plan & videos (<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/environment/pollinators/>).

SDCC are also developing additional training videos for groups interested in improving their local area for pollinators.



*Insect hotel at Lucan Demesne.*

### Other Actions

Under SDCC's Biodiversity Plan actions; Insect surveys have been carried out over the past 3 years on the meadows. This is a crucial action, allowing SDCC to assess the effectiveness of the pollinator plan and its outcomes. It also allows us to plan our maintenance regime on scientific evidence, for instance, it allows us to choose which meadows are best allowed to over-winter with a cut in spring and which ones are better cut in the summer / autumn. Initial reports on the insect surveys show a year-on-year increase in insect activity and biodiversity and a full report will issue later in 2022.



Insect hotels have been installed in several locations across the county; however SDCC are also focused on retaining and restoring natural habitats for insects, for example a woodland management plan is being developed and will examine the establishment of woodland edges which are ideal natural habitats for insects.

### **Other Plans and Strategies**

SDCC's Biodiversity Plan is in place supporting the above work. A Green Infrastructure Strategy for the county has been finalised and is a new part of the County's Development Plan. The Sustainable Urban Drainage Guidelines for SDCC were published early in 2022. The implementation of nature-based drainage solutions will support pollinators habitats, increase diverse habitats, and provide food opportunities for pollinators.

### **The Future**

SDCC have been considering use of the grass as an energy source through an anaerobic digestion system. The long-term consideration, if the feasibility stage was successful, we could then begin to contribute to the energy costs of a works depot (buildings and machines) using the energy that the grass provided through the digestion systems. SDCC are currently exploring this and doing some market research prior to publishing a tender for an anaerobic digestion feasibility survey.



*SDCC Pollinator Signage Dodder Valley Park*