

Ballyvaughan Tidy Town

Improving biodiversity through the Tidy Towns Competition



About the case study: The national Tidy Towns initiative was launched in 1958 to encourage communities to improve their local environment and make their area a better place to live, work and visit. Since 2006, there has been a special category that focuses on wildlife, which encourages initiatives to conserve and enhance the local environment including the improvement of biodiversity. 50 out of 450 marks are allocated to how a town manages 'Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities'. As part of a Tidy Town committee's five-year plan, this category should include a Habitat Survey/Wildlife Survey.

Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns Committee approached the GeoparkLIFE in 2014 to assist with this survey. GeoparkLIFE considered this an opportunity to look at how a national programme, based on competition, can not only have a positive impact on increasing biodiversity in urbanised areas, but can provide an effective template for communities to engage in conservation.

Checklist for community-based biodiversity projects based on the Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns scheme

Assess – First establish if there is broad local support, if participants are willing to invest their time and energy and if somebody will agree to be a local coordinator.

Contact: All local stakeholders including businesses and schools

Cost implications: none

Consult – Local conservation groups, ecologists, the local authority heritage officer. Dedicated Tidy towns webpage with essential information: <http://www.tidytowns.ie/get-involved/useful-information/>

Contact: Environment section local authority,

Cost implications: none

Record – A wildlife and Habitat Survey is essential to record a baseline for biodiversity for the town and to inform on what actions can be taken to enhance biodiversity.

Contact: Heritage Officer, local experts, 3rd level institutions.

Cost implications: Qualified ecologist to produce wildlife and habitat survey

Plan – Plan a campaign based on the recommendations of the wildlife and habitat survey

Contact: Group coordinator

Cost implications: none

Notify – Notify all local stakeholders using press and social media to inform them about the formation of the local Tidy Towns committee, contact details and work plans.

Contact: local press

Cost implications: none

Monitor – Monitor the Tidy Towns results as the work of the committee progresses. This can be a valuable incentive and motivator and ensures goals are met.

Contact: Group coordinator

Cost implications: none