



# Wexford County Council **Local Biodiversity Action Plan**

Pre-Draft Consultation  
Discussion Paper



Comhairle Contae  
Loch Garman  
Wexford  
County Council



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
**The Heritage Council**





*OxEye daisies in full bloom in Mayglass*



# Wexford's Biodiversity

## Introduction

Wexford County Council is preparing a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan, supported by the Heritage Council. This is a requirement of the National Biodiversity Action Plan, launched in 2024 and which requires that each Local Authority must have a Biodiversity Action Plan in place by the end of 2026.

With the recent appointment of a Biodiversity Officer to Wexford County Council, under the Heritage Council's Biodiversity Officer programme, Wexford County Council are commencing the preparation of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the county. The aim of this plan will be to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at county level.

This Pre-Draft Consultation Paper provides a background to the development of the plan. It is intended to help start discussion on biodiversity issues and priorities. It is your chance to have your say. For the Wexford County Local Biodiversity Action Plan to be successful it is important that we hear your views on how we should conserve biodiversity at a local level across the county.

We want to hear your views on nature  
and biodiversity

How would you like to see habitats  
managed for biodiversity?

What do you see as the biggest  
challenge facing Wexford's biodiversity?





*Megachile willughbiella* on borage flower, image J. Goodwin

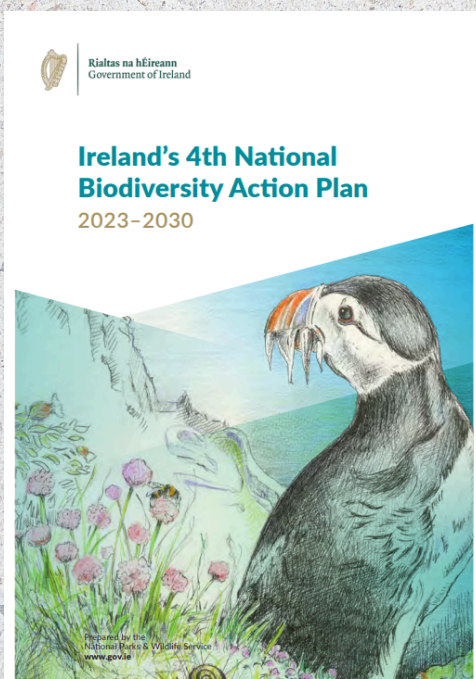


# What is Biodiversity and why does it matter?

'Biodiversity' means biological or species diversity. It is the total variety of all life on Earth. It includes all living things that make up our natural world. Biodiversity also refers to the places where animals and plants live (their habitats) and the interactions between living things and their ecosystems - rivers, wetlands, uplands, grasslands, woodlands, seas and shoreline etc.

We humans are an integral part of biodiversity. We are part of it and interact with it as we live our lives and shape the landscape and influence biodiversity all around us.

We are all dependent on biodiversity to provide us with a range of goods and services. These goods and services are called ecosystem services. Our activities such as forestry, fishing and agriculture for example rely on productive ecosystems. We also need healthy ecosystems to provide us with clean water and fresh air, food security and medicines and flood control and to help regulate our climate. We are drawn to our outdoor, natural spaces for recreation which contribute to our quality of life and well being. In essence we cannot live without biodiversity nor live separately from it.



*The 4th National  
Biodiversity Action Plan*

In May 2019 the Irish Government declared  
a Climate and Biodiversity Crisis

The Government launched the 4th National  
Biodiversity Action Plan in 2024

Biodiversity provides many of the basic  
ecosystem services  
that make life possible for people



# What is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan?

In addition to Ireland's international commitments to biodiversity conservation and the recent National Biodiversity Action Plan which aims to halt biodiversity loss, a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan is designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at a local level. These local plans will be developed in line with national strategy.

Local Authorities are responsible for planning, ensuring sustainable development and are tasked with enforcing many environmental regulations. As such they are instrumental in the conservation of biodiversity within their counties. The plan will outline the actions and objectives to protect and enhance biodiversity and will aim to address the needs of relevant agencies and community groups with a focus on shared stewardship for our shared biodiversity.

## **Wexford County Council Biodiversity Working Group**

The plan will be developed by a number of groups, working in partnership, on a Biodiversity Working Group. This group will come together as a working group under County Wexford's Heritage Forum. It will be a non statutory, advisory group and it will guide the preparation and implementation of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Members will be drawn from a wide range of representative groups across the sectors of State agencies, landowners, agriculture, voluntary and community groups, N.G.O's and local heritage and biodiversity groups.

## **Local Action on Biodiversity**

The new Local Biodiversity Action Plan will build on the work achieved under the previous Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2013 - 2018 and also on the work of many agencies, community groups, and other key stakeholders across the county. There is increasing awareness of the issues facing biodiversity and great willingness is being shown by community groups to get involved in biodiversity projects and citizen science projects.



# Stages of development of the Biodiversity Action Plan

1

## PREPARATION

Secure agreement of the Management Team and establish a Biodiversity Working Group. Gather background data and identify gaps.

2

## VISION & OBJECTIVES

Agree the broad aims of the Biodiversity Plan with the Biodiversity Working Group.

3

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public consultation stage one: produce a discussion paper, hold meetings, and invite submissions.

4

## PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Identify issues and needs, agree objectives and actions, and prepare a draft plan, liaising with colleagues and the Working Group. AA and SEA Screening.

5

## PLAN REVIEW

Present the draft plan to the Management Team and SPC for comment/approval.

6

## PUBLIC REVIEW

Public consultation on draft plan: make the plan available online and through libraries, and hold meetings.

7

## PLAN APPROVAL

Revise the draft plan and present it to senior management, the appropriate SPC(s) and full Council for approval.

8

## PUBLICATION

Publish and launch the new Biodiversity Action Plan.

*Velella velella* at Baginbun. Photo courtesy of Marina Mulligan



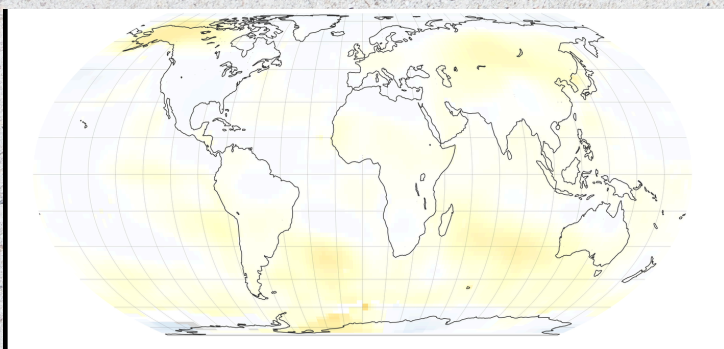
# The Current State of Biodiversity

The Irish Government declared a climate and biodiversity crisis in 2019. Biodiversity and Climate are intrinsically linked and climate change is dramatically changing our world today. Its impacts are showing in rising global temperatures, melting ice caps and extreme weather. But its impacts are not limited to those on humans alone. It also has significant impacts on the world's biodiversity.

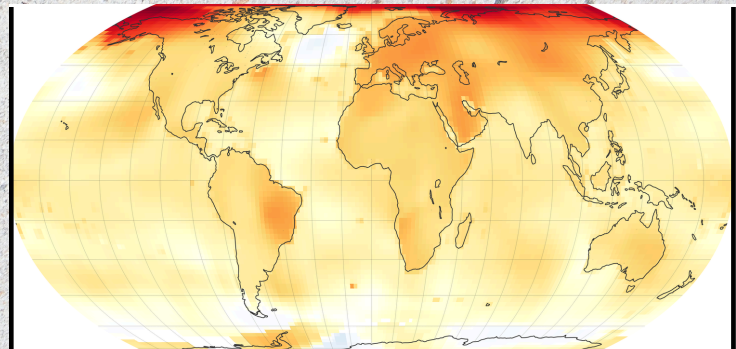
In just over 40 years, wildlife populations have shown a dramatic decline of 69% on average. The International Plant Protection Convention (IPCC) reports that 20-30% of species could die out if global mean temperatures go up by 1.5-2.5 degrees. Yet the global average surface temperature has risen by an average of 1.1 degree Celsius. For more than half of 2024, average temperatures were more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the baseline and the earth's average surface temperature in 2024 was the warmest on record. *Source NASA Earth Observatory*

Scientific assessments of the state of nature in Ireland have found that 85% of our EU protected habitats are in unfavourable status, with almost half (46%) demonstrating ongoing declines. Almost a third of our EU protected species are in unfavourable status and over half of native Irish plant species have declined. Over half of our 100 bee species have undergone substantial declines and 30% are threatened with extinction. *Source 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 -2030.*

Our National Climate Objective is to “pursue and achieve, by no later than 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy”



1975-1979



2015-2019

*Global Temperature rise since 1975. Credit: NASA Earth Observatory*





Overall winner secondary school Keep Wexford Beautiful art competition by  
Jíllia Rós Ásmundsdóttir



# Wexford's Biodiversity

Wexford County is very rich in biodiversity. A wide variety of habitats includes coastal dune systems, coastal lagoons, intertidal and subtidal reefs, wetlands and lakes, rivers, grasslands, marshes, woodlands, and peatlands. The importance of these habitats is reflected in the number and importance of the Natura 2000 sites in the county.

Natura 2000 sites are a network of sites of the highest biodiversity importance in Europe, designated under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) and the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). They are made up of Special Protection Areas (SPA) which provide for the protection of particular bird species and their habitats and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) which provide protection for habitats and species (other than birds). In Wexford there are currently 12 SAC's, three candidate SAC's and nine SPA's. There are a further three SAC's, two candidate SAC's and two SPA's within 15 kilometres of the county boundary. These are also important to note as habitats do not stop at county boundaries.









Natural heritage hot spots within the county include the coastal systems of Bannow Bay and Ballyteige, The Raven Nature Reserve, Wexford Wildfowl Reserve at the North Slob, the coastal lagoons at Lady's Island Lake and Tacumshin, the Blackstairs mountains and the valleys of the River Slaney and River Barrow. In spite of their EU designations many of these important habitats are in poor condition or declining due to a range of human influences for example nutrient enrichment, drainage and land conversion for agriculture, development of residential, industrial, transport and recreational infrastructure, light pollution, wastewater infrastructure and invasive alien species & emergent diseases such as ash die back or fireblight.

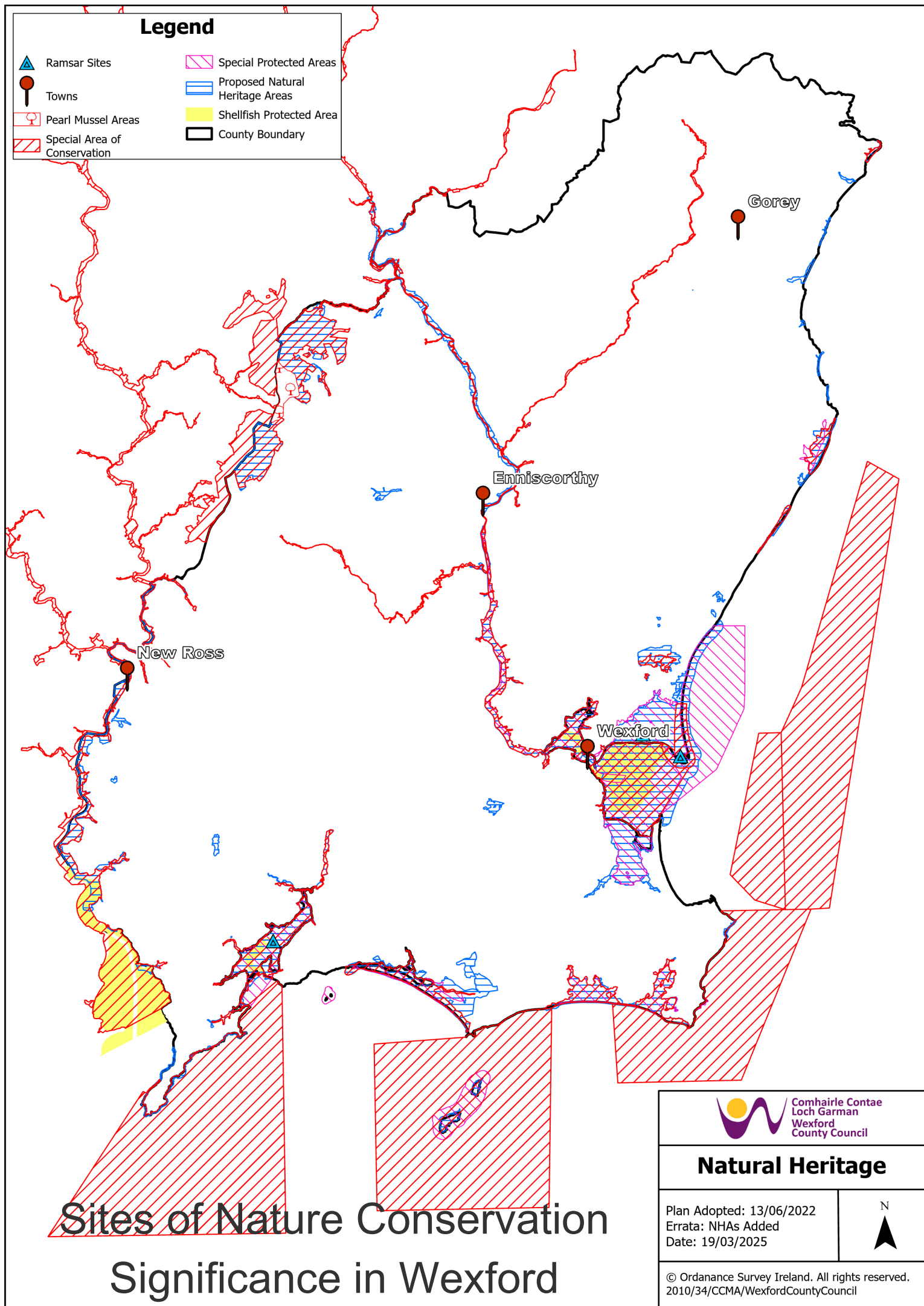
The wealth of habitats in Wexford is not confined to designated sites only. There are many locally important biodiversity sites throughout Wexford which are rich in species diversity as well as being valuable wildlife corridors. These habitats however, do not have any statutory protection afforded to them as designated sites. These habitats are also under threat from a wide range of sources and there is an urgent need to protect these areas of biodiversity value, including their associated species.

*Ballyteige Burrow, Special Protection Area, (SPA)  
Image J. Goodwin*



## Legend

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Ramsar Sites                  |  Special Protected Areas         |
|  Towns                         |  Proposed Natural Heritage Areas |
|  Pearl Mussel Areas           |  Shellfish Protected Area        |
|  Special Area of Conservation |  County Boundary                 |



# Sites of Nature Conservation Significance in Wexford



## Natural Heritage

Plan Adopted: 13/06/2022  
Errata: NHAs Added  
Date: 19/03/2025



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2010/34/CCMA/WexfordCountyCouncil



# Get Involved

Our biodiversity and environmental challenges are significant but not insurmountable. There is increased understanding that everything is connected and that we cannot live without healthy environments. The development of a Biodiversity Action Plan for the County presents an opportunity to assess the priorities for County Wexford and focus actions in the right areas.

It is important for us to know your views in terms of Wexford's Biodiversity. You know your local area best. Sharing your views with us will help us to identify local issues and needs and develop actions for the Biodiversity Action Plan.

- *What do you see as the biggest challenge facing Wexford's Biodiversity*
- *Have you noticed any change in wildlife in Wexford from when you were younger? Is there a particular plant or animal no longer present or declining in numbers?*
- *What actions could you or your group take to protect nature?*
- *What overall goals would you like to see for biodiversity for Wexford in the future?*

## Ways to get involved

**Pre-Draft Public Consultation Timeframe: -  
Commences 7th April, 2025**

**All submissions due by 5pm May 30th, 2025**

There are a number of ways you can talk to us to share your views or to make a submission at this pre-draft stage.

**In person** at the following walk in events as outlined below:-

- Enniscorthy Library: 11:00am to 13:00pm, Tuesday the 8th April
- Gorey Library: 14:00pm to 16:00pm , Wednesday the 9th of April
- New Ross Library: 11:00am to 13:00pm, Friday the 11th April
- Wexford Town Library: 14:30 to 16:30pm, Saturday the 12th of April





# Stakeholder Engagement




## Other ways to get involved :

By completing this survey at the following link : [Here](#) or scan the QR code above right.

By writing with any comments or observations to:  
Claire Goodwin, Biodiversity Officer, Wexford County Council, County Hall,  
Carricklawn, Wexford

Or by email to: [biodiversity@wexfordcoco.ie](mailto:biodiversity@wexfordcoco.ie)

A photograph of two brown frogs sitting on a large cluster of dark, bumpy frog eggs in a pond. The frogs are looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus green pond with some reeds.

Have your  
say!

*Image Edward Delaney*



# Biodiversity Projects In Wexford

Just some of the key biodiversity projects which have taken place in Wexford recently:

- Wetland Surveys of Wexford - 2022, 2023, 2024 with two further surveys planned subject to funding in 2025 and 2026 - one per Municipal District
- Wetlands of Wexford Story Map [Wexford's Wetland Wealth](#)
- Hedgerow Survey of Wexford in 2023 - A survey of a representative sample of hedgerows across Wexford
- Ecological surveys of Killurin and Holmestown landfill sites
- Nightjar Survey with Birdwatch Ireland 2024 and 2025
- Dune restoration project Curracloe, Morriscastle, Ballinesker and Duncannon
- Mayfly survey (part of the National Mayfly Survey)
- Return to Nature - Biodiversity project with parishes across Wexford on Church grounds
- Native woodland establishment at sites in Cushenstown, Taylorstown and Boolavogue
- In train - Invasive species control in Tintern Abbey with local group and Coillte
- Trees for Wexford Scheme

*Plums and Custard mushroom, *Tricholomopsis rutilans*  
Photo by J. Goodwin*

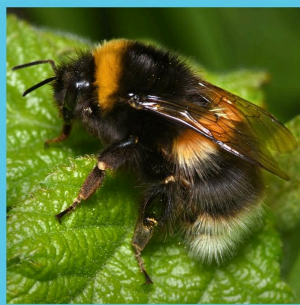


# Some bumble bees, solitary bees and butterflies of Wexford

## Bumble Bees



Early Bumble Bee



White & Buff-tailed BB



Red Tailed BB



Common Carder BB

## Solitary Bees



Ashy Mining Bee



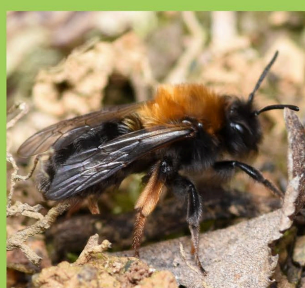
Chocolate Mining Bee



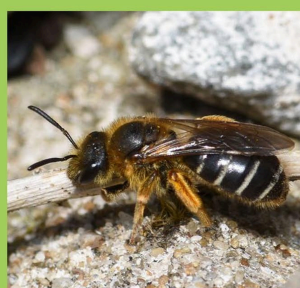
Common Mini Mining Bee



Gwynnes Mining Bee



Clarkes Mining Bee



Red-legged Furrow Bee



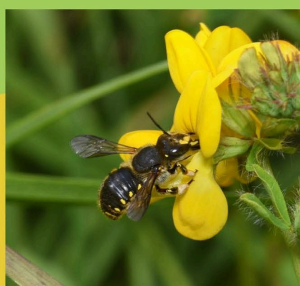
Red-tailed Mining Bee



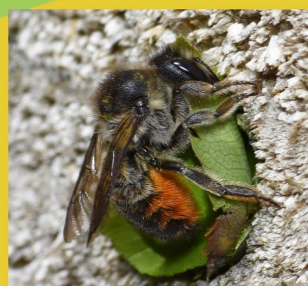
Common Furrow Bee



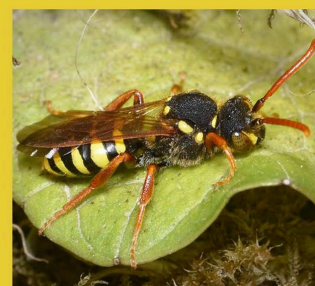
Red Mason Bee



Wool Carder Bee



Leafcutter Bee



Nomad Bee

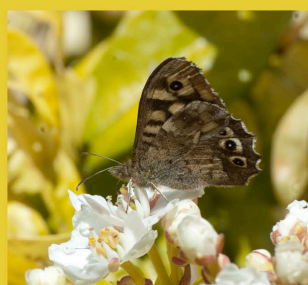
## Butterflies



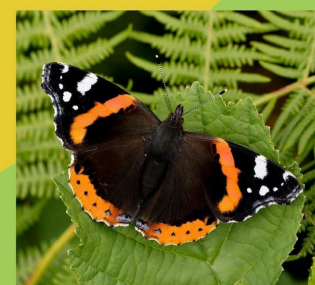
Tortioseshell



Small Copper



Speckled Wood



Red Admiral



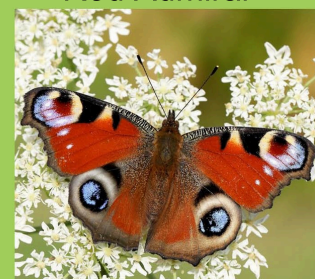
Wood White



Common Blue



Green Veined White



Peacock





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[www.wexfordcoco.ie](http://www.wexfordcoco.ie)



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