

Local Biodiversity Action Plan for St. Annes Terrace Sligo Town



Collated in consultation with St. Annes Terrace Residents.
by Woodrow Sustainable Solutions Ltd.

Part of the Parks Quarter Biodiversity Training Programme.

Client: Sligo Tidy Towns
September 2022



Acknowledgements

This Local Biodiversity Action Plan was developed from input by volunteer members of St. Annes Terrace in collaboration with Woodrow Sustainable Solutions Ltd (Woodrow).

Woodrow would like to acknowledge and thank all members of the community who gave up their time to meet and share their thoughts and ideas.

This was part of a wider programme of training and development programme for residential communities of south Sligo Town in the area known as 'The Parks Quarter'.

The funding for this project was provided by the EU LEADER fund, following an application from Sligo TidyTowns. Sligo TidyTowns part funded the project.

Front Page Image: The green at St. Annes Terrace, Sligo Town.

Source: All pictures used are property of Woodrow unless otherwise stated.

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Aims of participation in the Park's Quarter Biodiversity programme

The aim of participation in this programme is to educate, enable and encourage residents to create more biodiverse areas in their gardens and communal areas.

How this programme and Local Biodiversity Action Plan was developed

Sligo Tidy Towns secured EU LEADER funding in 2022 to deliver a biodiversity training programme for communities across the Park's Quarter of Sligo Town. Woodrow Sustainable Solutions Ltd (Woodrow) won the tender to deliver this training for Sligo Tidy Towns.

Representatives of St. Annes Terrace were contacted to determine if local residents were interested in participating in the creation of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Having expressed an interest some members of the community volunteered to join this programme.

Residents met with staff from Woodrow to walk around the estate and to discuss potential opportunities to enhance biodiversity and to create a Biodiversity Action Plan;

From this collaboration, this action plan was collated specifically for St. Annes Terrace. The proposed actions are relatively cheap and should be achievable by the community.

Existing Biodiversity in St. Annes Terrace

There are around 40 residential homes in St. Annes Terrace, which is located just to the east of Sligo town centre and to the South of the Garvogue. A terrace of houses lines each side of the road. The houses have modest front gardens but substantial linear back gardens. The back gardens constitute the biodiversity hot-spot along this avenue.

As such, the residents will be able to apply what they learn during the workshops and incorporate these biodiversity enhancing actions into their own private gardens. This will likely have a cumulative and positive effect on the local biodiversity.



Figure 1: The Street Signage for St. Annes Terrace

For example, in the image above (Figure 1) we can see two shrubs in a private front garden. The shrub on the left-hand side is a variegated variety of privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*). This shrub is evergreen and provides habitat for nesting birds and insects. The shrub on the right-hand side of the image is a variety of *Senecio* spp. which flowers during summer months providing forage for a wide range of pollinators.

Furthermore, a number of semi-mature broad-leaf trees line the bottom of the gardens (Figure 2). These trees lend structure to each garden, as well as seasonal interest, and most importantly for this project they provide good habitat for nesting birds as well as a variety of native insects.

St. Annes Terrace Biodiversity Action Plan

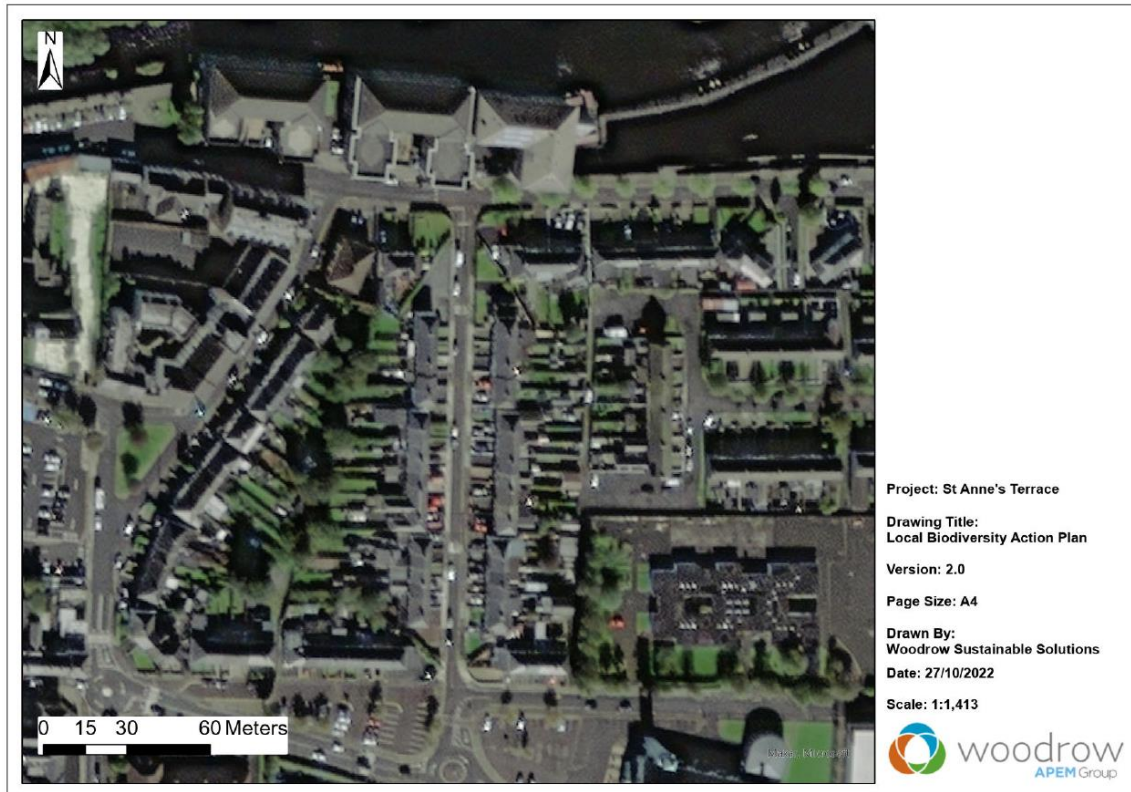


Figure 2: An ariel view of St. Annes Terrace showing the back gardens with trees.

Source: <https://earth.google.com/web/>

There was one house along St. Annes Terrace which stood out for providing good habitat for wildlife, including hedging, shrubs, flowering plants, and climbers (Figure 3). Ivy (*Hedera helix*) flowers out of season, in the Autumn months, when other forage is scarce. This makes it an important resource for our native pollinators. Similarly, the ivy fruits ripen over winter making them an important food source for birds and small mammals during these harsh months. Allowing Ivy to establish itself on the front of the house provides habitat as well as structural diversity – both of which support biodiversity.



Figure 3: This garden provides good habitat for wildlife.

Summary of Actions to enhance biodiversity in St. Annes Terrace

This is a summary of the proposed enhancement activities for the St. Annes Terrace to enhance biodiversity.

No.	Proposed Action	Further Information
1	Install Wall-Mounted Flowerpots and Hanging Baskets in front Gardens.	The boundary walls of resident's gardens show potential for wall-mounted flowerpots. As this is private property then residents must be able to decide for themselves whether they wish to opt in.
2	Reduce Mowing and Let Dandelions Bee.	Encourage the estate not to cut the grass in their front gardens until after the first dandelions have bloomed. Bees emerging from winter hibernation are starving and dandelions are superfoods for bees when there is little alternative forage available in early Spring.
3	Encourage Manual Weeding.	To reduce the use of harmful chemicals, it is recommended that the practice of manual weeding is adopted.
4	Leave Piles of Leaves in Quiet Corners.	This will increase habitat for hedgehogs and insect pollinators over winter months while they are hibernating.
5	Create Shelter (Homes) for Solitary Bees.	Create bee-hotels using piles of wood for a variety of pollinating insects including solitary bees.
6	Build and Erect Bird Boxes in Back Gardens.	Some bird boxes could be erected on the trees in private back gardens, where appropriate to provide habitat for nesting birds.
7	Erect Bird Feeders or Grow Your Own.	Put up bird feeders in gardens, and supply water in the winter. Or indeed grow a plants, such as sun-flowers, which produce high-calorie forage for birds.
8	Build and Install Bat Boxes on Buildings.	Bat boxes can be installed on the outside of buildings providing habitat for bats to roost. Bats are protected mammals.
9	Plant Pollinator-Friendly Shrubs and Ornamental Plants.	Pollinator-friendly shrubs are relatively low-maintenance. Pollinator-friendly ornamental plants require more maintenance but can look wonderful, such as salvias, asters, and aliums. Bulbs such as crocus, grape hyacinth and snowdrops are also pollinator-friendly.
10	Encourage the Safe Disposal of Oils/Paints/Toiletries.	Due to the proximity of the estate to Lough Gill, a site of European importance for wildlife, residents are encouraged to safely dispose of oil/paints/toiletries to ensure harmful chemicals do not reach these special areas.

Proposed Training & Workshop Summary

This is a table of training the residents were interested in receiving. This will form part of a wider programme of workshops and training activities to be delivered for the wider South Sligo Parks Quarter.

Proposed Workshop/walk / Talk	
Deliver a seed-collection and cuttings Workshop.	This workshop will focus on how to save money by collecting seeds, and also how to grow plants from cuttings. The practical elements of gathering, storing and propagating seeds will also be covered.
Deliver a Low-maintenance pollinator-friendly planting workshop.	This workshop will discuss low-maintenance planting schemes.
Bees and Pollinators Workshop.	This workshop will discuss the difference between social and solitary bees, their life-cycle, behavior, habitat preferences, and sources of food.
Activity workshop/s.	Create bird boxes or bat boxes or bird feeders.
Garden Bird Workshop.	This workshop could cover the basics of visual and aural bird identification for common garden visitors. It will also highlight their resource requirements.
Bat walk & workshop.	This workshop will cover the basics of bat ecology, including life-cycle, bat behaviour, and habitat requirements. The workshop would include an educational sunset bat walk using handheld equipment for species identification.
Tree planting activity/workshop	Most cost-effective for community groups is using bare-root trees.

Details of the proposed actions for biodiversity and resources

This Local Biodiversity Action Plan LBAP includes actions that would help the community connect with nature and help support local biodiversity. Increasing plant diversity is often the first step in this process as flowers provide food for pollinating insects and fruits provide food for our birds. Mature trees provide habitat for insects, birds, and bats. All these interrelated relationships create the wider ecosystem.

Ireland is now following the second All Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) which runs from 2021-2025. There is great free information, posters and resources at the website www.pollinators.ie. There are many simple actions outlined in the AIPP that communities can undertake to reverse declines in biodiversity. Many of the proposed actions listed in this Local Biodiversity Action Plan are similar to those recommended in the AIPP. An excellent resource is this community action booklet: https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Local-Communities_actions-to-help-pollinators-July-2021-WEB-JB.pdf

The competition handbook for TidyTowns community is also packed with great advice for communities: <https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/handbook/>



Image shows section from 'Gardens: actions to help pollinators'

Source: https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Gardens_actions-to-help-pollinators-July-2016.pdf

St. Annes Terrace Biodiversity Action Plan

Action 1: Install Wall-Mounted Flowerpots and Hanging Baskets in front Gardens.

The path along St. Annes Terrace does not have any trees or greenspaces for planting. However, each house has a private boundary wall dividing it from the public road. These boundary walls of show potential for installing wall-mounted flowerpots. It goes without saying, that residents would have to opt into to this choice. Indeed, these changes may also need to be approved by the local residents committee or county council. Care must be taken not to obstruct the public path or cause difficulties to those with prams or those who use wheelchairs.

Alternatively, hanging baskets could be installed beside the front doors. Species should be selected not solely for colour but for their potential to support pollinators. For example, suitable species include bacopa (*Sutera cordata* 'Snowflake') and bidens (*Bidens ferulifolia* 'Golden Empire'). Both are showy plants with a trailing habit which produce good resources for pollinators.



Figure 4: The boundary walls of residents' gardens show potential for wall-mounted flowerpots.

Action 2: Reduce Mowing and Let Dandelions Bee.

The war against dandelions is over! These flowers are packed with nutrients which are ideal for bees emerging from hibernation. If the St. Annes Terrace residents did not cut the first blooming dandelions, this would be a great food source for bees when there is little other forage available. Each dandelion head consists of individual flowers (florets) full of pollen and nectar. Nectar is the liquid bees feed on that is full of complex sugars (carbohydrates). Pollen provides protein and fats.

Part of the 'Don't Mow (yet) – let it Grow' campaign is to encourage people to let grass grow long and adopt a different mowing regime. When the grasses grow they can flower, and often seeds in the soil get a chance to grow also – such as cow slips or even some orchids. Communities could adopt a six or twelve week mowing regime. Whilst some may be concerned that it could look untidy, or abandoned, maintaining a neat mown edge makes it obvious that the area is still maintained. Overtime this area will become richer with native flowers. This will save money and resources associated with lawn management.



Image on right courtesy of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. Image on left from Maynooth University Campus where paths have been mown through longer grass areas.

Action 3: Encourage Manual Weeding.

To reduce the use of chemicals there are different ways to weed and reduce weed growth. This includes mulching, hand-pulling, hoeing digging, pulling weeds by hand before they set seed.

Action 4: Leave Piles of Leaves in Quiet Corners.

Piles of leaves can provide appropriate habitat for hedgehogs over winter months while they are hibernating. Such habitat is also essential for the life-cycle of many insects. The leaves can be gathered from under the deciduous trees during the autumn months. Fallen branches and sticks can also be added to these piles. They can then be piled and left at the base of the hedges - away from disturbances.

Action 5: Create Shelter (homes) for Solitary Bees.

Habitats can be created for solitary bees and other insects. This can be done in a simple and innovative way. Its so simple even kids can join in! Making a pile of logs and sticks can be a quick and easy way to make bee hotels. This will perform a similar ecological function to deadwood in a woodland – supporting the life-cycle of insects. Earthen banks and dry stone walls also provide habitat for insects and pollinators. These features might be incorporated into private gardens. More details will be provided in the workshops.



Figure 5: An example of a bug hotel which creates habitat for solitary bees and other insects.

Action 6: Erect bird boxes.

Participants can support local populations of small birds by putting up bird boxes. They could be placed in back gardens or wall mounted. Aim to have them up before the breeding season (maybe by March). They can also be left out all year, providing shelter and a place to roost in the winter.

They should be positioned out of direct sunlight – best facing north or south-east; and away from areas where cats can easily access them. We often see these placed too high, or poorly made with entrance holes too large for the target species. If bird feeders are placed near a nestbox, the nesting bird will spend a lot of energy defending its territory – so please don't.

There is a great information page with lots of FAQs about bird boxes:

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/garden-birds/nestboxes/>

A possible workshop in collaboration with a local Men's Shed could provide opportunity to show families how to assemble pre-cut parts to make a bird box.



This is also an easy template on how to make your own bird box and can be downloaded at:

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/nestbox-designs-for-birds-and-wildlife/>

Action 7: Erect Bird Feeders or Grow them!

The RSPB (UK Wild bird conservation charity) recommends feeding birds throughout the year, not just in the winter. Feeders are a great way to get close-up views of birds. There are many different types of feeders— including ones that fit onto windows, that are perfect for excellent views. You can also make your own bird tables, or indeed grow your own bird food in the form of sunflowers! Just place them quite high, away from cats, and not too exposed.

It is important to keep feeders clean and to prevent transfer of diseases. Move them if birds are not attracted to them. Sweep up any debris under feeders also. A lot of money is spent on buying bird food so try and ensure you know it comes from a good, environmentally responsible source.

Expert guidance on feeding birds can be found at the following website:

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/garden-birds/feeding-your-garden-birds/>

Many ask **what** should we feed birds: They should receive good quality food, for example, high-fat foods are beneficial in the winter. Do not feed birds:

- Salty foods; Loose peanuts, Cooked food or Bread.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/open-a-bird-cafe/>

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/feeding-birds/when-to-feed-garden-birds/>



Image of a Blue-Tit feeding on a bird feeder provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Source: https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/images/wildlife/birds/bluetit/bluetit_cropped.jpg

Action 8: Erect bat boxes.

These flying mammals are amazing animals. Like humans, they are warm blooded and suckle their young with milk. Some can eat up to 3000 midges a night. Bats are under threat through lost of habitats meaning they have less food and shelter; increased use of pesticides and increased lights at night. Residents of St. Annes Terrace can easily make a difference by providing shelter through provision of bat boxes.

Bat boxes can be installed in trees or on the outside of buildings providing habitat for bats to roost. In the Summer pregnant bats gather together to have their babies. The offspring and female bats stay together in 'maternity roosts' until late Summer. Insulated boxes are better for winter hibernation roosts.

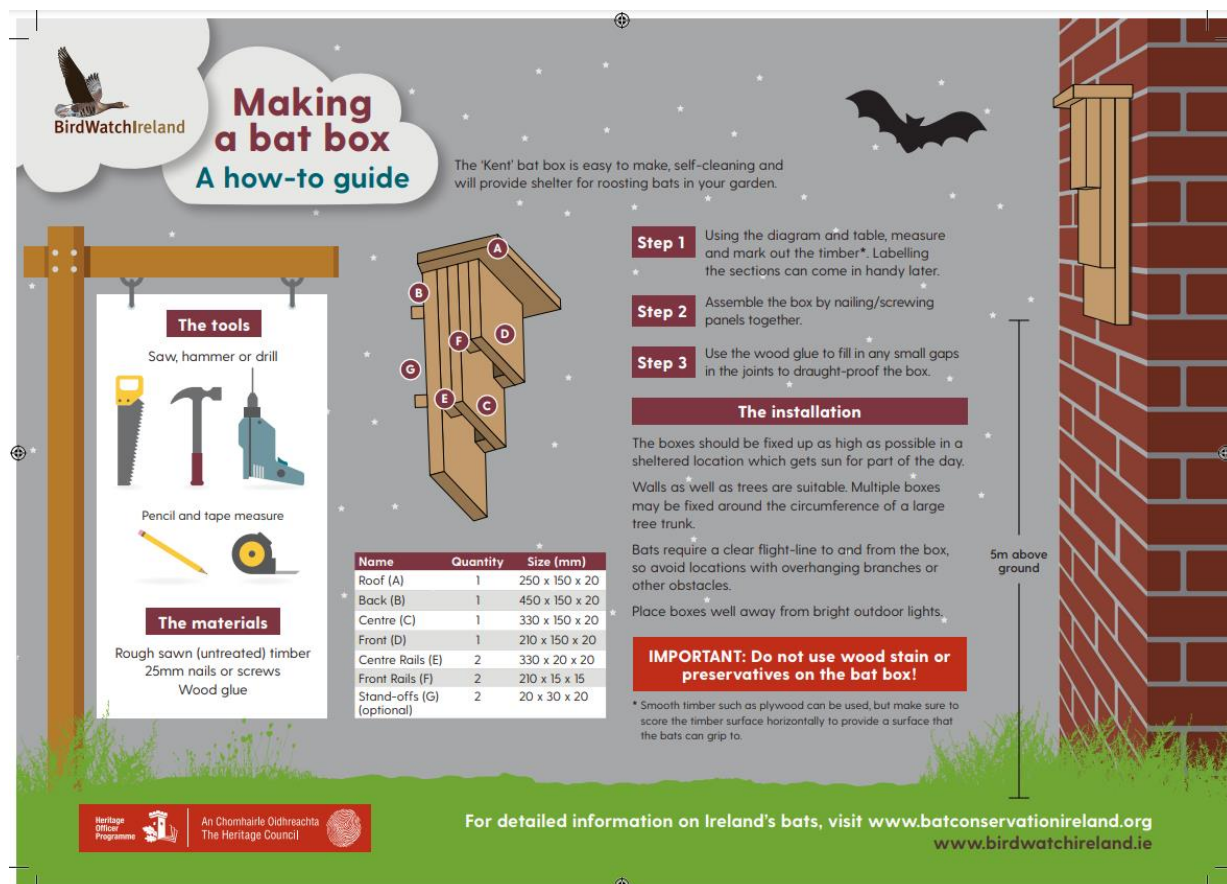


Image shows the great leaflet prepared by Bat Conservation Ireland detailing how to make basic wooden bat boxes and how to put them up.

https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Leaflet_3_batboxes.pdf

Action 9: Pollinator Friendly Plants

Even the smallest garden can plant a pot for pollinators. If the residents of St. Annes Terrace planted one pollinator-friendly plant in their front gardens, there would be a chain or necklace of feeding points for pollinators all around the estate. There are many things that can be planted in flowerpots including; ornamental plants and edible herbs.

Some ornamental plants can also be of benefit to pollinators including; rudbeckia, stonecrop, lavender and lambs-ear. Further information can be found in the All Ireland Pollinator Plan (see below).



Image shows a flyer depicting pollinator friendly plants

Source: <https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AIPP-A5-Flyer-Garden-2022-PRINT.pdf>

What better to have some fresh-growing parsley to pop into your soup? Herbs can be planted in flowerpots. By planting a wide variety of herbs you will ensure there is forage for pollinators throughout the growing season. For example; Basil flowers from July-Sept, Borage from April-Oct, Lavender from June-Aug, Oregano from June-Aug, Rosemary from April-June, Sage from June-Aug, and Thyme from May-Aug.



Image shows a variety of herbs which are both delicious and of benefit to pollinators

Source: <https://www.pollinators.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AIPP-Herbs-A5-Flyer-PRINT.pdf>

Action 10: Encourage safe disposal of oils/paints/toiletries.

Many household chemicals are harmful to the environment. It is important to safely dispose of these to ensure they are not unintentionally introduced to the environment.