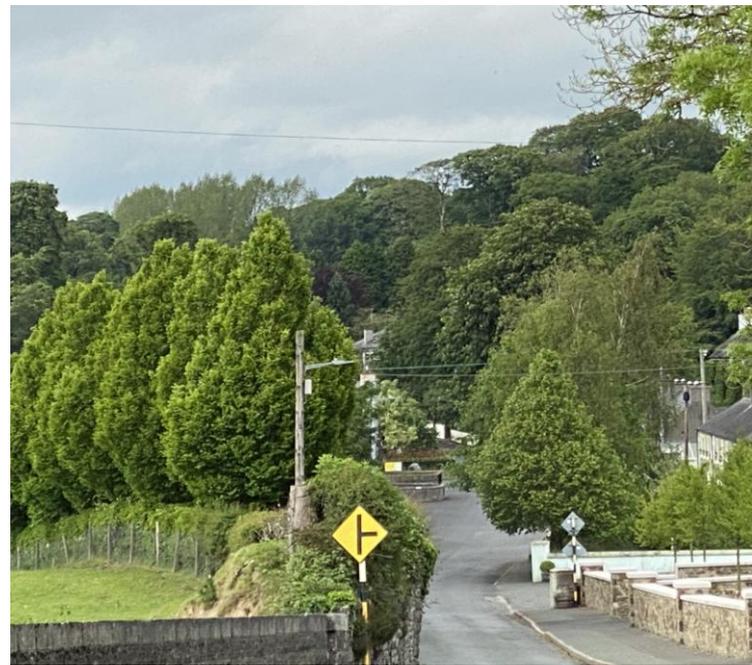


13 CLIMATE ACTION



Wicklow County Council Tree Management Policy



DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Issue No.	Date	Amended By	Description of Amendment
RevC	October 2021	JC	Draft revised following SPC submissions
Final Draft	December 2021	JC	Draft corrected following SPC meeting and prepared for publication.
Adopted Rev D	January 2022	JC & MC	Action delivery dates changed to take into account delay in policy being adopted.

Foreword

This policy sets out a vision to protect and care for existing trees in its care, promote better management of trees and support better community engagement in the county. It aims to achieve an increase in tree cover for the county in both rural and urban environments.

The Tree Management Policy has been produced to provide better understanding of our tree resources in County Wicklow and the role Wicklow County Council plays in managing and developing these resources. The aim of the policy is to provide a better approach to care and maintenance of trees under public ownership, to increase tree cover in the county and to engage public participation in caring for our trees. The policy will assist in responding to the Climate and Biodiversity emergency by focusing on the role trees play in climate mitigation and adaptation as well as building resilience in biodiversity.

Trees are an important feature of our environment. They create a sense of place and add beauty. They help to improve mental health and wellbeing and our wooded resources are important recreational spaces. They provide many environmental services, most notably in carbon sequestration, regulation of local climate conditions, flood mitigation, reduction of erosion, and protection of water quality. Trees and woodland are an important habitat, sustaining many key ecosystems and providing refuge for many species. Ancient woodlands have the highest biodiversity richness. Trees and woodland resources also bring economic benefit for County Wicklow. They help to sustain tourism and leisure activity in the county.

Preparing a Tree Management Strategy is an action of the Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019. The strategy also calls for an active tree planting programme and the use of nature based solutions to create an environment more resilient to a changing climate.

The implementation of the actions contained within this Tree Management Strategy will enable us to sustain existing tree populations in County Wicklow and build numbers, so that we can pass forward to the next generation our rich arborol heritage in a healthier and more robust condition. More trees and healthier trees will create a more resilient future.

**Frank Curran,
Chief Executive,
Wicklow County Council**

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Executive Summary

Trees are a prominent feature in both rural and urban landscapes being present in woodlands, hedgerows in open spaces and gardens and with individual trees dotted throughout the landscape. They provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits to society. Trees come in many shapes and form, from small trees in gardens to large specimen trees and champion trees.



In prehistory most of County Wicklow was covered in trees with a mix of Oak, Elm, Ash, Hazel, and Birch in the lowlands, while Scots Pine, Birch and Rowan grew more sparsely in the uplands. The arrival of farming started a clearance and by the 17th century much of it was gone, although there were significant remnants of ancient wood in the South of the county. By the 19th century only smaller remnants of Wicklow's woodlands remained. Parkland type woodlands were planted on some of the larger estates with many of these trees still part of the landscape today. The 20th century was notable for the development of commercial forestry, mostly by the state sector and largely composed of coniferous plantations. Wicklow is one of the most wooded counties with 20% coverage but only 3% is native woodlands. Hedgerows in Wicklow have a long history with many hedges first established in the 17th and 18th century. It is estimated that they cover 5% of the county. Hedgerow trees are a highly visible component of Wicklow pastoral landscape and the connectivity of hedgerows is important for wildlife. Trees in the urban environment include remnants incorporated into development, trees planted in public spaces and trees in private gardens. The range of trees in urban environments is more diverse including many non-native trees.

Many social, environmental, ecological and economic benefits of trees are documented and well understood but need to be given more consideration in the planning of tree management.

Trees benefit from protection under a number of pieces of legislation. The Forestry Act 2014 is the primary piece of legislation that affords protection for trees in rural areas. It takes account of the age of trees and mandates requirement for felling licences. The Wildlife Act 1976 imposes restrictions on cutting, burning or removal of any natural uncultivated vegetation including hedgerows during the bird nesting season. Individual trees or groups of trees can be protected using Tree Protection Orders under the Planning and Development Act 2000. The Planning and Development Act also provides protection for trees which are part of a site designated for protection including landscape conservation areas and monuments.

The Roads Act 1993 set out responsibility for landowners to maintain trees and hedgerows in a manner that prevents hazard to road users including both public roads and footpaths. A landowner may be notified in writing under a Section 70 notice if a tree is a hazard, requiring action to be taken.

The Tree Management Strategy sits within a framework of European, national and local policy, which aim to ensure healthy tree populations contribute to climate and biodiversity action. The EU Biodiversity Strategy targets the restoration of habitat in protected sites, the restoration of EU rivers and the planting of 3 billion trees. Ireland's Biodiversity Action Plan looks to conserve and restore habitats.



Development plan considers the protection of trees in the chapter on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity addressing the protection of designated sites and also the protection of trees on development sites. Protection of trees is considered in both The Wicklow Heritage Plan 2017 to 2022 and the Wicklow County Biodiversity Plan 2010 to 2015.

The 2019 Climate Adaptation Strategy set the preparation of a Tree Management Strategy as a target. Ambitions for expanding tree cover in the National Development Plan 2021-2024 provide an ideal time to deliver that target.

Wicklow's five municipal districts play an active role in the management of trees. The management of trees is linked to the management of public open space and also to the maintenance of municipal infrastructure in our towns and communities. Each municipal district has procedures in place for the management of trees and draws on expertise when

required. As well as planned tree care, emergency works are undertaken when required. The five districts recognise a need for a more coordinated approach to tree management and care, with protocols in place to ensure best practice and transparency in operations. Staff Training will help to deliver best practice in a coordinated manner.

Wicklow County Council works to promote tree planting and landscaping with trees. The Environmental Awareness Office provides trees through annual grants to community groups and in partnership with the Tree Council of Ireland for National Tree Week. New developments are required to landscape with trees. Municipal districts assist in providing trees for planting as part of landscaping works and projects.

This strategy sets out a vision to protect and care for existing trees in its care, promote better management of trees by all in the county and achieve an increase in tree cover for the county in both rural and urban environments. Six core goals have been identified:

1. To compile a county tree cover inventory.
2. To enhance tree management by agreeing and implementing a consistent council protocol.
3. To increase public awareness and appreciation of trees woodlands and hedgerows
4. To manage mature trees in council ownership.
5. To expand native tree cover in Wicklow for biodiversity enhancement.
6. To expand the urban forests in County Wicklow.

Actions start with documenting existing tree resources in the county, creating maps and a database. It is envisaged that apps can be used to help with the management of trees in the future ensuring better documentation of work undertaken. Mapping will also help to identify where tree planting can be used to help build a connected network of woodland resources.

Protocols will be put in place to ensure a consistent approach to tree management using best practice standards. Staff training needs will be identified. Expertise will be sought when needed to ensure the best outcome is achieved in tree care. Management will focus on the need to maintain existing trees but also ensure that newly planted trees get the care they need to survive to maturity.

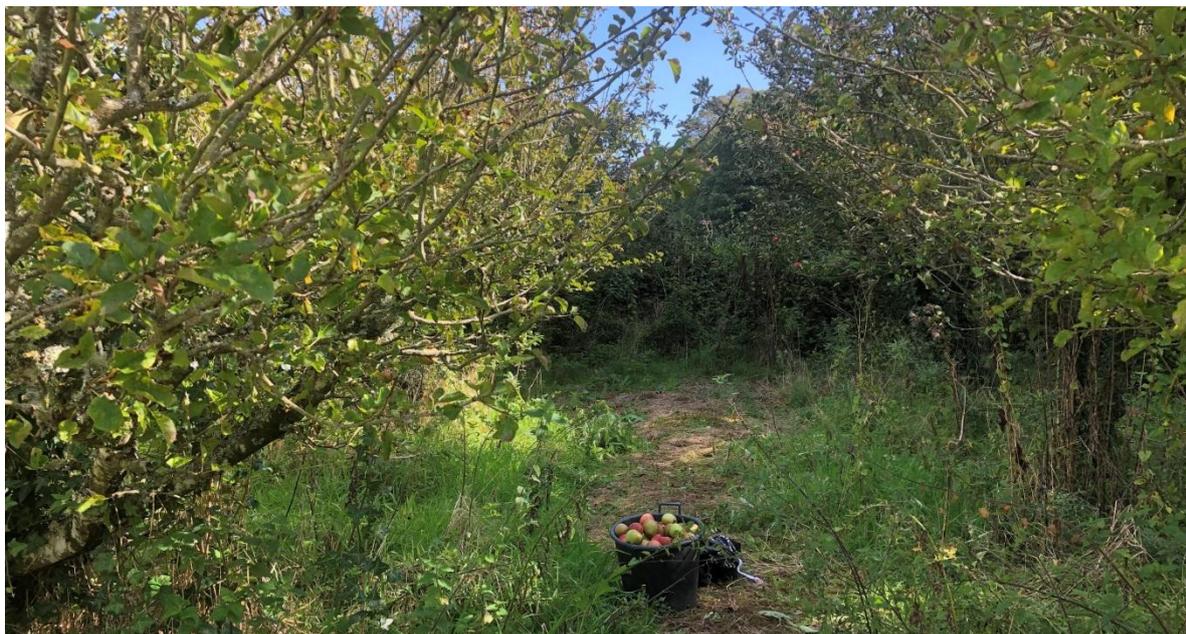
Wicklow County Council will work to better inform people about trees, their role in our communities, and how to plant and care for trees, ensuring the right tree is planted in the right space to allow it fulfil its full potential without causing problems that might require removal. Building awareness about the rich heritage Wicklow enjoys in woodland resources, habitats and individual champion trees will be a key focus.

Mature trees in public ownership will be surveyed cyclically to assess their health and identify works that help to maintain them. While the focus will be first and foremost on retaining existing trees, the planned replenishment of trees will be undertaken.

Wicklow County Council will seek to see the tree cover of the county expand in line with EU and National policy. The Council will work also with stakeholders to facilitate increasing tree cover. Sites owned by the Council identified as suitable for tree planting will be considered, seeking opportunities to plant under the Community Woodland Scheme and other funding opportunities. Wicklow County Council will provide information to communities on available funding for the planting of trees.

Expanding tree cover in urban environments presents particular challenges but also brings unique benefits including a better micro climate and better connection with biodiversity. Action will be taken to promote a better understanding of trees in the urban environment, the need to protect and care for them and the importance of selecting the right tree and site.

The actions in this plan will develop a comprehensive and cohesive approach to protecting and developing tree and wood land resources in County Wicklow.



1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to the management of trees as a natural resource within Wicklow County Council lands and generally within the wider environment, looking at opportunities for working in partnership with communities and organizations.

The development of a tree strategy for County Wicklow is timely in the current context of the Council's wide ranging objectives and commitments to biodiversity, climate action, green infrastructure, heritage and community wellbeing.

The Wicklow Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-22 aims to position Wicklow as a county prepared to harness its many unique physical, natural and human resources, in order to improve the quality of life for all who live, work and visit the County.

The Wicklow County Council Corporate Plan 2019-24 highlights Environment, Climate and Biodiversity Action as a key strategy objective, acknowledging that Wicklow County Council has declared a Climate and a Biodiversity Emergency for Wicklow. The Council commits to providing robust leadership in implementing Climate and Biodiversity Action and embedding it into all the activities of the Council, striving to protect, restore and develop the County's Natural Scenic and Heritage Resources.

Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-22 sets out a vision for County Wicklow to be a cohesive community of people, enjoying distinct but interrelated urban and rural environments, where natural surroundings and important resources are protected for the wellbeing of all.

Wicklow County Council Climate Adaption Strategy 2019 seeks to guide a planned and coherent response to the effects of climate change and is an important part of our commitment under the Local Authority Climate Action Charter to reduce our carbon emissions and create a more climate resilient county.

The County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2017-22 & County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan: The Heritage Plan sets out a vision to conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage of Wicklow and to foster a greater awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of this by all. The Heritage Plan promotes a fully integrated approach to heritage which encompasses built and natural heritage equally and this is reflected in the Heritage Plan actions which integrate and complement the Biodiversity Action Plan.

The aims of the County Wicklow Tree Management Policy are to:

- Develop an agreed vision for the long term protection and development of tree resources in Wicklow.
- Establish consistent, practical and effective management practices within the local authority.
- Promote education and awareness of trees generally.
- Engage with communities and groups on partnership opportunities to further enhance sustainable tree cover in County Wicklow.

This Tree Management Policy includes the following elements:

1. Wicklow's Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows : An Overview.
2. Why protect trees? Environmental, heritage and socio economic benefits and alignment with international, national and local frameworks.
3. How are trees protected? Legislation and statutory protection.
4. Current management of trees by Wicklow County Council, issues and opportunities.
5. Policy and vision – for the management and protection of trees in Council control and those in the wider landscape.
6. An Action Plan – setting out key actions over a five year period that can be undertaken by the Council within its remit and in partnership with others to enhance the management and protection of trees in County Wicklow.



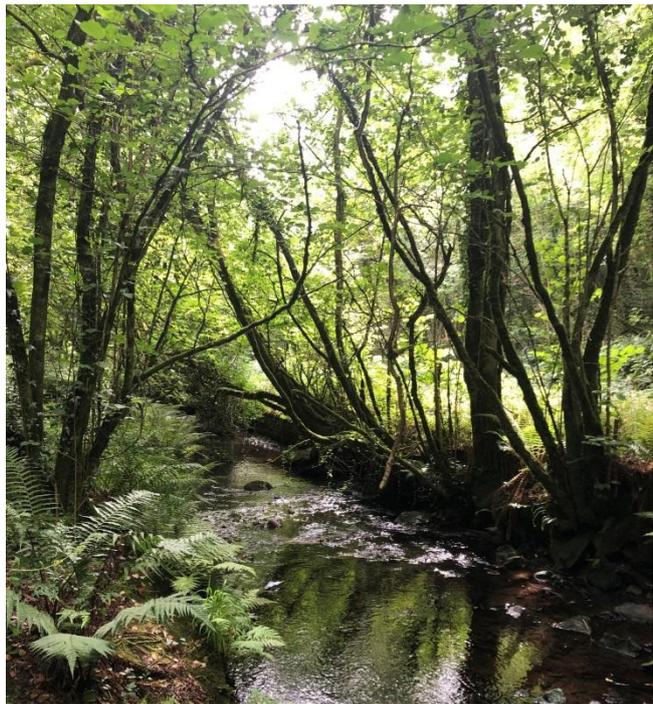
Trees, either individually as specimen trees or in groups as woodlands or hedgerows make an important contribution to the landscape and character of our countryside, towns and villages. They also provide a myriad of environmental and socio economic benefits among which include flooding and pollution control, carbon sequestration, biodiversity value, food, recreation, cultural interest, enhanced sense of place and wellbeing. Wicklow County Council wishes to enhance the management of trees, woodlands and hedgerows generally in the County including the maintenance, protection, conservation and planting of trees on Council owned lands and on public streets.

1.2 WICKLOW'S TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS: AN OVERVIEW

1.2.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOODLANDS IN COUNTY WICKLOW

To tell the full story of Wicklow's trees, we should go back to the end of the Ice Age and an almost treeless landscape. Ireland's woodlands developed over millennia. Until six or seven thousand years ago this was a country of forests. More or less open oak, elm, ash, hazel and birch woodlands would have covered much of the lowlands, with Scots Pine, Rowan and Birch woods growing more sparsely in the uplands

With the arrival of farming, came woodland clearance and the start of a transformation that has continued for thousands of years. A change of climate also caused a reduction in tree cover at higher levels. Spreading blankets of bog eventually displaced farmland, forcing Bronze Age farms down to lowlands. Thus the environmentally precious bogs that cover a quarter of Wicklow's land area today owe something of their presence to ancient farmers, and to climate change. These peatlands are internationally important habitats that are protected by law. They are now an important sink for carbon and a key asset to Climate Change mitigation.



While the extent of Wicklow's woodlands at different times of history is not fully understood, there is no doubt that woodland felling and management persisted alongside agriculture for thousands of years. Land was cleared for agriculture, pasture and commonage and it is likely that the 'wild woods' had disappeared by the start of the Middle Ages given that they would have been a prized and valuable source of materials, firewood and food. By the end of the Middle Ages, almost all of Ireland's woodlands had gone. The Civil Survey of Ireland (1654 – 56) details woodlands by Townland, counting thousands of them. Analysis of these records conclude that the woodland remaining in Ireland at that time cover between 2 and 10% of the land (Rackham).

1.2.2 THE WOODS OF WICKLOW CIRCA 1610: A GREAT SWATHE IN A FARMED LANDSCAPE

In 1606, when County Wicklow itself came into being, records refer to a great swathe of woodland remaining in the South East. This woodland was associated with the Avoca river valley and its tributaries and swept down from the hills towards the sea, stretching west to Shillelagh from Avoca and south west into Wexford County along the Slaney. A study of the 17th Century surveys by Eileen McCracken lead to the map that she has redrawn (FIG XX). The forests in Ireland were large, but there were very few of them.

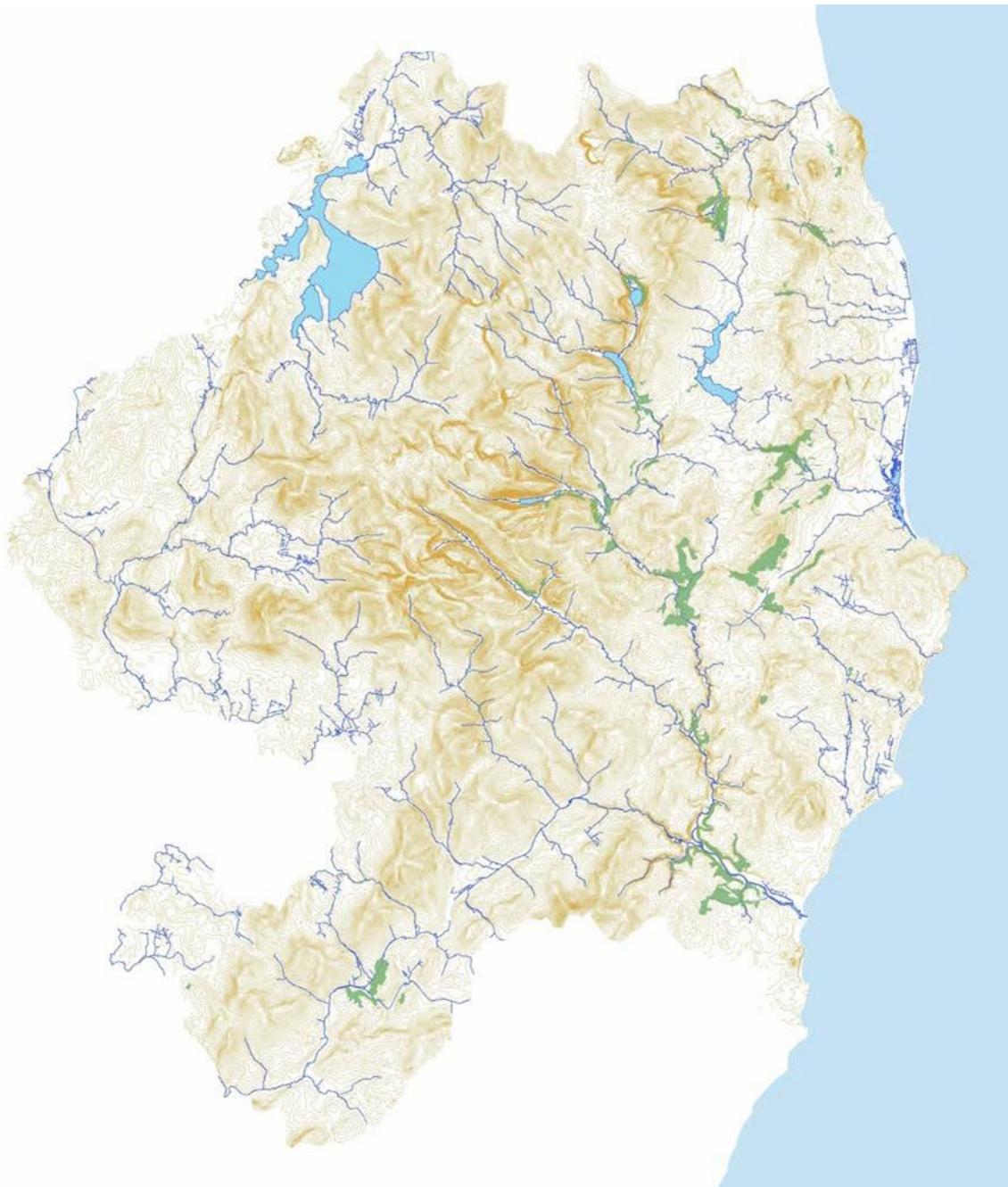


IRELAND'S WOODLAND REMNEANTS CIRCA 1600 (MCRACKEN)

1.2.3 THE WICKLOW OAKWOODS; THEN AND NOW

In 1671, records mention a still vast oakwood on the border of Wicklow and Wexford measuring 15 km². Located on lands belonging to the Earls of Fitzwilliam (the Coolattin Estate), this woodland was somewhat protected from the 1700s onwards, with new plantations of oak and beech. In the 1970s, however, the entire Coolattin Estate was bought for its timber and now only a small fragment remains at Tomnafinnoge Woods Nature Reserve, where a woodland of 0.65km² is today owned and protected by the State.

Other fragments remain of Wicklow's once great woodlands with the best examples to be found cloaking the valley slopes of our main rivers such as the Dargle, Avonmore, Glencree and Avoca rivers. These woodlands are shown on the map FIG XX



WICKLOW COUNTY: NATIVE WOODLAND FRAGMENTS ARE SHOWN IN GREEN (OSI, SIQI TAN)

1.2.4 WICKLOW'S REMARKABLE WOODLANDS: 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

By the 18th Century, most of Wicklow's woodlands had disappeared, but large landowners replanted trees throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries. At Coolattin, the Earl of Fitzwilliam

replanted areas of oak and beech. Wealthy landowners such as Fitzwilliam, Carysfort, Wicklow, Parnell and Powerscourt all planted parkland type woodland on their properties, the remnants of which are protected today.

At the foundation of the State, Wicklow's forest cover was estimated at about 35% while currently we have a woodland cover of 20% (OSI 2000). Of this, semi natural (deciduous and mixed woodlands) still cover about 3% of the land. These are Wicklow's woodland 'treasures'

A tiny fraction of Wicklow's forests are native (<1%). Very little native tree planting has taken place since the foundation of the state, although currently schemes are in place to reverse this trend. Both the NPWS and Coillte Natura are pursuing projects to increase native tree cover in the county. The farming community also has increased focus on planting native trees and hedgerows. Wicklow County Council focuses its own planting schemes on native species.

1.2.5 WICKLOW'S HEDGEROWS

The first historical Ordnance Survey Map dates from a survey undertaken between 1838 and 1846. These highly accurate maps mark thousands of field boundaries, which, in Wicklow, were and still are mainly hedgerows.

Ireland's familiar landscape of small fields and hedges was largely created between 1700s and 1800s as landowners enclosed former commonage to form fields and control stock. According to Joe Gowran (Woodlands of Ireland) rural roadside hedgerows are of the most importance, with surveys indicating that these are some of the oldest and most diverse hedges in the country. Some roadside hedgerows have an ancient heritage role, defining parish boundaries dating back to the seventh or eighth century and potentially earlier.



In 2011, Teagasc estimating cover across Ireland, calculating that Wicklow's hedges represented approximately 5% of the County's land area. Hedges have been lost through agricultural improvement. For a period of time in recent decades, hedges were lost as farmers were encouraged to enlarge their fields. Trees and hedges were also lost as a result of ribbon development on rural roads. This loss seems to be continuing despite the fact that Ireland's hedgerows have been recognised as an invaluable part of the country's natural and cultural heritage. Ash die back further threatens hedgerow trees.

The aesthetic and wildlife value of hedges is well documented in the Local Authority Heritage Office brochure titled "Conserving Hedgerows" produced by the Heritage Council.



1.3 AN OVERVIEW OF COUNTY WICKLOW'S TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGES

1.3.1 The Garden County covers an area of approximately 2025 km² and has a population of 142,500 divided between five municipal districts. Half of the population lives in one of four larger towns on the coast: Bray, Greystones, Arklow and Wicklow, the remainder lives in one of fifty other towns and rural settlements throughout the county. With almost 20% tree cover, Wicklow is one of Ireland's most wooded counties with documented forests covering an area of 390 km².

1.3.2 TREES AND WOODLAND IN THE UPLAND LANDSCAPES



Moors, heaths and bogs dominate the Wicklow Mountains and account for approximately a quarter of the land in the County. This bleak wet landscape does not naturally support trees. Some of the peatlands have been drained, however, and are managed for other users, including a significant amount of commercial forestry (about a quarter of the area).

1.3.3 INFORMAL WOODLANDS OF THE FARMED LANDSCAPE:

A semi natural network of trees, woodlands and hedges is typical of the farmed landscape of each of the five Municipal Districts: Bray, Arklow, Greystones, Wicklow and Baltinglass. Approximately two thirds of the County, including the lower slope of the Wicklow Hills, the rolling lowlands and the coastal hinterland form an idyllic pastoral landscape. This countryside consists of green fields, mainly under pasture, with woodland patches, exotic forests and a loose grid of hedges and hedgerow trees always in view. Mature trees punctuate the scene, standing alone or in groups, bespeaking the history of the countryside. These are Wicklow's 'informal woodlands'. The majority of these trees and hedges are unmapped and unknown, requiring mapping.

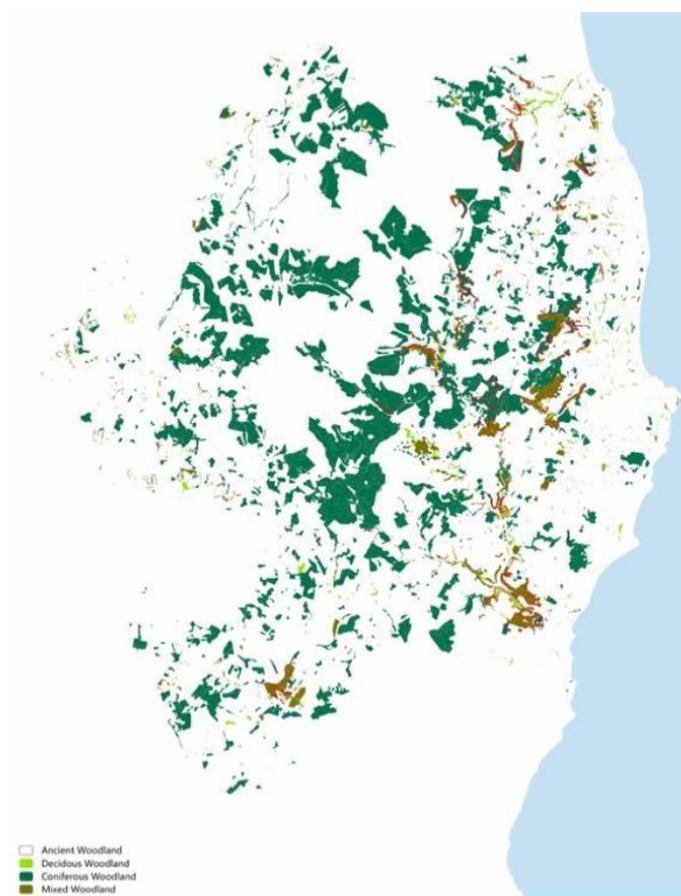


1.3.4 COUNTY WICKLOW'S URBAN FORESTS

County Wicklow's settlements were not designed with trees in mind. Old photographs show towns devoid of vegetation. Nevertheless, expansion over the past half century has played down the contrast between the built-up areas and the surrounding countryside.

and their farmed surroundings. Today a diversity of manicured gardens, trees and exotic hedges typifies the residential areas of every settlement in the County. Trees are now characteristic of urban environments.

Remarkable trees have been incorporated into the public realm of many towns and villages. Mature remnants of 18th Century demesne planting have been integrated into public parks, residential developments, sometimes private gardens, most often than not behind walls or railings than in the public realm. Borrowed, or not, the influence of these mature woodland trees on the streetscape and residential development is invaluable.



Documented forest 389.73 km² (19.3% of the land)

Coniferous forest 338.21 km² (16.7% of the land)

Mixed forest 38.24 km² (1.9% of the land)

Deciduous forest 13.28 km² (0.7% of the land)

Ancient and long established forest 30.95 km² (1.5% of the land)

1.3.5 ASH DIE BACK

Ash trees are one of the most common native trees in Ireland and are particularly noteworthy as a common feature in hedgerows. They are a very important element of the wooded landscape particularly in rural areas.

Ash Die Back, caused by a fungal infection *Chalara fraxinea* was first identified in Ireland in October 2012 having been reported in other European countries prior to that. The disease is now prevalent throughout most of the island of Ireland. Many trees are now showing symptoms of the disease. It is expected that the disease will cause the death of most of the Ash trees in the country in the next two decades. By 2021 many ash trees in County Wicklow were already showing signs of the disease. Most of these trees occur on private property being particularly common in rural hedgerows.



Current expert advice is to maintain trees while safe to do so in order to allow identification of disease resistant specimens. Trees may require crown pruning to remove dead branches and cutting down of dead trees where health and safety issues arise. Teagasc advise that material should never be moved from a site containing the disease. Forest owners and members of the public are asked to be vigilant for the disease and report any sites where



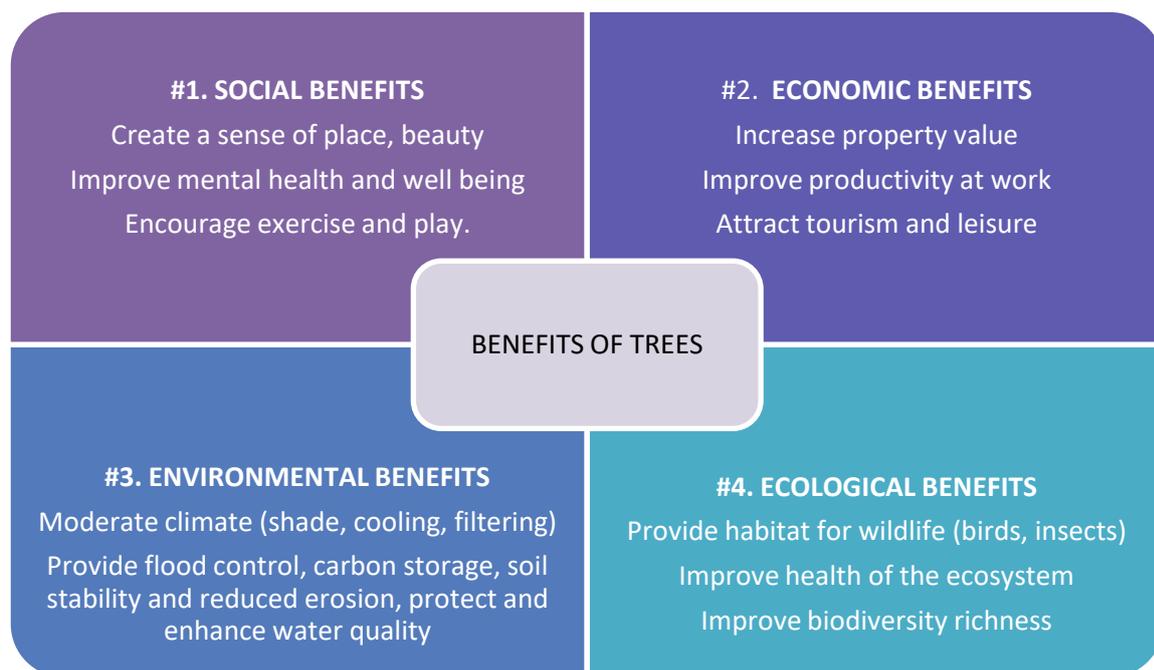
there are concerns about unusual ill health in ash to the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine by email forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie or by phoning 01 6072651. Symptoms to look for include necrotic lesions on stems and branches leading to foliage wilt, dieback of branches and death of the top of the crown.

2. WHY PROTECT TREES?

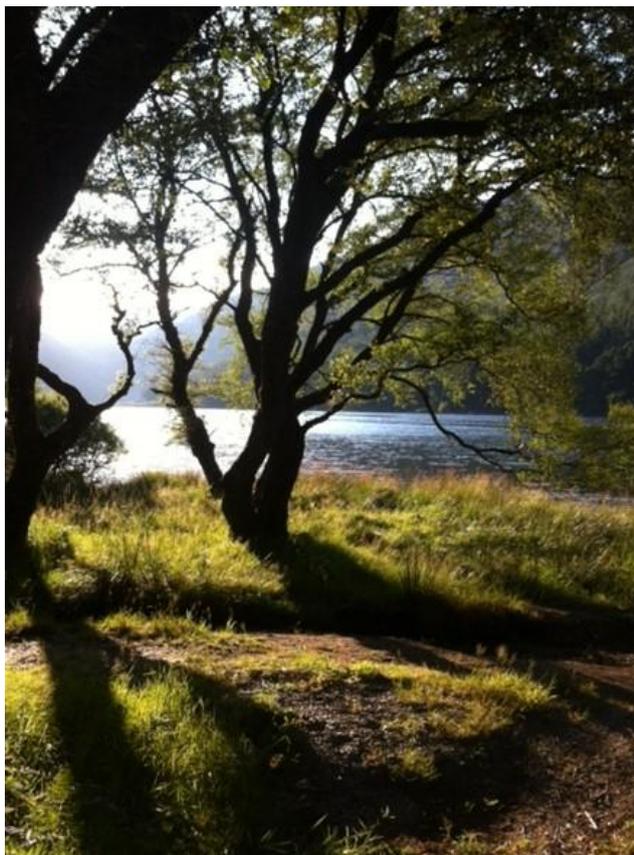
Environmental, Heritage and Socio Economic Benefits and Alignment with International, National and Local Frameworks

2.1 THE BENEFITS OF TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS

2.1.1 Trees and hedgerows are vitally important for wildlife and biodiversity, good for the environment, enhance the quality of our landscape and improve human health. They also help to mitigate climate change and flooding, prevent soil erosion and can add value to the economy. Many trees have high cultural significance and contribute positively to the character of our towns and villages. Bringing nature into our urban spaces, adds essential biodiversity and interest to the environment, creates more healthy and enjoyable living conditions for local people, and most importantly helps in the creation of sustainable communities.



2.1.2 TREES AND WOODLANDS CREATE SOCIAL CAPITAL



Trees affect human health and well being very positively. They reduce stress and improve mental health and quality of life, encouraging exercise and relaxation. Trees bring natural beauty and colour into a neighbourhood, marking the seasons. They provide shelter for birds, and so bring birdsong to our streets. #1

Trees can create a sense of place and connection with nature. Daily contact with trees, even when viewed through a window has been shown to improve general overall health in residential areas, speed up recovery times in hospitals and reduce the need for medicines. The reasons behind it are complex, but children that live in areas with trees tend to perform better in school. #1

2.1.3 TREES HELP FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

A healthy woodland is a carbon sink. Trees and woodlands combat climate change with what is currently the best carbon technology in the world (Crowther). Through photosynthesis, a tree removes carbon from the air, storing it in its roots, trunk and canopy as it grows and also transferring carbon into the soil via its roots. Thus, forests remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it for centuries. Planting trees and allowing them to grow larger and live longer helps combat climate change. Large long lived trees help reduce greenhouse gases effectively, they capture and store carbon and improve resilience of their area to the effects of climate change. #3

2.1.4 TREES HELP MODERATE THE LOCAL CLIMATE, TOO

As summer temperature rises, the effect of trees is gaining significance. Their moderating influence helps regulate temperature and so reduces the costs of heating and cooling buildings. #3

Trees help shade and cool the ground, they help humidify, cool and clean the air. They provide shelter from the wind and they increase the efficiency of buildings when it comes to regulating temperature. #3



They also increase the efficiency of the land when it comes to managing heavy rains and the effects of storms. #3

2.1.5 TREES HELP MITIGATE AGAINST FLOODING AND SOIL EROSION

Trees, woodlands and their associated vegetation are very important when it comes to flood control. Together, the different layers of a woodland intercept rainfall, hold it in place, reduce runoff and slow the volume and speed of water that travels across the land. In this, trees roots are as important as its leaves and branches. They act to maintain soil



permeability, reduce erosion and hold back the rainfall where it lands thus reducing the amounts of water that reach urban drainage systems during storms. Trees and woodlands, especially near rivers, help reduce the amount of silt and pollution that reach our waterways. #3

These principles are also important in towns where pavements do not let water pass into the soil very efficiently. Trees in verges and pavement pits all make a difference. #3

Flash floods are caused by heavy rains landing on impervious surfaces. Such storms can create huge volumes of surface runoff and quickly overwhelm local drains. Together, the trees, hedges and other types of healthy vegetation in a town's green spaces, parks, streets and private gardens act to help improve a town's capacity to 'hold water' and reduce the amount that flows across the ground and into the drains. #3

Even roadside hedges provide important ecosystem services as nesting sites and food sources for a variety of birds and other species, including insects. They improve soil quality, slow soil erosion and water runoff, create safe habitats and passage for various species and act as carbon sinks. #3

2.1.6 TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGES CREATE RICHNESS

Woodland ecosystems are naturally made up of different layers: the soil layer, the field layer, the shrub layer and the canopy layer. Wicklow's landscape contains fragments of native woodland and these patches of woodland along with the many isolated trees standing in fields, parks and gardens, hedges and hedgerows form a vast semi natural network that traverses the countryside and forms this county's best refuge for nature. #4

Red squirrels, pine marten, foxes, deer ,Irish hare, rabbit, shrews, badgers all thrive in suitable woodland habitats that provide them with refuge, shelter and food. Larger trees,



with timber cavities are invaluable for bats, birds, owls, pine marten, red squirrel, stoat and many types of insects. Decaying timber supports many types of fungi, insect and arthropod (beetle) both in the air and on the ground. #4

Flowering trees and shrubs in woodland, hedges and gardens support hundreds of different types of pollinating insect, including bees. The soil associated with the underground parts of trees and other woody plants teems with life: from fungal

mycelium to earth worms, beetles, ants, insects and various burrowing rodents such as the Pygmy Shrew. #4

Along a riverbank, willow and alder host huge numbers of insects, attracting bats and birds, their associated vegetation providing shelter and places to breed for otter, bank vole and frogs. Their roots hold the banks in place, resisting flood damage and soil erosion. Their

canopies provide shade, cooling the air and water, which can be very important for creatures in shallow streams. #4

County Wicklow's coniferous forests also contribute to biodiversity richness. Coillte now manages 10% of its forest for biodiversity. It may not be the case for every forest, but there are doubtless many glades, fallen trees, sunny openings and other unplanned elements within these dense forests that create all sorts of natural habitats and events. Herds of deer take daytime refuge in them. Coillte's open forest policy provides the county with important recreational resources well used by inhabitants and visitors from neighbouring counties. Coillte is a significant employer in the county. #4 #1 #2

Private gardens on the edges of town and in the countryside are often created using different layers and containing a mix of exotic and native plants, shrubs, trees and hedges. Altogether they can be likened to a mixed woodland and a biodiverse habitat. #4

2.1.7 TREES AND WOODLAND CREATE VALUE AND HELP SAVE MONEY

A 2018 study in Dublin (Grogan) found that trees led to significantly increased house prices. According to Grogan, Dublin's urban forest, located in wider streets within trees, larger gardens and parks generated excess value of up to 126 billion Euro. #2

The influence of trees helps regulate temperature and reduce the energy required to heat and cool buildings. The Office of National Statistics (UK) estimated that trees saved London 5 billion pounds between 2014 to 2018 through air cooling alone. #2

On a smaller scale, turning areas of grass into woodland, for example in residential estates and public parks, can reduce the cost of maintenance by 60% (Woodland Trust). #2

2.2 INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL FRAMEWORK FOR TREES

2.2.1 In the years since 1992 The 'Earth Summit' focused attention on the environment, highlighting the need to act in favour of forests at a global scale. Initiatives to prevent deforestation have been undertaken world-wide, at all levels of government, but their effectiveness has been limited and there is scientific consensus on the urgency of action required (EPRS 2020). Acting to regenerate tree cover in our own countries should equal or exceed our calls to protect tree cover elsewhere.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 adopted by the EU and which forms a key pillar of the European Green Deal sets a number of targets that can help to deliver more tree cover in County Wicklow. It will establish protected areas for at least 30% of land in Europe, with legally binding restoration targets. The strategy sets out to restore degraded ecosystems at land and at sea by:

- Increasing organic farming and biodiversity rich features on 10% of farmland
- Halting and reversing the decline of pollinators
- Restoring at least 25,000 km of EU rivers to a free flowing state



- Planting 3 billion trees by 2030.

Ireland's 2017 – 2021 National Biodiversity Action Plan (currently under revision) states its aim 'that biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of eco systems in the EU and globally'.

However, a 2020 review revealed that 86% of Ireland's protected habitats were awarded unsatisfactory status and that 46% of them were in a continued decline (NPWS 2020).

At the time of writing (2021), Ireland's protected areas cover 13% of the land. County Wicklow's legally protected sites cover an area of 326.5 km², as Special Areas of

Conservation (SAC) designated under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) transposed into Irish Law by the EU (Natural Habitats) Regulations. Thus, Wicklow's protected area covers 16% of the land.

The largest site is the Wicklow Mountains National Park at an area of 220 km². The area of the park is surrounded by important upland habitats. Cooperation between landowners, Coillte and the NPWS plays a key role in protecting upland habitats adjacent to the park. The uplands are a key resource for carbon sequestration, protection of water resources and a vital refuge for biodiversity. The SUAS project, Sustainable Upland Agriculture Project by the Wicklow Uplands Council is a pilot project to assist hill farmers gain productivity while protecting the upland habitats. The NPWS are also collaborating with Coillte on management of habitats in this area.



Elsewhere in Wicklow County, the woodland remnants are included in the list of Special Areas of Conservation, SACs: Deputy's Pass wood (0.48 km²) is the most intact fragment of the Glenealy Oakwoods (now largely replaced with conifers), Glen of the Downs (0.75 km²), Knocksink Wood (0.88 km²) the Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) (2.2km²) and Tomnafinnoge (0.65 km²). There may be scope to work with stakeholders on enlargement of some of these protected sites or build connectivity between sites and other woodland habitats.

A further 35 sites (76 km²) are proposed for protection as National Heritage Areas (NHAs) including several significant woodlands. Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995. Under the Wildlife Amendment Act 2000, NHAs are legally protected, pNHAs however benefit from more limited protection, they depend on the local authority / planning process.

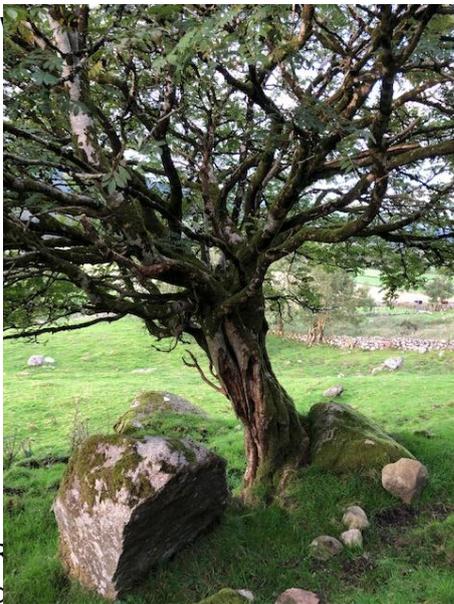
3. HOW ARE TREES PROTECTED?

3.1 LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY PROTECTION.

3.1.1 Trees and The Forestry Act 2014

Trees are protected and felling is regulated via the provisions of the Forestry Act 2014 (and associated Forestry regulations 2017)

Forest is defined by the Forestry Act as land under trees with a minimum area of 0.1 ha and crown cover of more than 20% of the total area (or potential to achieve this at maturity)



exempt from the requirement to obtain planning permission, some forestry activities, including tree felling, require consent by way of licence from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Outside of tree felling, other forestry activities requiring licence include Afforestation (for all afforestation projects where the area involved is greater than 0.10 hectares - approximately 0.25 acres) and Forest road construction (If a forest road construction project includes the provision of access to a public road, planning permission for the access may also be required.)

From the Forestry Act, it is an offence for any person to uproot or cut down a tree without having obtained permission in the form of a felling licence from the Forest Service.

There are scenarios where trees can be felled without the need to submit a felling licence application, these are listed below, in all cases it is the responsibility of the owner or the person felling the tree to ensure that they are acting within the law. Application forms for a Felling Licence and further information on the Forest legislation is available from www.agriculture.gov.ie

The following exemptions apply to the need for felling licences;

- A tree in an urban area. (An urban area is an area that is comprised of a city, town or borough specified in Part 2 of Schedule 5 and in Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act 2001, before the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. This act dissolved Town Councils, however the old boundaries of these areas are still considered as urban for the purpose of the Forestry Act 2014.

- A tree within 30 metres of a building (other than a wall or temporary structure) but excluding any building built after the trees were planted.
- A tree less than 5 years of age that came about through natural regeneration and removed from a field as part of the normal maintenance of agricultural land (but not where the tree is standing in a hedgerow).
- A tree uprooted in a nursery for the purpose of transplantation.
- A tree of the willow or poplar species planted and maintained solely for fuel under a short rotation coppice.
- A tree outside a forest within 10 metres of a public road and which, in the opinion of the owner (being an opinion formed on reasonable grounds), is dangerous to persons using the public road on account of its age or condition.
- A tree outside a forest, the removal of which is specified in a grant of planning permission, providing it was indicated on the lodged plans as being planned for removal as part of the application.
- A tree outside a forest of the hawthorn or blackthorn species growing in a hedge.
- A tree outside a forest in a hedgerow and felled for the purposes of its trimming the hedge providing that the tree does not exceed 20 centimetres diameter at 1.3 metres above ground level.
- Agricultural holdings can fell a limited small number of trees not exceeding 3 cubic metres.
- The maximum number of trees permitted to be felled under that exemption per year is 4 trees (12 cubic metres)
- Outside a forest, apple, pear, plum, or damson species are exempt from the need for a felling license.

Removal of trees from grant-aided plantations: All plantations are subject to the provisions of the Forestry Act, 2014. The purpose of the Act is to protect the national and private forest estate by regulating tree felling with a view to promoting sustainable forest management. With certain exceptions, a tree felling licence is needed before trees can be felled or otherwise removed.

Outside urban areas, permission is required to cut down trees.

3.1.2 TREES & WILDLIFE ACT

Restrictions on cutting burning or removing trees and hedgerows are set out in Section 40 of the **Wildlife Act 1976** as amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Heritage

Act 2018. These Acts stipulate that it is an offence to destroy vegetation on uncultivated land between the 1st of March and the 31st of August each year. This is to protect birds during the nesting season. These restrictions apply not only to private land users but also to local authorities, public bodies and contractors. There are a limited range of exemptions for essential works.

Trees are also protected through the provisions of the **Habitats Directive** (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) where they occur within designated Natura sites or where they support species that are listed for protection in the Habitats Directive (e.g. Bats). In Wicklow specified woodland habitats form part of the conservation interest for the following SACs; Vale of Clara, Glen of the Downs, Knocksink Wood, Deputy's Pass and Wicklow Mountains. In addition all bat species are protected by the Wildlife Acts of 1976-2018 and are listed on Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. Therefore, bat usage must be assessed in advance of tree works and if bat species are found to be present, a derogation licence is required from The National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for the enforcement of the Wildlife Acts of 1976-2018 and the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). The Local Wildlife Conservation Rangers can advise on the wildlife importance of trees and woodlands and their appropriate management.

3.1.3 TREES AND THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

The main provisions for the protection of trees via the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) is through the making of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs); through development control (i.e. conditions attached to planning permissions), and through inclusion of tree protection provisions in planning policy (e.g. policies in Development Plan). Where trees occur within the curtilage of Protected Structures¹ they may also be protected under the provisions of the Planning & Development Act 2000, where they may be deemed to contribute to the character and special interest of the structure. Examples may include tree-lined avenues, decorative clumps, woodlands or specimen trees.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) may be made under Section 205 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 or as part of the Development Plan process. A TPO can be made if it

¹ The Record of Protected Structures for Wicklow County Council is available in the County Development Plan and on www.wicklow.ie website

appears to the planning authority to be desirable and appropriate in the interest of amenity or the environment. A TPO can apply to a tree, trees, group of trees or woodland. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, topping, lopping or wilful destruction of trees without the planning authority's consent. The order can also require the owner and occupier of the land subject to the order to enter into an agreement with the planning authority to ensure the proper management of the tree, trees or woodland.

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-22 lists a total of 64 TPOs in County Wicklow (see schedule 10.08.3 of CDP). As part of the current (2021) review of the Wicklow County Development Plan, amendments to the existing TPOs are proposed in the Draft CDP, having cognisance of public consultation and following professional arboricultural assessment and recommendations.

Development Plans, Policy, and Planning Control:

Development Plans and Planning Controls provide another legal framework for the protection of trees. Under the Planning Acts, the Local Authority must produce a development plan for its area. This can include objectives for preserving, improving and extending amenities. These objectives can include the preservation of trees and woodland.

In Wicklow, while the protection of trees is encompassed with the Council's wider policies in relation to natural heritage, biodiversity, climate action and green infrastructure there are additionally a number of policy objectives explicitly targeting tree protection, as per extracts below:

Chapter 10 | Heritage Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022

Biodiversity Objectives

NH12 To support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity within the plan area in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, including linear landscape features like watercourses(rivers, streams, canals, ponds, drainage channels, etc), woodlands, trees, hedgerows, road and railway margins, semi-natural grasslands, natural springs, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geo-morphological systems, features which act as stepping stones, such as marshes and woodlands, other landscape features and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones that taken as a whole help to improve the coherence of the Natura 2000 network in Wicklow.

10.3.3 Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows

Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are important natural habitats and groups and lines of trees/hedgerows are important wildlife corridors. Trees, individually or in groups, make a valuable contribution to the biodiversity and amenities of the town. Groups of trees in urban areas can act as an attractive visual relief to the built environment and as an absorber of carbon emissions.

The Council aims to protect an individual tree, trees, a group of trees or woodland which are of environmental and/or amenity value. This can be done so with a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) that can be made through the development plan process or a separate TPO process

under Section 205 of the Planning and Development Act (The existing TPOs are set out in Schedule 10.08 and Maps 10.08 A, B & C). A TPO is subject to any conditions or exemptions for which provision may be made in the order, preserved from any cutting down, topping, lopping or willful destruction pending the final decision of the Council. Mature trees situated elsewhere in the County, whether in groups or individually, should be preserved where possible. Any interference to hedges/trees during the breeding season (March 1st - August 31st) is now an offence under the Wildlife Act 2000.

Woodlands and trees also have an amenity function, providing not only important recreational areas but also adding to the overall beauty of the County. A sizeable proportion of the forestry estate in Wicklow consists of the remains of old demesne planting. In addition to being an environmental and forestry resource, these areas are also of significant amenity value.

Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows Objectives

NH14 To promote the preservation of trees, groups of trees or woodlands in particular native tree species, and those trees associated with demesne planting, in the interest of amenity or the environmental, as set out in Schedule 10.08 and Map 10.08 A, B & C of this plan.

NH15 To consider the making of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) to protect trees and woodlands of high value, where it appears that they are in danger of being felled.

NH16 Development that requires the felling of mature trees of environmental and/or amenity value, even though they may not have a TPO in place, will be discouraged.

NH17 To discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development and encourage tree surgery rather than felling where possible.

NH18 To encourage the preservation and enhancement of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees, as part of the development management process, and require the planting of native, and appropriate local characteristic species, in all new developments.

NH19 To encourage the retention, wherever possible, of hedgerow boundary treatment in the County. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, provision of the same type of boundary will be required of similar length and set back within the site in advance of the commencement of construction works on the site (unless otherwise agreed by the Planning Authority



In accordance with Council policies (as above) tree protection is achieved by the operation of planning controls and tree preservation orders. There is a presumption in favour of the

hedgerows and woodlands as part of the planning consent process and to encourage the enhancement of tree cover in new developments. Permission may be refused if the proposed development would result in the destruction of trees whose preservation is considered to be essential in the interests of amenity or can be granted subject to conditions e.g. retention of specific trees or planting of new trees.

3.1.4 SPECIAL PROTECTIONS

Generally, trees benefit from little legal protection, but in some cases, where trees are located on land of high amenity or historical value, they are protected as part of the land and may not be removed without permission. Trees are legally protected if they stand within the curtilage of

- A structure protected under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Chapter 1, Part IV)
- An area subject to special amenity area order
- An area designated as a landscape conservation area (Section 204, Planning and Development Act 2000)
- A site recorded under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994
- A monument or archaeological area entered in the Register of Historic Monuments under Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987
- A national monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under the National Monuments Act 1930 to 1994, within a European Site or a National Heritage Area within the meaning of Regulations 2 (1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011

The protection of trees in general is considered as part of the planning process. Where feasible it is the policy of Wicklow County Council to retain trees on site and where tree removal is necessary to facilitate development steps should be taken to augment tree cover locally with trees of similar stature.

3.1.5 SECTION 70 ROADS ACT 1993

The Roads Act sets out responsibilities of landowners in relation to roadside trees, hedges and verges. Note that the public road extends from fence to fence (or hedge to hedge) and includes footpaths, grass verges and roadside drains, but not the boundary itself. Therefore the maintenance of roadside trees and hedgerows is the responsibility of the property owner.

Landowners must ensure that trees and hedges are maintained in such condition that they are not a hazard to road users and that they do not interfere with the public road / footpath. In particular, branches that just cut into the road should be cut back to enable safe passage. Dead or unsafe trees should be removed if they risk falling onto the highway.

Where necessary Wicklow County Council and landowners can take emergency action to remove a tree or part of which has been discovered to be unsafe. This will typically relate to trees which have suffered storm damage, a tree that has been discovered to be badly diseased or where an arborists report has indicated danger from either the tree or part of it.

A property owner's responsibility for their trees is also covered by the Occupiers Liability Act 1995. The owner of a tree may be liable for damage that it causes to the occupiers of adjoining land, or to people lawfully using a public way, if negligence can be proved.

The County Council usually via the municipal district may notify landowners in writing by issuing a 'Section 70 Notice' that a tree or hedge has become a safety hazard (in the opinion of the Council) and require them to take appropriate action. If an owner does not comply, the Local Authority must take action instead in which case the owner will be liable for costs. A Section 70 notice can be appealed to the District Court if the tree owner feels the prescribed action is unnecessary or excessive.

3.2 CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF TREES BY WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL, ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

3.2.1 WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL CONTEXT

Wicklow County Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency for Wicklow (19th April 2019). Climate Action is now a core priority throughout the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024.

The Wicklow County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy commits the Council to learning about and responding to the effects of climate change and building a resilient future for and with the communities of County Wicklow.



Ireland's Planning and Development Act 2000 requires Wicklow to designate landscapes and their associated characteristics for protection in the formulation of a County Development Plan.

The Wicklow County Development Plan identifies and maps areas of natural and cultural heritage at the scale of the County: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), Nature Reserves and Special Amenity Areas (SAAO). The County Development Plan sets out objectives for identifying, preserving, improving and extending Green Infrastructure, Natural Heritage and Biodiversity.

The Wicklow County Development Plan recognizes the value of healthy green infrastructure, its role in response to climate change issues and that it provides robust nature based solutions in environmental management. The plan sets out many objectives to protect and enhance natural elements of the landscape.

Wicklow's Natural Heritage Objectives set out the Council's aim to discourage the felling of mature trees and to encourage the retention and enhancement of woodlands and hedges. Specific trees, groups of trees and woodlands protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), are also identified and listed in the relevant Local Area Plan (LAPs). The proposed Tree management objectives are given in the below table. They are outlined in the chapter on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity.



The Wicklow County Heritage Plan 2017 – 2022 aims to conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage of Wicklow and fostering a greater awareness and appreciation of it.

The Wicklow County Biodiversity Plan 2010 – 2015 introduces the concept of biodiversity, describes important habitats and species and sets out a strategy for increasing our understanding and appreciation of them, along with measures for protecting them. The Wicklow County Heritage Plan 2017 – 2022 aims to conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage of Wicklow and fostering a greater awareness and appreciation of it along with measures for protecting them. The biodiversity plan objectives are incorporated within the scope of the County Heritage Plan and are delivered as part of the Council’s annual Heritage Plan work programme, overseen by the Wicklow Heritage Forum and co-ordinated by the Heritage Office.

The aims of the County Wicklow Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerow Management Strategy correspond with the multiple themes and objectives laid out in the documents above. The strategy acknowledges the contribution to human and ecological well being made by these ‘ordinary’ landscape elements and sets out to protect and enhance them.

3.2.2 WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL CURRENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Wicklow County is divided into five municipal districts, Arklow, Baltinglass, Bray, Greystones and Wicklow.

Each municipal district has responsibility for an array of services that includes (amongst others) maintenance, improvement and safety of roads and footpaths, streams, drain and gully maintenance, parking and litter management, maintenance of local authority housing and grounds as well as public parks and open green spaces, playgrounds and burial grounds.



Caring for trees, woodlands and hedges on Council land is undertaken by each Municipal District as part of a much larger portfolio of services, usually not as a specific role.

Municipal districts in Wicklow recognize a need for a more coordinated and planned approach to tree management and maintenance. All five districts are focused on maintaining tree cover. They all recognize that work currently undertaken is often reactive or related to other functions rather than planned to maintain tree health. Bray Municipal District and Greystones Municipal District have undertaken surveys of trees in the public realm with a programme of maintenance works. This allows planning of tree care with more attention given to trees in decline or poor health.

The municipal districts all recognized the value of having a planned programme of works and clear procedures set in order to communicate to the public what works are being carried out and why they are necessary. There will always be times when emergency works are necessary on trees, most often as a result of storm damage but a planned programme of works based on cyclical surveys can help to limit such works preserving a healthy tree population in the public domain while allowing for further development of tree resources going forward.

3.2.3 CASE STUDY: BRAY, PLANNING FOR CARE OF TREES.

Bray is the largest town in County Wicklow. Parts of the town have good numbers of mature trees that were planted as planned landscaping of streets and public spaces. Trees of note are located both in the public realm and on private properties. The trees are an important feature of Bray's urban landscape. Under Bray Town Council a Parks team was established to look after public spaces, the Peoples Park, the promenade and the street trees in the public realm. Work by this team was budgeted each year, including tree care. As trees in the town reached an older age and displayed signs of ill health it was apparent that a planned approach was required to manage the health of tree and plan for renewal of these



urban trees where required in order to maintain these urban wooded landscapes. Bray municipal district undertakes surveys of tree health on a five year cycle with more frequent observation of trees identified in the surveys as being at risk. These five year surveys have allowed Bray municipal district to plan and budget an annual programme of work to care for and replenish trees in its care. Such cyclical

surveys in a proactive manner are best practice and it would be appropriate to carry out similar survey work of trees in the care of the other four municipal districts.

3.2.4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE PLANTING OF TREES.

Wicklow County Council actively supports communities in new tree planting in open greenspaces through the Environmental Awareness Office and through landscaping and tree planting initiatives in the municipal districts. Trees offered are from a prescribed list of

native trees, fruit trees and a very limited number of pollinator friendly trees. Many communities also avail of other opportunities from the private sector and non-governmental organizations which provide trees for planting locally. Communities seek to plant a diverse range of wooded features. These include hedgerows, orchards, edible hedges, pocket forests such as Miyawaki mini-forests as well as more traditional street planting and use of standards in public greenspace.

Wicklow County Council is a member of the Tree Council of Ireland and during National Tree Week in March trees supplied by Coillte are distributed to local Community Groups, Tidy Towns, Residents Associations, Schools and Youth Groups for planting in public areas. The trees are a mix of native saplings.

Wicklow County Council Climate Action Team also provides an annual grant for autumn tree planting. Community Groups can avail of funding to cover 75% of the cost of planting native trees in public spaces, with applications assessed by Municipal Districts to ensure locations are suitable.

Trees and saplings are planted every year in a bottom up community led project that facilitates active citizen engagement. Tree planting at community level would benefit from guidance on site suitability and aftercare for trees as many citizens keen to plant may not be familiar with size and maintenance issues and how they vary depending on tree species or local conditions. Care is needed to ensure trees do not come into conflict with the built environment or local utilities.

3.2.5 CASE STUDY: GRANGECON, WEST WICKLOW

Grangecon is a small rural village located in West Wicklow. The village is surrounded by country estates which have a wealth of mature trees and tree-lined avenues on the approach roads to the village. The current landowners take great care in the management of their trees ensuring tree surgery as required and adding additional trees.

Grangecon Tidy Towns was formed in 1998 and a key aim was to replant trees along the approach roads to the village. Application was made for the Wicklow County Council Tree



Grant year-on-year and this enabled replanting along the verges inside the village signs. Trees planted have been a mix of Rowan, Cherry, Lime, Oak, Horse Chestnut, Carpinus and Beech, depending on the locations. These trees are now 25+ years old and starting to mature into impressive trees, although still young compared to neighbouring giants. In addition to the approach roads, a mix of trees was also planted as a copse on entry to Mallens Wood and Cherry, Lime and Rowan were planted opposite the terrace in Mallens Wood. The free native tree saps supplied by Wicklow County Council during National Tree Week have also helped to supplement our tree planting over the last 10+ years.

Grangecon was awarded the Tree Project Award by the National Tidy Towns Competition in 2016.



orchard of eating apple, cooking apple, crab apple, cherry and plum trees, in the centre of the village. This contains 25 fruit trees and is located behind the village hall. They also planted satellite orchards of 3 cherry trees beside the Church in the village, 5 orchard trees at the National School and 7 orchard trees at Ballynure Church. For this endeavour they were also presented with 5 heritage apple trees from the Tree Council of Ireland for planting at the School.

In 2020 100 trees were planted with the local
e planted for pollinators

2021 however has been the biggest year for tree planting with Grangecon working with neighbouring towns to plant over 4000 trees in the communities of West Wicklow. Most of the trees were supplied by a campaign called Easy Treesie.

Looking forward it is hoped to develop a new community woodland project.

Grangecon has a rich heritage of mature roadside and hedgerow trees which has now been complimented by a new generation of planting by the community.

3.2.6 TREES UNDER THE CARE OF THE COUNCIL

The Council is directly responsible for the care and maintenance of trees on Council land, including the public realm in housing estates, roads, streets, pavements, parks and green open spaces, as well as the open spaces of many privately built residential estates that have been taken in charge since 2001.

Estates that were taken in charge prior to 2001 remain responsible for the maintenance of their open spaces, including the trees. In some of these older estates we have seen many cases of trees that have been badly maintained. Estates and residents associations would benefit from more guidance on the management and maintenance of trees,

The County Council is not responsible for trees on private land unless there are public safety concerns and the landowner fails to comply with his or her duty of care under the Road Act 2007. Where a local authority is required to take action on public safety grounds the owner of the tree remains liable for any costs incurred.

Over time, specimen trees, groups of trees and fragments of demesne woodlands and hedgerows have been incorporated into expanding settlement boundaries and in some cases taken in charge by the Council.



The shared roads and footways, water mains, surface water sewers, foul sewers, open spaces and lighting of residential estates all become public when taken in charge. The planting of trees must take account of its urban context, sharing space with other utilities and services. The care and maintenance should be planned at the time of planting, taking account of the challenge for trees to establish, their eventual size and long term care requirements. Both above and below ground must be considered when assessing the long term impact of trees particularly their relationship to utilities and the built environment.

3.2.7 CARING FOR MATURE TREES ON COUNCIL LAND

The largest, most remarkable trees in the urban stock were planned and planted over two hundred years ago. Many large mature trees stand on private sites within development

areas and need not only protection, but also ongoing management and maintenance. Indeed, the incorporation of mature trees into public areas is not as simple as it might seem. Very large mature trees do not respond well to sudden change and tend to decline if subjected to shocks such as the compaction of soil, or root damage, or the removal of adjacent trees, or changes in ground water levels. The topping of such trees and the lopping of major branches only hastens decline. Advice from an arborist should be considered before works are undertaken on large specimen trees.



3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.1 Wicklow County Council plans to address a number of key themes in order to strengthen our management of trees in our care, improve citizen engagement in tree care and enhance the resilience of tree cover in the county. Doing so will have benefit for Climate Action and Biodiversity maintaining and augmenting a healthy tree population for the county. The key recommendations are:

- **Establish a baseline with an inventory of trees.**
- **Cyclical tree condition surveys to be undertaken.**
- **Develop protocols for best practice and consistency in tree care.**
- **Provide information to the public on their role in tree care.**
- **Develop opportunities to increase native tree cover.**
- **Develop skills of staff working with trees.**

A county inventory is needed to map the distribution and type of wooded resources existing in the county. This will allow us to better protect existing resources and build on existing resources in both rural and urban environments. Trees in public ownership are part of a wider network of trees and wooded ecosystems.

Cyclical surveys of trees in public ownership will help to maintain them in good health and assist in the scheduling of maintenance works. These surveys will be used to plan the regeneration and replanting of trees that will decline in the coming years.

Wicklow County Council will put in place protocols that ensure a consistent approach to tree care for trees under the charge of Wicklow County Council. Wicklow County Council will put in place structures to ensure a coordinated implementation of the protocols. Wicklow County Council will use British Standards for tree care and use training for staff involved in tree care work and when required that qualified arborists are contracted for any works being carried out on trees. We will be put in place protocols to ensure the process is further developed as part of planning to protect tree cover from pre-planning through completion of works ensuring maintenance of both pre-existing trees where feasible and new planting on site after development is completed.

More information is needed for the public on their role in tree care and the role they can play in both maintaining and augmenting tree cover in our communities. This should build on existing work including tree grants, National Tree Weeks, support for landscaping and tree planting programmes in the districts. Better guidance is needed on the role of trees, which trees are suitable for different circumstances and how to plan tree planting and care for the full

lifecycle of trees.

It is proposed that we explore opportunities to increase native tree cover in County Wicklow, protecting and building on existing resources. We work with all relevant stakeholders and will pursue opportunities to facilitate enlargement of native tree woodlands where possible and build connectivity between woodland habitats. Connectivity of tree cover in the urban environment to create a clearer expression of an urban forest in our towns is needed. The percentage tree canopy coverage can be used as a metric to measure progress on increasing tree cover.

Wicklow County Council will examine what resources are needed to build a more cohesive approach across the county on tree care and management, focusing on how the municipal districts can implement annual programmes within their jurisdictions. What training for staff is needed will be identified and implemented. How the municipal districts budget for cyclical surveying of trees and planned maintenance programmes will be addressed.



4.0 POLICY AND VISION

For the Management and Protection of Trees in Council control and those in the wider landscape.

4.1 VISION, GOALS AND ACTIONS

Wicklow County Council aims to enhance tree, woodland and hedge cover, throughout the County, to build resilience to climate change, to mitigate against climate change and protect and enrich biodiversity. The focus will be on protecting existing trees and hedgerows while availing of opportunity to increase canopy cover. Policy and public sentiment are aligning to facilitate an expansion in native tree cover. Wicklow County Council will establish the baseline for native tree cover in the county and work with stakeholders, the public and through its own work programmes to increase native tree cover in the county. An increase in native planting with a target of a 10% increase in trees planted per annum will help us achieve our climate and biodiversity goals.



The Council will embark on collaborative strategies with the public and other partners to achieve its aim, and agree a common vision for the future of County Wicklow's trees, woodlands and hedgerows.

Six overarching goals have been identified from which actions will be derived:



4.2 PROTOCOLS FOR TREE CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Protocol 1. Inventory and Monitoring of Trees

Wicklow County Council will use an inventory of trees in the county to create a baseline of tree cover for the county. A GIS mapping of tree cover will be purchased to record the current extent of trees in the county. The maps purchased will allow for the identification of tree cover down to individual trees in the landscape and the extent of their canopy. It will also record the network of hedgerows in the county. The baseline will allow us to measure progress on increasing tree cover, to monitor changing trends in tree cover and identify where efforts need to be focused on maintaining and increasing tree cover.

The council will undertake tree surveys in the principal towns of each of the five municipal districts. The surveys will assess the health and condition of trees in the care of Wicklow County Council. It will identify maintenance works required to retain trees. Tree surveys will be undertaken on a cyclical rotation. Where trees with issues of concern or evidence of significant decline are recorded visual inspections should be undertaken annually to monitor the trees.

Tree surveys will be undertaken by an independent consultant arborists who will provide as part of their report a schedule of work which identifies works required on individual trees. The contract for surveying will be separate from any contract to undertake works prescribed. The contract for surveying will be carried out as described in BS 5837 (2012). The arborist must be qualified to degree level and able to demonstrate experience in the field. They must have competencies as prescribed in BS 5837 (2012).

Wicklow County Council will research opportunities to develop or use apps that can harness information from the inventory of trees and the cyclical survey or data from visual inspection and information on works scheduled or carried out. Where appropriate apps will be used to monitor the

implementation of works for tree care and help to improve the efficiency of tree management programmes.

Wicklow County Council seeks to increase tree cover in urban areas. Linking to the data collated in the inventory of trees, Wicklow County Council will undertake audits to identify land suitable for planting and increasing urban tree cover. Where appropriate such sites will be developed under the woodland creation on public lands scheme.

Protocol 2. Tree maintenance and care.

Wicklow County Council aims to use tree care to maintain trees and ensure they are maintained in good condition while minimizing the loss of trees. We will as far as possible plan all tree works annually, while accepting that there will be circumstances such as storm damage or health and safety concerns which require immediate action.

Works undertaken will be guided by the need to protect biodiversity. No works will be undertaken during the bird nesting season from the 1st of March to the 30th of August, except where required as an emergency or safety requirement.

The annual programme of work will be in accordance with priorities identified during the cyclical surveys undertaken by an arborist.

Work will focus on the care of tree with the objective of maintaining their health and condition. Tree pruning will only be undertaken where necessary. Works will focus on the retention of trees maximizing their benefit to biodiversity while taking account of health and safety.

Work on trees will only be undertaken by staff when they have the appropriate training to do so and by professionally qualified arborists and tree surgeons with qualifications and experience for all other tasks. All works will be undertaken in accordance with British standard BS 3998 (2010) which is the appropriate standard for tree work.

The planned annual programme of works will be presented to the municipal district members. Information on the programme will subsequently be made available to the public.

The management of trees will take account of growing conditions and adjacent trees with the aim of allowing them reach their full potential within the constraints of the local environment. Wicklow County Council will focus on good site and tree location when planting to avoid the need for subsequent management or removal due to inappropriate siting.

Pruning of trees may be carried out on trees in the early formative years to improve shape or in limited circumstances where a formal landscape has been specified as part of the design. Tree pruning on mature trees will be prevented except where necessary

- 1) for the health of the tree with the aim of maintaining the condition of remaining parts of the tree by removing diseased or dead limbs or

- 2) where pruning is necessary as health and safety requires surgery such as for protection of utilities, preventing damage to buildings or
- 3) where pruning is required on roads to retain visibility of signage or maintain safe sightlines.

The programming of works on trees will not be done on request by members of the public. Where public concerns are received or requests to undertake works are made an assessment will be made by a qualified arborist or as it can be assessed as part of the cyclical survey of trees in the district. The district office will decide if waiting for the next cyclical survey is the appropriate timeframe to take before deciding whether an assessment should be undertaken. Where a municipal district judges the situation requires immediate emergency works action may proceed immediately with documentation of why works were needed.

Protocol 3 Planned removal of trees

It is the policy of Wicklow County Council to retain trees in the public domain and seek opportunities to increase tree cover. Tree should be retained to the maximum extent of their lifecycle that is possible to achieve within the local environment.

The planned removal of trees will only occur following inspection by an arborist unless there is a sudden change in the condition of the tree which creates a hazard necessitating urgent action. Where emergency removal is required the justification for removal must be documented.

There are a number of scenarios in which tree removal may be considered:

1. Removal of diseased, dying or dead trees.
2. Removal as part of planned redevelopment.
3. Thinning to allow space for full development of neighbouring trees.
4. The required removal of trees planted in inappropriate spaces.

Trees will only be removed or pruned where necessary and recommended by an arborists report except in emergency situations when a sudden change requires immediate action for safety. With trees in poor condition it is the policy to undertake remedial action to prevent further deterioration of trees rather than removal whenever possible. Diseased trees will be removed where recommended and where such actions fall in line with national policy. It is noted that current policy on Ash Dieback is to retain where possible infected trees to identify if any trees have resistance to the disease. It is also good practice to retain dead wood and dead trees when possible as they are an important part of woodland ecosystems supporting many species. Dead wood will be removed where it poses a safety threat but will be retained when feasible for biodiversity.

Trees may be removed in limited circumstances as part of planned redevelopment. This may be done when existing trees are unsuitable for the site or of a type that has little biodiversity value. Public notice must be given prior to removal of the trees outlining what measures will be undertaken to replace the trees on site or within the locality with a better quality of planting. Tree removal for

redevelopment of the public realm must be balanced by an equivalent or better planting of trees in the locality.

The thinning out of trees will be permitted where they have been planted densely and removal of some of the weaker trees will allow neighbouring trees to reach their full potential.

The removal of trees that are unsuitable for the space in which they were planted will be permitted when recommended by an arborists report. Circumstances may include trees that are interfering with utilities and where pruning has compromised their continued growth in reasonable condition, trees planted too close to buildings and walls, trees which dangerously restrict sightlines on public roads or trees of species that have roots that are unsuitable for the urban environment in which they have been planted.

Where it is necessary to plan the removal of trees public notice will be given and the reasons for removal documented. It is the policy of Wicklow County Council to replace trees removed either in the same location or by planting in a nearby locality with the aim of maintaining and enhancing local tree cover.

Protocol 4. Planting Trees

Wicklow County Council aims to increase tree cover and canopy extent in County Wicklow. It will achieve this through planting within the public realm, encouraging and supporting the planting of trees by communities, working with stakeholders to facilitate planting, ensuring tree planting is incorporated where feasible into the design of new developments and raising awareness on the role planting trees plays as a climate action.

Wicklow County Council will lead by example identifying opportunities to plant on land that it owns through the Woodland Creation on Public Land scheme. Planting of trees will be incorporated into new developments and redevelopments whenever feasible.

Wicklow County Council works with communities to support the planting of trees. As a member of the Tree Council of Ireland we are involved in the distribution of trees to the community each year to mark National Tree Week. An annual tree grant provides an opportunity for community groups to plant trees in the public realm. Native trees or a limited number of trees recommended in the All Ireland Pollinator Plan are specified. Where community groups are planting trees in the public realm it is the policy that municipal districts will be consulted to advise on the suitability of sites for planting and ensure that an appropriate type of tree is being selected for sites.

Wicklow County Council recognizes that most of the trees in the county and most of the planting that occurs is done by other stakeholders, land owners and householders on their own properties. Wicklow County Council welcomes initiatives that increase the planting of native trees throughout the county and the role the public play in delivering an increase in tree planting. Wicklow County Council will promote awareness of the role of trees in deliver climate mitigation and adaptation as well as increasing biodiversity resilience. We will promote opportunities and schemes that encourage and facilitate planting with native trees.

- Wicklow County Council recognizes that a tree planted in a good location will be a long term asset for the county while the wrong tree or wrong location will create management issues. Better guidance on tree planting will be provided to ensure that trees are planted appropriately. Adherence to BS 8545 (2014) will be sought in the design, planting and establishment of trees in new developments. *The Planning department will use BS 5837 (2012) as the baseline to inform all conditions for the maintenance of trees before, during and after works.*



4.3 5 YEAR ACTION PLAN

Ref	GOAL 1: COUNTY INVENTORY Priority 1-2 Years	Who	When
1.1	To establish the extent of tree, woodland and hedge cover throughout the County through the purchase of a digital survey (LiDAR survey, tree mapping, aerial photography, DTM, DSM, wet map). Collate data in GIS	Climate Action Team with GIS Officer	2022
1.2	To evaluate the purchase or development of a (mobile) tree management system, that is linked to the GIS database.	GIS Officer	2022
1.3	To conduct initial / complete existing tree surveys of all Council owned and managed trees and woodlands. Data to be collated in the computerised tree management system.	Arborists recruited by municipal districts	2023
1.4	To review existing and proposed Tree Preservation Orders in the County and update / finalise them.	County Development Plan	2022
1.5	To identify significant trees, woodland patches, groups, riparian vegetation and hedgerows paying particular attention to land zoned for development.	Biodiversity Officer (Proposed Role)	2022/23
1.6	Assess trees for inclusion in future County Development Plans and Local Area Plans under TPOs.	Biodiversity Officer (Proposed Role)	2023/24

Ref	GOAL 2: ENHANCE TREE MANAGEMENT BY AGREEING AND IMPLEMENTING A CONSISTENT COUNCIL PROTOCOL		
	Priority 1 – 2 years		
		Who	When
2.1	Approve current protocol for a preliminary 5 year period, but review progress annually. Apply protocols.	Wicklow County Council	2022
2.2	Adopt the Industry Standards for tree care.	Wicklow County Council	2022+
2.3	Identify and implement training needs for current employees. Identify opportunity for sharing of experience and the provision of training at regional level.	Training Officer	2022
2.4	Review and amend the pre planning, planning and post planning process to ensure that all trees, both existing and proposed are properly taken into account and that industry standards are respected, both in the preparation of contracts and before / during and after site works.	Planning pending appointment of new Biodiversity Officer	2022+
2.5	Require developers to ensure care and maintenance of trees planted for five years replacing any that are lost,	Planning pending appointment of new Biodiversity Officer	2022+
2.6	Review the taking in charge procedure to specifically include trees, and to include the trees / open spaces on all estates that have been taken in charge	Planning and Municipal Districts	2023+
2.7	Coordinate implementation of Goal 2 ensuring it is included on the agenda of District Engineer meetings.	Climate Action Team	2022
2.8	Publish planned tree maintenance programmes at least one month in advance of planned works, and ensure review of works, which should include reactive works, is carried out annually at the end of each season.	Municipal Districts	2022+

Ref	GOAL 3: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS		Who	When
	Priority: 1- 2 years			
3.1	Create an area on Wicklow.ie dedicated to trees, woodlands and hedges, with information pages dedicated to frequently asked questions, best practice methods and Council tree care protocols.	Climate Action Team and IT	2022	
3.2	Share the tree map on Wicklow.ie to make the data about tree distribution available to the public.	IT	2023	
3.3	Provide information and guidance on issues including Ash Die Back for the public.	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)	2022+	
3.4	Undertake a community engagement programme including talks, workshops, promotion of tree planting and participation in tree events.	Climate Action Team and PPN	2022+	
3.5	Provide support from the municipal districts to communities and estates on identification of sites suitable for tree planting.	Municipal Districts and Biodiversity Officer	2022+	
3.6	Promote funding opportunities for planting of woodlands both directly by Wicklow County Council, by communities and through partnerships including the Climate Action Fund and the Woodlands scheme.	Climate Action Team	2022+	
3.7	Publish an interactive inventory of remarkable and / or protected trees, woodlands and hedges for each Municipal District.	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)	2023+	
3.8	Promote a better understanding of the role hedgerows in rural areas and hedges in urban spaces play in providing habitat, ecosystem connectivity and also their capacity to sequester carbon.	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)	2023+	
3.9	Collaborate with stakeholders to share knowledge and expertise and to also increase public awareness of the work of all stakeholders which will include the NPWS, Coillte, An Taisce, The Tree Council Of Ireland and any other bodies promoting planting and care for our native trees.	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)	2022+	

Ref	GOAL 4:	Who	When
	MANAGE MATURE TREES IN COUNCIL OWNERSHIP		
	Priority 2-3 years		
4.1	Conduct a survey of mature tree stock on public land. Trees to be assessed cyclically on a rolling survey programme as recommended by arborists.	Arborists and Municipal Districts	2022+
4.2	Prepare a multi annual programme of tree maintenance works based on survey work by arborist.	Municipal Districts	2023
4.3	Plan for the replenishment of urban trees in decline replacing with trees of similar type and eventual scale.	Municipal Districts	2023
4.4	Research the overall situation concerning mature trees in urban areas. Species, condition, location, prognosis.	Arborists and Municipal Districts	2023+
4.5	Use the above audit as a basis for establishing a long term multi annual renewal plan that envisages renewal of large long lived species (prepare for future generations	Municipal Districts	2023+

Ref	GOAL 5: EXPAND NATIVE TREE COVER IN WICKLOW FOR BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT		Who	When
	Priority 2-10 years			
5.1	Engage with public and private interest groups, especially large landowners and Coillte on tree planting initiatives.	Climate Team	Action	2022+
5.2	Engage with stakeholders / landowners to identify opportunities to build the size and connectivity of key woodland sites.	Wicklow County Council		2022+
5.3	Provide information on opportunities for planting and woodland enhancement on Wicklow.ie	Climate Team and IT	Action	2021+
5.4	Seek funding and stakeholder engagement for nature based solutions or climate resilience projects that will enhance the protection of catchments, the capacity of riparian trees to absorb and attenuate high flood flow, protecting communities.	Climate Team	Action	2021+
5.5	Identify local authority owned or other public sites that can be planted using the Woodland Creation on Public Land Scheme.	Climate Team (Biodiversity Officer) and Municipal Districts	Action	2022+
5.6	Use the baseline inventory of tree cover to measure progress on expanding tree cover in the county.	Climate team and IT	Action	2025+
5.7	Support community planting of trees through donation of trees to mark National Tree Week, annual tree grants for planting in public spaces and any other relevant schemes that facilitate communal planting.	Climate Team (Biodiversity Officer)	Action	

Ref	GOAL 6: EXPAND THE URBAN FOREST		Who	When
	Priority 1-5 years			
6.1	Engage with interest groups, especially residents and residents' associations, schools, tidy towns, Coillte Nature and NGOs to identify opportunities for expanding urban tree cover.	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)	2022+	
6.2	Prepare and implement a public awareness programme about biodiversity, green infrastructure supported by the urban forest including the role of privately owned trees in creating a unified ecosystem.	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)	2024	
6.3	Promote tree planting and tree care in garden spaces to build connectivity in the urban forest and build canopy cover.	Climate Action Team and Municipal Districts	2022	
6.4	Identify Council owned and / or managed sites suitable for trees and woodland planting pilot schemes. Develop an annual tree planting programme (to be implemented under the guidance of suitably qualified professionals)	Climate Action Team and Municipal Districts.	2023+	
6.5	Identify Urban peripheral sites that will be suitable for planting using the Woodland Creation on Public land scheme that will serve for recreational space while building biodiversity connectivity on the urban rural interface.	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)	2022+	
6.6	Promote and support a diverse range of planting options to include hedgerows, edible hedges, orchards and pocket forests .	Climate Action Team (Biodiversity Officer)		

5.1 Delivering on the UN Sustainable Goals

The Tree Management Policy is part of Wicklow County Council’s commitment to delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Core goals delivered through the policy are SDG 13 Climate Action with trees delivering both mitigation and adaptation benefits, SDG 15 Life on Land through the role of trees and woodlands for biodiversity, SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities through the role trees play in protecting environmental conditions and ameliorating local climate. Wicklow County Council will work in partnership with stakeholders and communities, SDG 17 Partnership for the goals. SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation can be enhanced through protection of catchments with tree cover. Education and awareness on the role of trees and woodlands is a cornerstone of our policy, SDG 4 Quality education. Our tree , woodlands and forests help to deliver SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing. Trees and better care for them help us deliver a sustainable future.

