

Cork Environmental Forum

Position Paper 9 - Nature Conservation Priorities



The Community should develop a Nature Conservation Programme (NCP) throughout the County involving public and local representative bodies to conserve living resources while providing access to those resources for the community. The appointment of a County Council Nature Conservation Officer is an essential first step to establishing this Programme.

Development Control and Forward Planning

- Nature Conservation is supported by activities currently carried out by or through the Planning Authority such as County Development Plan, Environmental Appraisal of Development Plans, Environmental Impact Studies and Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Activities supporting Nature Conservation such as identification /designation of sites, development briefs / design guidelines, design of local authority's own development, and strategies for provision of green-space are currently lacking in the local authority.

Land Management

- The management of all local authority land should be Nature Conservation orientated, with further lands specifically acquired for Nature Conservation purposes. An annual audit of LA lands should form the basis of the Council's own NCP.
- Local Nature Reserves should be designated and managed in a network of sites monitoring biodiversity Countywide.
- The management of all road verges needs a Nature Conservation orientation.
- Demonstration projects and potential sites could be identified in the County Development Plan for wildlife gardens, nature/ecology parks, and greenways.

Data and Site Evaluation

- The establishment of a County Environmental Record Centre is urgently needed to hold and collate State of Environment Reports / Audits, a schedule of designated sites, and site alert maps for use in development control.
- A site designation system for use in development control and in the County Development Plan needs establishing. Its prime aim would be to identify the critical natural capital of the County in the form of those Nature Conservation areas, which are irreplaceable and require the strongest protection.
- The second aim of a site designation system is to retain the rest of the Nature Conservation resource in the County as a constant natural asset where any losses through the development process are compensated for by habitat replacement or enhancement.

Nature Conservation Strategy

A County Nature Conservation Strategy should identify both policy and actions. It should contain indicators, targets, time-tables and responsibilities, and could form part of all Local Area Plans.

Examples of possible indicators and matching targets for Nature Conservation in Cork County:

Indicator

Areas of critical natural capital
Amount of constant natural assets
Hectares of semi-native woodland
Number of Local Nature Reserves

Target

No annual loss
No net annual loss
X hectares restored
Declare 1 per annum

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To foster, promote & implement sustainable development within the Cork region

Registered Office. 10, Douglas West, Douglas Village, Cork. Company registration no. 340723
email: info@cef.ie website: www.cef.ie

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