

**Pollinator Trail Belcamp - SHD Planning Application 2022**



**Client : Gerard Gannon Properties**



## **All – Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025**

Creating an island where pollinators survive and thrive. The loss of natural and semi – natural habitats has been the key driver in pollinator decline. At its core, the Pollinator Plan is about providing food and shelter across all types of land so that our pollinators can survive and thrive. It creates a framework to bring together pollinator initiatives across the island, so that through coordination and cooperation, we can achieve our goal.

### **Why Protect our Pollinators?**

To protect pollination service, we need to protect as much wild pollinator diversity as possible. Because different wild pollinator species are active at different times of the day and at different times of the year: have varying behavior, body size and tongue length, flight distances, habitat and foraging preferences, and susceptibility to stressors, they vary in the plant species they pollinate.

Studies have shown that, around the world, crop pollination and yields increase when there is more diversity of these traits in agricultural systems, when there are more species of pollinators, and when pollinators are more abundant in general. Overall, systems that are more biodiverse tend to be more stable and more resistant to changes in climate. Thus, it is vital we conserve as much of our wild pollinator species diversity as possible

National Biodiversity puts the whole matter of Pollinators very clearly and distinctively on page 12 of the **New All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025**

### **Progress so far**

- Success in protecting our pollinators can be measured in the short, medium and long term.
- In the short –term, success lies in delivering a cohesive all-island strategy
- In the medium –term, it is the actions on the ground that change the way we manage our environment to provide pollinators with the food and shelter they need to survive
- In the long –term, success will mean a diverse pollinator assemblage across the landscape that is healthy and sustainable

**The All – Ireland Pollinator Plan (2015-2020) has achieved considerable impact :**

Amongst the achievements are recognition that The All Ireland Pollinator Plan is internationally regarded as an example of best practice, and has been recommended as a template for the development of national pollinator strategies by EU Members States

**278 businesses** have signed up as Businesses Supporters and agreed to take actions to help.

In **2018 Gannon Homes** became the first property development company in Ireland to sign up as a Business Supporter of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and has continued to develop a series of actions supporting pollinators in all its development throughout Ireland

As part of the ecological assessments for the SHD application on the lands at Belcamp within the administrative areas of both Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council the client Gannon Homes requested that special emphasis would be placed on actions to support Pollinators. Thus, with the launch of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 this spring, the opportunity to develop resources for pollinators at Belcamp was taken on board by supporting **Action 32.**

**Action 32 define** : Develop an All – Ireland Pollinator Trail across public land ,comprised of a network of sites ,demonstrating high quality pollinator/biodiversity –friendly management

The Pollinator Trail which will be developed will support pollinator friendly actions across a range of habitats on the lands at Belcamp, starting at the unique riverside public open space corridor alongside the river Mayne which has being allowed to Re wild.

The riverside corridor has evolved into a matrix of native tree and shrub species plus a herbaceous layer of vegetation based on native wild flower species, we have adopted the recommendations of the National Biodiversity Data Center allowing the seed banks in the soil to germinate and populate the surrounding area.

From late winter-spring and into summer the wild flowers have been monitored and photos kept, with a separate list of wild flowers in the index plus an invertebrate study which has been carried out on a regular basis every few weeks to establish a baseline study of what pollinators are present. This year there was a fantastic display of primroses concentrated in the area close by the river bank and the first time Cowslips began to flower, currently as writing this report coming up to mid-summer day there is a quantity of the native yellow iris in flower along the DCC side of the river.

The historic woodland corridor which was established along the open space had not been managed for a long period of time possibly 100 years and had become overgrown with sycamore and ash seedlings and a significant amount of Elm.

During spring 2021/2022 a comprehensive scheme of thinning the woodland commenced, combined with replacement planting of many trees and shrub species favorable to pollinators, including Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Chestnut, Wild Cherry other climax tree species such as Beech, Oak and Scots Pine have been added to the first phase of the woodland regeneration, ivy has been retained on most of the trees as an important food resource for pollinators in the late autumn. It is also intended to increase the floral resource on the ground floor of the woodland by adding Native Bluebells and Wild Garlic.

The River Mayne public open space corridor forms the administrative boundary between Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council and fulfills the concept of interconnecting corridors

which the All Ireland Pollinator Plan is trying to achieve which will help to foster biodiversity and maximize the positive potential for human health and wellbeing.

A decision has been made to have minimum intervention in terms of managing the area on the valley floor along the Mayne River apart from circulation routes to facilitate pedestrian, cyclists and a road system as shown on DCC Development Plan. As the area is important habitat for bats and evening flying moths which are now accepted as playing an important role in pollination, it is hoped that lighting if required will be minimal and selected to minimize impacts on protected species

Along the River, Salix species have grown and formed thick expanses of scrub with the main species being Salix Caprea and Salix Viminalis very important as a resource for pollinators early in spring, as they beginning to breed after winter hibernation. It is intended to extend willows along the river and introduce some additional species including Blackthorn, Hawthorn and more Wild Cherry to provide a greater range of resources.

The Appropriate Assessment has outlined that the River Mayne at this location is of County Status and the relatively wild and natural state of the lands along the river corridor are an important biodiversity asset.

In terms of the pollinator trail the river forms a Green link through a network of open space eventually connecting to the Biosphere at Baldoyle. Along this route pollinators corridors have already being developed at Father Collins Park and at Clongriffin, the route being planned at Belcamp can be seen as an extension of the Green link and will facilitate pollinator

connections in a north south directions linking into the open space areas associated with the apartments development associated with the DCC part of the SHD, vegetation corridors are being provided to link with existing areas along the R139 ,just a short distance away well within the flight capacity of a range of pollinators is Belcamp Park at which Rewilding has already resulted in a massive biodiversity gain for the area .

Within the SHD lands at Belcamp the scheme has being designed to facilitate corridors North /South and East/West so that hedgerows can be retained and supplemented with new areas all based on native Irish plants as recommended by National Biodiversity in their pollinator guides.

The pollinator trail will follow along by the ponds at which Salix species, Flag Iris, Water mints and other native species will enhance resources for pollinators. Proceeding in a North/South direction the pollinator trail will follow the biodiversity loop shown on the master plan via the woodland and connect to the historic walled garden in which a significant design element will be focused on providing resources for people and pollinators. These will include a apple orchard based on native Irish apple cultivars, trained fruit trees on walls, wild flower meadow based on native species and ornamental plantings which will be pollinator friendly.

Providing resources for pollinators is only one element and it is equally important that nesting areas are provided for bumblebees, hoverflies, dragonflies, and other insects throughout the network of public open spaces, woodlands and hedgerows. This involves taking an informed approach to management of open spaces, providing stick plies for nests, realizing that sandy banks can be habitat for mining bees, limiting usage of herbicides and other chemicals, in effect allowing nature space to develop.

**Gannon Homes** want to make Belcamp a **Pollinator friendly development** in all respects and are looking at innovative ways in which supporting pollinators can be extended to the private residential properties which are scheduled to be developed as part of the SHD process on the lands associated with Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council.

In my work supporting pollinators I engage with National Biodiversity Data Center and a similar organization in USA – The Xerces Society. A very successful program of outreach which has been developed has been the provision of pollinator seeds to communities and individuals allowing a wider and diverse flower resources to be provided through the area. This type of engagement as a citizen science process would be unique and a first in Ireland.

## How Would it Work?

- Front Gardens are planted with plants attractive to Pollinators
- Pollinator seed packs and plants to attract Bumblebees, Butterfly's will be made available to householders
- The Walled Garden had been designed as a Pollinator friendly location
- Interpretation boards to be erected along the route of Pollinator Trail
- As of Spring 2022 Cowslips, Primroses, Bluebells, are already recolonizing the woodland ,significant areas of wild primrose have developed along the southern side of the Mayne River Corridor



## **Actions Supporting Pollinators at Belcamp**

- Continue replanting the woodlands with native species
- Enhance planting of Salix species by River Mayne for spring flower resources
- Extend planting of Native Bluebells and wild Garlic in the woodlands
- Collect wild flower seed on site and re sow to enhance the genetic flower resource
- Sow Bluebell seed into areas of the woodland
- Sow Oak seed of Irish Provinces into the woodlands
- Retain ivy on trees being a vital flower resource for insects in late autumn
- Plant Street Trees which are of benefit to Pollinators
- Plant new areas of hedgerows using native Irish species
- Adapt grass maintenance to foster native wild flower development.

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