



**MONAGHAN**  
**TIDY TOWNS**

Baile Slachtmhar Mhuineacháin

Monaghan Town

BIODIVERSITY TOWN

**COMMUNICATION STRATEGY  
&  
IMPLEMENTATION  
PLAN**

2022-2025

[MONAGHANTOWNBIODIVERSITY.COM](http://MONAGHANTOWNBIODIVERSITY.COM)



# Background



Monaghan Tidy Towns declared our intention to make Monaghan Ireland's first 'Biodiversity Town' back in 2018, and we have been working relentlessly towards this objective ever since.

Whilst tremendous progress has been made on the ground in this regard, it has not all been smooth sailing. There has been some pushback from the public against some of the changes which have been introduced by the Council, particularly around grass mowing regimes and the introduction of a policy of non-use of pesticides.

However, in the main, initiatives such as our dispersed urban orchard and the Council's highly colourful pollinator planting schemes along roadside verges are beginning to make an impact on the public psyche, and we are beginning to see an increased interest from the public in understanding the 'why' behind the measures and finding out how they might implement some of these ideas in a small way at home themselves.

## Aim

The aim of this document is to connect the public with the work that is going on, to inform them of the purpose behind the work that they see and to encourage them to become involved. In so doing, we will deepen the engagement of the public and ensure that the benefits of our work reach beyond the public areas in which we are active and become embedded in the private gardens and spaces throughout the town.

It is only by reclaiming the gardens and private lands for nature that we can secure the future of many species, improve water quality and promote sustainable development. And so our aim is:

**"to promote engagement in the Biodiversity Town concept by the citizens and businesses of Monaghan"**



# Objectives

We have 4 core objectives in our **Communications Strategy**:



**Increase understanding by the public of the importance of biodiversity and how we all have a part to play in making our world more sustaining of life, and in the process, make life more sustainable for us all**



**Increase engagement by the public in our work**



**Build a brand and associated promotional material that are instantly recognisable and associated with accurate information on Irish-origin flora and fauna, with a reputation for easy-to-follow advice on practical ideas which can be replicated at home for little expense or effort**



**Ensure that our message is clear, consistent and regular, reaching clearly identified target groups**

We have 3 core objectives in our **Biodiversity Town Implementation Plan**:



**Establish a culture of data collection, so that we know what is living in our town, and the impact our actions are having over time**



**Become self-sufficient in the skills our community requires to nurture the natural environment and enable it to flourish alongside humanity**



**Create a record of how the Biodiversity Town Model is being created, so that it may be learned from and replicated by others**

There is one **Supporting Objective**:



**Build the capacity of the Tidy Towns volunteers so that the organisation can continue the work on a self-sustaining basis by the end of this Plan**



# Guiding Principles

Monaghan Tidy Towns is committed to the pursuit of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and is working towards addressing the global challenges we all face, as outlined in the SDG's. The protection of life on our planet and the preservation and enhancement of habitats to support a rich and diverse number of species is very much in line with the SDG's and at the heart of the purpose of creating a 'Biodiversity Town' and all that it entails.



We are followers of Jay Conrad Levinson's **Guerrilla Marketing** approach to reaching a target audience and convincing them to come on board with our message. The research\* shows that the best approach is repeated exposure to a consistent message, building trust between all parties. The Guerrilla Marketing approach will enable us to present our message in non-traditional ways, giving us an authentic voice and enabling us to reach out to people who may not have engaged before. Guerrilla marketing tactics often involve opportunities for engagement, which is perfect for our purposes.



Guerrilla marketing tactics often require more imagination than cash to implement, and thus are suited to the modest means of a voluntary organisation such as ourselves.

\*Guerrilla marketing draws from well-researched marketing principles. One of these is that your prospective customer will only see your advert once for every nine times you run it, and that in order for her to go from being a 'prospect' to taking action and coming through your door, she needs to see your advert three times - that's 27 adverts before she crosses your threshold. The research also shows that if you stop at advert 26, she will never come. The lesson is that a regular and sustained feed of activity is what works.

# Actions

## Objective 1: Increase understanding amongst the public of Biodiversity

No.	Action	When	Resources Required
1.1	Erect information signage around the town	by end 2023	Scripting of info signs Funding for signs
1.2	Develop a series of trails, linked to our biodiversity website by QR codes displayed on numbered signs along trails. Each trail to have a branded starting point	Repair the existing Tree Trail in 2022; 2 new trails by end 2024	Numbered Plaques x 60, branded & bearing QR codes 3x branded trail starting points Aid with trail development Aid with web design
1.3	Run an awareness campaign, explaining what is being done, how it supports wildlife, and why this is important	Continuous output over the 3 years of this Plan	Training in content creation Training in building a social media following Some basic blogging equipment - selfie stick, tripod, video editing software
1.4	Organise regular 'entry level' promotions designed to capture the public's attention, and make the task of 'doing something for biodiversity' a little less daunting - wildflower seed giveaways - dishwasher detergent giveaways - 'lawn makeover with clover' packs - 'bring back the bog' leaflet on how to create a bog garden	Continuous output over the 3 years of this Plan	Funding for the stock/ printing

## Objective 2: Increase engagement by the public with our work

No	Action	When	Resources Required
2.1	Develop primary and secondary schools workshops, linked to curriculum	2022	Collaboration with Monaghan Education Centre Training for volunteers so they can lead workshops
2.2	Deliver 30 workshops to primary school classes and 5 secondary level projects per year	annually from 2023	Collaboration with the 5 secondary schools and 5 primary schools in Monaghan town
2.3	Add a 'species of the week' feature to the website & invite the public to send in photos for identification	constant	Volunteer to post 'species of the week' content Volunteers to help people with their queries - or invite other members of the public to help identify species shown in photos posted to the blog
2.4	Run two events per year to promote the importance of trees: - National Tree Week in March - Run a 'Hug a Tree' event in Rossmore in May to identify trees by their leaves	annually from 2022	Funds to promote the events Tree identification keys
2.5	Run 4 family-focused biodiversity recording events such as Bat detecting walks, a summer bioblitz, and Go Wild in the Park	annually from 2022	Funding to promote the events Marquee to provide shelter in case of inclement weather Wildlife identification aids Wildlife detection aids Wildlife capture & detention aids (nets, dishes, trays etc)
2.6	Organise 1 town-wide project, supported by a giveaway and explanatory newsletter each year	annually from 2022	Funding to purchase the stock for the giveaways Funding to print the newsletters
2.7	Organise seasonal competitions to incentivise people to take action on specific issues eg - best biodiversity corner in a private garden - best managed lawn for wildlife - best wildflower display - Monaghan's wriggliest worm - most bird species recorded in one garden	annually from 2022	Funding to promote the events Sponsorship for prizes



### Objective 3: Build our brand

No	Action	When	Resources Required
3.1	Refresh our logo to add the strapline 'Biodiversity Town'	2022	Funding to pay graphic designer
3.2	Refresh our biodiversity website, to make the home page navigable by images rather than text-focused	2022	Funding for web designer
3.3	Set up a YouTube channel for our blogging content	2022	Training in blogging and producing content for YouTube
3.4	Commission 'how to' tips on video from experts, built on a range of subjects: 1: Make your garden more biodiversity friendly 2: Do one small thing a month to help promote and protect biodiversity 3: Stop the baddies and encourage the goodies the war for biodiversity	from 2022 onwards	Funding to: - commission the experts' pieces to camera - engage a recording crew to record and edit the experts - web developer to design space on website for the pieces and to upload as they become available
3.5	Release weekly content over our social media channels, always signposting back to related content on our website	from 2022 onwards	Training for our volunteers on content creation, script writing, blogging and website updating
3.6	Ensure that all project signage around the town carries the strap line 'Monaghan - Biodiversity Town'	from 2022 onwards	Graphics supplied (font, etc) by designer in a variety of sizes and layouts (portrait, landscape etc)
3.7	Announce our status at the main entrances to the town, along the approach roads	2023	Design of Feature signage Permission from TII for erection along national routes Funding to commission & erect signs



## Objective 4: Ensure our message is clear & consistent, and will resonate with its intended audience

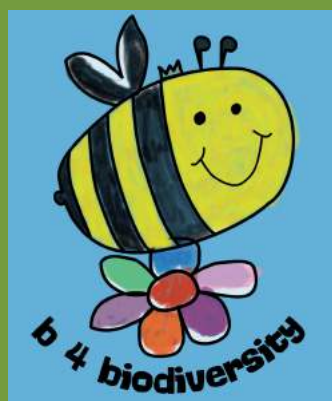
No	Action	When	Resources Required
4.1	Engage specialist support in PR for an initial two year period to help in the preparation of promotional material, publicity campaigns, brand development, script writing and vlogging	2022 & 2023	Funding to engage PR support

## Objective 5: Adopt a data-based approach to our work

No	Action	When	Resources Required
5.1	Establish baseline levels of the key species which indicate the health of the ecosystem in the town	2022	Volunteers to assist in carrying out the counts Training in count/ survey techniques Expert advice in setting up a manageable programme for surveying the town each year
5.2	Map the populations of important species, including endangered and invasives	2023	Assistance in GIS mapping from Monaghan County Council
5.3	Repeat the town surveys every three years, to determine the impact of our work	2025	Volunteers
5.4	Break the town into sections and allocate routes to designated volunteers, to facilitate consistency of recording	2022	Work out the routes in 2022 Volunteers to walk the routes as directed
5.5	Encourage citizen science and participation of the public in national surveys organised by the National Biodiversity Data Centre	annually	Training to help volunteers to record vlogs demonstrating how to get involved in events like the national garden bird survey Funding to organise training events directly

## Objective 6: Become self sufficient as an organisation

No	Action	When	Resources Required
6.1	Avail of expert advice to set up the systems and processes we need to become sustainable in our work programme	2022-24	Funding to pay experts
6.2	Build an exit strategy into every project we undertake, so that the burden on our volunteers does not increase year on year	ongoing	Expertise
6.3	Amass a collection of identification, collection and detention aids, so we can run our own bioblitz events and schools workshops	2022-24	Funding to purchase books & equipment
6.4	Link with third level institutions to provide work experience/ learning opportunities for undergraduates keen to examine theoretical concepts in practice in an urban setting	ongoing	links with urban landscaping programmes and biodiversity programmes



## Objective 7: Become a model for others to follow

No	Action	When	Resource Required
7.1	Make a written record of the journey, highlighting the milestones, surveys done, plans produced, key pieces of work, the order they were done in and the time required for each	2023	Time, access to the group's files
7.2	Create a digital archive containing a copy of the above, including copies of each plan, survey etc	2023	Time, access to the group's files
7.3	Create an 'Advice to Other Towns' section on our website and upload our archive to it	2024	Ability to upload to website
7.4	Create 'how we did it' vlogging content aimed at other towns as the work progresses, and upload to 'Advice for other Towns' section on website	new content regularly	Volunteers to create content and upload to website
7.5	Prepare a powerpoint show so that volunteers can deliver a talk to other groups when invited to visit	2024	Expertise with Powerpoint Train volunteers in presentation skills
7.6	Participate in national seminars, webinars, competitions etc on urban planning, biodiversity and climate change	2024-	Pull-up banner with logo and photos of activities and projects Retain samples of all merchandise/ giveaways so they can be displayed at such events



## Objective 8: Build the capacity of our Volunteers

No	Action	When	Resources Required
8.1	<p>Organise training for our volunteers in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- undertaking wildlife surveys</li> <li>- mapping the location of species using GIS</li> <li>- leading workshops</li> <li>- writing press releases &amp; for social media</li> <li>- recording &amp; editing video content on their phones for uploading to social media</li> <li>- working with social media and websites</li> <li>- event management and risk assessment</li> <li>- child safeguarding</li> </ul>	2022-24	Funding
8.2	Recruit volunteers who are skilled, or interested in developing skills, in the areas where we need expertise	when website is being refreshed	'Positions vacant' page on the website listing jobs that the group needs help with
8.3	Develop a volunteer motivation and retention plan, to ensure that people are happy and feel rewarded by what they are doing	2022	Funding for rewards scheme, teambuilding days, information on how their work is making a difference to the wildlife levels in the town
8.4	Appoint a head of volunteering, whose job it is to look after the volunteers, make best use of their skills, and plan out training events, reward days and motivational events	2022	A volunteer with people skills



# Work Programme

The chart below sets out the key pieces of work, and how they are linked to one another.

Some elements are reliant on others to be in place before they can start, so the data is presented in a timeline so these relationships can be identified and allowed for.

## Project 1: Branding & brand building

The purpose of this project is to achieve maximum impact from our work.

- Everything we do will carry the same branding and strapline so that the public knows that it is part of an overall, connected campaign.
- Our ambition to be a town for biodiversity will be proudly declared at the main entry points to the town, raising awareness and generating curiosity.
- Every aspect of our Tidy Towns work will connect back in some way to biodiversity.
- We will record everything that we do, and post to our website and social media, so that others may learn from what we are doing. All content will relate back to our branding
- We will set up a YouTube channel and post video content to facilitate the growth of subscribers over time
- We will engage the services of a PR expert to train us and assist in building a social media campaign
- All print material, merchandise etc used by us will bear the Biodiversity Town brand

## Project 2: Trails & signage

The purpose of this project is to create a visual presence for biodiversity around the town. This will serve to raise awareness amongst the general public of biodiversity, and encourage them to make changes in how they manage their own properties. The trails will also be valuable educational resources, which will form the backbone of our schools programme.

**Trail 1:** Tree Trail. This trail is already developed, but some signs have been damaged or are missing, and there is no branded start point. It is proposed to refresh the signage and apply the new branding, so it matches the other trails and enhances the consistency of our campaign.

**Trail 2:** Pollinator Trail. This trail will focus on habitats and plants which support pollinators, as well as identifying pollinators themselves and talk about what can be done to support them throughout the year

**Trail 3:** Microscopic Monaghan. This trail will focus on the very tiny creatures, and the organisms in soil, on which all life relies, and how they are negatively impacted by the use of phosphates and weedkillers.

- We will also provide information boards at key habitats around the town, where we are carrying out management works.
- We will also provide 'This area is being managed for biodiversity' signs for householders to erect in their gardens, to help spread the message and gain traction out in the community for our work.

## Project 3: Community Engagement

The purpose of this project is to convert public awareness into action, first by showing the public simple things they can easily do at home, and then by rolling out initiatives which call them to take action and provide the necessary kit to get involved.

- We will make 'How to' Vlogs on a wide range of topics, focusing on what people can do at home with little experience or money. These will be uploaded to YouTube channel and used in our social media campaign
- We will feature 'how you can help' tips on the information boards and signage around town, and on all our social media content
- We will run family-oriented events which mix fun with curiosity and science, aiming to recruit new volunteers to join our data collectors whilst also stimulating interest in the work and encouraging families to take action at home. Example events: 'Hug a Tree', 'Rossmore Park Bioblitz', Bat Walk along the Greenway
- We will organise town-wide initiatives, backed by giveaways of the relevant materials, to kickstart action on certain activities, to achieve critical mass/ viable corridors of habitat for certain species, or to encourage behavioural change on a large scale.
  - Pollinator Push - giveaway of seeds for plants which support pollinating insects
  - Butterfly Bash - giveaway of plants which support butterflies
  - Deadly Detergents - giveaway of earth-friendly detergents
  - Lovely Lawns - giveaway of seeds to oversow into grass lawns to improve their biodiversity value
- We will organise competitions between estates and different areas of the town, to use friendly rivalry to spur neighbours to action. Organise children's competitions, and also awards for all levels of experience in biodiversity promotion.

# Project 4: Data Gathering

The purpose of this project is to be able to know what is living in our town, and to be able to track over time whether the levels of each species is increasing or decreasing.

This will help us to plan future interventions and management strategies for the good of all species on a sustainable basis.

- We will identify the key 'indicator species' which indicate the health (or otherwise) of our habitats and the town in general for biodiversity
- We will carry out surveys of each species in selected 'representative locations' to establish a baseline population of these species
- We will develop maps of the town which show the locations of each species, and code them by whether sightings are increasing or decreasing over time
- We will prepare habitat management plans for each key area & use these as the basis for information panels at each site, to explain what is being done and why
- We will map the location of invasive species using GIS technology, aided by Monaghan County Council
- We will participate in the various national surveys organised by the National Biodiversity Data Centre, eg garden bird survey, ladybird survey, bat survey
- We will repeat the surveys in such a way that results can be compared over time, allowing us to track whether populations are on the rise or decline, and thus evaluate if we need to adjust our workplan.





# Project 5: Training & Mentoring

Implementing our ambitious programme will require an army of dedicated volunteers. The skills they will need roughly fall into three groups:

- Organisational
- Digital Marketing
- Fieldwork

We will need volunteers who can organise public events, campaigns, training, calls to action, competitions, schools workshops etc and who can marshall the forces, make best use of each volunteer's skills without overburdening or disillusioning anyone.

We will also need volunteers who are passionate about getting the message across and who wish to get in front of, or behind the camera to make fun and informative Vlogs which capture the public's attention. We also need volunteers who can transfer that digital content onto the internet to create an imaginative and captivating social media campaign, linked to our competitions and giveaways and generating subscribers who are willing to respond to our calls to action when we launch each town-wide initiative.

And just as importantly, we need all of this activity to generate a host of citizen scientists, who are out there exploring their environment and recording what they find in it. Without the data they provide, we won't know if our work is having an impact.

- We will organise training to support our volunteers in the roles they take on
- We will operate a mentoring system, where more experienced volunteers link up with new volunteers to ensure that they are supported in their role with us
- We will have a volunteer recruitment desk at all our events, to encourage more people to join the family
- We will run regular rewards events and teambuilding events, to ensure that morale amongst our volunteers is high and the commitment to our cause is strong
- We will remember that our volunteers are our most important attribute, and will ensure that they are facilitated to have a say in everything that we do



# Project 6: Legacy Building

The work that we are setting out to do is important, not just for Monaghan, but for all of Ireland. We are facing an ecological catastrophe, with many species near to collapse.

We believe that we can establish a simple framework which can be replicated by communities big and small throughout Ireland within the Tidy Towns model and with the support of local authorities under their new Climate Change Action Plans.

This Three Year Plan, as laid out, provides an opportunity to lay out a practical 'how to' guide for others to follow, and to make it all available online for groups to access free of charge.

- We will, through the commissioning of content on important issues from experts, build up a library of videos on YouTube which together will present a practical, well rounded picture of issues which need to be considered, and how best to address them, when working on improving a town for biodiversity
- We will provide a step by step guide on the surveys (eg Fossitt habitat survey), plans, maps etc which a group should prepare, and advice on how to get the most from each
- We will build a resource pack of ideas for workshops, giveaways, competitions etc., to help a group get started on their journey
- We will provide a social media pack and an event management pack to assist groups in organising their own campaigns and getting their message out as widely and effectively as possible
- We will provide a list of resources, to include where to get training and specialist advice, as well as information on what other supports are available to groups to continue their work

# Cost Breakdown

Activity	2022	2023	2024	Totals
<b>Branding &amp; Brand Building</b>				
Engage a brand consultant	3000	5000	5000	
Produce new graphics	1000			
Design welcome signage for 7 approach roads	3000			
commission welcome signs/ features		40,000	15,000	
Website redesign	5000			
<b>Subtotal 1</b>	12000	45000	20000	77000
<b>Trails &amp; Signs</b>				
Branded numbered signs with QR codes - 3 trails x 20 sites per trail plus poles	2400	2400	2400	
High impact start point for each trail - info point	1200	1200	1200	
'managed for biodiversity' signs to give to gardens - 400 signs over 3 years	4000			
Information boards at key habitat/ project areas - 10 key areas linked to schools programme and website		10000		
<b>Subtotal 2</b>	7600	13600	3600	24800
<b>Community Engagement</b>				
tripod with swivel grip, camera, 2x selfie sticks, specialist lenses for videoing tiny things, light reflector, microphone, editing software	6,000			
3 family events per year	3000	3000	3000	
Purchase marquee to weatherproof events	5000			
Run 2x town-wide promotions per year (with giveaways of 200 items per promotion)	5000	5000	5000	
3 x competitions per year - prizes	600	600	600	
Social media engagement - advertising	500	1000	1000	
<b>Subtotal 3</b>	20,100	9,600	9,600	39,300
<b>Data Gathering</b>				
purchase GPS recorders x3	300			
Budget to print maps in large format (A0)	100	50	50	
purchase equipment for collecting, identifying & detaining critters during bioblitzes	500			
<b>Subtotal 4</b>	900	50	50	1000
<b>Training</b>				
Social media & vlogging x 20 volunteers	2500	2500		
website maintenance x 5 volunteers	1250			
copywriting, creating content, marketing x 10 volunteers	2500			
survey techniques & organising surveys for various species x 20 volunteers	2500	2500		
teambuilding	3000		3000	
<b>Subtotal 5</b>	11750	5000	3000	19750
<b>Total</b>	52,350	73,250	36,250	<b>161,850</b>