



Fenagh Tidy Towns

Community Biodiversity/Pollinator Plan
2023 – 2025

Our Actions for Biodiversity in Fenagh



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Welcome to the Fenagh Tidy Towns Biodiversity Plan!

This plan is to be used to guide the biodiversity work of Fenagh 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 Fenagh 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

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Section 1. Introduction: Fenagh 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 Fenagh 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 Fenagh. 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 Fenagh 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 Fenagh

Fenagh – An Overview

The village of Fenagh is located in County Leitrim. It is located on the R202 road between Ballinamore and Mohill. Fenagh is a pretty village steeped in history, with beautiful old buildings such as the ancient Fenagh Abbey and St Catherine’s Church of Ireland. The Fenagh Visitor’s Centre or ‘Monk’s Den’ is the focal point of the village which operates as an information centre and café, as well as a community centre. The Church of Ireland has a tranquil Peace Garden within its grounds. The Tidy Towns is very active and rises to some of the challenges faced in Fenagh, which include having no prominent village centre, a lack of public green space and some busy through-roads. The main R202 thoroughfare and local road offshoots carry significant traffic going between the various nearby towns and villages. Despite this, the Tidy Towns committee has done a brilliant job of trying to ‘join up the dots’ in terms of working with the small spaces they have, brightening up corners, creating flowerbeds and decorating fences with children’s artwork. There is a lot of drive and creativity around, and much potential to enhance biodiversity throughout Fenagh village!

Key Project 1: Pollinator-friendly Planting Scheme

There are some striking flowerbeds and pots throughout the village of Fenagh, including the ‘Welcome’ boat near Quinn’s pub. It is positive that a little herb garden is located here too – great for pollinators and people! There is also a plot of planted wildflowers nearby.

It is recommended to replace the traditional annual bedding plants with pollinator-friendly varieties. Traditional bedding plants like Begonias, Marigolds and Petunias have little to no nectar/pollen and have to be replanted each year. Alternative bee-friendly options are Lavender, Heathers, Allium, Salvias, Catmint and Geranium sylvaticum. These are perennials that return each year with a little maintenance.

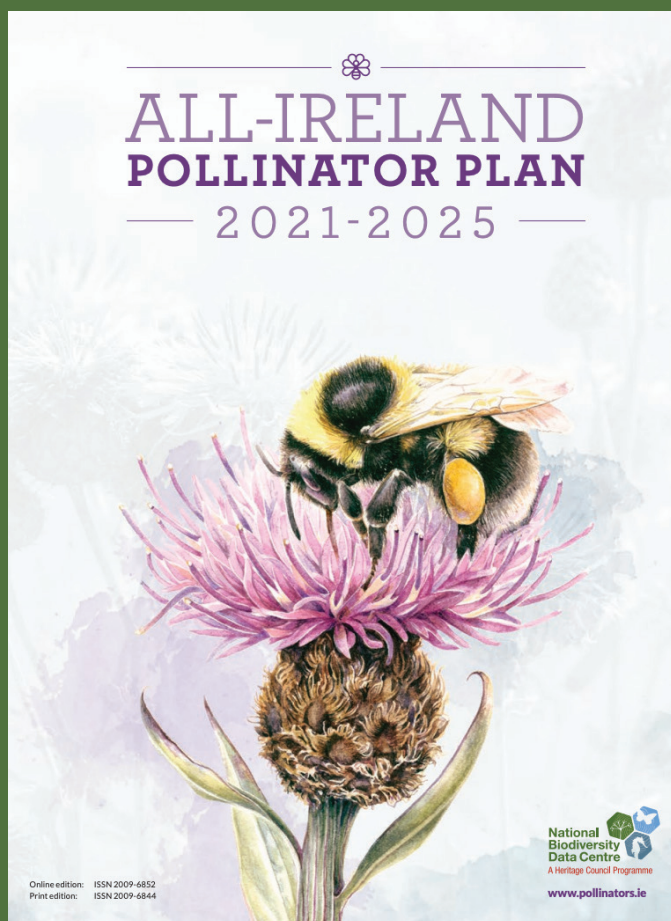
Perennial shrubs like Viburnum tinus and Potentilla fruticosa can provide colour and food for pollinators throughout the year. For more plant list options see pollinators.ie.

Project Period: 2023–2025



‘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 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! Fenagh Tidy Towns can join these efforts by becoming a Supporter of the AIPP (if not one already).



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



'Low-mow' sign at Causeway Hospital (Image: Donna Rainey) and AIPP 'Grow- don't mow' sign, Manorhamilton.

Key Project 2: Enhancing the Roadside Orchard

The roadside orchard on the way out to Foxfield is a lovely addition to the green space along here. The apple trees and currant bushes looked quite healthy and were bearing fruit on the survey. A strip of long grasses, wildflowers and Bramble provides a great 'run' for wildlife such as birds and small mammals, as well as pollinators. The AIPP sign informs people why some areas are uncut.

This space could be enhanced by planting 4 or 5 native fruit trees of the Apple/Plum/Pear variety, plus up to 10 fruit bushes, e.g. Blackcurrant, Redcurrant, Strawberry, Raspberry and/or Gooseberry. While wildlife will benefit from eating the resulting fruit, it would be great if local people could too, in the form of fruit-picking days in the autumn, followed by a jam making or apple pressing event, for instance!

It is also advised to cease the dumping of grass cuttings along the verge as this will over-fertilise the soil and suppress growth of natural grasses/flowers. Cuttings should be composted in the nearby graveyard compost bay (or otherwise). Reducing the amount of mowing along this verge would also reduce the amount of cuttings produced!

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 3: Vegetable/Herb Patch & Demonstrations

In the parking area with the planted border, past the visitor centre, there is a small vegetable patch with a sign. It is unclear how often this is used and would be good to encourage more activity here. A designated corner here, with the addition of herbs like those from the 'Welcome' boat is recommended. Local groups and schoolchildren should be encouraged to pick and use the resulting vegetables for cooking. Combined with the fruits yielded from the small orchard at the roadside further along, there is much potential for Grow-It-Yourself type courses and events in the village.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 4 : Biodiversity Mural at Handball Alley

The handball alley is a big part of Fenagh's activity in the village centre and the building is a focal point beside the Visitor's Centre. The climbers are a nice addition to the wall. A biodiversity-themed mural on part of the wall or gable here 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 : 'Low-Mow', Composting & Spring Bulbs at the Graveyard

The new graveyard out towards Foxfield is a great space with lots of potential to encourage more biodiversity. The lawns are currently extensively mown, but there was no fresh grass cuttings seen in the existing compost bays, suggesting another disposal method is used.

A 'low-mow' regime based on a short-flowering meadow, involves mowing the grass every 6 weeks instead of every week/fortnight (see 'Creating Meadows' section). This will mean less grass cuttings need to be disposed of and natural meadow flowers, e.g. Clover, Dandelion and Self-Heal will get a chance to grow and feed the bees!

The compost bay here would benefit from some clear signage, showing composting methods, what materials to add (and not), and how to rotate it, etc. Resulting composting can be used for village flowerbeds, for instance.

Spring bulbs would add great colour and much-needed early nectar/pollen for bees. These can be planted in lines and/or patches across the green space. Snowdrops, Crocuses, Muscari and Bluebells are recommended to plant over Daffodils and Tulips for their pollen/nectar value, although some of the latter species could be mixed in too.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 6 : Mini Wildlife Space, Ballinamore Road

This little clearing would be an ideal mini wildlife space. There is already some nature signage and a bug hotel in place here. Small areas in the centre could be strimmed once or twice a year, leaving a space for a natural bench, (see example below). Patches of native Bluebells would add colour and provide food for bees in spring. Some creative features, e.g. wooden 'stepping stones' could lead to a tree trunk base up to a 'Mouse House' for instance. A nature-themed sculpture might also go well here, fitting with local wildlife, e.g. see the 'Wolf hut' image below.

Project Period: 2023-2025





Carved bench in the biodiversity garden at Shannon Airport



A mini 'mouse house' with 'stepping stones'.



Wolf Sculpture, Rossmore Park, Co. Monaghan.

Section 3. Additional Biodiversity Projects for Fenagh 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	One Biodiversity Event	<i>The Tidy Towns group will organise at least one biodiversity-themed awareness event for the residents of Fenagh and the wider public. Themes could include a night-time bat walk, native wildflower walks or talks on managing natural meadows.</i>	Annually, 2023-2025
2	Moving Away from Herbicides	<i>Fenagh Tidy Towns generally avoids herbicides in its day-to-day activities. The Tidy Towns group could campaign for the end of glyphosate-based herbicides in Fenagh and the wider area.</i>	2023-2025
3	Protect and monitor stream water quality	<i>The bridge in Fenagh village was damaged on the survey day following a crash, with resulting debris in the stream. This is a somewhat regular occurrence. It would be important to ensure the debris is cleared and the stream kept clear for wildlife, e.g. for birds like Kingfishers, Grey Wagtails and Dippers. Stream water quality may be monitored via yearly water testing. Water quality training through Citizen Science projects with the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) is also worthwhile.</i>	2023-2025
4	Become a Supporter of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP)	<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>	2023-2025