

Aherlow Kilross Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 - 2028



**Based on a report by
Dr Mary Tubridy and Associates**

Supported by Community
Foundation
Ireland

Foreword

When people think of the Glen of Aherlow and the surrounding areas, they think of the natural beauty and our wonderful environment. Key to that is biodiversity – different species of animals and plants, their habitats and the ecosystems that join them together across our mountains, rivers, gardens and farmlands. A biodiverse and natural environment is vital for all our health and wellbeing

Unfortunately, biodiversity is under threat from pollution, climate change, invasive species and the loss of habitats.

Thanks to funding from Community Foundation Ireland, Aherlow Kilross Community Council (AKCC) was fortunate to work with Mary Tubridy, a very experienced ecologist, to develop the Aherlow Kilross Biodiversity Action Plan as a collective response to preserving and enhancing our local biodiversity. The full plan is available on www.bit.ly/AKCCBiodiversityPlan

The plan lays out clear, actionable steps to protect endangered species, restore habitats, promote sustainable land use, and ensure that our natural spaces are accessible, vibrant, and thriving for all.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in the development of the plan. We need everyone—young and old—to get involved. By learning about nature and taking action, you can help make Aherlow and Kilross a better place for both people and wildlife.

John O’Gorman - Chair Biodiversity Working Group

Our Vision

Aherlow and Kilross will be a high biodiversity area, which preserves and enhances a range of habitats and whose people are knowledgeable about and active in promoting biodiversity, creating a healthy sustainable community for their own benefit and for visitors to the area.

What is Biodiversity and why is it important?

Biodiversity means all the different forms of life that live and interact in our area – from tiny microorganisms in the soil to plants, insects, birds, animals, and people. In Aherlow and Kilross, our woodlands, rivers, bogs, hedgerows, mountains and farmland provide a range of habitats that support this rich web of life. Each habitat plays a vital role, offering food, shelter, and the right conditions for different species to thrive. These living things are all connected – soil microbes help plants grow, bees pollinate crops, and trees help clean our air and water, flies and fungi help to decompose dead material. When habitats are healthy, the whole environment benefits, including our farms, wildlife, and local community.

Here, we are lucky to have three special areas for conservation (SACs), covering parts of the River Aherlow, the upper slopes of the Galtee Mountains and Monour Mountain. By protecting and caring for these, and all our natural areas, we help ensure that the biodiversity and beauty of our local landscape will be here for future generations to enjoy.

But, how we live, what we put down our drains, spread in our gardens and lands and release out into our air, affects the living things that we rely upon and ourselves. Without healthy and diverse ecosystems, we cannot survive. So we need, collectively, to start putting biodiversity first and foremost in everything we do. We need to change our mindset from wanting “Neat and Tidy”, to celebrating wildness and nature.

Action Area 1: Woodlands and Forestry

- **In our woodlands:** Promote the Nature Park and all our woodland trails, developing strong interpretative materials to ensure that everyone can appreciate the biodiversity as they walk. Host guided Nature Walks.
- **In our School** – Support teachers, students and their families to learn more about local woodland and hedgerow habitats, their animals and plants and the history around them.
- **Coillte** - As the main woodland landowner, encourage them to carry out pro biodiversity work and planting and take a strategic spatial approach to restoring our native woodland in Aherlow and Kilross.
- **Invasive Species** - Assess and where possible take action to stop the spread of invasive species, in particular Rhododendron.
- **Leave No Trace** - Encourage all recreational woodland users to do so responsibly, leaving nothing but footprints and taking nothing but photographs.
- **Wildlife corridors:** Encourage the creation and maintenance of wildlife corridors including hedgerows to linking woodland and other biodiversity hotspots.



Walkers enjoying the Nature Park



Spring Woodland

Action Area 2: Farms and Farmland

- **Farming** – There is a huge diversity of farming in our area. This ranges from successful intensive dairy farming to non-intensive mixed farms to organic holdings. Support and encourage all farmers to adopt biodiversity friendly practices, participate in schemes such as ACRES. Support and encourage organic farmers and people transitioning to organic. A good resource is www.farmingfornature.ie
- **Hedgerows** – Support and develop increased and better quality hedgerows in the area. Hedgerows provide vital wildlife corridors, and the aim is to encourage landowners to manage them sustainably, cutting in a 2-3 year rotation, aiming for an A shape and rejuvenating as required.
- **Water quality** – Support farmers to work for improved water quality in the River Aherlow and its' tributaries, including joining the Farming for Water European Innovation Partnership.
 - Measure and monitor water quality in the Aherlow.
 - Manage growth on the river banks sustainably.
- **Habitat restoration:** Where possible maintain existing wild areas and wildlife friendly habitats and encourage the development of more.
- **Learning** - Support initiatives such as farm walks, talks and using citizen science to assess and monitor habitat and biodiversity in our farmlands.



Monour Heathland showing carefully managed habitats for wildlife



Section of the Aherlow River

Action Area 3: Tourism and Recreation

- **Hiking and walking:** Work with Aherlow Failte and local clubs to promote responsible use of the mountains for recreation and activity. Promote No More Trace.
- **Visitors:** Increase biodiversity awareness by including relevant information to the Aherlow Failte website and other information sources.
- **Green Destination:** Promote Aherlow as an eco tourism destination, highlighting that there are three internationally important Special Areas of Conservation, and a number of other important habitats and species.
- **Amenity Areas:** Work with Coillte and Aherlow Failte to manage amenity areas to maximise biodiversity.
- **Policy:** Ensure that the Aherlow Kilross area is recognised as an important biodiversity area in local and county plans. Work with Tipperary Tourism, Munster Vales and Failte Ireland to incorporate this into their programmes.
- **Galtee Mountains:** Develop a co-operative approach with all stakeholders who use the mountains, to maintain and enhance their biodiversity.



Pilgrims resting at Mooreabbey



View across the Glen showing hedgerows, lowland, forestry and mountain landscape

Action Area 4: Gardens and Public open spaces

- **Community Garden** – Continue to provide sustainable and organic solutions in the AKCC garden. Demonstrate community ecological approaches to plants and other species associated with our homes.
- **Learning** - Continue to provide gardening classes and visits which focus on sustainability and improved biodiversity to support gardeners in our community to be leaders in sustainable domestic gardening techniques.
- Encourage and demonstrate the value of leaving areas for wildlife, low intensity grass mowing, planting native species, avoiding herbicides and pesticides etc
- **Spaces** - Manage the public spaces in the area in a way which promotes biodiversity - eg area around community centre, GAA Pitch, Church, School, Graveyards, Green areas, Streetscapes, Kilross Remembrance Garden etc



Planting native trees in Kilross



Remembrance Garden, Kilross, showing a variety of planting



Community Garden Lisvernane, showing raised beds, composting facility etc

Action Area 5: Lisvernane National School

Our primary school is an important part of education for biodiversity throughout the area, through the staff, pupils and their extended families.

- **Biodiversity Curriculum:** Develop a curriculum to highlight the local heritage of woodland, forestry, mountains, river and farmland. This will incorporate biodiversity as a key element.
- **Tree Trail:** Develop a locally based Tree Trail with features of natural and cultural interest.
- **Propagate Trees:** Collect tree seeds and nuts (especially from venerable trees and those of biodiversity value) and plant them. Distribute the trees to families.
- **School and Community Garden:** Use the school and community garden as a showcase and educational resource for eco friendly gardening. Maintain Green Flag status. Install bird / bat boxes where relevant.
- **Monitoring:** Assist with monitoring key species in the area, birds, invertebrates, plants etc.



Good quality hedgerow in GAA grounds

Action Area 6: Monitoring the Plan

- **Monitoring:** Develop a core group of interested individuals and organisation representatives to drive on this Biodiversity Action Plan
- **Education:** Organise and encourage community members to participate in awareness raising and knowledge sharing events, such as talks, walks, visits etc that promote biodiversity. Utilise the information in the appendix to the plan re developing habitats and managing gardens and public spaces for biodiversity.
- **Citizen / Participatory Science:** Upskill young people and adults within the community to monitor biodiversity on a consistent basis, such as kick sampling the river, FIT insect counts, bat recording, birdwatching, butterfly monitoring etc feeding into the National Biodiversity Database.
- **Promotion and Communication:** Use the social media and other methods to spread the word about biodiversity and the actions in the plan.
- **Network:** Link with other groups with biodiversity expertise eg Birdwatch Ireland, An Taisce, Irish Wildlife Federation, Tipperary County Council, Woodlands of Ireland, LAWPRO etc
-

Acknowledgements

AKCC would like to thank everyone who has given of their knowledge and expertise so generously to the development of this plan. In particular, Dr Mary Tubridy and her team who brought their significant expertise to assessing the current status and the potential of the area for biodiversity.

We benefitted from the knowledge and help of representatives of sporting bodies, the parish, farmers, the school and creche, Tidy Villages etc. Input also came from Tourism interests led by the Glen of Aherlow Failte Society, and with key bodies such as Coillte, Teagasc and LAWPRO.

This biodiversity project has been developed
in partnership with

**Community
Foundation
Ireland**



NPWS

An tSúilíne Náisiúnta
Náisiúnta agas Faoilte
Náisiúnta Faoilte agus WILDLIFE
Service

Taking Biodiversity Action!



Good quality vintage hedgerow
near Clonbeg

Read the Full Plan at
<https://bit.ly/AKCCBiodiversityPlan>

or scan the QR code





Bee feeding on hawthorn, spider, robin, swift, saxifrage, gorse