



**Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan
2022-2027**



An Action of the Fingal County Biodiversity Plan 2010-2015

Compiled by NatureCubsIreland



Cover photo: Heather walk Open Space with Cowslips in Portmarnock

All photos taken by Author unless otherwise stated

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Biodiversity and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.....	3
The changing face of Ireland’s landscape; Tidy Towns Competitions, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.....	3
Project Description.....	4
Biodiversity Connectivity	4
Portmarnock and its environment.....	5
Survey.....	5
Generic Actions and points to note for all Local Biodiversity Action Plans	7
a) Monitoring Actions and recording results	7
b) Actions Requiring Consent for SACs and SPAs	7
Description of some of the projects in this Plan:.....	7
1) Potatoskin Lane:.....	8
2) Portmarnock Sand Dunes:.....	9
3) Martello Tower to Southern Cross Monument:.....	9
4) Wendell Avenue open space at SPAR	10
Table 2: Fingal County Council Actions as part of Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan.....	11
Table 3: Portmarnock Tidy Towns Group actions as part of Local Biodiversity Action Plan	13
Maps generated as part of the Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan	14
Figure 5: Biodiversity Connectivity in Portmarnock Tidy Towns Area	14
Figure 6: Biodiversity Hotspots identified in Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan	15
Figure 7: Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan Action Locations	16
References	17



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Biodiversity and Local Biodiversity Action Plans

There are many definitions of 'Biodiversity'. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2019) defined Biodiversity as *"the variability among living inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic systems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and between ecosystems"*. In layman's terms, it is how all elements of nature work together to preserve functioning ecosystems.

The Convention on Biological Diversity was signed by Ireland in 1996. One of the obligations of Signatories is the publication of National Biodiversity Reports. A relevant Action of Ireland's first National Biodiversity Action Plan (2002) was for Local Authorities to produce their own Biodiversity Action Plans. The production of these Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plans is an objective of Fingal's Biodiversity Action Plan (2010).

The changing face of Ireland's landscape; Tidy Towns Competitions, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and Local Biodiversity Action Plans

The 2010 Handbook for the National Tidy Towns Competition describes the category; 'Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities'. This category requires local groups to manage spaces for wildlife, instead of simply for tidy aesthetic reasons. Groups are awarded for leaving spaces wild, for planting perennial species and for taking note of the wildlife and flora in their surroundings.

This Tidy Towns category is in sync with the All Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) (2015-2020) and now 2021-2025, which provide tools to these groups to fulfil the Tidy Towns Wildlife category. The AIPP changed perceptions of untidiness in public spaces and provided the practical tools to local groups to know what and when to plant and when to leave nature alone in order to help our declining pollinator species.

In 2016, The Tidy Towns Competition introduced the Tidy Towns Local Authority Pollinator Award which again, added to the interest by Community groups in pollinator actions.

Tidy Towns groups and Community Groups all over the country have embraced this change in landscape management. This Fingal Local Biodiversity Action Plan project validates their efforts and provides further tools to enhance the biodiversity of their areas.



Project Description

Fingal County Council acknowledged the many pollinator initiatives of Tidy Towns and Community groups across the County and realised the importance of assisting these groups in their endeavours. This Local Biodiversity Action Plan project was initiated to provide these groups with additional tools to protect and enhance local biodiversity. Ecological Contractors were hired to assist Tidy Towns and Community Groups groups to identify local biodiversity opportunities; to advise on ecological best practice methods and to write subsequent Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

The areas covered within the remit of this LBAP are public spaces where the Tidy Towns groups already carry out activities or wish to do so in the future.

Private spaces were also visited where that stakeholder was interested in participating e.g. Pitch and Putt Clubs, Scout Dens, Churches, Schools etc. Biodiversity reports were written for these private sites as part of this LBAP as these would prove to be valuable in terms of adding to the network of nature-friendly stepping stones across the whole Tidy Towns area. A list of these private site reports in Portmarnock is found in Table 1.

Biodiversity Connectivity

Much of this Plan is focused on providing biodiversity connectivity across the Portmarnock Tidy Towns area (Figure 5). By its nature, a LBAP is limited in size and thus must acknowledge man-made green connections between naturally occurring biodiversity to enable flora and fauna to adapt to change and survive.

'Biodiversity hotspots' in Portmarnock were identified by the Tidy Towns group (Figure 6) and Actions to conserve and enhance their biodiversity identified (Tables 2 and 3). Naturally occurring or man-made linkages between these Hotspots and to other natural spaces were identified and informed Actions in this Plan. These man-made linkages are termed 'Green Infrastructure' and they are corridors along which animal and plant species can co-exist with man's uses of this same infrastructure e.g. train line, pedestrian or cycling pathway and football pitches.

A number of Green Infrastructure corridors were identified within the Portmarnock Tidy Towns area and with adjacent areas while writing this Plan:

- Iarnród Éireann train line
- Baldoyle to Portmarnock Greenway
- Portmarnock South LAP

These man-made green connections form links to connect naturally occurring biodiversity hotspots in this Local Biodiversity Action Plan.



Portmarnock and its environment

Portmarnock is a coastal town situated in the east of Fingal County. It is home to the world famous Portmarnock Golf Club and it's Blue Flag Velvet Strand attracts thousands of tourists annually.

Portmarnock is fortunate to have views of Lambay Island and Ireland's Eye and the newly opened Baldoyle to Portmarnock Greenway allows for safe walking or cycling along this stunning coastline.

Natural biodiversity features in Portmarnock include the Sluice River and its adjacent wetlands called the Sluice River Marsh which is a protected site under the Irish Wildlife Act. Internationally protected Light bellied Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla hrota*) feed on grasslands in a number of locations in Portmarnock annually including Portmarnock Public Park across from the Texaco garage. Impressive sand dunes stretch the length of Velvet Strand.

Although of man made origin, Robswalls Park in the north of Portmarnock links this Tidy Towns area with Malahide and forms a 90 acre park with vast stretches of meadow and Brent Geese feeding grassland. Del Riada Woodland, also in the north has good species diversity.

The Tidy Towns group and Portmarnock Beach Clean Coast Group in Portmarnock are very active and involved in biodiversity initiatives locally. They have already implemented many useful biodiversity actions and identified a number of locations that should to be conserved and interpreted.

Survey

Desktop survey:

A Desktop Study was carried out to research existing Portmarnock biodiversity information. A review was taken of previous biodiversity surveys, of information relating to protected species and habitats and any National or Local policies or Plans that might impact biodiversity. The Desktop survey also attempted to identify and liaise with groups that might like to participate in the LBAP. Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) were consulted to identify locations of wildlife and or notable flora and any challenges facing local flora and fauna were discussed. During this time, the true boundary of the Tidy Towns area was finalised with the help of the Tidy Towns groups.

The Desktop Survey noted the following information pertinent to Portmarnock biodiversity:

- Baldoyle Bay SPA (Site Code 4016)
- Malahide Estuary SAC (Site Code 4025)
- Baldoyle Bay SAC (Site Code 0199)
- Portmarnock South LAP
- Sluice River Marsh pNHA (Site Code 1763)
- Brent Geese feeding areas

Google Earth Pro software was used to produce a map with the information derived from the Desktop Survey. Fingal County Council Development Plan (2017-2023) Open Spaces, High Amenity area, Nature Development Areas and Ecological Buffer Zones were added. Biodiversity hotspots identified by local groups were then added to this map to create a visualisation of potential wildlife corridors across Portmarnock and to reveal major gaps in this connectivity.

Field survey:

A series of site visits was carried out so that areas of biodiversity that were important to the community were identified. As much of the Tidy Towns area was visited as possible.

Maps generated in the Desktop Survey phase were used to identify locations not suggested by Tidy Towns groups and these were visited for their potential biodiversity significance. The following categories of information were recorded during any site visit:

- Notable habitats/species (flora or fauna)
- Challenges to these notable habitats/species
- Existing uses if any of these identified habitats/sites
- Potential biodiversity outcomes for that site
- Wishlist of the Tidy Towns/Community Group
- Best practice methods to be employed at a location
- Potential for site enhancement for biodiversity
- Need for biodiversity interpretation

Many of the spaces of interest were quite small so habitat classification e.g. Fossit (2000) was not usually applied as could not be mapped on a large scale. Instead, 'Biodiversity Hotspots' were noted and described (Figure 6).

Community groups, Tidy Towns volunteers, Schools, churches, Scout troops and other interested also participated in these site visits on occasion. These stakeholders had been identified or came forward in the Desktop Survey phase of the project. Many of these groups offered to assist the Tidy Towns groups going forward e.g. Transition Year classes or Scout Troops. This was considered to be an important outcome of this LBAP as all the Tidy Towns groups stated that they were already overworked due to lack of volunteers and the age profile of volunteers. A list of biodiversity reports written for these participating groups' private lands such as Schools, Churches, Scout Dens etc. in Portmarnock is included as Table 1 below.

Additional Biodiversity Report	Actions recommended Y/N	Report available Y/N
St. Anne's Church	Yes	Yes
Portmarnock Community School	Yes	Yes
Portmarnock Scout and Guide Den	Yes	Yes
Portmarnock Train Station	Yes	Yes
Portmarnock Pitch and Putt Club	Yes	Yes
The Links Apartment Complex	Yes	Yes

Table 1: List of Biodiversity reports written for private stakeholders as part of the Portmarnock LBAP

As a result of the site visits; a better understanding of the of the local community, of the local biodiversity and of previously unidentified biodiversity emerged. This allowed for the formulation of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan that would be specific to this particular Tidy Towns area and community.



Generic Actions and points to note for all Local Biodiversity Action Plans

a) Monitoring Actions and recording results

Any Community Group implementing biodiversity initiatives should familiarise themselves with the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) website (www.biodiversityireland.ie). It is here that many practical resources are made available to local groups. It is also here where biodiversity data are recorded. Community groups should monitor the effectiveness of their actions to see what is working and what is not. The best way to do this is to participate in Citizen Science surveys. Many of these are described on the NBDC website. The results of these surveys may change over the period of a project, thus giving us a picture of the effectiveness of efforts. Any wild species, whether flora or fauna, should be recorded on the NBDC website and any pollinator sites created within an area, should be logged on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan website (www.pollinators.ie).

This will create a true map of pollinator corridors across the country. Thus, Citizen Science surveys are not included in the Tables of Actions (Table 2 and Table 3) as it is a given that they will be conducted as part of this LBAP and results logged on the NBDC website. See Appendix 10 for a list of Citizen Science surveys and instructions on how to log results.

b) Actions Requiring Consent for SACs and SPAs

If your area falls within the boundary of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area for birds (SPA), then certain activities that can be carried out here are limited without specific permission. There is a list of activities called Activities Requiring Consent (ARC) that cannot be carried out here without permission from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The list of ARCs is found in the Statutory Instrument (S.I) for that SAC or SPA (www.irishstatutebook.ie). Schedule 4 of the relevant S.I. will list the ARCs for that site.

Description of some of the projects in this Plan:

The Tables of agreed Actions to implement this Local Biodiversity Action Plan are given in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 is the list of Actions to be undertaken by Fingal County Council over the 5 year period. Table 3 is the list of Actions that will be undertaken by the Tidy Towns Group, with the support of Fingal County Council and with the assistance of other named local community groups. As mentioned previously, private stakeholders such as Sports Clubs, Churches and Schools will be implementing biodiversity actions and these participating groups are listed in Table 1.

Four of the larger Tidy Towns LBAP projects are described below. Detailed site reports are available for all areas of the LBAP and can be made available as a resource to implement all Actions in the Plan.

13 Appendices have been included at the back of this Plan. The objective of including these Appendices is to provide a practical tool to the Tidy Towns groups when carrying out the Actions.

There are myriad resources available to help groups and it can become overwhelming to figure out which to use. These Appendices have pulled together information from many sources so that a single location can be used as a source of practical guidance.

Target species are identified in Tables 2 and 3 to allow for monitoring of effectiveness of Actions.

1) Potatoskin Lane:

This lane extends from St. Anne’s Catholic Church to the entrance of Portmarnock Pitch and Putt Club. The Dunes Housing Estate backs onto Potatoskin Lane to the north. Portmarnock Tidy Towns group has been active at Potatoskin Lane in developing a meadow area and a number of additional actions are proposed in this Plan.



1a



1b



1c

Fig. 1a: Meadow area on Potatoskin Lane backing on The Dunes estate
Fig. 1b: Shaded grass verge along bare wall at Potatoskin Lane
Fig. 1c: Ivy clad wall on Potatoskin Lane near Portmarnock Pitch and Putt Club

Fig. 1c: Ivy clad wall on Potatoskin Lane near Portmarnock Pitch and Putt Club

This Plan recommends creating a more defined shape on the meadow side of the Lane. Cutting a strip of grass along the path will achieve this (Appendix 1). The bare wall along The Dunes estate would benefit from native hedgerow trees (Appendix 5). Shade tolerant wildlife friendly plants will add depth and biodiversity value to the shaded side of the lane along another bare wall (Appendix 2). Bird and Bat boxes will add nesting and roosting sites along the treeline near the Portmarnock Pitch and Putt Club entrance (Appendix 7). Unauthorised garden waste dumping along the lane needs to be addressed as some garden variety unwanted plants are growing along the lane e.g. 3 Corner Garlic (*Allium triquetrum*) (Appendix 6). The soil along the laneway near the Pitch and Putt Club is very sandy and thus suited to growing Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) seed. This is the favourite food plant of the Red Listed Large Carder Bee (*Bombus muscorum*) (Sustainable Skerries *pers. comm.*, 2021). It is proposed to collect this seed locally and plant along the sandy laneway (Appendix 8).



1d

Figure 1d: Sandy substrate along Lane



1e

Figure 1e: Unauthorised garden waste along Lane



3a



3b

Figure 3a: Embryonic sand dunes forming

Figure 3b: Meadow grass above red line at Monument

4) Wendell Avenue open space at SPAR

There is an open green space at the junction of Wendell Avenue and Coast Rd. at the SPAR shop. Portmarnock Tidy Towns group actively manages the flower beds in this space. Some wild flora were visible in areas that had not had a recent grass cutting. It is suggested that a space is selected to be managed as a small meadow here. This would be situated at the western end of the green away from the shops.

A hedgerow is growing along the border with the shops. The front of the hedge has been planted with a variety of garden flowers e.g. Daffodils (*Narcissus* sp.) but these are now overgrown with grass and Cleavers (*Galium aparine*). It is suggested that these Daffodils and any other garden variety plants are translocated from this hedgerow location to another space in the green area. This would highlight the hedgerow and a natural grass buffer zone would be more appropriate than garden flowers here.

Some of the old stems and trunks in the hedgerow have beetle holes. These are very important for Solitary Bee nesting sites and it is recommended that these dead stems and trunks are left here.



4a



4b



4c

Fig. 4a: Green at Spar on Wendell Ave. Fig. 4b: Hedgerow with garden flora

Fig. 4c: Beetle holes in dead stems



Table 2: Fingal County Council Actions as part of Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Theme	Animals benefitting	No.	Action	Appendix	Location	I.D.	Year	Partners
Grass Maintenance Schedule Target species: • Bee species • Butterflies	A, B, BT, EF OIS,P, R, TM	1	Meadow cut once a year and remove cuttings	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coast Rd. Portmarnock to Malahide Potatoskin Lane Heather Walk Martello Tower to Southern X Monument St. Rita's Cottage area in Portmarnock Pk. West end of Green at Spar, Wendell Ave. 	1	1-5	FCC
						2		
						3		
						4		
						5		
						6		
Target species: Brent Geese	B	2	Brent Geese feeding area	3	Portmarnock Park historic feeding areas	7	1-5	FCC
Planting Schemes Target species: • Bee species • Butterflies	B, BT, EF, OIS, P, TM	3	Potatoskin Lane: • Shade tolerant bushes • Plant native hedgerow trees	2 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along bare wall on RHS Along Dunes Estate boundary wall 	2	2	FCC/PTT/PCS
Target species: • Bee species • Butterflies	B, BT, OIS, P, TM	4	Perennial wildlife planting	2	Wendell Ave. green space bedding plant area	6	2	FCC/PTT/PCS
Target species: • Bee species • Butterflies	B, BT, OIS, P, TM	5	Plant base of street trees with wildlife friendly plants	2	Residential streets	-	1	FCC/PTT/Residents
Target group: Endemic flora	All	6	• Cease herbicide use	-	• All	-	1-5	FCC
	All	7	• Remove garden waste & liaise with homeowners	6	• Potatoskin Lane	2	1	FCC

A: Amphibians e.g. Frog, Common Newt

EF: Endemic flora e.g. local wildflowers

R: Reptiles e.g. Common Lizard

PBS: Portmarnock Community School

Annex IV: Annex IV of EU Habitats Directive EU92/43/EEC

AI: Aquatic Invertebrates

OIS: Other Invertebrates and Spiders

TM: Terrestrial mammals e.g. Hedgehog, Shrew, Field Mouse, Fox, Badger

PBCCG: Portmarnock Beach Clean Coast Group

B: Birds BT: Bats

P: Pollinators e.g. Bees, Moths, Butterflies, Hoverflies

BoCCI: Birds of Conservation Concern Ireland



Target species: Annex IV: Bats	Bt.	8a 8b	Erect bat boxes Countywide Bat Survey	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potatoskin lane trees • All 	2 -	2 1-5	FCC/PTT/PCS/Scouts
Target habitat: Sand Dunes	A, B, BT, EF, OIS, P, R, TM	9	Feasibility Study to investigate best method of dune protection at Portmarnock using best practice.	11	Portmarnock Sand Dunes	8	3	FCC
Education	P	10	Interpretation Panels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollinator Plan • Pollinator Plan & Embryonic Dunes 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potatoskin Lane • Southern Cross Monument 	2 4	2-5	FCC/PTT/PCS/PBCCG
Target Species: Birds	B	11	Countywide Bird Survey	-	All	-	1-5	FCC/PTT/PCS/Scouts

A: Amphibians e.g. Frog, Common Newt

EF: Endemic flora e.g. local wildflowers

R: Reptiles e.g. Common Lizard

PBS: Portmarnock Community School

Annex IV: Annex IV of EU Habitats Directive EU92/43/EEC

AI: Aquatic Invertebrates

OIS: Other Invertebrates and Spiders

TM: Terrestrial mammals e.g. Hedgehog, Shrew, Field Mouse, Fox, Badger

PBCCG: Portmarnock Beach Clean Coast Group

B: Birds **BT:** Bats

P: Pollinators e.g. Bees, Moths, Butterflies, Hoverflies

BoCCI: Birds of Conservation Concern Ireland



Table 3: Portmarnock Tidy Towns Group actions as part of Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Theme	Animals benefitting	No.	Action	Appendix	Location	I.D.	Year	Partner
Target group: Endemic Flora	All	T1	Collect and store wildflower seed	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant local Kidney Vetch seed on Potatoskin Lane sandy areas Collect and store Cowslip and Clover seed from Heather Walk 	2 3	2	PTT/PBCCG/Portmarnock Community School (PCS)
	All	T2	Control unwanted plant species: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sycamore Sea Buckthorn Tree Mallow Alexanders 3 Corner Garlic 	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portmarnock Sand Dunes Potatoskin Lane 	8 2	1-5	PTT/PBCCG/PCS/Portmarnock Scouts
	All	T3	Litter picking	-	Portmarnock Sand Dunes	8	1-5	PTT/PCS/Scouts
Target species: Solitary Bees	OIS, P	T4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandy soil banks for solitary bee nests Leave dead wood for cavity nesting bees 	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potatoskin Lane next to Pitch & Putt Club Wendell Ave. green space 	2 6	2	PTT/PCS



Maps generated as part of the Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan

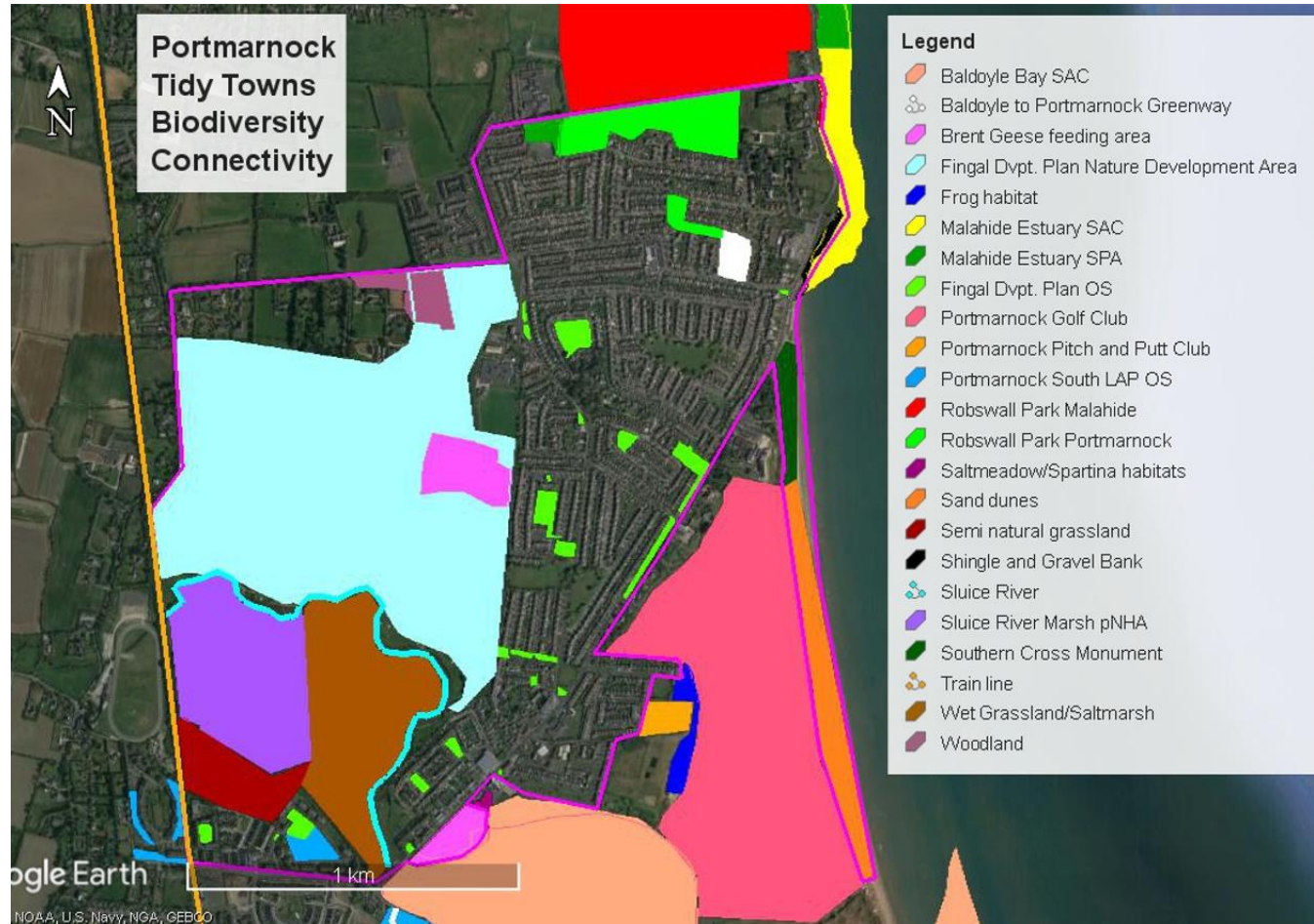


Figure 5: Biodiversity Connectivity in Portmarnock Tidy Towns Area

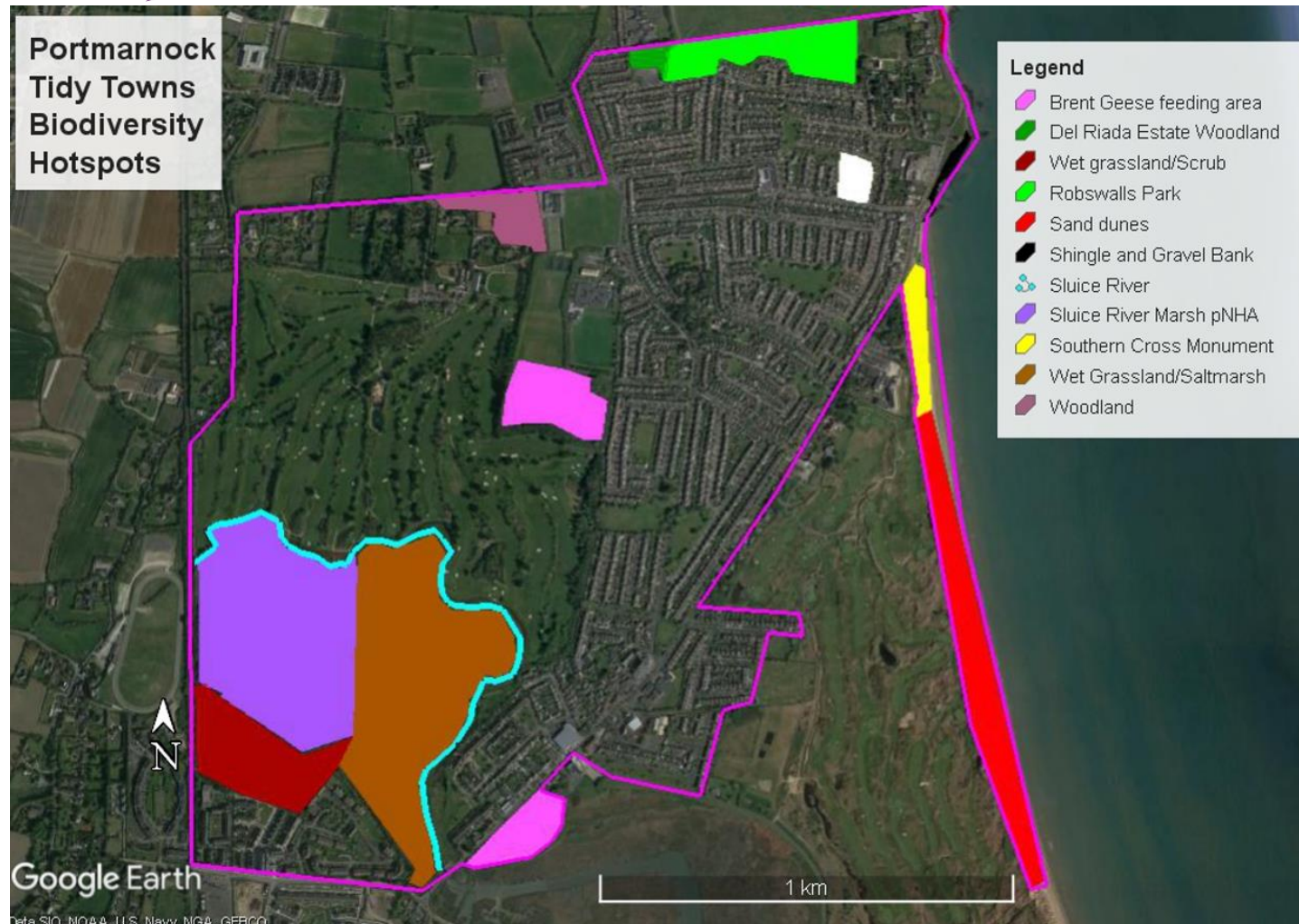


Figure 6: Biodiversity Hotspots identified in Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan



Figure 7: Portmarnock Tidy Towns Local Biodiversity Action Plan Action Locations



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