

Connolly Local Biodiversity Plan 2019-2022

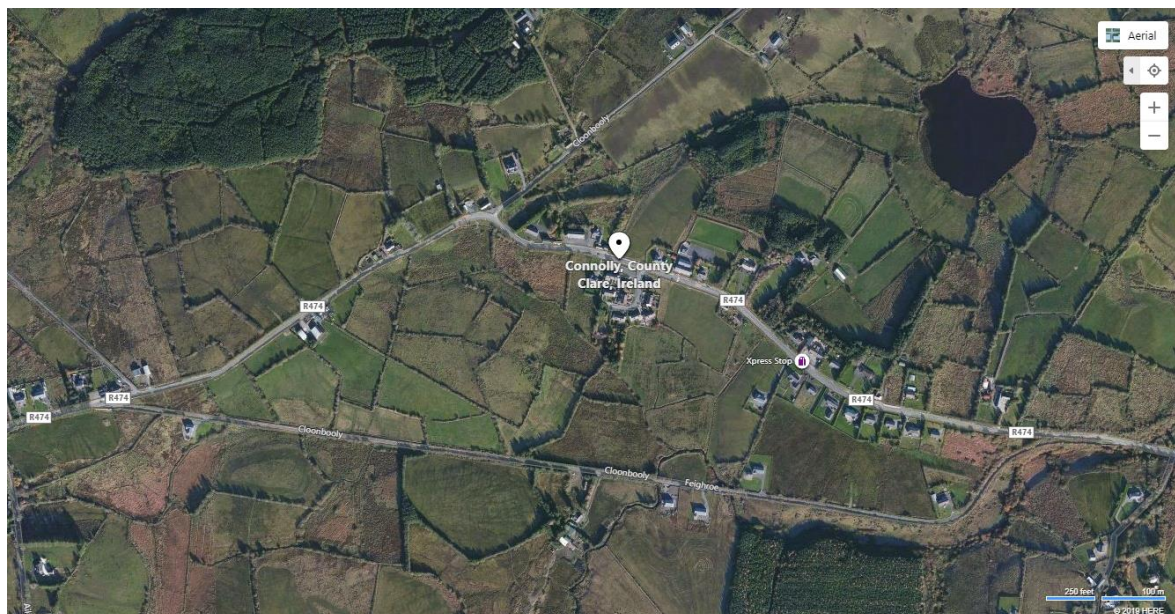


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About Connolly

Connolly is situated in Co. Clare, 15km west of Ennis on the R474 to Miltown Malbay. Connolly is a classified in the County Development Plan 2017-2023 as a ‘Small Village’ with a population of about 120 people. Connolly contains a national school, Church, a public house, local convenience shop and post office and a pitch. Connolly is surrounded by agricultural land interspersed with hedges, forestry, houses and farm buildings. Biodiversity wise the most important areas are the nature-corridors formed by the network of hedgerows, scrub and forestry, which can be seen around the village, and the small lake north of the village.



The Action Plan for Nature in Connolly sets out a list of projects, events and activities that will run over the next three years in the Connolly area for the benefit of nature and wildlife, the environment, and the local community. This document is a ‘Biodiversity Action Plan’ for the Connolly area.

Biodiversity action plans

Biodiversity Action Plans provide a framework for protecting, managing and/or enhancing natural heritage in the area through action led by the local community (Fuller 2019). The process of producing such a plan creates an opportunity to co-ordinate action among local groups, individuals, statutory bodies, and other organisations. Like many villages Connolly have active community-based groups such as Tidy Towns, the school, farming organisations, etc. that work tirelessly for the benefit of their members and the community. The production of a local biodiversity action plan can help ensure that community-based projects will not have a negative impact on biodiversity, and may have positive impacts on nature, the natural environment and amenities in the area e.g. through raising awareness, habitat creation and/or appropriate habitat management.

Biodiversity definition

The meaning of 'Biodiversity' is easy to understand when we break the word down; "bio" refers to life and 'living things' and diversity" means just that; range or variety. The word refers to the huge variety and variation of life that surrounds us on planet earth. Maintaining a high level of diversity among plants, animals and all living things all around us is essential in keeping the environment healthy and fit for human life. This includes diversity within species, between species and diversity of ecosystems. <https://greenschoolsireland.org/biodiveristy/>

Process to produce biodiversity plan

Connolly Tidy Village Committee, Clare biodiversity Training funded by Clare Local Development Committee (CLDC) and facilitated by Áitbheo. The training involved representatives of Connolly Tidy Village Committee attending five 2-hour sessions where we examined all aspects of our local heritage including; built, natural and cultural. We also attended two workshops for actions for pollinators, tree and hedgerow planting, community engagement, and habitat mapping training. All these sessions gave us the basic skill sets to create this biodiversity plan.



Connolly Tidy Towns Committee

Connolly has a proactive committee and try to make a positive impact on our village. Since we first entered the competition in 2004, it has had a positive impact on our village over the years with regular clean-ups and enhancement projects. Our group meets twice a week during the spring and summer and once a month during the autumn and winter. People working on Community Service Programmes (TÚS) also help out with Tidy Towns' projects. Connolly Tidy Towns Committee aims to enhance natural amenities and wildlife habitats in the village. A recent project involves creating a biodiversity area at 'Currans Cross'. A selection trees were planted, bee friendly flowers, Bee & Bee hotels, composting heap and a different grass cutting regime to allow longer grass in areas so wildflowers can grow.

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

A plan was published during 2015 which takes a new approach to conservation of biodiversity. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan (2015-2020) takes a look at the insects that pollinate our crops and other plants and outlines actions that can be taken by all sectors of society to protect our future by caring for our pollinators. In Ireland, most pollination is carried out by bees, but people are often surprised to hear that this includes 98 different species! Honeybees are the best known, but we have 20 different species of bumblebee and 77 solitary bee species. One third of our wild bee species are known to be threatened with extinction in Ireland. They are declining due to lack of food, places to nest, pests and diseases and the impact of pesticides and herbicides. Many of the actions outlines in this biodiversity plan will benefit Ireland's pollinators either directly or indirectly: leaving grass unmown to enhance wildflowers which will provide food for insects; reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides will benefit pollinators and all insects. Details of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan are at www.biodiversityireland.ie/pollinator-plan



Connolly Biodiversity Area

Enhancement of Biodiversity in Connolly

The Tidy Towns Committee is keen to do some work in various areas to conserve, enhance and raise awareness of biodiversity and actions to be undertaken are listed in Table below. In a village environment, areas of open grassland often provide opportunities to enhance the biodiversity value of the village. The most notable example of this in Connolly is the grassland habitat that runs along the road verge through the village. This strip provides the possibility for hosting many wildflower species and all the pollinating insects associated with it. Details of the actions needed are outlined on page 11. Wildflowers can be encouraged and pollinators helped, simply by slightly altering the grass-mowing regime. Many of these flower species originally grew in woodlands and therefore they flower in April-May before the leaves come on the deciduous trees. Many will have set seed before mid-May, therefore if the first cut of grass is left until mid-May annually (and later if possible), these areas will feature many beautiful flowers of great biodiversity value before long. Connolly has several flowerbeds dotted around the village. Depending on the types of plants grown in these, there are great opportunities for enhancing and encouraging the biodiversity of the Connolly local area.

Some biodiversity-enhancing work has already been done in Connolly by both the Tidy Towns Committee in previous years and the local National School. The Tidy Towns committee constructed bug hotel along with erecting several bird boxes and bat boxes around the village. Also a wildlife area was set up at the edge of the village on the western side of the village. Currently there are some wildflowers growing on the roadside bed along with a long grass cutting regime to encourage wildflowers to grow in the grass.



Roadside verge in Connolly

Habitat Map of the village centre



Connolly Biodiversity Map Guide

- **Area A** – Currans Cross
- **Area B** – Hedgerow across from church
- **Area C** - Housing Estate – Fiach Rua
- **Area D** - Hedgerow School to Shop
- **Area E** - Shop to Caterpillar

On Saturday 20th July 2019, representatives of our committee met to conduct our habitat mapping. The weather was dry with some pleasant sunshine. We decided to investigate what species & flora were present in a number of areas around the village. Please see below items noted during our habitat study.

Area A on Map – ‘Currans Cross’

Flora	Species	Threat
Ivy	Grass hopper	Knotweed
Brambles	Butterfly	Hub cap
Purple Clover	House Fly	Wrappers from chocolate bars
Oak tree	Bees	Cigarette butts
Ash tree		
Nasturtium		
Ox eye daisy		
Day Lily		
Montbretia		
Persicaria		
Beech Tree		
Silver Birch Tree		
St John’s Wort		
Eupatorium		
Campion		
Cow Slip		
Verbena		
Geranium		
Foxglove		
Fern		
Angelica		
Dock Leaf		
Thistle		
Birds Nest fern		
Yellow Grass		
Poppy (perennial)		
Nettles		
Sedum		
Potentilla		
Geium		
Horsetails		
Mountain Ash		
Bind weed		
Male Fern		
Lady Fern		
Thalictrum		

Area B on Map – ‘Hedgerow across from the church’

Flora	Species	Threat
Ivy	Honey bee	Chocolate wrappers
Escallonia		Cigarette butts
Brambles		Coffee cup
Dock leaf		
Quack grass		
Ragwort		
Clover		
Sally		
Horses tail		
Oak Tree		
Birch Tree		
Cherry tree		
Rowan tree – red & orange		
Beech Tree		
Nettles		
Bind weed		
Privet		
Wild fern		
Spirea		
Hawthorn		
Hebe		
Nettles		
Phygelius		
Hogweed		
Veronica		
Birds Nest Fern		
Dandelion		
Chickweed		
Angelica		
Daisy		
Roses		
Montbretia		
Sally		
Variegated Hedge		
Elaeagnus		

Area C on Map – ‘Housing Estate – Fiach Rua’

Flora	Species	Threat
Bramble	Wagtails	
Lysimachia	Brown Butterfly	
Blue geranium	Bees	
Birch tree		
Beech Tree		
Fuschia		
Ivy		
Montbretia		
Buddleia		
Red currant		
Hypericum		
Buttercup		
White Clover		
Purple Clover		
Small daisy		
Pine trees		
Nettles		
Horsetail		
Thistle		
Dock leaf		
Sally		
Silver Birch Tree		
Bind weed		

Area D on Map – ‘Hedgerow School to Shop’

Flora	Species	Threat
Ivy	Swallows	Cord from silage bales
Escallonia	Yellow Hammer	Cigarette butts
Ferns	Chaffinch	Bottle caps
Oak tree	Wagtail	Dog foul
Silver Birch Tree	White butterfly	
Spirea	Bumble bee	
Bind weed		
Montbretia		
Hawthorn		
Pea yellow flowering		
Fuchsia		
Bramble		
Lysimachia		
Thistle		
Buttercup		
White Spirea		
Wild pea		
Dock leaf		
St Johns Worth		
Pampas grass		
Bindweed		
Horsetail		
Silver birch tree		
Ladies mantle		
Sally		
Bee balm		
Wild baby breath		
Hazel Tree		
Sycamore Tree		
Camelia		
Wild Garlic		
Cotoneaster		
Wild rose		
Wild Sassafras		

Area E on Map – ‘Shop to Caterpillar’

Flora	Fauna	Threat
Bramble	Chaffinch	Chocolate wrappers
Wild fern	Spiders web	Cigarette butts
Catmint	Moth	Bottle caps
Thistle	Bees	Cigarette packs
Small daisy	Horsefly	Insulation
Spirea		Rhododendron
Dock Leaf		
Clover – White & Red		
Sally (willow)		
Hawthorn		
Wild rose		
Ivy		
Privet		
Elderflower		
Blackthorn		
Whitethorn		
Buddleja		
Buttercup		
Gorse		
Bugle		
Alder trees		
Nettles		
Montbretia		
Quack grass		
Ferns		
Oak		
Beech tree		
Clover leaf		
Rushes		
Wild geranium		
Wild pea		
Horsetail		
Hazel		
Hogweed		
Bluebell		
Foxglove		
Pheasant berry		

Actions for Biodiversity

Connolly Tidy Towns Committee proposes to do the following list of actions achievable with community effort within a timeframe of three years (2019 – 2022). Details of these proposals are outlined below and where to achieve these aims.

Proposed Actions to improve and maintain biodiversity in the Connolly area

Action no.	Proposed Action	Details of Proposed Action	Proposed timeframe
1	Completion of Cloontabonniv Bog Walk		
	- Development of birdwatching hut	We plan to develop a birdwatching hut along our bog walk to give people the opportunity to observe birds in the bog, and increase awareness of birdlife within the bog. We plan to build the hut using dried sods of turf, so that the hut will blend in with the landscape.	2019-2020
	- Identify flora & fauna	The committee want to inform walkers along the route of the flora and fauna in the bog and generally increase public awareness of the bog and its habitat. Once our committee has identified the flora and fauna in the bog, we will erect signage informing walkers of what they can see in the bog.	2019
	- Treatment of Japanese Knotweed	We want to eradicate and stop the spreading of Japanese knotweed along the access road to the bog walk. Japanese knotweed is an invasive species and left untreated we fear that it may spread to other parts of the access road and potentially the bog itself.	2019
2	Purchase of site with the potential to create a community garden.	We hope to purchase a site in the village and create a community garden, orchard and wetland area within the site. This will provide a recreational area and enhance an eye sore/black spot in the village. The garden will be accessible to all in the community.	2020
3	Creation of 'Our Place' booklet	We plan to create a booklet with information on local places, history and culture of Connolly	2020-2021

		and surrounding area. We want to educate and inform the community of the history of our local area. We plan to research the history of our church, school, the Fiach Rua Ceilí Band and townlands. We plan to print the booklet and distribute it for free once we receive adequate funding.	
4	Plant biodiversity enhancing flowerbeds & pots	Flower boxes and beds maintained by the committee will be planted with bee-friendly flowers	Annually
5	Plant wildflower meadow	Plant wildflower meadow along grass verges in the village	2020
6	Plant native trees & shrubs	Around the village where trees would not impair drivers' sight lines, and wildlife areas around the village.	2020-2021
7	Organise a local biodiversity day	Organise biodiversity event during biodiversity week.	Annually
8	Change the grass-mowing regime, benefit wildflowers	Any suitable grass verges leading into the village	Annually
9	Use natural methods of pest & weed control	Everywhere possible	Annually
10	Monitor local area for invasive species & control where necessary	We want to eradicate and stop the spreading of invasive species in the local area, including Japanese Knotweed and Rhododendron	Annually
11	Biodiversity data gathering	Register account with biodiversity Ireland and record all species we see in the village	Annually
12	Biodiversity-friendly hedgerow maintenance	Everywhere possible	Annually
13	Run Annual Spring Clean	Litter has a negative impact on nature and wildlife by causing pollution	Annually
14	Support biodiversity projects in the school	Produce activity sheets with information on local flora and fauna, etc.	2019- 2020
15	Develop heritage trail	Erect signage for townlands in the area outlining the meaning and local stories of the townland	2020-2022

Monitoring and Review Process

The actions achieved through this Plan will be reviewed annually by Connolly Tidy Towns Committee. This will ensure actions are realistically targeted and achieved and will also help in tackling any problems that arise.

Useful resources

Biodiversity Action Plan template (Janice Fuller 2019)

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/Parish_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/Boarded_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