

# Monaghan Tidy Towns

## *Biodiversity Action Plan*

2024-2027



# Contents

Welcome 3

Acknowledgements 3

## Section 1. Introduction 4

What is Biodiversity and why protect it? 5

## Section 2. Key Projects 7

Key Project 1. Bog Garden at Greenway entrance, Clones Road 9

Key Project 2. Tom Young's Wood (Cortolvin) 10

Key Project 3. Ulster Canal & River Shambles Water Quality 11

Key Project 4. Pledge your Garden Project – Housing Estates 12

Key Project 5. Swift Surveys & Training 15

Key Project 6. Pedestrian Link 16

Key Project 7. Enhancement of Peter's Lake 17

Key Project 8. Invasive Alien Plant Species Management Plan (IAPSMP) 19

Key Project 9. St. Louis Convent Lake & Grounds 21

Key Project 10. Peregrines at St Macartan's Cathedral 24

## Section 3. Schedule 25

## Section 4. Additional Biodiversity Projects 29

# Welcome to the Monaghan Tidy Towns Biodiversity Action Plan!



Monaghan Tidy Towns is leading the way for nature by striving to become Ireland's first biodiversity town. The group has worked hard over the past decade to conserve, enhance and raise awareness of Monaghan town's rich ecological network. The group received funding from Community Foundation Ireland in 2023 to develop a biodiversity action plan which will guide them for the next three years (2024-2027). This biodiversity action plan was drawn up following consultation with members of the Monaghan Tidy Towns group and field visits carried out in 2023 and 2024.

**Section 1** is an introduction to this plan and the work involved in its development, as well as some background on biodiversity.

**Section 2** contains 10 Key Biodiversity Projects outlined to undertake over the next three years. Some of these projects may take relatively significant resources for Monaghan Tidy Towns to complete and so will require support from a range of organisations, groups and individuals to be successful.

**Section 3** lays out a Schedule of recommended timelines and advice for implementation of the Key Projects. This also divides the projects into Short-term (2024-2025), Medium-term (2025-2026) and Long-term (2026-2027). Finally, **Section 4** recommends a few Additional Projects that we suggest Monaghan Tidy Towns could complete within the timeframe.

## Acknowledgements

This Biodiversity Action Plan was funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland. The Plan was created for Monaghan Tidy Towns by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. The author would like to thank the members of Monaghan Tidy Towns - particularly Emer Brennan - and representatives from Monaghan County Council - for their support, namely Michael Carroll and Patricia McCreesh. Thanks for meeting me in 2023 and 2024 to show me around the various focus areas of Monaghan town and to discuss options to enhance the town for both people and wildlife!

**Your continuous drive to protect and enhance nature in your locality is inspirational!**

# Section 1. *Introduction*

## MONAGHAN TIDY TOWNS BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN



### ABOUT THIS BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Biodiversity is now an integral part of the work of community groups. The category Biodiversity has become a vital aspect of the Tidy Towns competition and is relevant throughout all of the competition's eight categories. This biodiversity action plan will help Monaghan Tidy Towns to progress the work they have already completed, as well as proposing new projects to commence, over the next 3 years.

As well as providing a schedule of actions the plan will also be useful in raising awareness of how biodiversity is considered in Monaghan town and environs. 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 Monaghan Tidy Towns, in-person visits with a focus on areas to be enhanced for biodiversity and liaison with the Monaghan County Council Horticulturalist, Biodiversity Officer and Heritage Officer.

# What is Biodiversity and why protect it?

'Biodiversity' (or biological diversity) 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.

The term 'Biodiversity' has been around for several decades now, but it is only in recent years that its use has become mainstream. It encompasses not just nature and wildlife, but also the connections between all creatures and habitats, which include us humans. As the human population grows and we become more urbanised, we need to see ourselves as part of nature, not separate from it. Unfortunately, the biodiversity crisis we now face is primarily man-made, in our quest to 'conquer' it for our own wants and needs. When we detach ourselves from nature it becomes distant and loses its relevance and importance. This often means it gets demoted down a list of priorities and is either forgotten about (at best), or removed or damaged (at worst). This in turn affects humans, as nature provides us with so much of what we need to survive. For instance, 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 and being close to nature is known to particularly benefit our mental health. We instinctively derive great peace and joy in nature, whether that be listening to birdsong in trees and hedgerows, walking through a park or woodland, or admiring beautiful wildflowers.



## Who protects Biodiversity?

While governments are ultimately responsible for protecting biodiversity under law, it is up to all of us to do what we can to help conserve and support it. Nature is not only present in rural areas, it is also a huge part of our urban environments, but often gets overlooked in favour of infrastructural development and "progress". This is why the work of Monaghan Tidy Towns to become a 'Biodiversity Town' is so important. Monaghan town has the potential to become a leading light in Ireland for promoting and protecting biodiversity throughout the urban landscape. Monaghan Tidy Towns is already making strides by creating awareness, promoting the value of nature, educating local people of all ages / backgrounds and implementing worthwhile, on-the-ground projects. With the help of key staff from Monaghan Co and local volunteers, the group is well on its way to making Monaghan a notable exemplar of what can be done for nature in Irish towns nationwide. If more people were to get involved, if only just by enhancing their own little patch for wildlife, even more can be achieved!



# Biodiversity Town Monaghan

Monaghan Tidy Towns has been incredibly ambitious in the area of Biodiversity for over a decade. After a habitat survey was conducted in Monaghan in 2010, it was recognised just how much biodiversity exists within and around the town, and that there were many opportunities to enhance and extend the ecological network. The Tidy Towns committee has made it their ambition since then to make Monaghavn Ireland's first Biodiversity Town. Some of the initiatives to date have included the 'Dispersed Urban Orchard' project, pollinator friendly planting schemes, 'low-mow' areas, volunteer training workshops, biodiversity walks/talks and the commissioning of striking nature-themed murals around the town. The committee has worked closely with Monaghan County Council in its efforts, and through securing funding from various sources, has engaged the services of a digital media company to spread its message and educate the public in a positive, encouraging manner.

There is now a wonderful 'Biodiversity Town Monaghan' logo and a dedicated website at [biodiversity.town](http://biodiversity.town). These actions, along with the group's active social media pages, strive to promote projects and share ideas with a wide range of groups and individuals. Monaghan Tidy Towns' mission also extends to promoting urban biodiversity in other towns and villages through leading by example and by working with the Monaghan Network of Tidy Towns and Residents Groups. Monaghan Tidy Towns involves and intends to expand on the involvement of a wide range of groups in their 'Biodiversity Town' ambitions, such as the Migrant Men's group, local GAA Clubs, schools and groups such as Rehab and National Learning Centre, as well as SNAP (Special Needs Active Parents) for parents of children with autism and other special needs.



Monaghan Tidy Towns has commissioned a fantastic logo, 'Biodiversity Town Monaghan'. This is being used to promote all the various projects the group is and has been working on, in terms of activities, events and signage. This logo can be featured on all future signage installed throughout the town, creating consistency and a strong, positive brand throughout all projects.

# Section 2. Key Projects

## FOR BIODIVERSITY IN MONAGHAN

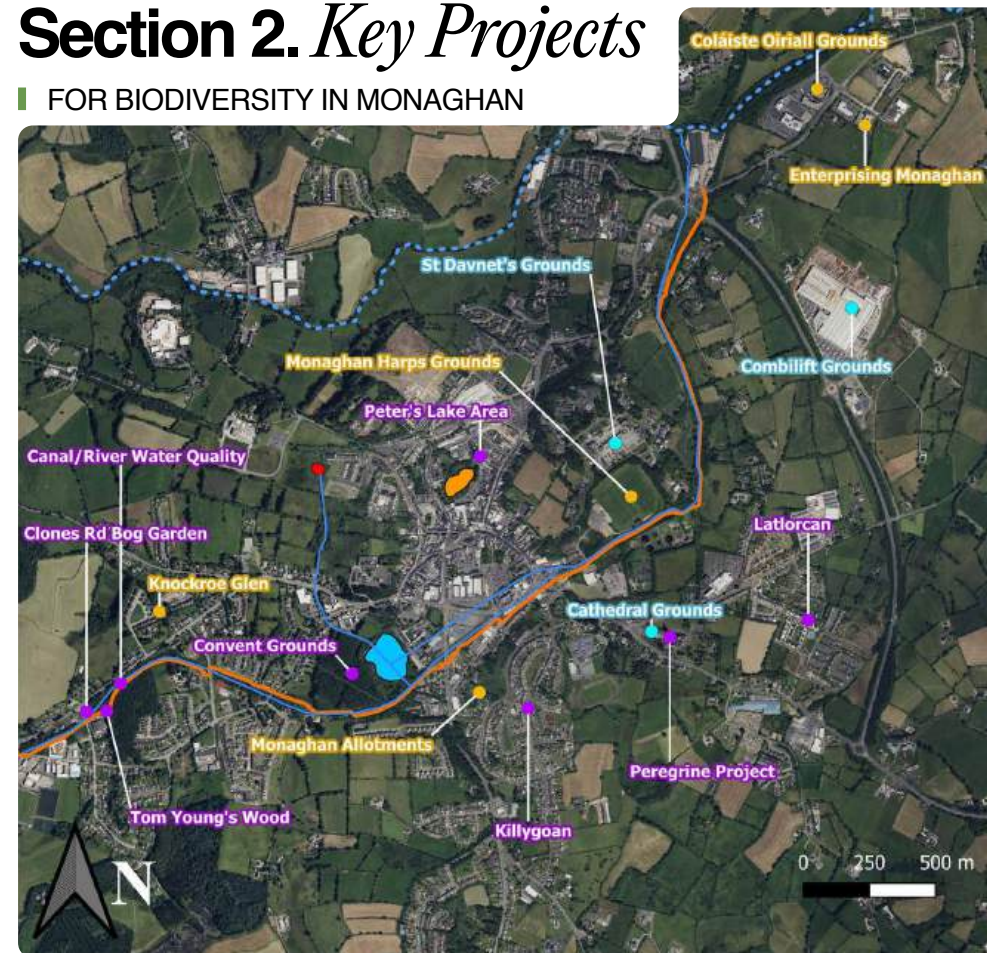


Figure 1. Locations of current and previous Biodiversity Action Plans for Monaghan town and environs.





## MONAGHAN – AN OVERVIEW

Monaghan town is the county town of County Monaghan and the largest town, with a population of almost 8,000. It is situated among rolling drumlins, complete with steep hills and associated wetlands, including lakes, streams and rivers. There are three lakes within Monaghan town's environs – these are Peter's Lake along the North Road, the Convent Lake on the St Louis Secondary School grounds and Mullaghduin Lake, a small, hidden lake behind Monaghan General Hospital. The Shambles River is the main river which runs through the town, rising as the Glen River on the Ballybay Road and flows into the Convent Lake via the townlands of Sheertrim, Drumbear and Tully. The Shambles then flows from the Convent Lake and joins the River Blackwater north of the town. Other nearby rivers and tributaries run through and close to the town, namely the Conawary River and Cor River.

The Ulster Canal is another important wildlife corridor, now serving as the Monaghan Greenway, running from the Clones Road, parallel with the Shambles River, through the town centre to the Armagh Road roundabout. Some sections still contain water while others are dry and are gradually being recolonised by scrub and vegetation. 'Tom Young's Wood' at Cortolvin, the forest on the Convent grounds, and the linear woods along the Glen Road, are examples of remaining wooded areas in the town centre. These patches of woodland, watercourses and associated hedgerows and treelines, all make up a substantial network of ecological habitats and corridors which benefit a range of wildlife throughout Monaghan town and environs.

In addition to the natural and semi-natural features still present, there has been a substantial increase in 'low-mow' regimes on public lands and pollinator-friendly planting throughout the town centre, via planters and flowerbeds, as well as at roundabouts and road verges. These efforts are down to the hard work and foresight of Monaghan Tidy Towns and the Monaghan Co Co Horticulturist and his team. The more habitat links throughout Monaghan town and environs for pollinators, birds and other wildlife, the more biodiverse the town will become. It certainly deserves to be called a 'Biodiversity Town'.



## 1 Key Project. *Bog Garden at Greenway entrance, Clones Road*

This entrance to the Monaghan Greenway along the Clones Road has recently been landscaped, with native hedge planting, pathways and flowerbeds. A section near the roadside has been pinpointed for a bog garden. This would highlight the boggy lands around Monaghan town and their value as wildlife habitats - on a miniature scale. A bog garden is a patch of slow-draining, waterlogged soil that mimics natural bog conditions.

Naturally damp, clay soils are ideal and should hold onto water without the use of a liner. The ground here is denoted as marshy on the catchments.ie website. A shallow hole 45-50cm deep is recommended, followed by a liner (if required), and a 3cm layer of grit/gravel. Excavated soil should be returned to the hole. A small amount of compost can be mixed in. Suitable plants can be planted in the spring, e.g.:



- Yellow Iris
- Purple loosestrife
- Creeping jenny
- Marsh marigold
- Hemp agrimony
- Golden sedge Carex elata
- Bog cotton
- Bogbean
- Meadowsweet
- Lady's Smock
- Water mint



Outdoor classroom sessions with local schools should be encouraged on site. These sessions can focus on bogs, wetlands, the canal/greenway and woodlands, educating children on their biodiversity value and fostering pride in Monaghan's rich urban biodiversity.



**Figure 2.** Map of area at Clones Rd greenway entrance and Cortolvin Forest. Source: catchments.ie



Further guidance for creating bog gardens can be found in The Heritage Council's 'Gardening for Biodiversity' [booklet](#) and the UK's Wildfowl & Wetlands (WWT) website, [here](#).

Signage would also be very useful here, to explain the bog garden concept and the wider importance of wetlands, which are an important part of the Monaghan town and county ecosystem.

Signage is generally best displayed in a lectern style (see image, right). Information can be comfortably read at an angle. It is recommended to feature attractive, relevant imagery and to keep text to a minimum. QR codes are an option if people wish to discover more about a topic in their own time.

## 2 Key Project. *Tom Young's Wood (Cortolvin)*

Tom Young's Wood is a mixed broadleaf/conifer woodland, over 5ha in area. It is located along the Monaghan Greenway, at the Clones Road Greenway entrance detailed in Key Project 1 (see Figure 1 above). The wood itself is a valuable habitat for wildlife.

There is a clearing approx. 100m in from the greenway entrance. Along the boundary wall with the nearby industrial units, there is a line of very tall *Leylandii* trees. These are of limited benefit to biodiversity and are also blocking out considerable light to the forest.

We recommend reducing their height to 2-3m tall, which will still allow some cover for wildlife and allow more light onto the forest floor.

Also, the cleared area can be planted with broadleaf species, e.g. Oak, Birch, Hazel, Holly. A temporary fence should be placed around the new trees to avoid damage. A trail can be left through the centre to allow people to enter the wood if they wish.

Otherwise, we recommend that Tom Young's Wood should be left to nature for the time being. In future, it may be worth looking at thinning out sections of the wood to ensure stronger trees are allowed to thrive and to allow sunlight to hit the forest floor, which will hopefully encourage some woodland flora to emerge. This should only be done under advice from an ecologist.



Illustrated view of a bog garden. Source: 'Gardening for Biodiversity'.



Lectern-style sign. Source: optimasigns.com



## 3 Key Project. *Ulster Canal & River Shambles Water Quality*



The Ulster Canal sets the route for the Monaghan Greenway and is an integral part of the town and county as a whole. It offers an excellent habitat corridor for a range of wildlife through the urban and suburban centre; however, its water is relatively polluted. The canal also links with the Shambles River, which is classified as having a 'Poor' Q-value, according to the EPA's catchments.ie website. Poor water quality can severely negatively affect the level of biodiversity in an area.

Monaghan Tidy Towns has secured funding for a 'Water Literacy Project' via assistance from the Community Water Fund (LAWPRO). This will tie in with the overall aim of raising awareness of water quality in Monaghan town and the actions people can take to help improve it, e.g. a 'Think before you Flush' campaign with a focus on the 'Dirty Dozen'. It will involve water quality workshops with four housing estates in Monaghan.

The potential for further water quality projects should be explored following this. It could build upon the existing Water Literacy Project but might also include linking in with the local farming community, businesses and those with septic tanks, who are not connected to the town's public sewerage system. Overall, the aim will be to improve quality of Monaghan town's watercourses – for biodiversity - and human health and wellbeing!



# 4 Key Project.

## *Pledge your Garden Project – Housing Estates*

In most housing estates across Monaghan town and outskirts, there is quite a lot of green space in the form of public lawns and verges. While welcome, many of these spaces are composed of amenity grassland, which is frequently mown and therefore of little benefit to biodiversity.

Two easy ways to improve on this are to increase areas for ‘low-mow’ and plant more trees. ‘Low-mow’ areas have already been very successful on the entrance to Killygoan, Tully and Mullaghmat.

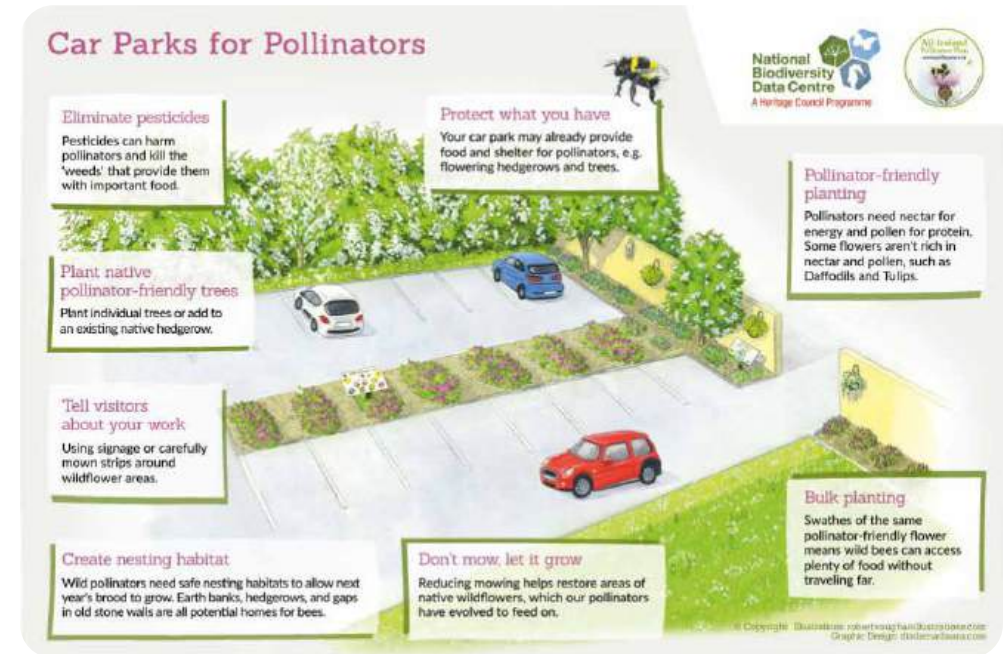
If there are concerns regarding space for children’s play, the trees can be planted in small groves or lines, in the form of ‘pocket forests’. This will not only extend wildlife corridors but create a more pleasant green environment for residents.

The focus for this plan will be on the Killygoan and Latlorcan housing estates, which cover large areas to the east and southeast of Monaghan town. There are several green spaces and verges throughout Killygoan which would benefit from native tree planting and reduced mowing regimes to encourage more birds and pollinators. The pedestrian ways leading up the hill are of particular note, close to the mixed woodland along the Glen Road.



Possible fears regarding tree planting and interference with views can be considered by carefully situating low-growing species, e.g. Wild Cherry, Crab Apple, Rowan, Hawthorn, Spindle. Non-native flowering Cherries, Liquidambar and Amelanchier species may also work well.

The ‘Pledge your Garden for Pollinators’ campaign has been run for a few years by Monaghan Tidy Towns. This could be further promoted and extended by nominating a willing homeowner in each housing estate to show their pollinator-friendly garden as an example or ‘demo garden’ to others and encourage more participation.







### THE SAGE GARDEN

Monaghan Tidy Towns has been running a series of Garden Workshops on 'how to make your garden more wildlife & pollinator friendly'. The beautiful Sage Garden at the CROCUS Centre in Monaghan town (Cancer Resource of Caring Understanding & Support), is being used as an example of how biodiversity-friendly gardens can be developed in an easy and affordable way.



## 5 Key Project. *Swift Surveys & Training*

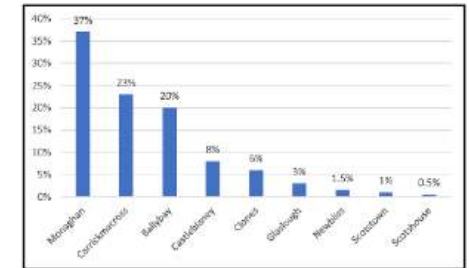
The Common Swift *Apus apus*, is a small migratory bird which arrives in Ireland from southern Africa in May and departs again in August. Swifts pair for life and are also site faithful, returning to the same nesting site each year. They are mostly an urban species, preferring to nest in crevices in old buildings and in the eaves of houses, or in natural gaps in stonework.

Swifts are now 'red-listed', meaning their numbers have been reduced rapidly in recent years, due to less nesting opportunities, lower insect availability and climate change. In terms of 'mess', Swifts are relatively clean as they spend all their time in the air except for when feeding their chicks.

A 2023 Swift survey by BirdWatch Ireland in Co. Monaghan found that Monaghan town had the highest number of Swifts and nest sites. Residential or commercial properties accounted for 63.5% of nest locations in the county, while 36.5% of nests were in religious or public buildings.

### Key actions advised in the report were to:

- Install nest boxes at suitable locations.
- Install nest bricks in new developments through the planning process.
- Use Caller systems to attract Swifts to these sites.
- Ensure local communities are involved.



Percentage of Swift nests found in each locality in Co. Monaghan.

We recommend that training in Swift ID and monitoring is carried out in Monaghan town. Surveys can then be carried out on an annual basis. Certain sites, e.g. convent buildings, churches and other older stone buildings can be monitored.

Installation of Swift boxes on existing and new builds, for all urban public buildings, should be pursued and locked into the planning application process.



Monaghan County Swift Survey 2023



## 6 Key Project. *Pedestrian Link*

### PEACE CAMPUS TO PETER'S LAKE & GLASLOUGH STREET

There is real potential for more defined pedestrian linkage between the new Peace Campus on the Plantation Road through to Peter's Lake via the laneway at McMahon's Tyres, and in turn the pedestrian link to Glaslough Street. This passes through a large public carpark. Enhancing these linkages would not only encourage people to walk more throughout the town, but it could also be done in a way that encourages and promotes biodiversity.

This could be achieved via cleaning the path and wall, trimming the existing hedge, planting pollinator friendly shrubs, painting the walls with bright colours and murals, as well as hanging planters, etc. For inspiration, see laneway/alley projects in Image 3 below. Mosaics and murals along sections of the wall would lift these thoroughfares. Involving local students in the project would be a nice way to connect it with young people.

The theme of the lake and associated waterbirds, insects and flora could be a focal point along the laneway, and/or related themes on local cultural and natural heritage. The carpark itself could be improved with tree planting, which would not only enhance the look of the area but also provide a natural corridor for birds and pollinators.

Signage to the entrances of the laneways are recommended to instil a sense of place on entering and exiting



'Love Alley', Crampton Court, Dublin (left) and Mural in Monaghan Town (right)

## 7 Key Project. *Enhancement of Peter's Lake*



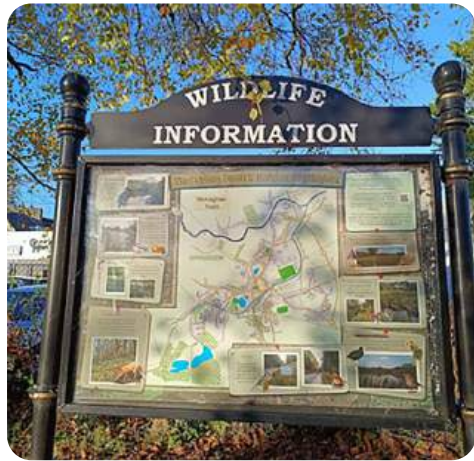
Peter's Lake and park is a superb natural amenity in the centre of Monaghan town. It offers calm and tranquillity to locals and visitors and an opportunity to connect with nature in an urban setting. The space has potential to be utilised more for biodiversity events and citizen science. We recommend training and upskilling events such as Bird ID, Tree ID and Plant/Grass ID sessions, with a focus on the local habitats and species of Monaghan town.

There is a litter and dumping issue in and around the lake, unfortunately, which is not unique to Peter's Lake. Regular litter cleanups at the lake involving the Council, local schools and Monaghan Tidy Towns would help to keep on top of the issue and highlight it among young people. Perhaps CCTV is needed at problem points, with a threat of fines, e.g. the footbridge.

The pathway around the lake needs upgrading in sections as it has deteriorated. There are a couple of signs detailing wildlife present at Peter's Lake on site. It is recommended to locate these in a more prominent position as they are currently quite hidden. Upgrades to signage may also be required where they are faded. This includes tree signage, which may need repositioning and/or regular cleaning to remove bird droppings and tree debris.

New signage should feature the Biodiversity Town Monaghan logo and contain more images than text. If those interested wish to find out more, a QR code with more information can be included.





## 8 Key Project. Invasive Alien Plant Species Management Plan (IAPSMP)

An Invasive Aliens Plant Species (IAPS) report was carried out in Monaghan town by INVAS Biosecurity in August 2023, commissioned by Monaghan Tidy Towns with support from LAWPRO. It focused on selected regional and local roads in and around the town, as well as Rossmore Park.

A total of 21 IAPS were found throughout the study area, some more problematic than others. Figure 4 below shows all the locations where IAPS were recorded during the survey. Third Schedule (Part 1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 49 & 50 (SI 477/2011) are the most serious species which need targeting immediately. The Third Schedule species identified during the Monaghan survey were:

- Chilean/Giant Rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*)
- Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)
- Himalayan knotweed (*Persicaria walichii*)
- Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)
- Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*)
- Nuttall's Waterweed (*Elodea nuttallii*)
- Water fern (*Azolla filiculoides*)
- Fringed Waterlily (*Nyphoides peltata*)

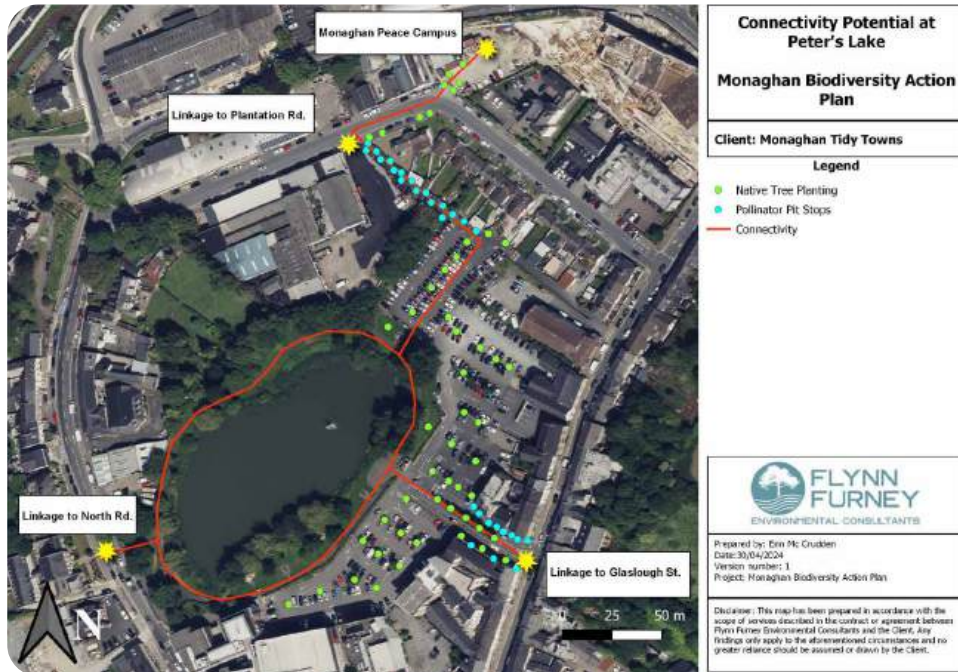


Figure 3. Map of Peter's Lake and environs, Monaghan.



Himalayan balsam and knotweed,  
Rossmore Park



Cherry Laurel, Rossmore Park



Old Man's Beard, Monaghan town



Buddleia, Monaghan town

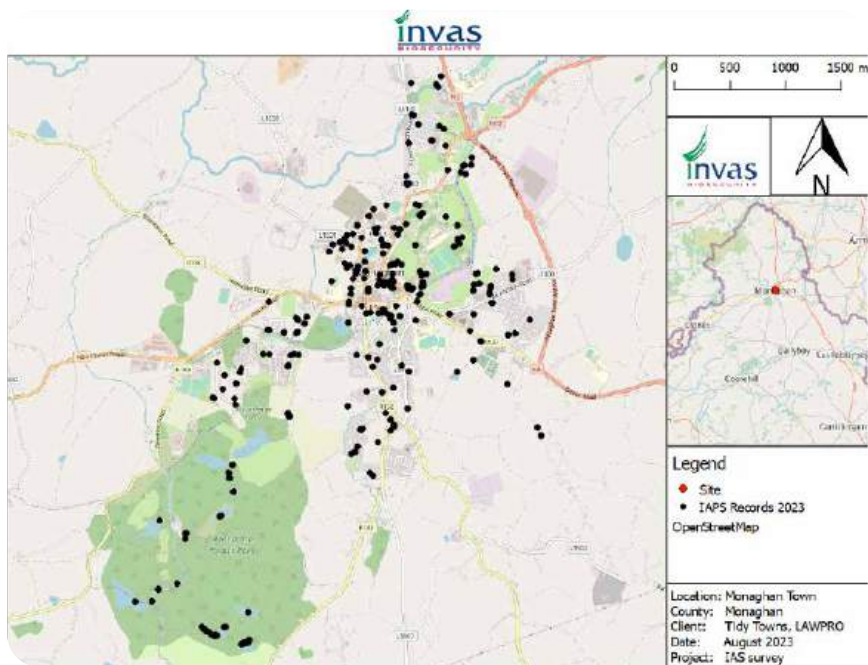


Japanese knotweed alone was found in 19 locations, while Rhododendron is widespread throughout Rossmore Park. Some other problematic but not yet legally listed IAPS recorded were:

- Buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*)
- Bamboo (*Pseudosasa spp.*)
- Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)
- Montbretia (*Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora*)
- Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*)
- Winter heliotrope (*Petasites pyrenaicus*.)

Buddleia was widespread throughout Monaghan town, with Cherry Laurel and Bamboo also an issue in parts of the town and throughout Rossmore Park. The report suggested a management plan which advised first focusing on eradicating the knotweed species, followed by several species that are as yet low in number, and so thus now is a good time to stop their spread.

An IAPS management plan is highly advised for Monaghan town and Rossmore Park as soon as possible. Monaghan Tidy Towns, Monaghan Co and other organisations, including volunteers, can team up to help eradicate or at least reduce the further spread of these species, via targeted removal schemes, signage, volunteer removal days and biosecurity measures.

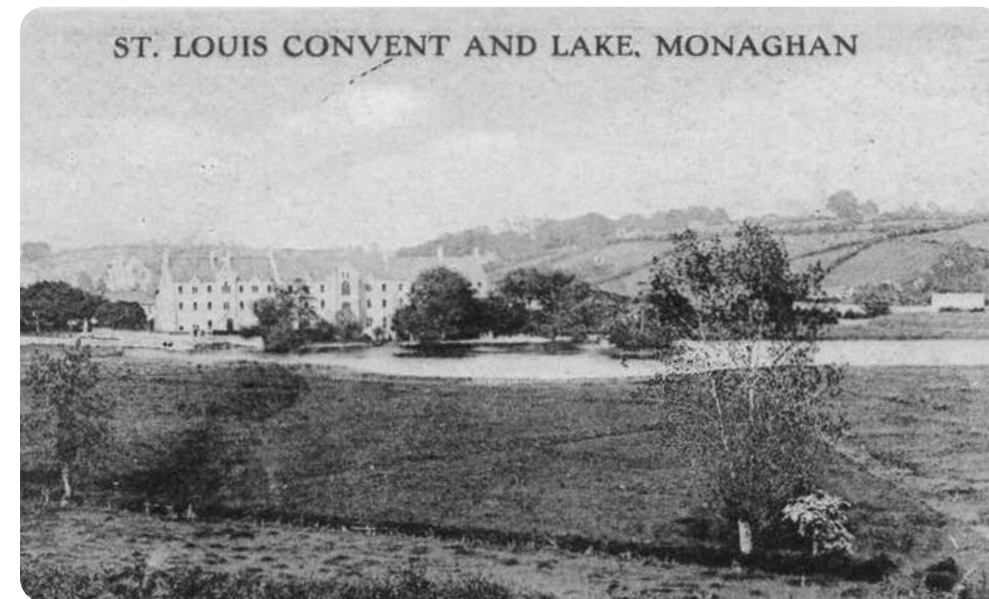


**Figure 4.** Map showing locations of all IAPS recorded during 2023 survey. Source: INVAS Biosecurity.

## 9 Key Project. *St. Louis Convent Lake & Grounds*

The Convent Lake is another valuable wetland area within Monaghan town. It is surrounded by reedbed, scrub and woodland, which is currently dominated by Sitka Spruce, but also contains a mix of broadleaves, including Ash, Willow, Alder and Beech. A range of wetland birds use the lake, e.g. Coot, Waterhen and Mute Swan. For centuries, the convent grounds have been inaccessible to the public. However, following acquisition of a large area (11.5 ha) of the convent lands by Monaghan County Council, there is huge potential for creating a valuable natural amenity here with the lake and forest setting.

The site is also just off the Monaghan Greenway and would be a wonderful natural detour off the main route, with trails through the forest and around the lake. A pathway around the lake perimeter, with public access from the town centre, would be fantastic. A comprehensive tree survey of the convent lands was commissioned by Monaghan Co Co and carried out by arboricultural consultant Dr Philip Blackstock in 2023. The survey report gives an insight into the existing habitats on site, which include mixed broadleaf/conifer sections, wet woodland, reedbed and hedgerows. The report also includes a management plan advising best practice to reconfigure and conserve the woodland and lake area.



View from the west across Convent Lake to St Louis Convent, early 1900s

Note the absence of woodland at the time.  
Source: Postcards of Monaghan, flickr.com.



We advocate a transition to broadleaf woodland by removal of the existing Sitka Spruce plantation, replacing it with a native tree mix, e.g. Oak, Alder, Willow, Hazel & Holly. Species such as Scots Pine and Larch are advised in the 2023 report, also with an emphasis on Oak. Laurel is highlighted as an issue on the site also, which will need to be eradicated. Before any clearance on site, a suite of ecological surveys will be required to ensure no adverse effects to wildlife will be incurred during the reconfiguration of the site.

An appreciation of Monaghan’s woodlands and wetlands should be the focus of the convent grounds. This would be a real biodiversity haven and natural public amenity, right at the heart of Monaghan town! The cultural heritage can also be tied in, with the history of the McMahons’ crannogs on the lake (one of which still remains), the original Monaghan Brewery, the girls’ reformatory/orphanage and St Louis’ Convent all brought into the story.



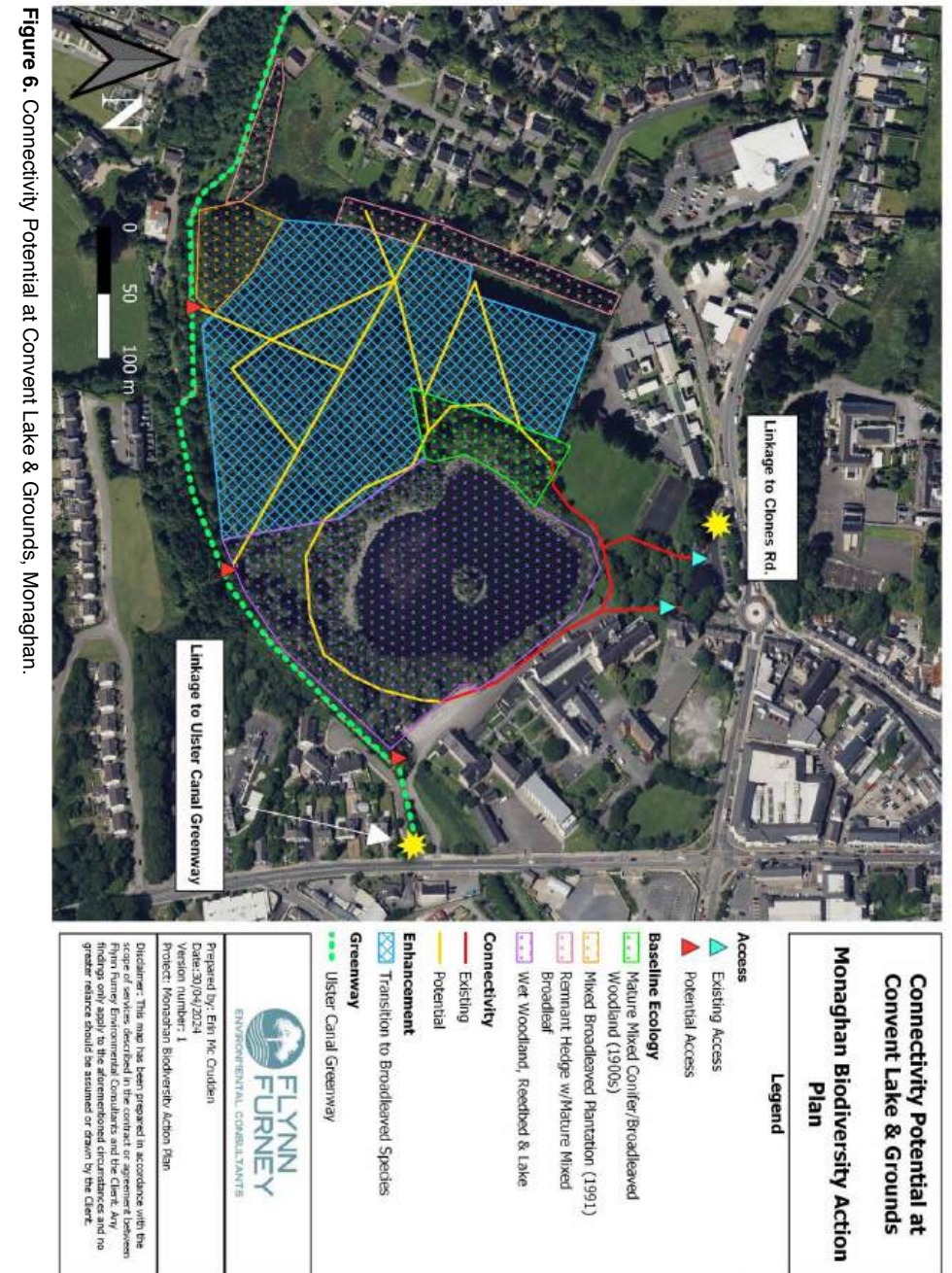
### CONVENT GROUNDS WOODLAND MAP

**KEY:**

- 1 = Conifer Plantation 1991
- 2 = Mixed Broadleaf Plantation 1991
- 3 = Mixed Broadleaf Plantation Edge 1991
- 4 = Mature stand mixed conifer with mixed broadleaf early 1900's
- 5 = Wet woodland, reedbed and lake
- 6 = Linear remnant hedge with mature mixed broadleaf
- 7 = open space
- 8 = Gardens, fields and Parkland
- X = inventory plots



**Figure 5.** Convent Grounds Woodland Map from the Tree Survey & Report commissioned by Monaghan Co Co (Blackstock, 2023).





# Section 3. Schedule

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS & TIMEFRAME

Action	Locations	Details, recommended Species & Materials	Planting Timeframe
1 Bog Garden, Greenway entrance, Clones Road	In the newly landscaped green space at Greenway entrance, Clones Road.	<b>Bog Garden planting:</b> Yellow Iris, Purple loosestrife, Creeping jenny, Marsh marigold, Hemp agrimony, Golden sedge Carex elata, Bog cotton, Bogbean, Meadowsweet, Lady's Smock and Water mint. <b>School visits:</b> Outdoor classroom sessions with local schools on site can focus on bogs, wetlands, the canal/greenway and woodlands.	Plant pond/bog plants - April-May. (2024-2025 – Short-term)
2 Tom Young's Wood (Cortolvin)	At the clearing in Tom Young's Wood, c. 1m in from Clones Road entrance to the Ulster Canal Greenway.	<b>Leylandii reduction:</b> Reduce height of line of Leylandii at the clearing to 2-3m tall. This will still allow some cover for wildlife and let more light onto the forest floor. <b>Plant the clearing:</b> Plant the cleared area with broadleaf species, e.g. Oak, Birch, Hazel, Holly. A temporary fence should be placed around the new trees to avoid damage. A trail can be left in the centre for entering the wood.	Reduce height of Leylandii – Sep-Mar. Should be done by a licensed arborist/tree surgeon. Plant trees - Nov-Mar. Do not plant in hard, frosty ground. 17th Mar is often considered the deadline for tree and hedgerow planting. (2024-2025 – Short-term)
3 Ulster Canal & River Shambles Water Quality	Water Literacy project at 4 housing estates in Monaghan town, plus follow-up actions.	<b>Public engagement:</b> Four workshops with on-site talks and demonstrations regarding water quality, water treatment and conservation. <b>Follow-up actions:</b> Explore possible actions after completion of Water Literacy Project.	Public workshops – May-Oct. With ecologists, Monaghan Tidy Towns and residents from local housing estates. (2024-2025 – Short-term)

# 10 Key Project. Peregrines at St Macartan's Cathedral

To establish a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* nesting site at St Macartan's Cathedral would be an exciting and ambitious project for Monaghan town. Peregrines have traditionally nested on cliffs but are now widely known to nest in tall buildings such as old towers and cathedrals.

This is a project the Tidy Towns could initiate with the aid of ecologists/ornithologists and/or BirdWatch Ireland. Installing a nest camera might be an option in future, where anyone can tune in to see the birds, especially during the nesting period.

This would be an ambitious but positive project for Monaghan Tidy Towns, as well as raising the profile of biodiversity in the town and county as a whole.



Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*. Source: BirdWatch Ireland



Peregrines nesting at Nottingham Trent University, UK. Source: Nottingham Trent University.



Action	Locations	Details, recommended Species & Materials	Planting Timeframe
6 Pedestrian Link - Peace Campus to Peter's Lake & Glaslough Street	New Peace Campus on the Plantation Road through to Peter's Lake via laneway at McMahon's Tyres, to the pedestrian laneway at Glaslough Street.	<b>Laneways:</b> Power wash the paths and walls, trim the existing hedges, plant pollinator friendly shrubs, paint the walls with bright colours, murals & mosaics, install hanging baskets/ planters, etc. <b>Themes:</b> Peter's Lake and associated waterbirds, insects and flora could be a focal point along the laneway, and/or related themes on local cultural and natural heritage. <b>Pedestrian signage</b> to instill a sense of place on entering and exiting, to encourage walking over driving. <b>Tree planting in car park:</b> tree planting in the car park will improve the aesthetics and extend the ecological network between areas.	Create attractive pedestrian links as soon as possible, with signage. Encourage community involvement in laneway enhancement, e.g. murals by schools, local artists, etc. Plant trees in the car park, Nov-Mar. Preferably by 2026. (2025-2026 – Medium-term)
7 Enhancement of Peter's Lake	Peter's Lake & environs, North Road.	<b>Citizen Science ID workshops:</b> Bird ID, Tree ID and Plant/Grass ID sessions, with a focus on the local habitats and species of Monaghan town. <b>Regular litter cleanups within and around lake:</b> to involve the Council, local schools and Monaghan Tidy Towns, etc. <b>Upgrade of paths and signage:</b> Resurfacing of degraded path around lake, plus wildlife signage upgrades.	ID workshops can occur throughout the year, but preferably between late spring-early autumn. Clean-ups of lake environs should be regular and ongoing. Upgrade of paths and signage should be prioritised. (2025-2026 – Medium-term)
8 Invasive Alien Plant Species Management Plan (IAPSMP)	IAPS management plan for Monaghan town and environs.	<b>Targeted IAPSMP:</b> A targeted plan to eradicate IAPS in identified locations of Monaghan own and environs, with an initial focus on Third Schedule species – e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Rhododendron.	Ensure IAPSMP is completed and eradication of Third Schedule species gets underway as soon as possible. (2026-2027 - Long-term)

Action	Locations	Details, recommended Species & Materials	Planting Timeframe
4 Bog Garden, Greenway entrance, Clones Road	Focus on a few housing estates at a time, e.g. Killygoan, Latorcan.	<b>Low-mow regimes in green spaces and verges:</b> Establish and extend 'low-mow' areas in housing estates – at Killygoan and Latorcan. Focus on less 'busy' areas for children's play, etc. Experiment with strips and patches to start with. <b>Pocket forests:</b> There is a need for more tree planting throughout the town's housing estates. Suggested species are Wild Cherry, Crab Apple, Rowan, Hawthorn, Spindle. Also, non-native Cherry varieties, Liquidambar and Amelanchier. <b>'Demo Garden'</b> : Nominate a 'demo garden' within each housing estate as an example of a nature-friendly garden. This could help to promote the 'Pledge your Garden for Pollinators' campaign each year.	For long-flowering meadows, cut once a year in mid-late October. For short-flowering meadow options, cut once every 5-6 weeks and lift cuttings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First cut after 15th April</li> <li>• Second cut end of May</li> <li>• Third cut – mid-end July</li> <li>• Fourth cut – end August</li> <li>• Fifth cut – after mid-October</li> </ul> Plant trees Nov-Mar. Do not plant in hard, frosty ground. 17th Mar is often considered the deadline for tree and hedgerow planting. Demo garden – nominate in the spring for the summer period. (2024-2025 – Short-term)
5 Tom Young's Wood (Cortolvin)	Organise training for Swift ID & monitoring for buildings across Monaghan town. Identify sites for Swift boxes.	<b>Swift ID &amp; Monitoring:</b> Sign up willing volunteers for Swift ID and monitoring training that can be carried out annually. Target specific areas/buildings to focus on. <b>Swift box installation:</b> Identify sites for Swift boxes and install them (with specialist guidance). <b>Planning process:</b> Make installation of Swift boxes mandatory for all public buildings in planning process.	Monitor area for birds in spring/summer (generally Apr-Sep). Consult ecologist before installing nest boxes to choose the correct location/s, etc. Work with Monaghan Co Co to make Swift box installation mandatory in renovation and construction of public buildings. (2025-2026 – Medium-term)



# Section 4. *Additional Biodiversity Projects*

■ FOR MONAGHAN 2024-2027

These are suggested projects that Monaghan Tidy Towns 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.

	Project	Description	Project Period
1	Two key Biodiversity Events per year	The Tidy Towns group will organise at least two biodiversity-themed awareness events for the residents of Monaghan town and environs. Themes could include Swift ID and monitoring training, pollinator-friendly planting schemes and flora/grassland ID, e.g. at Peter's Lake.	<b>Annually, 2024-2027</b>
2	Encouraging Citizen Science and recording on NBDC database	Providing events and training will be key for locals, however all who take part in events should be encouraged to record their findings on the NBDC database to ensure records of species for Monaghan are built upon each year.	<b>Ongoing, 2024-2027</b>
3	Establishing a base for Monaghan Tidy Towns	Currently, Monaghan Tidy Towns has no base from which to work from or store tools, equipment, etc. This would be very important for the group to progress their projects and hold meetings and events. The group should be supported in this by Monaghan County Council.	<b>Within period 2024-2027</b>

	Action	Location/s	Details, recommended Species & Materials	Planting Timeframe
9	St. Louis Convent Lake & Grounds	St. Louis Convent Lake, woodland and grounds.	<b>Creation of public natural amenity:</b> Open up the grounds as a local amenity through the woodland and around Convent Lake. Linkage with existing greenway. <b>Transition to broadleaf woodland:</b> Transition from Sitka Spruce dominant woodland to broadleaf, with a focus on native tree species, e.g Oak, Alder, Willow, Hazel, Holly, Scots Pine & Larch. Remove/manage Ashes afflicted with Ash Dieback Disease. <b>Retain valuable habitats:</b> Retain existing broadleaf sections, wet woodland, reedbed and hedgerows on site.	Embrace Convent Grounds as a public amenity and natural 'haven' within the town. Transition from conifer dominant to native broadleaf dominant. Follow best practice to retain valuable habitats and create new habitat where appropriate. (2026-2027 - Long-term)
10	Peregrines at St Macartan's Cathedral	St Macartan's Cathedral	<b>Establish Peregrine pair at cathedral:</b> This can be explored along with Birdwatch Ireland, ecologists and those with experience in monitoring Peregrines in urban environments.	Explore potential for establishment of a Peregrine pair at the Cathedral and aim to instate them if deemed possible, with specialist guidance. (2026-2027 - Long-term)





This biodiversity action plan was developed by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants for Monaghan Tidy Towns. It was made possible through funding granted by Community Foundation Ireland.



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