# Dromiskin Tidy Towns – Biodiversity Action Plan

2023 – 2028


FLYNN FURNEY
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

# Contents

# 1. Welcome to the Dromiskin Tidy Towns Biodiversity Plan!

Dromiskin Tidy Towns undertook to develop a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan for the village in 2022. The Plan will focus on specific areas such as Ginnety's Pond, the church/school grounds, Jack's Hill, the Red Bog and the area near the Dog Pound. The group commissioned Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants to create the Plan in early 2023, with financial support from the Community Foundation for Ireland and Pobal. Flynn Furney consultants met with Dromiskin Tidy Towns group on 27th January 2023 to discuss the aims and focus areas of the plan, followed by a brief survey. A more detailed survey was carried out of the village and focus areas on 21st March 2023. An online survey was distributed to village groups and individuals in regard to aid the preparation of the Plan between 2nd to 17th March. The results of this survey have helped to inform the Biodiversity Action Plan, in addition to observations and communication with the Tidy Towns group.

This Plan is to be used to guide the work of Dromiskin Tidy Towns for the next five years (2023-2028). The first section of the plan includes a basic introduction to biodiversity, the challenges faced by nature and the reasons for creating biodiversity plans such as this one. Next, some **Key Biodiversity Projects** are outlined – and these are projects that may take relatively significant resources for Dromiskin Tidy Towns to complete. Finally, recommendations are included for other **Additional Projects** we suggest that the group would undertake over the next five years.

## 1.1 Acknowledgements

This Plan was created for Dromiskin Tidy Towns by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants.The authors would like to thank the group for their support. Many thanks to Community Foundation Ireland and Pobal for making this project possible under their Nature Funds grant scheme.

Impressive Sunflower Wall at the Linencare site, Dromiskin, March 2023

# 2 Introduction

## 2.1 Biodiversity Action Plan Overview

Biodiversity has now become a key part of what community groups do. This Plan will help Dromiskin Tidy Towns to 'design' biodiversity considerations into their present and future projects and to maximise the benefits for wildlife as well as people. As well as providing a schedule of actions, the plan will also be useful in raising awareness of how biodiversity is considered in the locality. This may then empower individuals and groups, such as other nearby Tidy Towns committees, residents' associations and sports clubs, to make positive contributions for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

This plan will serve as a 'statement of best practice' for biodiversity and is hoped will also be useful in seeking financial or material support for future projects. This biodiversity plan was drawn up following consultation with members of Dromiskin Tidy Towns and in-person visits with a focus on areas to be enhanced for biodiversity.

## 2.2 What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on Earth. It includes all living things (organisms) that make up the natural world (including humans). Biodiversity also refers to the places where animals and plants live (habitats) and the complex interactions between living things and their environment which we call ecosystems.

## 2.3 Why is Biodiversity Important?

Humans are a component of biodiversity and we are dependent on it to provide a range of ecosystem services. Human activities such as agriculture, forestry and fishing depend on services provided by biodiversity. We rely on nature for the provision of clean air and water, food and medicines, natural landscapes, flood control, noise pollution control and much more. A healthy environment is important for human health and well-being. Biodiversity provides us with natural amenities to enjoy, parks and green spaces, wildlife and landscapes to admire and thus improves our quality of life. The attractiveness of our country as a tourist destination, a place to live and do business depends to a large extent on the richness of our biodiversity. Our country's natural heritage contributes to the attractiveness of landscapes, villages and urban centres.

## 2.4 The Biodiversity Crisis

The 2020 Living Planet Report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) found an average 68% decline in global populations of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians since 1970. The landmark 2019 Global Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reported that one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, which is the highest figure in human history. In Ireland, around 31,000 species are known to occur, yet the conservation status of only about 10% has been assessed. This means we have a fundamental knowledge gap in how biodiversity is changing in Ireland. Of the species that have been assessed, one in every fifth species is threatened with extinction here. Within this, a third of our bee species is threatened with extinction.

## 2.5 What is this Biodiversity Action Plan For?

The purpose of a Biodiversity Action Plan is to set out appropriate, locally-based actions for the conservation, management and/or enhancement of habitats for the benefit of native species. This biodiversity action plan:

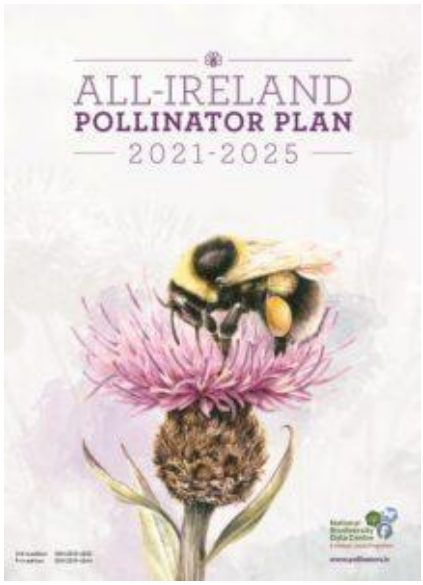
- Sets out a solid set of ambitious yet practical actions with a focus on biodiversity enhancement for the following 5-year period which the community group and locality can aim to achieve.
- Encourages actions to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and its conservation within the wider community.

## 2.6 Biodiversity Awareness

Raising awareness of biodiversity and encouraging or facilitating people to engage with and appreciate wildlife is an important tool in biodiversity conservation. Providing opportunities for people to experience nature is useful to draw people's attention to conservation. Even more effective, however, is increasing the amount of time people spend outdoors connecting with nature. Furthermore, the health benefit of spending time with nature is widely recognised as having positive impacts for both physical and mental wellbeing.

Raising awareness of biodiversity can be facilitated by organising wildlife-themed walks, (e.g. on bats, birds, wildflowers), or competitions, such as best wildlife-friendly garden, housing estate, or a wildlife photography competition. Better still is providing opportunities for people to volunteer on a project, such as invasive plant species removal, tree planting or encouraging people to get involved in citizen science projects. It is often the social benefits of such events that will attract people to get involved.

## 2.7 All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

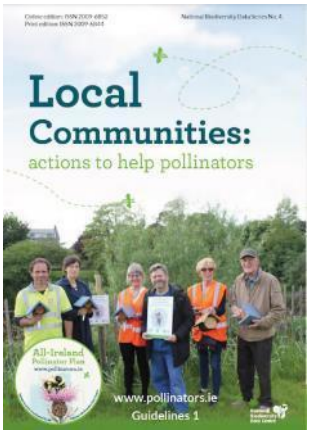


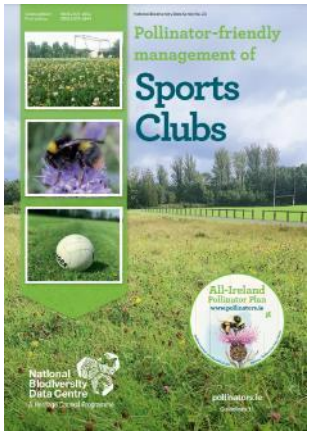

A startling one-third of Ireland's bee species are under threat of extinction by 2030. This is very worrying as bees and other pollinators provide essential 'services' to us humans. They pollinate our crops and plants. Without them, we would go hungry – and our world would be a more desolate and colourless place. A very positive project to address this threat was started right here in Ireland, called the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP). The AIPP is the largest-scale conservation project in Ireland and one of the first of its kind in the world. It encourages groups, communities, companies, schools and other organisations to play their part in conservation measures that are urgently needed to conserve our pollinating insects. The AIPP dedicated website, pollinators.ie is a mine of information on pollinators, with amazing facts and resources aimed at helping everyone to take simple actions to protect our precious pollinators. Everyone needs to know about the AIPP and do their little bit for bees! Dromiskin can join these efforts by becoming a Supporter of the AIPP! This is a simple process, which involves downloading and completing the AIPP 2021-2025 Supporter Agreement form from pollinators.ie and submitting to the email address: pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie.

## 2.8 AIPP Pollinator-Friendly Resources

The team behind the AIPP has developed guideline booklets aimed specifically at a range of groups, including community groups, sports clubs, local authorities and church groups. Each booklet gives targeted advice for every situation on how to become more pollinator friendly. Some of that advice is also contained in this biodiversity action plan, however it is also worth reading the booklets for additional information. Pollinator-

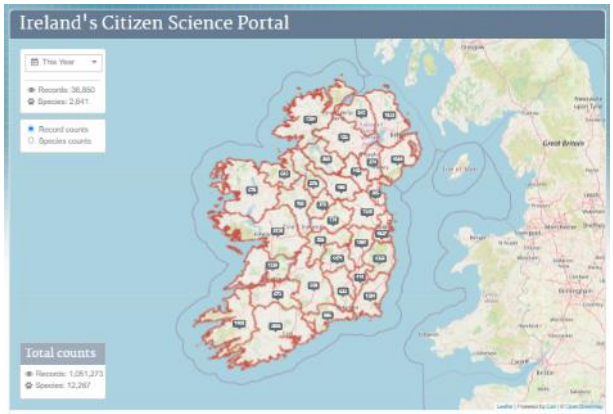
friendly signage, planting lists and information on bee species are just some of the resources the AIPP offers. All are available to view and download for free at pollinators.ie/resources/.




## 2.9 Biodiversity Recording

The National Biodiversity Data Centre works to make biodiversity data and information more freely available in order to better understand and assist the protection of Ireland's biodiversity. The NBDC encourages everyone to become a 'citizen scientist' by observing and recording species on their Citizen Science Portal. This helps them to build up a picture of the animals, plants and habitats present across Ireland, especially during current times when nature is experiencing big challenges. The NBDC's Biodiversity Maps page allows anyone to check all the biodiversity recorded across the country to date, breaking it down under specific headings. The more individuals and groups that get involved in citizens' science and recording the species they see, the more data we can contribute to this very important resource. It helps to plan ahead for biodiversity, as well as getting people out in nature, seeing what's around them. The more people recognise and understand what is present in nature, the more they are likely to value it and care what happens to it. An easy way to start recording in your community might be to try a FIT (Flower-Insect Timed) Count. Basically, people are split into small groups or individuals to watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and count how many insects visit it. The following points give more detail on FIT Counts:




- You can do a 10-minute FIT Count at any time between the 1st April and the 30th September.
- Your location can be anywhere e.g., garden, farm, park, school, business site.
- You don't need to identify the insects to species level, but only to tally within broad groups e.g., bumblebee, butterflies & moths, wasp, beetle.
- The FIT Count app allows you to take a FIT Count and upload the results in one go.

# 3 Dromiskin – An Overview

## 3.1 Results of Online Survey

An online survey was conducted via surveyhero.com and shared with various groups and individuals across Dromiskin over 2 weeks, between 2nd – 17th March 2023. A total of 25 responses were submitted and these proved to be very informative and useful to the development of the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan. The aim was to gauge the community's views on biodiversity in the community, with general questions on how they feel Dromiskin is doing in regard to biodiversity enhancement, such as where it is performing well and how it could improve. It is also hoped the survey would get people thinking about the nature around them and how they might do more to help it on a personal level too.

**1. What do you think are the most valuable areas for biodiversity in and around Dromiskin?**

**Overview:**

Main areas mentioned were the village centre, school grounds, Heritage Park, Ginnety's Pond and the Red Bog. Some also mentioned gardens, housing estates and hedgerows.

**2. Of the above areas, do you visit any of these for the appreciation of nature and biodiversity?**

**Overview:**

A resounding 'Yes' to visiting the key areas mentioned in Question 1. However, not the Red Bog due to lack of access. Only one 'No' and one 'Not as much as I'd like to' were recorded.

**3. Are there any other areas which you think could be improved for biodiversity in Dromiskin? If so, how might these improvements be achieved?**

**Overview:**

Key areas highlighted here were the GAA pitches, Jack's Hill, the area around the Dog Pound and the village green. Also highlighted were the garden near the Credit Union, the bank running from the church car park to the school's back gate and some of the housing estates.

**4. Plans are underway to develop Ginnety's Pond as a Nature Park. Do you think the plans should include interpretative signage to increase awareness of biodiversity of the site and general Nature/Pollination issues?**

**Overview:**

This was a resounding 'Yes', in addition to several 'Definitelys' and 'Absolutelys'. Education and awareness is regarded as very important, with children referred to specifically, as well as a disability/ sensory / age friendly area. One person suggested signage should be kept to a minimum.

**5. If yes to the above, have you a particular topic you would like to see included on the signage, e.g., Butterflies, Bees, Hedgehogs, Native Hedgerows, etc?**

**Overview:**

The suggested examples were referred to a few times as important to include on the signage, in addition to wildflowers, plants, pondlife, Irish birds, water birds, native hedgerows, insects and flora & fauna in general. Making the signage child-friendly was suggested a few times. A warning to keep dogs on leads and showing the food chain were also mentioned.

**6. Have you any ideas for initiatives or projects that you have seen or heard of elsewhere that might help us to improve biodiversity in Dromiskin?**

**Overview:**

Ideas for projects here included greenways, insect hotels, 'Sponsor a flower/hedge/plant', linking in with the local school, bee hives and bird boxes, onsite composting, a park and places to sit, e.g. in the village green, were some of the key suggestions. Keeping projects relative to the area was also mentioned.

**7. What do you do in your own garden to enhance biodiversity?**

**Overview:**

Several people said they have planted flowers, especially those which attract pollinators. One person said they plant local Irish plants and don't use pesticides. A few also say they don't spray (chemical weedkiller, it is assumed) and avoid fertilisers and slug pellets. Feeding birds and hedgehogs was also mentioned, along with wildflowers (some mow less, others may plant wildflowers but don't specify), insect hotels, composting, mulching grass and practising 'No Mow May'. Wild hedgerows and having a pond were other highlights. One person keeps honeybees. Others said they currently don't do enough for biodiversity or could do better.

**8. Have you any other suggestions for initiatives that Dromiskin Tidy Towns could undertake?**

**Overview:**

Other initiatives suggested by respondents include enhancing the entrance to some of the housing estates, linking in with local sports teams, having good communication with the community regarding projects, traffic calming measures and installing more bins, including dog litter bins. More pathways for walking were also suggested, along with the encouragement of food vans and farmers' markets, as well as using the old community centre. More planting by schoolchildren and enhancing the 'No Mow Zones' in the village centre were other ideas put forward. There was a lot of praise for the work of Dromiskin Tidy Towns in the responses too!

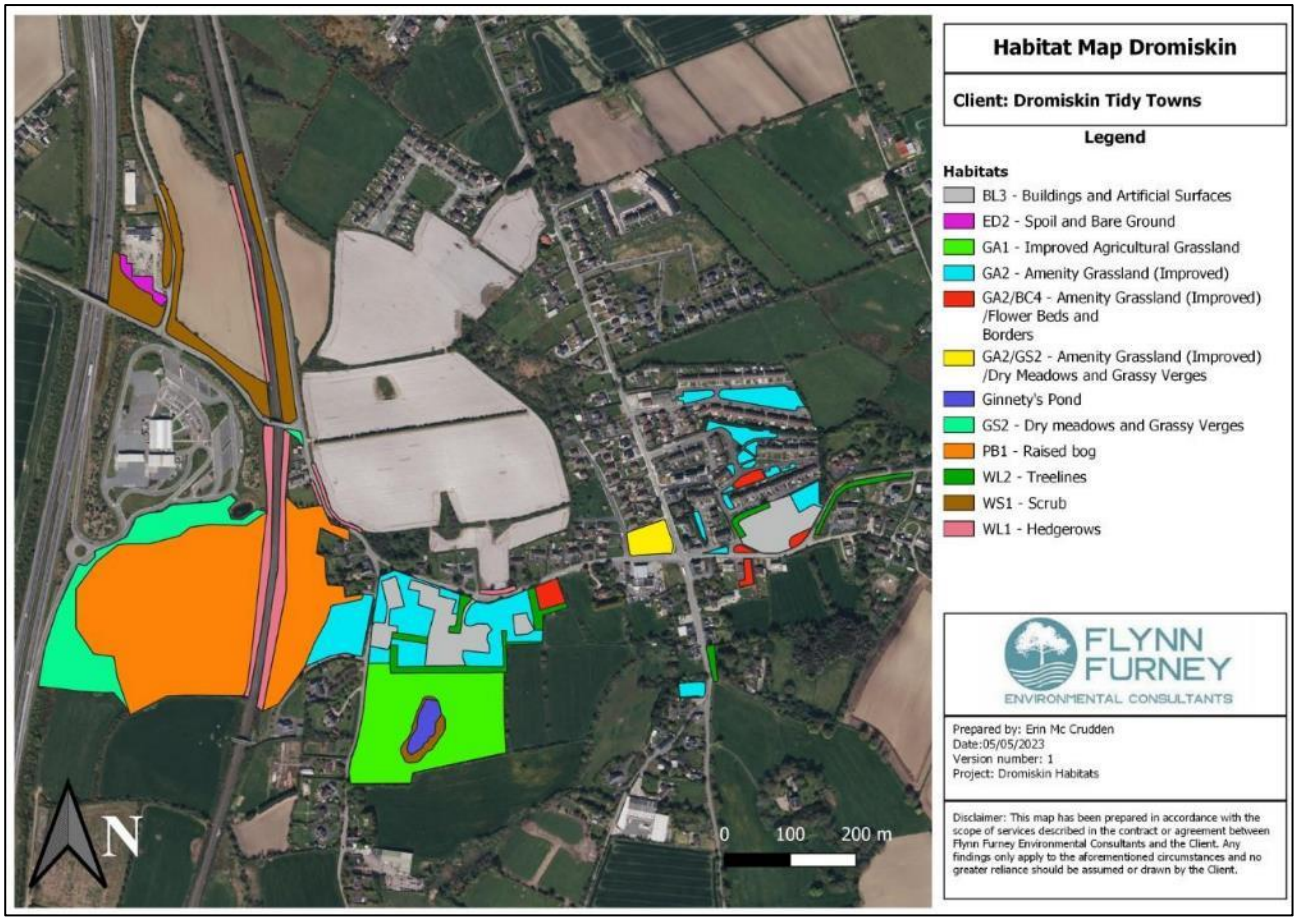
**9. The details of the respondents to our survey will be treated as confidential. However, would you like to be contacted in relation to ways that you could support the work of Dromiskin Tidy Towns? If yes, please give your contact details below:**

**Overview:**

5 out of the 25 respondents provided contact details so that they can be contacted in future to aid the work of the Tidy Towns group. These details were passed onto Dromiskin Tidy Towns.

# 4 Key Biodiversity Projects for Dromiskin

The current main habitats of Dromiskin are laid out in the map below. These show the current types and levels of habitat present, with a focus on the areas surveyed and where projects are recommended. Certain areas, e.g. hedgerows, treelines, raised bog and Ginnety's Pond, etc, already are inherently good habitats for biodiversity, and some have already been enhanced. Other areas have aspects that are good for biodiversity, but perhaps need some work, e.g. amenity grasslands, patches of excess scrub and spoil and buildings and artificial surfaces. This plan aims to lay out recommendations that will improve the biodiversity value of current habitats. Over time, as the projects in the different areas evolve, it will link up habitats, creating more robust ecological corridors for a range of species, including birds, pollinators, bats and small mammals. A larger version of the map below can be viewed at the end of this document.



## 4.1 Key Project 1 – Ginnety's Pond signage

Ginnety's Pond is a most valuable local amenity which has recently been developed to allow public access. To enhance the experience, signage on the species present and the habitat itself is recommended. The species should be relevant to the pond and surrounding vegetation, plus any bird or insect species that use it. A spring/summer survey by an ecologist would yield a list of species present to feature on the signage, e.g. plants present include Willows, Common Reed and Yellow Flag Iris, as well as possibly Purple Loosestrife, Redshank and Meadowsweet. Visiting bird species might include the Reed Bunting, Willow Warbler and Long-tailed Tit, alongside wetland species like the Mallard and Coot. Insects such as butterflies and damselflies would be drawn to such a habitat, in addition to amphibians, e.g. the frog/newt. Information on the importance of wetlands and their protection is also key here.

It is recommended to keep text on signs to a minimum, with imagery to the fore. Features such as QR codes or other scanning methods can be used so that people can visit webpages with further information on the featured habitats and species.

Ginnety's Pond with access path


Biodiversity signage at Shannon Airport

Vegetation at Ginnety's Pond in August 2022 (Image: Dromiskin Tidy Towns)

## 4.2 Key Project 2 – Barn Owl & Bat Boxes

Some species can be encouraged to set up home at Ginnety's Pond by installing tailor-made 'apartments'. For instance, bats likely forage in and around the area for insects, but they like a particular kind of tree with adequate cervices and cover to roost in. By installing a bat box, specifically a crevice-chambered bat box, near the pond, among the perimeter trees, it would provide a ready-made home for them. For more information, visit the 'Creating Roosts – Bat Boxes' webpage by Bat Conservation Ireland.

Barn Owls are a threatened, Red-listed bird species in Ireland – see the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland list (BoCCI 2020-2026). Once widespread, their numbers have experienced a huge decline in recent decades due to factors like reduced suitable habitat cover, lack of available food sources and the use of rodenticides (which are interlinked). There are efforts to support the Barn Owl nationwide now, and Dromiskin could be part of this!

Generally, Barn Owls prefer nesting indoors, however they will also nest in bespoke boxes made for their needs and installed on mature trees or poles in suitable habitat and at least 200m away from large, busy roads. They also don't tolerate regular, nearby human activity, so it would be best to find a more isolated spot than directly beside Ginnety's Pond. It is advised to place the box 3m or higher on a mature tree in a quiet location, or one at the edge of a woodland, or along a hedgerow. In future, perhaps wildlife cameras can be placed in the box to monitor activity and share with the community. It may take a few years for Barn Owls to set up home in a box, and they will only do so under the ideal conditions.

For further guidance, there are great resources available to download from BirdWatch Ireland on its 'Nestbox Designs for Birds & Wildlife' webpage.

Bat box mounted on 5m pole from eireecology.ie

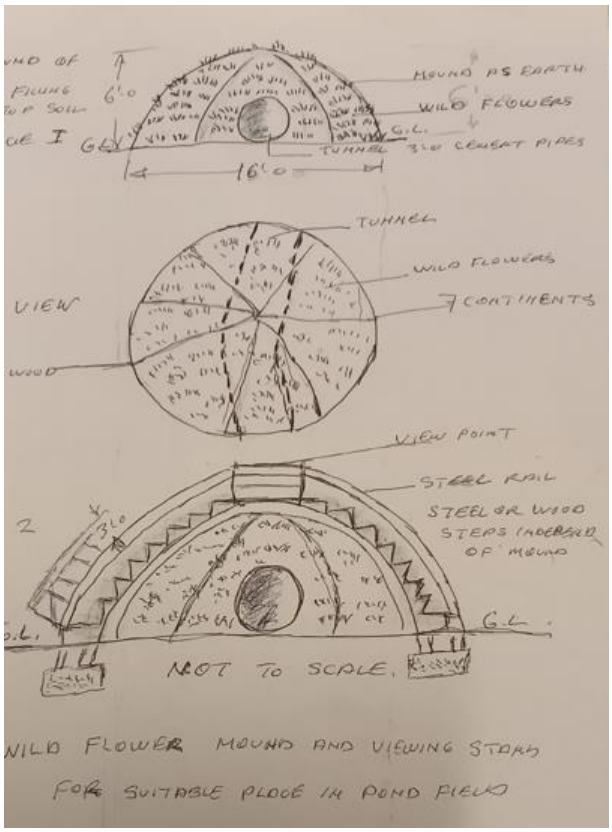
Outdoor Owl box from irishgardenbirds.ie

## 4.3 Key Project 3 – Viewing Mound – Ginnety's Pond

Ginnety's Pond is a special local attraction and will be sure to have a range of age groups visiting regularly as the site develops into a 'nature haven'.

For children to fully appreciate the pond and associated nature, it would be ideal to include a viewing point via a nearby mound. This would be a natural, grassy mound with some additional educational features, as follows:

- Constructed in a semi-circular shape to represent the northern hemisphere.
- Include a child-friendly tunnel going through it to represent the Earth's core.
- Steps to the viewing point / platform.
- Seven rails/bars that represent the 7 continents (and to prevent cycling).
- Planted with a native meadow mix suitable to the area. (Commercial wildflower seed should be avoided).



Initial design sketch for viewing mound by Seamus McArdle


A native wildflower and grass mix is recommended for the mound. See connectingtonature.ie for details.

## 4.4 Key Project 4 – Duck Feeder Unit

Ducks (and other water birds) are often fed bread by well-meaning people everywhere. 'Feeding the ducks' has been a popular pastime for many years and encourages children (and adults) to connect with nature.

However, bread is harmful to birds as it lacks the required nutrients they need and can bloat their stomachs, making them ill. The accumulation of crumbs and faeces in the vicinity can also encourage bacterial growth and attract vermin.

If people do insist on feeding ducks, it is advised instead to feed them sweetcorn, lettuce, cooked/defrosted peas, oats, seeds and rice (cooked or uncooked). See the 'What do ducks eat' webpage from the UK's Canal & River Trust for more information.

It is recommended to install a nearby dispenser with suitable foods for people to feed the ducks, for a nominal fee, at Ginnety's Pond. This should be dispensed in small quantities to ensure the ducks aren't overfed!

Duck dispenser unit in Cork. Image: yaycork.ie


Female Mallard with her chicks. Image: birdwatchireland.ie

Cahir became the first town to install a solar-powered duck feeder in July 2023! Image: tippmidwestradio.com.

## 4.5 Key Project 5 – 'Low-Mow' Management Regime

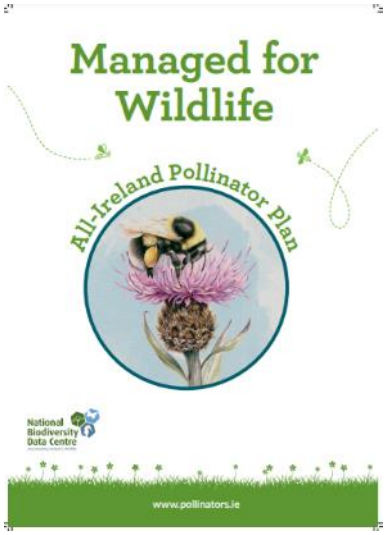
There are several green areas in and around Dromiskin village, including verges and public greens and parks. These are well maintained but could benefit from less cutting. A 'low-mow' regime has already been trialled at the central village green. With patience and management of the site as a short-flowering meadow, this will increase the native wildflower species over 2-3 years. The proposed landscaping plan for Ginnety's Pond should include 'low-mow' and 'no-mow' zones, wildflower meadows and biodiversity planting, where feasible.

By practising a reduced mowing or 'low-mow' regime, not only would this reduce the cost and labour, but it would create large patches of flowering meadow over time. There is naturally a seed bank of native Irish wildflowers in our soils, e.g. Clover, Dandelion, Daisy, Buttercup and Self-Heal. When we mow less, these can emerge, providing food for bees and other pollinators. In some cases, other species such as Cuckooflower, Ragged Robin, Yarrow and even wild Orchids can emerge, depending on the soil and location.

The AIPP advocates allowing our native wildflowers to grow over sowing packets of purchased seed. Growing meadows takes some patience as more flowers will emerge gradually each year following less mowing. See the 'Creating Meadows' and 'Low-Mow Management Options' below, for more information and examples of meadows that have been created naturally elsewhere in Ireland.

Holding 'FIT' counts and species recording events like 'Bioblitzes' a couple of times a year for consecutive years would give an indication of species diversity of flowers and insects across these areas, compared with patches that are mown frequently and support no wildlife. Another idea proposed is to introduce Red Creeping Thyme to some of the verges and public lawns in Dromiskin. See 'Red Creeping Thyme' section below.


'Low-mow' strips and mown paths at Causeway Hospital, Co. Derry. Images: Donna Rainey


## Red Creeping Thyme

Red Creeping Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*) is a perennial ground cover plant that is evergreen and requires very little maintenance. It produces swathes of pink flowers which emerge in May to August. It is becoming more popular as a cover plant, as an alternative to monoculture grass seed. In addition to its pleasant look and scent, it is also favoured by bees and other pollinators. It is worth bearing in mind that Red Creeping Thyme grows in well-drained neutral to alkaline soil in full sun. After flowering, cut vigorous Thymes back hard to maintain compactness. They can be pruned back in spring, for upright, shrubby species. Seed is sown on the surface and gently pressed into the growing medium. Do not cover over as the seeds need light to germinate. It takes about 500 seeds to cover 1 square metre. It might be wise to trial a few packets of seed in a couple of areas across Dromiskin, e.g. at Jack's Hill verge, in the Credit Union Garden and the Medieval Garden, to track how well it takes. Overall though, the main focus should be placed on the 'low-mow' regime to encourage the best outcome for our native pollinators.

## Creating Meadows

Instead of mowing public spaces and verges on a weekly or fortnightly basis, they can be mown just five to six times per year. The cuttings need to be lifted each time to ensure the soil is not over-fertilised, as this suppresses flowering meadow species. This cutting method creates short-flowering meadow type habitats which support pollinators. It also saves on costly labour and fuel. The floral diversity of the verges should become richer over time, transitioning from a few grasses and flowering species like Dandelion, Buttercup and Daisy, to denser patches containing more of these, plus Clovers, Selfheal, Bird's-foot-trefoil and Ox-Eye Daisy.

The type and abundance of species in each piece of land depends on what is contained within the original seedbank in the ground. It may take 2-3 years for flowers to emerge fully, especially if the area has been regularly mown for a long time previously. For a more maintained appearance, leaving a 1m strip more regularly mown can work very well. It often helps to communicate why you are cutting grass less often too, with All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) signage or similar. A 4- to 6-week cutting regime can be carried out as follows. Just remember to cut AND lift! Cuttings from short-flowering meadows can generally be composted. Long-flowering meadows can sometimes be baled for hay.

First cut after 15th April

Second cut end of May

Third cut – mid-end July

Fourth cut – end August

Fifth cut – after mid-October

## 'Low-Mow' Management Options

The 'low-mow' area at Manorhamilton's Star Fort (see image, left) is one of the best examples of a managed meadow we have seen at Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. Instead of mowing all of this expansive area of grass (which would be a 'desert' for bees), a substantial area has been left for pollinators. The grass is cut and lifted once a year to allow the next year of meadow flowers to emerge. A range of grasses and wildflowers such as Buttercups, Meadowsweet, Ragged Robin, Clover, Self-heal and even wild Orchids have emerged here over time. Paths are mown through the meadow so that people can walk through and enjoy the beauty here. A few All-Ireland Pollinator signs have been installed nearby to show what is being done and why.

## Spring Bulbs

Spring bulbs can be planted in autumn to add early colour and to supply food for bees when they need it most, e.g. Snowdrop, Crocus, native Bluebell. Other varieties include Grape Hyacinth, Fritillaries (e.g. *Fritillaria meleagris),* Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) and Anemone varieties. If planting Bluebells, be sure to plant the native Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and NOT the invasive, non-native Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*). While Daffodils and Tulips are beautiful, they provide little to no nectar/pollen for bees, so it is best to opt for the above list of species as far as possible. At the very least, Dromiskin Tidy Towns should be planting mainly pollinator-friendly varieties among some Daffodils and Tulips.

## 4.6 Key Project 6 – Enhancing School Grounds for Biodiversity

The sloped bank behind the school has recently been cleared of vegetation which had become overgrown and unmanageable. It would be ideal to create a rockery area here, interspersed with suitable flowering shrubs. Examples of pollinator-friendly, low maintenance shrubs are Heathers (*Erica carnea and/or Calluna vulgaris, etc)*, Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), *Geranium sanguineum,* Wild Thyme (*Thymus Serpyllum*) and Rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*), Creeping Blue Blossom (*Ceanothus repens*), Douglas' Meadowfoam (*Limnanthes douglasii*), *Sedum spp.*, Aubretia (*Aubrieta*), Saxifrage (*Saxifraga*) and Trailing Bellflower (*Campanula poscharskyana*). For year-round colour, etc, Firethorn (*Pyracantha spp.*), Berberis (*B. darwinii*) and Tibetan Cotoneaster (*C. conspicuous*) could be added.

A full, comprehensive list of perennial flowers and shrubs can be found in the AIPP Pollinator Planting Code Guide at pollinators.ie. 'The Top Ten pollinator-friendly plants for different situations' guide might also be useful.

The tree stumps which have been left here could be transformed into works of art (see example below), perhaps carrying on the Viking theme elsewhere in the village, or depicting other local folklore, etc. A native hedge or alternative line of tree species could be planted along here in the gaps, e.g. Hawthorn, Wild Cherry and Rowan,

Amelanchiers between Poplar tree stumps, Clones.

which are relatively low-growing and provide food for birds and pollinators. Another option might be Amelenchiers, which are non-native but good for wildlife - and have a pretty blossom.

The New Zealand Flax (Phormiums) in the car park provide height and cover but are of no benefit to pollinators and can become unmanageable. Replacing them with a row of low-growing native trees would be more beneficial for biodiversity, e.g. Wild Cherry, Rowan.

Planting pollinator-friendly spring bulbs around the grounds would also be a great bonus for pollinators. See 'Spring Bulbs' section above.

Wood carvings in tree stumps, Smithborough, Co. Monaghan.

## Native Hedging

Native hedging varieties produce flowers and fruit, providing food and shelter for birds, pollinators, small mammals and bats. Native hedges are excellent ecological corridors, offering a lifeline for many creatures, especially considering Ireland's current lack of native tree cover. In addition, they provide fantastic shelter for livestock in times of wind, rain or even hot, sunny weather. They also help to deter flooding by absorbing excess water, prevent land subsidence by strengthening the soil and are brilliant carbon sinks. Ireland's hedges often date back to the 18th and 19th centuries, with the introduction of the splitting up of land under the Enclosure Acts, although some date as far back as mediaeval times. Townland boundary hedgerows are often the most species abundant, with lines of mature trees incorporated into them. Typical native hedge species are Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Elder, Spindle, Whitebeam, Guelder Rose and Holly. Larger trees might include Oak, Ash, Beech and Sycamore. The latter two tree species are non-native but were popular in some areas at the time. Ash Dieback Disease has now spread across Ireland, with an estimated 90% or more of Ashes now affected. Unfortunately, this is having a negative effect on our landscape and wildlife, so we need to do what we can for our precious hedgerows.

## 4.7 Key Project 7 – Red Bog Alert

Red Bog is a small section of remnant raised bog that lies to the south-west of Dromiskin. A County Louth wetland survey in 2011 found that this site was of *County Importance* having a number of habitats represented here, including the Annex I (Habitats Directive) *Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion* and *Transition Mires and Quaking Bogs*. Red Bog has been transected by an active railway line and also a related drainage ditch.

Red Bog Alert is an ecology and climate change awareness project that may be undertaken by Dromiskin Tidy Towns with the primary school as a key actor. There are two strands to this: Ecology and Climate Change. These are of course interrelated but would span the categories of *Nature and Biodiversity in Your Locality* as well as *Sustainability – doing more with less*.

**Strand 1**: It is proposed that the St Peter's National School gains knowledge on the structure, function and components of Red Bog and share this with the wider Dromiskin community and beyond. This will not be straightforward, given the difficulty in accessing much of this wetland. It is suggested that Dromiskin Tidy Towns assist the school in establishing and maintaining contact with Iarnród Éireann and Applegreen with regard to access to Red Bog. The school should invite experts to assist them in identifying species and habitats as well as ways that practical conservation measures might be taken to assist the conservation of this wetland. These

may include the control of scrub and blocking of drainage ditches at Red Bog

**Strand 2**: It is proposed that St. Peter's National School undertakes a multi-annual project that will research and highlight the value of Red Bog as a carbon store. It is widely known that peat bogs have superb carbon storage ability and that this can be lost but also repaired and even enhanced (UCD/EPA). The National School, in conjunction with DTT, will explore the carbon storage capacity of this peatland, how much of Dromiskin's carbon footprint it can offset and crucially how this may be conserved or improved. It is suggested that experts in this area are invited to St. Peter's in order to share knowledge, give direction and guide the overall project direction.

Organisations worth contacting for advice are: the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC), An Taisce (Green Schools in particular) and a few smaller, volunteer-led projects such as the Ardee Bog Project, Co. Louth, the Drummin Bog Project, Co. Carlow, the Killyconny Bog Project, Co. Cavan/Meath and the Abbeyleix Bog Project, Co. Laois. It might also be worthwhile to look into applying for funding from the NPWS Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme. For more information, see here.


Community members from Abbeyleix Bog Project, Co. Laois. Image: decadeonrestoration.org.

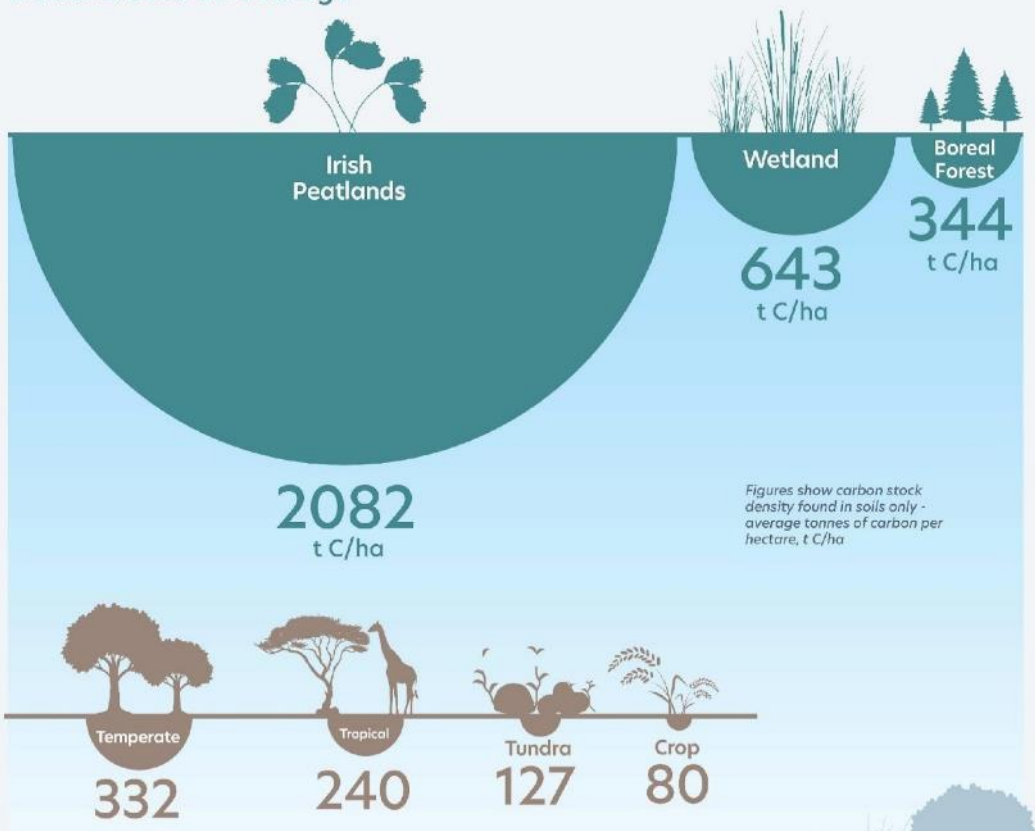
# The Amazing Carbon Storage of Ireland's Peatlands

Globally, soils store more carbon than any other system

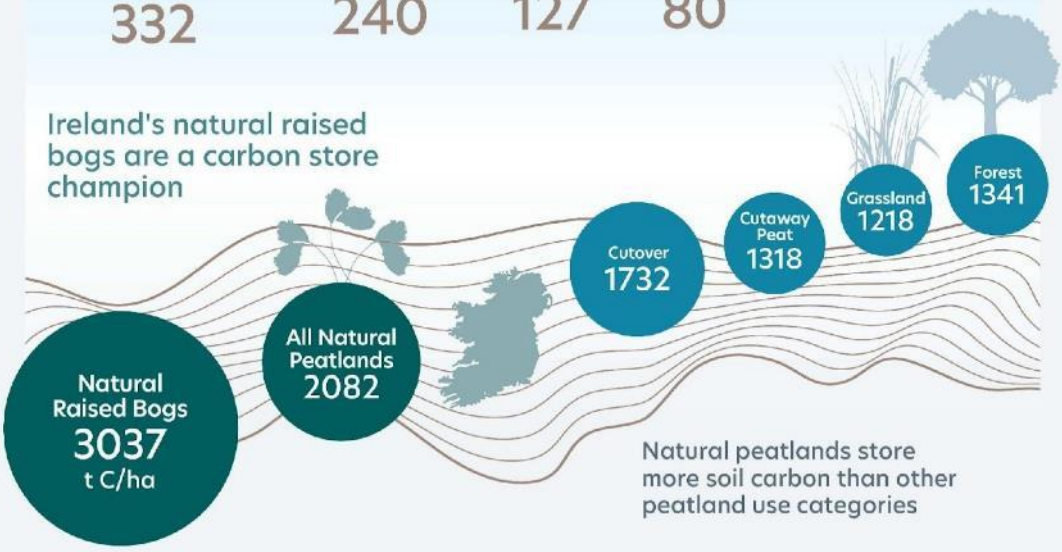

*Giga tonnes of Carbon

Ireland's peatlands store 3 times as much carbon as international wetland soils on average

They also hold 10 times as much carbon as tropical soils




Ireland's natural raised bogs are a carbon store champion




Natural peatlands store more soil carbon than other peatland use categories

Find out more at epa.ie

Sources: EPA Auger Report, IPCC

epaResearch This project is funded under the EPA Research Programme 2021-2030. The EPA Research Programme is a Government of Ireland initiative funded by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

## 4.8 Key Project 8 – Dundalk Dog Rescue/Louth Co Co Dog Pound

This area represents an opportunity for establishing pollinator-friendly plants in a disused area. With the understanding that this area may not always be devoted to biodiversity or amenity use, it is not considered wise to invest heavily in planting or other interventions here. In order to address the clutter that exists on this site, it is suggested that permission is gained hold a *Meitheal* here that would serve as a comprehensive clean-up day for the site. Louth County Council should be a partner in this.

Following this, it is proposed that some simple and inexpensive biodiversity measures are taken. These are: the planting along the boundaries of pollinator-friendly native shrubs that may include Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Guelder Rose. It is also proposed that soil scarifying and Yellow-rattle seeding is carried out. This may be done by hand. Local wildflower seeds of Dromiskin may be gathered by Tidy Towns volunteers and these added in 'scrapes' created within the site.

Finally, home-made insect breeding habitat may be added using simple components such as waste wood, Bamboo, and twigs. On boundaries of the site where future disturbance is deemed unlikely, Bee-Banks made from soil and sand may be installed. None of the above habitats or interventions will require regular maintenance and all will continue to be of use as long as this site is undisturbed.

## 4.9 Key Project 9 – Jack's Hill

Jack's Hill is currently well maintained but it could be given a boost in terms of colour and improved for biodiversity utility.

The photos below show verges of bright, pollinator-friendly flowers along the entrance to a large car park in Monaghan town centre. In spring these verges also contain colourful and pollinator-friendly spring bulb flowers. Some verges contain a native wildflower mix with Pink Campion, Dandelion, Clover, etc, while others contain ornamental Daisies and *Camassia*. These displays are easily maintained and give beautiful displays on entering a place.

The Gorse bushes along this road give eye-catching lines of bright yellow displays in spring and summer. Gorse provides great cover for birds and is liked by pollinators. Its benefits should be highlighted. Maintenance should be treated like native hedgerows – lightly trimmed every couple of years and only when required.

## 4.10 Key Project 10 – Pollinator Pit Stops

Creating 'Pollinator Pit Stops' throughout Dromiskin, e.g. pots and hanging baskets in housing estates and along the streets, would be an easy but effective way of extending the pollinator corridor from around the village into the centre and throughout the residential areas.

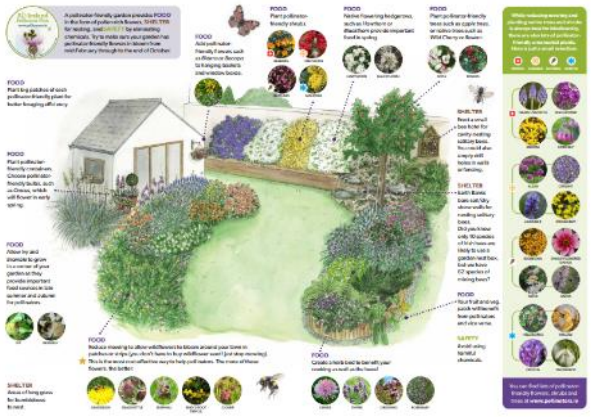
Planting perennial species is much more cost-effective, requires less maintenance and the plants last for several years, as opposed to summer bedding plants which must be removed each year and new ones replanted the next season.

A few more pots and hanging baskets throughout the town centre could be encouraged to add colour and encourage pollinators. Herbs are also great for pollinators - and useful for restaurants and businesses! These are easily grown in window boxes. This would create 'pollinator pit stops', meaning bees don't have to travel very far to fill up as they search for food.

A range of pollinator-friendly plants are favoured by bees and butterflies, such as spring bulbs (especially Crocuses, Snowdrops, Grape Hyacinth, Fritillaries and Anemones), plus perennial flowers and shrubs, e.g. Heather varieties, Lavender, *Potentilla fruticosa*, Allium, Salvias, Catmint and *Geranium sylvaticum*. See the 'Pollinator Friendly Planting Code' guidelines for extensive pollinator-friendly plant lists at pollinators.ie/resources/. 'The Top Ten pollinator-friendly plants for different situations' guide is very useful!

Encouraging locals to 'pledge their garden for pollinators' via pollinators.ie/gardens/ would be a great initiative. Perhaps a competition could be held for the Most Pollinator-Friendly Garden or Bee-friendly Housing Estate in Dromiskin in future. Indeed, this could be an annual event in the Dromiskin Tidy Towns' Calendar.


Available at pollinators.ie/resources/

'Pledge your Garden for Pollinators': pollinators.ie/gardens/

## 4.11 Key Project 11 – Invasive Species Management

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is a non-native, invasive species which takes hold in bare and disturbed ground and built surfaces. It is a perennial and can easily out-compete native species. It spreads extremely rapidly by means of rhizome (underground stems) growth and by spread of cut stem or root fragment. It is recommended to record and map the current locations of the knotweed on the NBDC website and to notify Louth County Council and/or the landowner/s. Signage must be displayed near each knotweed stand warning people not to cut or treat the plant. The council or other relevant landowner is legally responsible for eradicating Japanese knotweed, depending on its location. There are a range of chemical and mechanical methods to remove knotweed, but these should be carried out by a trained and accredited contractor. Methods are described in more detail on the next page.

Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*), while less problematic than Japanese knotweed, is still harmful to our native plant species and features on the official Invasive Species list. It can be simply dug up, usually to approx. 500mm. Any regrowth can be spot sprayed.

Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*), while considered 'naturalised', is originally from the Mediterranean region. This can take hold and is still considered an 'alien' species which spreads and threatens native plants by outcompeting them. Examples of this include the Grand Canal and coastal roadsides throughout Leinster. Alexanders can be either hand pulled or dug up from the roots and/or sprayed. While we would never advocate chemical treatment in general, for these types of problematic invasives, sometimes purely mechanical removal will not work. Progress needs to be monitored and follow-up action taken as needed in each case.

Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*)

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)

Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*)

## Methods for removing Japanese Knotweed

| PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL CONTROL METHODS | | |
|---|---|---|
| **METHOD** | **SEASON** | **FOLLOW-UP** |
| CUT AND INJECT | Late October and November | Regular follow up required for up to 5 years. Labour intensive |
| DIGGING AND SPRAYING | Digging to be done in winter, chemical treatment as below | Regular follow up required for up to 5 years. Labour intensive* |
| EXCAVATION | Two weeks after the application of a non-persistent chemical agent | Regular monitoring of site |
| DEEP BURIAL | Following excavation | Regular monitoring of site |
| DISPOSAL TO LANDFILL | Following excavation | N/A |

| CHEMICAL CONTROL METHODS | | |
|---|---|---|
| **METHOD** | **SEASON** | **FOLLOW-UP** |
| GLYPHOSATE | May to early October | Requires repeated applications over a period of 5 years |
| 2,4-D AMINE | May to early October | Requires repeated applications over a period of 5 years |

## Highly Recommended - A Tidy Towns Composting Unit

A communal composting unit would be beneficial in Dromiskin, subject to site availability. Composting units are a great way of disposing of cut grass and garden waste, which can be turned into valuable compost for use in the planted beds on site. If three bays are constructed within a unit, this allows for a quicker compost turnover, as moving and airing the material on a regular basis breaks it down more rapidly. It is important to provide good signage about what can and cannot be placed in the composting unit. Domestic food waste should not be placed in these bays, only garden waste from the site. Do not dispose of invasive plant species or problematic weeds in the bays as the seeds, roots and spores will not always fully break down and can be spread around further. As well as being useful for all the above reasons, publicly visible community composters are a great way to encourage residents to get into the composting habit.

# 5 Additional Biodiversity Projects for Dromiskin Tidy Towns

The following are suggested projects that Dromiskin Tidy Towns could carry out within the timeframe of the plan. They aim to correspond with the key projects laid out in Section 4, as well as raising awareness of biodiversity within the wider community.

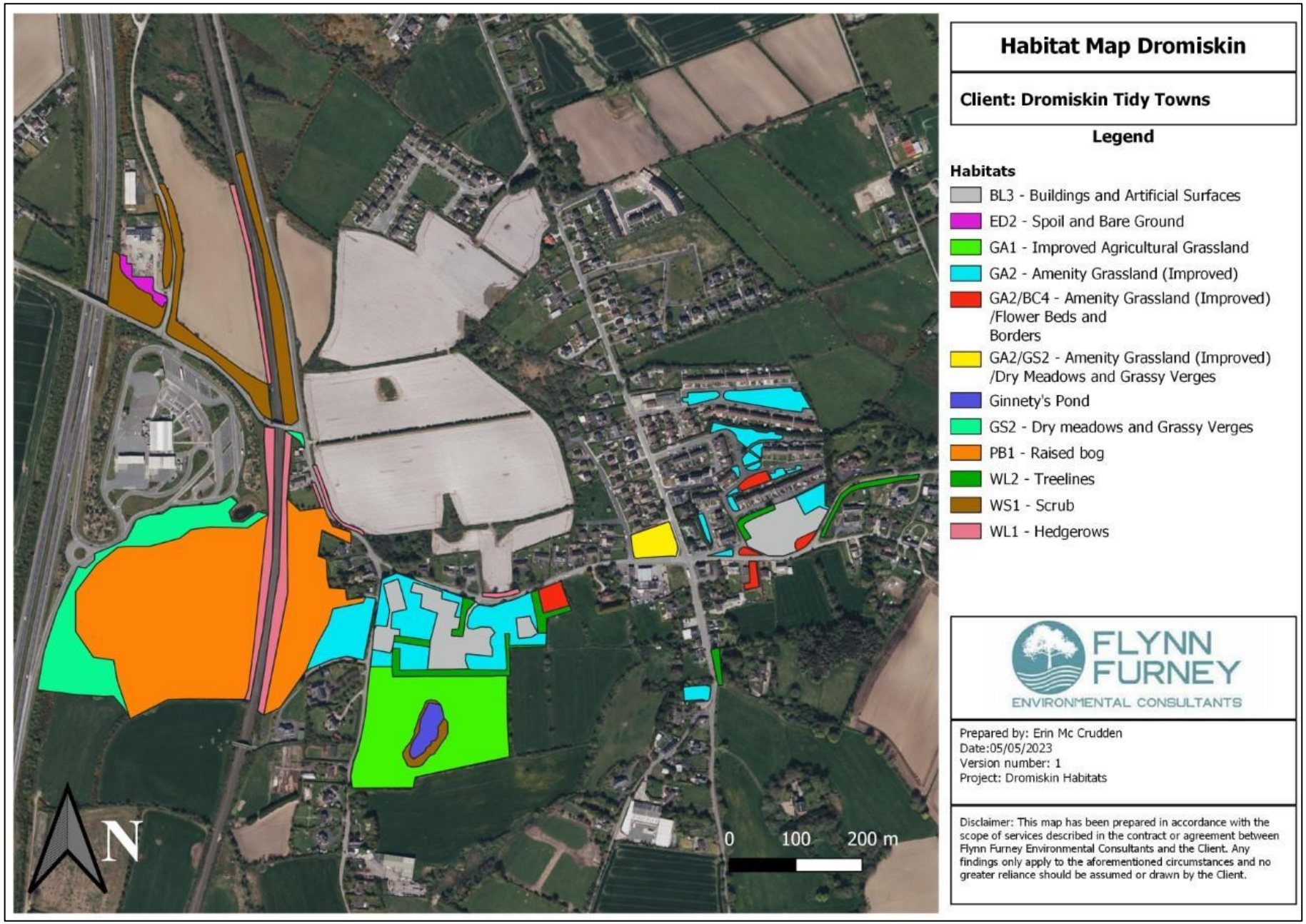
| No. | Project | Description | Project Period |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Biodiversity talks and training | e.g. Tree ID skills, 'low-mow' regimes, pollinator-friendly planting. Delivered by invited experts from NGOs (e.g. Sonairte), other Tidy Towns groups or local experts. | 2023-2028 |
| 2 | Become a Supporter of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) | Becoming a Supporter of the AIPP may galvanise efforts to protect pollinators among local people. It will help everyone to understand why certain actions are being taken, e.g. 'Low-mow' regimes. Visit the AIPP Supporter webpage for more information. | 2023-2028 |
| 3 | Install rain butt/s | Installing rain butts will conserve water. These can be installed easily at the base of downpipes from local buildings for watering some of the village plants, for instance, at the school, etc. If these are located around the village, it could reduce water use by a significant amount! | 2023-2028 |

# 6 Recommended Actions & Timeframe

| | Action | Location/s | Recommended Species | Planting Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Plant native trees | Along top of rear school bank and to replace New Zealand Flax in car park. | E.g. Hawthorn, Wild Cherry, Rowan and Amelenchiers. | Nov-Mar. Do not plant in hard, frosty ground. 17th Mar often considered the deadline for planting. |
| 2 | Plant native hedges | Possibly along top of rear school bank and at other desired locations. | Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel (*Coryllus avellana*), Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifoilum*). | Nov-Mar. Do not plant in hard, frosty ground. 17th Mar often considered the deadline for planting. |
| 3 | Plant perennial flowers and shrubs | In school grounds and along verges. | Heathers (*Erica carnea and/or Calluna vulgaris, etc)*, Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), *Geranium sanguineum,* Wild Thyme (*Thymus Serpyllum*) and Rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*), Creeping Blue Blossom (*Ceanothus repens*), Douglas' Meadowfoam (*Limnanthes douglasii*), *Sedum spp.*, Aubretia (*Aubrieta*), Saxifrage (*Saxifraga*) and Trailing Bellflower (*Campanula poscharskyana*), Camas (*Camassia*) and Rose Campion (*Silene dioica).* For year-round colour, etc, Firethorn (*Pyracantha spp.*), Berberis (*B. darwinii*) and Tibetan Cotoneaster (*C. conspicuous*) could be added.<br><br>Full pollinator friendly list available at pollinators.ie. | Mainly in May-Jul, although some species can be planted earlier in the spring or later in the autumn. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Plant spring bulbs | In school grounds and along verges. | Crocus (*C. vernus*), Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari harmeniacum*), Anemones (e.g. *A. nemorosa, A. blanda),* Fritillaries (e.g. *Fritillaria meleagris),* Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*), native Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). | Sep-Nov. Remember roughly where the bulbs are planted when planting perennials so that they are not dug up or interfered with. Alternatively, plant the bulbs after perennials have been planted so it is clear where there is adequate space. |
| 5 | Trim hedges (only lightly sided and/or topped each year) | Surrounding native hedges, when mature and established. | Any established native hedges within the village boundary and GFC grounds. | By law, hedges cannot be cut between 1st March and 31st August each year (under Section 40 of the Wildlife Act). Ideally, wait until end October to start February, to avoid extended bird and pollinator activity. Only trim hedges lightly, and if strictly necessary. Hedges can only be cut outside the declared season if they are truly detrimental to road safety. |
| 6 | Prune shrubs | In school grounds, etc. | Any perennial shrub will likely require pruning once a year, e.g. Heathers, Lavenders, Wild Thyme, Rosemary, etc. | Perennial shrubs are generally pruned back in the autumn, after flowers have died off. Be mindful to leave shrubs with berries until later to allow birds a chance to feed on them. |
| 7 | Cut grass | Village Green, verges, church grounds, Ginnety's Pond, housing estate greens, etc. | | For short-flowering meadow option, cut once every 4-6 weeks and lift cuttings. For long-flowering meadows, cut once a year in mid-late October. Lift cuttings.<br>● First cut after 15th April<br>● Second cut end of May<br>● Third cut – mid-end July<br>● Fourth cut – end August<br>● Fifth cut – after mid-October |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Install composting unit | Install communal compost unit at a convenient and slightly hidden location if possible. Ensure clear signage is placed here for everyone to see. | | Any time. Preferably before spring when grass cutting begins. Keep compost mixed and rotated throughout the year. |
| 9 | Trial Red Creeping Thyme | Trial on village verges. However, 'low-mow' regime is strongly recommended to go along with this. | | Plant creeping thyme 20-30 cm apart to allow for spreading. Prune in spring to maintain a compact appearance and again after flowers are spent if needed. Plant in spring, or autumn in mild areas, in soil that drains freely and with no danger of waterlogging in winter. It can also be propagated in summer autumn. |
| 10 | Invasive Species Management | Where Japanese knotweed, Winter Heliotrope and Alexanders are occurring throughout the village. | Target species as listed (to the left) or as identified by Invasive Species Ireland or the NBDC. | See Key Project 8 for further information. |
| 11 | Pollinator Pit Stops | In pots and hanging baskets throughout the village streets and residential areas. | Scabiosa, Saxifrage, Thyme, Rosemary (and other herbs), *Agrimonia, Ajuga reptans, Betonica officianalis,* Chicory, Purpurea, *Pimpinella major*, etc. Spring bulbs are also good for earlier in the year, e.g. Crocus, Grape Hyacinth. | Plant up pots and hanging baskets with perein summer months. With care they will last into autumn and can be used for several subsequent years when stored over winter. Spring bulbs can be planted in late autumn. See pollinators.ie/plant-a-pot-for-pollinators/ for some guidance. |
| 12 | Install signage, mound, duck feeder and bat box at Ginnety's Pond.<br><br>(Seek suitable location for Barn Owl Box). | Install signage on biodiversity at pond but ensure this is limited to avoid clutter. Install bat box, mound and duck feeder nearby. A Barn Owl Box should be installed in a nearby, quieter location, away from human activity. | Suggested ideas, materials and websites are provided with each recommended project in the main document. | Signage, mound and duck feeder can be installed at any time of year. However, Barn Owl boxes are best to install in Nov/Dec, before the breeding and nesting period. Bat boxes are best to install between Nov-March, before breeding/roosting time. |


Habitat Map Dromiskin
Client: Dromiskin Tidy Towns
Legend
Habitats
BL3 - Buildings and Artificial Surfaces
ED2 - Spoil and Bare Ground
GA1 - Improved Agricultural Grassland
GA2 - Amenity Grassland (Improved)
GA2/BC4 - Amenity Grassland (Improved) /Flower Beds and Borders
GA2/GS2 - Amenity Grassland (Improved) /Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges
Ginnety's Pond
GS2 - Dry meadows and Grassy Verges
PB1 - Raised bog
WL2 - Treelines
WS1 - Scrub
WL1 - Hedgerows
N
0
100
200 m
FLYNN FURNEY
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS
Prepared by: Erin Mc Crudden
Date:05/05/2023
Version number: 1
Project: Dromiskin Habitats
Disclaimer: This map has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services described in the contract or agreement between Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants and the Client. Any findings only apply to the aforementioned circumstances and no greater reliance should be assumed or drawn by the Client.