



County Monaghan
Biodiversity Action Plan
2026–2031

The County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026–2031 is the product of a collaborative effort by a wide network of individuals, communities and organisations dedicated to safeguarding Monaghan's biodiversity. Sincere thanks are extended to the dedicated members of the Biodiversity Working Group for their expertise, guidance, and unwavering commitment throughout the plan-making process. Their insights have been instrumental in shaping a clear, practical roadmap for biodiversity action across the county in the years ahead.

We also wish to acknowledge the many local communities, Tidy Towns groups, conservation organisations, schools, farmers, businesses, and individuals who actively engaged in the consultation process, sharing knowledge, passion, and innovative ideas. Your involvement has been instrumental in shaping a plan that reflects a shared vision for Monaghan's biodiversity and the high regard in which it is held throughout the county.

The development and implementation of the Plan is funded by Monaghan County Council, The Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund.

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Sincere thanks to all who shared photographs for this publication. Your contribution is highly valued and greatly appreciated – Alexis Fitzgerald, Colette Gemmell, Dalia Guzauskaite, Deirdre Macklin, Fearghal Duffy (RIP), Fiona Connolly, Hunter Ray, Irish Wildlife Trust Monaghan Branch, Marija Cernikova, Monaghan Tourism, Pat McKenna, Patricia McCreesh, Wild Monaghan.

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For more information on Monaghan's biodiversity, access the QR code here

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to Biodiversity	5
What on Earth is biodiversity?	6
Why is biodiversity important in County Monaghan?	8
Understanding the global biodiversity crisis	9
What's driving the decline – and what it means for Monaghan	10
Key challenges and drivers of biodiversity loss in Monaghan	11
Opportunities for biodiversity in Monaghan	12
Chapter 2: The County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan	13
Key achievements delivered under the County Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategy 2020–2025	14
Developing the Biodiversity Action Plan	15
County Monaghan Biodiversity Working Group (BWG)	16
Statutory instruments and strategic policies guiding the Biodiversity Action Plan	17
Chapter 3: Biodiversity of County Monaghan	19
Monaghan's geology	20
Notable Monaghan ecosystems	21
Spotlight on some of our protected species	32
Sites of nature conservation significance in County Monaghan	34
Chapter 4: Objectives and Actions (2026–2031)	47
Overview: Four pillars and objectives	49
 Theme 1: Biodiversity audit	50
 Theme 2: Conservation, restoration and resilience	53
 Theme 3: Leading by example	58
 Theme 4: Connecting to nature	64
Implementation & resourcing	68
Role of the Biodiversity Working Group during implementation	68
Statutory biodiversity duty	68
Appendices	69
Appendix 1: List of abbreviations	69
Appendix 2: Monaghan Biodiversity Working Group members	70
Appendix 3: Summary of legislative frameworks	71
Appendix 4: Summary of strategic policy documents	73
Appendix 5: Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)	77
Appendix 6: Trees of special amenity value / amenity areas	80
Appendix 7: County Monaghan geological sites	81
Appendix 8: County sites of biodiversity Importance	83

Foreword from the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive

Monaghan County Council is pleased to present the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026–2031. This plan arrives at a critical time, as the pressures on nature have never been greater, both locally and globally. Biodiversity underpins our health, wellbeing, economy and quality of life, and the actions set out in this plan provide a clear and ambitious framework to protect, restore and enhance the habitats and species that form the cornerstone of Monaghan’s natural environment. Our objective is simple: to make space for nature, so that it can survive and thrive.

The Plan reflects Monaghan County Council’s commitment to embed biodiversity into our policies, programmes and day-to-day operations, while working in close partnership with communities, landowners, environmental organisations, elected members and State agencies. It aligns local priorities with national and international policy, and sets out practical, measurable actions to address key threats and pressures impacting our natural environment. We would like to sincerely thank all those who contributed their time, expertise and local

knowledge during the preparation of this plan, and in particular acknowledge the support of the Heritage Council through the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme, which has strengthened our capacity to respond to biodiversity loss at local level. The appointment of a dedicated Biodiversity Officer within Monaghan County Council is an important milestone, providing the structure and expertise required to deliver this plan effectively. A special word of thanks to the Monaghan Biodiversity Working Group and other stakeholders for their guidance and input throughout the process.

Biodiversity protection cannot be achieved by one organisation alone. It requires a whole-of-society approach, grounded in education, participation and stewardship, especially among younger generations. This is a plan for the people of Monaghan, and we encourage everyone to engage with it and to play their part. Together, we can build a healthier, more resilient county – one where nature recovery benefits communities today and safeguards Monaghan’s biodiversity for future generations.



Robert Burns
Chief Executive
Monaghan County Council



PJ O'Hanlon
Cathaoirleach,
Monaghan County Council



Foreword from the Heritage Council

We are delighted to introduce the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026 – 2031. This milestone initiative brings national biodiversity policy to life at the local level, rooted in the unique landscapes and rich natural heritage of County Monaghan, such as its important wetlands and community spirit.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Officer Programme, established by the Heritage Council in partnership with the County and City Management Association, has been pivotal in embedding biodiversity at the heart of local decision-making. Through funding, training and the development of networks, this programme equips local authorities with the tools to address the challenges and opportunities in biodiversity conservation. In County Monaghan, this work builds on a solid foundation laid by the Heritage Office and the Heritage Forum, whose vision and commitment paved the way for the appointment of a dedicated Biodiversity Officer in 2023.

The inclusive approach to heritage by Monaghan County Council – recognising the interdependence of natural, built, and cultural

assets – is inspiring. The collaboration between the Heritage Forum and the Biodiversity Working Group reflects a deep understanding of how people connect with their surroundings, valuing them as vibrant expressions of identity, memory, and place.

The development and delivery of a county-level biodiversity action plan serves not only to protect habitats and species but also to foster local engagement, pride, and climate resilience. The County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan embodies this ethos, drawing on community input, expert knowledge, and policy guidance to chart a course for sustainable, impactful conservation. As we face increasing environmental challenges, the implementation of this plan will be a testament to the strength of partnerships and the commitment of all involved.

The Heritage Council is proud to support Monaghan County Council, the Biodiversity Officer Patricia McCreesh, and local communities as they deliver this forward-looking and essential plan.



Virginia Teehan
Chief Executive
The Heritage Council



Dr Martina Moloney
Chairperson
The Heritage Council

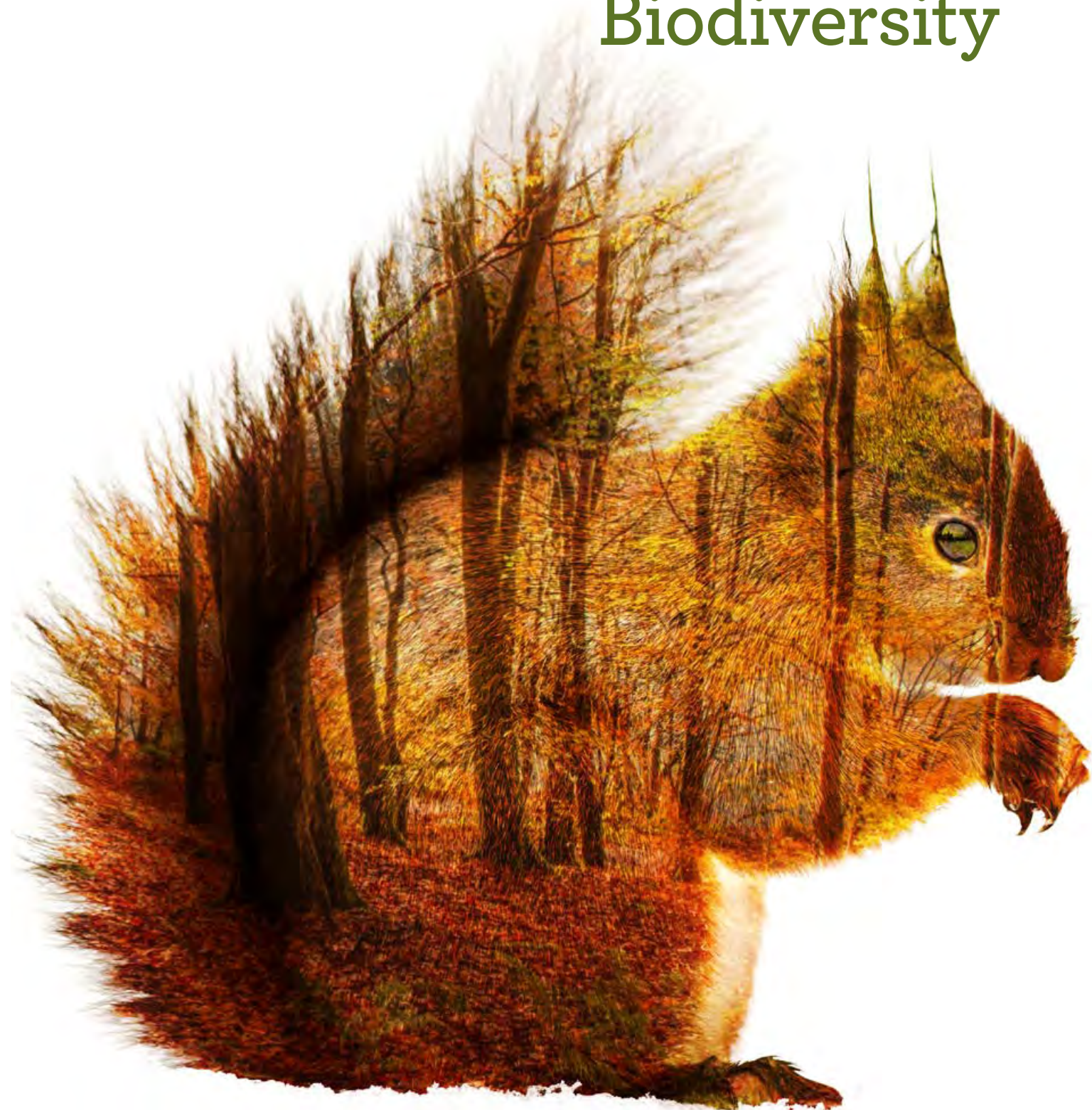
Vision

Biodiversity in Monaghan is valued, conserved and restored, ensuring that wildlife and ecosystems thrive for the benefit of current and future generations through community engagement, sustainable practices, and collaborative stewardship.



CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Biodiversity



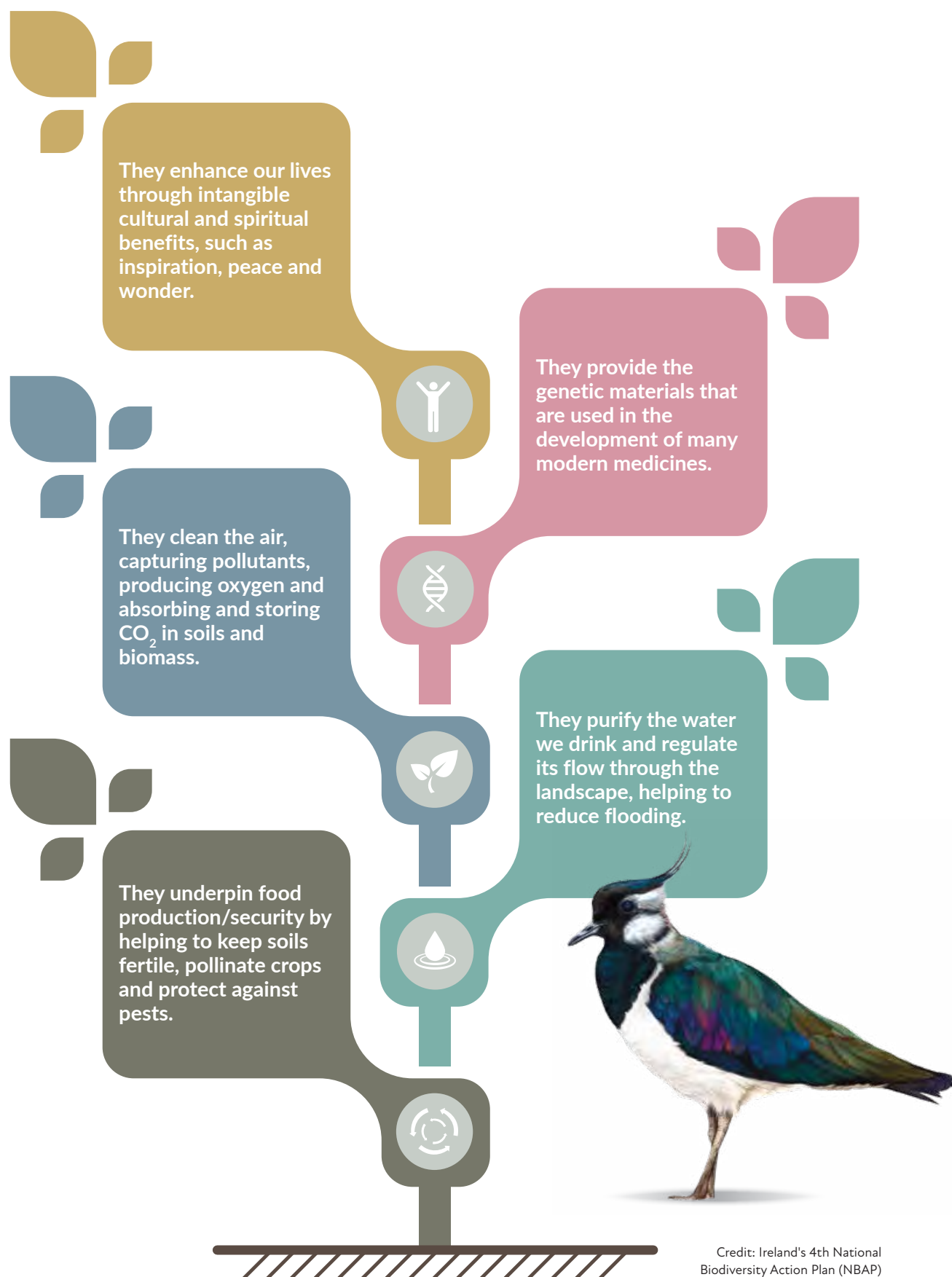
What on Earth is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of living things, and the places they live (habitats). It includes the wildflowers in a verge, the insects in a hedge, the fish and birds in our lakes and rivers, the bats over our streets at night – and the soils, woods, bogs and grasslands that support them. In Monaghan, our lakes and rivers, the Ulster Canal and its banks, our rolling drumlins, peatlands and fens, hedgerows, farmlands, woodlands, and our parks and green spaces are familiar habitats.

Biodiversity isn't only about rare species. It's also the familiar creatures and plants we see every day – from blackbirds and butterflies to dandelions and mighty oak trees. From a garden pond to a whole river catchment, all of these – and the air, water, geology and soils around them – work together as ecosystems that keep nature (and us) in balance.



We all depend on healthy ecosystems



Credit: Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)

Why is biodiversity important in County Monaghan?

Biodiversity makes Monaghan a healthier and more resilient place to live. When nature thrives, we all benefit from these free and vital functions that sustain life and are called ‘Ecosystem services’. These provide essential goods and services that have significant economic value that contribute to human wellbeing and economic prosperity.

Examples of Ecosystem Services

- **Provisioning Services:** timber, clean air, fresh water & medicinal compounds
- **Regulating Services:** soil fertility, pest control, flood mitigation, crop pollination, air purification, coastal defences, carbon storage & sequestration
- **Supporting Services:** soil creation, nutrient cycling, photosynthesis, water cycle
- **Cultural Services:** outdoor recreation areas

Nature is under pressure right across the world, but it recovers quickly when given the chance. By looking after Monaghan’s hedgerows, ponds and streams, restoring peatlands and wetlands, planting and managing native trees, and creating wildlife-friendly spaces in towns, schools, farms and gardens, we protect the everyday services nature gives us – clean water, fertile soils, pollination, carbon storage and flood protection – and we pass on a richer county to the next generation. There is also increasing evidence that both the quality and quantity of biodiversity in the green spaces around us have a huge impact on both our physical and mental wellbeing.

This Biodiversity Action Plan sets out practical steps to protect, restore and celebrate nature across Monaghan, and to make it part of everyday decisions in our homes, communities, businesses and public services. Everyone has a role to play – and every action, big or small, helps.

Certain species, known as indicator species, reflect the health of the environment – for example, flat mayflies indicate good water quality, lichens reflect clean air, and bats are sensitive to habitat change. Their decline is an early warning of wider ecosystem damage.



Understanding the global biodiversity crisis

In May 2019, Dáil Éireann declared a climate and biodiversity emergency, making Ireland one of the first countries globally to do so. Since then, national and EU reporting has continued to show that nature is under significant pressure. Ireland’s State of the Environment Report 2024 highlights that 85% of protected habitats assessed are in inadequate or bad condition, and 30% of protected species assessed are in inadequate or bad status, with many trends still moving in the wrong direction. The same assessment also reports serious declines in bird populations: 26% of regularly occurring bird species are in severe decline, with a further 37% showing moderate declines – meaning 63% of bird species are in serious trouble overall. Broader evidence cited in the report also points to steep declines among other groups: more than half of Ireland’s bee species have declined since 1980, with 30% considered threatened with extinction, and over half of native plant species are in decline. National monitoring further indicates major losses in insects, with the Irish Butterfly Monitoring Scheme reporting an overall decline of 35% in butterfly populations since 2008.

These national trends matter for County Monaghan because many of the species in decline – such as farmland birds (e.g. curlew and redshank), upland birds (e.g. hen harrier), freshwater species (e.g. the European eel and the freshwater pearl mussel), and pollinators (e.g. wild bees, including bumblebees and solitary bees) – depend on habitats that are common across the county.

Figure 1: The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Article 17 Report on Habitats Directive, NPWS, 2019



What's driving the decline – and what it means for Monaghan

Surveys and action plans carried out across County Monaghan show clear and consistent declines in both habitats and species, reflecting these wider national trends. The Monaghan Wetlands Action Plan highlights the loss, fragmentation and degradation of wetlands due to drainage, infilling, nutrient enrichment and changing land management, with impacts on lakes, fens, marshes and associated species. The Monaghan Hedgerow Appraisal Survey found that many hedgerows are in poor or moderate condition, with gaps, over-trimming and outright removal reducing their value as wildlife corridors for birds, bats and pollinators. Species-focused surveys tell a similar story: the 2023 Swift survey recorded reduced nesting opportunities linked to building changes, while the 2024 and 2025 Barn Owl surveys indicate declining occupancy and breeding success, associated with habitat loss, reduced prey availability and road mortality. Together with wider biodiversity and habitat surveys undertaken through development planning and local studies, these findings point to a gradual erosion of Monaghan's semi-natural habitats and declining populations of once-common species, underlining the need for coordinated habitat protection, restoration and better management across the county.



Key challenges and drivers of biodiversity loss in Monaghan

Biodiversity loss is rarely caused by one factor alone – pressures often interact, weakening ecosystems and making them less resilient. The key drivers in a Monaghan context include:

Habitat loss and degradation – drainage, development, land improvement, commercial peat extraction, intensive management and poorly planned works can reduce or damage wetlands, grasslands, hedgerows and other semi-natural areas.

Habitat fragmentation and loss of wildlife corridors – breaking up connected habitats makes it harder for species to move, feed and breed, especially where hedgerows, treelines and river corridors are removed or poorly managed.

Pollution – nutrient enrichment and run-off can reduce water quality and impact rivers, lakes and associated species.

Pesticides and herbicides – these can reduce insects and other food sources, with knock-on effects for birds, bats and aquatic life.

Artificial light at night (ALAN) – poorly designed lighting can disturb nocturnal wildlife and weaken ecological corridors, particularly along hedgerows and watercourses.

Invasive species – invasive plants and animals spread through soil movement, dumping and recreation; biosecurity is vital, especially for aquatic habitats (e.g., “Check–Clean–Dry”).

Climate change – changing rainfall patterns and extreme events increase stress on habitats and reduce ecosystem resilience, making existing pressures harder to manage.

Land abandonment / under-management – some semi-natural habitats depend on appropriate, low-intensity management; without it, they can become scrubbed over and lose species richness.

Recreation and amenity pressure – trampling, disturbance and infrastructure can damage sensitive habitats and disturb wildlife, especially where visitor pressure is concentrated.

Lack of knowledge, eco-anxiety or apathy – limited awareness of biodiversity value, uncertainty about what actions help, and “it won’t make a difference” attitudes can reduce reporting, community buy-in and day-to-day nature-friendly choices; this is why education and “connecting to nature” actions are a key part of Monaghan’s biodiversity planning.

Lack of funding/resources – limited staffing, budgets and long-term funding reduce capacity for surveys, enforcement, habitat management and restoration, slowing delivery of biodiversity actions and monitoring.

Opportunities for biodiversity in Monaghan

Despite the challenges, there are many meaningful and achievable opportunities to enhance biodiversity in Monaghan through better coordination, community involvement, smarter use of data, and integrating biodiversity into the management of land, water and public spaces.

Public understanding of the importance of nature is growing, as is the desire to protect and restore it. New national and EU policies bring increased support and funding for biodiversity projects. Crucially, Monaghan has active communities, farmers, landowners, schools and organisations already helping to protect and enhance local biodiversity. By building on this momentum and working in partnership, we can support nature-based solutions that benefit both wildlife and people, while strengthening the resilience of local communities and the environment.

In recent years, Monaghan County Council and partners have strengthened the county's evidence base through targeted surveys and practical projects, including the Monaghan County Swift Survey (2023), the Barn Owl Population Status and Trends Survey (2024), and participation in the Recording Irish Mayfly Conservation Status Survey (2024–2025),

supported by citizen science volunteers, particularly members of the Monaghan Wetland Forum.

The Council has complemented this growing knowledge base with public resources such as *Monaghan's Wonderful Wetlands; Community Action: A Beginner's Guide to Wetlands* (2025) in collaboration with the Community Wetlands Forum; and major botanical recording through the *Flora Book of Monaghan* (2024) by Alexis FitzGerald. Alongside research, practical projects such as the Bog Garden along the Ulster Canal Greenway, and the rewilding of Elliott's Farm in Monaghan town, demonstrate how biodiversity initiatives can create spaces for learning, community pride and nature.

These opportunities continue to grow through community engagement. Monaghan's annual Biodiversity Conference provides a platform to share local projects, hear local voices and generate new ideas, helping to turn awareness into action. This has been strengthened by the Youth Biodiversity Conference, which brings young people into the conversation through talks and hands-on activities, helping to build the next generation of nature champions in Monaghan.



A selection of recent biodiversity publications commissioned by Monaghan County Council.

CHAPTER 2

The County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan





The County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026–2031 provides a focused framework to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity across the county, with a strong emphasis on action on Council managed lands and assets and delivery through partnerships with communities, landowners, agencies and organisations. It proposes 50 targeted actions under four strategic themes: Biodiversity Audit, Conservation & Restoration, Leading by Example, and Connecting to Nature.

Key achievements delivered under the County Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategy 2020-2025

The County Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategy 2020-2025 delivered several key projects and reached key milestones which contributed significantly to achieving biodiversity objectives under the plan.

The Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF), administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, was launched during the lifetime of the plan and played a significant role in the delivery of projects along with financial support from Monaghan County Council and the Heritage Council. The following key projects and milestones were achieved during the lifetime of the strategy:

- Wetland Action Plan 2021
- Hedgerow Appraisal Survey 2021
- Signed as an Official Council Partner of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2020
- Appointment of a Biodiversity Officer within Monaghan County Council in partnership with the Heritage Council
- Publication of 'Flora of Monaghan Book'
- Publication of 'Monaghan's Wonderful Wetlands' Book
- Launch of 'Magic Under Monaghan' peatlands film for children
- Monaghan Barn Owl Surveys 2024 & 2025
- Monaghan Swift Survey 2024 & 2025
- Hedgerow training for council staff
- Launch of perpetual Fearghal Duffy Award for most prolific county recorder.

Developing the Biodiversity Action Plan

The County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026–2031 provides a framework to guide biodiversity conservation and restoration over the lifetime of the Plan, with the aim of halting biodiversity loss across the county. The Plan has undergone Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment screening and has been developed in line with Heritage Council guidance (Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines) and relevant international, national, and local conservation strategies.

Preparation of this plan commenced in 2024 and was informed by a series of key stages, including research, policy review, consultation, and extensive stakeholder engagement.

SUMMER 2024

Monaghan Biodiversity Working Group established, bringing together stakeholders from across the county.

SPRING 2025

Evidence review: Submissions collated and reviewed, including biodiversity feedback from the Climate Action Plan consultation, to inform objectives and actions.

SUMMER 2025

Internal briefings: Key consultation themes presented to Municipal Districts (MDs) and the Senior Management Team (SMT).

WINTER 2025

Governance review: Draft Plan presented to the Environment and Climate SPC.

WINTER 2025

Draft consultation: Draft Plan published on the MCC Consultation Portal, with AA and SEA screening reports, followed by review of submissions and further SPC engagement and Climate Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

SPRING 2024

Youth engagement: Youth Biodiversity Conference held to capture young people's views for the draft Plan.

SUMMER 2024

Biodiversity Discussion Paper published; pre-draft public consultation held, including five library clinics. Feedback and a targeted questionnaire used to guide the Plan.

SPRING 2026

Adoption and publication: presented to the Corporate Policy Group (CPG); adopted by Elected Members at Full Council in April 2026; final Plan published.

County Monaghan Biodiversity Working Group (BWG)

At the outset of the Biodiversity Action Plan process in July 2024, Monaghan County Council invited a range of relevant stakeholders to join the County Monaghan Biodiversity Working Group (BWG). Membership includes representatives from the farming sector, state agencies, community groups, county recorders, environmental non-governmental organisations (NGO's), Public Participation Network (PPN) members, and biodiversity specialists. The BWG operates as a working group under the well-established Monaghan Heritage Forum and meets several times each year. The composition of the working group is outlined in Appendix 2.

The BWG provides a structured forum for communication, collaboration and knowledge-sharing, supporting best practice and building awareness through networking and information exchange. It encourages the development of innovative, partnership-based initiatives to restore, enhance and protect biodiversity across County Monaghan, while strengthening community involvement through awareness-raising, training and other capacity-building supports.

Figure 2: Biodiversity Working Group Members



Statutory instruments and strategic policies guiding the Biodiversity Action Plan

Since the publication of the County Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Plan 2020–2025, the policy landscape has advanced significantly, with a much stronger focus internationally, nationally and locally on taking urgent action for nature. At international level, the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan is guided by the direction set under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, especially the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which sets clear global goals and targets for halting and reversing biodiversity loss this decade. At European level, it aligns with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which aims to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030 and strengthens expectations around protecting and restoring habitats and species. It also reflects the wider EU push to protect rivers, lakes and groundwater through the Water Framework Directive, which supports catchment-based work that benefits freshwater biodiversity. At national level, the Plan is

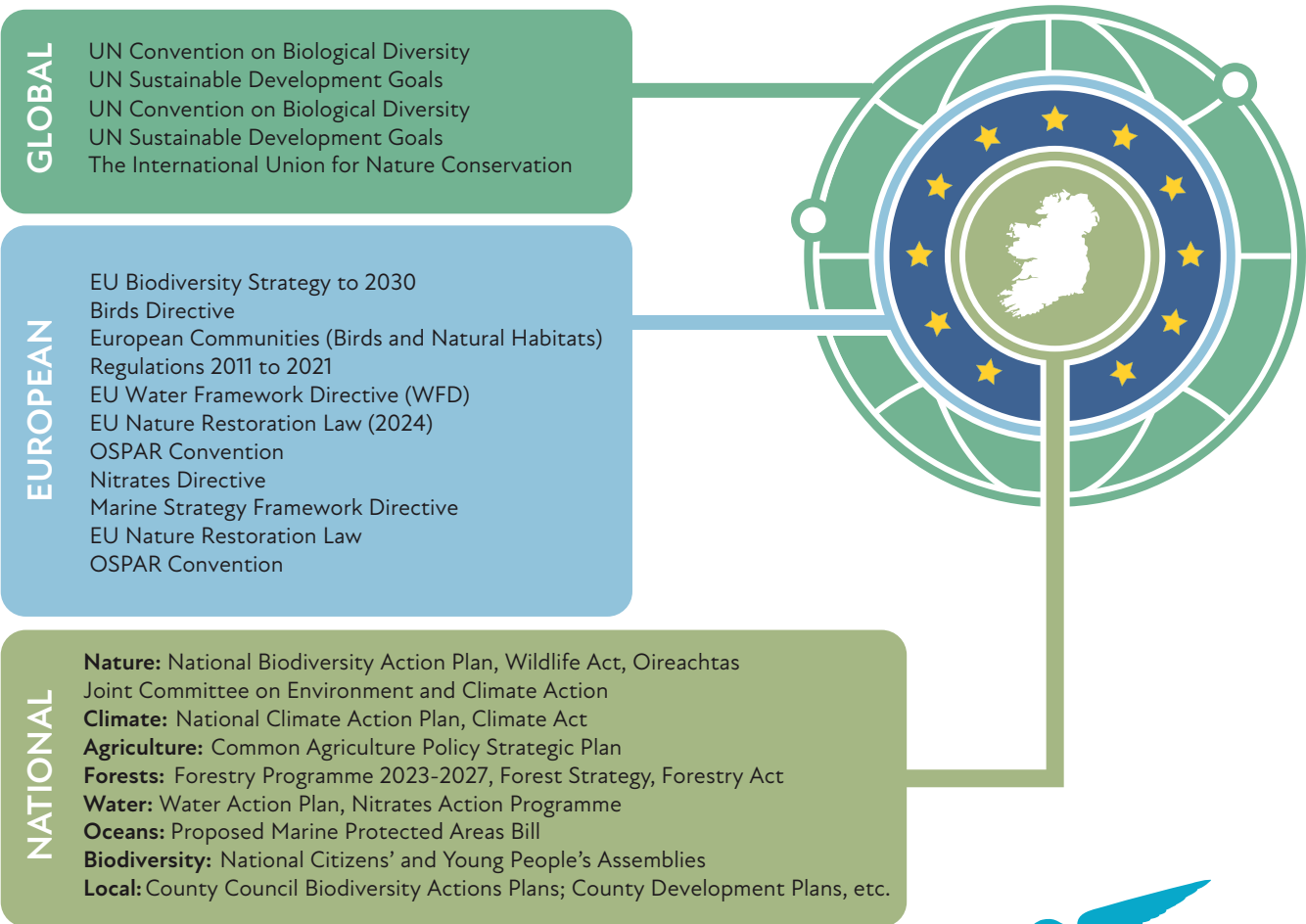
shaped by Ireland’s 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030, which sets the national agenda and emphasises a whole-of-society approach; it also notes the strengthened public sector role in delivering biodiversity action. National climate and water policy are also important, particularly the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (which frames the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity rich economy) and the River Basin Management Plan 2022–2027 (Water Action Plan 2024), which highlights water-quality measures that deliver biodiversity co-benefits. Locally, the Plan is anchored in the Council’s main strategy documents – especially the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025–2031 and the Monaghan County Council Climate Action Plan 2024–2029 – so that biodiversity actions are reflected in day-to-day planning, land management and climate delivery across the county.

The Biodiversity Action Plan is also guided by key legislation that protects nature and ensures environmental impacts are properly considered, as outlined in Figure 3. Summaries of, and links to, each relevant policy and piece of legislation are provided in the appendices.

The EU Nature Restoration Law (2024) – Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 – shifts the focus from protecting nature to actively restoring degraded ecosystems across Europe. It aims for restoration measures to cover at least 20% of EU land and sea by 2030 and to be in place

for all ecosystems needing restoration by 2050, with binding targets for habitats and species. It also requires action to reverse pollinator declines by 2030 (with monitoring), achieve no net loss of urban green space and tree cover by 2030 with increases thereafter, and improve river connectivity, supporting the ambition to restore 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers by 2030. For County Monaghan, it guides the Biodiversity Action Plan towards measurable restoration projects and reporting aligned with national restoration planning.

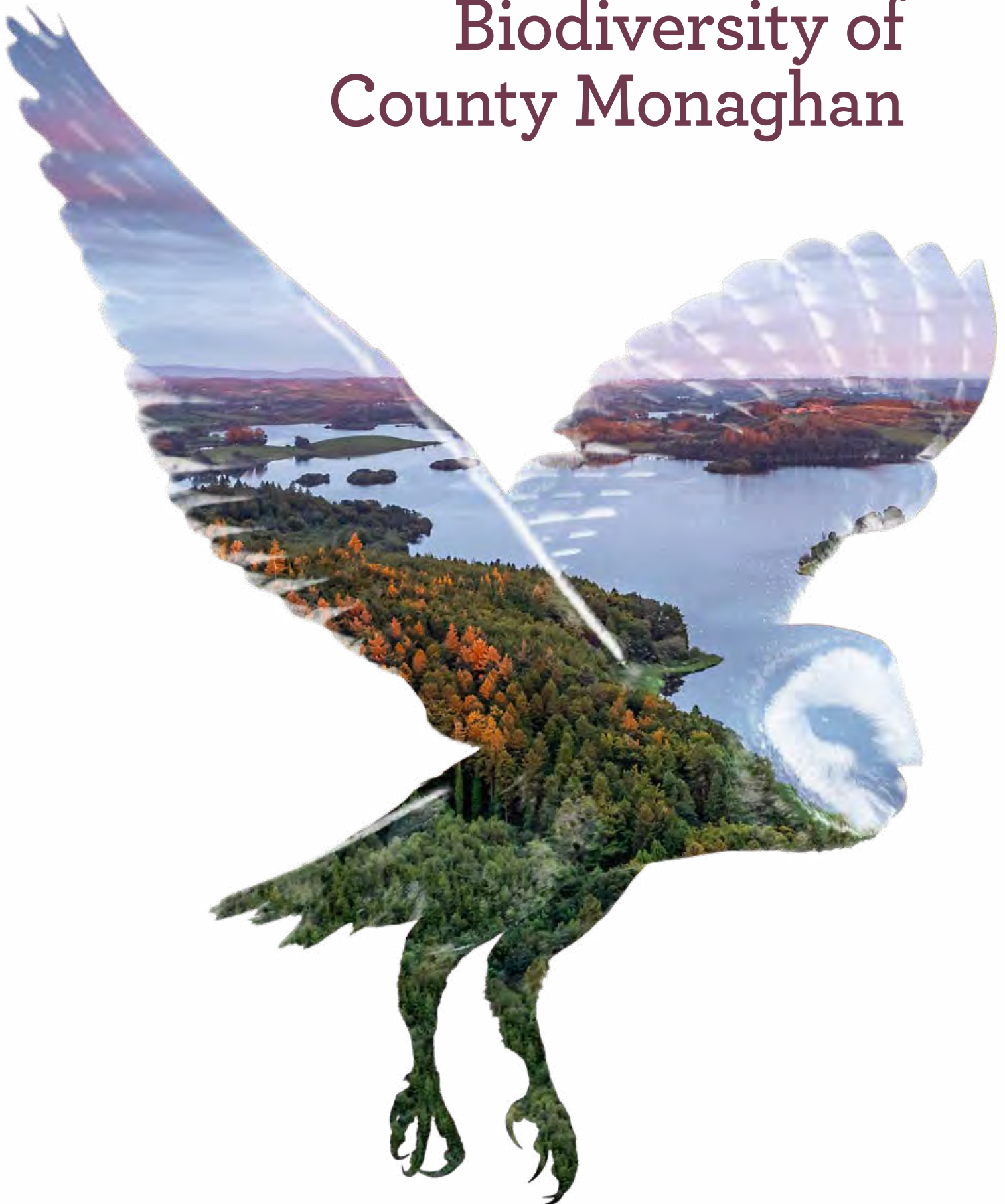
Figure 3: Environmental policies, plans and programmes that influence biodiversity



Source: Adapted from NPWS, 2024

CHAPTER 3

Biodiversity of County Monaghan



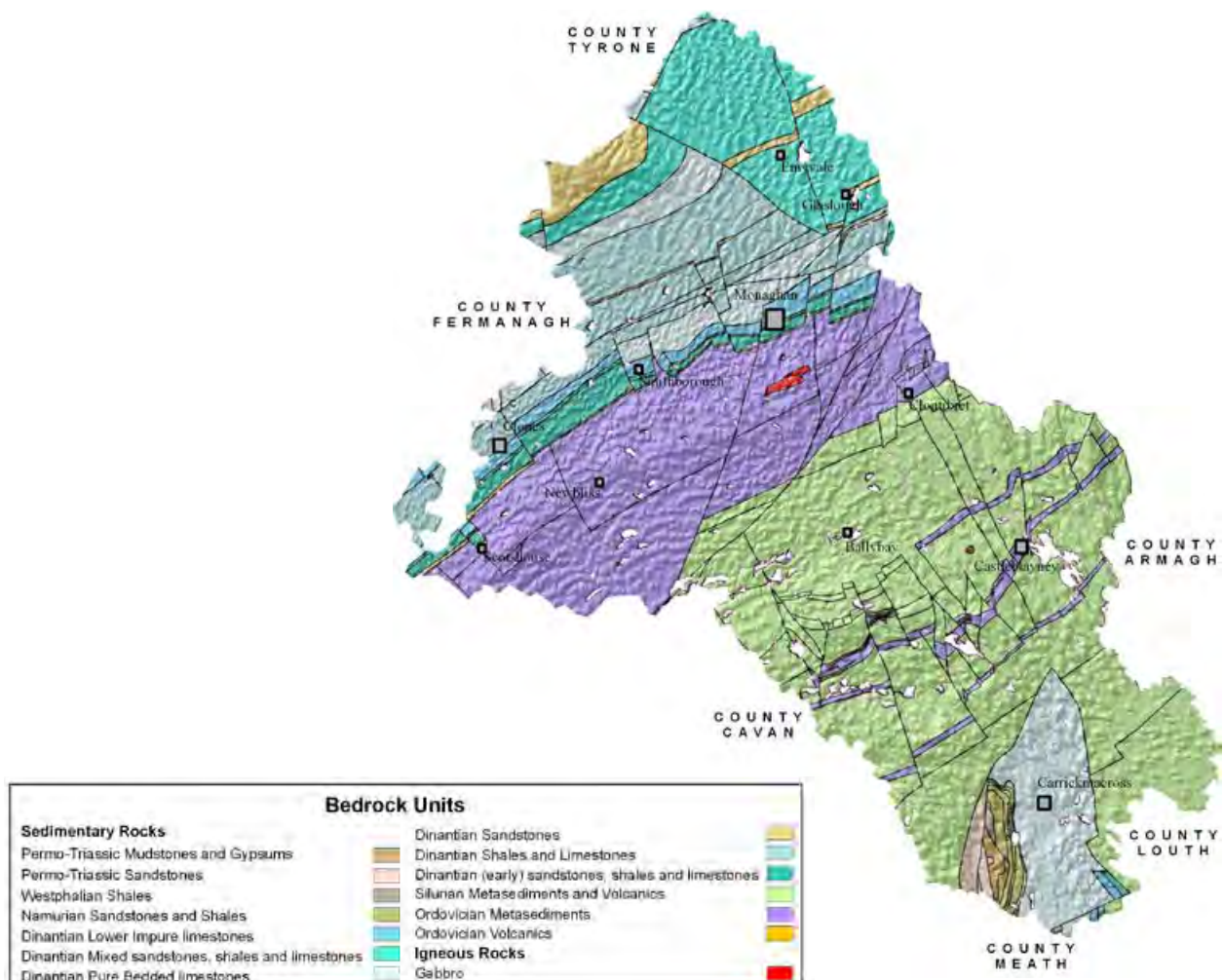
Monaghan's geology

County Monaghan's biodiversity is closely linked to its physical landscape and geological history, which have created a rich variety of soils, landforms and habitats. The county lies within Ireland's northeast drumlin belt, giving rise to a predominantly low-lying, gently rolling countryside, with higher ground limited mainly to the southern slopes of Sliah Beagh in the northwest. This varied topography contributes to a patchwork of wetlands, grasslands and farmland habitats across the county.

Monaghan's underlying geology reflects a long and complex history. Much of the central and southern areas are underlain by Ordovician and Silurian mudstones and sandstones, while Carboniferous rocks in the north record transitions from ancient river systems to tropical seas and delta environments. In the southeast,

faulting has preserved younger rocks, including limestones, sandstones, mudstones, thin coal seams and gypsum-rich red beds, most notably at Knocknacran.

Across much of the county, the bedrock is masked by thick glacial deposits from the last Ice Age, which shaped the rounded drumlins and created numerous lakes and wet hollows, such as Lough Muckno. Limestone geology in south Monaghan has produced karst features, including sinkholes and underground drainage, influencing groundwater movement and wetland formation, while the ribbed moraines near Scotshouse form a glacial landscape of international significance. Together, these features underpin the diversity of habitats found in Monaghan. To recognise their intrinsic value, twenty sites of local geological importance are designated as County Geological Sites in the County Development Plan (listed in Appendix 7).



Notable Monaghan ecosystems

Wetlands

Wetlands are among the most important and sensitive habitats in County Monaghan, supporting a wide range of species and playing a critical role in water management and climate regulation. These include raised and blanket bogs, fens, marshes, and wet meadows, many of which are remnants of once more extensive wetland systems. Monaghan contains some of the finest examples of transition mire fens and mesotrophic inter drumlin lakes that occur in Ireland, for example Killyneill Fen.

Although much depleted, substantial areas of blanket bog still remain on the high ground of Sliabh Beagh and Mullyash Hill. The best remaining examples of remnant (largely inactive) raised bog currently known in the county occur within the wider Kilmore Lough area in the northwest of the county. Wetlands provide breeding and feeding grounds for birds like the curlew, snipe, and heron, as well as amphibians, dragonflies, and a variety of aquatic plants. They act as natural water filters and help reduce flooding by absorbing excess rainfall. However, many wetlands in Monaghan have been damaged by drainage, commercial peat extraction, and land-use changes. Protecting and restoring these habitats is key to reversing biodiversity loss and ensuring ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change.





The topography, hydrology, climate, and soils in County Monaghan are well suited to wetland habitat formation and wetlands originally covered an estimated 18.5% of the county. It is estimated that 10% of Monaghan's wetlands were lost between 2000 and 2006. Similar significant declines in wetland habitats are occurring on a global scale, despite a growing awareness and understanding of the importance of these habitats.

Species that depend on wetlands, such as migratory wintering birds, including Barnacle Goose and Whooper Swan, or Common Frog and Smooth Newt, are specifically adapted to wet conditions and not found elsewhere. Extensive work has been undertaken over the past twenty years in identifying and characterising the ecological character of wetlands throughout County Monaghan. The outcome of this work has produced a valuable dataset containing information on 710 wetlands, of which 205 have been subject to field survey. This information has formed the basis of the Wetland Action Plan for the county.

The County Monaghan Wetland Forum (MWF) was established in 2021 as an action under the County Monaghan Wetland Action Plan to encourage practical conservation and enhancement measures at wetland sites. Membership includes individuals and organisations involved in the ownership, management or stewardship of wetlands. The Forum provides an active platform to promote the importance and value of wetlands, share local knowledge and experiences, and build capacity through networking and support, helping to protect and improve wetlands across County Monaghan.





Freshwater Habitats

County Monaghan's freshwater environment includes a dense network of drumlin lakes, rivers and streams, and the Ulster Canal, all of which support important aquatic and riverside wildlife and provide connections through the wider landscape. Freshwater habitats are under pressure from pollution, invasive species, and altered water flows linked to drainage and development. Protecting water quality, restoring river habitats, and maintaining natural processes are therefore central to safeguarding freshwater

biodiversity. Conservation and restoration work in Monaghan has been supported by Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), community initiatives, and targeted projects including European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) and other funding schemes. Monaghan County Council has also supported freshwater-related research, including the National Mayfly Survey of Ireland and the Monaghan Otter Survey.



Lakes

A land of lakes and wetlands, Monaghan has over 250 areas of open water, covering around 2,000 hectares. Its gently rolling drumlin landscape and naturally wet ground mean that hundreds of loughs, small lakes and other wetlands have been able to form and thrive here. The largest lakes, including Lough Muckno, Lough Major, Lough Emy and Lough Egish provide habitat for fish such as pike and perch, and support waterbirds including swans, kingfishers and great crested grebes. They also contribute to local recreation and wellbeing and form key elements of Monaghan's blue-green network. In more low-lying, base-rich regions of the county, a special type of lake has developed. 'Marl' loughs occur in the southeast (in the vicinity of Carrickmacross) and west (in the vicinity of Clones), in areas with underlying limestone bedrock geology. The most notable of the marl loughs is the Kilroosky Lough Cluster, just north of Clones, which has been designated as the only Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in Co. Monaghan.

Many lakes in the county are used as abstraction sources for drinking water, so there is a comprehensive programme of monitoring carried out by EPA, Monaghan County Council, IFI, LAWPRO, and individual Group Water schemes.

Rivers and streams

Several significant river catchments flow through the county. The widest and most substantial river in the county is the Finn River, which originates on Slieve Beagh and flows along the Monaghan-Fermanagh border south and west, where it eventually drains into the Upper Lough Erne system further to the west in Co. Fermanagh. The River Blackwater drains parts of north and east Monaghan. In the south-east, the River Fane and River Glyde flow towards County Louth, with both rivers contributing to cross-county ecological connectivity. The Fane originates at Lough Ross on the Monaghan/ Armagh border and flows to Dundalk Bay, while the Glyde flows to the sea at Annagassan; salmon and trout have been recorded in the Glyde.





These rivers and streams support a wide range of species. Otters, freshwater mussels and diverse aquatic invertebrates depend on clean water and intact river habitats. Unfragmented rivers are especially important for salmon and trout, which migrate upstream to spawn on clean gravels – such as in tributaries of the Mountain Water. Aquatic invertebrates including mayflies, stoneflies and caddisfly larvae are widely used as indicators of river health: generally, the greater their diversity, the better the water quality.

Monaghan is also considered a stronghold for the protected white-clawed crayfish, a qualifying interest of the Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC, though numbers are known to be declining. Specialist river birds such as dipper, grey wagtail and kingfisher can be found along suitable stretches.

Overall water quality in County Monaghan remains unsatisfactory, with around half of monitored freshwaters failing to meet their environmental objectives. However, the upper reaches of two rivers – the Scotstown River and the Mountain Water – continue to achieve high ecological status and have consistently received

the coveted ‘Blue Dot’ designation. The Scotstown River was the focus of an intensive ecological assessment in 2024 (*Scotstown Blue Dot River Study 2024*), an award-winning collaborative project between Tydavnet Group Water Scheme, Monaghan County Council, LAWPRO, IFI, Acres Breifne, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council ABC Council and environmental consultants Flynn Furney. The study aimed to improve understanding of the river’s ecology, while a strong community engagement programme helped to raise awareness, build local knowledge and foster pride in protecting this high-quality, unspoiled habitat.

Turloughs

Turloughs occur in a small limestone area in southeast Monaghan near Carrickmacross, making them some of the most northeasterly examples in Ireland. Key sites include Ballyloughan Turloughs, Kilmactrasna Turloughs and Moylan Lough, which flood in winter and shrink back in summer, supporting a mix of open-water and shoreline wetland plants.

Peatlands

Monaghan's peatlands are a defining part of the county's upland landscape, with blanket bog the most characteristic type. These bogs develop where high rainfall and waterlogged ground slow decomposition, creating deep peat that acts as a long-term carbon store and helps regulate water in the wider catchment. They also support specialist bog plants, including carnivorous species such as sundews, butterworts and bladderworts, which have evolved to cope with nutrient-poor conditions by trapping small insects and other prey. A key "bogbuilder" is Sphagnum moss, which is closely associated with healthy blanket bog vegetation and helps maintain the wet conditions needed for peat to form.

Sliabh Beagh is Monaghan's flagship peatland: an extensive cross-border upland complex that supports some of the best blanket bog habitats in Ireland. On the Monaghan side, it is designated as the Sliabh Beagh Special Protection Area (SPA), with Hen Harrier listed as the qualifying interest, reflecting the site's importance for this protected raptor and the

habitats it depends on. The Eshbrack bog area is also recognised nationally as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA). Like many peatlands, parts of Monaghan's bogs have been affected by drainage and commercial turf cutting, which lowers water tables and reduces habitat quality; restoration therefore focuses on rewetting – repairing bog hydrology so the peatland can recover. In support of this, Monaghan County Council is currently embarking on a €4m PeacePlus project at Sliabh Beagh, aiming to restore 608ha of peatland alongside hen harrier management, as part of the wider cross-border PeacePlus Nature programme.

The Ulster Canal and the Blueway/Greenway

Part of the Ulster Canal (constructed 1825–1841) passes through County Monaghan. Although the canal was abandoned in 1931, restoration works – including the Clones to Clonfad stretch and a new marina – were completed in 2024 as part of a wider project to restore 14.5 km between Clones and Lough Erne. This revived Blueway, complemented by the





Greenway through Monaghan town, provides opportunities for people to experience the canal as a long-established wildlife corridor within the landscape.

Farmland and grasslands

Agricultural land has the potential to be a major resource for biodiversity. Landowners, as custodians of the countryside, can deliver real gains for nature by making small, practical changes that create or improve habitat, while also supporting farm sustainability and long-term profitability. In Monaghan, this opportunity is especially significant because farms are typically small and closely connected to one another, with recent CSO data showing that Monaghan has the smallest average farm size in Ireland at just 22.4 hectares (*Farm Structure Survey 2023 - Central Statistics Office*).

With relatively minor adjustments, farming practices can be tailored to benefit wildlife without undermining productive capacity. Simple measures can make a meaningful difference, such as enhancing hedgerow management, reducing pesticide and herbicide use where feasible, introducing multispecies swards, installing bird/bat/barn owl boxes where appropriate, and leaving small low-yield areas – often described as a “hare’s corner” – to develop naturally.

Monaghan is also represented in the Farming for Nature ambassador network, which shares examples of whole-farm approaches that support biodiversity while maintaining viable farm systems. The role of farmers in maintaining high nature value (HNV) farmland and semi-natural grasslands is particularly important. These grasslands can support diverse wildflower



communities, including species such as ragged robin and devil's bit scabious. Devil's bit scabious is the larval food plant of the marsh fritillary butterfly, a species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive and classified as Vulnerable in Ireland's Red List of Irish butterflies.

Grasslands in County Monaghan, especially species rich meadows and low-input pastures, are important habitats for pollinators, birds and small mammals. Grassland character and species richness are shaped by soil type, underlying geology, local conditions and management. Semi-natural calcareous grasslands in Monaghan are quite scarce and are largely restricted to the lowland limestone regions of the county in the southeast and west.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are one of the most widespread habitats in County Monaghan, with an estimated 16,000 hectares of hedgerows, treelines, individual trees and scrub/non-forest woodland. Many of Monaghan's hedges – especially in the Monaghan, Dartrey and Farney baronies

– were widely planted in the early to mid 1800s, often by estate managers using shrubs such as hawthorn, blackthorn and holly, while some townland-boundary hedgerows are likely much older and can be especially valuable for biodiversity. Diversity in any hedge is influenced not only by age but also by soil and wetness, the presence of nearby semi-natural habitats (notably woodlands), and how the hedge has been managed over time.

The recently published 'Flora of Monaghan' by Alexis FitzGerald records that Monaghan is particularly notable for its bramble (*Rubus*) diversity: brambles and dog-roses are almost universal in our hedges, and an exceptional 80 *Rubus* species have been recorded in the county, highlighting the quality of this habitat. The Monaghan Hedgerow Appraisal Survey (2021) reported a significant decline in hedgerow condition and extent. Only 12% of surveyed hedgerows were found to be in favourable condition, and the estimated annual loss rate was almost 1%, reported as three times the national average. Pressures such as ash dieback (in a county where ash is a dominant hedgerow tree) and excessive or poorly timed cutting can



quickly reduce hedge condition – removing flowers and berries, weakening structure, and creating gaps. These findings highlight the need for active, sustainable hedgerow management, including sympathetic cutting regimes, maintaining banks and verges, filling gaps, and replanting with diverse, disease-resilient native species. Support through agri-environment schemes, guidance and local initiatives will be essential to protect, restore and strengthen this vital green corridor across County Monaghan. Monaghan County Council's collaboration with Hedgerows Ireland, Ireland's leading hedgerow organisation, through initiatives such as the Elliott's Farm Rewilding Project demonstrates our strong commitment to the long-term, sustainable management of these vital habitats.

Woodlands

Virtually no large, ancient forests survive in County Monaghan today. The most substantial remaining blocks of semi-natural deciduous and mixed woodland are often associated with older demesnes and estates, including Glaslough Estate, Hilton Demesne, Dartrey Demesne, Lough Bawn Estate and Lough Fea Estate, where historical planting has created a varied mix of native, planted and long-established naturalised trees. Monaghan's drumlin landscape influences woodland character with oak-dominated woodland more typical on drier higher ground, while wetter hollows and lake margins favour willow, alder and birch. Some of the best surviving wet, lough-edge woodland (fen-carr) occurs on estate lands, notably around Dromore Lough in the former Dawson/Dartrey lands (Dartrey Demesne), where rare sedges have been recorded alongside veteran spindle.

Despite historic forest losses and the rise of commercial conifer planting from the mid 20th century onwards, Monaghan's modern woodlands remain important habitats. They range from small patches of native broadleaf

woodland to larger managed forests, supporting birds, mammals, insects, fungi and a rich ground flora in places, while also providing carbon storage, water regulation and valued spaces for recreation and wellbeing. Wet woodlands can be seen at Lough Muckno, and riparian woodland along the Dromore River provides cover and perching habitat for species such as kingfisher.

Several sites combine biodiversity with landscape and cultural interest. Rossmore Forest Park retains estate features including giant redwoods and a 460 m yew avenue; Derrygorry Forest (north of Monaghan town) was planted under the People's Millennium Forests initiative; Dartrey Forest near Cootehill on the Cavan border includes older oak trees on Black Island and is noted for native red squirrel; Castleshane Forest on the edge of Castleshane village features a scenic waterfall; and Tom Young's Wood on the southern edge of Monaghan town, beside the Old Ulster Canal, is known for species such as otter and jay and for its woodland-wetland transition.

Unfortunately, invasive shrubs like cherry laurel and rhododendron impact many of County Monaghan's woodland habitats by outcompeting native plants and hindering tree regeneration by blocking all sunlight to the ground layer of the woodland.



Urban habitats

Urban areas across County Monaghan support a surprisingly rich range of wildlife and can play an important role in the county's wider ecological network. Key habitats in towns and villages include private gardens, parks and other public green spaces, cemeteries, institutional lands, railway embankments, canals and canal-side walls, urban meadows, and built features such as bridges, old stone walls and other structures. Even derelict or vacant sites – though often temporary – can provide valuable refuge for wildflowers and insects. To maximise these benefits, biodiversity and nature-based solutions should be built into new and refurbished development from the start, and urban green spaces managed in more wildlife-friendly ways, such as reduced mowing, pollinator-focused planting and greater structural diversity.

Community-led initiatives are central to supporting urban nature, with many towns already benefiting from the work of Tidy Towns and local groups. Gardens can act as stepping stones for wildlife and offer daily chances for people to connect with nature and support wellbeing. Built structures can also provide nesting and roosting sites – swifts may use crevices in buildings and bridges, bats can exploit sheltered cracks and voids, and older walls and buildings may host lichens, mosses and ferns. Allotments and community gardens can be especially valuable where herbicides are avoided and a variety of plants are allowed to grow. Practical actions include creating long-flowering meadows, joining pollinator initiatives (e.g., the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan), and simple recording such as FIT counts, alongside pond creation, native tree and shrub planting, and installing bird or bat boxes where suitable. There are also strong opportunities to “design in” biodiversity through swift bricks, bee bricks, green roofs, rain gardens and greener streetscapes, strengthening ecological corridors while improving local environmental quality and climate resilience.





The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030 highlights the vital role that Local Authorities play in conserving biodiversity and coordinating action at a local level. A County Biodiversity Action Plan provides a focused response to the specific biodiversity issues facing Monaghan.

SPOTLIGHT ON SOME OF OUR PROTECTED SPECIES



Otter

Lutra lutra

The otter is protected under the Irish Wildlife Acts (1976 & 2000) and is also listed on Annexes II and IV of the EU Habitats Directive. Despite this, it is in poor conservation status across Ireland. Otter are recorded in many wetlands in Monaghan.

Marsh Fritillary butterfly

Euphydryas aurinia

This attractive butterfly is the only Irish insect listed on Annex II and is present in the county. The caterpillar larval stage can be found within silken webs on the leaves of the foodplant Devil's-bit Scabious, *Succisa pratensis*. Habitat destruction is one of the main threats to this species.

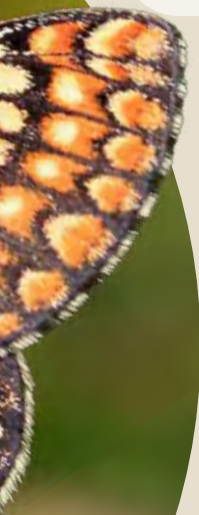




Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Hen harriers are famous for their mating ritual called the Sky Dance - the male and female perform aerial acrobatics, this can be observed at Sliabh Beagh in Springtime. Males are pale with black wing tips, females are larger and brown. Loss of habitat and illegal persecution are key factors in their decline.



White-clawed Crayfish

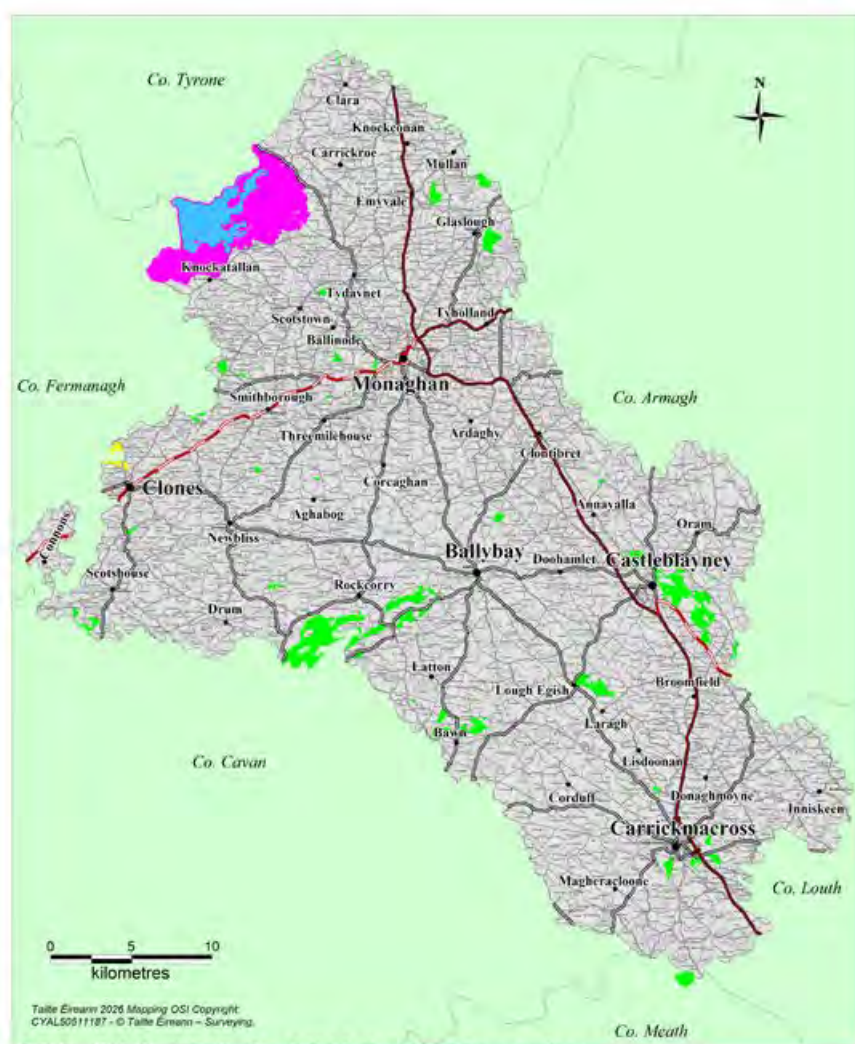
Austropotamobius pallipes Crayfish are freshwater relatives of marine lobsters. They are found in limestone rivers and lakes in Co. Monaghan. They are listed on Annex II and Annex V of the Habitats Directive and the species is protected in Ireland under the Wildlife Acts. They are under threat from introduced species and a disease called crayfish plague.



Sites of nature conservation significance in County Monaghan

European designated sites (SACs and SPAs)

County Monaghan has a very small Natura 2000 network compared with other counties in the Republic of Ireland, with just one SPA and one SAC currently designated- Slieve Beagh SPA (004167) and Killoosky Lough Cluster SAC (001786). For that reason, Monaghan's Biodiversity Action Plan places strong emphasis on protecting both designated sites and other high-value areas that have no formal designation, because these places act as core refuges for nature and stepping stones that help wildlife recover and spread through the wider landscape. This requires active management, monitoring and close collaboration with landowners and communities to maintain (and improve) site condition over time.



SPA, SAC, NHA & pNHA in Co Monaghan

Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| National Primary Route | Special Area of Conservation (SAC) |
| National Secondary Route | - Burdautien & Summerhill Loughs |
| Regional Roads | - Killoosky & Dummis Loughs |
| Towns/Villages | - Ramages Lough |
| | Special Protection Area (SPA) |
| | - Slieve Beagh SPA - Hen Harriers |
| | Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) |
| | - Eshbrack Bog, Slieve Beagh |
| | Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) |





Importantly, the limited extent of formal Natura 2000 coverage does not reflect the quality of Monaghan's biodiversity. The county supports habitats and species of European importance, including Annex I habitats such as natural eutrophic lakes, transition mires and quaking bogs. There are noteworthy examples of calcareous fens, semi-natural dry grasslands, alluvial forests and even turloughs in the southeast of the county, amongst many other noteworthy habitats which are more than worthy of European protection. In other words, Monaghan contains biodiversity of a standard that merits strong protection and careful long-term stewardship, even where sites are not yet designated at European level.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated for the presence of habitats and/or species of conservation importance which are listed under Annex I and Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and are legally protected under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC (Site Code: 001786)

Kilroosky Lough Cluster is Monaghan's only designated SAC and is a cross-border protected site located about 2 km northwest of Clones, made up of three separate areas containing calcium-rich, clean (oligomesotrophic) marl lakes and their associated fen and wetland habitats. It is designated under the EU Habitats Directive for Annex I habitats – Hard Water Lakes (3140), Alkaline Fens (7230) and priority Cladium Fens (7210*) – and for the Annex II species White-clawed Crayfish (1092), an indicator of high water quality. The cluster includes Kilroosky, Burdautien, Summerhill and Dummy's Loughs, noted for stonewort-rich waters and extensive calcicole plant communities, alongside species-rich fens supporting notable plants (including orchids) and wet woodland elements. Overall, the site is of high conservation value because these habitat types are rare and highly sensitive to pollution and support protected species.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

Ireland is legally obliged under the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the protection of listed rare and vulnerable bird species, regularly occurring migratory bird species and wetlands, especially those of international importance.

Sliabh Beagh (SPA) (Site code 004167)

Sliabh Beagh SPA (004167) is Monaghan's only designated SPA, and comprises a large upland area that stretches from County Monaghan into Northern Ireland. It's made up of a mix of blanket bog and heath, forestry plantations, and rough grassland, with a few small lakes dotted through the site. The higher ground includes well-developed bog vegetation such as heathers, cotton-grasses and bog mosses, while some older field areas support wetter grassland.

The site is designated under the EU Birds Directive primarily for the Hen Harrier, and is recognised as one of the species' key strongholds, supported by the combination

of open bog/heath and forestry. Hen Harriers often nest in young conifer plantations or tall heather and hunt over open bog, heath and forestry edges for small birds and mammals.

In addition to the Hen Harrier, the area also supports Merlin and Red Grouse, with occasional sightings of Peregrine Falcons all of which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Overall, Sliabh Beagh SPA is a key site for bird conservation, offering essential nesting and foraging habitats for several important species.

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 makes legal provision for the designation and protection of a national network of Natural Heritage Areas. These areas are important as habitats and in some cases for species of plants and animals of conservation importance whose habitats need protection. There is currently just one fully designated Natural Heritage Area (NHA) in Co. Monaghan, namely Eshbrack Bog NHA.



Eshbrack Bog NHA (Site Code 001603)

Eshbrack Bog NHA (Site Code 001603) is a large area of upland blanket bog about 8 km northwest of Scotstown, and connected to the wider Slieve Beagh uplands across the border. The site includes extensive bog vegetation (heathers, deer sedge, cottongrasses, crowberry and bog mosses), with cranberry common in places, plus bog pools and lakes alongside a wider mix of heath, acid grassland, wet grassland, small patches of scrub (hazel and willow) and wet flushes. Eshbrack is especially important because it holds the last relatively intact bog habitat in County Monaghan and supports several Red Data Book bird species (including Greenland whitefronted goose, hen harrier, merlin, golden plover and red grouse), but it is still under pressure from commercial peat cutting, drainage and forestry impacts (including the spread of self-seeded conifers). As blanket bog is a globally rare and sensitive habitat, it needs careful long-term management to protect what remains.

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) are sites identified by the National Parks and Wildlife Service as being of national importance for biodiversity, geology or geomorphology, but which have not yet been formally designated in law. However, they are recognised in planning and licensing decisions and receive limited protection through planning policy, agri-environment schemes and forestry controls.

In County Monaghan, pNHAs mainly reflect the county's distinctive drumlin landscape and include a wide range of habitats such as lakes, fens, marshes, wet woodlands, bogs, transition mires and calcareous grasslands. Many of these sites are centred on inter-drumlin lakes and associated wetlands, which are particularly

important for plants, invertebrates and wintering birds, making pNHAs a key element of biodiversity protection and land-use planning in the county. These sites are listed in Appendix 5.

Wildfowl Sanctuaries

Wildfowl Sanctuaries are used to protect certain ducks, geese and wader species (e.g. Wigeon, Brent Goose, Golden Plover, Lapwing) from hunting. There are three Wildfowl Sanctuaries in County Monaghan : Dartrey/Fairfield (WFS-04 CN/MN), Lough Ramor (WFS-03 CN/MN), and Emy Lough (WFS-42). These sanctuaries are areas that have been excluded from the 'Open Season Order' so that game birds can rest and feed undisturbed.

Sites of biodiversity importance

Other important habitats in County Monaghan are Sites of Biodiversity Importance (SBIs). These sites, while not formally designated, play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity at a local level, and are protected through the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan 2025-2031. Sites of Biodiversity Importance are areas that have been identified through Monaghan County Council surveys and encompass diverse habitats such as wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, and peatlands, and/or sites which host locally rare or significant numbers of different species. Data from ongoing and future biodiversity surveys will continue to inform the selection of SBIs and it is critical to the overall ecological network and biodiversity value of County Monaghan that these sites are identified, valued, and conserved. Sites of Biodiversity Importance in the county are listed in Appendix 8.



There is a process underway at the national level to identify and map County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs). These will be non-designated sites of county and regional level importance that contribute significantly to the ecological framework of a city or county. CBAs will be distinct from, but may be located adjacent to, formally designated sites. They will be identified using strict scientific and evidence-based criteria, encompassing diverse habitats such as wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, and peatlands, and/or sites which host locally rare or significant numbers of different species. Linear networks, and corridors such as hedgerows and treelines will not be considered a CBA. Some of Monaghan's existing County Sites of Biodiversity Importance may qualify as CBAs. It is the aim that these sites will be mapped and protected through the policies and objectives of the county development plan

Trees of special amenity value

Within the County Development Plan, Monaghan County Council has identified trees/groups of trees in towns and the wider rural area that are of special amenity value. Where appropriate, the Council may use the Tree Preservation Guidelines (1994) to make Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), which prohibit the removal or damage of protected trees. At present, no TPOs are in place in County Monaghan. Trees of Special Amenity Value in Monaghan are listed in Appendix 6.

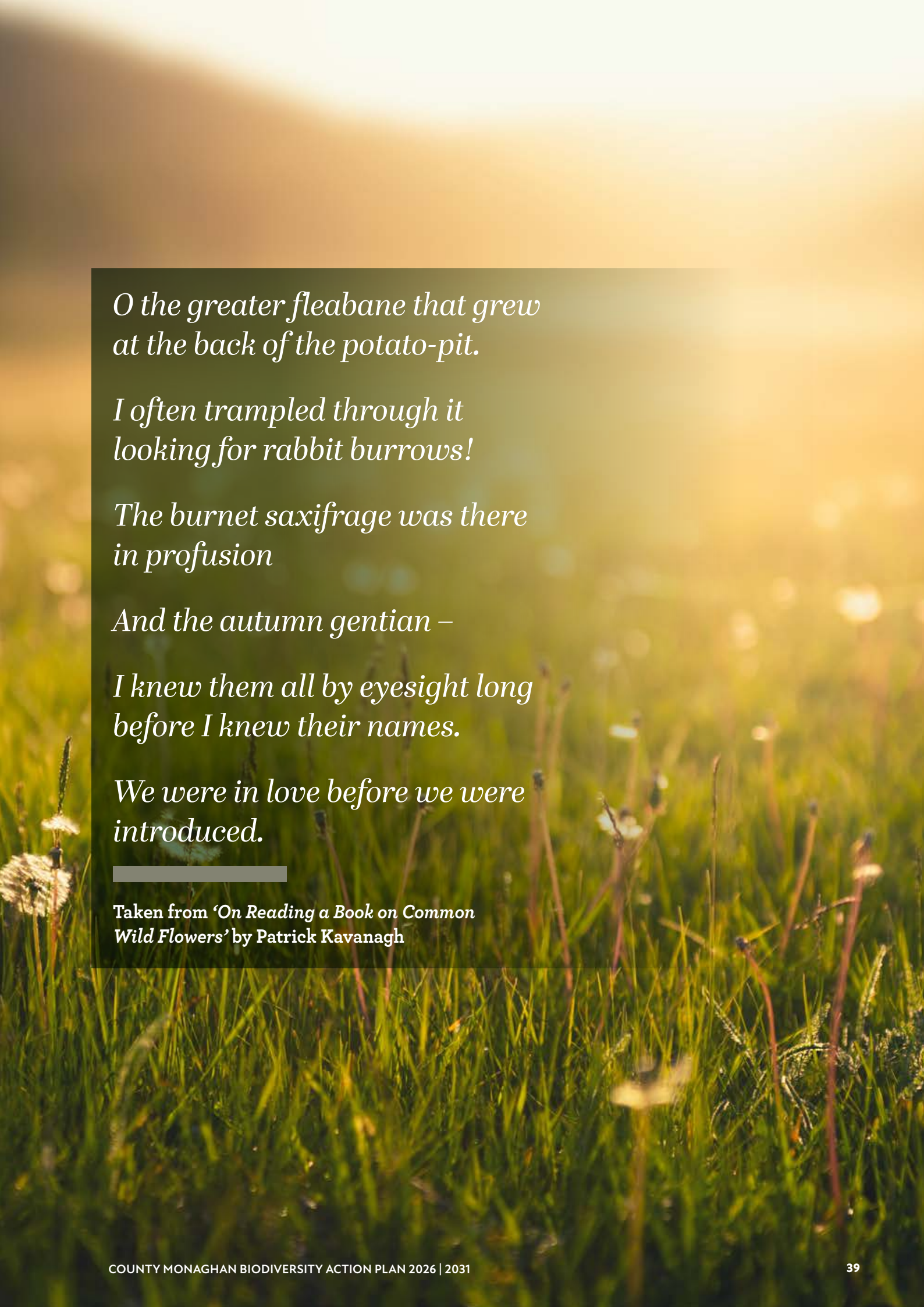
Sites of primary and secondary amenity

The County Development Plan designates Amenity Areas to protect landscapes of scenic, recreational and tourism value. Areas of Primary Amenity Value are the county's most outstanding landscapes and receive the highest level of protection. Development is only permitted where it can be clearly shown that the landscape character, natural beauty and environmental qualities will not be harmed, and even normally exempt development requires planning permission. In Monaghan, these areas are Sliabh Beagh and Bragan Mountain and Lough Muckno and its environs. Areas of Secondary Amenity Value include other important scenic landscapes, such as river valleys, uplands, woodlands and lakes. These areas are valued for community use, recreation and tourism, and development is managed to ensure it is sensitively designed and maintains the overall landscape character and visual quality. A full list of Amenity Sites are listed in Appendix 6.

Sites of notable botanical interest

The comprehensive '*Flora of County Monaghan*' published in 2025 by renowned botanist Alexis FitzGerald details 31 sites of particular botanical interest in the county (Pg 150). These comprise a range of sites containing nationally or regionally rare or notable plants.





*O the greater fleabane that grew
at the back of the potato-pit.*

*I often trampled through it
looking for rabbit burrows!*

*The burnet saxifrage was there
in profusion*

And the autumn gentian –

*I knew them all by eyesight long
before I knew their names.*

*We were in love before we were
introduced.*

**Taken from ‘On Reading a Book on Common
Wild Flowers’ by Patrick Kavanagh**

CASE STUDY 1

Monaghan's Youth Biodiversity Conference

Biodiversity loss affects everyone, yet children and young people are too often left out of decisions that will shape their futures. Children have a fundamental right to grow up in healthy, safe and clean environments, so it is essential that their voices are included in planning for nature. This approach aligns with the Aarhus Convention, which supports access to environmental information and public participation in environmental decision making, helping to build awareness, ownership and stewardship from an early age.

To address the gap in youth participation, Monaghan County Council's Biodiversity Officer organised the county's first Youth Biodiversity Conference in May 2024. The event brought together 60 students and their teachers from ten primary and post-primary schools across Monaghan, creating an inclusive space for young people to engage directly with biodiversity issues in their own communities.

Inspired by Ireland's first Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss (2022), the conference helped participants learn about Monaghan's natural environment, discuss the issues that matter to them, and contribute ideas to the County Biodiversity Action Plan. Activities included a "graffiti wall" for drawings and messages, hands-on workshops making bird feeders and bee bombs, and an educational birds of prey display. Feedback from schools was overwhelmingly positive, with students reporting increased understanding of local biodiversity and a strong sense that their views were valued and made a real contribution to the plan.



CASE STUDY 2

Elliott's Farm Rewilding Project

Monaghan County Council, led by its Biodiversity Officer and Horticulturist, is delivering a five year project to rewild Elliott's Farm, a 2.63 hectare parcel on the Clones Road donated by Dr Charles Elliott for public use in the 1960s. This underused grazing ground will be restored as a flagship urban-edge biodiversity site. The core aim is to create species rich semi natural grassland by allowing native plants to regenerate from the soil seed bank, providing habitat for pollinators and wider wildlife. A smaller companion site at St Mary's Boys' School will be managed alongside it to form a meaningful urban ecological corridor.

A second strand is Monaghan's first Community Seed Bank, safeguarding local genetic stock and supplying Monaghan provenance native seed for restoration projects countywide. Priorities include restoring hedgerows through laying, coppicing and replanting; using conservation grazing with native breeds such as Old Irish Goats or Dexter cattle to control grasses and encourage wildflowers; and providing learning opportunities through managed workshops and events. Delivered with Monaghan Tidy Towns, St Mary's Boys' School and Hedgerows Ireland, the project will strengthen Monaghan's green network and, by year five, create a thriving meadow, a source of native seed and a living classroom for conservation for all.



CASE STUDY 3

Monaghan's Annual Biodiversity Conferences

Over the past three years, Monaghan's Biodiversity Conference series—delivered during Science Week—has become a valuable annual forum where communities, landowners, schools, practitioners and agencies can meet, share local knowledge and translate concern about biodiversity loss into practical action. These events are important because the scale of biodiversity decline can feel overwhelming at local level; the conference helps people understand what's happening in Monaghan, learn from existing solutions, and connect with others who can support delivery on the ground. This collaborative approach is captured in Monaghan County Council Chief Executive Robert Burns' message: "We should be that strong community partner. We don't have to do everything ourselves, we just need to work with others who are trying to do the right thing."

The first conference (Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan town, 18 November 2023) launched as a countywide showcase of local nature projects, covering Monaghan's wetlands, pollinator action, rewilding in towns and villages, and the launch of the county Swift Report. The second conference (Ballybay Wetlands Centre, 16 November 2024) brought the discussion into a flagship wetland setting, again highlighting local projects and encouraging broad public participation. The third conference (Sliabh Beagh Hotel, Knockatallon, 8 November 2025) expanded into upland and emerging pressures, with sessions on marsh fritillary conservation, otter research, invasive species, wildfire risk, citizen science, breeding waders and dark skies—showing the conference's growing role in building capacity and momentum for action.

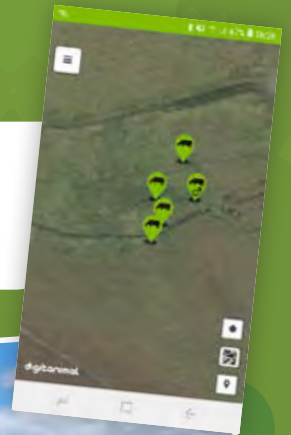


CASE STUDY 4

Sliabh Beagh Conservation Grazing – Dexters for Fire Risk & Biodiversity

As part of the Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) project, Monaghan County Council partnered in a conservation grazing trial on the blanket bog of Sliabh Beagh to tackle two linked challenges: wildfire risk and biodiversity decline. Blanket bogs can ignite during prolonged dry spells, so reducing the build-up of rank grasses and scrub is essential to protect these sensitive habitats and maintain their ecological function. The trial used Dexter cattle, a hardy native breed well suited to marginal uplands. Their selective, low intensity grazing breaks up dense vegetation and lowers fuel loads, helping to reduce the likelihood and potential severity of wildfires. At the same time, grazing creates a varied “mosaic” of vegetation structures, which can increase plant diversity and improve habitat for invertebrates and birds, including ground-nesting species in this hen harrier landscape.

Local farmers were central to the project’s success, particularly Farming for Nature Ambassador Pat McKenna. Pat runs a Dexter suckler herd (c. 90–100 cattle) on 60 acres at the foothills of Sliabh Beagh, finishing calves for beef and selling directly to restaurants and local customers. His high-nature value approach—no chemical fertiliser, late cutting in a curlew sensitive area, a traditional hay meadow, broadleaf planting and long managed hedgerows—is captured in his view: “I see my farm as a habitat.” Building on this momentum, Monaghan County Council is now advancing an ambitious €4m PeacePlus Nature Programme peatland restoration project on Sliabh Beagh, part of a wider €20.8m cross border initiative, restoring 608 hectares to strengthen biodiversity, carbon storage and water regulation and to support the re-establishment of hen harrier in north Monaghan.



CASE STUDY 5

Making Space for Swifts: Building Nature into Modern Design

The Common Swift (*Apus apus*) is the only swift species that comes to Ireland to breed. It nests in colonies, usually arriving in late April/early May and leaving again in late August once chicks have fledged, before migrating to Africa for the winter. Swifts are extraordinary birds: they can eat, drink and even sleep on the wing, landing only to breed between May and August. They feed on airborne insects such as midges, aphids and tiny spiders. In Ireland the species is Red-listed, so protecting nesting places is especially important in towns where swifts often rely on older buildings and traditional nest sites that can be lost through redevelopment. In Monaghan, the need to safeguard local colonies was reinforced by the county-wide Swift Survey carried out in 2023 by BirdWatch Ireland. This context was particularly relevant during the development of the Monaghan Peace Campus – an iconic peacebuilding landmark on the north side of Monaghan town – designed to promote unity, inclusivity and collaboration and providing state-of-the-art, affordable multi-use community spaces, a youth zone, café area, the town library and County Monaghan Museum. Swifts had traditionally nested in the area now occupied by the Peace Campus, and throughout the build Monaghan County Council's Biodiversity Officer worked closely and constructively with the project team to ensure the new development continued to support this vulnerable species. The swift boxes are discreet and well integrated: they were custom-made to suit the spaces available and colour-matched to the brickwork. The result speaks for itself, a beautifully designed building which does not compromise on its biodiversity obligations to a red-listed bird species.



CASE STUDY 6

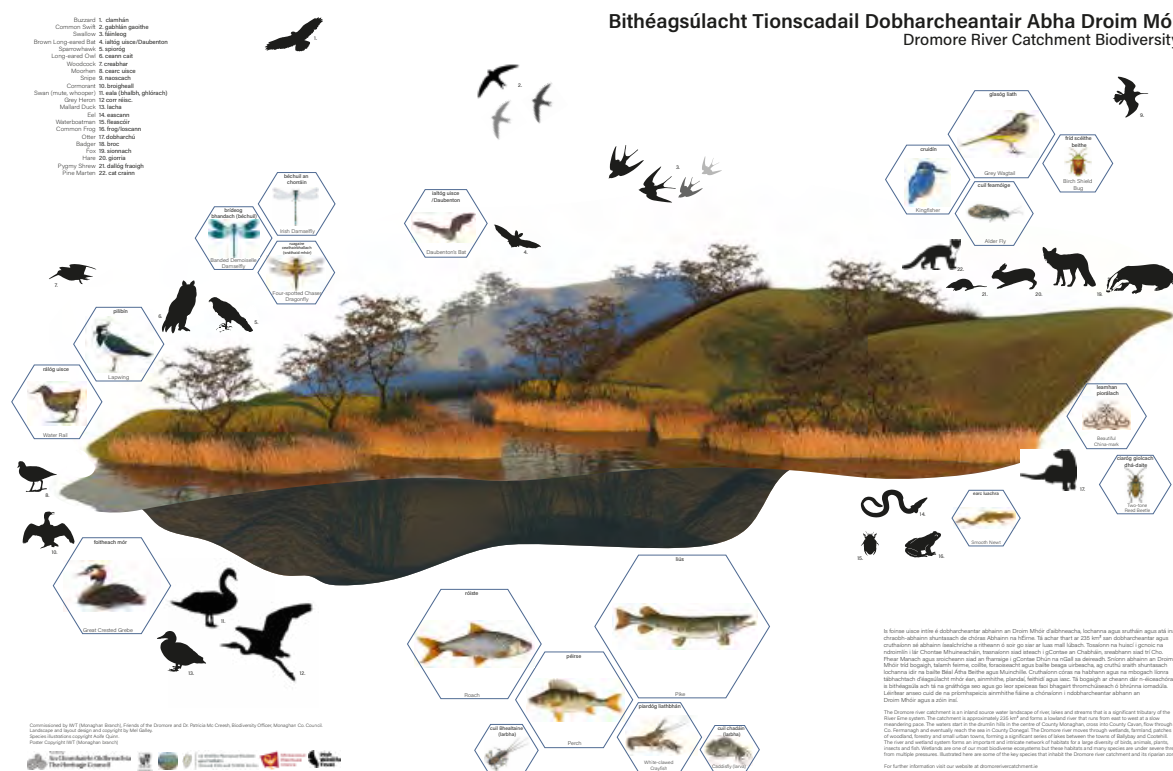
The Dromore Mapping Project

The Dromore Mapping Project began when a local interest group realised accurate maps of the Dromore River system didn't exist. Online GIS layers contained major errors (mislabelled inlets/outlets and missing features), limiting recreation, conservation and water management. Friends of the Dromore River and the Monaghan Branch of the Irish Wildlife Trust with support from Monaghan County Council Biodiversity Officer, partnered to produce a ground-truthed map of the Dromore sub-catchment, enriched with biodiversity records, habitats and water-quality pressures. With €25k secured through the NPWS Local Biodiversity Action Fund and €25k match funding from the Heritage Council, two research assistants (GIS and visualisation) were hired to deliver an interactive digital database, a printed map and an innovative 3D wooden tabletop topographical model of the catchment (a first in Ireland). Community volunteers provided vital



“boots-on-the-ground” verification – walking long reaches of rivers and streams, correcting datasets and recording wildlife – while volunteer admin support helped deliver on time and on budget.

The project leaves a lasting legacy: stronger local knowledge and pride; safer canoeing and riverside access; identification of nutrient run-off hotspots and priority restoration sites to guide water-quality improvements; engaging education tools for schools and communities; and better evidence for land-use planning, river restoration and nature connectivity. The approach is already being replicated in the Annalee catchment, showing a scalable, community-driven model for biodiversity and water management.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



CHAPTER 4

Objectives and Actions of the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031



The actions within this plan present a strategic framework to safeguard and enhance Monaghan's diversity. Structured around four key pillars, the plan outlines specific objectives and actionable steps aimed at fostering biodiversity conservation, community engagement, and sustainable land management. By aligning local initiatives with national biodiversity goals, the plan seeks to create a resilient ecological network that supports both environmental and community well-being.





Theme 1 Biodiversity audit

Aim

Support and strengthen our database to conserve, manage and enhance biodiversity within the county through data collection, mapping and research



Theme 2 Conservation, restoration and resilience

Aim

Deliver actions which aim to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity and to reverse biodiversity loss at a county-wide level by 2031



Theme 3 Leading by example

Aim

Promote and integrate biodiversity conservation into decision-making processes and operations through policy, best practice and procedures.



Theme 4 Connecting to nature

Aim

Enhance collaboration among all people adopting a whole-of-society approach to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity within the county.



Theme 1: Biodiversity audit

To deliver effective and well-targeted biodiversity action, Monaghan needs a robust understanding of species and habitat distribution, as well as habitat condition and extent. Reliable data helps us focus effort where it matters most – so that priorities can be identified, actions can be targeted, and clear objectives can be set to halt declines and support recovery. Achieving this requires continued collaboration with key partners, including the National Biodiversity Data Centre, Monaghan County Council GIS capacity, local wildlife organisations and recorders, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Key priorities under this theme:

- Compile and improve data on species and habitats of conservation concern in County Monaghan
- Map priority species and habitats to support evidence-based decision-making across Monaghan County Council functions
- Develop a countywide ecological network of key sites and linkages to protect and enhance wildlife corridors

Objective 1: Strengthen the knowledge base through targeted surveying and monitoring

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
1.1 Complete a county-wide Biodiversity Audit	Publish a comprehensive biodiversity audit report using existing surveys to establish baseline data on habitats and species; produce relevant GIS layers	Audit completed and publicly available; number of habitats and species documented	5B; 5C	Biodiversity; GIS; NPWS; NBDC
1.2 Identify gaps in species/habitat records	Commission relevant surveys/projects to address knowledge gaps and improve understanding of Monaghan's biodiversity	Number of new surveys completed; number of new species/habitat records added	5A;5B	Biodiversity; BWI; BCI; BWG; IFI; NPWS; NBDC
1.3 Identify and map County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)	Assist in the identification and mapping of County Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) according to Heritage Council guidelines, to support existing, and future County Development Plan policies and objectives	Number of CBAs mapped and validated; GIS layers integrated into planning systems	2A;2B; HCLO 3; HCLO 8; HCLO 14-16	Biodiversity; Planning; GIS; HC; NPWS
1.4 Develop targeted Habitat and Species Action Plans	Finalize and publish action plans for priority habitats and species	Number of action plans developed; number of actions implemented	2A;2E	Biodiversity; Planning; GIS; NPWS
1.5 Develop an Ecological Network Map	Produce a county-wide ecological network map to inform green and blue infrastructure	Map completed and used in planning decisions; number of wildlife corridors identified	2B	Biodiversity; MCC all depts; NGO's; LAWPRO; NWPS
1.6 Centralise biodiversity data for planning and decision-making	Launch a digital biodiversity data portal accessible to MCC departments and relevant stakeholders	Portal operational; frequency of data updates	5B	Biodiversity; GIS; NBDC



Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
1.7 Develop and implement an Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Management Plan	Publish a comprehensive IAS audit report using existing surveys to establish baseline data on species, location and extent; produce relevant GIS layers	Plan adopted; number of IAS sites managed or eradicated annually	2G; ISO 1/ ISP 1	Biodiversity; NPWS; GIS
1.8 Develop and implement a MCC Tree and Hedgerow Strategy	Publish strategy which sets out the approach for protection, planting, management and promotion of trees and hedgerows in Monaghan, to include a viable policy for hedgerow and tree maintenance	Strategy published; number of actions completed	2B; NEGI 2; WP 1 / TWP 2	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Roads;



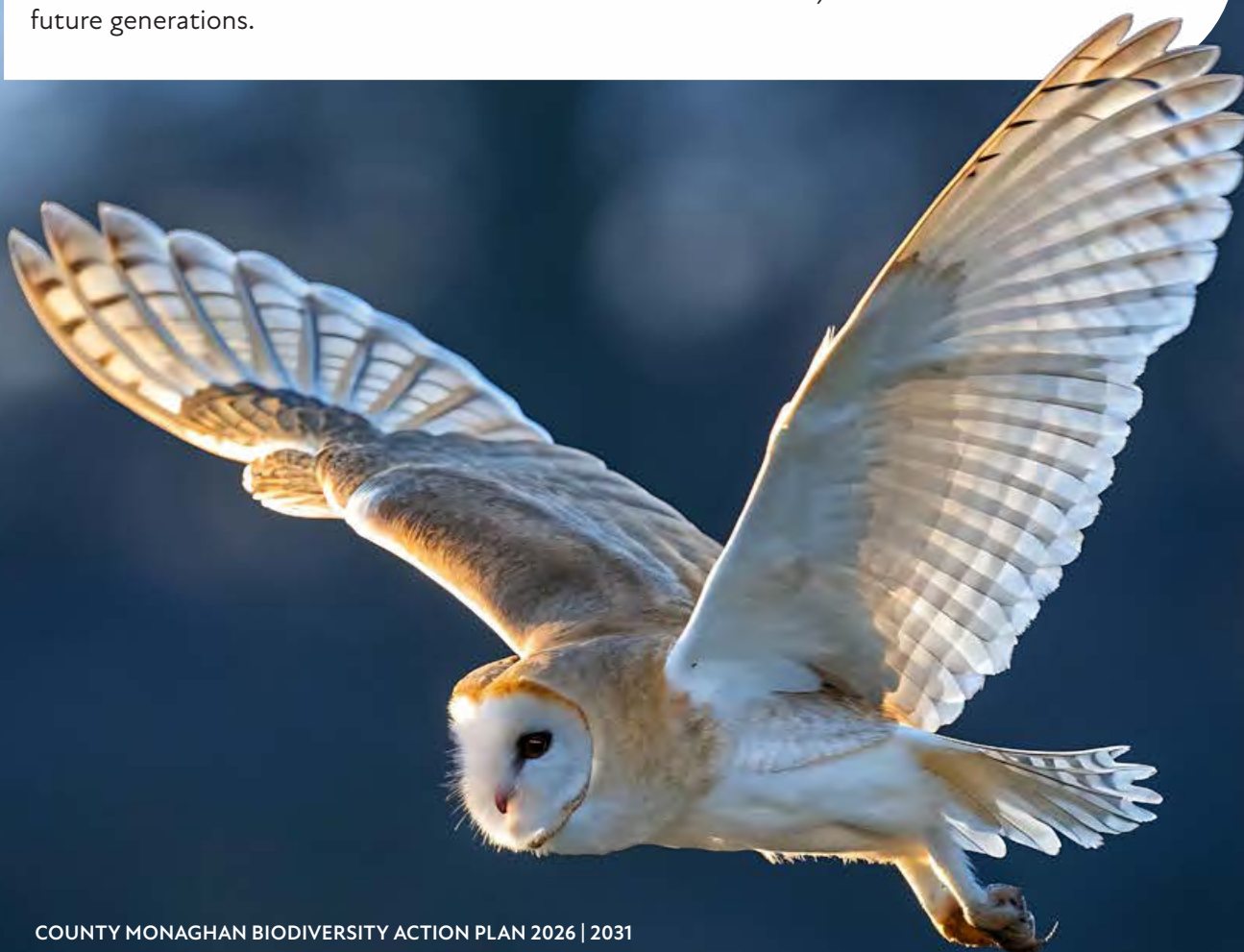


Theme 2: Conservation, restoration and resilience

The second theme deals with protecting Monaghan's biodiversity and ecosystems, restoring areas that have been degraded, and ensuring resilience against future challenges such as climate change, invasive species, and habitat fragmentation. Healthy ecosystems provide essential services – clean water, carbon storage, flood regulation, and pollination – that benefit both nature and people. By focusing on conservation and restoration, Monaghan can safeguard its unique landscapes and species for future generations.

Key priorities under this theme:

- Deliver national and local biodiversity actions (including 4th NBAP local authority actions).
- Protect and restore key habitats and species (Sliabh Beagh SAC, wetlands, pNHAs, swifts, bats).
- Improve landscape, water and climate resilience (hedgerows, farm/public land best practice, rivers/lakes incl. Lough Muckno).



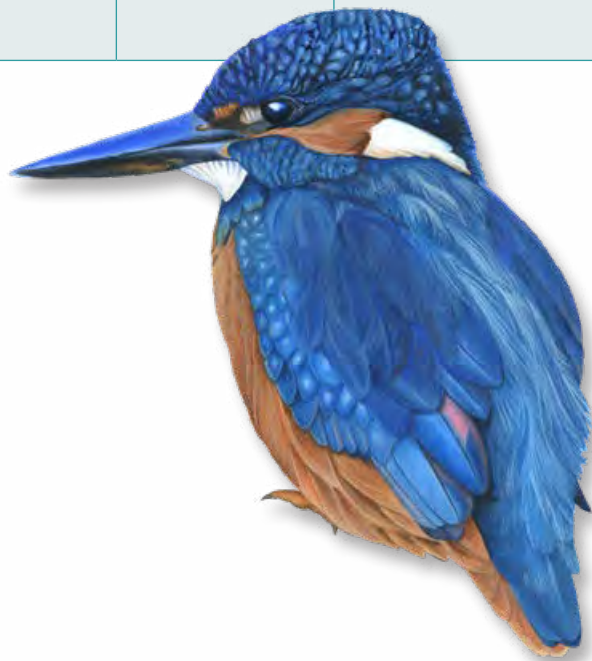
Objective: Protect, restore and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems in Monaghan

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
2.1 Implement Local Authority actions from the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan	Implement relevant actions annually through collaboration with MCC sections; Complete annual biodiversity duty report	Annual Biodiversity Duty report submitted to NPWS	1B9, 1C5, 1C6; NEGI 2; HCLSO 1	Biodiversity; MCC all Sections; NPWS
2.2 Support Sliabh Beagh SAC Conservation Management Plan	Collaborate with NPWS and relevant partners for peatland restoration, invasive species management, species and habitat conservation, and wildfire control	Area of peatland restored; number of fire control measures implemented; IAS sites treated	2A3, 2A4; NEGI 6; HCLO 2; HCLP 1; HCLo 11	Biodiversity; NPWS; RBCT; Truagh; IFA; landowners; Cross-border stakeholders
2.3 Develop Elliott's Farm as exemplar biodiversity site for landowners and farmers	Launch pilot project with hedgerow restoration, conservation grazing, semi natural grassland restoration and seed collection	Extent of hedgerows managed; biodiversity indicators improved	3A2; NEGI 5	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Hedgerows Ireland; TT; Schools
2.4 Implement Monaghan Wetland Action Plan	Continue to implement actions in order of priority in collaboration with stakeholders; Launch pilot wetland restoration project in partnership with Monaghan Wetland Forum	Project initiated; area restored; number of actions implemented	2B1, 2B2; NEGI 8; HCLO 4; WLP 1-3	Biodiversity; LAWPRO; MWF; IFI; NPWS; CWF; landowners; TT
2.5 Support Water Framework Directive initiatives	Work with MCC Env Section and stakeholders to support initiatives that contribute to the restoration of waterbodies e.g. fish migration, Blue Dot rivers	Number of measures completed	2B3; NEGI 2, NEGI 13, NEGI 14	Biodiversity; Env. Section; EPA; LAWPRO; UI; IFI; NPWS; RBCT

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
2.6 Facilitate Monaghan's Biodiversity Working Group as a function of the Heritage Forum	Convene quarterly meetings and publish annual progress report on implementation and review of the MCC Biodiversity Action Plan (2025-2031)	Number of meetings held; annual report published; stakeholder participation; report quarterly to the Heritage Forum	1C1, 1C3; NEGI 2;	Biodiversity; BWG; HC
2.7 Implement Monaghan Hedgerow Survey recommendations	Liaise with landowners, farmers, contractors, communities and relevant stakeholders to create awareness and retain/plant/manage hedgerows for biodiversity & climate action	Length of hedgerows planted/maintained; use of native provenance; number of training/awareness events	3B1; WP 1/ TWP 2	Biodiversity; Hedgerows Ireland; Planning; Roads; TT; landowners; Teagasc;
2.8 Support implementation of the Lough Muckno Biodiversity Report	In collaboration with stakeholders, implement the recommendations arising, particularly with regard to Annex 1 habitat	Number of actions implemented; biodiversity indicators monitored	2A5	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Env. Section; TT; landowners; NGO's
2.9 Raise awareness of plant and animal diseases (e.g. Ash dieback, crayfish plague etc)	Deliver public awareness campaigns and training sessions and promote biosecurity measures	Number of events held; biosecurity materials distributed	4A2; ISO 1/ ISP 1	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Env. Section; TT; NGOs
2.10 Fund surveys for rare or threatened species	Expand efforts to monitor and conserve species listed in the Red List or protected under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives by funding targeted ecological surveys e.g. barn owl, marsh fritillary, red squirrel, white-clawed crayfish etc	Number of surveys completed; new records added to database	2C1, 2C2	Biodiversity; Europe Direct; MID; NPWS; HC;

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
2.11 Survey and assess pNHAs	Complete ecological assessments for pNHAs to better understand these sites and their role as biodiversity reservoirs	Number of pNHAs surveyed; condition reports published	2A1; NEGI 9; HCLO 2	Biodiversity; NPWS
2.12 Champion red-listed swifts (<i>Apus apus</i>) and other vulnerable birds in Monaghan (e.g. swallows, sand martin, house marten etc)	Protect existing swift (and other bird) nest sites; establish new sites; request bricks/boxes as part of new suitable developments; monitor populations	Number of nests installed	AC3; HCLO 3	Biodiversity; BWI; TT; NPWS
2.13 Protect and enhance bat populations	Implement targeted actions to protect roosting sites, enhance foraging habitats, and raise public awareness; ensure development projects consider appropriate lighting and habitat protection measures	Number of boxes installed; bat activity recorded; species diversity	2C4; HCLO 3	Biodiversity; BCI; TT; NPWS
2.14 Collaborate with Biodiversity Officer Network	Strengthen regional and national biodiversity outcomes by actively engaging with the Biodiversity Officer Network to share expertise, coordinate joint initiatives, and amplify the impact of conservation efforts	Number of collaborations; outcomes achieved	1B9, 1C2	Biodiversity; BO Network; HC

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
2.15 Promote biodiversity-friendly land management	Facilitate the adoption of biodiversity-friendly land management practices by working closely with farmers, landowners, and rural communities; through initiatives such as <i>Farming for Nature</i> , <i>Hare's Corner</i> or <i>High Nature Value Farming</i> ; develop demonstration sites and peer-to-peer learning networks to showcase best practices	Number of landowner-focused events held; number of farmers participating	3A1, 3A3; NEGI 11, NEGI 12, DZNGI 7	Biodiversity; Climate; land owners; Teagasc; TT; NPWS; NGOs.
2.16 Create a biodiversity directory	Publish and maintain online directory of organisations, groups and services involved in promoting, managing and conserving biodiversity in Monaghan	Directory launched; number of organisations listed; annual updates completed	4B1	Biodiversity; EAO; NPWS; TT; NGOs





Theme 3: Leading by example

The third theme positions Monaghan County Council as a leader in biodiversity protection by embedding ecological thinking across all areas of its work. It recognises the central role of local government in setting standards, influencing behaviour and shaping places where biodiversity can thrive. The Council will integrate biodiversity considerations into key policies, strategies and operational decisions – across areas such as planning, procurement, climate action, housing and transport. By leading by example, Monaghan County Council can create a positive ripple effect, encouraging wider action and embedding shared responsibility for biodiversity and ecological sustainability across the county.

Key priorities under this theme:

- Embed biodiversity across Council policy and decision-making, including planning, climate action, transport, housing and infrastructure.
- Manage public lands in a nature-positive way, using biodiversity-friendly practices such as reduced mowing, native planting and habitat enhancement.
- Lead by example through staff training, flagship projects and transparent reporting, demonstrating practical biodiversity action and accountability.

Objective: Monaghan County Council will lead the way by mainstreaming biodiversity into policies and strategies, ensuring biodiversity is at the heart of all decision making, land management and community engagement efforts.

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
3.1 Ensure MCC has dedicated staff and resources to lead, support and report on Biodiversity commitments	Seek to embed the Biodiversity Section as a strategic priority within the LA Workforce Plan to ensure MCC has the skills, knowledge, and capacity to deliver effectively for biodiversity	Section resourced and staffed	1B9, 1C6; NEGI 3; HCLO 1	Biodiversity; NPWS; TT; NGOs
3.2 Develop and Implement a MCC Pesticide/ Herbicide Policy	Explore alternative methods of weed control; continue to work towards elimination of glyphosate use on MCC assets (except where necessary for IAS removal)	Policy published; % reduction in glyphosate use; number of alternative methods trialled	3A4; NEGI 4, DZNGI 8	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Climate, MDs
3.3 Conduct an audit of MCC built and land assets to determine suitable sites for biodiversity enhancement	Assess all Council-owned built and land assets to ascertain their ecological potential; recommend tailored interventions supporting habitat creation, species conservation, and ecosystem services	Audit report completed; number of sites identified; number of enhancements carried out	2A5, 3B1; NEGI 5; DZNGI 1	Biodiversity; MDs

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
3.4 Create a Biodiversity Guidance Document and training programme for MCC staff and stakeholders in delivering biodiversity-positive development outcomes	Develop a <i>Biodiversity Guidance Document</i> for MCC sections involved in planning, design, and construction to provide practical, locally relevant guidance on how to achieve biodiversity-positive outcomes, with a focus on habitat protection, species conservation, and net biodiversity gain	Document published; number of staff trained	1B3, 4B1; HCLP 2	Biodiversity;
3.5 Align all biodiversity actions with relevant national and EU legislation, policy frameworks, and strategic plans	Ensure that all biodiversity-related activities, projects, and policies are fully compliant with and guided by current legislation and strategic frameworks at local, national, and EU levels	Annual compliance review completed	1A, 1C3	Biodiversity; MCC staff; NPWS
3.6 Collaborate with MCC Climate Action Team in delivering biodiversity actions from the Climate Action Plan (2024–2029) (LACAP)	Recognising the interdependence between climate and biodiversity, deliver co-benefits that enhance ecosystem resilience, support carbon sequestration, and improve community wellbeing	Number of biodiversity actions completed; joint initiatives completed	1C3, 3A1	Biodiversity; Climate; Horticulture;; MDs

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
3.7 Prioritise the use of Native tree and plant species in MCC developments and projects	Where appropriate, native plant species to be prioritised in all landscaping, rewilding, developments, projects and habitat restoration efforts across its land portfolio	Number of projects using native species; provenance tracking	3A5; NEGI 2; DZNGI 2; HCLO 17	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Climate;
3.8 Undertake actions to deliver the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan	Deliver MCC commitments under the <i>All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP)</i> through the Council Partner Agreement	Number of actions completed; annual report submitted to NBDC	2C5; NEGI 5; DZNGI 2; HCLO 4	v Biodiversity; Horticulture; Climate;
3.9 Develop a 'Biodiversity Checklist' to assist with planning application review	Create a <i>biodiversity checklist</i> for assessment of planning applications and internal Council-led projects, to ensure biodiversity is embedded early and measurable net gain is achieved	Checklist adopted; % of applications reviewed using checklist	1C5, 1C6; HCLO 12-13	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Planning; Climate;
3.10 Pilot Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs)	Identify opportunities for NBS and SUDs in MCC projects; pilot biodiversity initiatives e.g. green roofs, permeable parking, bird/bat/bee boxes/bricks, native tree, pollinator-friendly planting, urban orchards, etc	Number of pilots completed; biodiversity features installed	3A6; NEGI 7, DZNGI 5	Biodiversity; Horticulture; Planning; Climate

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
3.11 Develop a Grassland Management Plan for suitable grassland areas across MCC's land portfolio	Create a strategic <i>Grassland Management Plan</i> to enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, support pollinators, and reduce carbon emissions through nature-positive practices	Plan completed; hectares under biodiversity-friendly management	2B4, 3A7; NEGI 5; DZNGI 3; HCLO 3	Biodiversity; Horticulture; MDs
3.12 Transition to peat-free compost in all MCC projects and generate compost in-house from green waste and leaves	Support the Horticulture Section to phase out peat compost use, and pilot a green waste compost project; promote and support composting as a key nature-based solution	% reduction in peat use; pilot project launched	3A8; DZNGI 6	Biodiversity; Horticulture; MDs
3.13 Develop lighting guidelines to reduce light pollution and support dark sky conservation	Develop and promote best practise guidelines on artificial lighting to reduce impacts on people and wildlife; explore Dark Sky pilot sites in Monaghan	Guidelines published; pilot site designated; light pollution metrics	2C6	Biodiversity; Dark Skies Ireland
3.14 Incorporate MCC Green Public Procurement Strategy in all biodiversity projects and events	Ensure that all purchasing and contracting decisions actively support biodiversity, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience	Number of projects using sustainable materials	1B10, 3A9	MCC all staff; Roads; Climate; Biodiversity; TT; NGOs

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
3.15 Establish a MCC ‘Green Team’ of volunteer staff interested in biodiversity, environmental, climate & sustainability issues	Form a staff Green Team and organise lunchtime toolbox talks, pollinator planting, waste reduction, field trips etc to engage and promote awareness in the workplace and at home	Team established; number of initiatives led; staff participation rate	1B3, 4B1	MCC all staff; Biodiversity;;
3.16 Seek opportunities to promote biodiversity through creative means	Use the arts to inspire public engagement and make biodiversity accessible, relatable, and emotionally resonant for diverse audiences through art, music, drama etc. in partnership with MCC libraries, Creative Ireland and Percentage for Art funding	Number of projects completed; community engagement metrics	4B2	Biodiversity; Creative Ireland
3.17 Promote Inclusive Biodiversity Education and Awareness, and foster connection to nature through the Irish language	Collaborate with MCC Libraries and Communities Sections to deliver accessible, inclusive biodiversity education and engagement opportunities; use libraries as community hubs to distribute biodiversity information and resources e.g. ESKER boxes	Number of events held; demographic reach	4B1, 4B3	Biodiversity; MnG; NGO’s; MCC libraries & Communities;



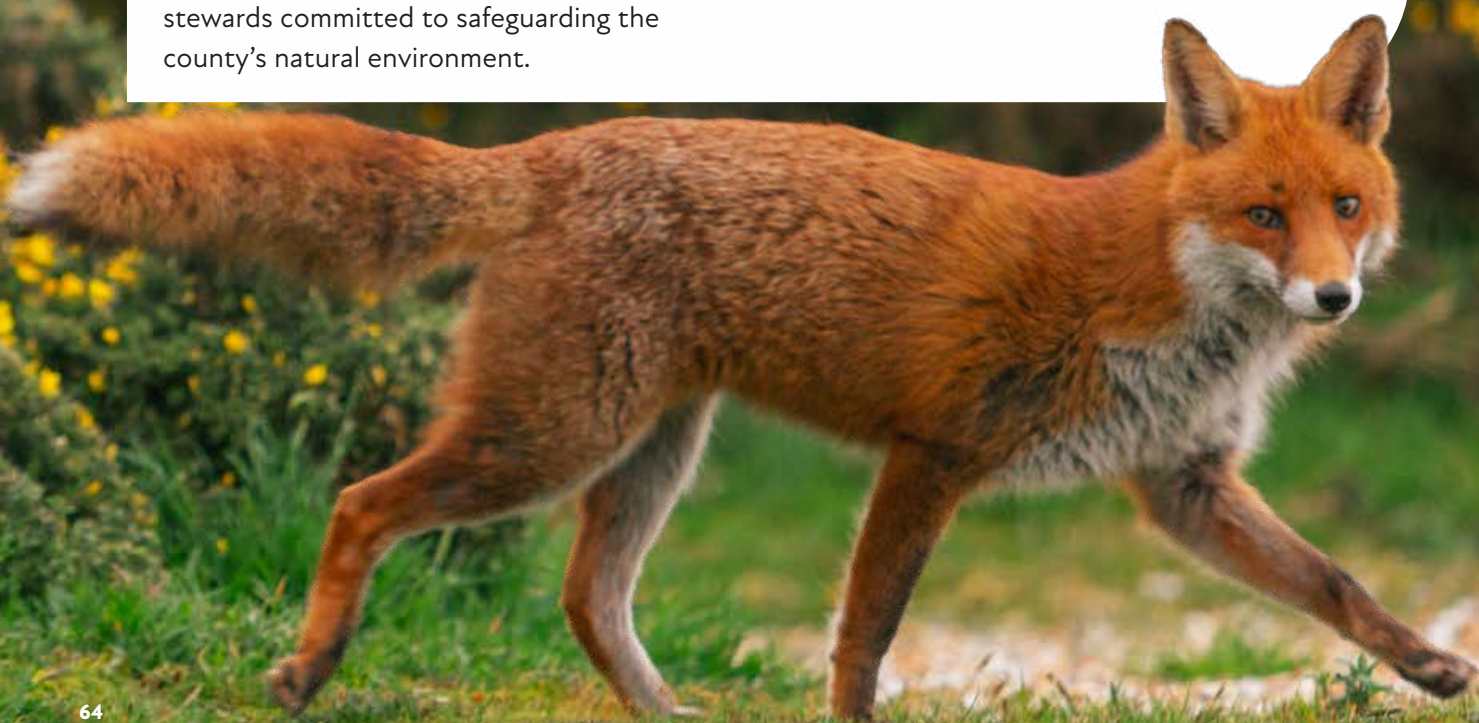
Theme 4: Connecting to nature

This theme recognises that local communities are central to protecting biodiversity. By helping people connect with nature, Monaghan County Council aims to build awareness, appreciation and a shared sense of responsibility for the natural environment. Through education, participation and access to nature, communities are more likely to value local ecosystems and take action to protect and enhance them.

The theme focuses on engagement through learning and experience – from schools and citizen science to practical conservation and everyday contact with green spaces. By supporting community-led initiatives and making nature part of daily life, Monaghan can develop a strong network of local biodiversity stewards committed to safeguarding the county's natural environment.

Key priorities under this theme:

- Increase awareness and understanding of biodiversity through education, outreach programmes and nature-based events.
- Support active community involvement in conservation, including citizen science, volunteering and local biodiversity projects.
- Improve access to nature close to home by promoting green spaces, wildlife corridors and community gardens that support wellbeing and biodiversity.

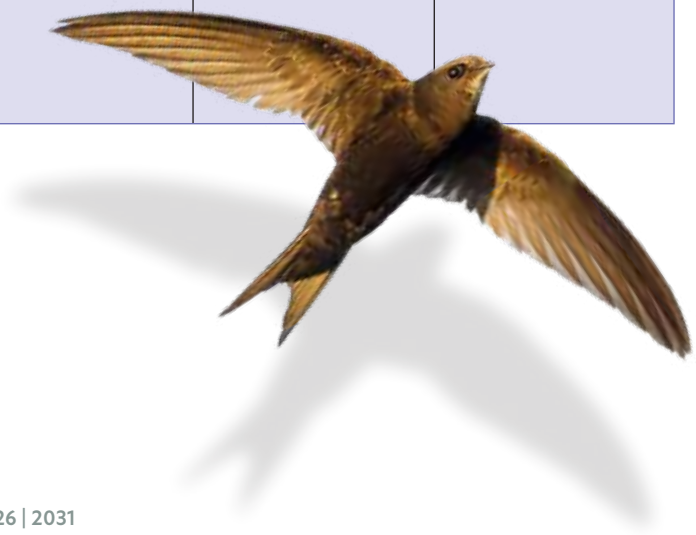


Objective: Empower communities in Monaghan to become stewards for nature through increased awareness, engagement, and appreciation of biodiversity

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
4.1 Increase public awareness of biodiversity by delivering free-to-attend biodiversity events and training	Actively engage the public in biodiversity education and celebration by hosting inclusive, accessible events during National Biodiversity Week, National Heritage Week, Climate Action Week, Science Week, etc., across all Municipal Districts	Number of events held; public attendance and engagement levels	4B1, 4B3; HCLSO 1; GEP 1-5	Biodiversity; NGO's; community groups; children
4.2 Pilot a Biodiversity Support Scheme to fund and empower community-led biodiversity projects across Monaghan	Launch a Biodiversity Support Scheme, such as Hare's Corner, to provide financial and technical assistance to community groups, schools, landowners, and local organisations undertaking biodiversity enhancement projects	Number of grants awarded; project outcomes and biodiversity impact	4C1; DZNGI 6	Biodiversity; NPWS; HC;
4.3 Support community groups in developing and implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs)	Actively support local communities in creating and delivering Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) tailored to their unique landscapes, species, and priorities through training and funding guidance/ signposting	Number of LBAPs developed; number of funding applications supported	1C5, 1C6; HCLSO 1	Biodiversity; NPWS; HC;MCC Communities; MDs

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
4.4 Support Citizen Science engagement in biodiversity projects	Facilitate and support Citizen Science initiatives in Monaghan, signpost existing programmes, offer training, and empower recorders to upload data to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)	Number of active recorders; volume of biodiversity records submitted to NBDC; number of Citizen Science programmes engaged with	4A3; HCLSO 1	Biodiversity; MCC Env. Section; NPWS; HC; MCC Communities; MDs
4.5 Support community pollinator and biodiversity initiatives via the Public Participation Network (PPN)	Through the PPN, support communities, landowners, Tidy Towns groups, schools, businesses, faith groups, sports clubs etc to fully engage with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan by implementing relevant pollinator-friendly actions; and adopting other biodiversity initiatives (e.g. Return to Nature Programme, Green Clubs Programme)	Number of groups implementing All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions; number of groups adopting Return to Nature or Green Clubs programmes	2C5, 4C1; HCLSO 1	Biodiversity; Horticulture; MCC Env. Section; NPWS; HC; MCC Communities; MDs
4.6 Support the Green Schools Programme in Monaghan	Promote the delivery of the Green Schools Programme in the county, with dedicated support for schools earning their Biodiversity Flag; promote Heritage in Schools Initiative	Number enrolled and supported; number of Biodiversity Flags awarded; number engaged in Heritage in Schools	4B2	Biodiversity; EAO

Action	Target	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Policy Alignment with NBAP, CDP, CAP	Support Provided By
4.7 Use traditional, social and digital media to highlight awareness of biodiversity and the challenges it faces locally	Raise public awareness of biodiversity using a wide range of media e.g. print, broadcast and social media and explore the use of podcasts, webinars, videos, newsletters etc to reach diverse audiences, inspire action, and foster a deeper connection between people and nature	Number produced; social media reach and engagement; broadcast coverage	4B1; HCLSO 1	Biodiversity; EAO; NGO's
4.8 Highlight and celebrate community efforts in raising biodiversity awareness	Actively recognise and promote the contributions of individuals, schools, community groups, and organisations that demonstrate leadership in biodiversity awareness and action e.g. annual Fearghal Duffy Memorial Award	Number of community projects highlighted annually	4C2	Biodiversity; EAO; NGO's
4.9 Deliver Biodiversity Conferences as key platforms for education, collaboration, and inspiration	Continue to deliver Monaghan's Biodiversity Conference and Monaghan's Youth Biodiversity Conferences	Conferences held; attendance figures increasing	4B4; NEGI 9	Biodiversity; EAO; NGO's; TT; MWF



Implementation & resourcing

Progress on the Biodiversity Action Plan will be reported to the Council's Chief Executive and elected members through the monthly Chief Executive Report. Each action is linked to at least one key performance indicator (KPI) to enable consistent measurement of progress. An annual progress report will be prepared to track delivery of the Plan, assess outcomes against agreed indicators and targets, and meet relevant reporting requirements. The report will be presented to the Biodiversity Working Group and the Heritage Forum, and brought to the relevant Strategic Policy Committee. Key updates will also be summarised in Monaghan County Council's Annual Report. The Plan supports a whole-of-society approach to protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity across County Monaghan.

The successful delivery of this Plan will depend on access to appropriate financial, human and technical resources. Monaghan County Council will actively pursue funding through national programmes, including the NPWS Local Biodiversity Action Fund and the Heritage Council's biodiversity grants, and will explore EU funding and collaborative funding applications where relevant. The Council will also work with cross-border bodies where habitat connectivity, river catchments or species conservation require coordination beyond the county boundary.

To strengthen delivery on the ground, Monaghan County Council will provide guidance and support to local groups and landowners seeking biodiversity-related funding, helping them to advance actions and objectives set out in the Plan. Securing sufficient resources is essential to ensure measures are implemented on time and achieve measurable, lasting impact.

Role of the Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) during implementation of the Plan

The BWG will provide feedback and practical support to Monaghan County Council in the implementation and monitoring of the Biodiversity Action Plan. The Group will help coordinate cross-sector delivery, contribute to ongoing review, and support annual implementation planning to ensure actions remain targeted, deliverable and measurable.

Statutory biodiversity duty

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 places the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030 on a statutory footing and requires local authorities to have regard to its objectives and targets. Annual reporting on actions within the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026–2031 will be informed by cross-departmental input within Monaghan County Council and submitted by the Biodiversity Officer via the NPWS reporting system, contributing to the national review of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan.

Appendix 1

List of abbreviations

NBAP National Biodiversity Action Plan

BCI Bat Conservation Ireland

BSBI Botanical Society Britain & Ireland

CARO Climate Action Regional Office

CBA County Biodiversity Area

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CDP County Development Plan

DAFM Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

HC Heritage Council

HD Habitats Directive

IEN Irish Environmental Network

IFA Irish Farmers Association

IFI Inland Fisheries Ireland

IWT Irish Wildlife Trust

LAP Local Area Plan

LAWPRO Local Authority Waters Programme

MCC Monaghan County Council

MWF Monaghan Wetland Forum

NBDC National Biodiversity Data Centre

NGOs Non Governmental Organisations

NHA Natural Heritage Area

NPWS National Parks and Wildlife Service

pNHA Proposed Natural Heritage Area

PPN Public Participation Network

RBCT River Blackwater Catchment Trust

SAC Special Area of Conservation

SPA Special Protection Area



Appendix 2

Monaghan Biodiversity Working Group members

An Taisce
Birdwatch Ireland
Breeding Waders EIP
Coillte
County Recorder
Farming for Nature
Inland Fisheries Ireland
Irish Farmers Association (IFA)
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO)
Monaghan Branch of the Irish Wildlife Trust
Monaghan Tidy Town Network
Monaghan Wetland Forum
National Parks and Wildlife Service
Native Tree Expert
Public Participation Network Monaghan
River Blackwater Catchment Trust
Teagasc
Monaghan County Council Climate Action Section
Monaghan County Council Environmental Awareness Officer
Monaghan County Council Heritage Section
Monaghan County Council Horticulture Section
Monaghan County Council Planning Section

Monaghan County Council Roads Section



Appendix 3

Summary of legislative frameworks guiding the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031

Statutory Instruments Guiding the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031		
	European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2021	The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) protect habitats, species and wild birds across Europe. In Ireland, they are transposed through the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), which place duties on public authorities to avoid deterioration of protected habitats and species. Any plan or project likely to affect European sites (SACs/SPAs) must be screened and, where necessary, undergo Appropriate Assessment under Article 6(3) (and Article 6(4) where relevant).
	Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2023 (as amended)	The Wildlife Acts 1976–2023 are Ireland’s core legislation for wildlife conservation, amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Acts 2000, 2010, 2012, 2021 and 2023. They provide the legal basis for protecting wildlife and for designating sites such as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 also introduced a public sector biodiversity duty, requiring listed public bodies to consider biodiversity in their functions and to report annually on measures taken and progress made.
	EU Nature Restoration Law 2024	The EU Nature Restoration Law, adopted by the Council of the EU in 2024, is a key part of the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy. It sets legally binding targets to restore at least 20% of the EU’s land and sea by 2030, and all ecosystems needing restoration by 2050. It focuses on restoring degraded ecosystems – especially those that store carbon and reduce disaster risk – covering wetlands, forests, grasslands, rivers and lakes, and urban, agricultural and marine ecosystems, including pollinators and river connectivity.
	The Flora Protection Order 2022	Under the Flora (Protection) Order it is illegal to cut, uproot or damage listed plant species, or to alter, damage or interfere with their habitats. The plants and their seeds also cannot be sold. These protections apply wherever the plants occur, inside or outside designated sites. The current list of species protected under Section 21 of the Wildlife Act 1976–2023 (as amended) is set out in the Flora (Protection) Order 2022, which replaces earlier orders from 1980, 1987 and 1999.

Statutory Instruments Guiding the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031

	The Planning and Development Act 2000 to 2024 (as amended)	The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provides the statutory framework for development management and consent, including provisions for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) and the protection of natural heritage. Certain classes of development may be exempt from permission, but exempted development generally loses its exempt status where EIA or AA is required. The Act also requires development plans to include objectives for environmental protection, including natural heritage and designated sites.
	The Water Framework Directive (WFD)	The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) provides the EU-wide framework for protecting and improving rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters, with the aim of achieving at least “Good” status and preventing deterioration. It is implemented through six year cycles, with the current third cycle running from 2022–2027, supported by Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan 2022–2027 (Water Action Plan 2024). County Monaghan spans several WFD catchments, including the Erne catchment (draining to Lough Erne), the Lough Neagh & Lower Bann catchment via the Ulster Blackwater system, and the Newry, Fane, Glyde and Dee catchment in the southeast.
	Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA Directive)	The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires certain plans and programmes to be assessed for likely significant environmental effects before adoption. In Ireland, SEA is implemented through S.I. No. 435/2004 (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) and S.I. No. 436/2004 (planning SEA), as amended. Because County Development Plans and Local Area Plans can have significant effects, SEA identifies potential impacts early and sets out measures to avoid or mitigate negative effects.
	The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required under the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU, which amended Directive 2011/92/EU on assessing the environmental effects of certain public and private projects. The Directive strengthens EIA procedures, including consideration of natural resources, sustainability, biodiversity and climate change. EIA supports decisionmaking by competent authorities (e.g., local authorities) by identifying and evaluating likely significant environmental impacts so that sustainability and ecology are built into the planning process.

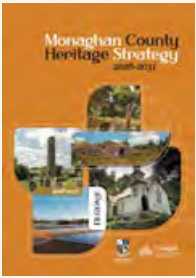
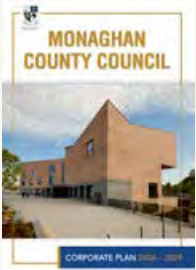
Appendix 4

Summary of strategic policy documents guiding the Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2031

INTERNATIONAL			
	UN Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was agreed at the 1992 Rio “Earth Summit”. Ireland signed in 1992 and ratified in 1996. The CBD and its Conference of the Parties (COP) decisions set a global legal framework for protecting nature, with three core aims: conserve biodiversity, use it sustainably, and share benefits from genetic resources fairly. It is implemented mainly through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.	
	EU Biodiversity Strategy	The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, including protecting 30% of land and sea, restoring ecosystems, reducing pesticide use, and better integrating biodiversity into fisheries, farming and forestry. It also commits to an ambitious nature restoration plan, with Local Authorities helping to deliver it by embedding biodiversity in local planning and policy.	
	The International Union for Nature Conservation	The IUCN is the main global authority on species conservation status, best known for its Red List, which tracks extinction risk and summarises key information on distribution, habitats, threats and actions. Alongside NPWS status assessments, it helps prioritise species for conservation in County Monaghan’s Biodiversity Action Plan.	

NATIONAL			
	Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023-2030	Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023–2030 sets out national actions to deliver biodiversity recovery through five overarching objectives, with a strong emphasis on a whole of government, whole of society approach. Many measures are delivered locally, and under Objective 1 the NBAP requires all local authorities to adopt a Biodiversity Action Plan by the end of 2026, with regular review and updates.	
	The Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (2019)	The Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan supports Ireland's Paris Agreement commitments and highlights biodiversity's role in health, wellbeing and sustainable development. It includes 17 local authority actions under six aims: restore nature for resilience; improve climate impact evidence; strengthen connectivity; engage society; secure funding; and monitor/evaluate delivery.	
	Heritage Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2028	The Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023–2028 is built around six pillars, including Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss, and commits to working with local authorities and key partners to support a national Biodiversity Officer network, targeted biodiversity grant schemes, and the ongoing role of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.	
	National Water Action Plan for Ireland 2024	The Water Action Plan 2024 (Ireland's River Basin Management Plan) sets out how Ireland will protect and restore rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters under the EU Water Framework Directive. It strengthens catchment based management, evidence and resourcing, with LAWPRO supporting local engagement and a national programme of measures to drive water protection, restoration, biodiversity and climate action across all local authorities.	
	Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework	Ireland's National Planning Framework (NPF) is the longterm strategy guiding growth and development to 2040, shaping regional development and directing investment in housing, infrastructure and services. It promotes compact, sustainable settlement patterns, supports balanced regional growth, and helps protect the environment while aligning with climate action goals.	

	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032	The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government ensuring balanced and sustainable growth across the region.	
	All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2021-2025	The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) is an islandwide, collaborative programme to reverse pollinator declines, with 186 actions to make farmland, public and private land more pollinatorfriendly by improving food and shelter, and it highlights the key role of councils through management of their own lands.	
	NPWS: Threat Response Plans	The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has developed several Threat Response Plans to establish a system of strict protection of species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. These three-year plans detail each species' range, distribution, habitat, threats, required actions, responsible parties and timelines.	
	NPWS: Invasive Alien Species Soil and Stone Pathway Action Plan 2023-2027	Ireland's Invasive Alien Species Soil and Stone Pathway Action Plan 2023 2027 addresses the unintentional spread of invasive alien species and outlines local authorities' surveillance responsibilities. The plan outlines the role local authorities have in terms of surveillance of invasive alien species.	
LOCAL			
	Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031	The Monaghan County Development Plan 2025–2031 is the Council's sixyear landuse framework guiding settlement, housing, infrastructure and environmental management. For biodiversity, it prioritises protection of Natura 2000 and other designated habitats, safeguards wetlands, trees/hedgerows/woodlands, strengthens green infrastructure and landscape conservation, and addresses invasive species, with development assessed through SEA and Appropriate Assessment. Chapter 6 outlines strategic biodiversity objectives.	

	County Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Plan (2020–2025)	The County Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Plan 2020–2025 sets out actions to protect, conserve and advocate for biodiversity, linking nature recovery with climate mitigation/adaptation and sustainable communities. It aims that by 2025 the value of biodiversity and heritage is embedded in Monaghan County Council’s activities, and it prioritises practical delivery through themes such as Monaghan’s wetlands, hedgerows and native woodland, and high nature value farmland.	
	Monaghan County Heritage Strategy 2026–2031	A county-wide strategy led by Monaghan County Council that sets objectives for the identification, protection, conservation, management, enhancement, and interpretation of the built, natural, and cultural heritage of the County.	
	Monaghan County Council Climate Action Plan (2024–2029)	This statutory document provides a clear, evidencebased pathway for Monaghan County Council to support national climate policy and objectives. Climate action and biodiversity are closely linked, and the CAP includes actions to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan, to strengthen green and blue infrastructure, expand naturebased solutions, and embed biodiversity in Council operations and development.	
	Monaghan County Council Corporate Plan 2024–2029	Monaghan County Council’s Corporate Plan 2024–2029 sets a vision for a thriving county supported by a sustainable environment, with a core goal of “A Sustainable Future.” It supports biodiversity by committing to delivery of the Council’s Climate Action Plan 2024–2029, and by recognising Monaghan’s “unique biodiversity environments” as assets to protect and enhance.	

Appendix 5

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and key conservation features

Site Code	pNHA name	Key habitats / species / features (“qualifying interests”)
000001	Dromore Lakes	Inter-drumlin lake system with wet woodland and reed swamp; important wintering wildfowl (incl. Whooper Swan), Great Crested Grebe, Lapwing.
000558	Emy Lough	Mesotrophic inter-drumlin lake; surrounding Alder/Willow sections; important over-wintering bird site.
000559	Glaslough Lake	Lake and adjacent wetlands; calcareous water/stoneworts (Chara spp.); reed fringe; woodland setting; heronry on wooded islands.
000560	Lough Fea Demesne	Calcareous grassland exceptionally rich in orchids; adjacent mixed woodland; turloughs present.
000561	Lough Naglack	Calcareous lough with adjoining limestone grassland, calcareous marsh and mixed woodland; very rich flora.
000562	Monmurray Grassland	Grassland pNHA (specific features not described in the schedule).
000563	Muckno Lake	Listed as a pNHA (schedule text does not provide detail), but recent project material notes the lake and surrounding habitats include woodland and wildlife habitats and records protected species (incl. otter), wintering birds and other fauna.
001268	Cordoo Lough	Calcium rich lake surrounded by reed swamp and wet grassland with some interesting species including shining pondweed.
001495	Lough Ross	Large slightly alkaline lake; extensive reed-swamp, stony lake edge with Littorella, diverse pondweeds (Potamogeton spp.); extensive floating marsh and strong habitat succession gradients.
001594	Ballyhoe Lough	Acid/peaty lough; reed fringe; willow/alder belt; wooded islands (reported crannogs).
001595	Loughbawn House Loughs	Inter-drumlin lakes within dense woodland; reed-swamp fringe; floating macrophytes incl. Yellow Water-lily.
001596	Black and Derrygoony Loughs	Lakes with transition mire (floating scragh) and reed-swamp (incl. Reed Canary-grass stands).

Site Code	pNHA name	Key habitats / species / features (“qualifying interests”)
001599	Creevy Lough	Open shoreline; shore-weed (<i>Littorella</i>) on lake floor; rare aquatics recorded (<i>Elatine hexandra</i> , <i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i>); sedge/spike-rush margin.
001600	Drumakill Lough	Small lake; surrounding wet grassland and freshwater marsh.
001601	Drumgole Lough	Extensive reedswamp; areas of wet grassland; Whooper Swans in winter.
001602	Drumreask Lough	Calcareous lake with stoneworts (<i>Chara</i> spp.); <i>Cladium mariscus</i> among reedbeds; marshy margins.
001604	Gibson’s Lough	Lake with floating marsh/successional wetland communities (sedge/bulrush/cowbane, cotton-grass etc.).
001605	Lough Egish	Primarily ornithological interest: wintering Whooper & Bewick’s swans, Goldeneye; breeding birds listed incl. Black-headed Gull, Lapwing, Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Pochard.
001606	Rafinny Lough	Small oligotrophic upland lake; unusually species-rich flora; well-developed floating mat succession.
001607	Lough Smiley	Wetland complex: reed-swamp, freshwater marsh, transition mire, remnant raised bog, cutover bog, wet scrub woodland.
001608	Monalty Lough	Reed fringe with wet woodland/scrub (Willow); woodland “tongue” dividing basins; adjacent wet grassland.
001611	Ulster Canal (Aghalisk)	Canal section largely grass-colonised; pockets of Yellow Flag and Meadowsweet noted.
001612	Wright’s Wood	Schedule has no detail. Community biodiversity material describes it as diverse broadleaved woodland.
001616	Tassan Lough	Inter-drumlin lake with reed-swamp, transition mire, poor fen, and dry heath on rocky substrate; legacy mine spoil nearby.
001671	Spring and Corcrin Loughs	Reed fringe, water-lily zone, calcareous mud shelf with stoneworts; surrounding wet grassland, marsh and scrub.
001781	Lisarilly Bog	Poor fen on quaking scraw in drumlin hollow; developed on cutover raised bog; sensitive to nutrient enrichment.
001782	Killyhoman Marsh	Small wet scraw / marsh partially invaded by trees.
001783	Corcreeghy Lake and Woodland	Lake with thin marsh/scraw margin; extensive wet Willow/ Alder stand; Marsh Fern (<i>Thelypteris palustris</i>) noted as rare in Monaghan.

Site Code	pNHA name	Key habitats / species / features (“qualifying interests”)
001784	Rosefield Lake and Woodland	Small calcareous lake with surrounding alder woodland and reedbeds; extensive Chara communities.
001785	Mullaghmore Lake (South)	Shallow infilling lake with floating scraw; water-lily; dense emergent swamp (club-rush / horsetail).
001835	Lisabuck Lough	Reed-fringed lake; marsh and scrub; wet woodland; presence of <i>Carex acuta</i> noted as adding ecological interest.
001836	Anagheane Lough	Lake with surrounding woodland on cutover bog; quaking swamp; transition mire/marsh sequence; Frogbit (<i>Hydrocharis morsus-ranae</i>) (nationally rare) recorded.
001837	Mullaglassan Lough	Scraw-fringed lake; reedbeds; local <i>Cladium mariscus</i> stand; extensive <i>Carex diandra</i> quaking transition mire.
001838	Kilcorran Lough	Larger highly calcareous lake in Finn system; marl substrate; relatively low nutrient status; swamp development in places.
001839	Killyvilly Lough	Calcareous lake (border area); includes open water, alder woodland, <i>Cladium mariscus</i> fen; extensive transition mire with some wet birch scrub; notable “mown” species-rich transition mire area described.
001841	Drumcor Lough	Long linear oligo–mesotrophic lake with fringing reed community and willow scrub (Cavan–Monaghan border).
002077	Nafarty Fen	Listed as a pNHA (no descriptive text included in the schedule extract beyond the name).



Appendix 6

Trees of Special Amenity Value from the Monaghan County Development Plan (2025-2031)

Location	Type of Trees	OS Reference
Blackwater Vale, Monaghan	Mixed	9-7/11
Connabury Hill, Castleblayney	Mature Beech woodland	20-13
Glen, Rockcorry	Conifers	18-14
Knockconan	Mature Scots Pine, Sycamores, Beech trees	3-8
Laragh Village	Ash, Beech, Elm, Sycamore, Hazel, some mature Oaks	27
Legacurry, Monaghan	Row of Beech	6-11
Swans Cross, Dromore	Row of Conifers	18-6
Tullybuck, Clontibret	Avenue of Lime	14

Areas of Primary Amenity Value from the Monaghan County Development Plan (2025-2031)

Constraints Map Reference	Areas of Primary Amenity
PA1	Sliabh Beagh and Bragan Mountain
PA2	Lough Muckno & Environs

Areas of Secondary Amenity Value from the Monaghan County Development Plan (2025-2031)

Constraints Map Reference	Areas of Secondary Amenity
SA1	Emy Lough and Environs
SA2	Blackwater River Valley
SA3	Mountain Water River Valley
SA4	Mullyash Mountain
SA5	Ulster Canal and Environs
SA6	Rossmore Park and Environs
SA7	Castleshane Woods and Environs
SA8	Billy Fox Memorial Park and Environs
SA9	Annaghmackerrig Lake, Woodland and Environs
SA10	Dartrey Demense and Environs
SA11	Dromore River and Lake Systems
SA12	Lough Major and Environs
SA13	Hollywood Lake
SA14	Lisanisk Lake
SA15	Lough Naglack
SA16	Rahans Lake
SA17	Lough Fea

Appendix 7

County Monaghan geological sites - locally important geological sites classified as County Geological Sites (CGS) in the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031

Site No.	Site Name	Description	Townland(s) / Location
CGS 1	APHUCA CAVE (Finn Mc Cool's Cave)	Twin-entranced cave passage approximately 450m long; part of a complex karst landscape.	Cloghvalley Lower, Carrickmacross
CGS 2	BALLYLOUGHAN TURLOUGHS	Three small turloughs; exceptionally rare east of the Shannon.	Ballyloughlan, Carrickmacross
CGS 3	CALLIAGH	Small quarry; first recorded Irish and British occurrence of manganaxinite; best exposure of Fe and Mn-rich shales.	Calliagh, Threemilehouse
CGS 4	CARRICKATEE HILL	Extensive volcanic rock outcrops and crags; best exposure of Ordovician volcanic rocks in central Longford-Down inlier.	Carrickatee, Ballybay
CGS 5	CLONTIBRET STREAM	Site of former antimony mine and gold exploration area with significant geological interest.	Tullybuck, Lisglassan
CGS 6	CREEVY CAVE	Largest cave system in County Monaghan; post-glacial karst development.	Cloghvalley Lower, Creevy
CGS 7	DONAGHMOYNE RISING	Significant spring rising and associated doline in karst limestone terrain.	Donaghmoyne, Carrickmacross
CGS 8	FINN MC COOL'S CHAIR AND KILLMACTRASNA CAVE	Karstic depressions, cliff feature and cave within a complex doline landscape.	Doohatty, Kilmactransa
CGS 9	HOPE MINE	Historic lead and silver mine; contains County Monaghan's only Cornish engine-house chimney.	Cornalough, Castleblayney

Site No.	Site Name	Description	Townland(s) / Location
CGS 10	KNOCKNACRAN GYPSUM MINE	Large open-cast gypsum mine; probably the largest man-made excavation in Ireland.	Drummond, Dernascore, Knocknacran West & East, Derrynaglah
CGS 11	LEEG DRUMLIN	Rare crescent-shaped (barchan) drumlin; one of very few known in Ireland.	Leeg, Carrickmacross
CGS 12	LEMGARE	Former mine site noted for rare wulfenite mineral occurrence.	Lemgare, Annayalla
CGS 13	MOKEERAN QUARRY	Large working quarry producing agricultural lime.	Mokeeran, Killgally
CGS 14	MOYLAN LOUGH	Post-glacial turlough formed in Lower Carboniferous limestone.	Tullyvaragh Upper & Lower, Monnanagirr, Tullymackilmartin, Garrifly
CGS 15	ROCKORRY-COOTEHILL RIBBED MORaine	Part of the world's largest ribbed moraine field; contains approximately 160 features.	Multiple Townlands (75)
CGS 16	SCOTSHOUSE-REDHILLS CROSSCUTTING RIBBED MORAINES	Unique cross-cutting ribbed moraines recording two separate ice flows; globally significant.	Over 75 townlands across c. 70 km ²
CGS 17	TAMLAT	Historic mining site and one of the oldest mines in County Monaghan.	Tamlat, Drumfaltra
CGS 18	TASSAN	Largest and most productive lead mine in County Monaghan, with extensive surviving features.	Tassan, Annayalla
CGS 19	TIRAGARVAN	River sink, rising and cave system illustrating karst drainage processes.	Tiragarvan, Lossets
CGS 20	TULLYVARAGH	Active sinkhole, stream sink and cave system in Lower Carboniferous limestone.	Tullyvaragh Upper & Lower

Appendix 8

County sites of biodiversity importance:
Sites that have been identified through
Monaghan County Council surveys as being of
International, National and County importance
(Ref: Monaghan County Development Plan
2025-2031)

Reference	Site Name	Reference	Site Name
615	Ballyloughan Turlough D	MFS-30	Lough Aphuca
616	Ballyloughan Turlough E		Lough Bane
617	Ballyloughan Turlough F		Lough Duff
622	Ballyloughan Turlough G	MFS-31	Lough Ooney
MFS-17	Aghafin Lough	MFS-05	Morgans Lough
002904	Aghnamullen Fen	MFS-33	Muckno Mill Lough
629	Ballyloughan Turlough J	633	Nure Beg Fen and Marsh
MFS-12	Bishops Lough	2614	Priestfield Lough
MFS-13	Cargaghmore Fen	298	Raferagh Fen
MFS-27	Carrickmore	376	Reillys Lough
MFS-15	Clonkeen Lough	586	Shankill Lough
MFS-18	Corlea	MFS-37	Shantonagh Lough
MFS-01	Cornaglare	MFS-38	Sillis Lough
	Corleadargan	Bog MFS-19	Coravoo Lough
MFS-07	Crinkill Lough		Cormeen Lough
MFS-02	Drum Lough	MFS-20	Corvaghan
89	Drumakill Lough	MFS-21	Creevaghy
MFS-23	Drumaveale Lough	MFS-04	Crumlin Lough
002732	Drumgallen Bog	545	Derryarrily Bog
MFS-24	Drumganny Lough	MFS-25	Drumgoast Lough
587	Drumgoan Fen	MFS-26	Drumharriif Lough
MFS-28	Faltagh		Drumroo

Reference	Site Name	Reference	Site Name
MFS-08	Killycooly Lough	002897	Greaghglas Fen
002755	Killyneil Fen		Greaghawillin
625	Kilmactrasna Turlough G		Grove Lough
555	Kilmore West Bog	MFS-29	Killyboley Lough
234	Kilvey Lough	624	Kilmactrasna Turlough F
600	Lagan Lough	626	Kilmactrasna Turlough
H 83	Lough Egish bogs	627	Kilmactrasna Turlough J
MFS-40	Lough Nahinch	264	Kilmore Lake
93	Monalty Lough	555	Kilmore West Bog
345	Monaltyduff	599	Kilmurray heath and bog
MFS-32	Mount Matthews	583	Killygally Fen
384	Raferagh East Fen	589	Legghimore Fen
MFS-35	Rathkeevan Lough	002911	Lisinisky Marsh
MFS-36	Roosky Lough		Clen Lough
568	Tassan grassland	531	Carnquill Bog
MFS-10	Annagose Lough	MFS-14	Carrickaslane Lough
MFS-11	Annyalty Loughs	002901	Coravilla-Rakeen
585	Aughrim More Bog	535	Cloughvalley Lower Spring
340	Ballyloughan Turlough A	MFS-16	Clonoony Lough Coolcar 604
621	Ballyloughan Turlough H		



Discover the Biodiversity of county Monaghan



For further information please contact:

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