



Ballyvaughan Biodiversity Plan

2019- 2022

Introduction

The intention of the following document is to summarize the efforts being undertaken in the village of Ballyvaughan in County Clare, Ireland to increase biodiversity. This includes documentation of both ongoing and new projects as well as summaries of future plans. In addition, it contains a brief geographic and historical survey of Ballyvaughan.

It is the hope that the Biodiversity Action Plan outlined below will provide a framework for the village for protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the natural heritage of Ballyvaughan while also supporting a greener and more sustainable future. This will be accomplished through the collaboration of the local community, whether it be the students of the national school and the Burren College of Art, local residents, or the efforts of the Ballyvaughan Development Committee through the workings of Tidy Towns.

In order to produce these plans, a number of volunteers from the village attended Biodiversity Training Sessions that were organised and run by Burren Beo in 2019 and funded by Clare Local Development Company. This training provided information about how to research the biodiversity of one's local area, how to implement a biodiversity plan, and the importance of biodiversity to an area's heritage and economy.

Biodiversity conservation includes not only protecting and enhancing species and habitats of a local area, but also involves the local community and is a multi-layered engagement with place. It is our hope that the following plans illustrate our commitment to the area in and around Ballyvaughan as well as toward the people that occupy it.

Table of Contents

Introduction	ii
Brief Geographic and Historical Survey of Ballyvaughan	1
Environmental Geography	1-2
Human Geography	3
Environmental and Human History	4-5
Project Actions	6-13
Works Cited	14

Brief Geographic and Historical Survey of Ballyvaughan

Environmental Geography

Ballyvaughan is a small village and the most northerly part of County Clare. It is a part of the parish of Drumcreehy. The surrounding countryside is a mixture of agricultural and pasture lands, limestone, hedgerows, turloughs, hazel-scrub, and stone walls. Ballyvaughan is situated on Galway



Rine at Sunset

Bay with two piers: the New Pier and the Old Pier. There is the Bishops Quarter beach as well as the privately-owned, Rine. In the areas surrounding the village there are species-rich calcareous grasslands, farmland, stone walls, turloughs, saltmarshes, and the famous limestone pavement. Within the village



Gentian, one of the many species found in the Burren

there are many other habitats in which 146 plant species have been recorded. These various habitats support bees, birds, butterflies, and mammals, some of which are protected under Irish and EU legislation, which highlights the importance of maintaining the biodiversity in and around Ballyvaughan.

Among the habitats of Ballyvaughan there is the turlough to the south, which crosses the Wood Loop Walk. In the east there

is the Lough Rask, which is a brackish lake. In the west one can find the Rine and an area of coastal grassland. This grassland is of great significance being the home to the endemic Burren Green Moth (*Calamia tridens occidentalis*). During a field survey done for a 2014 report they found that there were 10 types of bryophytes (moss and liverworts) and 146 species of higher plant, as noted in the previous paragraph.



Dog Sniffing Flora at the Rine



Loughrask

Human Geography

The village has a permanent population of approximately 200 people. This number grows to over 1,000 in the summertime. Tourism and agriculture drive the economy. There are a number of hotels, restaurants, B & B's and pubs within the village. The village also boasts the Burren College of Art which provides a platform for artistic and cultural expression in the community and the Ailwee Caves and Birds of Prey Centre, which support engagement with the natural structures of the local area as well as bird conservation. There is also a church, school, and playing field.

One of the most notable aspects of life in Ballyvaughan (and by extension in the Burren) is the harmony between humans and nature in order to create a balanced ecosystem. For example, with the practice of winterage, cattle are brought up the limestone mountains to graze during the winter months. As such, they keep grasses and shrubs down so that come springtime the vast array of flowers so unique to the Burren ecosystem are able to flourish. Another example of a partnership between human and natural activity is through the many stone walls constructed by people, which are home to ferns, lichens, bryophytes, and invertebrates.



Footprints in the sand along Bishop's Quarter Beach

Environmental and Human History

The environmental history of Ballyvaughan is entrenched in that of the Burren's. The area is covered in limestone, which was initially part of the ocean floor. Boulders throughout the region found their place in the landscape by being dragged and pushed by retreating ice bergs at the end of the last Ice Age, which also carved into the surface jarring straight lines. Throughout the region one can find fossils



Old Photograph of Poul nabrone dolmen

stamped into the stone, reminders that what is now high above the surface existed deep below long ago.

In terms of human history, Ballyvaughan had long been a stronghold to the O Loclairns', except for a brief time around 1540 when they lost the town to the O'Briens. Before the formal formation of the village, the area was a late medieval settlement. In the early years of the 19th century it was established as a fishing village by the Quays. During the 19th



Old Photograph of Pier

century the town had its own workhouse, coastguard station and a large police barracks.



Ballyvaughan is the home of a number of important historical monuments. On the Burren College of Art campus there is a 16th century tower house, Newtown Castle, which was restored in 1994. Near the village is the Poulabrone dolmen, a massive Neolithic grave marker. Also located nearby is Caherconnell Stone Fort, a medieval ring fort, and Corcomroe Abbey, a ruined monastery. Of particular fame there is the Corkscrew Hill and Gregan's Castle, which inspired the *Lord of the Rings* novels by acclaimed English author J.R.R. Tolkien. On the way to the Rine there is the Pinnacle Well and viewable from

the piers is Finavarra Tower, a martello tower built during the Napoleonic wars in 1812-1816.



Rainbow Over the Pier

Project Actions

Below is an outline of past, present, and ongoing projects. Ballyvaughan prides itself on the deep care it shows toward not only making the village aesthetically appealing but also our communal efforts to maintain and support local ecosystems.

In 2014, Phoebe O'Brien (Ecologist) researched and compiled a thorough document outlining the biodiversity of Ballyvaughan with suggestions of how to improve and maintain local habitats. Her project was supported by the Ballyvaughan Community Development Group and the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark LIFE project. The below projects either see these previous suggestions come to fruition or present new projects that the village is undertaking. Overall, her survey in addition to this report reflect and record Ballyvaughan's continued habit of supporting its community and environment.

Increasing Pollinators in Village Landscaping

With permission from the county Conservation Officer, new planters were placed along the bridge in Ballyvaughan. The majority of plants in these planters were pollinator-friendly plants. This extended the colourful planting throughout the village and will likewise be used for lighting a dark area during Christmas time. These planters were made in Lisdoonvarna and sponsored by local businesses. Two more barrels were also purchased to replace old ones and for the continued maintenance of planters in the centre of the village. These efforts can be seen as a support to the human element within biodiversity, as they promote a clean and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere, thus promoting tourism and the wellbeing of those in town. The use of the planters for lighting during the dark winter months likewise promotes safety for walkers and motorists. These actions in turn support economic activity.



New flower baskets were added to the bridge in 2019.

In expansion of local landscaping and in contribution to the Aitbheo Project with the CLDC and the Burrenbeo Trust, a new planting area has been created on the bank of the aqueduct, south-west of the bridge. A test patch was cleared using homemade organic weed killer and was planted with wildflower seed provided by a local organic sheep-farmer and seed provider. The seeds are an Irish mix and Irish woodland bulbs were planted along the existing tree line. Children in the village are creating a new Junior Tidy Towns bed on the opposite bank under the supervision of Claire Linnane.

It is the village's hope to continue these efforts to include more pollinator-friendly flowers throughout the village's landscaping.



Wildflower garden planted in 2019 by the bridge.



Poppy in the wildflower garden planted by the bridge.

Growing New Flowers from Seedlings

This project is done in collaboration with the senior classes of the local national school and will continue for a few years. It has been integrated into the children's participation in *Áitbheo* biodiversity pollinator project. In addition, with the help of local gardeners, a seed bank is being formed. It is part of our new three-year plan with the hopes of reducing planting costs as we continue to propagate plants

from our own area. As such, these efforts will help the local community grow more in tune with the biodiversity in their local area as they participate in the natural planting cycles.

Reclaimed Cottage Gardens and Wildflower Planting

The village boasts a number of permanent planted areas. In order to encourage the bee population of the area, our objective is to only cultivate insect-supporting plants in these beds. These actions are supported by the school children and volunteers who collect the seeds we sow.

Another similar project is the Remembrance Garden, begun in 2016 and was modelled on the designs made by Diarmuid Gavin. It is an exposed, coastal area. Replanting of the area will feature in the next three-year plan. The project is being undertaken by the Ballyvaughan Development Committee.

A final expansion of this has occurred through landscaping on private property. A number of individuals have taken it upon themselves to plant cottage gardens and beds of wildflowers. Not only do these efforts add a rich beauty to village, they support pollinators and wildlife, in addition to being greatly admired and appreciated by those that pass.



Oxeye Daisies

Starting a Community Garden

In 2018 a Grow It Yourself group was initiated by Jackie Mauer. Preparation and planting have begun under this initiative and Tidy Towns plans on partnering with this group. They are looking toward Agenda 21 funding. Insurance for this project may also be of note. In addition, a polytunnel or greenhouse will be needed, which organisers hope to secure through grant funding. Not only does the formation of a community garden promote social ties within the village, but they likewise provide locals with a source of inexpensive and nutritious food. These efforts also have positive effects on the environment.



Images from 2019 harvest in Jackie Mauer's garden. Plans include expansion of this project to a community garden.

Re-establish Lost Trees

During Tree Week, ash trees were planted around the village, near the Remembrance Garden at Sans Souci and then mulched with seaweed. Such action promotes the diversity in plant species throughout the area and provides birds with nesting places. This scheme was promoted through the Clare County Council. Not only would the villagers like to see these trees maintained, but they would likewise wish to plant more trees. Popular choices include apple trees, with the suggestion being made to begin an Adopt-A-Ballyvaughan Apple Tree project.

Reduction of Pesticides

We do not purchase wildflower mixes, peat-based compost, or slug-pellets. This is an improvement in gardening practices seen in the last few years, as a report from 2014 on the biodiversity of Ballyvaughan noted the use of herbicides and slug-pellets. It is the village's intention to continue these improved practices.



Community Herb Garden at Ballyvaughan National School.

Education: Improving Local Knowledge of our Home

Education is a key element to promoting local biodiversity. Thus, during Burren in Bloom 2019, Ballyvaughan hosted a Biodiversity Ireland workshop walk and talk. During this workshop the village was showcased for its biodiversity. Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns also hosted an event on pollinators with Sharon Parr and the Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland on 8 June 2019.

In addition to these efforts, there are regular guided walks through the local area intended to improve people's knowledge of the landscape. These will continue and workshops will happen every year. A push for increased signage throughout the area to alert and inform tourists and locals alike to the

species present in the landscape has also occurred. In addition to this, signage informing people of the Burren Code and the guidelines and standards that we have toward how we treat our environment will become vital to preserving this beautiful landscape.

Continued Protection of the *Cardamine Impatiens*

This biennial plant can be found in only two known locations in Ireland, and one of them is in Ballyvaughan. It is classed as endangered in the Red Data List of Vascular Plants 2016 and is protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015. Currently, a sign has been placed at the site and the area is actively monitored after flooding, pipe upgrades, and major drain clearance. It is our hope to continue these efforts.

Summary of Biodiversity Action Plan

Project/ action	Potential collaborators	Timeframe
1. Increase the amount of pollinator-friendly plants and perennials in village landscaping	Tidy Towns, National School	Annually
2. Growing plants for landscaping from seed (to avoid buying summer bedding)	Tidy Towns, National School	Annually
3. Expansion permanent planting for pollinators and wildlife	Development Group	Annually
4. Establish a community garden	GIY group, Tidy Towns	2020
5. Tree planting- increase the number of native trees and fruit in the village	Tidy Towns, School, Development Group	Annually
6. Continue to reduce use of chemicals including herbicides and pesticides	Tidy Towns	Ongoing
7. Run nature walks and talks during the year	Development Group, Burren Beo, Tidy Towns	Annually
8. Continue to protect rare plant, Caramine impatiens	Development Group	Ongoing

Works Cited

<https://www.clare.ie/place/ballyvaughan/>

<https://www.gregans.ie/>

<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/ballyvaughan2.htm>

http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Burren_Geoscientific_Guide_NEED.pdf

<http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Ballyvaughan-Tidy-Towns-survey-of-Wildlife-and-Natural-Amenity-2014.pdf>

Useful resources

Trees and tree planting

- http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/buds_of_the_banner.pdf
- <http://www.clarecoco.ie/services/arts-recreation/heritage/county-clare-tree-design-guide-for-towns-and-villages-24243.pdf>

Native varieties of fruit trees- Irish Seed Savers Association

- www.irishseedsavers.ie

How to conduct a biodiversity audit

- <http://www.devon.gov.uk/devon-community-toolkit-for-the-natural-environment-feb-2012.pdf>

Habitat mapping

- http://www.greenschoolsireland.org/_fileupload/biodiversity%20resources/Habitat_mapping.pdf
- http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/uploads/docs/publications/Communities_publications/Paris_h_Wildlife_Toolkit_WEBv2.pdf

Developing nature or heritage trails/ walking routes

- www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/Guide_to_Planning_and_Developing_Recreational_Trails_in_Ireland.pdf
- www.noticenature.ie/Walking_Trails_in_Ireland.html

Interpretive signage/ materials

- http://www.roscommoncoco.ie/en/Services/Heritage/Publications/Telling_People_About_Our_Heritage-Interpretation_and_Signage_Guidance.pdf
- http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/miscellaneous/Bored_of_Boards.pdf
- <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/wildlife/Interpretive-trail-signs-exhibits.html>

Building bird or bat boxes

- <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/>
- www.batconservationireland.org/pubs/reports/Leaflet_3_batboxes.pdf

Planting to attract wildlife and pollinators

- <http://pollinators.ie/>
- www.butterflyconservation.ie/
- <https://www.rspb.org.uk/makeahomeforwildlife/wildlifegarden/>
- <http://www.ipcc.ie/advice/wildlife-gardening-tips/>

Creating a wildflower meadow

- <https://pollinators.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/How-to-guide-Wildflower-Meadows-2018-WEB.pdf>

Invasive species

- <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/>
- <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/invasive-species/>
- <http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Invasive-Species/invasive-species.html>

- **Protected sites, species and habitats**

- www.npws.ie