

# MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY GARDEN & ALLOTMENT STRATEGY



DRAFT  
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# Executive Summary

The Community Garden and Allotment Strategy for County Monaghan sets out a coordinated, evidence-based framework to support the development, expansion and long-term sustainability of community growing spaces across the county in line with the Monaghan County Council Climate Action Plan. Led by the Council, it responds to increasing demand for accessible land for food production while advancing climate action, biodiversity and community wellbeing objectives.

The strategy is informed by research, community engagement, and case studies of existing community gardens operating within the county. These examples demonstrate how underutilised land can be successfully transformed into productive, community-led spaces delivering measurable environmental and social benefits.



They also highlight key success factors—including strong local leadership, clear governance structures, and ongoing support—as well as challenges such as sustaining volunteer participation, all of which shape the strategic approach.

The document provides a practical framework for structured engagement between the Council and communities to both facilitate new community gardens and strengthen existing sites. It emphasises cooperation, shared learning and coordinated support to enhance resilience, improve management practices, and maximise climate action outcomes at site level.

Community gardens and allotments are recognised as multi-functional assets, supporting local food production, reducing emissions, enhancing biodiversity, and promoting sustainable land management. They also contribute to physical and mental wellbeing, while fostering social inclusion, skills development and stronger community connections.

The strategy outlines clear objectives and delivery mechanisms, including site identification, phased development, governance arrangements, and operational guidance. It positions Monaghan County Council as a key enabler, working in partnership with communities to ensure consistency, accessibility and long-term viability.

Overall, the strategy establishes a strong foundation for scaling community growing initiatives across County Monaghan, supporting climate resilience while empowering communities to lead and sustain local action.

# Table of Contents

01	Executive Summary	p 02
02	Introduction	p 05
03	Legislation and Policy Context	p 07
04	Existing Community Gardens & Allotments Co. Monaghan	p 10
05	Methodology & Strategy Development	p 12
06	Vision & Objectives	p 13
07	Implementation Model	p 15
08	Site Assessment Considerations	p 18
09	Policy & Governance	p 19
10	Monitoring & Evaluation	p 22
11	Appendix 1	p 23
11	Case Studies	p 24

# Introduction

This Community Garden and Allotment Strategy, developed by Monaghan County Council, sets out a clear and coordinated framework to support the development, management, and expansion of community gardens & Allotments across County Monaghan.

Responding to increasing interest in community food growing, the strategy sets out practical guidance, and a framework of how the Council will work with local groups, landowners, and partner organisations to expand access to community gardens and allotments, thereby strengthening stakeholder collaboration and supporting communities to establish and sustain successful projects. It seeks to ensure that these spaces are accessible, inclusive, and of a high standard, delivering long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits across the county.

At a national level, the Planning and Development Act 2024 provides statutory recognition for allotments and community gardens and requires local authorities to plan for such spaces as part of sustainable community development.

This strategy aligns with key local and national policy frameworks. At a local level, it supports the objectives of Monaghan County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, Draft Biodiversity Plan, and Draft Heritage Strategy, all of which emphasise the importance of green spaces, community engagement, and environmental protection



Mullaghmatt Community Garden & Allotment

The strategy also supports wider policy goals relating to climate action, sustainable development, and community wellbeing, contributing to broader ambitions for more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable communities across County Monaghan.

Community gardens and allotments offer a wide range of benefits. They deliver environmental, health, and social benefits by supporting local food production, reducing emissions and waste, enhancing biodiversity and soil health, and promoting sustainable lifestyles. They also improve wellbeing through physical activity and access to fresh produce, while fostering education, skills development, social inclusion, and stronger community connections

Interest in community growing has increased significantly, driven by sustainability, food security, cost-of-living pressures, and connection with nature. Despite this interest, the availability of allotments and community growing spaces in Ireland remains relatively low compared to other European countries.

Monaghan County Council recognises strong demand for accessible spaces for community food growing and environmental action, presenting an opportunity to expand provision, utilise underused land, and support locally driven solutions; this strategy responds by setting out a structured approach to increasing the number and quality of community growing spaces for the benefit of all communities.



Big Tom/Oram Community Garden

# Legislation & Policy

## Context

### National Legislation

#### Planning and Development Act 2024

The Planning and Development Act 2024 is the primary legislation governing the provision of allotments and community gardens in Ireland. For the first time, it introduces statutory definitions for both.

An Allotment is defined as an area of land (up to 1,000 square metres) let to individuals for the cultivation of fruit and vegetables primarily for personal or family consumption.

A Community Garden is defined as land used collectively by a group for gardening or plant propagation, operating on a not-for-profit basis.

The Act places a responsibility on local authorities to consider the regulation, promotion, facilitation, and provision of land for these purposes. It also requires councils to plan for community growing spaces as part of wider sustainable community development, strengthening the role of allotments and community gardens within the planning system

### National Planning Policy

#### Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024)

The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024), issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), set out requirements for the provision of high-quality, multi-functional public open space within new developments.

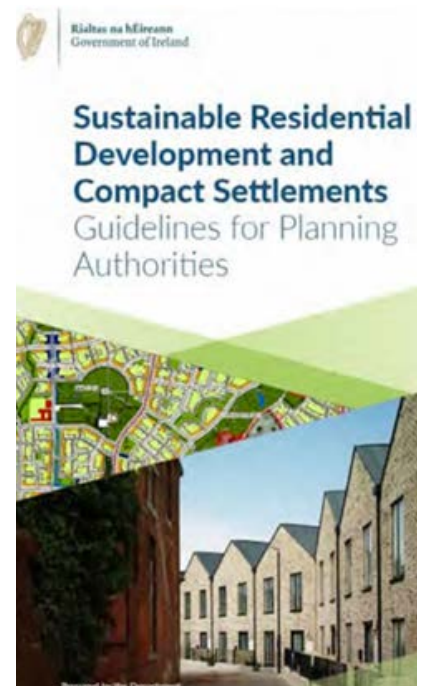
The guidelines require that 10-15% of land in new residential developments is allocated for public open space. They promote the delivery of a connected network of green spaces that serve a range of functions, including recreation, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

Within this context, community gardens and allotments are recognised as appropriate components of public open space, where suitable. Their inclusion is encouraged as part of well-designed, accessible, and multi-functional green infrastructure.



Number 34 of 2024

Planning and Development Act 2024



## Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031

Chapter 6.12 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 commits to the preparation of a countywide Green Infrastructure Strategy. This strategy aims to identify, protect, and enhance green infrastructure assets across the county, strengthen biodiversity and ecological connectivity, and deliver wider environmental and community benefits.

Green infrastructure policy focuses on enhancing existing assets within settlements, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, and other landscape features that support biodiversity and function as ecological corridors.

Policy GI1 requires that development proposals within or adjacent to green infrastructure to incorporate and protect key biodiversity features through sustainable design.

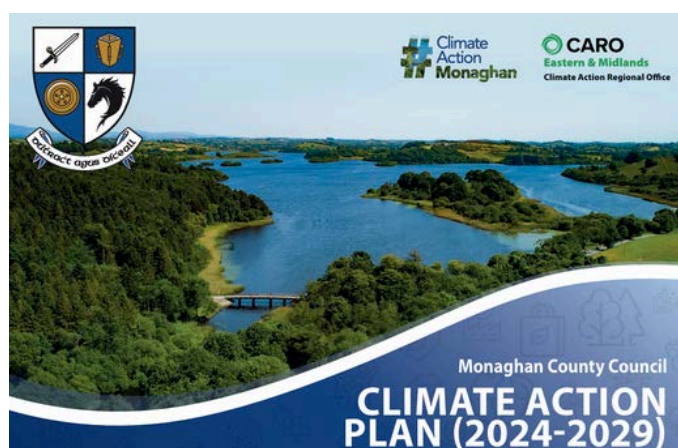
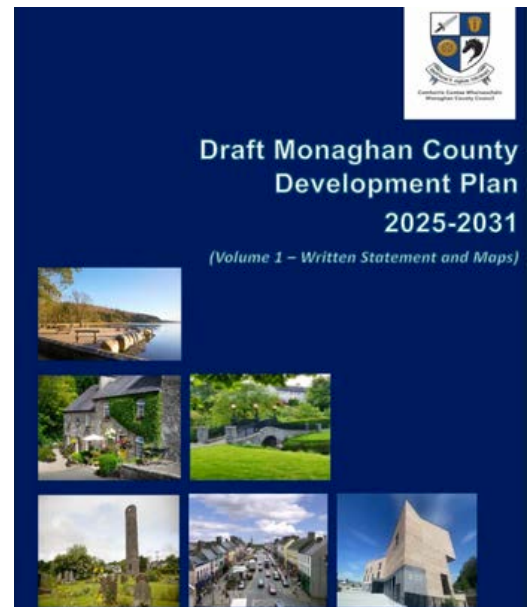
Community gardens and allotments contribute to this framework by combining food growing, biodiversity, and community use within settlements. As actively managed spaces, they also support collaboration between the Council, local communities, and other stakeholders.

In this way, community growing spaces can play a practical role in delivering the objectives of the Development Plan by enhancing green infrastructure, supporting biodiversity, and improving access to high-quality green spaces in towns and villages.

## Monaghan County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

This strategy aligns with the objectives of Monaghan County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, which emphasises the role of community engagement in delivering local climate action.

In particular, it supports the Plan's action to develop a Community Garden and Allotment Strategy to enable the expansion of community-led growing initiatives across the county. Community gardens and allotments provide a practical mechanism to deliver on this objective by promoting sustainable land use, enhancing biodiversity, supporting local food production, and encouraging low-carbon lifestyles. They also contribute to building climate resilience at a local level by empowering communities to take meaningful and collective climate action through nature-based solutions.



# Existing Community Garden & Allotments Co. Monaghan

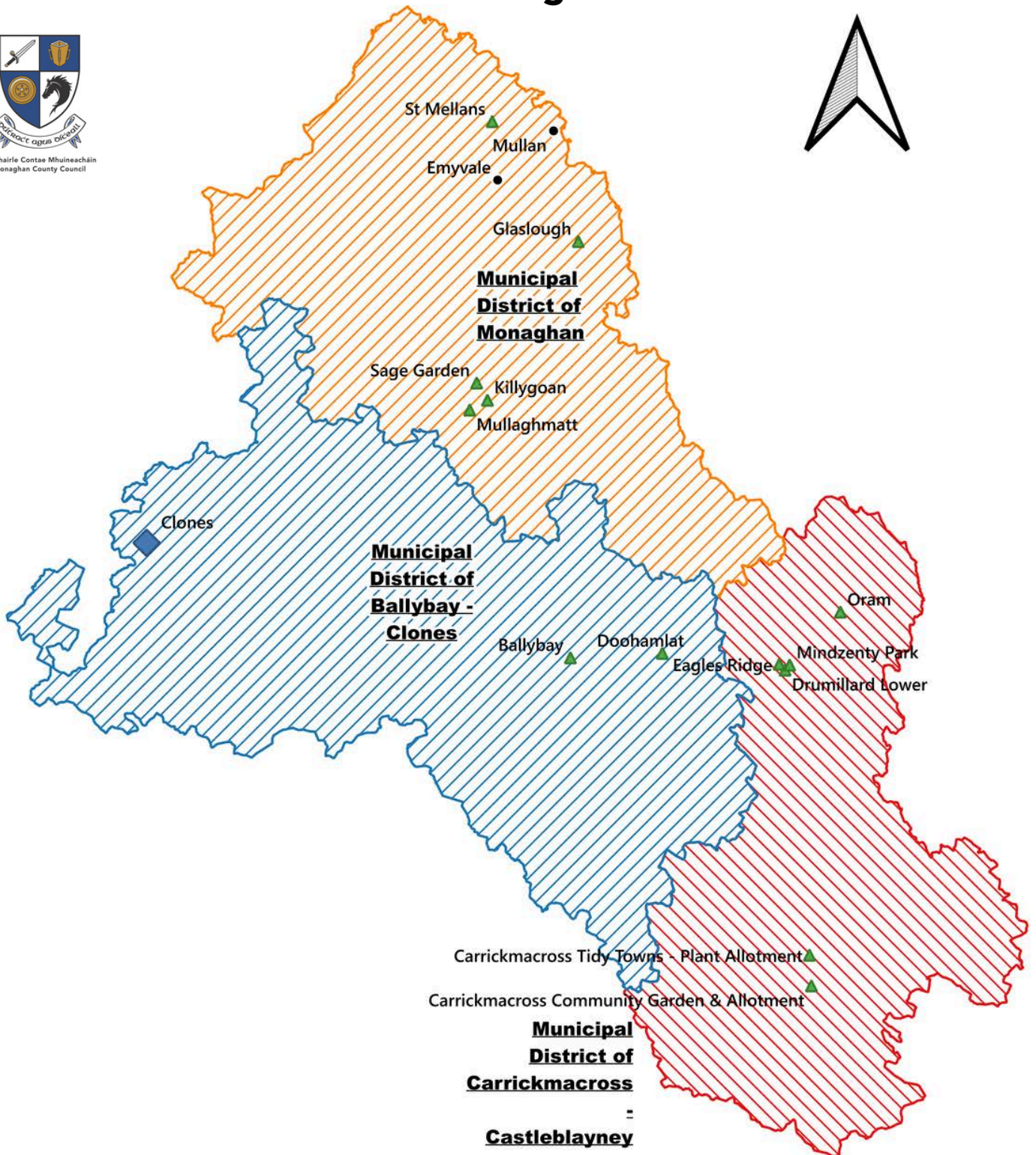
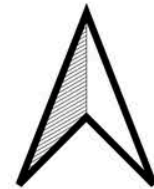
From the research phase in developing this draft Community Garden & Allotment Strategy, extensive research was put into place to find the existing community gardens and allotments in county Monaghan. A list of those in operation can be seen below:

Existing Community Gardens/Allotments in Co. Monaghan

1. Carrickmarross Community Garden & Allotments
2. Carrickmacross Tidy towns - Growing polytunnel
3. Doohamlet Community Garden & Allotments
4. Doohamlet Cois Luchas Community Garden & Allotment
5. Eagles Ridge - (Drumillard upper) Castleblayney
6. Drumillard Lower Community Garden & Woodland Castleblayney
7. Mindzenty Park Castleblayney
8. Ballybay Community Allotments
9. Sage Garden Monaghan Town
10. Killygoan Community Garden & Allotments
11. Mullaghmatt Community Garden & Allotments
12. Glasslough Community Garden & Allotment
13. Oram Community Garden & Allotments



# Map of existng Community Gardens & Allotments Co. Monaghan



## Community Gardens & Allotments Co. Monaghan

- ◆ Community Garden & Allotments in Development
- Community Garden & Allotments (Dispanded)
- ▲ Community Garden & Allotment (Inuse)

## Co. Monaghan Municipal Districts [3]

- ▨ Municipal District of Ballybay - Clones [1]
- ▨ Municipal District of Carrickmacross - Castleblayney [1]
- ▨ Municipal District of Monaghan [1]



# Methodology and Strategy Development

The preparation of this Community Garden and Allotment Strategy followed a structured and phased approach to ensure it is evidence-based and informed by community input.

The process commenced with desktop research, reviewing community garden and allotment initiatives within County Monaghan and across Ireland. This included examining existing strategies, guidance documents, and policy frameworks to understand how community growing spaces are planned, supported, and managed at local authority level.

This was supported by baseline research to build an understanding of the local context, including existing provision, and the role of community food growing in supporting wellbeing, social inclusion, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

Engagement with community groups played a key role in shaping the strategy. Direct contact with existing community groups helped to identify levels of interest, common challenges, support needs, and opportunities for partnerships. This engagement ensured that the strategy reflects lived experience and community priorities.



Big tom/Community Garden Oram

Several visits to existing community gardens and allotments in Co. Monaghan were undertaken to gain insight into how projects operate in practice. These visits focused on governance structure, community engagement, site facilities, maintenance, and long-term viability.

The preparation process also involved reviewing best-practice examples from successful community garden and allotment projects, both regionally and nationally. This included consideration of the design/layout of allotments/gardens, volunteer engagement, funding approaches, and management models that could inform future delivery in County Monaghan.

Following the publication of this draft Community Garden & Allotment strategy a survey will be undertaken to capture wider stakeholder input and to further inform and refine the wider findings from the earlier stages of the process. This ensures that the final Community Garden & Allotment strategy is informed by a broad range of perspectives. Overall, this approach has ensured that the strategy is grounded in research, shaped by local communities in Co Monaghan.

# Vision & Objectives

Monaghan County Council's vision is to support the development of accessible, high-quality Community Gardens and Allotments across the county that strengthen climate resilience, enhance biodiversity, promote sustainable food production, and support community wellbeing through locally led initiatives.

This vision aligns with the objectives of the Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, particularly in empowering communities to take local climate action and build capacity to respond to climate impacts. Community growing initiatives contribute to these aims by:

## THEME 1: CLIMATE ACTION & BIODIVERSITY



### Promote Climate Resilience.

- Support the development of community gardens and allotments that enhance climate resilience through sustainable land management, water conservation, and low-carbon practices.

### Enhance Biodiversity

- Ensure that all sites contribute to biodiversity through native planting, habitat creation, and reduced use of chemicals

## THEME 2: FOOD GROWING & ACCESS

### Expand Local Food Growing Opportunities

- Increase the availability and accessibility of community gardens and allotments across County Monaghan.

### Ensure High-Quality, Accessible Sites

- Deliver well-designed, inclusive and safe sites that meet consistent standards and support long-term use.



## THEME 3: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & WELLBEING



### **Strengthen Community Participation and Ownership**

- Support community-led approaches that encourage local stewardship, collaboration and long-term sustainability.

### **Support Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion**

- Provide inclusive spaces that promote physical and mental wellbeing and foster social connection.

## THEME 4: EDUCATION & AWARENESS

### **Promote Sustainable Living and Environmental Awareness.**

- Use community growing spaces as hubs for education, skills development, and awareness of sustainable practices.



## THEME 5: DELIVERY, GOVERNANCE & SUPPORT



### **Establish a Clear Implementation and Governance Framework**

- Provide a transparent and consistent process for the development, management and oversight of sites.

### **Enable Sustainable Funding and Resourcing**

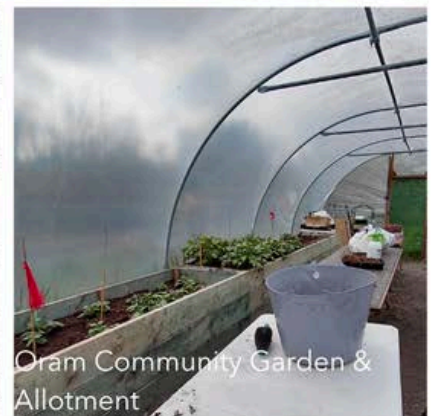
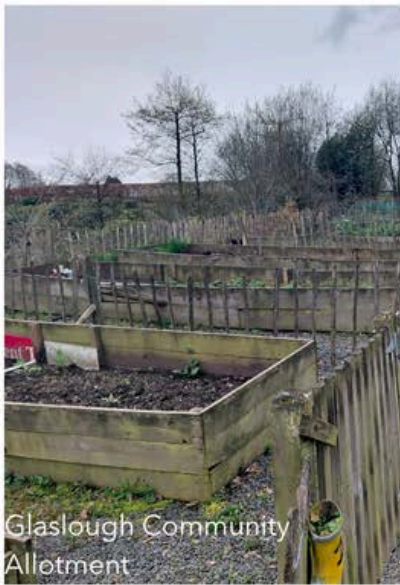
- Facilitate access to funding, guidance and support to ensure the long-term viability of projects.

### **Foster Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing**

- Support the development of networks and partnerships to share learning and strengthen delivery across the county.

# Implementation Model

The strategy sets out the following implementation model to guide the development of Community Gardens and Allotments in County Monaghan. This model provides a clear and practical pathway, outlining how communities can engage with Monaghan County Council from initial interest through to site development and ongoing management. It is designed to support a community-led approach, with the Council working alongside communities while providing guidance, facilitation, and coordination at each stage.



## Stage 1 - Community Engagement & Initial Proposal

1

- Community groups express interest in developing a garden or allotment.
- Initial engagement with Monaghan County Council.
- The Council provides guidance on requirements, structure, and next steps.
- Community groups are supported to organise and demonstrate capacity.

## Stage 2 - Site Identification

2

- Community groups identify potential sites locally
- The Council undertakes a parallel review of:
- Public lands
  - Council-owned or underutilised sites
  - Early discussions take place with relevant internal sections and stakeholders

## Stage 4 - Agreements & Project Setup

4

- Formal agreement/arrangement developed between the Council and community group.
  - Roles and responsibilities clearly defined (governance, management, use)
- Supports provided for:
- Training
  - Funding applications
  - Project planning

## Stage 3 - Site Assessment & Selection

3

- Potential sites are assessed using agreed criteria, including:
- Planning and land use considerations.
  - Accessibility and suitability for food growing.
  - Environmental and biodiversity constraints.
  - Engagement with community group to shortlist and agree preferred site.
  - Site selection confirmed.

## Stage 5 - Delivery, Launch & Ongoing Support

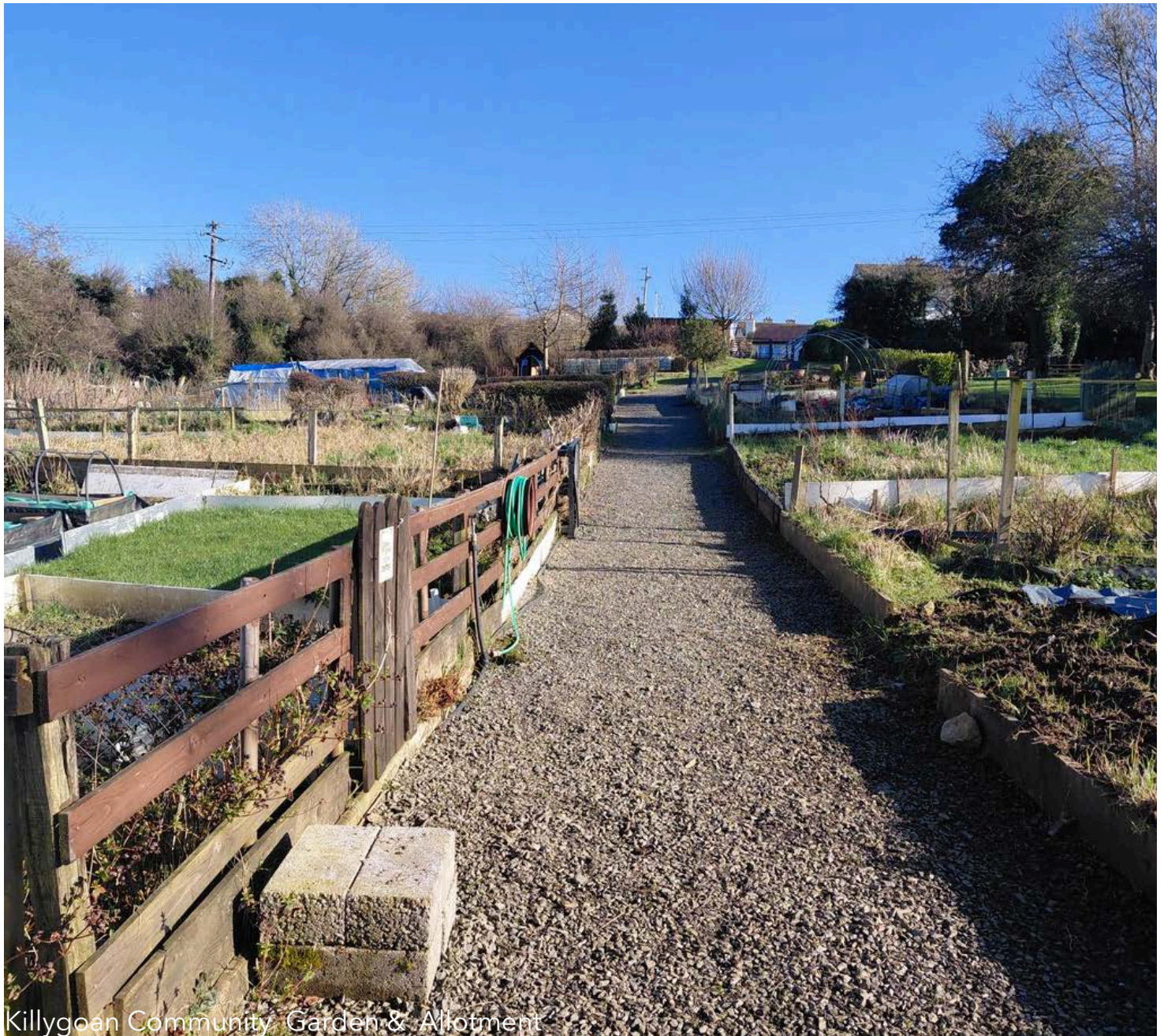
5

- Site development and preparation (where required)  
Project launch and operational start  
Ongoing Council support including:
- Capacity building
  - Funding guidance
  - Oversight through agreed frameworks (e.g. SLA)
  - Community group leads day-to-day management

Delivery of community gardens and allotments will be supported through a structured and phased approach led by Monaghan County Council in partnership with local communities.

The rollout of projects will be phased. Formal agreements will be established between the Council and community groups to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and management arrangements prior to project delivery.

Monaghan County Council will lead on site development and provide ongoing support through guidance, capacity building, and oversight mechanisms such as Service Level Agreements. Community groups will take primary responsibility for the day-to-day management and operation of sites, ensuring a strong community-led approach supported by the Council.



Killygoan Community Garden & Allotment

# Site Assessment Considerations

Sites for community gardens and allotments will be assessed using a consistent, transparent, and evidence-based framework to ensure they are suitable, sustainable, and capable of meeting both current and future community needs.

A range of key factors will be considered as part of this assessment. Accessibility is a primary consideration, including proximity to local communities, safe and inclusive access for all users, and connections to surrounding streets and transport routes. The availability of basic infrastructure such as water supply, secure boundaries, and space for storage or communal use will also be assessed to ensure sites are functional and practical to develop and maintain.



Environmental suitability is another critical component. This includes consideration of soil quality, drainage, sunlight exposure, and flood risk, as well as the presence of any constraints such as contamination or invasive species. Biodiversity will also be carefully considered to ensure that site development protects existing habitats and, where possible, enhances ecological value.

Land use compatibility and planning considerations will also inform site selection. This includes ensuring that proposed uses align with zoning objectives and that community gardens and allotments can be appropriately integrated into their surrounding environment. Opportunities to make use of underutilised or vacant land will be explored where appropriate.

Community factors are equally important in the assessment process. These include demonstrated local demand, the level of community support, and the capacity of groups to manage and sustain the site over the long term. Consideration will also be given to how the site fits within the local area, including its relationship with neighbouring properties and its potential to contribute positively to the wider community.

# Policy & Governance

This section sets out the governance framework to support the development, delivery and ongoing management of Community Gardens and Allotments in County Monaghan. It ensures that projects are delivered in a consistent, safe and accountable manner, while supporting a community-led approach with appropriate oversight by Monaghan County Council.

## Governance Approach

Community Gardens and Allotments will be delivered through a community-led model, supported by Monaghan County Council.

Community Groups will be responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of sites. Monaghan County Council will provide support, facilitation, and oversight, particularly where the Council is the landowner.

This approach encourages local ownership while ensuring appropriate standards and compliance are maintained.



Glaslough Community Allotments

## Licensing & Agreements

All sites will operate under formal agreements to provide clarity and protect all parties.

A site-specific agreement (e.g. licence or lease) will be established between Monaghan County Council and the community group, where applicable. Agreements will outline:

- Roles and responsibilities.
- Permitted uses of the site.
- Maintenance and management expectations.

Community groups may also put in place local agreements with individual plot holders to support good site management and consistency.



Carrickmacross Community Allotments



Killygoan Polytunnel

## Insurance Requirements

Appropriate insurance cover will be required to ensure safe operation of sites:

Community groups will be responsible for obtaining:

- Public liability insurance.
- Other relevant insurance, depending on activities and site use.

Responsibility for operational risk will rest with the community group managing the site.

The Council will provide guidance where required.

## Health & Safety

Health and safety is a key requirement for all projects:

- A site-specific risk assessment should be completed prior to commencement.
- Safety procedures should be maintained and reviewed regularly.
- Community groups are responsible for ensuring that sites operate in a safe and inclusive manner.



Oram Community Garden & Allotment



Sage Garden

## Roles & Responsibilities

Clear roles are essential for effective delivery:

Monaghan County Council will:

- Provide strategic oversight and support.
- Facilitate site identification and agreements.
- Offer guidance on best practice and funding opportunities.



### **Community Groups will:**

- Lead project development and day-to-day management.
- Ensure compliance with agreed standards.
- Maintain the site and coordinate users or volunteers.

### **Supporting Effective Delivery**

Together, these governance arrangements provide a clear and practical framework to support the successful delivery of Community Gardens and Allotments across County Monaghan. They ensure that projects are well-managed, sustainable over the long term, and aligned with wider climate, biodiversity and community objectives



# Monitoring & Evaluation

This strategy will be monitored through a practical and proportionate approach to track progress, support delivery, and inform continuous improvement. Monitoring will focus on key outputs and outcomes aligned with the Implementation Model, ensuring a clear link between community engagement, site development and long-term sustainability.

Progress will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by Monaghan County Council, with updates informing internal reporting and future programme development.

## Key Indicators:

The following high-level indicators will be used to assess progress:

- Number of Community Gardens and Allotments Established
- Number of Community Groups Supported
- Geographic Distribution of Sites
- Number of Sites Progressing Through Development Stages
- Level of Community Participation and Activity
- Contribution to Climate and Biodiversity Objectives.



## Review and Continuous Improvement

Monitoring outcomes will be used to:

- Inform future site development and prioritisation.
- Identify supports required by community groups.
- Strengthen delivery processes over time

This approach ensures that the strategy remains responsive, supports community-led delivery, and continues to contribute to wider climate, biodiversity and community objective

# Appendix 1

## Case Studies

From research carried out on existing community gardens and allotments across Co. Monaghan, the following case studies have been developed based on three local community projects. These case studies draw on practical experience, highlighting how projects have been set up and managed, as well as identifying examples of what has worked well in practice. They also reflect local knowledge and community-led approaches, providing useful insights and examples of good practice to help inform future projects.

### **Case Study 1** - Ballybay Community Garden & Allotments

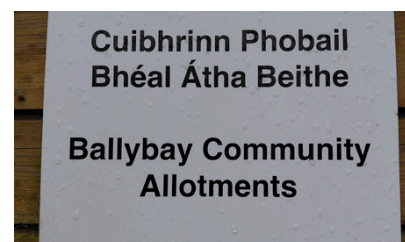
**Location:** Ballybay Town Centre

**Established:** 2017

**Landowner:** Monaghan County Council

**Operators:** Ballybay Tidy Towns

Ballybay Community Garden and Allotments is a long-established community-managed site located in Ballybay town centre. Developed in 2017 on a previously overgrown back-alley garden, the site demonstrates how small, centrally located parcels of underused land can be successfully transformed into productive, biodiverse, community spaces. The land is owned by Monaghan County Council and leased to Ballybay Tidy Towns.



### **Site and Management**

Despite its modest size, the site is highly efficient and well-integrated into its surroundings. It contains 16 large, raised beds, all of which are currently in active use, reflecting sustained demand. Plot holders are responsible for maintaining their own plots and adjacent areas, supporting a high standard of site upkeep. Annual plot holder fees per tenant, contribute to the upkeep of the site. The site also receives annual support through Monaghan County Council's Environment Fund, alongside maintenance assistance from Community Employment (CE) scheme workers.

A shared equipment shed provides access to gardening tools and machinery, while a polytunnel enhances growing capacity. An innovative heated growing table within the polytunnel enables early and diverse crop production, adding resilience and learning value to the site.



Ballybay Community Allotment

## Biodiversity and Sustainability

Biodiversity and sustainability are central to the site's operation. The garden is managed organically, with no chemical spraying. Rainwater harvesting is in place, with water collected from a nearby council building which is stored in tanks and used in plant growing, eliminating the need for mains water. Composting is a key feature, supported by food waste and coffee grounds collected from local households and businesses in the town centre.

The site benefits from mature stone boundary walls, which provide valuable microhabitats, now further enhanced with climbing fruit plants. Additional biodiversity measures include native apple trees, wildflower and native planting (including Irish bluebells), an insect hotel, swift nesting boxes, and a long-term biodiversity plan for the site.



Rain Water Harvesting



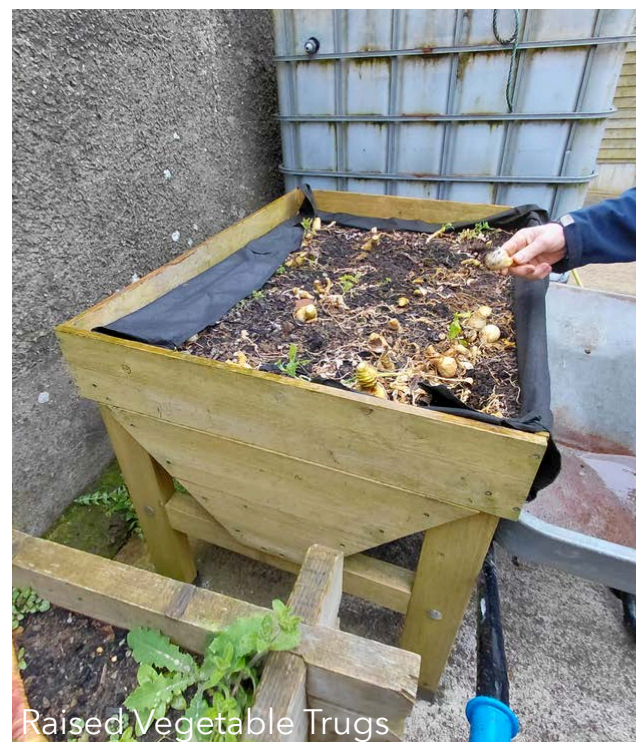
Swift Boxes

## Community Engagement and Inclusion

The garden supports a wide range of users, including individuals, families, and community groups. A wide range of age groups engage in planting and growing activities.

Purpose-built raised vegetable trugs ensure accessibility for people with mobility issues or wheelchair users, highlighting the inclusive design of the site.

This project has also attracted interest from many residents in Ballybay, fostering social cohesion, shared learning, and through food growing.



Raised Vegetable Trugs

## Challenges and Future Plans

One of the main key challenges highlighted here and at the majority of other allotments sites is getting younger people involved. For Ballybay Community Allotments the group aims to continue improving facilities, expand or upgrade the polytunnel, install a glasshouse and expanding the composting area. While potential site expansion is constrained by neighbouring land ownership, any future growth would prioritise the preservation of historic stone walls.



Heated Growing Table - Ballybay Community Allotment

## Key Learning

Ballybay Community Garden & Allotments demonstrates how strong local leadership, clear governance, modest financial support, and a strong sustainability ethos can deliver significant community, environmental, and social benefits– even on a constrained town-centre site.

## Case Study 2: Gaeil Tríúcha Community Garden & Allotment

**Location:** Errigal Truagh County Monaghan

**Funding Programme:** Community Climate Action Programme.

Gaeil Tríúcha CLG has developed a Community Garden & Allotment which is a small-scale biodiversity focused project developed through funding under the phase 1 strand 1 of the Community Climate Action Programme (food and waste theme).

The project transformed a previously under-used grassed area owned by the local GAA club into an active, community-led garden that supports food growing, biodiversity, education, and wellbeing



Growing Area

### Site Background and Development

Prior to development, the site consisted of an unused grassed area with limited community function or environmental value. Through Community Climate Action programme funding, the site was repurposed into a small community garden and allotment, demonstrating how modest interventions can deliver meaningful environmental and social benefits.

The project was designed with a strong focus on inclusion, education, and sustainability, ensuring that the space could be shared and used by different groups within the community.



Sensory & Memorial Garden



Growing area

## Growing and Biodiversity Features

The community garden includes a raised bed allotment area used for growing a wide range of vegetables, herbs, and fruit. Crops currently grown on site include garlic, leeks, celery, chard, parsley, onions, potatoes, and a variety of herbs such as sage, and mint. In addition, edible fruit bushes are planted throughout the garden, alongside planting of a native Irish apple orchard. Biodiversity enhancement is a core element of the project. Native planting has been incorporated across the site, supporting pollinators and wildlife while increasing habitat diversity within the local area.



Vegetable and herb growing



Native Irish apple trees



Growing area at St. Mellan's park Gaeil Triúcha

## Community Use and Education

The garden is actively used by Errigal Truagh special needs and the local national school. These groups access the site for workshops and practical learning sessions focused on growing fruit and vegetables, sustainable food practices, and environmental awareness. The space provides a safe, accessible outdoor learning environment that supports skill development, inclusion, and engagement with nature.

## Memorial and Sensory Garden

In addition to food growing, the site includes a memorial dedicated to member of the club and a sensory garden designed to provide a calm, reflective space for the community. This area features native birch trees, biodiversity-focused planting, and seating. The sensory garden enhances wellbeing and accessibility, creating a space that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.



## Environmental and Climate Benefits

The Gaeil Tríucha project demonstrates strong alignment with local climate action and biodiversity objectives. The garden supports: local food production and reduced food miles, Increased biodiversity through native planting, education and awareness around food, waste, sustainability and inclusive access to green space within the community

## Learning and Strategic Value

This project highlights the value of small, community-led gardens in delivering climate action, biodiversity gains, and social benefits. It shows how under-used land can be converted into multifunctional community assets that support learning and inclusion. The Gaeil Tríucha Community Garden/Allotment provides a strong example of how targeted climate funding can enable practical projects with lasting impact.

# Case Study 3: Eagles Ridge Community Allotment & Drumillard Lower Community Garden/Woodland & Mindszenty Park.

**Location:** Drumillard, Castleblayney

**Landowner:** Monaghan County Council

**Management:** Local Community Committee



## Overview

Eagles Ridge Community Allotment and the adjoining Drumillard Lower Community Woodland are community-led green spaces located within the Drumillard housing estate in Castleblayney. The estate comprises of social housing units, and both sites represent long-term efforts by the local community to transform under-used and previously neglected land into productive, inclusive, and biodiverse spaces.

Together with Mindszenty Park, these sites illustrate a strong local tradition of voluntary, community-driven land reclamation and environmental improvement, supported over time by Monaghan County Council and partner organisations.

## Site Origins and Development

The Eagles Ridge allotment site was originally an under-utilised area of waste land that had become a focus for dumping. Local residents recognised its potential for positive community use and initiated efforts to reclaim and repurpose the site.

A voluntary management committee was established, working in conjunction with Íontas (the local arts and community resource centre), to drive the project forward. This partnership played a key role in addressing issues such as access, governance, funding, and community participation.

The original concept for allotment provision in Castleblayney was supported by the local convent, with a strong emphasis on enabling residents to grow food for personal consumption and, historically, for sale at the local market. The land was formally leased from Monaghan County Council through the Carrickmacross-Castleblayney Municipal District.

Since its establishment, the site has received ongoing operational support through FÁS and Tús employment schemes, which have helped ensure regular maintenance, site management, and continuity of care.



### **Facilities and Growing Provision**

The Eagles Ridge site contains 22 plots of varying sizes and layouts. Some plots are single growing areas, while others consist of multiple raised beds (typically 7-10 per plot). Annual plot fees are reinvested back into the sites facilities.

The site includes two polytunnels: one for individual plot holders and a second dedicated to community groups and schools for workshops and educational activities. A dedicated area is also used for growing locally sourced native Irish tree seedlings. These workshops, led by local facilitators, provide training on growing native trees from seed through to young trees.

### **Biodiversity and Environmental Measures**

A strong emphasis has been placed on biodiversity and sustainable land management. Measures include native woodland planting and hedgerows, apple, pear, grapevine, and other fruit trees, Composting areas, edible shrubs and planting are present throughout the site, together, these features contribute to habitat creation, pollinator support, and improved ecological connectivity within the Drumillard estate.



## Community Engagement and Inclusion

The allotments are primarily used by local residents. Workshops and training sessions have expanded in recent years, reflecting growing interest in food growing and sustainability.

The site has strong links with local organisations and schools. The local National School regularly attends the site, using a dedicated plot and polytunnel for hands-on learning in food growing. A partnership with Crannóg Resource Centre supports access for people with disabilities, with raised growing beds designed for people with mobility issues including wheelchair users.

## Drumillard Lower Community Woodland

In addition to the allotments, the committee has developed a small community woodland and recreational space at Drumillard Lower. This site, also owned by Monaghan County Council, was first developed over 20 years ago on land that had previously been used for dumping.

The site features include: A circular paved area with 10 raised beds, suitable for schools and group use for growing crops, Edible planting, including apple trees and berry bushes and walking paths through native woodland planting.



## Learning and Strategic Value

The Eagles Ridge and Drumillard Lower projects demonstrate the long-term value of community-led green spaces within social housing estates. They show how allotments and small-scale woodland areas can deliver food growing, biodiversity, education, inclusion, and social cohesion.



## Mindszenty Park

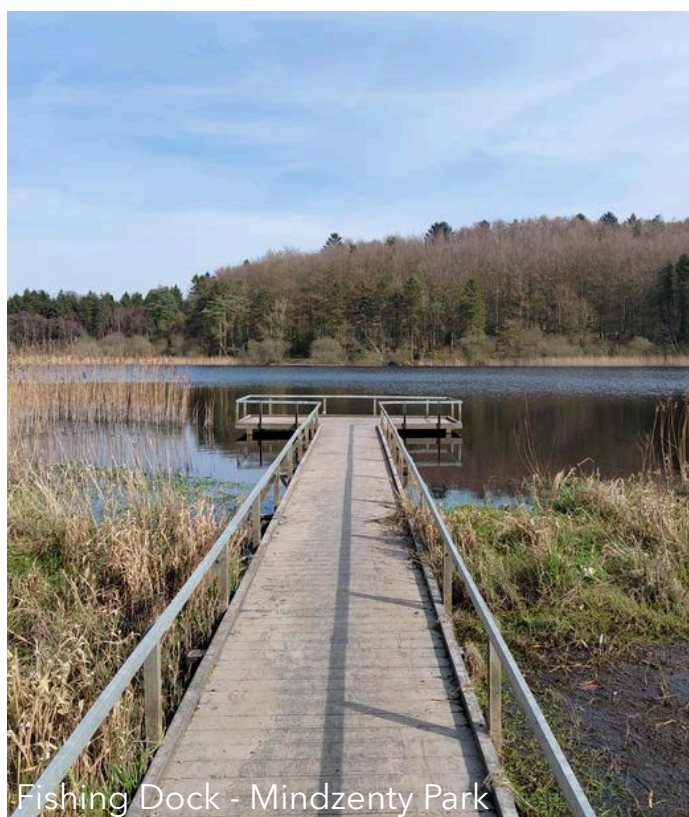
The work undertaken at the Drumillard estate forms part of a longer local tradition in Castleblayney of communities reclaiming under-used land for public benefit. This approach is clearly demonstrated by the development of Mindszenty Park, which began in the 1970s.



Mindszenty Park is located on the shores of Gas Lake in Castleblayney town. The site was originally an area of neglected waste ground and was gradually transformed through the voluntary efforts of the late Mindszenty Finnegan, a local community activist who reclaimed, developed, and maintained the land as a public amenity.

Named in recognition of his contribution during his lifetime, Mindszenty Park has since become an established recreational and green space within the town. In more recent years, the park has benefited from public investment, strengthening its role as a community hub. Its development illustrates how informal, volunteer-led environmental action can lay the foundations for long-term public value and later strategic investment.

Today, the site comprises public parkland and landscaped green spaces, a football pitch, an allotment growing area, walking paths, seating and benches, and access to the lakeshore, including a dock used for boating and fishing.



Fishing Dock - Mindzenty Park



Growing area - Mindzenty Park