

Report on the
Recommendations and Calls to Action
of the Citizens' Assembly and Children
and Young People's Assembly on
Biodiversity Loss

Version for Children and Young People

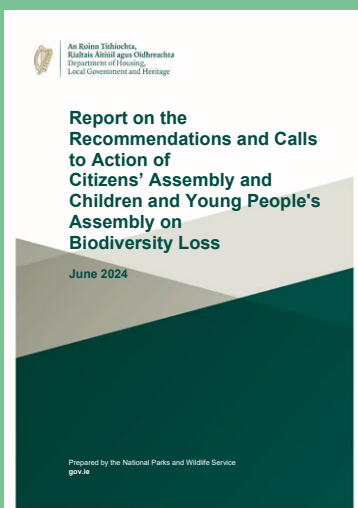
June 2024





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Original report prepared by the
National Parks and Wildlife Service

This version for children and young people
has been created by Dublin City University and
University College Cork.



Worms are the
on the ground
on a small
eggs or larvae

Do you know what
the most important
part of a tree is?
The roots! They are
the part of the tree
that is underground
and they are the
part of the tree that
takes up water and
nutrients from the
soil. They are also
the part of the tree
that anchors it to the
ground.

Plants are the
producers of the
ecosystem. They
take in carbon
dioxide from the
air and use it to
make food for
themselves and
other organisms.

The full report describes the Irish Government's response to each of the recommendations from the adult Citizens' Assembly as well as the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss' 58 Calls to Action. **Read the full response.**

This version for children and young people focuses on its response to the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss.

It was created by adults from Dublin City University and University College Cork who designed and delivered the Assembly in 2022, together with children and young people who took part in the Assembly as Assembly members and Young Advisors.

The Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss and the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss provided an opportunity to give voice to people of all ages living in Ireland on the important topic of biodiversity. I am grateful to the members of the Assemblies who invested considerable time and energy in this vitally important process and welcome the opportunity to present the Government response to the Recommendations and Calls to Action of the Assemblies. **I would like to especially thank the members of the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss for their unique insights in their Calls to Action.** Both Assemblies have enabled time and space for debate on the emergency that is biodiversity loss. I believe that trust was built and a greater understanding of the issues facing biodiversity across society was achieved.

Malcolm Noonan T.D.
Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform



Background

The Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss took place in **October 2022** and brought together 35 randomly selected members aged 7-17 from across Ireland to explore, discuss and create calls to action on how to protect and restore biodiversity in Ireland.

This Assembly took place at the same time as the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss with the adult population. The adults' Citizens' Assembly published its report in **March 2023** which included 159 Recommendations.

The Children and Young People's Assembly published their report in **April 2023** which included 58 Calls to Action, divided into seven themes.

What happened next?

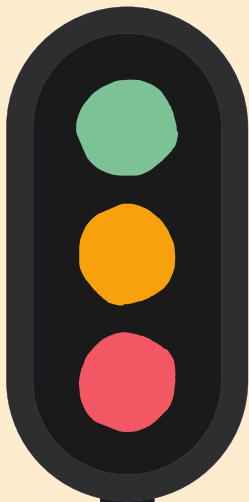
- The *Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action* read and discussed the 159 Recommendations and 58 Calls to Action with members of the adults' Citizens' Assembly and Children and Young People's Assembly.
- Next, the Joint Oireachtas Committee created its own recommendations report on what the Irish Government should do to protect and restore biodiversity in Ireland. This was published in **December 2023**.
- The *National Parks and Wildlife Service* looked at both the Recommendations and Calls to Action from the Assemblies, and the Recommendations from the Joint Oireachtas Committee. In **October 2024**, they published this report explaining what steps they have taken in response.

Who's Who?

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action is a group of politicians, both Teachtaí Dála (TDs) and Senators, who have been chosen to work together to protect the environment and address climate change.

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is part of the Government and is responsible for the conservation of a range of habitats and species in Ireland.

Of the Children and Young People's
Assembly's 58 Calls to Action:



= 3 (5.2%) are being implemented

= 52 (89.7%) are in progress

= 3 (5.2%) are not being implemented

On the following pages, you will see the Assembly's Key Messages and Calls to Action on the left-hand column. An explanation of the Irish Government's response is on the right.



Key Messages

- 1 We must treat the Earth like a member of the family or a friend.
- 2 Future generations must live in a world where there isn't a biodiversity crisis and where children don't have to take Action because of the incapability of past generations.
- 3 Every decision must take biodiversity into account.
- 4 Children and young people must be included in decisions being made about biodiversity.
- 5 Biodiversity protection must be a shared responsibility and a global, collaborative effort.
- 6 We must consume resources in a sustainable, moderate way that neither diminishes the environment/biodiversity or our rights, wellbeing and livelihoods.

The Government has promised to explore how Ireland could recognise the rights of nature.

The Government agrees with this key message, and has included a similar message in its National Biodiversity Action Plan.

This National Biodiversity Action Plan is the first one which *must* be followed because of what the law says. Public bodies (organisations that are in charge of important things such as hospitals, schools, the police) must now say how they have taken biodiversity into account when making decisions.

The Government has promised to create a Children and Young People's Biodiversity Forum so they can get involved in important decisions. This is explained in its National Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Government agrees with this key message, and has included that protecting biodiversity is a shared responsibility in the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Government has created a National Food Waste Prevention "Roadmap" which explains what the food waste situation is in Ireland, and what needs to happen to reduce food waste by a half by 2030.



Calls to Action



Theme 1



1 Make biodiversity and climate education mandatory for children and young people at every level.

The Government is working with the departments responsible for education, children and young people, and biodiversity. This includes the 'Heritage in Schools' programme where experts will visit primary schools (in-person or virtually) to help children and their teachers learn about and appreciate their local heritage. They are also introducing 'Climate Action and Sustainable Development' as a subject for fifth-year students in some schools from 2024.

2 Provide biodiversity education outside of schools (i.e. community learning, on TV, social media, cartoons, comedy, podcasts) for people of all ages.

The Government is working with Sustainable Media Ireland to increase its focus on biodiversity. The Government is also supporting public libraries to share information about sustainable development (including biodiversity) and supporting awareness campaigns and activities, for example, through the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Education and Biodiversity Officers.

3 Fund local community Action groups for biodiversity so people can learn, share ideas and inspire and encourage others to take Action.

The Government has agreed to build support for community biodiversity projects.

4 Provide education to farmers on how to farm in a way that protects and restores biodiversity, including encouraging a variety of methods for farming (e.g. diversified farming, no monocultures).

5 Help farmers to become community leaders to inform and inspire other farmers to make changes needed to value, protect and restore biodiversity.

6 Make sure the media gives the same amount of coverage to biodiversity news as to economic and business news. Media coverage should include details and numbers (in a similar way to the COVID-19 pandemic reporting) and less negative portrayals of animals (e.g. sharks).

The Government explains that it already supports education for farmers including the Knowledge Transfer programme. They have also created new actions to support farmers in the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Government supports the Farming for Nature initiative and a programme for sharing information about sustainable agriculture. They are giving funding to farmers to be community leaders by farming in a way that supports biodiversity.

The Government explains that the law already states that *Coimisiún na Meán*, Ireland's Media Regulator, must promote the development of programmes about the environment (including biodiversity).

Theme 2



Governance

7 Every decision being made must consider biodiversity and the rights of nature.

8 Involve children and young people in decision-making so that more children and young people are given the chance to speak about climate change and biodiversity.

9 Enforce existing environmental protection laws by putting more money into enforcement (as existing incentives haven't been successful).

10 Make sure businesses and industries have regulations so they work in green ways.

11 Give incentives to people to persuade them to make changes, especially farmers, business people, and companies.

The Government has promised to explore how Ireland can recognise the rights of nature. Public bodies (organisations that are in charge of important things such as hospitals, schools, the police) must now say how they have considered biodiversity when making decisions.

The Government has promised to create a Children and Young People's Biodiversity Forum - a group for children and young people to get involved in important decisions too.

The Government has promised to improve how wildlife laws are enforced.

The Business for Biodiversity Ireland platform will support Irish businesses to assess and report on their impacts on biodiversity.

See response above for Call to Action 10 for businesses. There will also be incentives to the farmers to support biodiversity action.

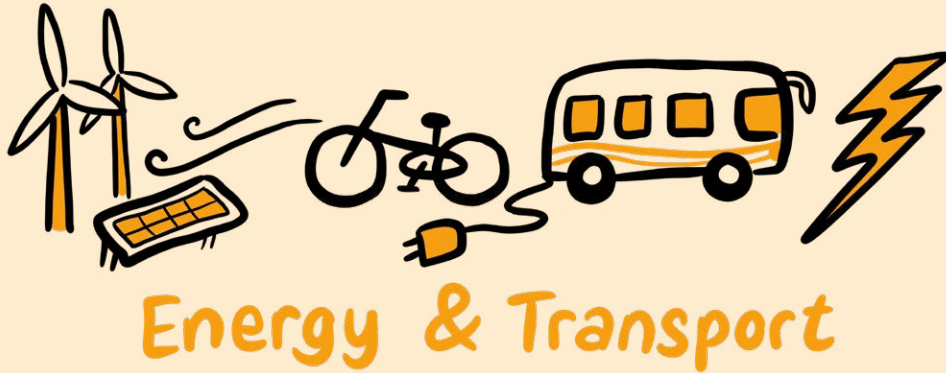
- 12 Put lower prices on stuff we really need and put higher prices on stuff we want but don't necessarily need.
- 13 Put a tax on expansion into biodiversity rich areas (i.e. it should be more expensive to carry out development work/building in biodiversity rich areas).
- 14 Invest in conservation efforts, species protection and environmental causes, and give funding to environmental charities.
- 15 Set up a permanent Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, and make sure this Assembly's Calls to Action are carried out and not just forgotten.

Ireland (as part of the European Union) has started using taxes to reduce pollution and protect nature. These taxes make it more expensive to use fuels that harm the environment and encourage people to use cleaner options for the things they buy.

The Government is not going to do this.

The Government has agreed to better protect conservation sites, species and habitats. The Government will also provide some funding to environmental non-governmental organisations.

The Government will set up a Children and Young People's Biodiversity Forum as part of their latest Biodiversity Plan.



Energy & Transport

16

Turn Ireland's energy green by: Cutting out non-renewable forms of energy (i.e. ban coal, peat and oil); Investing in research into new green energy sources, technologies and generators; Increasing wind turbines - every house should have a wind turbine!; Using kinetic energy in busy places to power electrical needs nearby e.g. kinetic energy generated from both people walking and vehicles driving in towns and cities could provide electricity to homes and businesses; Providing support and funding for people to install solar panels in their house.

17

Improve public transport so that it is good enough to be the preferred option for people. This would include: - Making it cheaper - Expanding tram and train networks outside of Dublin - Replacing parts of the existing road network with trams and trains, and rewilding redundant roads - Encouraging one car per household - Encouraging car sharing.

Ireland has committed to become climate neutral by 2050 and reduce its emissions by 51% by 2030. This is part of the law: the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

The Government's Climate Action Plan (2024) explains how it plans to do this. Examples include its Small-Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (which includes small-scale generators) and grants for installing solar power equipment. The Environmental Protection Agency is funding research and innovation in environmental technologies.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has added (and improved) bus routes, including over 60 new routes in rural areas in 2023. They also created 190km of walking and cycling paths, 54km of greenways and four new pedestrian and cycle bridges.

The Government has made public transport 20% cheaper for adults and 50% for those under 26.

In 2024, the Government gave the

18

Reduce use of fossil fuels and CO2 emissions by: Stopping production of new diesel and petrol cars and making the sale of existing diesel and petrol cars more expensive; Encouraging the sale and use of affordable electric cars; Creating more bike lanes and footpaths; Lowering the number of petrol stations and factories that use fossil fuels.

19

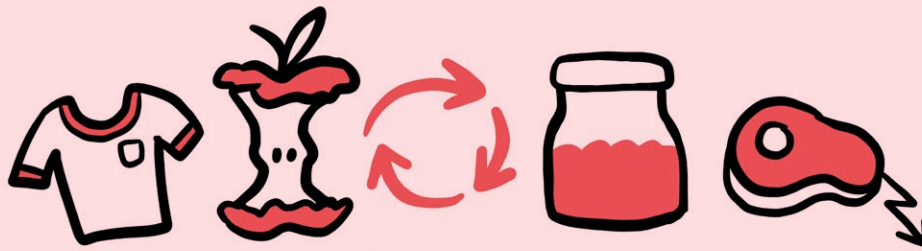
Reduce the need for mining through improved recycling and reusing materials (e.g. electric car batteries) so that environments and habitats are protected from being destroyed.

NTA €290 million to put towards over 800+ active travel and cycling projects in local areas. It has also taken big steps to improve planning for BusConnects, DART+ and Metrolink.

See above. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland is also giving grants for using electric vehicles.

This Calls to Action fits with the national Circular Economy policy which explains Ireland's steps to reducing waste.

Theme 4



Waste & Consumption

20 Ban single-use plastic.

The following Calls to Action fits with the national Circular Economy policy which explains Ireland's steps to reducing waste.

21 Make shops and businesses take back and correctly dispose of their waste by law.

See above.

22 Create refill stations across Ireland (i.e. refilleries/eco-shops for food and other products).

See above.

23 Reduce clothes waste and fast-fashion.

See above.

24 Create more specified recycling systems.

See above.

25 Stop sewage pollution.

The Environment Protection Agency is responsible for investigating complaints of pollution and for enforcing environmental laws in Ireland. This includes water pollution. The Government is funding Uisce Éireann (UÉ) who are responsible for Ireland's water services including treating waste water. The Government has already created plans to stop raw sewage being put into water sources where it is still happening.

26 Stop pollution of all waters (i.e. rivers, lakes, oceans).

26 Reduce meat consumption by: - Introducing a meat tax
- Stopping the slaughtering

27 of animals unless we really need it - Creating more farms for producing vegetables rather than for feeding animals

28 Encourage people to grow more vegetables for themselves.

29 Encourage plant-based food / vegetarian diets.

30 Reduce food waste by educating people and companies about how they can do this, and repurposing food waste into sources of energy.

31 If building new homes, build upwards, not outwards. Otherwise, use current housing stock and fix derelict, abandoned

The Government has agreed to protect and restore Ireland's natural waters in line with the rules set by the European Union.

There is increased global demand for meat. Because cows and sheep can be outside for most of the year,

Ireland is in a good position to produce meat sustainably. Most of Ireland's meat is exported to other countries. The Government is also supporting the farming of fruits and vegetables.

The Government is trying to increase the demand for local, in season, fresh, quality fruit and vegetables by educating people on their benefits. They are running campaigns, and working with local authorities to support allotments and community gardens, and encourage growing fresh produce.

The Government is reviewing scientific evidence to create new guidelines to support healthy eating with a particular focus on food sustainability. Education resources for the public will be available to help them eat more sustainably.

This Call to Action fits with the national Bioeconomy Action Plan.

The Government is offering incentives and other measures (such as empty property and refurbishment grants) so current housing stock is used.

buildings for people to live in.

32

Make sustainable living more affordable and therefore more achievable.

There are a number of initiatives to encourage sustainable living, including lower mortgage rates for energy-efficient homes, and grants for retrofitting and electric cars.



Restoring & Rewilding

33

To restore and rewild environments which support our biodiversity, including urban and rural places, and develop national parks with the people who might work in these places. - Make more national parks, nature reserves, protected areas and safe spaces (a mix of private and public spaces) for animals and different habitats by:

- Creating more policies for protecting and restoring biodiversity
- Giving more land to biodiversity
- Offering to pay people money to encourage them to turn private land into national parks
- Giving benefits to landowners and farmers to take Action on their land to encourage biodiversity
- Making biodiversity the main focus of all Tidy Towns groups instead of tidiness

The Government supports the creation, expansion and improvement of national parks. *Coillte*, who manage forests in Ireland, have agreed to expand the area of forests they manage for nature. The Tidy Towns programme has a focus on biodiversity. Community groups are being encouraged to produce local biodiversity plans with ecologists.

- 34 Restore and reintroduce native species including trees, plants, flowers and predators (e.g. wolves).
- 35 Make more green spaces in cities and urban areas.
- 36 Fund more rangers, forest keepers and other green jobs.
- 37 Give money and support to people who might lose their jobs so they can find green jobs.
- 38 When developing new buildings, don't disturb rivers - protect their natural movement.
- 39 Reforest Ireland! Every time someone is born, a tree should be planted so over time we will have forests full and protected for nature.

The Government is supporting Local Authorities and other public bodies to support native tree planting. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is running birds of prey reintroduction programmes.

The National Biodiversity Action Plan explains that the public and private sector have agreed to work towards 'no net-loss of biodiversity' so Ireland does not lose more biodiversity than it can protect or grow back.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service aims to hire more conservation rangers. Each Local Authority will employ a Biodiversity Officer to champion biodiversity issues. More jobs are being created in the forestry sector.

As part of its Just Transition Programme, the Government is investing up to €169 million. It is particularly focused on the Midlands.

An assessment must already be made if a protected river might be impacted by a building development. However, the Government is developing new guidelines to provide practical advice to water planners.

Ireland has a programme to create many new forest habitats. If the European Union's Nature Restoration Regulation is adopted, Ireland will add to the EU's commitment to plant three billion trees.

40 Cut down fewer trees and find new materials to replace paper.

41 Increase the number of deciduous plantations in Ireland.

42 Prevent deliberate and accidental forest fires.

The Government explains that cutting down trees is regulated in Ireland, meaning there are rules on how many and what types of trees are allowed to be cut down. Most trees that are cut down must be replaced.

The Government's Forest Programme 2023-2027 explains different options for planting mixed-tree forests. Ireland has committed to planting 50% broadleaf trees, and is on its way to achieving this.

The Government has agreed to develop a National Fire Management Strategy.



Habitat & Species Protection

43

Control and manage invasive species by:

- Not bringing them into Ireland
- Inspecting goods being shipped to Ireland
- Paying people to locate invasive species
- Trapping and releasing to a 'new habitat' (i.e. an animal sanctuary).
- Introducing and enforcing fines for bringing them in (*fines proportional to wealth).
- Using camera traps to detect invasive species
- Raising awareness/ telling people about them (through multiple channels - podcasts, social media, comedy)
- Making them illegal
- Telling people not to release them
- Telling people if you see them

There is a list in the National Biodiversity Action Plan about what actions the Government is taking to control invasive species.

44 Prevent people from disturbing bogs, wildlife and animals in their natural habitat.

45 Create more hedgerows and ditches by providing incentives/rewards for reducing hedge/grass cutting and rewilding hedgerows.

46 Create a network of wildlife corridors, paths, tunnels and bridges across Ireland.

47 Make cats wear bells (to alert birds to their presence).

48 Stop hunting endangered species and birds in the wild.

49 Create a penalty point system to stop further destruction of habitat loss. The more points you get, the more severe the penalties become e.g. if a company is illegally dumping, some of their assets (like properties) should be seized.

The Government is supporting Local Authorities and other public bodies to support native tree planting. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is running birds of prey reintroduction programmes.

The Government has agreed to support farmers to protect, restore and create biodiverse landscapes. This includes incentives to plant new hedgerows and look after existing hedgerows.

The Government created 54km of greenways in 2023. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has created a Landscape Plan to make sure biodiversity is part of major transport developments. Many Local Authorities are creating new green places and buildings. Farmers are being given incentives to create biodiverse areas on their land.

The Government will include this recommendation on a leaflet they are creating about how to be a responsible cat owner.

The Government has rules on what can be hunted at what time of the year - including birds and mammals. This is called the Open Seasons Order. It includes species not to be hunted.

The Government will think about this when it next reviews its Wildlife Act.

Theme 7



Overexploitation

50 Stop the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides. This would include: - Preventing people from spraying plants with pesticides and chemicals - Making sure farmers do not spread chemicals on the roads

51 Support farmers to grow organic because they are better for the environment and our health.

52 Provide greater incentives to reduce methane

53 Enforce regulations and quotas on hunting/ exploitation of certain types of species (endangered/ protected species). Fine people if they break the quota.

The Government has rules about the sale and use of pesticides, in line with rules that the European Union has set.

The Government supports farmers to change their methods to organic farming.

In its Climate Action Plan, the Government explains how Ireland will reduce methane emissions including: improving the quality of cows, adopting more sustainable fertilisers and new technologies, and using land in better ways. They also created the Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025 which explains this in more detail.

The Government is protecting certain animals under the Wildlife Act.

54 Reduce overgrazing to limit impacts on grassland habitats. Provide schemes, subsidies and support to farmers so they don't have to overexploit in the first place.

55 Give farmers money to support them to make the changes needed.

56 Place limits on people for doing different things during different seasons e.g. hunting, farming, fishing.

57 Halve the size of the national cow herd.

58 Stop overfishing through having restrictions, quotas and regulations on fishing practices (only ethically-caught fish).

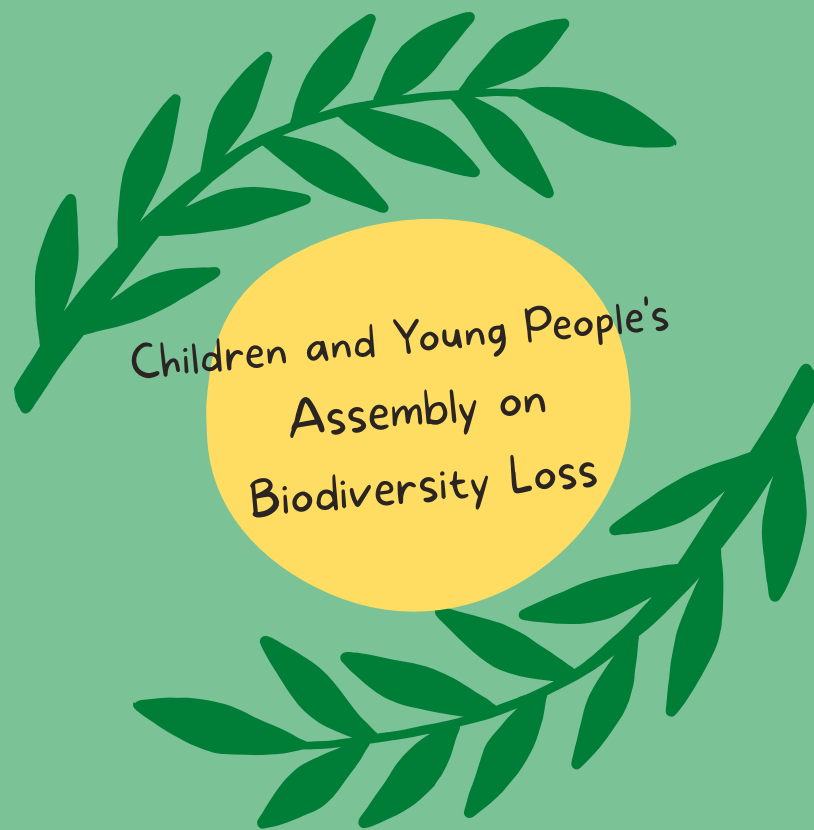
The Government is providing incentives to farmers to encourage farming practices that are good for the environment.

The Government is helping farmers to plant more trees and keep habitats for the animals who need to live there.

To protect key species, people require a license (and to follow rules) for certain activities.

For the time being, no decision has been taken by the Government to reduce the number of cows.

The European Union's Common Fisheries Policy sets out the plan for how Ireland should conserve its fish stocks, and fish sustainably. The Seafood/Offshore Renewable Energy Working Group has developed a guide on finding the balance between eating seafood and the climate emergency. Marine Protected Areas and fisheries both have a role in protecting habitats and certain species.



Find out more about the Assembly at

www.cyp-biodiversity.ie