

Heritage Officer update on Heritage & Biodiversity activity for Climate & Biodiversity SPC meeting on 22.06.22.

Climate Action: Biodiversity Actions/ Activities currently underway

- **Wicklow Barn Owl Project** – currently peak season for survey work as breeding birds are most active from now until August. Public awareness talk held in Arklow for Biodiversity week, lots of sightings being reported. BWI Wicklow branch held coastal survey event on 16th June as part of project. Remaining of Barn owl boxes to be erected at end of year.
- **Wicklow Swift Project:** Resources, advice and nesting boxes distributed to schools and community groups on request. Outing held for in Rathdrum for National Biodiversity Week, 30 persons in attendance.
- Pollinator resources – Advice and resources available. Over 200 ‘managed for wildlife’ and ‘Don’t mow let it Grow’ outdoor signs distributed to MDs and members of public. Noticeable increase in pollinator friendly management at roadside verges, roundabouts and open spaces.
- **East Coast Nature Reserve Events:** Monthly seasonal free public event programme in place in partnership with Bird Watch Ireland at East Coast Nature Reserve. Crinniu na nOg event held on 11th June, next event on Wildflower theme scheduled for 17th July.
- National Biodiversity Week 13th – 22nd May – c. 20 events held in Co. Wicklow.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan funding allocations - confirmed early June. Total of €48,000 allocated for the following two projects as follows:

Brittas Bay Conservation project (Works underway)

- Continuation of conservation measures, introduction of grazers (cattle)
- Recording & monitoring (incl citizen science)
- Pilot dune erosion measures
- Community Engagement programme – Dawn in the Dunes event held 22nd May, Butterfly workshop planned for Sun 26th June
- Interpretation/ branding
- Warden (PT)
- Sea Buckthorn (invasive species) control

County Hedgerow Survey – Request for tenders issued, closing date 24th June. It is proposed to engage ecological services to carry out a county Hedgerow survey using the established Hedgerow Appraisal System (approx. 20 survey samples for county) to

- Assess quality and extent of hedgerow network in county Wicklow
- Establish baseline to monitor change over time
- Make recommendations for management

Climate Action (Built Heritage - Archaeology):

Community Monuments Fund (CMF) : Funding to increase the resilience of our Built Heritage (archaeology) to climate change via Community Monument Fund (CMF) 2022- Seven CMF projects currently underway, overseen by Heritage Officer, allocations as follows: Arklow Castle repairs, Arklow Castle repairs €84,621; Mullinacuffe Historic Church ruins repairs €14,954; Castlekevin, Roundwood conservation plan €18,682; Baltinglass Hills – Lidar Survey €29,362; West Wicklow Medieval church and graveyards –geophysical survey and access improvements €30,000; Castlekevin podcast production €7,748; Abbey Lane, Arklow – research & interpretation €7,072. Recoupments and reporting to be made in Q4.

Community Archaeologist For Wicklow:

Allocation received through County Heritage Plan Fund from the Heritage Council and WCC for appointment of a part time community archaeologist. Request for quotations (RFQ) issued for the provision of Community Archaeology Services for Wicklow County Council to work with Heritage Office to support landowners and council in their role as custodians of archaeological heritage. Yvonne Whitty, De Faoite Archaeology is appointed. One of key areas of focus will be appropriate management of Council owned monuments e.g. historic graveyards to ensure conservation and climate resilience

Climate Action (Built Heritage – Architecture): Protected Structures Grants: Projects under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structure Fund (HSF) grant schemes from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage underway. BHIS includes 11 projects under a county allocation of €96,000. HSF includes 3 projects; €25,000 towards Russborough Weir Wall repairs; €40,000 for St Matthews Church, Newtownmountkennedy, and €10,000 to vernacular house at Greenan More. Project, reporting and recoupment to be overseen by heritage officer on behalf of planning section.