



Carrigallen Tidy Towns

Community Biodiversity/Pollinator Plan
2023 - 2025

Our Actions for Biodiversity in Carrigallen





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Welcome to the Carrigallen Tidy Towns Biodiversity Plan!

This plan is to be used to guide the biodiversity work of Carrigallen 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 will take significant resources for Carrigallen Tidy Towns to complete. Finally, 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 Carrigallen Tidy Towns by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. The author would like to thank the volunteers of Carrigallen for their support. Special thanks to the enthusiastic group who met me on a sunny day in August 2022 to show me around the lovely village of Carrigallen – Julie, Anne, Becky, Noelle and Joan.

Section 1. Introduction: Carrigallen 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 Carrigallen 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 Carrigallen. 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 Carrigallen 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.



Section 2. Key Projects for Biodiversity in Carrigallen

Carrigallen – An Overview

The lovely village of Carrigallen is located in east County Leitrim, set among drumlins and lakes. Carrigallen Lough or the ‘Town Lough’, as it is known locally, is a key natural feature of the village, which is enjoyed by both locals and visitors. Passers-by can sit and relax on the benches overlooking the lake along the Ballinamore Road. There are some beautifully planted areas throughout Carrigallen, such as the memorial along Main Street and around the millwheel at the Cornmill Theatre. The old Church of Ireland and Bredagh School are surrounded by lines of grand, mature trees, including Beech and Yew. The old well, heading west past the Church of Ireland, is also a special spot in terms of cultural heritage which is maintained by volunteers. There is a history of theatre and creativity within Carrigallen which provides opportunity for combining nature and art in this biodiversity action plan and beyond!

Key Project 1: Enhancing the Lakeside - for people and nature

There is an informal path here sloping down to the lakeside from the main footpath. While suitable for some to walk down, it is not accessible to all. The area close to the lake is currently overgrown, with some parts inaccessible. There is much potential for improvement here by making this into an attractive amenity area which allows locals and visitors to access the edge of the water, appreciating its calm and beauty, while benefitting biodiversity. Some natural benches and/or a picnic area would be nice here. A mowing and strimming regime at the lakeside and banks would work well, allowing maintenance and shape to take hold, while encouraging natural meadow flowers to emerge each year. It may also be possible to install an eco-friendly path, e.g. bound and crushed, reclaimed stone for a compacted surface with grip.

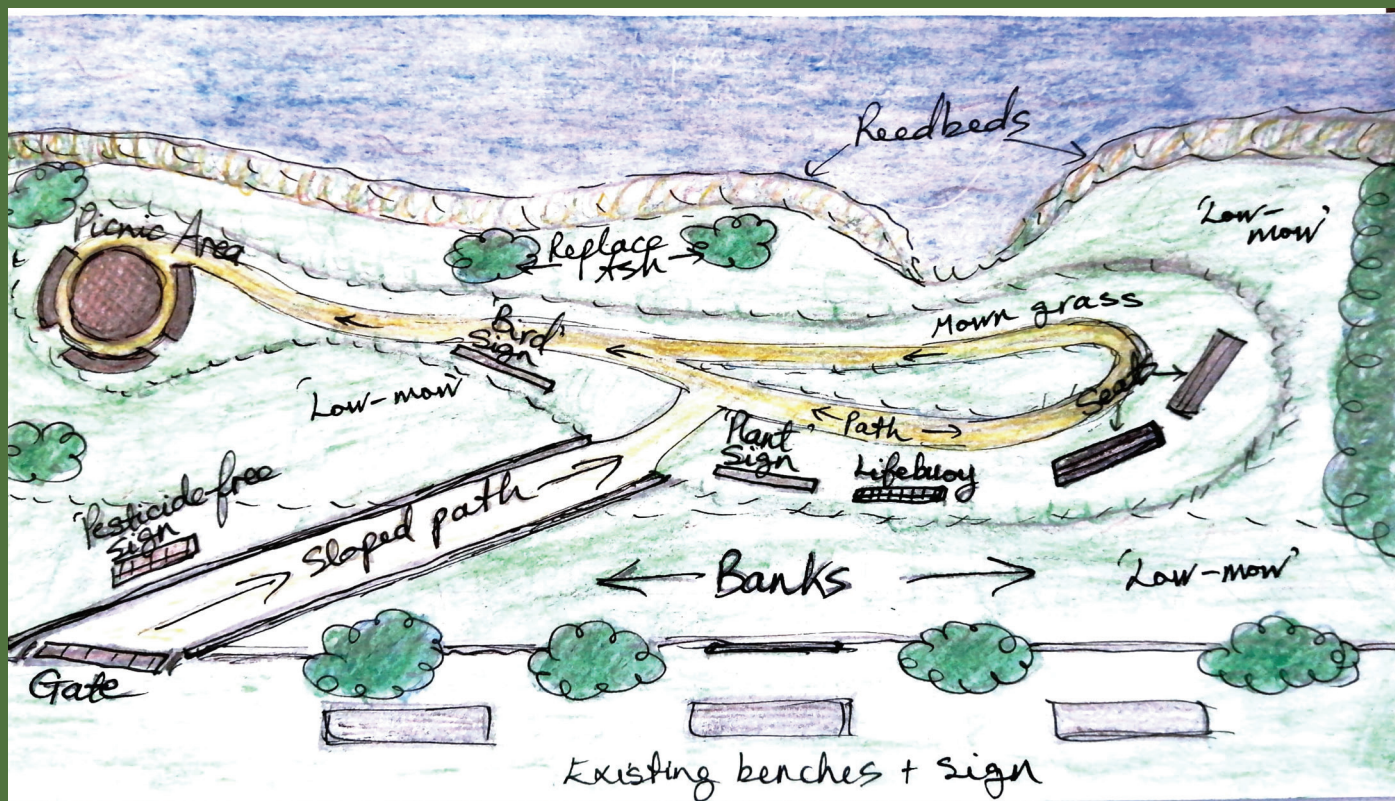
On the opposite side of the lake, the boardwalk area for anglers is very pleasant. There is some lovely lakeside vegetation here such as Water Mint, Yellow Loosestrife and Purple Loosestrife. A sign on this side of the lake depicting the key plant and bird species would be a positive addition. Perhaps working in tandem with the local anglers’ club, some key fish species could be included too. In terms of maintenance, a light strimming along the carpark edge and boardwalk edge around twice a year is an option, but not vital. The root protection area (RPA) of the Birch tree here should be addressed, otherwise its health will decline. The tarmac around it can be carefully removed by an arborist or otherwise, using the correct tools.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Proposed design for Lakeside

The sketch below shows how the lakeside at Carrigallen could look (looking down from above).



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

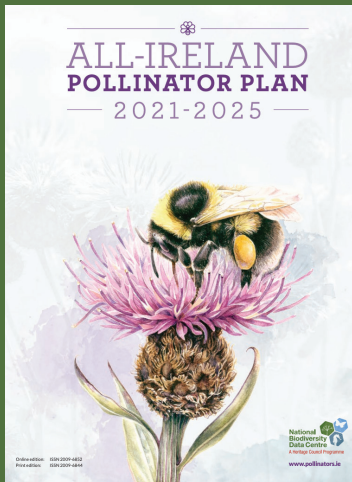
Key aspects of this project would include:

ACTION:	DETAIL:
New sloped path with fencing	<i>This path will follow down into the lakeside area, with a looped walkway around available space. This can be either a tightly mown path or laid with a special surface, e.g. compacted, crushed grit with slim timber edging. An attractive metal/wooden gate could be placed at the entrance.</i>
Picnic area and benches	<i>Wooden picnic benches and seating by the lakeside. Reclaimed wood with natural, artistic features would be a bonus.</i>
Creating Meadow sections	<i>This will involve more regular mowing for pathways (if this is the method chosen for the path) every couple of weeks. Short meadows can be created by cutting and lifting every 6 weeks, while long meadows along the verges and banks only require a cut and lift once or twice a year (e.g. in April and October). Any cuttings should be composted where possible, unless they contain invasive plant species.</i>
Biodiversity Signage	<i>Signage on biodiversity aspects, e.g. bird species, plant species present at the lake. Include an All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) sign to demonstrate why there is a 'low-mow' regime in place. The current 'Pesticide free Zone' sign could also be replaced.</i>
Replace Ash trees with Ash Dieback Disease	<i>The current semi-mature/immature Ash trees at the lakeside are affected with Ash Dieback Disease. These could be replaced with water-loving, native tree species such as Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> or Downy Birch <i>Betula pubescens</i>.</i>
Leaving reedbeds and areas of scrub	<i>Reedbeds along the lakeshore are important habitats for waterbirds and invertebrates, as well as creating a 'buffer zone' between land and water. It is also important to keep sections of scrub with Bramble, Ferns, etc which provide cover for birds, small mammals and invertebrates.</i>

'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! Carrigallen 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: Yard behind Theatre/Community Hall

The area behind the Cornmill Theatre/ Community Hall is currently under-used, except for some overflow parking. There is potential here for a landscaped area that would benefit biodiversity and enhance the overall look of the space. The bank currently consists of scrub, including Gorse and Bramble, along with mixed trees and shrubs, which includes some non-natives like Laurel and Fuchsia. While scrub can be beneficial for biodiversity, it can also take over, leaving no room for other species if left unmanaged. It is recommended to remove the excess scrub here and the non-native shrubs. Disposal of garden waste, etc should not be permitted. The Ash trees present on the rear bank are affected by Ash Dieback disease. These can be removed and replaced by native trees/hedgerow species like Hawthorn, Hazel and Rowan. Recommended here would be to plant up the cleared banks with easily maintained, pollinator-friendly rockery shrubs with good cover and colour, like Heathers, Lavenders, Campanula, Alyssum and Aubrieta. Some large boulders/rocks could break up the space, with one showing the name Carrigallen or 'Carraig Álainn'. A strategically placed bench here would be a nice touch.

The fuel tank could be blocked off by timber or trellising, or a stone wall complete with climbers, e.g. Clematis, Ivy. Alternatively, the cover could be painted with nature-themed artwork. It is also suggested that a set of steps could be installed to the right of the tank up into the cleared, raised area behind the building. This might offer a pleasant outdoor space and viewing point for the community hall/theatre. Some nice planting and a second bench, looking outward, might look well here.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 3: Japanese Knotweed

It was noted that several patches of Japanese knotweed are present throughout Carrigallen. Japanese knotweed 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 and notify Leitrim County Council. Signage must be displayed near to each knotweed stand warning people not to cut or treat the plant. The Council or relevant landowner is 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.

Project Period: 2023-2025



More on Japanese knotweed...

Construction sites are particularly vulnerable to impacts by Japanese knotweed. It only takes a fragment of the plant stem to spread this plant. The importation of materials may introduce the plant to the site or may be translocated into the site on contaminated machinery. It will then be spread to new sites by the contaminated machinery. It can lead to extensive structural damage through the rhizomes. Foundations may be compromised and paths and roadways may be lifted by the plant spreading. It is unfortunately common to see Japanese Knotweed on roadside areas. Again, illegal dumping of unwanted material has generally caused this. When knotweed occurs in a roadside treeline or hedgerow, it is imperative that these are not cut as doing so can very likely spread the plant further still. The flails used to cut hedges can eject live fragments of knotweed that can be flung far from the parent plant. Worse still, the machinery itself can carry knotweed plant fragments that can then go on to start new infestations. Japanese Knotweed is listed in S.I. No. 477/2011 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as non-native species subject to restriction under Regulation 49 and 50 and as such it is an offence to plant or disperse this plant.

Key Project 4 : Well near Church Street

The well located west of Church Street, just outside Carrigallen, is an attractive feature with a recently upgraded stone wall. There is some potted planting at the wall here. It would be good to see some pollinator friendly varieties added too. Lists of suitable flowers and shrubs can be found at pollinators.ie.

The well itself may just need a little bit of clearing from fallen vegetation and debris every so often. It would be interesting to also check the quality of the water here as it looked quite stagnant and discoloured on the survey day.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Section 3. Additional Biodiversity Projects for Carrigallen 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	Sculptural piece on a biodiversity theme by the lakeside	<i>The artistic and natural aspects of Carrigallen could be combined in a sculptural piece by the lakeside depicting a key part of the locality's biodiversity, e.g. a waterbird, a tree or plant species.</i>	2023-2025
2	One Biodiversity Event	<i>The Tidy Towns group will organise at least one biodiversity-themed awareness event for the residents of Carrigallen and the wider public. Themes could include a night-time bat walk, native wildflower walks or talks on water quality issues.</i>	Annually, 2023-2025
3	Moving Away from Herbicides	<i>Carrigallen Tidy Towns has already been avoiding chemical herbicides in its day-to-day activities for some time. The Tidy Towns group will continue to campaign for the end of glyphosate-based herbicides in Carrigallen and the wider area.</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