

## Tullamore Tidy Towns Biodiversity DRAFT Plan.

**Biodiversity** includes every species and all the genetic differences within each species. It encompasses the variety of ecosystems: forests, drylands, wetlands, mountains, lakes, rivers, agricultural lands and islands where living creatures, including humans, animals, insects and plants, form a community, interacting with one another and with the air, water and soil around them. Convention on Biological Diversity  
<https://www.cbd.int/youth/biodiversity>

**Biodiversity** is all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria.  
World Wildlife Fund  
(<https://www.worldwildlife.org/resources/explainers/what-is-biodiversity/>)

**Biodiversity...** two words 'biological' and 'diversity', biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth in general, or the variety of living things in a given ecosystem or region. It covers all living things, ranging from bacteria, plants and animals to humans. European Union  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/biodiversity.html>

**Biodiversity**, the variability among living organisms from all sources, underpins all life on Earth. This includes diversity within species, between species and across ecosystems, representing the genetic makeup of plants, animals, microorganisms and the complexity of ecosystems. World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/biodiversity>

## **Introduction**

According to the National Biodiversity Centre the word biodiversity refers to:

*all the variety of life that can be found on Earth. Biodiversity can also refer to variability at a range of biological levels: genetic, species and ecosystem.*

In Ireland it is estimated that there are 31,448 species with possibly another 8,500 species yet to be discovered.

It should be noted that not all 31,448 species will be found in Offaly or in Tullamore Town Urban area. Tullamore does not have a coastline. Marine species will not exist in the wild around Tullamore. Therefore, when discussing biodiversity, a realistic approach needs to be undertaken. The following questions should be asked at all times:

1. What biodiversity currently exists in Tullamore?
2. How can biodiversity endeavours be designed to support existing biodiversity?
3. Can species diversity be improved by projects carried out by Tullamore Tidy Towns?
4. Are there measures that should be avoided going forward?

The saying “From Little Acorns big Trees Grow” needs to be adopted when considering nature friendly schemes. Biodiversity just doesn’t happen because a tree is planted, or a bug hotel is erected. Nature can move in quickly and exploit the urban environment. For a species to survive it needs to build a community, an ecosystem to survive.

Never take offence if wildlife does not agree with human thinking. There can be more for nature in a rotting plank of wood than a 5 star habitat created by dedicated Tidy Towns people.

## **Biodiversity baseline information.**

To determine the direction of a plan or strategy some foundation work needs to be undertaken.

- Identify habitats, the different homes for biodiversity. A habitat map of the large habitats needs to be compiled. This will be done in accordance with Fossitt, 2000.
- Record and map all work in progress or completed by Tullamore Tidy Towns, Fruit tree details should be detailed before tags go missing.
- List and map protected habitats and species and or habitats and species of local importance. The same should apply to invasive species.
- Participate in wildlife surveys. The Garden Bird survey runs from December to February, details are available on the BirdWatch Ireland website.
- Locate and evaluate potential wildlife corridors and stepping stone habitats within the Tullamore Tidy Town area. Wildlife corridors can be a treeline that connect two locations for wildlife to travel through. Stepping stone habitats are unconnected

smaller habitats that nature can use to travel from one location to another. This information will support long-term habitat development.

### **The 2026 growing season.**

Prior to the 2026 growing season there are some interests that need to be discussed and agreed by Tullamore Tidy Towns. These are listed as follows:

1. Grass cutting. To mow or not to mow that is the question. Grass needs to be divided into amenity grassland vs grassland habitats beneficial for wildlife. Amenity grassland needs to be regularly cut. This grassland is typically associated with sports pitches, parks and areas in estates to soften the built environment or for children to play in. Road verges, nutrient poor grassed areas or recolonised areas of stone or aggregate would be ideal areas for No Mow May. A cutting regime for wild areas needs to be reviewed for the 2026 growing season.
2. Planting schemes. There is a temptation to plant a lot of the one plant species. Monoculture vs Diversity. There needs to be flowering plants all through the growing season. As the Spring flowers go over a new eruption of Summer flowers should be emerging. This would be repeated into Autumn with plant fruiting structures providing food through winter.
3. Habitat creation. Is it time to move away from daffodils for example and focus on other species such as native Bluebells. Mature woodland areas could reflect the woods around Charleville Castle, a sea of blue from April.
4. Urban biodiversity. The urban environment can be challenging for wildlife. Busy streets, bright lights, noise and people with stomping feet pounding pavements. For some people hanging baskets soften the built landscape and provide a much needed pop of colour. Hanging baskets are often high up out of reach and form a linear feature along streetscapes. If each basket was planted with one pollinator plant the streetscape is a potential stepping stone habitat.
5. Large Mature Trees. Urban areas are often restricted to smaller species of trees due to space restrictions. Mature large trees benefit wildlife but can be interesting for humans. Larch is the only needle tree to drop their needles in winter, and fruit of the Horse Chestnut tree is always of interest to children. Richard Jacks with his forestry experience could be asked to advise.

### **Feeling overwhelmed?**

The above suggestions might seem a lot to take in but when broken down it is just a slightly different way of thinking. Don't feel overwhelmed. Tullamore Tidy Towns is doing great work.

**Litter picking.** It is so important from an aesthetic point of view, but it removes a danger to wildlife.

**Tree and flower planting.** Creating awareness and interest is essential to promoting biodiversity projects. Planting trees, flowers and shrubs is beneficial to wildlife.

**Attending workshops.** Offaly Communities “Reap What You Sow“ Workshop provided some valuable advice on seed saving, fruit tree maintenance and planting schemes.

**Don't go solo.** Organisations such as Waterways Ireland that manage the canal, the Office of Public Works that manage the Tullamore River, Inland Fisheries Ireland with responsibility for fish species all have Environmental Management Plans. Seeking help, guidance or information on management regimes could be invaluable.

## **Longterm plans**

In 2026 the big thing from a biodiversity perspective will be habitat mapping, identifying species and recording work completed by Tullamore Tidy Towns. During the growing season April to September 2026 would be an ideal time to recognise urban areas of ecological interest around the town. These areas of interest could consist of:

- Determining the work that would need to be done to restore the beehive habitat at the top of the Clara Road
- Suggest areas in the town to plant a space suitable for mature tall trees or even one big tree on a green.
- Installation of water gardens in conjunction with Offaly County Council should be investigated
- Ecological enhancement works to support a local bat roost which could include assessment of street lighting, additional planting or simply doing a bat count,
- Liaise with schools about their green schools' initiatives or garden management regimes and include gardens in the stepping stone map of Tullamore Town.

## **What can be achieved and completed in 2026?**

Start at the start. Mapping habitats will identify the larger habitats within Tullamore Tidy Town area. The next step is to record flora and fauna. Record planting schemes. (Niamh).

The next stage is more complicated, how to agree what can be done for Biodiversity in 2026. Let's talk and collate ideas. Be prepared for a learning curve. It always is with nature.

Those who attend workshops should share findings with the group.

Celebrate biodiversity. International Day for Biological Diversity is Friday May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026.