



**Monaghan Local Action Group**

Monaghan Tidy Towns Biodiversity Action Plan

COMBILIFT

2023 – 2026



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
**2040**

Ár dTodhchaí  
Tuaithe  
Our Rural  
Future



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
**Europe investing in rural areas**

Funded by the Department of  
Rural and Community Development

**LEADER 2014-2022 Programme**



## Monaghan Local Action Group

### Monaghan Tidy Towns (COMBILIFT) Biodiversity Action Plan (2023-2026), developed by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants.

Ba mhór againn cuidiú a thug na gníomhaireachtaí seo luaite :  
Grúpa Forbartha Áitiúil Forbairt Chomhtháite Mhuineacháin  
Theoranta , Comhairle Chontae Mhuineachán , an Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail chomh maith le Ciste Eorpach Talamhaíochta  
le Forbartha Tacaíochta áitúila don Scéim seo a chuir i bhfeidhm

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funding this project.



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# 1. Welcome to the Combilift Biodiversity Action Plan!

This plan is to be used to guide the work of Combilift and Monaghan Tidy Towns for the next three years (2023-2026) in terms of biodiversity enhancement projects. This document focuses on Combilift, specifically. The plan was drawn up following consultation with the Tidy Towns group and field visits undertaken in March and April 2023.

The first section of the plan includes a basic introduction to biodiversity, the challenges faced by nature and the reasons for creating biodiversity plans such as this one. Next, some **Key Biodiversity Projects** are outlined – and these are projects that may take relatively significant resources for Monaghan Tidy Towns to complete. Finally, recommendations are included for other **Additional Projects** we suggest that the group would undertake over the next three years.

## 1.1 Acknowledgements

This Plan was created for Combilift, via Monaghan Tidy Towns, by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. The author would like to thank Monaghan Tidy Towns and Combilift for their support. Special thanks to Emer Brennan and Michael Carroll, who met with me during the development of this plan, in addition to staff representatives from Combilift. Many thanks to Monaghan LCDC/Local Action Group and Monaghan Integrated Development, the funding body which made this project possible under the LEADER fund.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Biodiversity Action Plan Overview

Biodiversity has now become a key part of what community groups do. This Plan will help Combilift and Monaghan Tidy Towns to 'design' biodiversity considerations into their present and future projects and to 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 the locality. This may then empower other individuals and groups, such as other nearby Tidy Towns committees, residents' associations and sports clubs, 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 Combilift and Monaghan Tidy Towns members and in-person visits with a focus on areas to be enhanced for biodiversity.

### 2.2 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.

### 2.3 Why is Biodiversity Important?

Humans are a component of biodiversity and we are dependent on it to provide a range of ecosystem services. Human activities such as agriculture, forestry and fishing depend on services provided by biodiversity. We rely on nature 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 richness of our biodiversity. Our country's natural heritage contributes to the attractiveness of landscapes, villages and urban centres.

### 2.4 The Biodiversity Crisis

The 2020 Living Planet Report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) found an average 68% decline in global populations of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians since 1970. The landmark 2019 Global Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reported that one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, which is the highest figure in human history. In Ireland, around 31,000 species are known to occur, yet the conservation status of only about 10% has been assessed. This means we have a fundamental knowledge gap in how biodiversity is changing in Ireland. Of the species that have been assessed, one in every fifth species is threatened with extinction here. Within this, a third of our bee species is threatened with extinction.

## 2.5 What is this Biodiversity Action Plan For?

The purpose of a Biodiversity Action Plan is to set out appropriate, locally based actions for the conservation, management and/or enhancement of habitats for the benefit of native species. This biodiversity action plan:

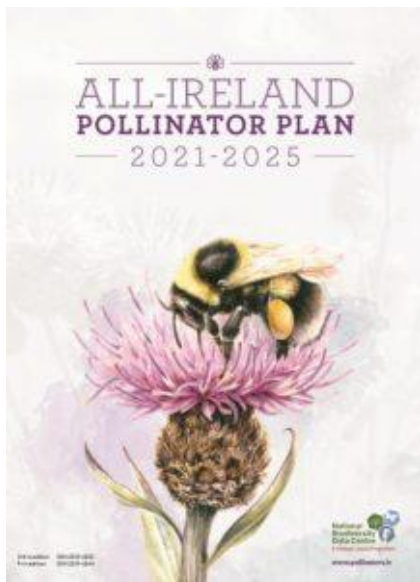
- Sets out a solid set of ambitious yet practical actions with a focus on biodiversity enhancement for the following 3-year period which the community group and locality can aim to achieve.
- Encourages actions to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and its conservation within the wider community.

## 2.6 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 people's 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 as having positive impacts for both physical and mental wellbeing.

Raising awareness of biodiversity can be facilitated by organising wildlife-themed walks, (e.g. on bats, birds, wildflowers), or competitions, such as best wildlife-friendly garden, housing estate, 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.

## 2.7 All-Ireland Pollinator Plan



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](http://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! Combilift can join these efforts by becoming a Business Supporter of the AIPP!

## 2.8 AIPP Pollinator-Friendly Resources

The team behind the AIPP has developed guideline booklets aimed specifically at a range of groups, including community groups, sports clubs, local authorities and church groups. Each booklet gives targeted advice for every situation on how to become more pollinator friendly. Some of that advice is also contained in this biodiversity action plan, however it is also worth reading the booklets for additional information. Pollinator-friendly signage, planting lists and information on bee species are just some of the resources the AIPP offers. All are available to view and download for free at [pollinators.ie/resources/](http://pollinators.ie/resources/).



## 2.9 Biodiversity Recording



The National Biodiversity Data Centre works to make biodiversity data and information more freely available in order to better understand and assist the protection of Ireland's biodiversity. The NBDC encourages everyone to become a 'citizen scientist' by observing and recording species on their [Citizen Science Portal](http://Citizen Science Portal). This helps them to build up a picture of the animals, plants and habitats present across Ireland, especially during current times when nature is experiencing big challenges. The NBDC's [Biodiversity Maps](http://Biodiversity Maps) page allows anyone to check all the biodiversity recorded across the country to date, breaking it down under specific

headings. The more individuals and groups that get involved in citizens' science and recording the species they see, the more data we can contribute to this very important resource. It helps to plan ahead for biodiversity, as well as getting people out in nature, seeing what's around them. The more people recognise and understand what is present in nature, the more they are likely to value it and care what happens to it.

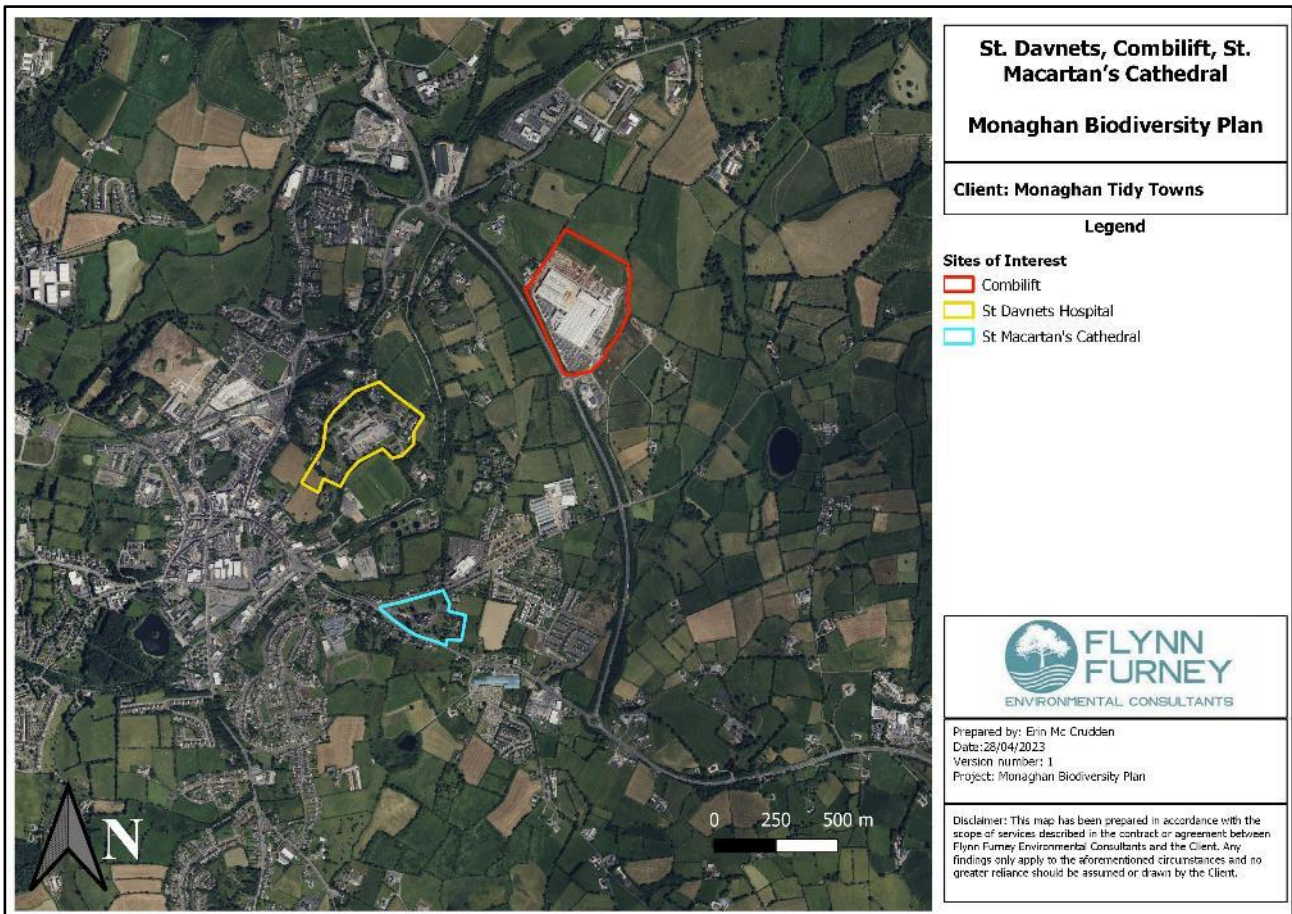
An easy way to start recording in your community might be to try a [FIT \(Flower-Insect Timed\) Count](http://FIT (Flower-Insect Timed) Count). Basically, people are split into small groups or individuals to watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and count how many insects visit it. The following points give more detail on FIT Counts:

- You can do a 10-minute FIT Count at any time between the 1st April and the 30th September.
- Your location can be anywhere e.g., garden, farm, park, school, business site.
- You don't need to identify the insects to species level, but only to tally within broad groups e.g., bumblebee, butterflies & moths, wasp, beetle.
- A new FIT Count app allows you to take a FIT Count and upload the results in one go.



### 3 Focus Areas – An Overview

Combilift is a Monaghan-based company making specialised forklifts to ship worldwide and which employs 750 people. Its global headquarters are based at Annaghagh, just northeast of Monaghan town. While much of the site is industrial, the western side, nearest the N2, includes areas suitable for targeting to enhance biodiversity. Map 1 below lays out the three sites in total which are included under Monaghan Tidy Town’s biodiversity action plan. Table 1 outlines the total areas, in hectares (ha) of each site, (the focus areas for enhancing biodiversity value) and the percentage of each site to be enhanced under the plan. This document focuses on recommendations for Combilift only, however.



Location	Total Area of Site (hectares)	Area of Biodiversity Plan (hectares)	% of site being enhanced for biodiversity
St Macartan’s Cathedral	4.3	1.5	35%
St Davnet’s Hospital	10.7	2.3	21%
Combilift	16.3	3.1	19%
<b>TOTAL (3 sites combined)</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>22%</b>

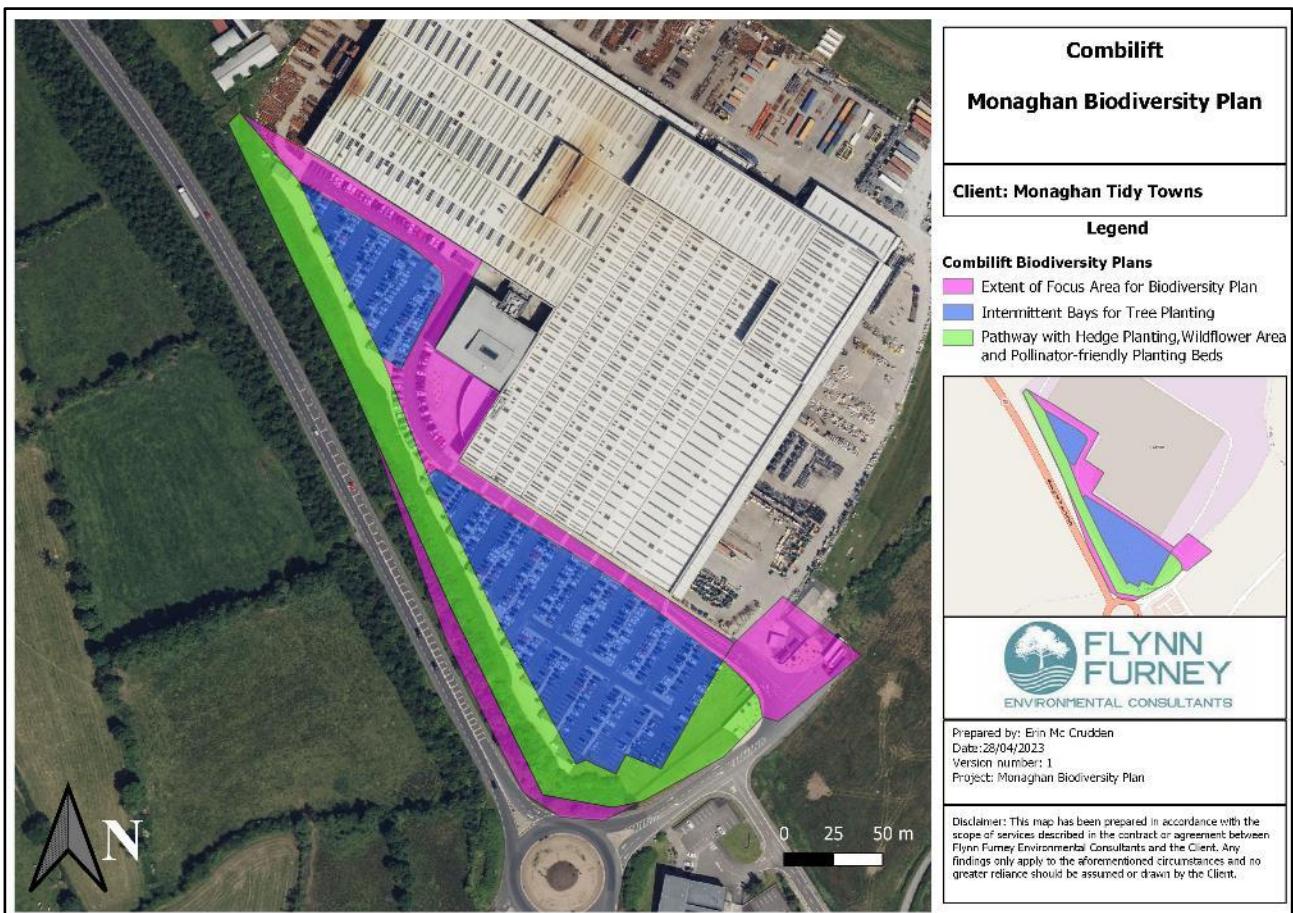


## 4 Key Biodiversity Projects for Combilift

### 4.1 Combilift

The map below lays out the Combilift HQ grounds, along with biodiversity focus areas. This is followed by projects which outline our recommendations for the grounds of Combilift HQ. It is also recommended to refer to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan's 'Businesses: Actions to Help Pollinators' booklet at [pollinators.ie/resources/](http://pollinators.ie/resources/).

**\*NB\* It is important to note that the Combilift grounds are strictly not open to the public, but only for staff and groups who have permission to visit while on tours at the factory.**



#### 4.1.1 Key Project 1 – Native Hedging along new Pathway

The new pathway being created along the edge of the Combilift grounds for staff will be a great asset to the company. In order to increase the biodiversity value, native hedging is recommended to plant along here, e.g. Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Holly, Hazel, Guelder Rose and Spindle. It is advised to plant this hedge on both sides for the first few metres of the path and then solely along the inside of the left-hand side for the remainder of the pathway, as the right-hand side belongs to Monaghan County Council and will be included in the future extended greenway.

The native hedge can easily be maintained, and when established after the first couple of years, it need only be lightly trimmed every 2-3 years (topped and sided). It should not be severely cut into a box shape every year as this hampers flowering and fruiting and is thus not useful for pollinators, birds or any other wildlife.

The layer of gravel here, outside the timber edging, will need to be scraped back or removed in order to expose the soil underneath for planting. For guidance on native hedgerow planting see Teagasc's webpage on ['Planting Hedges'](#) and Future Forest's ['Planting Native Hedges'](#).



## Native Hedging

Native hedging varieties produce flower and fruit, providing food and shelter for birds, pollinators, small mammals and bats. Native hedges are excellent ecological corridors, offering a lifeline for many creatures, especially considering Ireland's current lack of native tree cover. In addition, they provide fantastic shelter for livestock in times of wind, rain or even hot, sunny weather. They also help to deter flooding by absorbing excess water, prevent land subsidence by strengthening the soil and are brilliant carbon sinks. Ireland's hedges often date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the introduction of the splitting up of land under the Enclosure Acts, although some date as far back as medieval times. Townland boundary hedgerows are often the most species abundant, with lines of mature trees incorporated into them. Typical native hedge species are Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Elder, Spindle, Whitebeam, Guelder Rose and Holly. Larger trees might include Oak, Ash, Beech and Sycamore. The latter two tree species are non-native but were popular in some areas at the time. Ash is unfortunately now greatly affected by Ash Dieback Disease across Ireland. With 70% of County Monaghan's hedgerow trees being Ash, this is of great concern for the county.



### 4.1.2 Key Project 2 – Enhancing Green Areas for Pollinators at Combilift

There are a couple of options here. Either the natural approach is taken, where a short-flowering, 'low-mow' meadow is encouraged (see 'Creating Meadows' section), or a native grass/wildflower mix is planted. The latter option is highly recommended by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and is low maintenance. AIPP signage can be installed to show the lawns are being managed for pollinators.

Sowing a grass/wildflower mix would involve scraping back the top layer of grass to expose the soil. A mix such as the 'Butterfly and Bee Meadow Mix - Wildflowers with Grass' from [connectingtonature.ie](http://connectingtonature.ie) is recommended if this is the option chosen. After the flowers have gone to seed, they are to be cut and then lifted, as done with a natural meadow. An 80:20 Grass: Wildflower mix could work well here. If more wildflowers are desired, a 50:50 mix is suggested instead.



## 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! Cuttings from short-flowering meadows can generally be composted. Long-flowering meadows can sometimes be baled for hay.

- First cut after 15<sup>th</sup> April
- Second cut end of May
- Third cut – mid-end July
- Fourth cut – end August
- Fifth cut – after mid-October



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

## 'Low-Mow' Management Options



The 'low-mow' area at Manorhamilton's Star Fort (see image, left) 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.

### 4.1.3 Key Project 3 – Planting Trees between Parking Bays

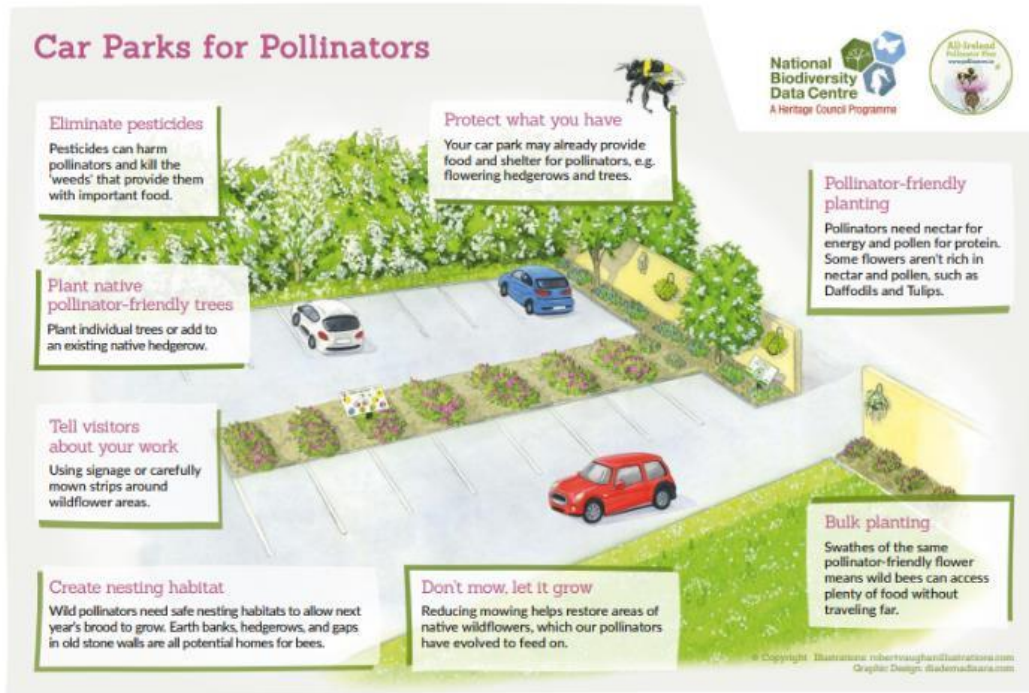
There are currently 550 car parking spaces at the Combilift site, which covers a very large area. It is recommended to 'break up' this vast space by planting native trees within the out-shots that act as breaks and which are currently filled with gravel.

Native trees would add colour and character, as well as providing 'ecological corridors' across this part of the site for birds and pollinators. It would also help to cool the car park in hot weather.

Recommended tree species include Rowan, Wild Cherry and Whitebeam. The gravel would have to be removed to allow ingress of water for the planted trees.

Check out 'Car Parks for Pollinators', a new publication from the AIPP, pictured below and available at [pollinators.ie/resources/](http://pollinators.ie/resources/).



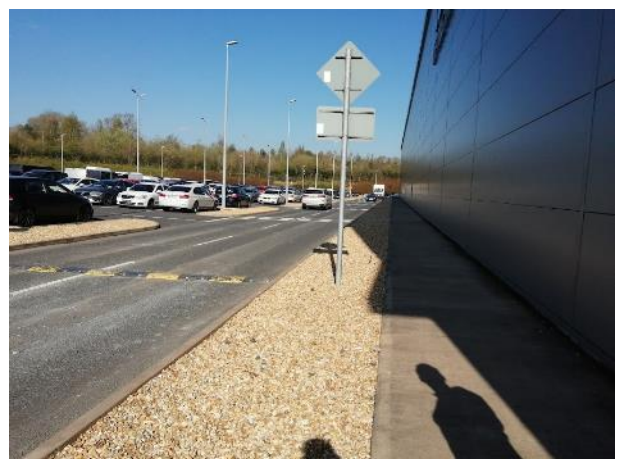


#### 4.1.4 Key Project 4 – Pollinator-friendly Planting at Combilift

The planting scheme at the reception area, the gravel border along the footpath by the building and the main entrance to Combilift could be improved for pollinators. Instead of the current Box shrubs, alternative perennial shrubs and flowers could be planted. These might include species like *Viburnum tinus*, *Potentilla fruticosa*, Ornamental Broom, Heather varieties and Lavenders.

Pollinator-friendly blubs, as described under 'Spring Bulbs' section, would also be ideal for these areas.

This type of planting could be extended along the side of the building, in addition to the mix of native trees mentioned under Project 3 above.



## Spring Bulbs

Spring bulbs are present in parts of the grounds which is great to see. However, many more bulbs can be planted to add more colour early in the year and to supply food for bees when they need it most, e.g. Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), Crocus (*Crocus vernus/tommasinianus*), native Bluebell. Other varieties include Grape Hyacinth, Fritillaries (e.g. *Fritillaria meleagris*), Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) and Anemone varieties. If planting Bluebells, be sure to plant the native Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and NOT the invasive, non-native Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*). While Daffodils and Tulips are beautiful, they provide little to no nectar/pollen for bees, so it is best to opt for the above list of species as far as possible. At the very least, consider planting mainly pollinator-friendly varieties among some Daffodils and Tulips.



### 4.1.5 Key Project 5 – Avoid using Weedkiller

It is highly recommended to avoid the use of chemical weedkiller (e.g. the example on the right, around a grove of trees). Chemical weedkiller is toxic to wildlife and humans and is likely to be banned outright in the coming years. Weeds should be removed manually, and lawns edged at the kerb with a spade or hoe, where required. There are other alternatives such as hot foam spray, weed burning machines and rotating brush machines which can be used for large-scale weed-removal if needed.



## 5 Additional Biodiversity Projects for Monaghan Tidy Towns

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 4, as well as raising awareness of biodiversity within the wider community.

No.	Project	Description	Project Period
1	Biodiversity talks and training with Monaghan Tidy Towns	Encourage staff to attend biodiversity-themed events held by Monaghan Tidy Towns, e.g. Tree ID skills, 'low-mow' regimes, pollinator-friendly planting.	2023-2026
2	'Reclaim parking spaces' for nature	Taking back one or two parking spaces at Combilift for outdoor dining and meetings would create a more pleasant atmosphere, while also being positive for biodiversity.	2023-2026
3	Become a Supporter of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP)	Combilift could become a Business Supporter of the AIPP. This may galvanise efforts to protect pollinators among the site visitors and staff, etc. It will help everyone to understand why certain actions are being taken, e.g. 'Low-mow' regimes.	2023-2026
4	Install rain butt/s	Installing rain butts will conserve water. These can be installed easily at the base of downpipes from buildings for watering plants and for other uses.	2023-2026



## 6 Recommended Actions & Timeframe

	Action	Location/s	Recommended Species	Planting Timeframe
1	Plant native trees	In out-shots between parking bays at Combilift.	Rowan ( <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> ), Wild Cherry ( <i>Prunus avium</i> ), Whitebeam ( <i>Sorbus aria</i> ).	Nov-Mar. Do not plant in hard, frosty ground. 17 <sup>th</sup> Mar often considered the deadline for planting.
2	Plant native hedge	Along edge of new pathway at Combilift.	A mix containing all or some of the following: Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> ), Blackthorn ( <i>Prunus spinosa</i> ), Hazel ( <i>Coryllus avellana</i> ), Spindle ( <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> ), Guelder Rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> ) and Holly ( <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> ).	Nov-Mar. Do not plant in hard, frosty ground. 17 <sup>th</sup> Mar often considered the deadline for planting.
3	Plant perennial flowers and shrubs	Plant in flowerbeds at Combilift.	Heathers ( <i>Erica carnea</i> – flowers winter/spring <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> – flowers summer/autumn) Rosemary ( <i>Salvia rosmarinus</i> ), Viburnum ( <i>V. tinus</i> ), <i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> , Berberis ( <i>B. darwinii</i> ), Hyssop ( <i>H. officinalis</i> ), Hebe (e.g. 'Caledonia' & <i>H. hulkeana</i> ) and Broom ( <i>Cytisus scoparius</i> ), Lavender ( <i>Lavandula angustifolium</i> ), Catmint ( <i>Nepeta</i> ), Bellflowers ( <i>Campanula spp.</i> ), Coneflowers ( <i>Rudbeckia</i> ) and Ox-Eye Daisy ( <i>Oxalis</i> ). Full pollinator-friendly lists available at <a href="http://pollinators.ie">pollinators.ie</a> .	Mainly in May-Jul, although some species can be planted earlier in the spring or later in the autumn.

4	Plant spring bulbs	Plant in flowerbeds and/or along verges at Combilift.	Crocus ( <i>C. vernus</i> ), Snowdrop ( <i>Galanthus nivalis</i> ), Grape Hyacinth ( <i>Muscari harmeniicum</i> ), Anemones (e.g. <i>A. nemorosa</i> , <i>A. blanda</i> ), Fritillaries (e.g. <i>Fritillaria meleagris</i> ), Winter Aconite ( <i>Eranthis hyemalis</i> ), native Bluebell ( <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> ).	Sep-Nov. Remember roughly where the bulbs are planted when planting perennials so that they are not dug up or interfered with. Alternatively, plant the bulbs after perennials have been planted so it is clear where there is adequate space.
5	Prepare ground and sow grass meadow mix	On small grassy lawns at Combilift.	Meadow mix of grass seed with native wildflower seed. Recommended: 'Flowering Lawn - Low Growing Meadow Mix - Wildflowers & Grass' or 'Butterfly and Bee Meadow Mix - Wildflowers with Grass' from connectingtonature.ie. This is a low-growing meadow mix composed of 80% grass seed: 20% wildflower seed. Sowing rate: 3-5g per square meter. Species include Birds foot Trefoil, Red Clover, Self-Heal, Forget me Not, Black Medick, Yarrow, Vetch, Ragged Robin, Hawkbit, Oxeye Daisy.	Late spring/early summer (March to June) or late summer/early autumn (August to October). Avoid planting during frosts - wait until soil has warmed up.
6	Trim hedges (only lightly sided and/or topped each year)	When hedge becomes mature and established at Combilift.	Any established native hedges within the three sites in this plan.	By law, hedges cannot be cut between 1 <sup>st</sup> March and 31 <sup>st</sup> August each year (under Section 40 of the Wildlife Act). Ideally, wait until end October to start February, to avoid extended bird and pollinator activity. Only trim

				hedges lightly, and if strictly necessary. Hedges can only be cut outside the declared season if they are truly detrimental to road safety.
7	Prune shrubs	Where pollinator-friendly shrubs have been planted at Combilift.	Any perennial shrub will likely require pruning once a year, e.g. Heathers, Lavenders, Wild Thyme, Rosemary, etc.	Perennial shrubs are generally pruned back in the autumn, after flowers have died off. Be mindful to leave shrubs with berries until later to allow birds a chance to feed on them.
8	Cut grass	On lawn patches at Combilift (if 'low-mow' method is chosen here).		For short-flowering meadow option, cut once every 5-6 weeks and lift cuttings. For long-flowering meadows, cut once a year in mid-late October. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First cut after 15<sup>th</sup> 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>
9	Install composting unit	Compost unit would be useful to place in Combilift grounds for any grass cuttings and garden waste generated.		Any time. Preferably before spring when grass cutting begins. Keep compost mixed and rotated throughout the year.