



**Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil:** CLW-C10-86

**Stádas:** Submitted

**Aighneacht:** Environment Natural Heritage

**Údar:** Margaret Brennan

**Comhairliúchán:**

Draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

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## Litir Chumhdaigh

I am making this submission motivated by increasing and urgent concerns I have about the depletion of biodiversity from our environment/the climate emergency and the knock-on effects this will have on future generations.

### Tuairimí:

#### Chapter 5: Sustainable Travel and Transportation

**Caibidil:** Volume 1: Written Statement » Chapter 5: Sustainable Travel and Transportation

We need safe walking and cycling route provision all over the county.

I want to state clearly that we should NOT try to achieve this objective at the expense of the few remaining and critical natural environments which still exist such as the Barrow track. This river environment must be protected as it is. Ecologists generally agree that the river and river bank are not separate environments and need to be protected as a unit. Many of the invertebrates in the river complete some part of their life cycle on the riverbank and need it. Likewise some of our waterbirds feed on the bank vegetation. Pristine water quality is a direct result of a healthy river ecosystem.

What I am asking for is a close examination of all routes through the county/towns and villages. Opportunities for creating safe cycling and walking routes need to be incorporated into this plan. This will address the climate issue by reducing emissions along with being a huge benefit to the health and well-being of our communities.

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#### Chapter 9: Landscape and Green Infrastructure

**Caibidil:** Volume 1: Written Statement » Chapter 9: Landscape and Green Infrastructure

I am asking you to please provide a biodiversity officer for the county. It is an absolute necessity at this point. We are in the midst of a huge crisis for our wildlife. We humans are only a species among species and all of our lives and well-being is intertwined. A biodiversity officer is the absolute minimum needed at this point to provide a focal point and leadership for projects to address the various species declines.

I would like to see the benefits of biodiversity being clearly stated in this plan and in turn adequate funding be provided for projects contributing to biodiversity enhancement. Project Carlow 2040 acknowledges the link between access to nature/biodiversity and human health and well-being.

At a minimum all existing green spaces need to be protected. We need lots more suitable trees in our urban settings all over the county. Further acquisition of land for planting of native woods will address the biodiversity and climate crisis whilst providing some amenity for communities.

Swift populations in the county need monitoring and protection. We need to protect existing colonies and enhance their nesting opportunities. We are very lucky to have existing populations in Carlow town and in Leighlinbridge, Ballon, Bagenalstown, Tullow and Clonegal. Perhaps an opportunity exists for Carlow to take a lead in Ireland on swifts, and establish a Swift town or county. New public buildings could incorporate swifts bricks providing inbuilt nesting opportunities for swifts. Refurbishment of old buildings needs to take existing populations into consideration before any work commences.

A workshop for architects and planners could raise awareness around the need to take swifts, bats and other wildlife into consideration at the early stages of planning developments. There could be a requirement built into the planning laws to ensure minimum requirements for biodiversity are met as new developments proceed.

There is an opportunity here around wastewater treatment too, constructed wetlands could be used to treat wastewater whilst simultaneously providing habitat for wildlife. Public amenity access might also be possible here, making triple use of the area.

Peatlands are very scarce in Carlow so special consideration and protection of existing areas in Drummin and the Red Bog adjacent to Coillte owned land in Tomard Upper should be given, in consultation with the local communities and adjacent landowners. Wonderful and special wildlife exists or has existed here (such as the marsh fritillary butterfly, red grouse, golden plover, snipe and so on, along with rare plants).

All of the different habitats within the county do provide opportunities for nature based tourism if properly managed and sustained.

Carlow has adopted the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan so it should now be quickly enacted on all public lands. This will provide a lead to other sectors of the community to get involved.

We have a problem with several invasive species in Carlow so we need a plan and implementation of same for the county.

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## **Chapter 10: Natural and Built Heritage**

A biodiversity officer for the county is an absolute minimum requirement and starting point if we are to seriously set about addressing the challenges out there for biodiversity in our county. One needs to be appointed as soon as is possible.

Barn owl numbers are under serious threat and a significant number of mortalities of barn owls have been noted in the recent past due to their low flying over motorways. Action needs to be taken to alleviate this situation.

A workshop for architects and planners could raise awareness around the need to take swifts, bats and other wildlife into consideration at the early stages of planning developments. There could be a requirement built into the planning laws to ensure minimum requirements for biodiversity are met as new developments proceed.

There is an opportunity here around wastewater treatment too, constructed wetlands could be used to treat wastewater whilst simultaneously providing habitat for wildlife. Public amenity access might also be possible here, making triple use of the area.

Please protect the floodplains of the River Barrow as they provide flood relief for all our riverside towns and are very important for seasonal wetland birds such as Golden Plover, Lapwing and Curlew. It would be more appropriate now to look at providing financial assistance to landowners suffering from seasonal flooding in view of the ecosystem services this is providing, rather than engaging in infrastructural flood relief programmes.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl

**Teorainneacha Gafa ar an léarscáil:** Níl