

Report on the public consultation process for the Draft Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan (2021-2025)



**Arts, Culture, Leisure and Recreation
Strategic Policy Committee**

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Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

This report has been prepared following the review of the public consultation process by: Lorraine Bull, Biodiversity Officer; with contribution from Maryann Harris, Senior Executive Parks and Landscape Officer, and Leslie Moore, Head of Parks Services for Dublin City Council, and Shane Casey, Acting Senior Executive Parks and Landscape Officer.

Overview of public consultation process

The preparation of the Draft Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan (2021-2025) was through direct engagement with various stakeholders identified through the implementation of the current plan. The Draft was presented to the Arts, Culture, Leisure and Recreation Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) in May 2021 and then issued for public consultation for four weeks - from May 19th 2021 through to June 16th 2021 - via the consultation portal on Dublin City Council's website: <https://consultation.dublincity.ie/parks/draft-dublin-city-biodiversity-action-plan>. Respondents could make submissions via an online portal, through the post, or to the email address: biodiversity@dublincity.ie.

Despite the challenges of public engagement during Covid-19 restrictions, the consultation was promoted through:

- Print and online media,
- Radio interviews,
- Dublin City Council Libraries,
- Advertising in the Dublin Gazette,
- Local area offices and their communications,
- Dublin City Council elected representatives and their communications, including Lord Mayor's Office,
- Community groups (including residents' associations and Tidy Towns)
- Environmental NGOs.

In total, 122 submissions were received, mostly through the online portal (112 responses), with just 10 received via email and none by post. The response rate was similar to that of other DCC online public consultations by DCC Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services. Respondents were from across society, including elected representatives, individuals, community groups, environmental NGOs and other organisations. These included:

Dublin Port Company, Irish Green Building Council, An Taisce, Coastwatch Ireland, Dublin Community Growers, Dublin Friends of the Earth, House Martin Conservation UK & Ireland, the Liffey Salmon Project, Irish Seal Sanctuary and Digital Basics.

Tidy Towns, residents' associations and heritage groups that responded were from across the city, including: Ballybough, Cabra, Clontarf, Dolphins Barn, Drimnagh, Drumcondra, Finglas, Glasnevin, Inchicore, Irishtown, Phibsborough, Raheny, Rialto, Sandymount, and Whitehall.

Respondents using the online consultation portal were asked set questions on their views on the themes of the draft plan and their awareness and activities on biodiversity issues. The following percentages represents the results from the online portal, with email responses factored into the discussion.

Results of Questions on People’s Awareness and Engagement in Activities

Responses to the importance of biodiversity to quality of life

The majority of those surveyed (89%) ranked biodiversity as very important to their quality of life, with 9% ranking as somewhat important (2% did not respond to the question).

Awareness of the European Natura 2000 sites for protected habitats and species in Dublin City

There was a 100% response rate to this question. Nearly 53% of people that responded to the plan were aware of the European Natura 2000 sites, with 47% being unaware.

Awareness of Dublin Bay designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

When asked whether they were aware of Dublin Bay being designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, 97% of respondents replied. Of these 65% answered yes, with 35% answering no.

Awareness of the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plans

Over half of those surveyed (54%) had not read the previous Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plans (100% of respondents answered this question), indicating that the public consultation process increased awareness and introduced some citizens to this policy.

The Top Three Threats to Biodiversity in Dublin City

When asked what people think are the top three threats to biodiversity in Dublin City, respondents ranked the top 3 threats in order of importance (see Figure 1). The results were: 1. Habitat loss; 2. Climate Change; and 3. Habitat fragmentation and pollution (both ranking equally).

This illustrates the need to monitor and conserve habitats of importance for biodiversity.

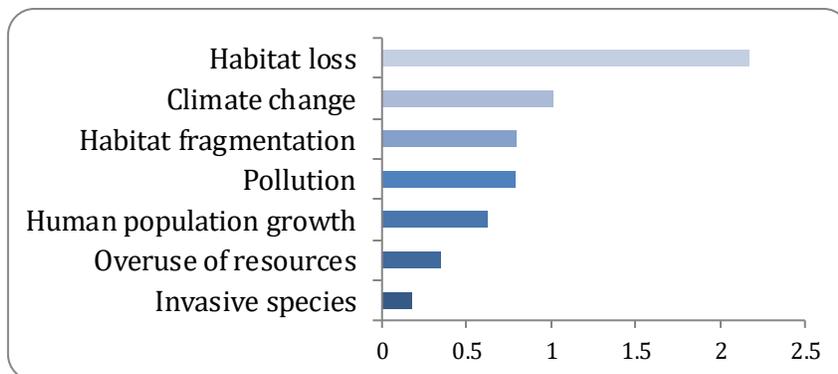


Figure 1: Ranked responses to the top three threats to biodiversity in Dublin City felt by respondents to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Have you ever taken part in any of the following structured activities for biodiversity?

When asked ‘Have you ever taken part in any of the following structured activities for biodiversity?’ nearly all of those surveyed (99%) answered (detailed in Table 1). Over 80% of respondents to this question participate in activities for biodiversity, with 7 in 10 under-taking practical activities for the environment

(clean-ups, Tidy Towns, planting). Attending biodiversity talks was popular with 61% of respondents participating in talks hosted by others and almost a third attending those by Dublin City Council. Respondents could choose more than one response. This illustrates the value of having actions 17.1-17.3.

Table 1: Responses to participation in activities for biodiversity by respondents to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Option	Total	Percent
Workshops/talks about biodiversity by City Council	35	31%
Workshops/talks around biodiversity by others	68	61%
Practical activities to help the environment	80	71%
Citizen Science projects to record biodiversity	40	36%
Other	29	26%
None of the above	20	18%
Not Answered	1	0.9%

What actions would you take to restore biodiversity in Dublin City?

There was a 100% response rate to this question with 99% respondents stating that they would take actions to restore biodiversity (detailed in Table 2). The most popular response was people taking action on their own property (81%), followed by volunteering on a restoration project in Dublin (65%), joining an organization that restores biodiversity (62%), and taking part in Citizen Science surveys (50%). These responses bode well for the plan's actions to increase information for members of the public and practical conservation and Citizen Science. When asked 'If a fund for biodiversity restoration projects existed in Dublin City Council, would you donate to it' 46% indicated a willingness to do so.

Table 2: Actions that respondents would take themselves to restore biodiversity in Dublin City in response to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Option	Total	Percent
Do work to my own property to improve biodiversity	91	81.25%
Volunteer on a restoration project in Dublin	73	65.18%
Join an organisation that restores biodiversity	69	61.61%
Volunteer to survey biodiversity in Dublin	56	50.00%
Donate to a restoration project in Dublin	51	45.54%
Other	23	20.54%
None of the above	1	0.89%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Newsletter

When asked to sign up to a biodiversity newsletter, 87.5% (98) respondents replied favourably and agreed to be contacted in future communications.

Responses to the Draft Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan

Overall, the response to the plan was positive in relation to most themes, objectives, and actions. Main concerns raised were seeking more practical actions by Dublin City Council and clarification on timelines and ensuring delivery of results. Where specific concerns were raised in relation to Dublin City Council services (planning, land use, transport, waste, or specific parks management), these will be circulated to the relevant Dublin City Council personnel.

The recurring issues that respondents raised included:

- Increasing green space and having areas set aside for biodiversity across the city.
- Sustainable development.
- Reducing mowing and having planting schemes for pollinators.
- Elimination of pesticides.
- Planting more trees and retaining mature trees.
- Having more Citizen Science projects.
- Increasing education and outreach programmes for citizens and schools.
- Working with and offering support to community groups.

Responses to whether the Biodiversity Action Plan gives a good overview of biodiversity in Dublin City

Nearly 76% of all those surveyed thought that the plan gave a good overview of biodiversity in Dublin City (85 out of 107 responses). Any negative comments ranged from not enough information in the plan to it being too complicated in parts.

Responses to whether the Biodiversity Action Plan was easy to understand

Just over half (54%) of those surveyed responded to whether the plan was easy to understand. Of these, 75% thought that it was, with some commenting that the plan was ambitious and needed more action orientated actions with specific targets.

Responses to Theme 1 - Maintaining Nature in the City

There was a response rate of 71% to the question on Theme 1. The key areas that respondents want implementation of under this theme are summarized below (Figure 2). Some respondents chose multiple answers or gave the same answer in other sections.

There is a strong request for more education and outreach by Dublin City Council on how to maintain biodiversity and a demand for increasing areas to be set aside for biodiversity, including through stronger development controls. Improving management of areas for biodiversity, protecting designated sites, reducing mowing and pesticides, and establishing wildlife corridors.

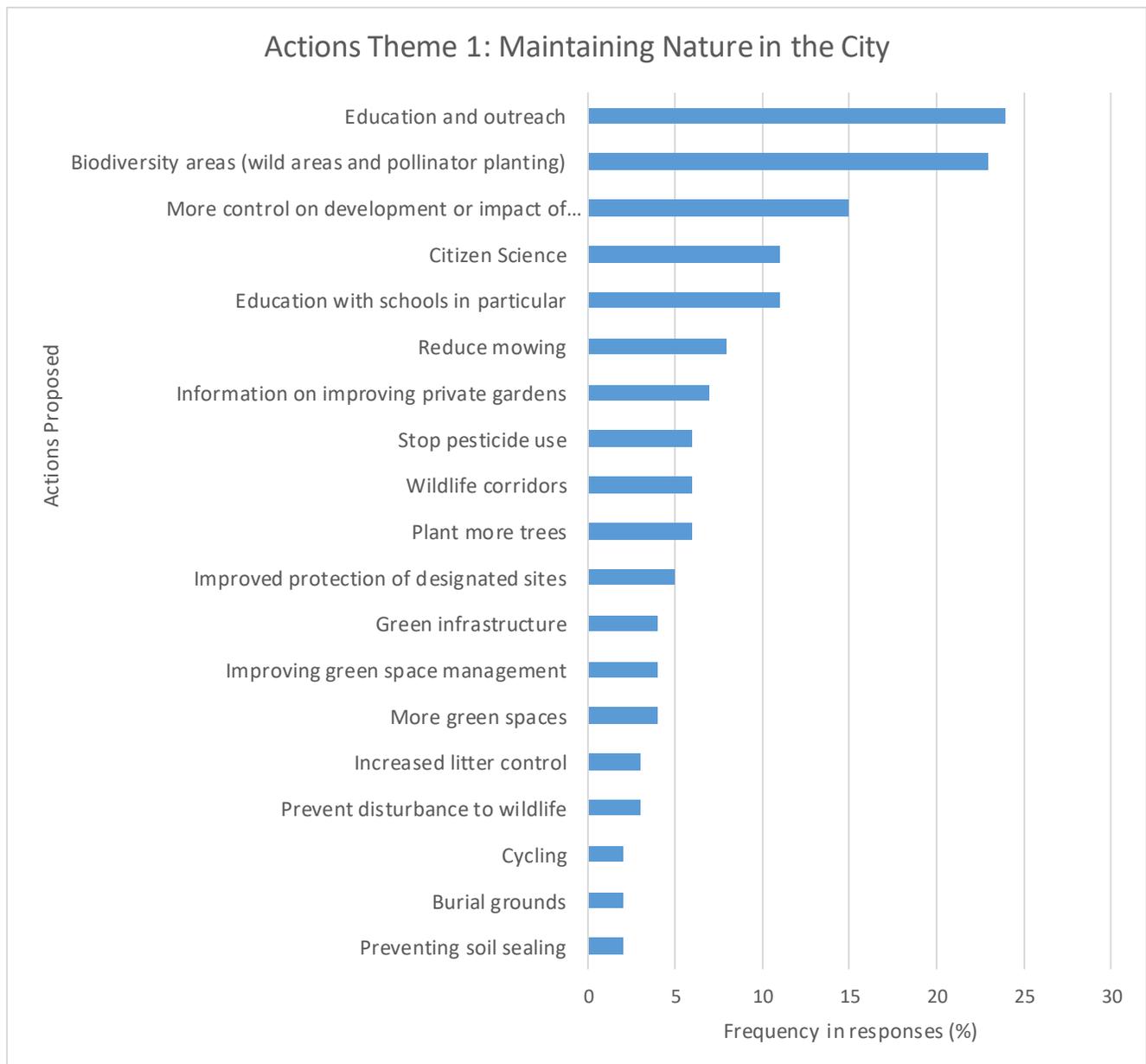


Figure 2: Actions respondents supported under Theme 1 or would like DCC to focus on in response to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Responses to Theme 2 - Restoring Nature

There was a response rate of 72% to this theme. The most popular responses to this were restoring rivers, increased areas for biodiversity, more green space, and greater education and outreach. The key areas identified are summarized (Figure 3, below). Some respondents chose multiple topics.



Figure 3: Actions respondents supported under Theme 2 or would like DCC to focus on in response to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Responses to Theme 3 - Building for Biodiversity

Two-thirds responded to Theme 3 (74 responses), the results of which are summarized in Figure 4 below. A quarter of respondents thought that increased green infrastructure is a key strategy required. Topics from other themes were highlighted with some additional comments on measures to prevent biodiversity loss in development projects. Green infrastructure was the most frequent comment with 18 responses (24%) as well as creating biodiversity areas in developments and sustainable development. There was also specific mention of installing of bat/bird boxes, more green space, restoration and protection of habitats, favouring biodiversity net gain, and producing guidelines for builders.

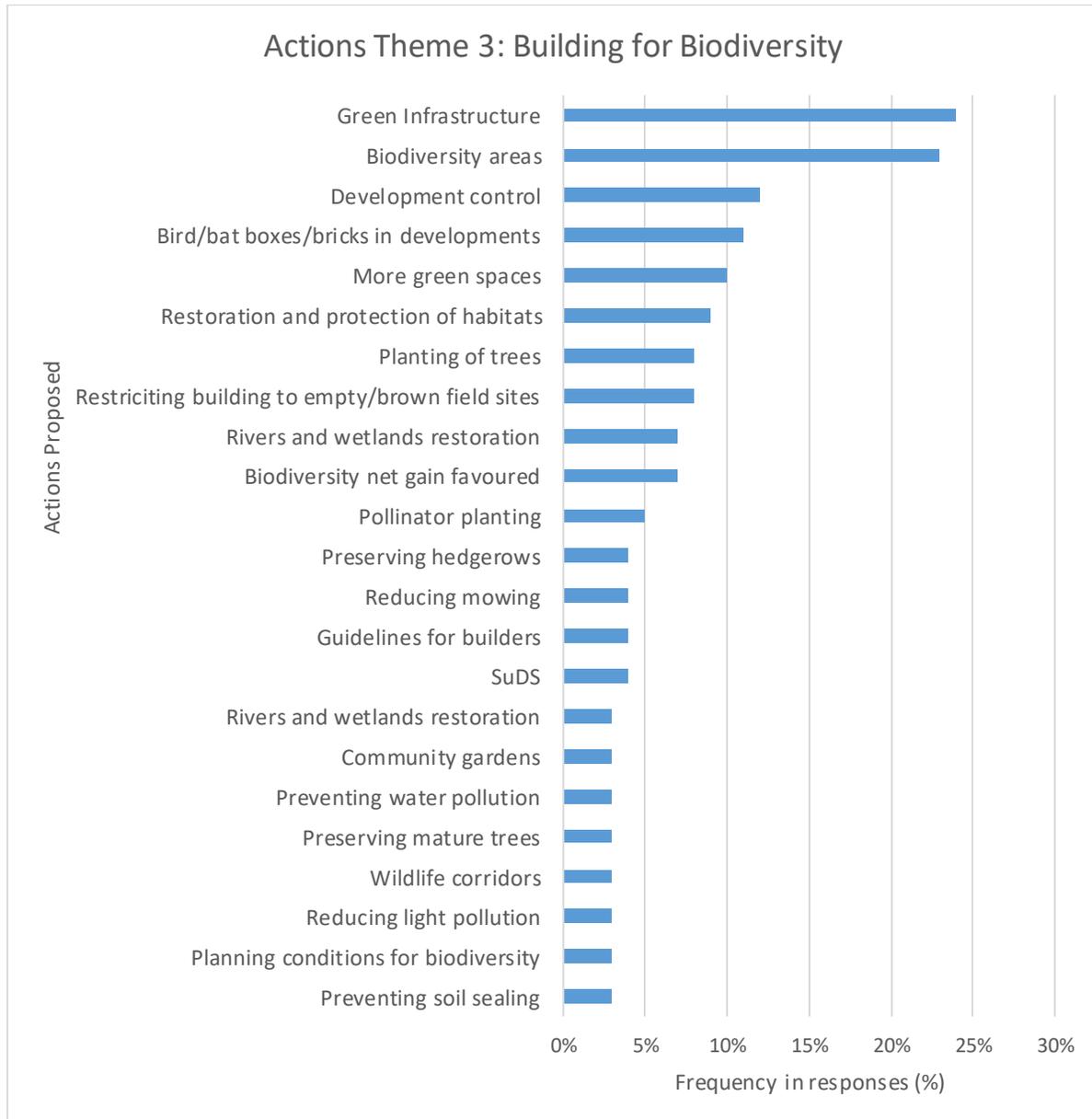


Figure 4: Actions respondents supported under Theme 3 or would like DCC to focus on in response to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Responses to Theme 4 - Green Capital City

Just over 62% of those surveyed responded to Theme 4, Dublin as a Green Capital City (detailed in Figure 5 below). There was a mixed response to the theme, with only 7% of respondents expressing to liking the idea of applying for the awards to promote biodiversity, while 20% thought that resources should be used for more practical actions. Many responded that a lot of work is required to bring Dublin to a standard in line with other European cities. The term 'green washing' was also mentioned by 4% of respondents.

When asked what Dublin City Council should do to make Dublin a Green Capital City, the respondents gave a variety of answers. The most popular were to improve green spaces and reduce traffic (both 17%), followed by pollution and education and outreach (both 11%).

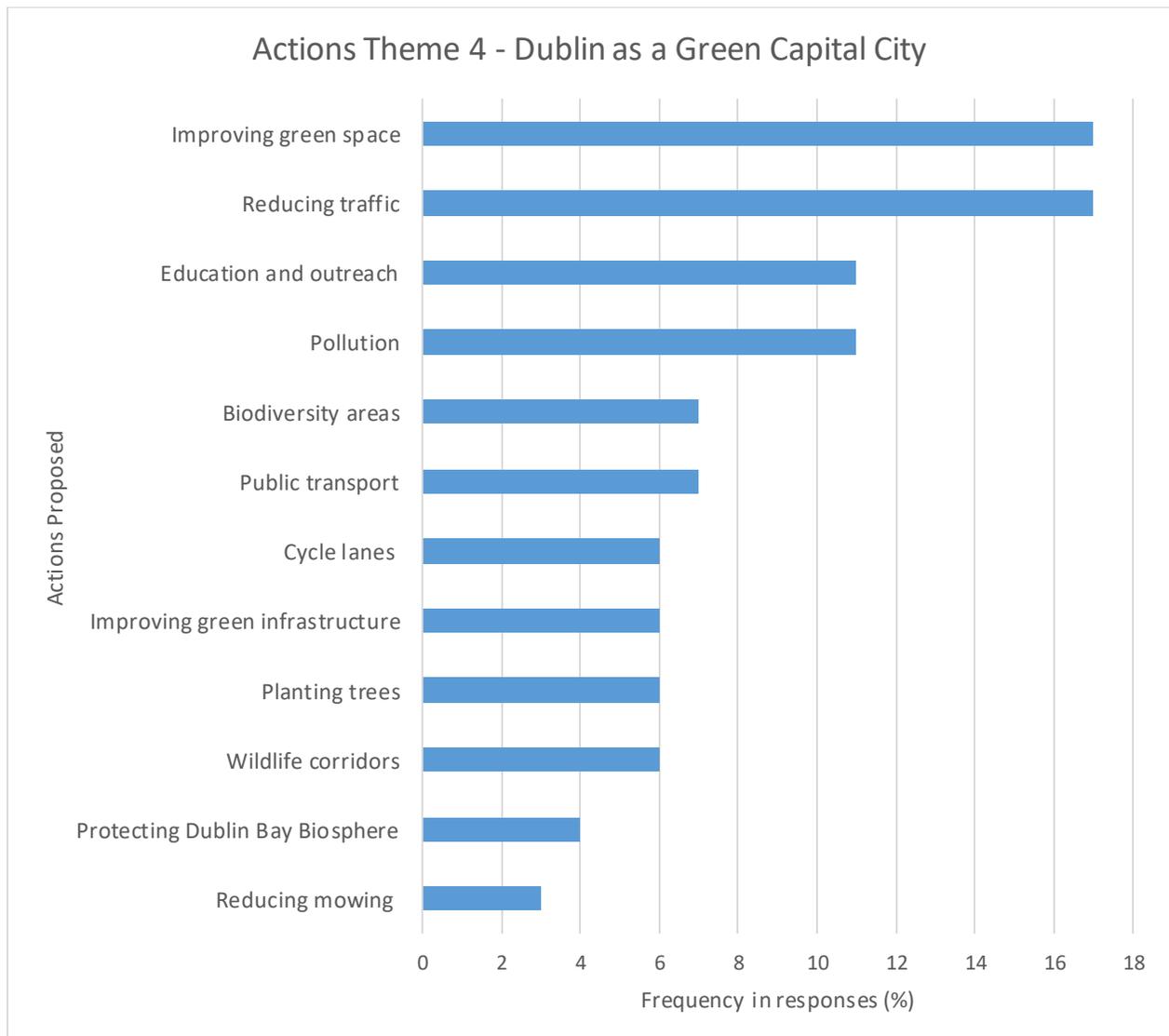


Figure 5: Actions respondents would like DCC to focus on in response to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Actions that should be done for biodiversity for Dublin City to be a Green Capital City?

When asked what should be done for biodiversity for Dublin City to be a Green Capital City, respondents suggested a variety of approaches. There was a 75% response rate (84 out of 112) to this section. The overall response was that a lot of work is required to bring Dublin to a standard to meet these objectives and match other European cities. Actions of particular note that were highlighted are detailed in Figure 6 below.

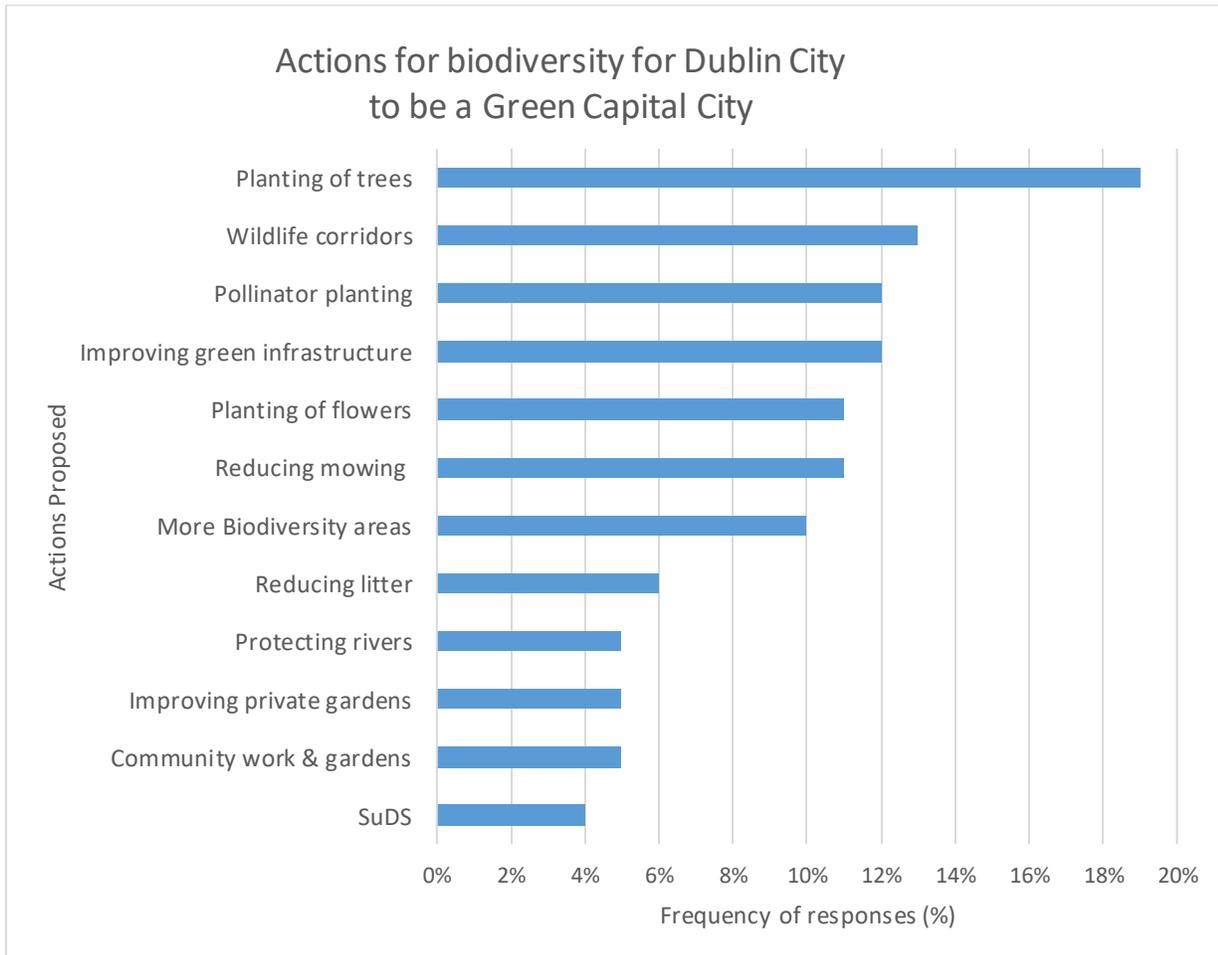


Figure 6: Actions that should be done for biodiversity for Dublin City to be a Green Capital City proposed by respondents to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Responses to Theme 5 - Understanding Biodiversity

Just over half of those surveyed (54%) responded to this theme. However, education, outreach and citizen science projects were consistently mentioned in other themes throughout the consultation process. Education at community level was the most popular suggestion, followed by providing programmes for schools. A variety of suggestions were made on how to increase outreach, with one in six focusing on citizen science as a key action.

The plan has several actions for engagement, which are favoured, overall respondents would like to see more of the following noted in Figure 7 bar chart below.

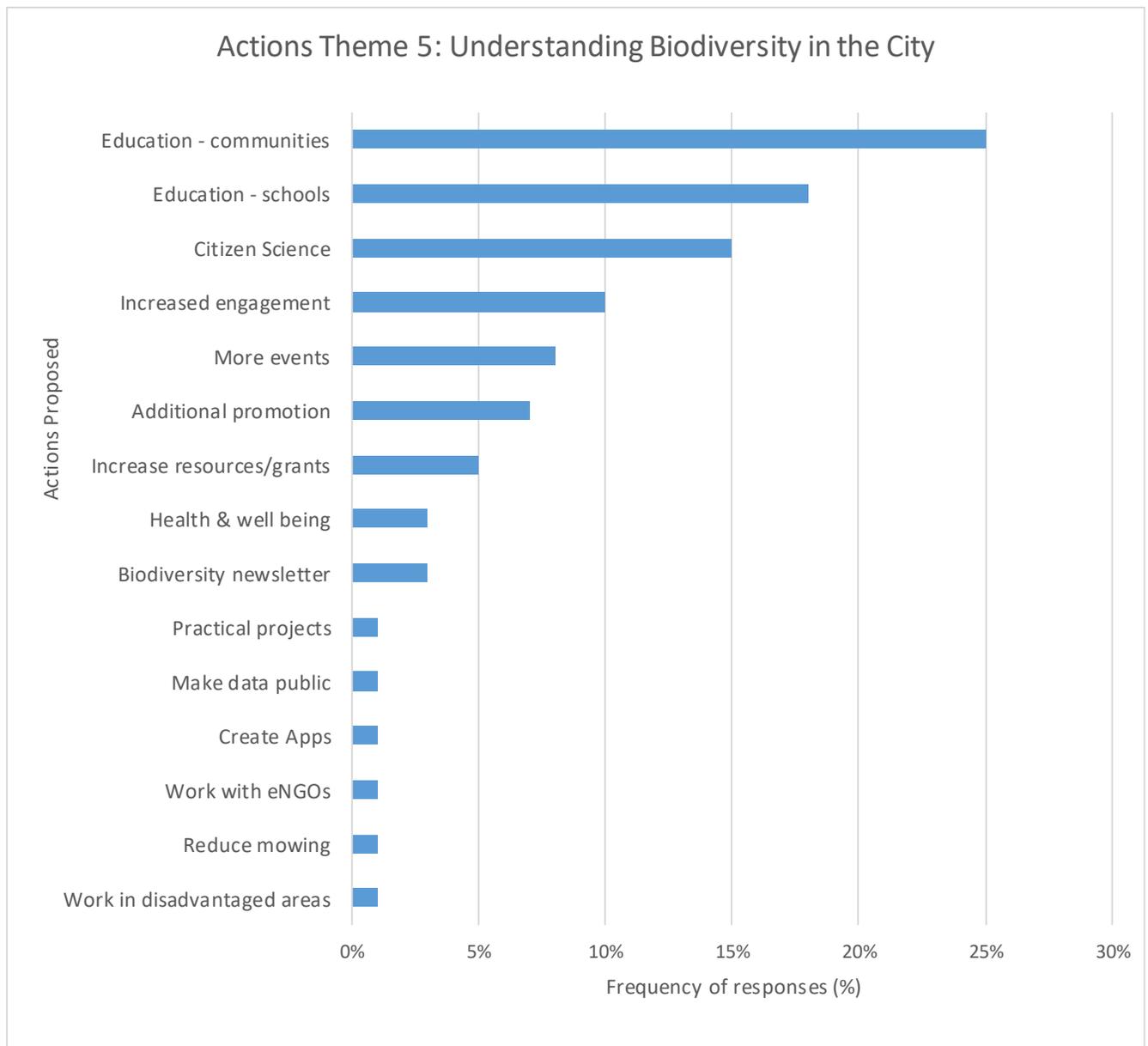


Figure 7: Actions respondents supported under Theme 5 or would like DCC to do more of in response to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Responses to Theme 6 - Partnering for Biodiversity

Just over half of respondents (53%) made a submission to this theme (59 out of 112), which is similar to Theme 5. Working with communities working with communities (17%) featured highly along with sports bodies (3%), e-NGOs (1%), youth groups (3%), senior groups (1%) and working more collaboratively with other DCC departments (7%). It was suggested to set up a 'Friends of Parks' groups for different areas, which will be considered further.

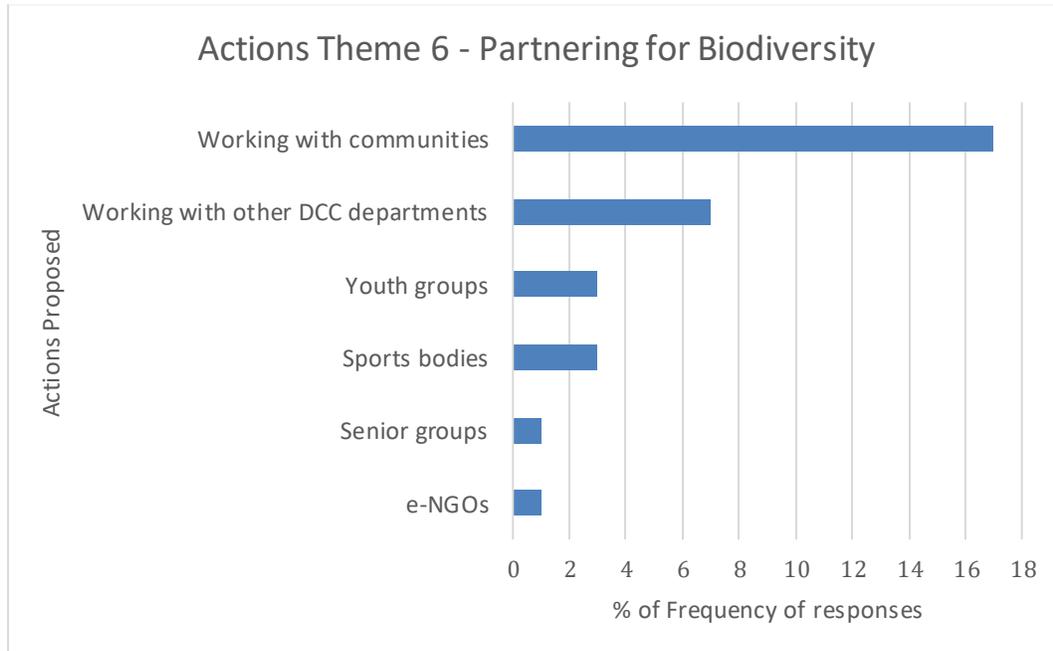


Figure 8: Actions respondents supported under Theme 6 or would like DCC to do more of in response to the public consultation on the Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan.

Other Themes and Actions Respondents Would Like DCC to Consider

When asked whether there were any other themes for us to consider for the new plan, 51% of respondents (57 responses) replied to this section. There were some suggestions that are within the framework of existing actions (e.g. education, golf courses, and gardening for biodiversity) and other DCC departments. Themes noted were:

- Education
- More on Climate Action and connection to Climate Action Plan
- Natural burial grounds
- Golf courses and urban parks
- Championing key species
- Enforcement (wildlife and litter) and wildlife disturbance prevention
- Gardening for biodiversity
- Information on what to do if you find an injured animal in a park
- Prevention of fly tipping and waste management

When asked whether there were any other themes for us to consider for the new plan, fewer than half (48%) of respondents replied (54 responses). Other actions that were suggested were as follows. Some of these are within the framework of existing actions and are identified in asterisk* below:

- More quantifiable targets and specific deadlines on actions and accountability
- More detail on implementation
- More information for private gardens*
- More on inner city greening, pesticide reduction* and reducing mowing*
- Increased control on tree removal (both on public lands and highlighting the value of trees for private gardens)
- Actions for Irish hare
- Add House martins to actions for swifts (House Martin Conservation UK and IE)
- Add an action to work on reducing light pollution*
- Local grants*
- Actions on allotments
- Education and practical actions to help combat water pollution*
- Link in with An Taisce's Green Home and Energy and Green Schools Programmes*

The following submissions are addressed by way of proposed amendments to the Draft Plan and other measures:

1. Based on a submission from House Martin Conservation UK & Ireland (HMCUK-IE), it is proposed to include House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*) alongside the actions for Swift (*Apus apus*) as it is a bird with similar requirements, migration cycles and conservation concern and it would be effective to act for both in this way.
2. A submission has recommended that Irish hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*) be included in the list of protected mammals in Dublin City and within an action, to ensure that it is monitored and managed for, given its important conservation concern and decline within Dublin City. It is proposed to amend Table 2a and Action 4.2 to include this important species.
3. A submission was to add an action to work on reducing light pollution. This will be addressed by way of a proposed Objective in the Draft Dublin City Development Plan. Therefore, it is not proposed to amend in the Biodiversity Action Plan.
4. More detail on implementation was requested. This will be way of annual reports, newsletters, and updates to Council and this SPC.
5. Actions were requested on specific categories of information, e.g., biodiversity for private gardens. As Objective 16 addresses this already in a strategic level and it is not considered necessary to create an action for each type of guidance given.
6. Increased control on tree removal (both on public lands and highlighting the value of trees for private gardens) was requested. This is being considered in detail in the Draft Dublin City Development Plan and the forthcoming City Tree Strategy. Controls must be in line with national legislation. Currently, the Forestry Act (2014) provides an exemption for urban trees from any

controls, other than if as part of a planning consent under the Planning Act or for safety reasons under the Roads Act.

7. Actions on allotments were sought. This is being considered in the Draft Dublin City Development Plan.
8. Education and practical actions to help combat water pollution were sought. This will be relayed to the appropriate Dublin City Council personnel and LAWPRO.
9. Some partner organisations and agencies that had been part of the Biodiversity Forum requested slight changes to the text in the document or decided to sign up as partners to specific actions.