Monaghan Tidy Towns

Monaghan: Biodiversity Town

2017-2020

A Biodiversity and Development Plan for

Monaghan Town

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.

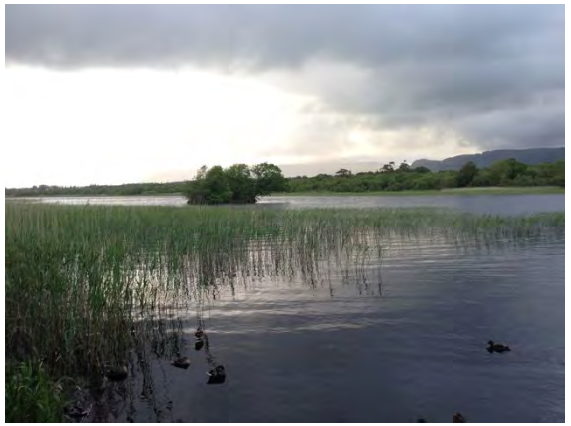
As it approaches its 60th year of operation, the Tidy Towns Competition continues to allow an excellent vehicle for driving community actions, although these need not be initiated, led by or even actively involve the Tidy Towns group. As the competition has evolved, it has become far more sophisticated 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 3 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.

To address this, Monaghan Tidy Towns has taken a bold step. As its existing 3-Year Plan reaches the end of its span, its successor is to be 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

PART 1. INTRODUCTION



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 Department of the Environment 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. Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities 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.

What's the Local Biodiversity Action Plan For?

The purpose of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is to provide relevant and locally-based recommendations for the management and enhancement of habitats for the benefit of native species. Now, this may involve areas that are already of high value but more usually it makes recommendations to improve or enhance areas of our own living spaces and activity in order to increase their value as habitat for species other than humans. This might include simple actions such as putting up bird boxes - a regular Tidy Towns activity - but may also involve more complex actions such as species surveys and monitoring and habitat creation. The following section of this document (Section 2) describes some of the key spaces and places for biodiversity within Monaghan. The next section forms the plan for 2017-2018 (the Tidy Towns year). Section 4, the final part, sets out in tabular fashion the recommended actions for this and the following two years.

Invasive Species

Two non-native invasive species 'listed' by the National Biodiversity Data Centre occur within the area covered by this plan. Another lower-risk species occurs. Invasive species are among the greatest threats to biodiversity worldwide. An important function of this LBAP is to give guidance on management of these.

Awareness

One of the most important functions of a Tidy Towns group is the dissemination of high quality environmental information for the promotion of awareness within their town or village. Equally, a Biodiversity Action Plan must contain useful and practical information for the group on how to go about this. Incorporated within every section of this Tidy Towns Plan is guidance on how Monaghan Tidy Towns can continue to take the lead in providing locally relevant and applicable information on the conservation and enjoyment of biodiversity in Monaghan.

PART 2. PLACES AND SPACES FOR BIODIVERSITY

i. Places for Biodiversity: Monaghan Town - *sites important for biodiversity*

First: An Introduction to Monaghan

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 2011 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 *Muineachan* 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 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.

Designated Sites

There are no sites designated for nature conservation within Monaghan Town at time of writing. However, close to the town boundary there is a proposed Natural Heritage Area - Wright's Wood. The River Blackwater is a designated salmonid watercourse.

Places for Biodiversity…

It should be noted that a habitat survey has previously been completed for Monaghan Town while this should soon be updated, this precludes the need for a detailed description of habitat areas within Monaghan. Instead, a brief overview of the ecological context is provided.
The town centre is largely defined by four squares which are interconnected by streets. Given the size of the town, there are relatively few green areas within the town centre, exceptions to this being Peter's Lake and the Ulster Canal Park.

Rivers

The Ulster Blackwater is a hugely important river for this region. It is designated as salmonid. It also contains Annex I and II species Kingfisher and Otter. The Shambles is of much lesser importance as a habitat for fish species. Its subterranean sections preclude significant migration of fish and macroinvertebrates leading to a much poorer diversity. However, in its upper reaches and as a Blackwater tributary, it is worthy of protection.

The Ulster Canal

The Ulster Canal within Monaghan Town has been well-surveyed in recent years prior to the development of the Greenway. This, and other surveys have recorded Kingfisher and Otter here also. Bats, mature trees and significant built structures are among other notable features. Its ongoing utility as a 'wildlife corridor' cannot be overstated.

Lakes

Monaghan is a Lakeland county but Monaghan Town is still unusual in having a natural lake within the urban area with built infrastructure surrounding it. It contains natural stocks of fish including bream and roach and is of particular value for waterfowl.

Woodland

There are several notable areas of woodland- of varying character within and close to the Monaghan urban area. These include Wright's Wood (pNHA): a mixed broadleaved woodland with mature oak and excellent wildflower assemblages, Tom Young's Wood: an ash-dominated mixed woodland which is regenerating and Rossmore Park: a very large and varied estate containing coniferous plantation but also a mosaic of habitats which include lakes, river and semi-natural grasslands.

Stone walls

Stone walls are a feature of several areas of Monaghan. These are a stable and 3-dimensional habitat. Some of these are extremely old, allowing habitats to both develop and to be enhanced. From tiny algae, ferns and higher plants up to breeding birds, stoats and bats, stone walls are really important habitat areas. The conservation of old stone walls and careful repair of same is crucial in protecting long-term habitats in towns. New structures may be faced with stone and in time these will allow some space for wild species.

Mature trees

Large mature trees are plentiful in Monaghan Town. The importance of street and garden trees is best appreciated from the upper floor of Fleming's Department Store, looking north over the town. One of the most obvious biodiversity benefits of mature trees is stable nesting habitat. Rookeries, for example need tall mature trees and may be seen in the beech trees of

St Davnet's. However, both year-round resident birds and summer visitors rely on our trees for nesting habitat, roosts and for food supply. Several of our most familiar garden birds' populations would simply crash without them. For this reason, keeping the trees we have and planning their eventual replacement with greater numbers are just as important as tree-planting initiatives for Tidy Towns.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows offer invaluable refuge habitat for birds, mammals and many invertebrates. They are a '3-dimensional' habitat which - in a mature hedgerow - offer ground, herb, shrub, understorey and canopy habitats. They are long and join up and thus form excellent wildlife-corridors. They tend to be stable and long-lasting but some are threatened by field enlargement and clearance.

Buildings

Habitats within buildings may be afforded birds - species such as house sparrow, starlings and Hirundines, bats - most Irish species as well as many vascular and other plants. In some instances, buildings are vital habitat e.g. for house martins and swallows where their 'natural' habitat (e.g. cliffs) is absent. Interesting, Monaghan Town has been included in the 2017 National Peregrine Falcon survey as the Cathedral spire may offer nesting habitat for Peregrines.

Gardens and Parkland Areas

St Davnet's Hospital - owned by the HSE - has the greatest number of mature trees of any site outside of Rossmore. There are also open grassland and orchard and farmed areas here. Smaller private gardens and school grounds - such as the St Louis Convent also represent significant areas of semi-natural and managed habitats of varying value from reed-swamp to lawns.

PART 2. PLACES AND SPACES FOR BIODIVERSITY

ii. Spaces for Biodiversity: Monaghan Town - *the key locations for our work*

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 Ulster Canal and Greenway

This is one of the most significant areas in terms of management of space for biodiversity. The Ulster Canal and the new Greenway represent a 'green corridor' through the heart of Monaghan Town. This will continue to be important as a linear habitat and migrating corridor for a range of species. A number of biodiversity awareness and education initiatives have been undertaken here. This vital site will continue to be of relevance in this regard. An equally important role of the Tidy Towns is in the maintenance and upkeep of the Greenway.

Tom Young's Wood

This mixed woodland incorporates a number of pathways including a short section of the Greenway. The Tidy Towns group should play an important role in ensuring that these are in good condition and fit for use. The Tidy Towns should also have input on any future management decisions (e.g. felling of trees, renovation of bridges) as required. Adjacent the woodland is an outdoor classroom that may be of use for Tidy Towns educational projects.

Monaghan Allotments

The very substantial allotments at Pound Hill has been laid out and is managed so as to maximise its benefits for native species - from pollinators (nectar-bearing plants) to hedgehogs (a hedgehog hotel located here). More importantly, the site is recreating old field boundaries in order to ensure linkages between hedgerows and treelines. The project also provides locally produced food, saving food-miles and carbon dioxide. Monaghan Tidy Towns currently supports this project and will continue to do so.

Gardens

Within the town there are gardens of a range of size, type and use. Given the nature and location of these areas a survey of same was not possible so this plan cannot give an account of how wildlife-friendly they may or may not be. However, these are potential assets in terms of creating and keeping space for wildlife. The plants therein need not be exclusively native. There are many plants that are non-native that are as attractive to our insects - including honey bees- as they are to people. The Tidy Towns group has already made significant contribution to wildlife-friendly gardening with the DUO project.

Roadside Verges and Banks

While we enjoy a very green countryside in Ireland, the greater majority of our grassland areas can be very species-poor. In contrast, our roadside areas can be quite diverse. Included among some of the plants that thrive here are some that pollinators rely on for food early on in the year. Dandelions, for example. The uneven growth of roadside hedgerow plants can offer refuge for these and other invertebrates as well as for the birds that feed upon their newly hatched larvae.

Small Spaces

There are several areas where even a limited amount of space could be devoted to beneficial planting. For example, roadside verges and even roundabouts. A small herb bed is easy to establish and is excellent for wildlife. A few decorative non-native plants that are excellent for invertebrates include *Napeta* (cat-mint), *Salvia* and *Rudbeckia*. Ox-eye daisies and cranesbills are also good. Shrubs you can plant in spaces (e.g. beside the car-park / pumphouse walls and in corners adjacent might be cotoneaster, fire-thorn or *Berberis*.

Throughout the Town - Invasive Species

Non-native invasive species are now problematic throughout Ireland. Monaghan Town is no different, Japanese knotweed has been recorded in several locations. Himalayan Balsam and 'Japanese' Cherry Laurel are significant threats to biodiversity in Rossmore Park. Water Fern is long established in the Ulster Canal on the Clones Road. While Tidy Towns groups frequently take direct action against invasive species, one of their key roles is in awareness, providing information to the local authority and preventing spread. It is essential that Monaghan Tidy Towns plays its part in this regard.

SECTION 3. THE PLAN: ACTIONS FOR TIDY TOWNS AND BIODIVERSITY 2017 - 2020

SECTION 3. THE PLAN: ACTIONS FOR TIDY TOWNS AND BIODIVERSITY 2017 - 2020

This section contains the 3-Year Plan. Here, the actions to be undertaken by Monaghan Tidy Towns are set out. These are listed as per the categories of the Tidy Towns Competition. Those actions that are to be undertaken in Year 1 of this plan are the *priority* actions and the letter P assigned. Those tasks that are to be undertaken in subsequent years are the *long-term* actions and the letters LT are assigned. Those that are ongoing tasks (e.g. annual projects with schools, Heritage Week events) are the *ongoing* tasks and the letter O is assigned. An example is given below:

Action	Detail	Timeframe
1.1	Monaghan Tidy Towns (MNTS) is to continue to play a key role in the Monaghan Tidy Towns Network	**O**
1.2	MNTS is leading the way in how youth may be involved in Tidy Towns. It is recommended that these efforts are continued with perhaps a 3-year rotating volunteer role to organise only this part of the group's work.	**O**
1.3	The Neat Tweet: The group is to begin an ongoing PR campaign related to both litter and birdsong.	**P**

The following section (Section 4) contains the plan for the coming year (2017-2018). There is not in this plan a section for years 2 or 3 of this plan. This is intentional. This is to be completed each year As the Monaghan Tidy Towns Committee complete the tasks as described in this section, these may be removed from the list of tasks and new tasks added to the priority (P) tasks. In this way, the plan may be kept relevant and current for each year of operation.

1. Community Involvement and Planning

Action	Detail	Timeframe
1.1	Monaghan Tidy Towns (MNTS) is to continue to play a key role in the Monaghan Tidy Towns Network	**O**
1.2	MNTS is leading the way in how youth may be involved in Tidy Towns. It is recommended that these efforts are continued with perhaps a 3-year rotating volunteer role to organise only this part of the group's work.	**O**
1.3	The Neat Tweet: The group is to begin an ongoing PR campaign related to both litter and birdsong.	**P**
1.4	MNTS is to provide signage for their actions: e.g. an area not cut to allow wildflower flowering- *uncut for wildlife*	**LT**
1.5	Each school within Monaghan Town is to be supported in the undertaking of a project related to biodiversity.	**O**
1.6	LA21: any Local Agenda 21 Project submitted by the Tidy Towns group is to have a biodiversity aspect, if not focus.	**O**
1.7	MNTS is to link with relevant conservation/environmental NGO for advice on year-to-year campaigns.	**LT**
1.8	MNTS is to have input into relevant statutory procedures (e.g. Co. Monaghan Development Plan).	**P**
1.9	MNTS is to facilitate at least one Heritage Week event.	**O**
1.10	MNTS is to continue to be represented on the Monaghan Town Team.	**O**

2. Built Environment & Streetscape

Action	Detail	Timeframe
2.1	The Tidy Towns group is to maintain vigilance with regard to planning applications on important buildings in Monaghan Town.	**O**
2.2	The group is to encourage all owners to improve properties that are derelict or in need of care to improve buildings.	**O**
2.3	An inventory of notable built environment features is to be drawn up through voluntary effort with expert oversight.	**LT**
2.4	A dedicated volunteer Swift and House martin survey is to be completed before end 2018.	**P**
2.5	A detailed bat survey of Monaghan Town is to be commissioned within the first 2 years of this plan.	**LT**
2.6	A survey of the flora and condition of older stone walls is to be carried out with the aim of creating a database and exhibition.	**LT**
2.7	The group is to continue to be active in the maintenance of important heritage buildings such as the railway station	**O**
2.8	A painting scheme for Dublin Street has been mooted (at time of writing). MNTS will play a central role in this and other schemes for the improvement of this important commercial street.	**LT**
2.9	MNTS is to continue to lobby owners of prominent buildings/facilities such as the Bus Station, former petrol station site and Hospital for ongoing improvements and renovation works as required.	**P**
2.10	The Tidy Towns group will lobby for any new or renovated public buildings to have nesting/roost spaces for swifts and bats incorporated into the building structure.	**O**

3. Landscaping and Open Spaces

Action	Detail	Timeframe
3.1	The Dispersed Urban Orchard (DUO) and Greenway fruit tree planting projects are to be carried on with progress and enhancements assessed annually. The over-arching Tree Plan is to be followed and updated as required.	**P**
3.2	MNTS is to adopt a policy of using only pollinator-friendly plants, insofar as possible. Ideally native or near native plants will be used in suitable locations and native tree species of benefit to pollinators will be prioritised.	**P**
3.3	The sloped bank at Killygoan is to be developed with native tree / trees for pollinators/	**LT**
3.4	The orchard at St Davnet's Hospital is to be maintained and the development of bee hives here considered. Trees removed within these grounds are to be replaced on a 2 for 1 basis.	**O**
3.5	Hedgerows are to be 'joined up' - e.g. at road junctions on hinterlands where 'hopover' tree-planting is to be established. e.g. on the Cootehill Road.	**LT**
3.6	The old cemetery at Mousewood is to be surveyed for suitability for development as a semi-natural parkland area.	**LT**
3.7	MNTS is to undertake a Neighbourwood woodland establishment project in conjunction with Monaghan County Council. A suitable site has been selected. A detailed assessment process should commence immediately.	**P**

4. Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities

Action	Detail	Timeframe
4.1	Invasive Species: It is recommended that an expert from Invasive Species Ireland is invited to provide training for the Tidy Towns Network in the relevant non-native invasive species with a key focus on Scheduled Invasive Species.	**P**
4.2	Following the above, MNTS is to assist Monaghan County Council in drawing up an Invasive Species Management Plan for Monaghan Town. This is to include the scoping of biological control for the Water Fern in the Ulster Canal.	**P**
4.3	MNTS is to assist in the carrying out of at least one 'Citizen Science' project per year. It is suggested that a Swift, Swallow and House Martin survey is carried out in this present season. All results are to be made available to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Other relevant projects are *Spring Alive* and the National Lizard and Peregrine Surveys.	**P (&O)**
4.4	MNTS is to play an active role in the further development of the Ulster Canal Greenway as it is extended.	**LT**
4.5	MNTS is to be a key player in the development of a Conservation Management Plan for Rossmore Park as it is developed.	**LT**
4.6	MNTS is to play an active role in the practical conservation tasks in managing Tom Young's Wood.	**O**
4.7	Biodiversity Week is to be celebrated in Monaghan Town each year and marked with at least one event and dissemination of information with a new theme per year that is relevant to Monaghan.	**O**

5. Sustainable Waste & Resource Management

Action	Detail	Timeframe
5.1	MNTS will -where resources allow - implement Festival Greening for major events in Monaghan Town.	**O**
5.2	The development and maintenance of the allotments shall be supported by the Tidy Towns group as required.	**O**
5.3	MNTS shall participate in a Stop Food Waste Campaign on a regular and planned basis. This may be carried out in conjunction with the Allotments Group and *Transition Monaghan*.	**P**
5.4	MNTS shall promote cycling, walking and low-carbon/carbon-free travel for all Monaghan citizens.	**O**
5.5	MNTS shall help to promote the use of the Ulster Canal Greenway as a commuter and school-goer resource.	**LT**
5.6	In conjunction with Monaghan County Council, the allotments users and the Tidy Towns Network, MNTS shall organise composting and wormery classes.	**P**
5.7	The co-operation with the Men's Shed should be maintained for reuse/up-cycling projects.	**O**
5.8	A 4-R awareness project shall be rolled out via social media and maintained year on year.	**LT**
5.9	MNTS will continue to support the town's charity shops as well as the new Flea Market.	**O**

6. Tidiness and Litter Control

Action	Detail	Timeframe
6.1	Social Media shall be employed to launch and sustain an anti-litter awareness campaign. These will include our new *Anti-Litter Twitter Project* and the weekly *Neat Tweet*.	**P**
6.2	Unlicensed signage on approach roads will not be tolerated. A weekly 'round-up' of these is to be carried out.	**O**
6.3	All signage on the bypass and approach roads is to be inspected on a monthly basis and cleaned / repaired / reported for remedial works as required.	**O**
6.4	The new Trolley Rescue project is to be launched in summer 2017.	**P**
6.5	MNTS shall campaign against the use of products containing micro-beads and excessive packaging. School /youth projects may feature as part of this.	**LT**
6.6	The Blackwater and Shambles Rivers shall be the focus of a dedicated clean-up in the appropriate season. A biodiversity theme - e.g. The Crayfish Clean-up! - shall be adopted to raise awareness of the importance of keeping these watercourses clean.	**P**

7. Residential Streets and Housing Areas

Action	Detail	Timeframe
7.1	Tree-planting is to be a priority action for all estates where space is allowed. MNTS are to encourage all resident groups to take part in the DUO project as it evolves.	**P**
7.2	Estate Biodiversity is to be introduced as a category in the inter-estate competitions.	**LT**
7.3	Orchard or woodland planting is to be proposed at any suitable unused ground within estates (e.g. at Oak Ridge).	**LT**
7.4	A hedgehog hotel project - featuring habitat created from reused timber is proposed for estates. Groups will be encouraged to research these structures and to adapt them to their surroundings.	**P**
7.5	The outstanding work at Mullaghmatt, which includes specific youth projects as well as individual garden work and green area tree-planting projects are to be maintained.	**O**
7.6	The extensive green areas of Pound Hill may be enhanced by a 'prairie-planting' regime. A decorative aspect - e.g. a planted or cleared design - may be incorporated by the steps leading to The Mall.	

8. Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes

Action	Detail	Timeframe
8.1	MNTS is to have input into the process of selecting the design of new Monaghan Town name signage. At time of writing a section of stone wall has been proposed for 2 no. locations.	**P**
8.2	New Monaghan Town name signs are to incorporate *Biodiversity Town* in the text.	**P**
8.3	All of the approach roads are to be surveyed and areas for low-mow (grass-cutting) regime are to be identified. The maintenance programme is to be agreed with Monaghan County Council and the National Roads Authority.	**P**
8.4	The bypass (N2) will have a low-mow regime implemented. A series of signs - as per the All Ireland Pollinator Plan - are to be devised to inform motorists of the rationale of this management.	**LT**
8.5	Signage for the River Blackwater are to be created for the main road crossings.	**LT**
8.6	The 'Northern Standard Lane' should be renovated and decorated with reproductions of newspapers from significant dates.	**LT**

SECTION 4. FIRST STEPS: ACTIONS FOR BIODIVERSITY 2017 - 2018

The priority actions for Monaghan Tidy Towns for the coming year are given in this section.

Community Involvement and Planning	**Action 1.3**	The Neat Tweet: The group is to begin an ongoing PR campaign related to both litter and birdsong. Campaign is proposed to be online and also on regional radio.
	Action 1.8	MNTS is to have input into relevant statutory procedures (e.g. Co. Monaghan Development Plan at consultation stage at time of writing).

Built Environment & Streetscape	**Action 2.4**	A dedicated volunteer Swift and House martin survey is to be completed before end 2018.
	Action 2.9	MNTS is to continue to lobby owners of prominent buildings/facilities such as the Bus Station, former petrol station site and Hospital for ongoing improvements and renovation works as required.

Landscaping and Open Spaces	**Action 3.1**	The Dispersed Urban Orchard (DUO) and Greenway fruit tree planting projects are to be carried on with progress and enhancements assessed annually. The over-arching Tree Plan is to be followed and updated as required.
	Action 3.2	MNTS is to adopt a policy of using only pollinator-friendly plants, insofar as possible. Ideally native or near native plants will be used in suitable locations and native tree species of benefit to pollinators will be prioritised.
	Action 3.7	MNTS is to undertake a Neighbourwood woodland establishment project in conjunction with Monaghan County Council. A suitable site has been selected. A detailed assessment process should commence immediately.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	**Action 4.1**	Invasive Species: It is recommended that an expert from Invasive Species Ireland is invited to provide training for the Tidy Towns Network in the relevant non-native invasive species with a key focus on Scheduled Invasive Species.
	Action 4.2	Following the above, MNTS is to assist Monaghan County Council in drawing up an Invasive Species Management Plan for Monaghan Town. This is to include the scoping of biological control for the Water Fern in the Ulster Canal.
	Action 4.3	MNTS is to assist in the carrying out of at least one 'Citizen Science' project per year. It is suggested that a Swift, Swallow and House Martin survey is carried out in this present season. All results are to be made available to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Other relevant projects are *Spring Alive* and the National Lizard and Peregrine Surveys.

Sustainable Waste & Resource Management	**Action 5.2**	MNTS shall participate in a Stop Food Waste Campaign on a regular and planned basis. This may be carried out in conjunction with the Allotments Group and *Transition Monaghan*.
	Action 5.6	In conjunction with Monaghan County Council, the allotments users and the Tidy Towns Network, MNTS shall organise composting and wormery classes.

Tidiness and Litter Control	**Action 6.1**	Social Media shall be employed to launch and sustain an anti-litter awareness campaign. These will include our new *Anti-Litter Twitter Project* and the weekly *Neat Tweet*.
	Action 6.4	The new Trolley Rescue project is to be launched in summer 2017.
	Action 6.6	The Blackwater and Shambles Rivers shall be the focus of a dedicated clean-up in the appropriate season. A biodiversity theme - e.g. The Crayfish Clean-up! - shall be adopted to raise awareness of the importance of keeping these watercourses clean.

Residential Streets and Housing Areas	**Action 7.1**	Tree-planting is to be a priority action for all estates where space is allowed. MNTS are to encourage all resident groups to take part in the DUO project as it evolves.
	Action 7.4	A hedgehog hotel project - featuring habitat created from reused timber is proposed for estates. Groups will be encouraged to research these structures and to adapt them to their surroundings.

Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes	**Action 8.1**	MNTS is to have input into the process of selecting the design of new Monaghan Town name signage. At time of writing a section of stone wall has been proposed for 2 no. locations.
	Action 8.2	New Monaghan Town name signs are to incorporate *Biodiversity Town* in the text.
	Action 8.3	All of the approach roads are to be surveyed and areas for low-mow (grass-cutting) regime are to be identified. The maintenance programme is to be agreed with Monaghan County Council and the National Roads Authority.

This plan was devised by Billy Flynn of Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants on behalf of Monaghan Tidy Towns. The plan was supported by Monaghan County Council. Monaghan Tidy Towns would like to thank all of the volunteers, businesses, local authority staff, pupils and teachers who help us in our work year on year.
We couldn't do it without you.