

# Maghera Biodiversity Action Plan 2021- 2026



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## **1.0 Introduction & Local Context**

Maghera is a small village located outside the town of Virginia, Co. Cavan. This village is the most southerly part of the province of Ulster as it is based on the border of County Cavan and County Meath. Cavan is well-known as the ‘Lakeland County’ and Maghera borders two significant watercourses: Lough Ramor and the River Blackwater. Lough Ramor is a large natural lake of approximately 741 hectares which flows into the River Blackwater. Lough Ramor is a proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA) (Site Code: 000008) [1]. The River Blackwater is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 002299) and a Special Protected Area (SPA) (Site Code: 004232). The River Blackwater is designated as a SAC under the EU Habitats Directive as the following habitats and species are listed in Annex I and II: Alkaline Fens, Alluvial Forests, River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*), Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) and Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [2]. The River Blackwater is designated as a SPA under the EU Birds Directive for the species Kingfisher (*Alcedinidae*) as it is listed in Annex I [3]. These sites are surrounded by wetlands & woodlands which are important to maintaining & supporting the existing wildlife. Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) & Otters (*Lutra lutra*) have been known to frequent these two sites.

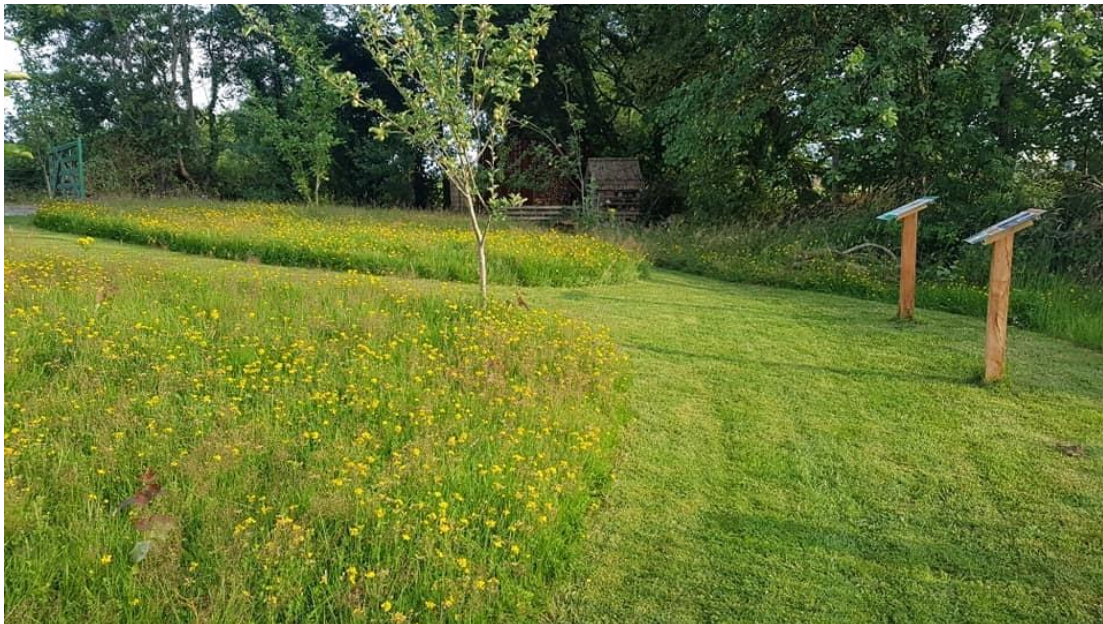


Figure 1 - Heritage Orchard with Wildlife Signs & Uncut Vegetation



Figure 2 - Insect/Bee Hotel located in the Heritage Orchard

The community of Maghera have already completed a lot of work in providing biodiversity features in their local area as they have been working towards their Tidy Towns 2021 application & have been a participant for the last 8 years. They joined the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 to support their area & create more natural landscape for pollinators. A 'Heritage Orchard' (Figure 1) is located near the local Carrigabruise National School & has a variety of biodiversity features. The area is left natural & a small path has been cut around the edge which allows the community to walk through. Signs have been put in place in the to ensure the area is not disturbed or mowed. An 'insect/bee hotel' (Figure 2) has been built & placed in the sheltered corner of the orchard to provide protection for insects/bees where they won't be interfered with. An old tree trunk (Figure 3) has been repurposed & converted for use by insects/bees as small holes had been drilled into it to create more protection for them. There is a pond to encourage aquatic life such as frogs, newts & insects to relocate to & breed in this quiet area. A green area (Figure 4) located along the N3 Cavan to Dublin Road & in the centre of the village, is an area the community have also put a lot of work into. A team is out regularly checking to see what needs to be done in the community areas i.e., weeding the flower beds, pruning shrubs, planting trees & flowers, painting fences/benches & lots more. Trees & flowers that the community have planted here along the road have greatly enhanced the area & brought lots of colour into this busy location. The flower beds along with the hedgerows planted, have provided food & protection for pollinators as well as some

beautiful colour for everyone passing through this small village, especially in the Spring & Summer time. Attached below are photos of some of these biodiversity features in Maghera.



Figure 3 - Tree Trunk Insect/Bee Hotel located in the Heritage Orchard




Figure 4 - Green Area at the centre of Maghera

Maghera is a village surrounded by agricultural land which are lined by hedgerows, houses & farm buildings. As this recent aerial image shows (Figure 5), Maghera has many buildings & houses with gardens which have the capability to host a variety of species & wildlife. The most important areas which the community would like to work on for biodiversity are the green area & the Nine Eye bridge along with enhancing the network of hedgerows & scrub which can be seen around these areas.



Figure 5 – Aerial Image of Maghera Showing the Areas of Interest (source: Bing Maps)

**Legend for Figure 5: Map of Maghera**

Key	Area of Interest
	Nine Eye Bridge
	Green Area

In 2019, Maghera Development Association successfully sought funding from The Community Foundation for Ireland Environmental & Nature Biodiversity grant. The aim of this Community Biodiversity Action Plan is to further promote and enhance biodiversity in the local area of Maghera, particularly the area where Lough Ramor meets the River Blackwater at the Nine Eye Bridge and at the green area in the centre of the village.

The community outlined the following ideas to be incorporated into the action plan:

- Signage for the new wooden walkway at Nine Eyed Bridge located where Lough Ramor joins with the Blackwater River.
- Information boards on wildlife present in the local area around the river & lake – Whooper Swans, Otters, Eels etc.
- Information board about the River Blackwater & Lough Ramor

## **2.0 Habitats, Flora & Fauna in the Area**

The Maghera Development Association/Tidy Towns committee are eager to conserve, enhance & raise awareness of biodiversity in their local area.

### **2.1 Habitats**

Some of the main habitats in the area are described below:

<b>Habitat Code (Fossitt, 2020)</b>	<b>Description</b>
WN6 – Wet willow, alder, ash woodland	The area surrounding Lough Ramor & the Blackwater River is mostly made up of semi-natural woodland & contains hazel, alder & willow trees.
FW1 – Eroding/upland rivers	The river Blackwater flows through from Lough Ramor & under the Nine Eye bridge. The River Blackwater is a fast-flowing river which joins up further south to the River Boyne, Co. Meath.
GM1 - Marsh	Freshwater marshland surrounds both water courses. Sedge is the main feature of these marshes.
WL1 - Hedgerows	Hedgerows occur all around field boundaries and along the main roads in Maghera.
WL2 - Treelines	Treelines also occur around field boundaries & roads in the village.
WS1 - Scrub	Scrub is a common habitat in the area especially along field edges & roadside verges.
GA1 – Improved Agricultural Grassland	Maghera is a village which consists of large areas of farmland.
BL3 – Buildings & Artificial Surfaces	The village is made up of a number of buildings such as houses, shops & agricultural sheds.
BC4 – Flower Beds & Borders	Maghera has many flower beds located all around the centre of the village.
GA2 – Amenity Grassland	Maghera has a football pitch located near the centre of the village.



## 2.2 Flora

The Maghera Development Association have planted several flowerbeds around the village. In each flower bed & green area, the community have made it their priority to plant pollinator friendly plants & flowers for every season so that there is always a supply of food for wildlife.

In the future, depending on the types of plants & flowers grown in these, the flower beds are a great opportunity to encourage & enhance the biodiversity in the area. The community have made a great effort to ensure there is a food supply for wildlife in the area each season by planting flora specifically where some will bloom.

Some of the current flora for each season are:

Spring:

- Crocus (*Crocus vernus*)
- Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)
- Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*)
- Pansy (*Viola arvensis*)



Figure 6 – Flowerbed Located Opposite the Green Area

Summer:

- Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
- Geranium (*Pelargonium peltatum*)
- Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*)
- Cat Mint (*Nepeta faassenii*)



Figure 7 – Maghera Peace Garden Flowerbed

Autumn:

- Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)
- Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*)



Figure 8 – Flower Box Located at Old Hall

Winter:

- Ivy (*Hedera hibernica*)
- Laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*)
- Skimmia (*Skimmia japonica*)
- Mahonia (*Mahonia aquifolium*)

## 2.3 Fauna

A wildlife monitoring programme is in place by the community to observe the wildlife living in Maghera. A trail camera was set up in the Heritage Orchard & at the new River Blackwater walkway. The camera traps recorded the following wildlife:

- Mallard Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*)
- Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)
- Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)
- Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
- Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)
- Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)



Figure 9 – Bat Box Located on Gable Wall of Old Hall

Along the River Blackwater, the community also have a bat monitoring scheme in place where 4 species of bat were recorded: Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) & Nathusius' Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*). All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey has been completed in Maghera by the local community since 2016. It is important for this survey to be carried out each year to view any trends in the Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*) population.



Figure 10 – Habitat Created for Insects/Bugs/Bees



Figure 11 – Habitat Area in the Heritage Orchard

### **3.0 Programme of Action for Biodiversity**

The community of Maghera are a very active group which already carry out many biodiversity improvement actions & future community plans. The following actions can be developed by the community to provide benefits for both the local area and wildlife.

- Planting of Native Irish Species

Planting of more native Irish species in the local area in Spring or Autumn time. The community have meetings throughout the year to discuss the planting needed for the following seasons & always ensure that native species are included. By carrying out this action, native plants attract & support wildlife & pollinators. Native plants also promote biodiversity & stewardship of our natural heritage. The areas to include this planting are around the Carrigabruise National School, Green Area & the Wooden Walkway at the Nine Eye Bridge (Short-Term Goal).

- Erect Bird Boxes & Feeders, Insect Hotels & Bat Boxes

There are currently bird boxes in the village in locations near the Green Area, the Old Post Box & the Heritage Orchard. The old bird boxes in the area may need to be checked & replaced. A maternity bat box is located on the end wall of the community hall & an insect hotel is in the heritage orchard. If suitable locations are found, more bird boxes, insect hotels & bat boxes can be added. This action would be beneficial to provide nesting & roosting locations for wildlife species in the area (Medium-Term Goal).

- Monitoring of Invasive Species

Keep a check of & annual monitor of the locality for any invasive species & put in place controls where necessary. Liase with the County Council about the spread of invasive species. This action prevents the spread & possible invasion of non-native species (Long-Term Goal).

- Promotion & Support of Birdwatching

There are locations along the Nine Eye bridge & surrounding watercourses which would be suitable for birdwatching & by linking up with Bird Watch Ireland this could be achieved. By carrying out this action, it would highlight some of these areas in the community & provide knowledge to the community on birds nesting in the local area (Long-Term Goal).

- Build & Erect Signage Along Walkway at the Nine Eye Bridge

A wooden walkway was built in recent years alongside the Nine Eye bridge so the community would like to highlight key information about Lough Ramor & the River Blackwater in this area for the public to view. A sign with information on key species located in the area would also be a great feature. This action will highlight the nature & wildlife in the locality for a good visitor experience (Medium-Term Goal).

- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025

Promote pollinator-friendly planting in residential areas around the local area & reduce the use of pesticides & herbicides. This can be achieved by providing an information leaflet to residents on pollinator-friendly plants to grow in the garden. This action is to help create more habitats & a better food supply for bees/butterflies/moths while making the community more attractive looking (Long-Term Goal).

- Bee Keeping Project

Promote a community beekeeping project in the area with any local beekeepers. There is some local interest in introducing beehives into the area & there is mapping currently on-going. There are a few beehives in the locality where the community can collaborate to learn more about bees while carrying out this activity. This action creates a wider population of pollinators in the area & is a community project that people can work on together (Medium-Term Goal).

- Junior Tidy Towns

Promote Junior Tidy Towns in the community & to encourage biodiversity projects for children in the local area. The aim of this action is to get more children active in their community as there are already a few members in the local national school & to motivate others to get involved. Some potential activities include litter clean-ups, planting pollinator-friendly plants, planting native trees etc (Long-Term Goal).

- Participate in Monitoring Schemes/Surveys

The Butterfly & Frog Monitoring Schemes are great surveys to be involved in. The results can be returned to the National Biodiversity Data Centre/Irish Peatland Conservation Council. By monitoring the species in the locality, it will give a better indication of the biodiversity in the area (Short-Term Goal).

## **4.0 References:**

1. National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2021. *ArcGIS Web Application*. Dahg.maps.arcgis.com. Available at: <https://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8f7060450de3485fa1c1085536d477ba> [Accessed February 2021]
2. National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2021. *Site Synopsis For River Boyne And River Blackwater SAC*. Available at: <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/synopsis/SY002299.pdf> [Accessed February 2021]
3. National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2021. *Site Synopsis For River Boyne And River Blackwater SPA*. Available at: <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/synopsis/SY004232.pdf> [Accessed February 2021]