



Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Group
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Topic

Heritage - Biodiversity- Green infrastructure- Climate Action- Energy

Submission

Provision of a space for the Blessington community to grow food locally. See attached for more information.

File

BLAP Blessington Allotments Campaign 020423.pdf, 0.82MB



Blessington Allotments Campaign

Submission to Blessington Local Area Plan

Introduction

The Blessington Allotments Campaign started our campaign in May 2018 when residents of Blessington contacted Wicklow County Council requesting the provision of allotments in Blessington in line with legislation such as the Local Government Act 2001. The discussions have continued since, with a formal presentation given at the Baltinglass Municipal District meeting in April 2019 requesting the provision of allotments in the Blessington area, which received the full support of the councillors in attendance.

Over 40 members of the Blessington community have previously registered their interest with the Blessington Allotment Campaign since we started seeking members of the community to register their interest.

Several of our members previously utilised allotments in other local authority areas such as Kildare or South Dublin County Council.

Local Projects

In January 2021, our campaign launched a new grow your own initiative with the local Blessington Educate Together National School. In this initiative, we purchased strawberry, raspberry and blueberry plants, along with apple and pear trees and seeds. Every student (55) received seeds and plants to encourage them to learn about where food comes from.

The feedback from the students and families was incredible, with several of them stating how much of a mental boost this gave them and their children particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In June 2021 following receipt of a community award grant from Kildare County Council in partnership with Gaelscoil na Lochanna (based in Kildare), the Blessington Allotments Campaign organised for 185 strawberry plants and seeds to be purchased for the students of the school.



Dónal McCormack, Chairperson of Blessington Allotments Campaign (left) and Jonathan Kinsella, Principal of Blessington Educate Together National School.

Land sought for community allotments in Blessington

THIS week the Blessington Allotments Campaign launched their new "grow your own" initiative with Blessington Educate Together National School.

The idea was championed by the Blessington Allotments Campaign who successfully applied to the Wicklow County Council Community Awards 2020 to finance this initiative.

Chairperson of Blessington Allotments Campaign, Dónal McCormack said: 'We are delighted to launch this new initiative for students in Blessington Educate Together National School. Over the coming months, students at home will grow raspberries, strawberries, apples, pears, blueberries. Throughout the year they will receive over 16 different types of seeds including

tomato, carrot, lettuce and beetroot and will learn and experience how beneficial it is to grow your own food.'

'Our campaign has always called out the numerous benefits from communities and families learning to grow their own - even more important now during COVID-19.'

This project comes about as the campaign for allotments in Blessington approaches its third year, with the search for public or private land still ongoing. Since forming in May of 2018, they have been in contact with Wicklow County Council, local councillors, TDs and community groups in order to ensure that allotments are developed for the Blessington community.

'We are a community group in Blessington seeking a small bit of land to rent to be able to grow our own fruit and vegetables. This is something that would be a huge benefit to the town and would be a great help to our local community. If there is anyone in the area with some land available to rent for these purposes, we would love any opportunity to discuss things,' added Mr McCormack.

Anyone who may have some suitable land available should contact blessingtonallotments@gmail.com.



Pupils' new summer project to bear fruit

THIS week the Blessington Allotments Campaign launched their 'Grow Your Own' initiative with Gaelscoil na Lochanna in Blessington.

WE'VE HIGHLIGHTED THE NUMEROUS BENEFITS THAT CAN BE GAINED FROM COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES LEARNING TO GROW THEIR OWN

In January 2022 using the 2021 Wicklow County Council Community Award Grant, the Blessington Allotments Campaign organised for 194 strawberry plants to be given to the Blessington No. 1 school in Blessington, Co. Wicklow.

In June 2022 we sourced and donated 50 strawberry plants to Sakura Educate Together.

In January 2023 using the 2022 Wicklow County Council Community Award Grant, the Blessington Allotments Campaign organised for 250 strawberry plants to be given to St. Mary's Junior National School in Blessington, Co. Wicklow.



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Blessington school gets 250 strawberry plants

By MYLES BUCHANAN

LAST Friday the Blessington Allotments Campaign provided 250 strawberry plants for the students at St. Mary's Junior National School to grow at home.

Pollinator friendly strawberry plants and peat free soil were purchased from the Blessington Lakes Garden Centre to encourage students to grow their own food at home.

The idea was championed by the Blessington Allotments Campaign who were able to deliver this project thanks to their successful application to the Wicklow County Council Community Awards in 2022 to finance this initiative.

Dónal McCormack, Chairperson of the Blessington Allotments Campaign, said: "We are delighted to continue this initiative with another local school. Over the coming months, every student from St. Mary's Junior National School will grow their own strawberries, and experience how exciting and beneficial it is to grow your own food."

"Strawberries are an ideal starter plant when beginning to grow your own food, as they will sprout new strawberry plants in the coming months. We hope this will encourage more students and families in the area to grow more of their own food."



Dónal McCormack, Chairperson of the Blessington Allotments Campaign (far left) with pupils and staff of St. Mary's Junior NS.

He added: "In the past two years the Blessington Allotments Campaign has provided almost 750 pollinator friendly plants to primary school students in Blessington. Each plant acts as part of a dispersed community orchard that will help pollinators and other biodiversity in the Blessington area."

Carmel Dillon, Principal of St. Mary's Junior National School in Blessington, said:

"As a long time Green Schools participant we are delighted to partner with the Blessington Allotments Campaign for this project."

"This is an ideal initiative to encourage our students to help local biodiversity. Our other students will be getting up their strawberry plants and then taking care of them over the coming months. It will be exciting for everyone involved

to see how their efforts bear fruit."

St. Mary's Junior National School is the fifth local school that the Blessington Allotments Campaign have partnered with for this initiative. The group aims to provide pollinator friendly plants to another Blessington school later in 2023. This will see the completion of this project for the Blessington Allotments Campaign,

having provided every primary school in Blessington with pollinator friendly plants for all of their students over the last two years.

The Blessington Allotments Campaign are delighted to have recently partnered with Blessington Tidy Towns to help deliver this final phase of their pollinator friendly school project.

Jason Mulhall, Chairperson of Blessington Tidy Towns, said: "We are delighted to support this initiative to plant more pollinator friendly and edible plants in the Blessington area."

"Students, families, schools and our local biodiversity all benefit from this project. Local sustainable projects such as this empower communities to work together and take action to help with our climate and biodiversity crisis."

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

NEWS 5



Blessington No. 11 School students with Dónal McCormack, chairperson of the Blessington Allotments Campaign and principal Lillian Murphy.

Students get busy planting strawberries

By MYLES BUCHANAN

LAST week the Blessington Allotments Campaign provided 194 strawberry plants for the students of the Blessington No. 11 school to grow at home.

Pollinator friendly plants and peat free soil were purchased from the Blessington Lakes Garden Centre to encourage students to grow their own food at home. The idea was championed by the Blessington Allotments Campaign who were able to deliver this project thanks to their successful application to the Wicklow County Council Community Awards 2021 to finance this initiative.

Dónal McCormack, chairperson of the Blessington Allotments Campaign, said: "We are delighted to continue this initiative with the students in Blessington No. 11 School. Over

the coming months, every student from the school will grow their own strawberries and experience how beneficial it is to grow your own food."

"Strawberries are an ideal plant to start with as they will sprout new strawberry plants in the coming months. We hope this will encourage more students and families in the area to grow more of their own food. In the last 12 months, the Blessington Allotments Campaign have provided almost 750 pollinator friendly plants to primary school students in Blessington. Each plant acts as part of a dispersed community orchard that will help pollinators and other biodiversity in the Blessington area."

Lillian Murphy, principal of Blessington No. 11 School said: "We were delighted to

partner with the Blessington Allotments Campaign for this project. "This is an ideal initiative to encourage our students to help local biodiversity. It will also allow our students to see how to take care of their plants over the coming months and see how their efforts bear fruit."

This is the third local primary school that the Blessington Allotments Campaign have partnered with for this initiative and they hope to extend this to more schools in the Blessington area, subject to funding. To discuss the supporting of future editions of this initiative, the Blessington Allotments Campaign can be contacted on Facebook, Twitter or at their email address: blessingtonallotments@gmail.com.

Finally, St. Mary's Senior National School were chosen as the final school in Blessington. This was the largest school to receive pollinator friendly plants as part of the pollinator friendly Edible Blessington Project.

Blessington Tidy Towns partnered directly with Blessington Allotments Campaign to support this stage of the project.

Since our campaign with local schools started, over 1100 local students have received plants for growing food at home such as apple and pear trees, strawberry, raspberry and blueberry plants, along with seeds to encourage the students to grow their own.

In recent weeks, our campaign has also organised a Plant Swap within Blessington with hundreds of plants, seedlings and seeds available for sharing between the Blessington community.

This shows the large impact that having an area within Blessington assigned for community growing space could have to the wider population.

WICKLOW PEOPLE | Wednesday, May 3, 2023



St. Mary's Senior National School, Blessington with Dónal McCormack and Jason Mulhall.

'Grow your own' project ends as 1,100 plants given to young pupils

By MYLES BUCHANAN

THE Blessington Allotments Campaign has now completed their two-year project to help local children grow their own food and learn about pollinators, with one final delivery of strawberry plants to bring the total pollinator friendly plants given away up to 1,100.

The students of St. Mary's Senior National School were given the last 320 strawberry plants for them to grow at home earlier this month.

Like all the others purchased for this popular project, they were bought from the Blessington Lakes Garden Centre, the project being supported by Blessington Tidy Towns.

Dónal McCormack, Chairperson of the Blessington Allotments Campaign said: "Every student in St. Mary's Senior National School received a strawberry plant and this marked the completion of our project

to provide every Primary school student in Blessington with a pollinator friendly plant. "Every student from St. Mary's Senior National School will grow their own strawberries and experience how exciting and beneficial it is to grow your own food."

"Strawberries are an ideal starter plant when beginning to grow your own food, as they will sprout new strawberry plants in the coming months, which can then be given to friends and family. We hope this will encourage more students and families in the area to grow more of their own food."

Mr McCormack added: "In the last two years the Blessington Allotments Campaign have provided almost 1,100 pollinator friendly plants to primary school students in Blessington. Every single primary school student in Blessington has now received a strawberry, raspberry or blueberry plant, or an apple

or pear tree. Each plant acts as part of a dispersed community orchard that will help pollinators and enhance biodiversity in the Blessington area."

"We have seen such incredible results from working with Primary schools across Blessington and we hope this enthusiasm for community growing will lead to the allocation of an area within Blessington for the community to produce their own food."

Gerry Brown, Principal of St. Mary's Senior National School in Blessington said: "This is an ideal initiative to encourage our students to help local biodiversity. Our students will enjoy taking care of their plants over the coming months and for everyone involved to see the fruits of their labours."

St. Mary's Senior National School is the sixth local school that the Blessington Allotments Campaign have partnered with for this initiative.

Coláiste An Gl...
Winner:
Gaeltach Present
05/06/2023 - 16/06/2023
Creagh Coll 03/07
For Stua...
Formal Games - Sports - Games - ...
"The most comprehensive...
Book C...
or visit our w...

New eTenders platform
eTenders is the next platform to sell to Government
Businesses will be able to access details on the new



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Background Details

Wicklow County Council are one of eight local authorities who provide no allotments or community gardens, according to the LGMA. Every local authority that borders Wicklow provides allotments and community gardens - see here for details on the LGMA report:

<https://www.lgma.ie/en/publications/local-authority-sector-reports/a-profile-of-local-government-climate-actions-in-ireland-final.pdf>

Reductions in carbon and GHG emissions from community gardening

In the past, organisations such as the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society have estimated the potential reduction in CO2 emissions from community growing spaces. According to their document "Briefing paper on Allotments, Food and Climate Change: how growing one's own food can reduce emissions from food production":

"If we assume that 25% of a plot-holders food is grown on their plots and there is a commensurate reduction in all bought food (but not in the domestic processing) then 4% (0.5 tonnes) of an individual's total emissions will be saved each year. Surveys show that crops are usually shared by families, friends and local community groups. If we use a conservative estimate of two people benefiting, then at least 1 tonne of CO2 is saved by each standard allotment plot every year and a one hectare allotment site saves 50 tonnes of CO2 per annum."

The Scottish Government also highlighted the reduction in carbon emissions from community growing, with estimates of between 2kg and 5kg of carbon equivalent for every kilogram of vegetable produced:

"Carbon emissions (including reducing energy use, more sustainable transport and less waste) can be reduced by between 2kg and 5kg of carbon equivalent for every kilogram of vegetable produced"

Ref: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/consultation-paper/2018/06/allotments-further-guidance-local-authorities-part-9-community-empowerment-scotland/documents/00537266-pdf/00537266-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00537266.pdf>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, 2019

A large argument in favour for the provision of more community growing spaces is that the spaces assist in the reducing of greenhouse gas emissions, improving urban food security, improving biodiversity and adapting to climate change impacts. In 2019, the IPCC released a report which included Urban Agriculture initiatives, as follows:

"Urban and peri-urban agriculture reduces the food carbon footprint by avoiding long distance food transport. These types of agriculture also limit GHG emissions by recycling organic waste and wastewater that would otherwise release methane from landfills and dumping sites (Lwasa et al. 2014). Urban and peri-urban agriculture also contribute in adapting to climate change, including extreme events, by reducing the urban heat island effect, increasing water infiltration and slowing down run-offs to prevent flooding, etc."



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(Lwasa et al. 2014, 2015; Kumar et al. 2017a1209). For example, a scenario analysis shows that urban gardens reduce the surface temperature up to 10°C in comparison to the temperature without vegetation (Tsilini et al. 20151210). Urban agriculture can also improve biodiversity and strengthen associated ecosystem services (Lin et al. 20151211).”

“In summary, urban and peri-urban agriculture can contribute to improving urban food security, reducing GHG emissions, and adapting to climate change impacts (robust evidence, medium agreement).”

Ref: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-5/>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report – Working Group III, March 2022

Following the 2019 report above, the IPCC released their Working Group III report in March 2022. Detailed within this were climate and biodiversity actions related to increasing the amount of urban agriculture in urban areas, as detailed below:

D.2.1 Sustainable urban planning and infrastructure design including green roofs and facades, networks of parks and open spaces, management of urban forests and wetlands, urban agriculture, and water-sensitive design can deliver both mitigation and adaptation benefits in settlements (medium confidence). These options can also reduce flood risks, pressure on urban sewer systems, urban heat island effects, and can deliver health benefits from reduced air pollution (high confidence).

8.1 Sustainable Development: Urban agriculture, including urban orchards, roof-top gardens, and vertical farming contribute to enhancing food security and fostering healthier diets.

8.2.2 Economic development, competitiveness, and equity: Urban agriculture can not only reduce household food expenditure, but also provide additional sources of revenue for the city.

8.4.6 Urban-rural linkages: Urban food systems, as well as city-regional production and distribution of food, factors into supply chains. Reducing food demand from urban hinterlands can have a positive impact on energy and water demand for food production (Eigenbrod and Gruda 2015) (see ‘food system’ in Glossary). Managing food waste in urban areas through recycling or reduction of food waste at source of consumption would require behavioural change (Gu et al., 2019). Urban governments could also support shifts towards more climate-friendly diets, including through procurement policies. These strategies have created economic opportunities or have enhanced food security while reducing the emissions that are associated with waste and the transportation of food. Strategies for managing food demand in urban areas would depend on the integration of food systems in urban planning.

Link: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FullReport.pdf

Sustainable Development Goals

Community growing spaces also clearly help contribute towards some of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, for example:



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World Health Organisation recommendations for public green spaces

The World Health Organisation included reference to allotments and community gardens in their publication "Urban green spaces: a brief for action". In addition, they recommend the following:

"As a rule of thumb, urban residents should be able to access public green spaces of at least 0.5–1 hectare within 300 metres' linear distance (around 5 minutes' walk) of their homes."

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/344116/9789289052498-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

In March 2023, the Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss issued their final report to the government.

The final report of the Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss recommended the following:

51. The State must ensure the expansion of community gardens and allotments through local authority initiatives in conjunction with private landowners, in both urban and rural communities.

Link: https://citizensassembly.ie/wp-content/uploads/Report-on-Biodiversity-Loss_mid-res.pdf

In April 2023, the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss recommended the following:

28 Encourage people to grow more vegetables for themselves

35 Make more green spaces in cities and urban areas

Link: <https://cyp-biodiversity.ie/>



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Planning Act, Development Plan and other Requirements:

2010 Planning and Development Act:

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2010/act/30/enacted/en/print#sec77>

13. Reserving land for use and cultivation as allotments and regulating, promoting, facilitating or controlling the provision of land for that use.

Wicklow County Council has a role in the 2010 Planning and Development Bill to reserve land for use and cultivation as allotments. Wicklow County Council should call out which lands allotments and community gardens can be placed upon, similar to other local authorities.

Sustainable and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities:

In the Sustainable and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities, it details:

Public open spaces should be designed to cater for a range of active and passive recreational needs (including play, physical activity, active travel, cultural uses and community gardens and allotments, as appropriate to the context) and to conserve and restore nature and biodiversity.

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/280882/af1b1694-6ff4-4a14-b2c6-f104347ffb53.pdf#page=null>

Wicklow County Council Development Plan 2022 - 2028:

CPO 7.48 To support and facilitate the development of allotments and community gardens, of an appropriate scale, on lands which meet the following criteria:

- *land situated within or immediately adjacent to the edge of towns/villages;*
- *land that is easily accessible to the residents of a particular town or village;*
- *where an adequate water supply can be provided;*
- *where adequate road infrastructure and access exists/can be provided; and*
- *where adequate parking facilities can be provided.*

Chapter 7 | Community Development

Allotments & Community Gardens

Interest and activity continues to grow in the use of land for allotments and community gardens. Allotment gardens allow a number of people to cultivate their own vegetables in individual plots/land parcels on lands owned by another private individual or body. The individual size of a plot/parcel ranges between 200-400sqm and often the plots include a shed for tools and shelter.

The individual gardeners are usually organised in an allotment association which leases the land from the owner who may be a public, private or ecclesiastical entity, provided that it is only used for gardening (i.e. growing vegetables, fruits and flowers), but not for residential purposes. Unlike allotments which are plots of land that are worked on by individuals or families, a community garden is all about sharing – both the work and the harvest.



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Public allotments and community gardens are becoming an increasingly important element of sustainable communities. They have a number of benefits including the promotion of healthy lifestyles, biodiversity and providing a cheaper local and sustainable source of food. The Council supports the provision and wider distribution of such facilities across the County.

Chapter 18 also classes Allotments and Community Gardens as Green Infrastructure.

Appendix 1:

In larger developments (in excess of 1ha), consideration should be given to dedicating part of the residential open space (not exceeding 25% of the total space) to community gardens; at a minimum, landscaping plans will be required to identify a suitable area (in terms of soil type, gradient, light, drainage etc) within the residential open space area that would be suitable for future community garden use by the resident community

<https://www.wicklow.ie/Portals/0/adam/Documents/dYzSEvBnzU6gMW897FmMxg/Link/Appendix%201%20-%20Development%20and%20Design%20Standards.pdf>



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2013 Blessington Local Area Plan

In the 2013 Blessington Local Area Plan, no mention of allotments or community gardens are present. No land is allocated for allotments or community gardens within Blessington.

In addition, the Blessington Zoning Matrix in section 10.2 does not include any mention of allotments or community gardens. This should be updated to include a variety of different land, given the wide-ranging impact of allotments or community gardens.

For example, local authorities throughout Ireland regularly allow the use of allotments on a variety of zoned land. Louth County Council, for example, in their County Development Plan allow allotments for generally permitted use for the following zones:

- A1 - Existing Residential
- A2 - New Residential - Phase 1
- A3 - New Residential - Phase 2
- B2 - Neighbourhood Centre
- G1 - Community Facilities
- H1 - Open Space
- K1 - Agriculture

<https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/publications/development-plans/louth-county-development-plan-2021-2027/volume-1-all.pdf>

Recommendations for Blessington

An area within Blessington should be allocated as a space for Blessington residents to grow food as a community. This has been shown in numerous other locations around Ireland to benefit climate and biodiversity actions locally, but also to help with social integration and community cohesion.

Community growing spaces throughout Ireland are shared outdoor spaces, with a variety of different activities making use of the space.

Land needs to be zoned appropriately for a community growing space within Blessington, with the Blessington Local Area Plan providing details on this.

The Blessington Allotments Campaign request that the Blessington Local Area Plan include both a recommendation for land to be allocated for a community growing space within Blessington, along with defined actions to ensure the swift provision of this much needed community amenity.