

APPENDIX 1

Biodiversity Officer Update - April to September 2022

Projects and Raising Awareness

Mid Ulster Bird Ringing Project

The Traad LNR Constant Effort Site (CES) continues to be a success with all 12 visits completed between the beginning of May and the end of August. Biometrics of almost 500 birds were collected. This data has been submitted to the British Trust for Ornithology who monitor over 120 such CES sites across Britain and Ireland. Bird ringing is one of the most effective methods to study the biology, ecology, behaviour, movement, breeding productivity and population demography of birds. The information gathered is vital in monitoring bird populations and helps identify possible causes of population changes. Such data can be used for determining Priority Species, enabling conservation action to be appropriately targeted.



For the last number of years, Traad CES has been recognised as the best CES in Northern Ireland. This is not only through the vital data collected on a range of bird species, but also in terms of engaging with the public and the training opportunities it provides. Such has been the success at Traad that other organisations are now trying to establish similar schemes. Oxford Island CES started in 2021, and the RSPB and BTO have trialled the same at Portmore Lough for the 2022 season. Even with these other sites now operating, Traad CES is still considered to be the site to 'get to' in terms of the quality of training provided, which reflects well on MUDC.

To continue engagement with participants of the CES, it is planned to organise a few Winter Ringing sessions, prior to preparations for the 2023 CES season.

All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Survey

This is the 13th consecutive year this survey has been undertaken along the Torrent River/Coalisland Canal. The data collected from this survey feeds into the All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Survey through Bat Conservation Ireland. Over 600 sites have been surveyed across the island of Ireland since 2006. Coalisland Canal is one of a limited number that have been continuously surveyed for over 12 years. This long-term data not only provides an assessment of how Daubenton's bats are doing locally, but also makes a valuable contribution at a national scale.



The data gathered through this survey will be submitted to Bat Conservation Ireland when the surveys have been completed.

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan



With Mid Ulster District Council now an official partner of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, there are a number of actions to be undertaken each year to support the AIPP. The Biodiversity Officer continues to work with other council sections to deliver these actions, in particular the creation of meadows through the Don't Mow, Let it Grow management system.



In addition, the Biodiversity Officer has delivered three workshops focussing on pollinators and how to take action to protect them. These actions fulfil the requirement for a Year 1 partner. The Biodiversity Officer will report the relevant activities to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan before the end of 2022, when all activities have been completed.

Non-native Invasive Species

The Biodiversity Officer continues to work with other relevant council sections in relation to non-native invasive species. The Biodiversity Officer has coordinated responses to queries from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency regarding MUDC activities and obligations under “The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019” in relation to grey squirrel management. This contentious issue will require ongoing consultation until a management programme can be agreed. The Biodiversity Officer continues to develop the partnership with the recently formed Mid Ulster Red Squirrel Group.



Biodiversity Recording



Northern Ireland is vastly under-recorded in terms of biodiversity. The Biodiversity Officer continues to encourage people to record the wildlife they see and submit their records to the national database. In addition to general wildlife records, local people are encouraged to take part in targeted ‘citizen science’ surveys such as the Big Butterfly Count. This information helps build a better picture of how our local

biodiversity is faring, enabling an assessment to be made on the health of our environment.

This will help guide specific action to help protect our most threatened habitats and species at both a local and national scale.



Corporate Improvement Plan – CIP1 Action 13

In accordance with the CIP, a questionnaire had been circulated to all council sections to try to establish a baseline as to the potential impacts each council function may be having on biodiversity, with the aim of looking at where impacts could be reduced, and ideally where biodiversity enhancement actions could be undertaken. Although several sections did reply, overall, there was a poor response.

This resulted in a rethink and a change in direction. The decision was taken to work with those areas where a difference could be made. The idea is to develop a toolkit to enable habitat assessments to be made on council properties and linked with the GIS system so these can be mapped. A small number of sites have been selected to trial this tool, and after review and any necessary amendments will eventually be rolled out to all council owned/managed properties. Following the habitat surveys, an assessment can be made as to potential actions that could be undertaken for biodiversity enhancement. The Biodiversity Officer is continuing to develop the methodology that best suits the council requirements.

Biodiversity Advice and Issues

Mid Ulster District Council

The Biodiversity Officer continues to provide advice to council on a range of biodiversity issues. This includes:

- Providing advice and biodiversity information on Habitat Regulation Assessments to be undertaken to ensure the council do not contravene relevant legislation (The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (NI) 1995)
- Providing advice to ensure council do not infringe legal requirements under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011, and Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 (as amended 2011).
- Providing advice on fulfilling obligations under the Biodiversity Duty to “further the conservation of biodiversity” (Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011).
- Providing advice on council obligations under the “The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019”.
- Providing advice on general biodiversity related enquiries from council staff.

General Public

The Biodiversity Officer continues to provide advice to and respond to queries from the public on a wide range of biodiversity issues.