

**TRAMOREECO GROUP** (TEG)

# TRAMORE COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

**Biodiversity Conservation and Enhancement in Tramore- Part 3**





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## Introduction

Action plans for local communities exploring novel ideas for conservation are needed.

Despite growing scientific knowledge and awareness, the richness of our ecosystems and habitats is constantly in decline. This trend needs to be reversed while there is still time.

A Community Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP) can address these issues and if implemented with the backup of local people, volunteer groups, local schools, businesses and the Council, can form a useful tool for shaping the future local development towards maintaining and enhancing the diversity of habitats.

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## **Tramore Eco Group (TEG) - Fostering a Sense of Stewardship**

The response of the local community is key. No action plan, unless put into practice, is of value. Fostering a sense of **stewardship** comes through creating an interest in observing

and learning about the natural environment.

As much as compiling existing information and collecting new data about species and habitats, this project focuses on exploring ways interested individuals in a community can come together to create positive action and to counteract trends that are threatening local biodiversity and the richness and beauty of our immediate environment.

Tramore Eco Group by building monitoring teams for wetland birds, freshwater habitats, butterflies and bees has had a revitalising effect on increasing local skills and knowledge. These surveys of the state of biodiversity in the town and its surrounds pave way for future monitoring schemes and raising awareness.

The group has initiated related projects such as:

- The '**Bee Corridor**', providing free pollinator friendly plants for private gardens in order to increase connectivity and availability of food plants for pollinators and to provide information and increase awareness in a casual way.
- The '**Tramore Bird Hide**', a shelter that provides a space for observing birdlife, has been granted planning permission in the Tramore Eco Park area and is at its construction stages.

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- '**Beach Clean**', a regular engagement event with the public while picking litter, especially plastic waste from the beach, thus reducing the amount of plastics reaching the marine ecosystem.

## **Guiding Principles and Local Actions**

Examples of best practice from Ireland and abroad, and in particular the aspirations,

interests and work undertaken by TEG, the following guidelines, or **guiding principles**, have been formulated.

**Local actions**, current and new ideas, are presented as examples of implementation and future aims.

## **Guiding Principle 1**

***Biodiversity and climate resilience to be made key planning priorities in coastal regions.***

Biodiversity and climate resilience to be made key planning priorities in coastal regions in particular, together with a zero carbon approach and alternative forms of transport in local

area planning.

## Local Action 1

### ***Participation in planning both on local and County level.***

Participation in planning at both local and regional level. Tramore Eco Group has made detailed planning recommendations for Waterford Area Plan 2022-2028 . In developing the Blue - Green (BG) infrastructure, the '**Green Ring**' of Tramore [ **view document here: Tramore Green Ring 2.docx**] aims to promote wildlife corridors, pollinator friendly road verges and access to natural areas via guided trails along with changing modes of transport

### **New Proposal 1: Promotion of movement across habitats.**

By designing small underpasses and bridges in built up areas for vulnerable species like the hedgehog would be necessary as the amount of impervious surfaces is constantly on the rise and movement in and through built up areas is becoming harder.

### **New Proposal 2: Locating and preserving biodiversity hotspots.**

Locating and preserving **biodiversity hot spots** in the built up area where pressures for development and construction are high. An example is the Glen Road woodland, which is a breeding place for several species of woodland bird including warblers that migrate here in summer. The loss of these birds would be a serious loss to the overall biodiversity of Tramore. The TEG ecological survey shows that Newtown Woods does not support the

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same abundance of birds as do the Glen Road Woods. Species diversity is also greater in the latter.

The Boating Lake is another hot spot for bird and pollinator life in the heart of Tramore.

### **New Proposal 3: Increasing tree count.**

Gradually increasing tree count to the national recommended level of 17 % of total land area (Tramore has the lowest tree count in County Waterford). No planning should be



permitted that further reduces forested areas or necessitates felling of individual trees. This issue has also been addressed in the '**Tramore Green Ring**' proposal.

Consultation or at least notification by Waterford Council with local environmental groups such as TEG on impending actions that will adversely impact the natural environment - an example of a deleterious action was the removal of gorse in September 2021 from Tramore Nature Park thereby destroying a habitat for invertebrates and birds and a partial barrier to prevent dogs and people from wandering from the path and potentially disturbing ground nesting birds and trampling on rare plants in the inner parts of the Eco Park.

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## Guiding Principle 2

### *Ongoing local monitoring programmes.*

Ensuring the future of **ongoing local monitoring programmes** and other **Citizens Science** initiatives depend on access to training. **This enables local groups and individuals to observe trends** in biodiversity



over time. This is necessary for building evidence to support actions and strategies needed for reversing negative trends and for evolving ways of fostering a sense of **stewardship** and communality towards nature.



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## Local Action 2

### *Raising environmental awareness and active intervention.*

Volunteer groups such as Clean Coasts, CoastWatch, Scouts, Girl Guides, Tidy Towns and Tramore Eco Group (TEG) are engaging in raising environmental awareness, in active intervention, controlling invasive species, and in monitoring local species and habitats. Tidy Towns conducted a pollinator study of the green spaces in Tramore. Some of the local actions taken by Tramore ECO Group:

- Surveying pollinators as part of the survey leading to the Tramore Community Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP)

- Plants (CBAP)
- Winter water and garden birds birds (CBAP)
- Local freshwater streams (CBAP)
- Finding the areas in Tramore Town favoured by bats
- Recording common breeding birds in and around Tramore
- Providing nesting boxes for barn owls and boxes and callers for swifts to encourage new colonies
- 'Bug hotels ' to encourage insect life
- Removing the invasive *Sargassum moticum* seaweed to prevent it from smothering Eelgrass, an important food supply for Brent Geese. The removal of *Sargassum* was a cooperation between Scouts, CoastWatch and Tramore Eco Group that took place on Tramore Back Strand in the summer of 2021

### Guiding Principle 3

#### ***'Nature Literacy' or 'Earth Literacy' Promotion Locally.***

Eco and environmental education and engagement to be further promoted in local schools, the colleges, local community groups, residents groups and other volunteer groups, and the local authority. The aim is to increase '**nature literacy**' or '**earth literacy**' as it is also called, with emphasis on understanding and knowledge of local species, habitats and factors impacting ecosystems on a local and global level. School Biology and SPHE curriculums need to be revised to provide more practical and applicable ecological knowledge for everyone, not just students interested in science.



### Local Action 3

#### *Promoting informal learning through outdoor classrooms.*

- Local schools take students regularly to an 'outdoor classroom', on Tramore Strand, to explore the ecosystem first hand. This more relaxed, experiential learning is happening through nature and heritage walks occasionally organised in the area and could be promoted a lot more as a relaxed way of informal learning and raising awareness.

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- Native tree planting and taking part in restoration works in the Tramore Sand Dunes area could be potential projects for secondary schools.
- Engagement through art - secondary school students from Ard Scoil na Mara have engaged with the natural environment by engaging in study of local birdlife and habitats and depicting it as an outdoor mural near the Boating Lake
- 'Leave No Trace' (LNT) approach, or 'Leave nothing but footprints', is an awareness campaign about leaving no



rubbish behind when visiting natural sites.

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## Guiding Principle 4

*Collaboration beyond biological research, community development, social entrepreneurship in conservation.*

Moving away from traditional and rigid models towards new approaches to conservation to be explored involving both public and private interest parties. This involves **cross-sector collaboration** beyond biological research. **Community development, social entrepreneurship in conservation** and influencing positive **behavioural change** are

## **possible pathways.**

Management practices of all areas, especially public ones, to follow best practice in preserving and enhancing biodiversity. Bringing '**continuum**' thinking to the forefront, where habitats are seen as a coherent whole, rather than fragmented patches. Designing **buffer zones** around more sensitive habitats and incorporating this into the overall conservation and management plan.

A special emphasis on **blue-green infrastructure** and enhancing **the movement** and dispersal of species through **wildlife corridors**.

In the immediate town area, a limit should be set to use of **impervious surfaces**, like concrete and tarmacadam, with a limit to percentage of covered area (PTIA). All horizontal and vertical areas to be considered as potential living spaces and channels for better species and habitat connectivity, in the most built up areas, to substitute for loss of biodiversity through human activities.

## **Local Action 4**

### ***Creating buffer zones around protected areas.***

**New Proposal 1:** To create a buffer zone as an extension of the SPA (Special Protection Area) for Tramore Backstrand to include Driver's field at Lisselan with its ponds that are used by waterbirds in winter and by some species for breeding in the ponds.

The Local Authority has conducted surveys on the state of Tramore Sand Dunes and Back Strand over the years. A new survey of the Salt Marsh area is currently in progress.

*The management of stone walls in the Tramore town area.*

**New proposal 2:** The management of **stone walls** in the Tramore town area. The survey team observed the management of **stone walls** in Tramore town area. They are mostly stripped bare and sprayed, resulting in the loss of typical plant species favouring this type

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of urban habitat. If left to grow they would provide food for pollinators and various other insects. They might even attract the Common Lizard, Ireland's only native reptile. It is unsure if there still is an extant population in Tramore town.

*The management of unique habitats.*

**New Proposal 3:** A special focus on the development of a comprehensive **management plan** for the most unique habitats.

**Tramore Sand Dunes** which presently has a conservation status **of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** is a declining habitat. This is due to intense human impact like trampling, erosion caused by unmanaged access to the area (as well as natural processes) and disturbance of wildlife caused by dogs and humans.

Structures to protect the Dunes, such as fencing and wire mesh erected by the Council several years ago have fallen into disrepair. Preferable routes are to be marked with stakes and signage to encourage walkers to walk around rather than across the dune area. In time, boardwalks can be added to bring groups on guided walks to help familiarise the public with the importance of the area and to enjoy the amenity in a sustainable way. Important microhabitats within the dune system that sustain a particularly rich plant and pollinator life including rare and

## Guiding principle 5

### *Substantial investment in research of native plants and their propagation.*

Substantial **investment in research of native plants** and their **propagation and use** in public and private areas. Increasing the knowledge of each (woodland, grassland etc) **habitat** and use of suitable plant species for planting when necessary e.g. during remedial works in an area to ameliorate for loss of diversity.

Moving away from the manufacturing and use of sterile (bedding) plants in favour of annual pollinator friendly plants. Large scale promotion of **seed saving of wild plant seed** from local provenance to promote pollinators and to ensure **ecosystem resilience** and food security.

## Local Action 5

Biodiversity friendly planting in town parks and green areas to create '**bee corridors**', a network of pollinator friendly gardens where different pollinating insects have a chance to forage.

Biodiversity friendly planting in town parks and green areas is essential. Tramore Eco Group has undergone training in methods of **seed saving** and **propagation** with a professional horticulturist. '**Plant Table**', a



giveaway table for handing out pollinator friendly seedlings to local people for planting in their own gardens is an ongoing campaign of the group.

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The local Lions Club is planning to undertake a scheme of planting native trees in the Tramore town area. Tree planting, seed saving and sowing is a suitable project for local schools and community groups such as residents groups.

## **Guiding principle 6**

*Increased investment in biodiversity monitoring programmes.*

Increased investment in **biodiversity monitoring programmes** and **flagging the spread of invasive species** in the context of **climate change**.

Not all taxonomic groups enjoy the same level of interest or monitoring activity. In these groups the decline or even extinction of a species may go unnoticed.

A particular impact of climate change is expected to be further spreading of current invasive species as well as new species reaching the island of Ireland.

Cooperation between scientists, authorities and volunteer groups (**cross-sector collaboration**) is needed to create an **alert and action network** to combat the spread of such species and to improve general vigilance for observing and reporting changes in the immediate natural environment.



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## Local Action 6

**New Proposal 1:** Training core teams - 'Tramore Eco Eye' Network.

During monitoring programmes, the observation skills of the surrounding nature are all

important. Increasing '**nature literacy**' levels through education and creating interest in observing, recording and reporting changes, has been one key focus of Tramore Eco Group. Training core teams makes it possible to impart information through social media, local nature walks and talks to a wider audience.

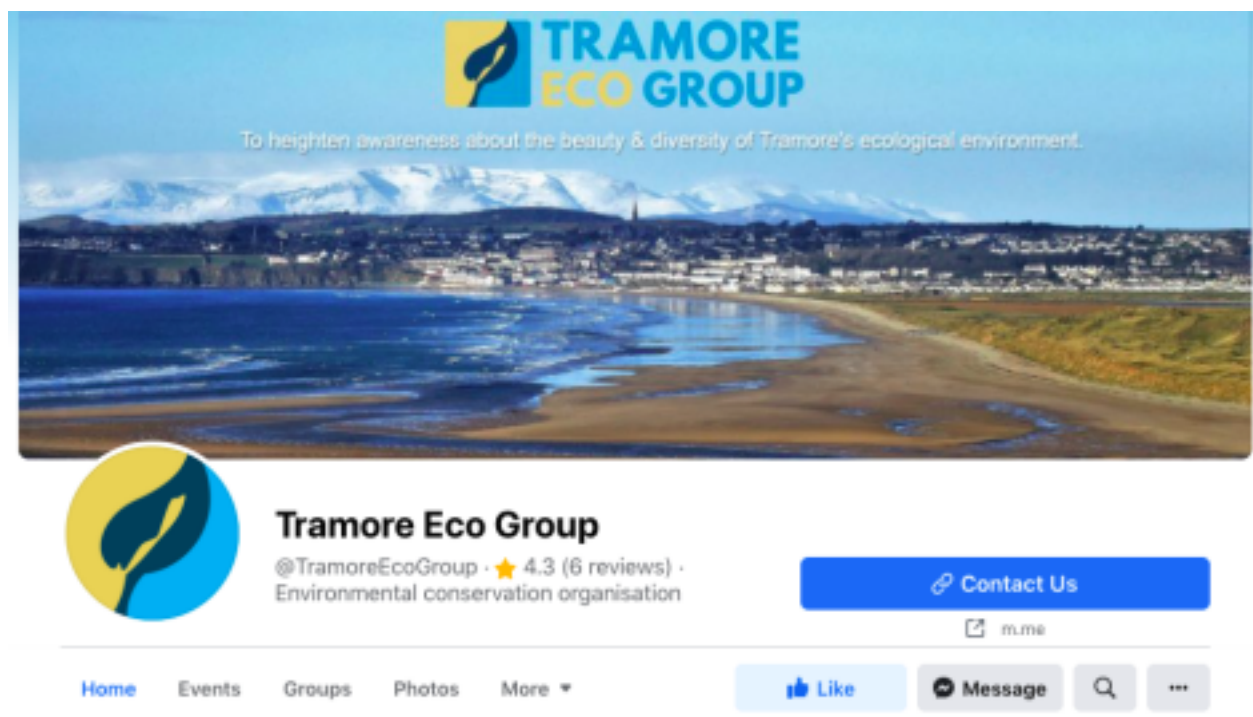
## **Guiding Principle 7**

*Identifying and filling the gaps in information flow.*

Identifying and filling the **gaps in the flow of information** and **obstacles to access of information** for the public. Creating and investing in new, easy to use **interfaces** to access and understand better the results of scientific study and its application.

**Increasing capacity for engagement with the public** in research institutes with information officers to ease pressure on staff conducting actual research.

Promoting positive **social media influence** in reaching a wider audience not limited to the local community only. A development of a structured **framework** for using **social media data** for **conservation science** and **practice**.



## Local Action 7

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***Using social media in reporting observations and gathering data.***

Many groups, individual citizen scientists and research institutes use social media successfully in reporting observations and gathering data. Tramore Eco Group is active in this form of networking and tagging other groups while helping spread information and awareness, answering questions or in directing them to someone of a particular area of expertise or responsibility. There has been a positive response to this type of **use of social media in the service of ecology and the environment**.

## Guiding Principle 8

*Ecosystem services to be incorporated into economy and economic projections.*

**Ecosystem services** ( the many and varied benefits to humans provided by the natural environment and well functioning ecosystems) to be incorporated into economy and economic projections. With the current steep declining trend, it is questionable whether ecosystems will continue to be able to sustain human livelihoods without a radical intervention.

Tying (local) economy with the value of ecosystem services - the responsibility for biodiversity mitigation following from the 'polluter pays' principle, by first of all avoiding and when necessary, restoring loss of biodiversity.

**Community-based commercial developments for conserving biodiversity, influencing change in consumer habits, behaviour and attitudes** is to be explored.

## Local Action 8

### *Community-based commercial development for the conservation of biodiversity*

**New proposal: Integrating** ecology and the environment with enterprise

The concept of **community enterprise**, the grassroot perspective to communities and their development and regeneration, can lead to **community-based commercial development for the conservation of biodiversity**. Integrating the aspect of ecology and the environment under the hub of the Board of Enterprise Ireland and the Waterford Local Enterprise Office (LEO) for exploring further the potential for innovation in this area.

Bank of Ireland (BOA) local branch has shown interest in creating a project to bring the areas of economy and ecology closer together. Any effort to bridge the seemingly separate

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ecological and economical systems, even small scale and exploratory, will help to highlight the fact that **nature has an enormous value in local and global economies**.





wetland birds such as Little Tern and Ringed Plover to parts of Tramore and Sauleen beaches.

**New Proposal:** Erecting suitable fencing to exclude dogs and people and predators and manned by seasonal and volunteer wardens.

This has been undertaken on the East Coast in the Little Tern colonies at Kilcoole, Wicklow; Portrane, Dublin and Beltray, Louth. Positive action succeeded in bringing back Little Terns as a breeding species at Portrane strand in north County Dublin, which is part of a metropolitan area of over one million people.



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Children from a local school observing the Little Tern Colony at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow. The colony is contained within the fencing which is erected for the breeding season and then removed. There is always a warden present who can answer visitors' questions.

<http://littleternconservation.blogspot.com/>

## **Conclusion**

A Community Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP), composed of guiding principles and local actions are aimed to be used as tools for local biodiversity strategic planning and management for the future. The CBAP is a resourceful tool, alongside local community

implementation, for addressing and reversing ecosystem and habitat decline.



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### SWOT Analysis

The Tramore Eco Group (TEG) conducted a SWOT analysis to analyze future trends impacting local biodiversity.

STRENGTHS
Different strands - multiple and varied projects
Strong vision
Good mix of skill sets
Positive social media profile
Good track record
Organic way of working - allows members to focus on their interests and personal strengths

### **WEAKNESSES**

Too diverse - possibility of lack of focus and fragmentation

Small group of active members

Age profile - need to engage with the younger population

Absence of local people actively engaging

Difficult to engage for an outsider

Weak collaboration with other local community groups

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

Chance of outlook during Covid, openness to environmental/ecological issues

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Interest created in the community through good, visible local projects e.g. bird hide in Tramore Eco Park

Concern over global issues e.g. climate change, funnelled to local level of action

Growing interest among individuals and local groups

Engagement through schools with younger age groups

To 'cash in' on the popularity environmental/ecological issues and gain traction

Ability to address and issue, a perceived problem directly e.g. low tree cover in Tramore area

### **THREATS**

Constraints- uncertainty of future project funding

Resistance to change human behaviour

Authority blocking

Lack of awareness and interest in community

Lack of implementation of recommendations and guidelines
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Local residents voices not heard
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