



# Manorhamilton Tidy Towns

Community Biodiversity/Pollinator Plan  
2023 - 2025

Our Actions for Biodiversity in Manorhamilton



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage





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## Welcome to the Manorhamilton Tidy Towns Biodiversity Plan!

This plan is to be used to guide the biodiversity work of Manorhamilton for the next 3 years. The plan was drawn up following consultation with members of the community group and a field visit undertaken in August 2022.

The first section of the plan is an introduction to this plan and the work that gave rise to it as well as some biodiversity basics. Next, we outline the Key Biodiversity Projects – these will be projects that may take relatively significant resources for Manorhamilton Tidy Towns to complete.

Finally, there are recommendations for some additional projects we suggest that the group would undertake over the next three years, the timeframe of this plan.



## Acknowledgements

This Community Biodiversity and Pollinator Plan is a Leitrim County Council Heritage project funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund and by Leitrim County Council. The Plan was created for Manorhamilton Tidy Towns by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. The author would like to thank the volunteers of Manorhamilton for their support. Special thanks to the enthusiastic and hard-working Michael and Trish who met me in August 2022 to show me around the great town of Manorhamilton.



# Section 1. Introduction: Manorhamilton Community Biodiversity / Pollinator Action Plan Action Plan

## This Plan is a Biodiversity Project

Biodiversity has now become a key part of what local community action groups do. This project will help Manorhamilton to 'design' biodiversity considerations into their present and future projects and 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 Manorhamilton. This may then empower individuals and groups such as residents' associations 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 Manorhamilton Tidy Towns, an in-person visit with a focus on areas to be enhanced for biodiversity and liaison with the Leitrim County Council Heritage Officer.

## 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.

## Why is Biodiversity Important?

Humans are a component of biodiversity and we are dependent on biodiversity to provide a range of ecosystem services. Human activities such as agriculture, forestry and fishing depend on services provided by biodiversity. We rely on biodiversity 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 rich biodiversity of the county. Our country's natural heritage contributes to the attractiveness of landscapes, villages and urban centres.

## What is this Community Biodiversity/Pollinator Action Plan For?

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

- makes recommendations for the conservation of biodiversity through appropriate actions for the protection, management or appreciation of an area of high ecological value.
- Identifies actions to improve or enhance local areas so as to increase their value as habitats for species.
- Encourages actions to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and its conservation.



## **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 peoples' 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 with positive impacts for both physical and mental wellbeing.

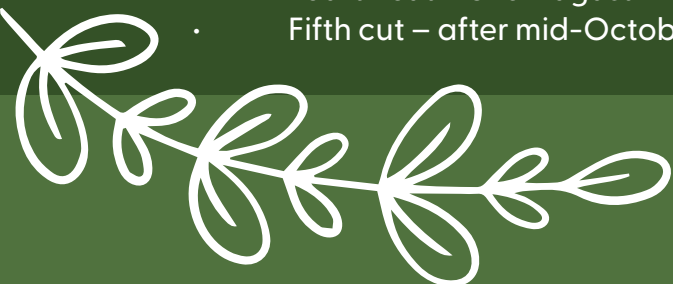
Raising awareness of biodiversity can be facilitated by organising wildlife-themed walks, bat walks, wildflower walks and bird watching or competitions, such as best wildlife-friendly estate, best garden for wildlife or a wildlife photography competition. Better still is providing opportunities for people 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.

## **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 6-week cutting regime can be carried out as follows. Just remember to cut AND lift!

- First cut after 15th April
- Second cut end of May
- Third cut – mid-end July
- Fourth cut – end August
- Fifth cut – after mid-October



## Section 2. Key Projects for Biodiversity in Manorhamilton

### Manorhamilton – An Overview

The town of Manorhamilton is located in central County Leitrim and is the second-largest town in the county after Carrick-on-Shannon. The Irish name ‘Cluainín’ or ‘Cluainín Uí Ruairc’ means ‘little meadow’ or ‘little meadow of the O’Rourkes’. This suggests beautiful rolling hills full of lovely meadows! There is a lot of history attached to the town, especially in the form of Manorhamilton Castle, of which the ruins still stand today, and the ‘Star Fort’ area. Much work has already been carried out in Manorhamilton to benefit biodiversity in recent years. Pollinator-friendly planting exists throughout the town and the ‘low-mow’ meadows at the Star Fort are some of the best examples of managed, natural meadows in a public space that Flynn Furney ecologists have seen to date. There is major potential to further enhance biodiversity in Manorhamilton. This plan aims to support the Tidy Towns in such positive endeavours.

### Key Project 1: Creating Homes for Swifts

A Swift Audit carried out for Manorhamilton in 2020 revealed there are several sites in the town where Swifts return to nest each year, including buildings at New Line and the corner of Monk’s Row and Main Street. This is very positive, however there has been a decline in the number of Swifts recorded in the town over the years, possibly due to less available nesting sites. Potential sites highlighted in the audit included the old Fever Hospital, the Courthouse and a gable wall behind Café Bia Sláinte. It is recommended to integrate Swift Bricks or boxes into existing buildings, especially suitable sites or those where Swift activity has been recorded already. Swift Conservation Ireland offers great advice on nest box siting. The booklet ‘Wildlife in Buildings’ by BirdWatch Ireland is also brilliant.

Project Period: 2023-2025



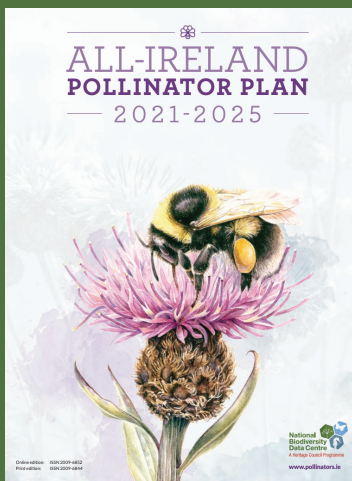
The iconic Swift is in trouble and needs a helping hand. Image: [swiftconservation.ie](http://swiftconservation.ie)



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

## ‘Low-Mow’ Management Options

The ‘low-mow’ area at Manorhamilton’s Star Fort (see image, right) 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.



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](http://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! Manorhamilton Tidy Towns can join these efforts by becoming a Supporter of the AIPP (if not one already).



## Key Project 2 : Viewing Point at Star Fort

The viewing point at Star Fort is a wonderful location from which to overlook the meadows, flower beds and church across the road. Some picnic benches and seats are present here on a stone/concrete raised area. This might be softened by removing some of the hard edges and creating softer slopes which would allow wheelchair and buggy access. There may be the possibility of resurfacing it with a low-maintenance, compacted grit. A sign with some information on the managed meadow and flower species present would go well here, and/or an artistic feature/sculpture with a biodiversity theme.

A mini orchard with various fruit bushes and trees has been planted at the Star Fort in recent times. Some of these plants are faring well, while others are not. It is recommended to replace those which are not doing well with new plants. Perhaps some extra bushes/trees can be added to extend this mini orchard too. The local school could be involved in caring for the orchard. Jams, preserves and other tasty treats could be made from the future fruit yields here!

Project Period: 2023-2025



## Key Project 3 : Micro Park, Old Bundoran Road

There is a small, triangular area of unused ground behind the stone wall at the junction with the old Bundoran Road. While small, this little space would be ideal for a biodiversity 'micro' park. It currently contains two Ash trees and Blackthorn hedging, along with Comfrey, Nettle and Bindweed, etc.

While it is beneficial for nature as is, there is no mutual benefit for people. Some of the rear Ash trees and Blackthorn/Bramble scrub can be kept, while the front, overgrown section of thick grasses, Bramble and Bindweed could be cleared. An access point (or two) could be created in the wall and a simple pathway installed.

A 'low-mow' approach can be taken to allow meadow flowers emerge, with a small bed or two of pollinator-friendly flowers and shrubs added. A couple of benches would allow people to sit and enjoy the space and the nature around them. A 'low-mow' approach could also be taken for the green patch located nearby. One or two AIPP signs could be erected to show the area is managed for pollinators.

Project Period: 2023-2025





## Key Project 4 : Biodiversity Mural at Bee Park

Bee Park Community Centre and nearby sports pitch and handball alley are focal points of the community in Manorhamilton. A biodiversity-themed mural on a suitable wall or gable at Bee Park would not only brighten up the general space but would also highlight the importance of biodiversity to local people and visitors. Murals depicting nature scenes have become more common throughout the country and have proven to be popular and effective at awareness-raising.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Mural of a Dandelion, Switzerland, by the famous wall artist Mona Caron.

## Key Project 5: Native Tree Planting Project, Cluainín

A native tree planting project has been started in Manorhamilton in an unused green space near Cluainín Voluntary Housing development. The aim is to create a small woodland which will not only contribute to biodiversity enhancement and help to store carbon but will be a great natural amenity for local residents and schoolchildren. Native tree species of local provenance should be planted to complete this project. They should suit the local soil type, microclimate and take account of surroundings, e.g. buildings, sunlight, potential height at maturity, etc. Species might include Birch, Rowan, Bird/Wild Cherry and native fruit trees, e.g. Crabapple *Malus Sylvestris*.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Schoolchildren assisting with tree planting, January 2022. Image: Leitrim Live.

## Key Project 6: Green 'Fáilte' Space, Enniskillen Road

There is a relatively large green space with Welcome or 'Fáilte' sign present along the Enniskillen Road entering Manorhamilton. It is currently well maintained with some colourful planting. It would be beneficial for pollinators to add perennial flowers and shrubs with more available nectar/pollen, e.g. *Potentilla fruticosa*, Lavender, Heathers, Allium, *Salvias* and Catmint.

Spring bulbs may be added to add early colour and supply food for bees in spring, e.g. Snowdrops, Crocuses, native Bluebells. Cordylines might be replaced with *Viburnum* or a similar shrub.

A 'low-mow' regime to encourage a short flowering meadow would be ideal here, with only strips cut more regularly at the edges for a more maintained look. This would provide much needed food for pollinators throughout the year in the form of Dandelions, Clover and Self-Heal. A small AIPP sign could be erected. If permitted, a picnic bench might go well here also. For more pollinator-friendly planting ideas see [pollinators.ie](http://pollinators.ie)

Project Period: 2023-2025



Spring bulbs for pollinators – Snowdrops & Crocuses.



## Section 3. Additional Biodiversity Projects for Manorhamilton 2023-2025

These are suggested projects the Tidy Towns group could carry out within the timeframe of the plan. They aim to correspond with the key projects laid out in Section 2, as well as raising awareness of biodiversity within the local community.

No.:	PROJECT:	DESCRIPTION:	PROJECT PERIOD:
1	<b>Biodiversity Event each year</b>	<i>The Tidy Towns group will organise at least one biodiversity-themed awareness event for the residents of Manorhamilton and the wider public. Themes could include a night-time bat walk, native wildflower walks or talks on managing natural meadows, e.g. at the Star Fort.</i>	Annually, 2023-2025
2	<b>Moving Away from Herbicides</b>	<i>Manorhamilton Tidy Towns tries to avoid herbicides in its day-to-day activities. The Tidy Towns group will continue to campaign for the end of glyphosate-based herbicides in Manorhamilton and the wider area.</i>	2023-2025
3	<b>Famine Memorial graveyard</b>	<i>The mown lawns here would be ideal for a 'low-mow' type regime, as recommended for the 'Fáilte' space on the Enniskillen Road. Mown strips around the edge would ensure a more maintained look. Some additional pollinator-friendly flowers and shrubs would also work well. See <a href="http://pollinators.ie">pollinators.ie</a> for inspiration.</i>	2023-2025
4	<b>Become a Supporter of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP)</b>	<i>Becoming a Supporter of the AIPP may galvanise efforts to protect pollinators in the local community. It will help everyone to understand why certain actions are being taken, e.g. 'Low-mow' regimes.</i>	Annually, 2023-2025
5	<b>Annual 'Bioblitzes' and 'FIT Counts'</b>	<i>Bioblitzes are a great way to record the species present in the locality, as well as fun ways to get people involved in noticing nature. A 'Flower-Insect Timed (FIT) Count' is another fun way of recording and getting locals involved in Citizen Science. The Star Fort meadows would be a good location for such activities. All records gathered can be sent to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) for their database. See <a href="http://biodiversityireland.ie">biodiversityireland.ie</a> for more details.</i>	Annually, 2023-2025