

Chapter 13 Natural Heritage, Landscape and Amenities

13.0 Aim

To conserve, protect and enhance Tullamore's natural heritage, where possible. The Councils will aim to strike a reasonable balance between conservation and development objectives in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development.

The following aims/principles will guide the Councils heritage policies and objectives as set out in this plan:

- To avoid damage or loss of natural heritage.
- To mitigate the effects of harm where it cannot be avoided.
- To promote appropriate enhancement as an integral part of any development.
- To promote a reasonable balance between conservation measures and development measures in the interests of promoting the orderly and sustainable development of Tullamore.
- To continue to seek the protection and enhancement of the town and environs landscape and to ensure that development respects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing landscape.

13.1 Context

13.1.1 Natural Heritage

13.1.2 Overview

Over 10% of land area of Ireland is formally and legally designated as being of European importance for nature conservation. European and National Legislation now protects many valuable remaining wild habitats through the designation of sites as proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA's), Natural Heritage Areas (NHA's) (candidate) Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC's) and Special Protection Areas (SPA's). The designation of NHA's is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the designation of SAC's and SPAs are the responsibility of EU, but it is the responsibility of everyone to protect these sites. The process of designation is ongoing, as other sites may be identified during the life of this plan. Sites of nature conservation value have the potential to increase tourism in the area and add to the aesthetic and recreational appeal of the landscape.

13.1.2.1 Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2009

The Councils are the key agencies responsible for the protection of the natural environment. Section 10 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000-2009 requires that a Development Plan include objectives relating to the conservation and protection of the environment, including, in particular, the natural heritage and the conservation of European sites and any other sites, which may be prescribed.

13.1.3 Biodiversity

It is established that biodiversity is being lost at an increasing rate and one of the main objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity was to conserve biodiversity. The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) resulted from the Earth Summit held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Ireland signed the Convention in 1992 and ratified it in 1996. Subsequent agreements, EU Directives and Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan have reinforced this message and the commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity.

13.1.4 National Heritage Plan 2002

A key objective of the National Heritage Plan (2002) seeks to "place heritage at the heart of public life". The plan recognises that heritage is communal and we all share a responsibility to protect it. Protection of heritage must begin at local level enabling everybody to become actively involved in preserving and enhancing the heritage of Tullamore.

13.1.5 Offaly Heritage Plan 2007-2011

The Offaly Heritage Plan is the second Heritage Plan to be prepared and published for the County. It outlines a five-year, specific action plan of work to be carried out in County Offaly, overseen by the Offaly Heritage Forum. The programme delivery is co-ordinated by the Offaly Heritage Office and lists a number of actions to be undertaken over the lifetime of the Heritage Plan. The Councils will continue to work with the Heritage Forum in relation to achieving its targets over this Development Plan period.

13.1.6 Landscape and Amenities

13.1.6.1 Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009

The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009 require that development plans contain objectives for the preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authorities, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

Section 10 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2009 sets out the mandatory objectives including the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities.

13.1.7 Rural Development

13.1.7.1 Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015

Chapter 10 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015 contains a chapter of policy statements, polices and objectives for rural development in County Offaly. The Councils will adopt these polices and objectives where necessary and where relevant to the Environs area of Tullamore. To this effect, polices and objectives which relate to rural development within the environs of Tullamore have been included in this chapter.

13.2 Strategy

13.2.1 National and European Designations

Tables 13.1 and 13.2 (also refer to Maps 13.1 and 13.2) illustrates the proposed Natural Heritage Areas and candidate Special Areas of Conservation within Tullamore. The designation of sites within Tullamore and subsequent protection afforded to them does not always preclude development from occurring. However, the Councils' role is to ensure that development, when considered appropriate, is carried out in a manner that does not impede or disturb the biodiversity of the proposed/designated site.

13.2.1.1 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)

Natural Heritage Areas are designated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the DoEHLG under the provisions of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 in recognition of nationally important habitats, species and sites of geological interest. Natural Heritage Areas cover nationally important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms or geomorphological features, wildlife plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. The ecological interest that underlies proposed NHA's is taken into account in decisions on planning applications.

Table 13.1 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas in Tullamore

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas	
Site Code	Site Name
000571	Charleville Wood
002104	Grand Canal
001777	Ballyduff Wood
000885	Ballyduff Esker

13.2.1.2 Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs)

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation are areas of special importance to wildlife habitats and species. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) lists priority habitats and species that must be conserved. Under the Habitats Directive, each EU member is required to designate SAC's, because they support habitat, plant and animal species that are rare or

threatened in Europe and that require particular measures, including the designation of protected sites to conserve them. While cSAC's are fully protected under the EU Habitats Directive, the term 'candidate' refers to the fact that the sites are currently under consideration by the European Commission. Part IV of the 1997 European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, subsequently amended by the Wildlife Amendment Act, 2000 requires local authorities, in respect of development requiring planning permission, to ensure that an appropriate assessment of the implications of a proposed development within an SAC be undertaken.

Table 13.2 Candidate Special Area of Conservation in Tullamore

Candidate Special Area of Conservation	
Site Code	Site Name
000571	Charleville Wood

13.2.2 Flora Protection Order 1999

The planning process should seek to further protect and enhance those species (currently protected by law) and their habitats. Very often this can be done by minimising adverse impacts – for example, by requiring that development takes place outside the breeding season. In other cases, it may be appropriate to seek to ensure that individual members of a species survive by providing alternative roosts in the case of bats, for example. It may also be appropriate to seek to have an alternative area(s) of habitat provided.

The Councils shall protect plant and animal species that are listed under Wildlife Act, 1976 (amended 2000). Some of the rarest flora species are protected under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. The current list of protected species is set out in the Flora (Protection) Order, (1999) which supersedes orders made in 1980 and 1987. As well as flowering plants and ferns, it includes for the first time a number of mosses, liverworts, lichens and algae. It is illegal to cut, uproot or damage the listed species in any way, or to offer them for sale. This prohibition extends to the taking or sale of seed. In addition, it is illegal to alter, damage or interfere in any way with their habitats. This protection applies wherever the plants are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation.

It should be noted that protected species are protected wherever they occur and not just within designated sites. The Flora Protection Order S.I. No. 94 of 1999 lists the species of flora, which are protected, and also protects the habitat or environment of protected flora, making it an offence to willfully alter or otherwise interfere with these areas. Table 13.3 outlines a number of species that are known to occur in the Tullamore area.

Table 13.3 Occurrence in Tullamore of species protected under the Flora Protection Order (1999)

Species	Notes	Location	Grid Reference
Red Hemp Nettle	Eskers; dry species-rich grasslands	Murphy's Bridge Esker, Tullamore.	N37476 30877
Opposite-Leaved pondweed	Mesotrophic lakes/water bodies	Tullamore River	N340 250

13.2.3 Nature Protection outside Protected Sites

The Councils acknowledge that it is important to maintain and enhance the character and quality of the urban and rural environment in its entirety as wildlife heritage is not confined to statutory designated sites, but is found throughout the countryside and in built-up areas. Protecting areas in isolation from each other, with little regard to conservation in the wider countryside is considered inappropriate.

All development proposals should respect significant wildlife habitat areas and corridors so as to protect flora and fauna and to conserve and enhance their habitat. It is through the conservation of ecological infrastructure such as hedgerows and riparian corridors that a "network of sites" can be developed in the town. These allow for the migration and the

exchange of species between conservation areas. The Councils will continue to develop a hierarchy of open space with the aim of creating a “network of sites” through the town and flowing into the surrounding open countryside. The provision of Green Belts within built up urban areas can play a significant role within this ecological network. The Councils will encourage the management of features of the landscape, which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems for the marking of field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

There are sites within the town and environs that have a level of natural value in terms of the plant and animal life they support and may potentially be under threat as the town area expands. The Councils can ensure that any lost natural habitats are replaced by appropriate new measures such as new planting of native species and the creation of open spaces and wetlands, when development proposals are being considered.

13.2.4 Biodiversity Action Strategy for Offaly

The Biodiversity Action Strategy for Offaly was adopted by Offaly County Council in June 2005. This policy document sets out the process and principles for the biodiversity action plan in Offaly. In addition, “State of the Wild in Offaly” was published in 2007. This publication sets out the baseline data known about each of the flora and fauna species groups in Offaly. The Councils will endeavor to continue efforts to reduce the loss of biodiversity in Tullamore.

The Councils will seek to protect the natural heritage of Tullamore. There may be instances when development may be deemed appropriate in areas that are not designated for conservation protection but where the Councils consider that significant biodiversity is present. In this instance, applicants will be requested to undertake an ecological report of the site. Efforts should be made by the applicant to ensure that minimal disturbance is caused to the existing biodiversity within the site. Evidence of significant biodiversity may be detected because of the nature of the site e.g. waterway, esker, woodland, presence of protected species etc. In such instances, the Councils may recommend the following actions to be taken in order to protect and enhance the identified ecological features:

1. Retain existing habitats e.g. trees, scrub, grassland, ponds, and incorporate into open space areas.
2. Leave rough grassland areas (with appropriate mowing regimes) as wildlife corridors, particularly adjacent to linear features such as roads and watercourses).
3. Retain existing boundary hedgerows between developments and private property. Fencing and man-made boundaries should be erected where necessary but not in the place of a hedgerow.

13.2.5 Riparian (River) Buffer Zones/Wildlife Corridors

Riparian¹ buffer zones are used to protect a particular watercourse from the impact of human activity or development in an area. The buffer zone if sufficiently large and managed will:

- Filter out pollutants and sediment from overland surface runoff.
- Provide a refuge for animals with close affinity to rivers e.g. otters, kingfishers, dragonflies.
- Create habitat necessary for fish and other aquatic life.
- Provide amenity and recreation to local people and visitors to the area (fishing, scenic walks etc).
- Enhance flood alleviation.

In particular, the Grand Canal, Tullamore, Silver and Clodiagh Rivers and the railway line represent “wilderness corridors” for wildlife. Other areas are equally important, but on a more local scale. The Councils will endeavour to retain natural features where new developments are proposed. Also, small stretches of hedgerow or individual trees maybe important parts of the natural environment and should be protected where necessary and possible.

¹ A riparian buffer zone is a strip of vegetated land bordering a river or stream

Where developments are proposed adjacent to waterways and notwithstanding the consideration of setback distances to mitigate against flooding, the Councils will generally seek a setback distance of between **30 metres to 50 metres** from the **waterway's edge**. The Councils may reduce or increase this setback depending on the size of the site and the nature of the development proposed.

13.2.6 Landscape

The Councils have a key role in the preservation of the landscape, views and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty within Tullamore. This can be achieved through the adoption of policies and objectives and their implementation within the development management process. Map 13.3 indicates Tullamore's topography, Map 13.4 "Corine Landcover Map" gives a technical view of Tullamore's landcover and Map 13.5 illustrates the location of eskers in the area.

In general terms, Tullamore's landscape is gently undulating outwards from its urban core into the surrounding hinterland, with linear water bodies running through same, esker ridges located to the north of the town and Charleville Wood to the south-west. Subsequently, the Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015, has identified the different landscape areas of Tullamore and characterised same in relation to their **degree of sensitivity to various kinds of development** (refer to Map 13.6). Typical to urban areas, the majority of Tullamore is classified as "**Low Sensitivity**". The esker system to the north of the town, the Grand Canal and its environs, along with Charleville Wood are all classified as "**High Sensitivity**".

The designation of areas of high amenity within County Offaly and Tullamore provide a basis for the protection of views and prospects of certain visually vulnerable features. However, there may be a number of individual views and prospects which warrant protection within the town and environs area. Site visits for each particular planning application will finally determine if any views will be affected by a proposed development. The protection of a view, and its application through the Development Management process (TTEO 13-18) is simply to protect that view and not to cross over with other controlling policies, for example the single rural house policy.

13.2.7 Eskers

The Councils recognise the unique importance of Tullamore's Esker Landscape deriving from its geological, zoological, botanical and scientific value. Map 13.3 highlights the location of these eskers which have been designated Areas of High Amenity (AHA) in the Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015. The Eiscir Riada (the major esker ridge) runs through Arden and Ballyduff. It is an objective of the Councils to protect the remaining esker and to reserve it as a green amenity space. It is noted that the esker to the north of the town has been much eroded by quarrying.

13.2.8 Open Space and Recreation

Open space provision in Tullamore comprises both public open space and privately owned/operated sports grounds and playing pitches.

The principal area of public open space serving the town centre is Lloyd Town Park on Cormac Street. In addition, substantial areas of open space are provided in the Arden area to the north of the centre and at Cloncollog to the south-east. Further areas of open space are identified in the plan (refer to Chapter 5).

The privately owned lands of Charleville Castle Demesne and Estate continue to provide a significant amenity for the town. These lands include Charleville Wood (proposed Natural Heritage Area and Special Area of Conservation) and large tracts of agricultural lands. The Councils will continue to apply a flexible approach to the future development of the Castle and Demesne grounds. The Councils will continue to facilitate and cooperate with the owner/s of these lands in protecting this valuable amenity area.

Privately owned sports grounds and playing pitches provide a significant and valuable amenity within the town. In particular, the playing facilities at Tullamore GAA Club, Tullamore Rugby Club and Tullamore Harriers continue to offer sporting amenities of a very high standard.

As part of the Tullamore Public Realm Strategy, the Councils will continue to further develop and extend the network of interlinked parks and green spaces within the town and environs. Access to, and permeability within, this network of green space is of key importance to pedestrians and cyclists.

13.2.9 The Grand Canal

The Grand Canal represents a very significant and valuable amenity for the town of Tullamore and many people use its walks, especially at the eastern end of the town. The Grand Canal is part of a 750km inland waterways networks and due to past developments and improvements, the town is accessible by water from the River Shannon, Barrow and Erne (into Northern Ireland). The opening of the Royal Canal to the Shannon in 2009 is likely to lead to increased boat traffic.

The importance of the canal as a linear park and tourism and recreational facility has been recognised in the Grand Canal Corridor Study produced in 2002 by the Heritage Council.

13.2.10 Trees, Hedgerows, Traditional Stonewalls

The Councils recognise the heritage and amenity importance of hedgerows within the environs of Tullamore town. Hedgerows provide a corridor role in the facilitation of the movement and distribution of wild flora and fauna through the landscape (habitat for insects, nesting sites for birds, assist mammals in their survival). In addition, hedgerows also provide a service to farms in terms of boundaries, have a scenic appearance and their root systems regulate water movement and improve the quality of water.

13.2.10.1 Trees and Woodlands

The Councils intend to uphold the amenity, educational and scientific value of trees and woodlands. There are currently no Tree Preservation Orders within Tullamore. There are a small number of stands of trees which are attractive features of the town and important in their contribution to the town's visual setting and these will be examined over the plan period with a view to their preservation.

Notwithstanding the above, it is the overall policy of this plan to protect trees and tree groups within Tullamore that have significant value to the built/natural environment and consequently amenity value to the people of Tullamore.

The Councils will not normally grant planning permission for development which requires the felling of sound mature trees, save where it is absolutely necessary in the interests of safety (both for the development and for traffic) or the siting of development. In such cases, the Councils will require the developer to replant suitable trees and take steps to ensure their survival.

13.2.11 Walking Routes/Heritage Trail

Objective TTEO 13-17 sets out the Councils continued plans to further develop nature walks in Tullamore. Also, the Tullamore heritage trail leads to a number of the main attractions of the area. The Councils will continue to support and upgrade infrastructure on these routes as resources permit i.e. lighting, footpaths, etc. and will seek to identify other walking routes/paths within the town and environs.

13.2.12 Areas of High Amenity

Within the County Development Plan 2009-2015, Offaly County Council has designated the eskers to the north of Tullamore town and environs as "**Areas of High Amenity**" (refer to Map 13.7). During the life of this plan, the Councils will investigate further designations of "Areas of High Amenity" within the town including parks, green spaces etc.

13.2.13 Sand and Gravel Extraction

The Councils recognise the importance of sand and gravel extractions for the economic/ infrastructural development and as a valuable source of employment, for Tullamore and its hinterland. It is also recognised however, that exploitation of deposits can have a seriously damaging environmental impact on the scientific, recreational and amenity value of the Tullamore's natural landscape, in particular its **esker network**.

The suitability of any extraction enterprise shall be assessed on the basis of the sensitivity of the local environment to such impacts; the scale of the development proposed and the capacity of the road network in the area to accommodate associated traffic.

It shall be the Councils' policy to ensure that extractions do not result in a reduction of the visual amenity in "**Areas of High Amenity**" and Landscapes classified as "**High Sensitivity**". Also, it shall be the Councils' policy to ensure damage to areas of scientific importance or of geological, botanical, zoological and other natural significance shall not be permitted. It is the Councils' policy that all such workings are subjected to landscaping requirements and worked out quarries are rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Councils, which could include recreational, amenity and end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to wastes such as soil, stone and subsoils and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.

The Councils will have regard to the DoEHLG's Guidelines for Planning Authorities for Quarries and Ancillary Activities 2004 when assessing applications relating to the extraction industry in Tullamore. In this regard, bonds or levies will be required by the Councils as a condition of any planning permission granted to ensure satisfactory reinstatement, on completion of extraction. The Councils will require the payment of a contribution towards the cost of road improvement and reinstatement works necessitated by permitted developments.

The Councils recognise the unique importance of Tullamore's Esker landscape deriving from its scientific, botanical, archaeological and historical value. All proposals for sand and gravel extraction from Eskers will be determined by reference to the need to conserve the environment, character and scientific value and the extent to which the proposed development would be damaging to these qualities. Aggregate Potential Mapping is one measure of determining where potential gravel extraction can take place in Tullamore. The Geological Survey of Ireland carries out this survey work in association with Local Authorities. The Councils will cooperate with the GSI to ensure the completion of aggregate potential mapping for Tullamore and County Offaly.

13.3 Policy

Natural Heritage

TTEP 13-01 It is the Councils' policy to have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on sites with proposed and/or nature conservation designations.

TTEP 13-02 It is the Councils' policy to prohibit any development that would be harmful to, or that would result in, a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of protected species within Tullamore and to support/co-operate with statutory authorities and others in support of measures taken to manage proposed or designated sites in order to achieve their conservation objectives.

TTEP 13-03 It is the Councils' policy to protect the integrity of Charleville Wood (proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) and cSAC) and to cooperate with relevant government bodies and the landowner in the management of Charleville Wood and Estate.

TTEP 13-04 It is the Councils' policy to protect and enhance the built and natural heritage and the recreational potential of the Grand Canal Corridor and to encourage and promote access to and understanding of the Grand Canal.

TTEP 13-05 It is the Councils' policy to protect, conserve and enhance Tullamore's biodiversity and natural heritage including wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats, landscapes and/or landscape features of importance to wildlife, especially along the Railway line, the Grand Canal and the Tullamore, Silver and Clodiagh Rivers.

TTEP 13-06 It is the Councils' policy to continue to promote education, knowledge and pride in the natural heritage of Tullamore.

TTEP 13-07 It is the Councils' policy to conserve, protect and enhance where possible wildlife habitats such as rivers (including riparian buffer zones/wildlife corridors), streams, wetlands, trees, woodlands and scrub, hedgerows and other boundary types such as stone walls and ditches providing a network of habitats and corridors essential for wildlife to flourish.

TTEP 13-08 It is the Councils' policy to protect riparian corridors by reserving land along their banks for ecological corridors and maintain them free from inappropriate development, where appropriate, and discourage culverting or realignment.

TTEP 13-09 It is the Councils' policy to promote the protection and preservation of existing hedgerows and to encourage planting of native hedgerow species.

TTEP 13-10 It is the Councils' policy to use native species in Tullamore, including on the Councils property, for landscaping works carried out by or on the part of Tullamore Town Council/Offaly County Council.

TTEP 13-11 It is the Councils' policy to promote the preservation and enhancement of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees.

TTEP 13-12 It is the Councils' policy to discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development and to encourage tree surgery rather than felling where necessary.

TTEP 13-13 It is the Councils' policy that developments, which require vehicular access from public roads that were formerly towpaths or from existing towpaths along the Grand Canal, are very strictly controlled. This is in addition to restrictions relevant to the Canal's designation as a Natural Heritage Area and consequently as an Area of Special Control (also refer to Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015 – Chapter 14; Built Heritage). Within areas zoned as white lands in the Tullamore town and environs area, it is policy to consider housing applications for established families*, only along roads that were formerly towpaths along the Grand Canal and that such developments will be strictly controlled.

(Families for the purpose of this policy (TTEP 13-13) are defined as husband, wife and their children, siblings of the husband and wife and their sons and daughters.)*

Landscape

TTEP 13-14 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that a pro-active view of development is undertaken whilst maintaining respect for the environment and heritage, as per the general principles of sustainable development. Further it is policy to conserve, protect and enhance the landscape of Tullamore at a number of levels:

- The value of the landscape itself, the form and historic character of urban Tullamore and the associated open countryside on the urban fringe.
- The value of the landscape as a resource for economic growth in accordance with its physical and visual attributes.
- The value of the landscape and its role with habitats and species whose diversity enriches the environment.

TTEP 13-15 It is the Councils' policy to control development as per the manner in which the County landscape classification refers to Tullamore (refer to Map 13.6).

TTEP 13-16 It is the Councils' policy to encourage state and private afforestation, both native broadleaf and coniferous species, in appropriate locations in Tullamore environs, in co-operation with Coillte and the Forest Service and in line with national policy.

TTEP 13-17 It is the Councils' policy to ensure those extractions (quarries/sand and gravel pits) which would result in a reduction of the visual amenity of Areas of High Amenity (refer to Map 13.7) or damage to areas of scientific importance or of geological, botanical, zoological and other natural significance shall not be permitted. It is Councils' policy that all such workings should be subjected to landscaping requirements and that worked out quarries should be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Councils which could include recreational, amenity and end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to wastes such as soil, stone and subsoils and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.

Open Space and Amenity

TTEP 13-18 It is the Councils' policy to protect and preserve "Areas of High Amenity" in Tullamore, from development which would be visually obtrusive or which would detract from the intrinsic character and environmental quality of the landscape.

TTEP 13-19 It is the Councils' policy to develop land for open space and amenity provision to ensure that residents and visitors gain the highest level of benefit possible from the environment of Tullamore.

TTEP 13-20 It is the Councils' policy to ensure a balance of public open space and amenity provision throughout the town.

TTEP 13-21 It is the Councils' policy to link open spaces and amenity developments so as to secure integration of provision as far as possible.

TTEP 13-22 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that the provision of open space in new housing developments makes a significant contribution to the recreational needs of adjoining residents.

TTEP 13-23 It is the Councils' policy to examine the potential of, and promote the use of the Grand Canal as a local amenity feature and a significant tourist attraction for the town.

13.3 Objectives²

Natural Heritage

TTEO 13-01 To conserve and protect European and National sites and to ensure that any development proposal in the vicinity of, or affecting a European or National designated site, provides sufficient information to show how its proposals will impact on the habitat of the site, and appropriate amelioration, and the Councils will consult with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in this regard.

TTEO 13-02 To protect, conserve and enhance Tullamore's biodiversity and natural heritage. The principle of enhancement will be taken into account in the Development Management Process. It is a particular objective to protect plants, animals species and habitats, which have been identified by the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Wildlife Act and the Flora Protection Order.

TTEO 13-03 To carry out ecological studies in order to have improved baseline data and decision-making capacity.

TTEO 13-04 To protect the natural environment of the Grand Canal, Tullamore, Silver and Clodiagh Rivers and railway line and their corridors through the town.

² The order of listing of objectives is not intended to indicate priorities. Subject to the availability of resources, it is the Councils' aim to monitor and accomplish the objectives listed in this section within the period of this plan.

TTEO 13-05 To seek the preservation of important features of geological interest within Tullamore.

Open Space and Amenity

TTEO 13-06 To prepare an Open Space Strategy for the town of Tullamore as part of the Tullamore Public Realm Strategy.

TTEO 13-07 To further develop and extend a network of open spaces for pedestrian/cyclist movement within the town and environs.

TTEO 13-08 To integrate plans for a network of cycle routes with plans for a network of amenity routes including parks, paths and walks (as part of the "*Cycle Network and Parking Study*").

TTEO 13-09 To provide walks along Tullamore River.

TTEO 13-10 To develop walks along both sides of the Grand Canal including spur leg to canal basin.

TTEO 13-11 To cooperate with the owner of Charleville Estate in order to continue to protect the amenity value of Charleville Estate and to examine any plans relating to the further enhancement/development of this amenity.

TTEO 13-12 To provide an amenity area based on the aquatic environment of the Canal centred on the canal basin area, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works.

TTEO 13-13 To facilitate the provision of a major boating centre in Tullamore in conjunction with the Office of Public Works.

TTEO 13-14 To continue a landscaping/tree planting programme for Tullamore giving specific attention to public approach roads, the town's streetscapes/public squares.

TTEO 13-15 To facilitate the improvement of public open space in various housing estates in conjunction with local residents.

TTEO 13-16 To protect trees or stands of trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. During the life of this plan, the Councils will investigate the feasibility of protecting such trees and/or stands of trees by Tree Preservation Orders.

TTEO 13-17 To promote the protection and development of nature walks at:

- Eiscir Riada.
- Ballard to Clonminch.
- Links to and along the Grand Canal Way.
- Charleville Demesne/ Estate.
- Mass Paths to Kilbride Church.

TTEO 13-18 It is an objective of the Councils to preserve scenic views and prospects throughout the town and environs area which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, as part of the development management process.