



Kinlough Tidy Towns

Community Biodiversity/Pollinator Plan
2023 – 2025

Our Actions for Biodiversity in Kinlough



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Welcome to the Kinlough Tidy Towns Biodiversity Plan!

This plan is to be used to guide the biodiversity work of Kinlough 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 Kinlough 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: Kinlough 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 Kinlough 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 Kinlough. 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 Kinlough 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 Kinlough

Kinlough – An Overview

The village of Kinlough is located in north County Leitrim, near the borders of Counties Donegal and Fermanagh. It lies in a very scenic location near the Dartry Mountains, with the stunning Arroo Mountain in the distance. Lough Melvin is situated just east of the village and is popular with tourists, anglers and local swimmers. The Eco Park at Lough Melvin is a unique amenity which has been developed by the community over the years. A popular community garden, forest walk and children's playground are located here, which provides much enjoyment for both locals and visitors. This plan outlines some practical, achievable projects to aim for within the 3-year timeframe. These projects will help to enhance the biodiversity of the Eco Park, as well as other key areas identified throughout the village of Kinlough.

Key Project 1: Invasives at the Eco Park

Both Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* and Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* are invasive species under Regulations 49 & 50 of the Third Schedule list of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 [S.I.477/2011]. Both species continue to be an issue at Melvin Eco Park. Efforts have been made locally to address this issue, but the Tidy Towns needs financial and practical support to control and eradicate these species so that they do not spread further and affect surrounding native plant life and wildlife any further. More permanent signage must be displayed near to each Japanese 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.

More permanent signage should also be placed near to Himalayan balsam stands to ensure it is treated and handled correctly. 'Balsam bashing' days can work well and can be done by volunteers. These days should be scheduled to take place before the plant flowers, or any seed pods have set. The ideal time for 'Balsam Bashing' is from about mid-May to the end of June. Piles of Himalayan balsam plants may be left in situ and covered with jute or hessian to block out light that will rot down with the plant. Alternatively, they should be transported to suitable licensed composting facilities.

For more information on Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, visit invasives.ie.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 2: Managing Green Spaces – Eco Park

There are three main spaces that could be enhanced for biodiversity with different methods of meadow management. The spaces are the picnic/meeting area opposite the playground, the orchard and the long patch of grass sloping down to the angler's hut (pictured right). The latter space is already managed quite well for pollinators, though the regularly mown strip could be reduced to a 1m strip by the path. A long-flowering meadow strip of c.2-3m wide could be left towards the rear, while a short-flowering meadow of c. 3-4m wide could be created by mowing every 6 weeks from April to October.

The orchard might benefit from having a short-flowering meadow with long-flowering strip left around the perimeter. The picnic area is currently managed for pollinators, but this could be enhanced by introducing a 2-3m long-flowering strip by the boundary and keeping the rest of the space as a short-flowering meadow. If desired, pathways can be mown through the space on a more regular basis. Further details on meadows and how to create the different types are given below under the 'Making Meadows' section.

Project Period: 2023-2025



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

‘Low-Mow’ Management Options

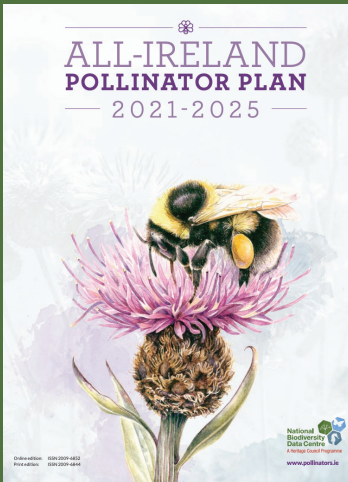
The ‘low-mow’ area at Manorhamilton’s Star Fort (see image, right) is one of the best examples of a managed meadow we have seen at Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. Instead of mowing all of this expansive area of grass (which would be a ‘desert’ for bees), a substantial area has been left for pollinators. 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.



‘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.



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

Key Project 3 : Maintaining Willow Structures – Eco Park

There are some Willow structures in the picnic area of the Eco Park which are great features for all visitors, as well as being of benefit to pollinators and birds. There are two Willow tunnels/domes here, one of which is pictured right.

To ensure the structure of the tunnels/domes are kept, the Willows will need to be pruned back and shaped each year in the autumn once the shoots and leaves have gone dormant.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 4 : Arborist Survey – Eco Park Woodland

A quick walk through the woodland at the Eco Park revealed there is a mix of mature and semi-mature broadleaf trees present, mainly. Some patches of wet woodland exist near the lake too, another important and threatened habitat in Ireland. While many of the tree species present looked healthy, there were patches where crowding and incoming sunlight may be an issue. This also suppresses woodland flower growth on the woodland floor. It would be worth commissioning an Arborist's study of the woodland here. A report should detail the tree species present, key mature and semi-mature species and how the trees should be managed into the future, e.g. are patches of 'thinning out' or coppicing required in places?

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 5: Old Abbey/Graveyard

The old abbey/graveyard in Kinlough is a beautiful area hidden down a small lane just outside the village, near the Eco Park. It is surrounded by striking mature trees with a wonderful view south towards Arroo Mountain. This secret space could be a special haven for nature.

The grounds here are not formally managed by any particular group but there had potentially been some lawn maintenance carried out prior to the field visit. A 'low-mow' management regime of the grass here would work well as there is low footfall. A short-flowering meadow (cut every 6 weeks between April-Oct), interspersed with a long-flowering meadow (cut and lift in Sept/Oct) would be ideal here. Planting pockets of spring bulbs like Snowdrops, Crocuses, Muscari and Bluebells is recommended. Some Daffodils and Tulips can be added, but they have limited pollen/nectar. The Lucifer/Montbretia should be removed from here as it can become quite invasive.

For further inspiration, the AIPP has a dedicated guide for faith communities, including church grounds. See pollinators.ie/faith-communities for more details.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 6 : Low-Mow Options throughout Kinlough

Housing estate greens, the bring bank area, community centre and Rossinver Church of Ireland lawns are three examples of green spaces throughout Kinlough that contain ample amounts of green space that can be managed for pollinators. 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 AIPP recommends the 'low-mow' method. However, in areas that have been re-seeded in recent times, a 'head start' may be given by sowing patches of native wildflower seed. This should be suitable to the local soil. We recommend buying genuinely native wildflower seed from outlets such as wildflowers.ie, or using local seed collected by hand! We do not recommend buying commercial seed in garden centres or supermarkets.

Patches of spring bulbs would add great colour and much-needed early nectar/pollen for bees in these spaces. These can be planted in lines and/or groupings across the green areas. 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.

Some suitable native trees and small orchards also look great and provide food for birds and pollinators throughout the year. Recommended species are Rowan, Hawthorn, Bird/Wild Cherry, Crabapple and native Plum/Pear varieties. The green spaces outlined here would be ideal for planting small groves or lines of these trees. Young trees will require some attention initially to ensure best growth.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 7 : Phase out Weedkiller Use

There were a few patches noted on the field survey where weedkiller has been used in the recent past, e.g. in one or two of the housing estate greens, around trees and along kerbsides. These chemicals are not only harmful to the trees themselves but kill any plant and insect in close proximity. There is also a risk any weedkiller washed away ends up in the nearest watercourse. Leaving a circle of longer grasses and flowers around trees is eco-friendly and requires less maintenance. A 1m mown strip can be kept along the kerbside. If growth over the kerb is undesired, this should be removed with a spade every so often

Project Period: 2023-2025



Key Project 8 : Conifers at the Grotto

The grotto in Kinlough is a peaceful space which has been improved through several measures in recent years in terms of landscaping.

It was noted on the field visit that a tall line of conifer trees and Leylandii edges the grotto, shading out much of the ground on one side (see image, right). Not only are these trees non-native, but they are also not overly beneficial to wildlife. They may serve as a landing spot for birds or sometimes as nesting sites for Rooks, etc. but they cannot compare to our native trees in terms of biodiversity benefit. It is recommended to have this line of conifers checked by an arborist and have them removed, if possible. Under the Forestry Act 2014 it is an offence for any person to uproot or cut down any tree unless the owner has obtained permission in the form of a felling licence from the Forest Service. There are exceptions to this rule, however. For more information see crann.ie/trees/legislation/. An arborist or tree surgeon can advise further on this particular case.

If the conifers are removed, they should then be replaced by a native hedge with a mix of species, e.g. Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Spindle and Guelder Rose.

Native hedge species are fantastic for pollinators and birds as they produce fruits and flowers throughout the seasons, as well as providing cover and nesting sites. More sunlight would also be allowed to enter the grotto space. A 'low-mow' regime with patches of short-flowering meadow is highly recommended for these lawns to attract more bees!

See pollinators.ie/faith-communities for inspiration.

Project Period: 2023-2025



Section 3. Additional Biodiversity Projects for Kinlough 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 Kinlough and the wider public. Themes could include a night-time bat walk at Lough Melvin Eco Park, talks on managing natural meadows and invasive species, etc.</i>	Annually, 2023-2025
2	Survey and record species (e.g. trees, flowers, birds, bats) regularly and record with NBDC.	<i>Surveying and recording a range of species around Kinlough, notably at Lough Melvin Eco Park, will help to grow the dataset and form a picture of species diversity in the area. Register species recorded with the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) at biodiversityireland.ie.</i>	Annually, 2023-2025
3	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. See pollinators.ie for more details.</i>	2023-2025