



Muineachán **Monaghan** **Tidy Towns**

A Biodiversity & Development Plan for Monaghan Town
3 Year Plan | 2021 – 2024



Foreword

This is a Tidy Towns Plan. Devised for Monaghan Tidy Towns to assist them in planning their actions over a 3-year period, this plan has been drawn up in consultation with Monaghan Tidy Towns, the local authority and other statutory and voluntary groups.

After 60 years of operation, the Tidy Towns Competition continues to allow an excellent vehicle for driving community actions, although these need not be initiated, led by or even actively involve the Tidy Towns group. As the competition has evolved, it has become far more sophisticated than a mere comparison of levels of litter or floral displays. Indeed, Tidy Towns is now the largest and longest-running environmental project in Ireland.

In recent years, Monaghan Town has been transformed by the positive actions of many: The Town Council, businesses, residents and not least Monaghan Tidy Towns. One of the more remarkable successes has been in adopting and maintaining biodiversity initiatives within the town. These have been widely embraced within the town and have helped to focus efforts on our common natural environment. They have been lauded nationally too. Monaghan Tidy Towns has won 3 national awards for biodiversity projects over the last 5 years. No other town in the competition can claim this. The desire to sustain, enhance and even create biodiversity within our common living space has become a central tenet of the group and its supporters.

Since our last plan was created, a biodiversity emergency has been declared by the Dáil. We fully realize the seriousness of this declaration, its context and our need to play our part.

To address this, Monaghan Tidy Towns has taken the bold step of making our Tidy Towns Plan a **Development Plan and Local Biodiversity Action Plan** combined. This will guide the day-to-day and even year-to-year actions of the group toward our common aim of making Monaghan a Biodiversity Town.

<http://www.monaghantownbiodiversity.com>

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Document design by Laura Hannon.

About this Plan

The purpose of this plan is to allow Monaghan Tidy Towns to describe, classify and prioritise actions for the coming 3 years. Primarily, this sets out a timescale for recommended actions for the Tidy Towns group, the local authority Municipal District, other voluntary bodies and even businesses within the town. The plan was devised by a consult ecologist in consultation with the Tidy Towns group, the local authority Municipal District executive, other voluntary groups and Monaghan businesses.

This plan does not follow the typical structure of the traditional Tidy Towns Plan in that a key theme appears throughout: biodiversity.

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity or biological diversity simply refers to the variety of all living things on earth – including people, plants, animals, fungi and micro- organisms. Biodiversity is another term for nature, natural heritage, wildlife or the natural world. The term biodiversity, however, refers to more than individual species and includes the genes they contain, the ecosystems and habitats of which they form part, and also highlights the interdependence and interconnectedness of all living things.

Why is Biodiversity Important?

Biodiversity supports life on earth and is part of all our daily lives. We depend on biodiversity for clean air and water, healthy soils, food, building materials, and medicines. The importance of a healthy environment for human health and well-being is being increasingly recognised. The conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage is an integral part of good environmental management.

The attractiveness of our country as a tourist destination, a place to live and do business depends to a large extent on the rich biodiversity of the country. Our country's natural heritage contributes to the attractiveness of landscapes, villages and urban centres. Biodiversity improves the quality of life for visitors and residents alike.

Biodiversity and Tidy Towns

Biodiversity has been a part of the Tidy Towns message for well over a decade. The competition has long recognised that the wellbeing of our tidiness, villages and even city centres is enhanced by the presence of other species and the location of stable habitats for them within our living spaces. Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality attracts 50 points in the competition and as such offer major opportunities for communities to understand, conserve and enhance their local biodiversity while benefiting their overall standing in the competition. The competition also offers awards in recognition of work carried out by Tidy Towns groups in encouraging and undertaking positive action for biodiversity. In these, Monaghan Town has excelled in recent years.

Local Biodiversity

In recent times, we've seen how important it is to appreciate the huge variety and complexity of the habitats around us. We know that we don't own these, rather, we share these with other living things. As such we acknowledge that we have a responsibility to play our part in maintaining these habitats in as good a condition for as many species as possible. Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, it has been recognised that the closer to the ground that environmental actions are planned and managed, the better governance and outcomes may be expected. Thus, government policy has been to support the drawing up of action plans for biodiversity at national county and local levels. At the latter level, a Local Biodiversity Action Plan is required. This present document fulfils this role for Monaghan Town

Monaghan Tidy Towns and Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which has been adopted by all UN members. These are calls for actions within a global partnership of nations to produce a better and more sustainable future for all. These goals address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change and other key environmental issues. In 2021, Tidy Towns has adopted these goals and has integrated these into the competition which now asks participating groups to demonstrate which goals their projects and actions help to meet. To this end, we have indicated in our plan which goals may be met by the projects set out in our plan.



Introducing: Monaghan Town

The town of Monaghan is the principal town of the county and had a population of just under 8,000 people at the 2016 census. It is located to the north of the county (found at 54.247926 N and 6.970825 W, IGR H 668 338), less than 10km from the border it shares with County Armagh in Northern Ireland. Monaghan is in the heart of the Drumlin belt and it is within this landscape that the town of Monaghan lies. Several of the more prominent of the town's buildings - its hospital and cathedral - as well as its largest housing estate stand on hills overlooking the town. An interpretation of Muineachán is 'land [or area] of little hills'.

The town links two national roads, the N54 and the N2. The town was once an important railway junction of the Great Northern Railway until 1960 when the closure of the last remaining lines took place. There are now no railway services in Monaghan (although the county once had 17 railway stations!). The town also stands on the Ulster Canal, a commercial artery which, never really achieving its intended success, was abandoned in 1931, less than a hundred years since its completion. Today the Ulster Canal hosts Co. Monaghan's first Greenway. The Ulster Blackwater runs in a roughly west-east direction through the hinterlands to the north of the town. One of its tributaries, the Shambles River runs through the centre of the town (roughly south-north) and is underground for much of this part of its course.

While there is no large Town Park, Peter's Lake lies within a small park in the town centre and Rossmore Park a very large Coillte-owned estate is immediately adjacent the town to the south, linked by the Ulster Canal Greenway and footpath/cycling trails.

Monaghan's Biodiversity Hotspots

Rossmore Park

The significance of this site in terms of biodiversity, recreation, awareness and education cannot be overstated. At time of writing, the process of development of a Conservation Management Plan for the site has begun. Monaghan Tidy Towns should make timely and relevant contributions to the development and implementation of this. Multiple recreational uses of the park are in discussion. However, key biodiversity considerations are central. Supporting proposals such as the establishment of a town arboretum (e.g.) here will be a key role for the Tidy Towns group.

Peter's Lake

This unusual wetland site is extremely popular for a variety of users. To date the Tidy Towns group has been active in biodiversity awareness here. At time of writing, the site has received some negative publicity - whether deserved or not. The Tidy Towns will continue to play an active role in anti-litter activities as well as awareness of conservation issues here.

St Davnet's Hospital

This is a very significant site in terms of Monaghan's green spaces. There are more mature trees here than in any other single site in Monaghan. There is a long-established orchard here that has been refurbished after many years of neglect. There are mature hedgerows, grassland, agricultural lands (in use) and the site is bordered to the east by the Ulster Canal. In addition to this, the many old buildings here represent very significant bat and bird roost and nest habitat areas.

The Plan: Actions For Tidy Towns And Biodiversity

These are the Key Projects for Monaghan Tidy Towns for 2021-2024. These are the projects that will have the greatest impact on the town, its landscape and biodiversity over this time. They are also the projects that will demand the greatest time and resources of Monaghan Tidy Towns and its supporters.

Key Projects

Key Project 1: Green Spaces & Landscaping

Renewing the Tree Trail

A Monaghan Town Tree Trail was created by Monaghan Tidy Towns some years hence. This is to be updated to reflect the current 'tree-scape' of the town and to utilise IT to make this trail more interactive. It is suggested that a new series of trail markers is developed. This may intersect with further trails by using a common web-based self-guiding system. New mapping utilising GIS will also be proposed.

Project Period : 2021-2022



Key Project 2 : Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality

Respect the Dandelion (and other Unsung Heroes)

In 2021, Monaghan Tidy Towns launched the ‘Respect the Dandelion’ campaign to highlight the valuable role played by this common plant. MNTT will extend this campaign to laud a number of other undervalued plants and insects for the essential part they play in pollination. Ivy, Fruit Trees and even grasses may be featured in this campaign which will be carried out across the pollinator year.

Project Period : 2021-2025



Key Project 3 : Streetscape & Public Places

Biodiversity Bus Station

The Tidy Towns group are aiming to get Bus Éireann on board for this very exciting project. This will see the adapting of some areas of our Bus Station on North Road to become a valuable stage on our journey to Biodiversity Town status. The group will seek to add trees, pollinator-friendly plants, bug and bird boxes and good quality information on Monaghan Town's efforts to make this a destination for essential wild species.

Project Period : 2022-2024



Key Project 4 : Residential Streets and Housing Areas

The Green Estate Award

Monaghan Tidy Towns, in conjunction with Monaghan County Council, will plan and launch an innovative award scheme for our housing estates and areas. This will involve a long-term commitment from residents and residents' associations who will strive to make their areas better for wild species but also for themselves. The estates will receive guidance on this scheme from MNTT who will devise a series of guidelines for the initiative to include potential projects to make best use of common areas, gardens and entrances. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan will provide the underlying rationales for the Green Estates in this category.

Project Period : 2022-2024 (and ongoing)



Key Project 5 : Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes

Low-Mow – a better approach

In order to make our approach roads more wildlife-friendly, MNTT will work with Monaghan County Council and the Municipal District to implement a regime of low-intensity grass management on these thoroughfares. An awareness campaign to inform road users and residents of the rationale behind this management regime. This will include (where appropriate) signage as well as the use of social media to keep people apprised of why we're 'letting it grow wild.'

Project Period : 2021- ongoing



Key Project 6 : Green Spaces & Landscaping

St Davnet's Plan

The grounds of St Davnet's Hospital represent the largest amount of green space within the speed limited area of Monaghan town. This is an invaluable resource for people as well as pollinators, plants and birds and other animals. MNTT will work with senior staff of the HSE to develop a plan for the hospital grounds that will maximise the natural and semi-natural assets of the campus for all of the users of St. Davnet's, including the many people who work here and avail of its services.

Project Period : 2021-2023



Our Plan: Projects Planned for Year 1 (2021-2022)

PROJECT:	CATEGORY:
Updated Tree Survey: A tree survey previously undertaken is to be updated with a follow-up survey. This is to include digital (GIS) mapping.	<i>Green Spaces & Landscaping</i>
Herbicide-Free Weeding: By the end of this period, MNTT will have lobbied the Municipal District for the implementation of herbicide-free weeding in their operations.	<i>Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality</i>
Announcing Biodiversity: It has been a long-term aim of MNTT to have high quality signage at the main entrances to Monaghan. This will not only welcome visitors but announce Monaghan's status as a Biodiversity Town.	<i>Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes</i>
Animal Art: Further wildlife-themed murals are proposed for Monaghan, including on the laneways and alleyways.	<i>Streetscape & Public Places</i>
New Cinema Releases: The Tidy Towns group will repair and replace the damaged posters at the old cinema.	<i>Tidiness and Litter Control</i>
Home for Polyunnel: MNTT will seek a suitable site for a polytunnel which will save huge resources for the group and town.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Better Businesses: Monaghan Tidy Towns will resume its Monaghan: Looking Good scheme for participating businesses.	<i>Community – Your Planning & Involvement</i>
A Swift Survey: The Tidy Towns group will organise a survey for the nesting sites of this fascinating but endangered species.	<i>Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality</i>
Low-Mow N2: The Tidy Towns group will lobby the Municipal District to have a low-intensity grassland management regime put in place for the N2 Monaghan Bypass.	<i>Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes</i>



Our Plan: Projects Planned for Year 2 (2022-2023)

PROJECT:	CATEGORY:
Annual Ending: This year, Monaghan Tidy Towns will cease the use of annual planting in their planting plans.	<i>Green Spaces & Landscaping</i>
Nasturtiums not Weeds: The Tidy Towns group will use Nasturtiums to provide colourful ground cover in neglected areas around the town.	<i>Green Spaces & Landscaping</i>
Bus Station Mural: As one of the first actions of Key Project 3, MNTTS will seek the creation of a biodiversity-themed mural on the wall of the Bus Station on the North Road.	<i>Streetscape & Public Places</i>
Boxes for Business: The Tidy Towns group will facilitate the creation of pollinator-friendly window-boxes for participating businesses in the town.	<i>Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities</i>
Cottage at Drumbear: The derelict cottage at Drumbear will get a 'facelift' by the Tidy Towns group including wildlife-friendly planting here.	<i>Residential Streets and Housing Areas</i>
Out Among the Pollinators: The Crocus Garden will host a COVID-compliant outdoor meeting space for community groups and nearby residents and clients.	<i>Community - Your Planning & Involvement</i>
Killycorrigan Meadow: Monaghan Tidy Towns will work with Monaghan County Council on the development of a management plan for this site in line with All-Ireland Pollinator Plan guidelines.	<i>Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality</i>
Virtual Visits: School visits will recommence but using online technology to carry out safe virtual visits to Monaghan schools.	<i>Community - Your Planning & Involvement</i>
Follow the Greenway: Monaghan Tidy Towns will continue to work on making the existing Greenway as wildlife-friendly as possible as well as coordinating with the County Council on the development of Phase II of the Ulster Canal Greenway.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Pushing our Pollinators: The Tidy Towns group will expand on its award-winning Dispersed Urban Orchard (DUO) project by encouraging more residents to plant fruit trees at home.	<i>Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality</i>

Our Plan: Projects Planned for Year 3 (2023-2024)

PROJECT:	CATEGORY:
Pollinate the Estates: As part of Key Project 4, the Tidy Towns group will seek plants for pollinators to be used in landscape planting in our estates and residential areas.	<i>Residential Streets and Housing Areas</i>
Good Ground Cover: Monaghan Tidy Towns will be proposing the use of native Ivy as a wildlife-friendly ground cover plant.	<i>Streetscape & Public Places</i>
Cutting Back Containers: The Tidy Towns group will begin to reduce the number of resource-hungry containers and hanging baskets.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Estate Champions: The Tidy Towns group will work to find ‘champions’- local residents to take on the role of communication with estate-dwellers.	<i>Residential Streets and Housing Areas</i>
Crocus Focus: Monaghan Tidy Towns will review the status of the Crocus Garden and make improvements as required.	<i>Green Spaces & Landscaping</i>
Young Heroes: A review of the Monaghan Junior Tidy Towns will be undertaken this year.	<i>Community – Your Planning & Involvement</i>
Biodiversity at Rossmore Park: Monaghan Tidy Towns will give their support to biodiversity initiatives at Rossmore Park.	<i>Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality</i>
Worms, Turning & Training: The Tidy Towns group will carry out training for householders and gardeners in best practice composting for gardens of all sizes.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Rivers in Sight: The Tidy Towns group will work with the County Council and Inland Fisheries Ireland to have the rivers of Monaghan Town made more visible with appropriate signage.	<i>Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes</i>
Invasives Training: The Tidy Towns group will engage an expert to give training in the identification and treatment of invasive alien plant species.	<i>Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality</i>



Annual and Ongoing Projects

These are the projects that are either multi-annual or are ongoing. Monaghan Tidy Towns are to check regularly that the goals of these actions are being met.

PROJECT:	CATEGORY:
No More Herbicides: Monaghan Tidy Towns will no longer use chemical herbicides and will maintain this policy.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Annual Audit: An annual tidiness audit will be carried out to include street furniture and signage.	<i>Tidiness and Litter Control</i>
Part of a Team: The Tidy Towns group will continue to be represented on the Monaghan Town Team	<i>Community – Your Planning & Involvement</i>
Allotment Effort: The Tidy Towns group will support the excellent ongoing work of volunteers at the Monaghan Allotments.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Ongoing Participation: The Tidy Towns group will continue to be represented on the Co. Monaghan Public Participation Network.	<i>Community – Your Planning & Involvement</i>
Keeping it Clean: Monaghan Tidy Towns will continue to participate in An Taisce's annual Spring Clean.	<i>Tidiness and Litter Control</i>
Networking: Monaghan Tidy Towns will continue to play an important role in the Co. Monaghan Tidy Towns Network.	<i>Community – Your Planning & Involvement</i>
Embracing Heritage: The Tidy Towns group will undertake or assist with annual Heritage Week events.	<i>Community – Your Planning & Involvement</i>
Better Built: Monaghan Tidy Towns will lobby for any new or renovated buildings in Monaghan Town to have provision made for bird nesting and bat roosting spaces.	<i>Streetscape & Public Places</i>
Charitable Efforts: The Tidy Towns group will promote the operation of charity shops and their role in reuse and repair.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Travelling Smarter: Monaghan Tidy Towns will work with Monaghan County Council in developing and promoting the Ulster Canal Greenway as it is created.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>
Zero Tolerance: The Tidy Towns group will work with the Municipal District to remove on appearance non-licensed commercial signage.	<i>Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes</i>
Buying In: Monaghan Tidy Towns will support businesses that strive to reduce environmental impact through good practice such as sustainable waste management, repurposing of materials or local produce supply.	<i>Sustainability – doing more with less</i>

