



## Doonbeg Biodiversity Plan 2019 to 2022



**Doonbeg Tidy Towns**

**September 2019**

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## Introduction

This biodiversity plan is an initiative by Doonbeg Tidy Towns, a group of 15 volunteers, to introduce a greater awareness and appreciation within our community for our local environment which is rich and varied. Situated on the west coast of Clare, Doonbeg is a village of approximately 800 residents and a hinterland which includes bogland, the tidal estuary of the Doonbeg river, wetland and forestry.

## Work Achieved So Far

Our first step in increasing and improving our biodiversity was to replace a lot of our annual summer planting with pollinator friendly perennials. To further our awareness, two of our group attended a bee identification workshop with The Irish Wildlife Trust. Four of our group are attending CLDC funded training delivered by Burrenbeo Trust and Janice Fuller which is guiding us in the right direction in identifying our issues and developing our plan.



Replacing annual bedding with pollinator friendly perennials



Potting up softwood cuttings and sowing seed in our polytunnel



Bee identification workshop, The Irish Wildlife Trust

## Our Objective and Aim

Our principal objective is to make our community and visitors aware of our range of flora and fauna, recognise and promote awareness of the need to conserve and protect these with a view to enhancing them for the future. We are particularly anxious to involve our local national school, Doonbeg Community Development Ltd and other local groups such as the Men's Shed and our local farmers in bringing this plan to fruition.

We aim to

- Increase awareness of our existing natural environment
- Improve our knowledge of our local flora and fauna
- Increase awareness in our community of our existing natural environment
- Identify problem areas
- Encourage greater biodiversity



Native Mountain Ash trees planted in Dún na Mara residential estate, Doonbeg, with area of lawn left uncut to encourage wildlife.



Sea pinks and clover on the shore at Doughbeg Bay



Lady bird, Ballard Bay

## **Built and Cultural Heritage**

We are a relatively small, rural community. The parish of Killard, which incorporates the village, is mentioned as far back as the year 801AD in the Annals of Clonmacnoise.

Doonbeg village boasts two castles. The village grew up around Doonbeg Castle, built in the 16th century for the Earl of Thomond, Daniel O'Brien. The Westropp report of 1893 mentions that seven families lived in the tower. By 1907 two families lived there and it was occupied up to 1930. Locals used its upper floor with its mossy overgrowth as a picnic spot since it afforded privacy and beautiful views. Sadly, most of the castle has come down, leaving only the north-western corner standing.



Doonbeg Castle



Doonmore Castle

Doonmore Castle, adjacent to the harbour, was built by Philip Mac Sheeda Nor McCon in the 16th Century. It was inhabited during 1808 but classed as a ruin in 1837. Only the lower portion, from the stone vault down, survives.

There are a number of forts within our townland which have significant historical value. Hence, the names, Dún Beag (Doonbeg) and Dún Mór (Doonmore), translated means small fort and great fort. The large number of forts located in Doonbeg Parish proves that the area was populated during the Iron Age and also during the early Christian period.

Collapsed stone from both these castles has been used over the years to build walls and homes.

## The Bridge at Doonbeg

The seven-arched stone bridge which spans the Doonbeg river is architecturally significant. This photo from the Mason Photographic Collection of 1897 features a doorway in the centre of the bridge which was once part of a famine era habitation. The London News of 1849 reported *“Two wretched families have taken refuge under the bridge in a hole. They consist of two widows, one with three children, all ill of jaundice, and the other with five.”*



Below, the sketch on the left shows Judy O'Donnell and her children and the photo on the right shows their habitation as it is today. The other family was headed by Mary Belfast, given that surname as she spoke with a Northern accent.



JUDY O'DONNELL'S HABITATION UNDER THE BRIDGE AT DOONBEG.



## The Fair Green

The Fair Green, as the name suggests, is an open area in the centre of the village where horse fairs would have taken place in times past. It is now a community amenity space which the Tidy Towns group maintain. The layout of the space is very basic and the landscaping is showing signs of age with the footpath and concrete pots cracking and breaking up. It lacks colour most of the year and it is not an attractive place to sit and relax.

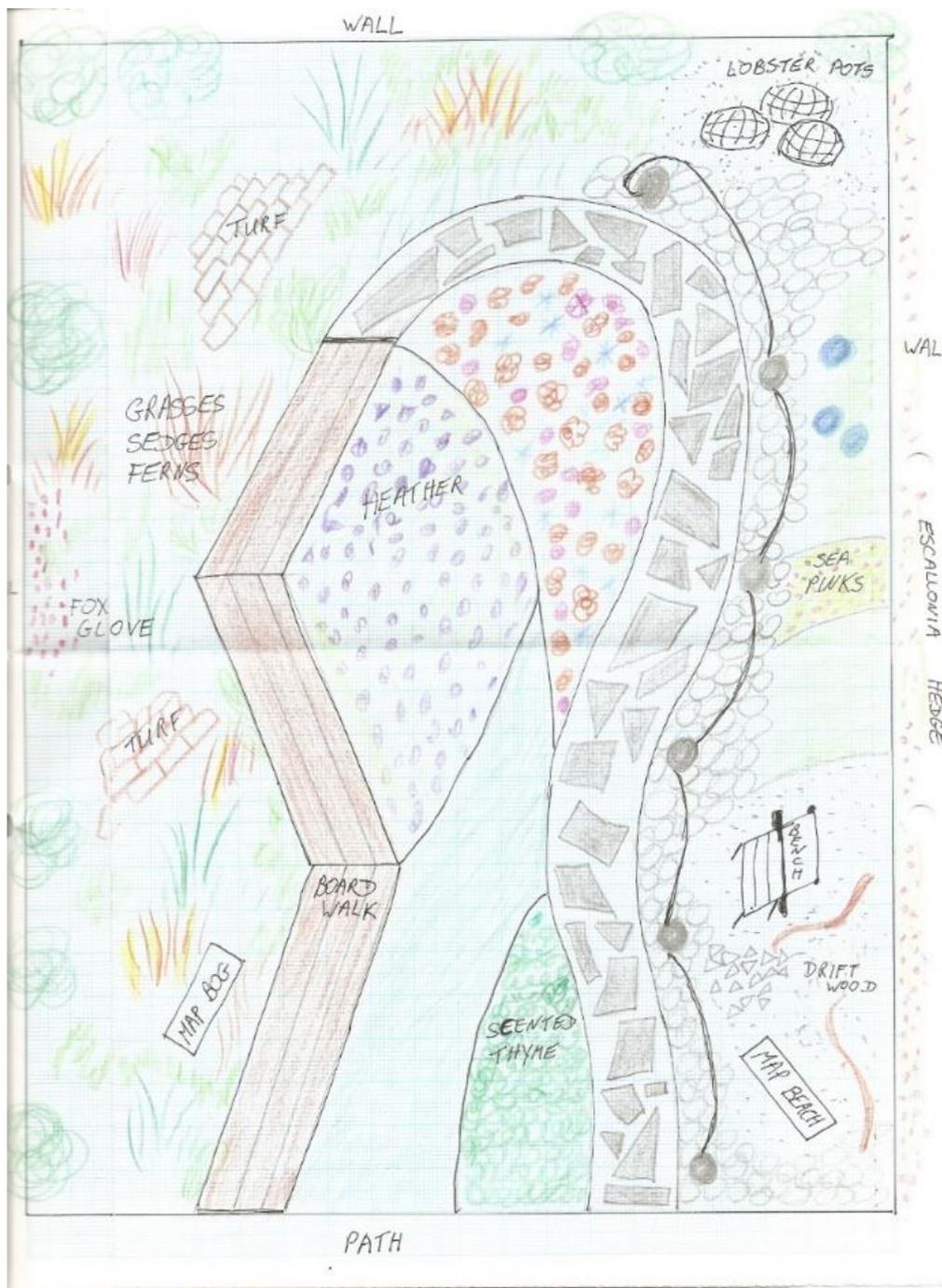


The Fair Green

This year Tidy Towns have drawn up a sketch showing how we would like to improve the space. The plan reflects the traditional and local way of life and highlights our coastal and bogland areas with their great range of flora and fauna. The perennial planting will reflect our coastal position on the west of Ireland and provide shelter and food for birds and insects. We have chosen a range of grasses and plants that provide colour all year round. We have selected trees of varying height to add interest and encourage singing birds to rest a while and entertain us!

The hard landscaping will reflect our beach environment with a range of pebble and stone and include items you would expect to find at the seaside –

lobsterpots, netting and rope, sea shells, driftwood. A number of footed turf piles and pieces of bog deal will evoke the bogland. Our residents and visitors can sit and enjoy this relaxing space and reflect on the varied landscape of Doonbeg and its surroundings.



Fair Green Sketch

## Nature

Doughmore beach is located to the north of the village with the wild Atlantic sea continuously eroding the sand dunes. Unfamiliar plant and seeds are brought in on the tide during storms and we wonder at where they originated. This magnificent 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> km beach is a paradise for surfers, walkers, beach anglers and picnickers but shifting sands and strong cross currents make it dangerous for swimming.

The White Strand, to the south of the village, a Blue Flag beach, is a more sheltered bay favoured by swimmers as a safer option. This beach attracts many holidaymakers every summer. It is the location for our annual Christmas day charity swim!



Elephant Moth Caterpillar on the road to the White Strand

Tucked between these two locations is the calm Doughbeg Bay and harbour, incorporating a wetland area and the remains of a traditional salmon trap, revealed when the tide is out. The presence of a group of whooper swans adds to the calm atmosphere of this bay. The bay is the habitat of several varieties of seabirds and wading birds – seagull, oystercatcher, curlew and snipe. Otters can be spotted at the river outflow at the bay. Seals are also frequent visitors.



Our resident heron and egret at Doughbeg Bay



Winter swan, Doughbeg

Birdwatchers from near and far flock to the cliffs at Baltard, south of the village, which has an international reputation for the numbers of rare breeding birds that pass through such as kittiwakes, puffins, razorbills, fulmars and guillemots, golden plover and lapwing.



A welcome sight in winter, Rose Cottage, Doonbeg

Brent Geese arrive from Greenland to overwinter at Lough Donnell, north of the village.

The bogland and forested areas to the east of the village are a habitat for fox, rabbit, hare and badger and a host of birds including the skylark, meadow pipit, hen harrier and the cuckoo, the latter can be heard in April and May. Bogland fauna include bog-cotton, sphagnum moss, heathers and black bog rushes.

For the most part, earth banks form field boundaries on productive agricultural land, planted with whitethorn and blackthorn. These hedgerows provide habitats for insects and small birds and an abundant source of food.



'Small Blue' Butterfly at Strand Camping, Doonbeg



'Dark Green Fritillary' Butterfly



<b>Project/ activity/ event</b>	<b>Project leader</b>	<b>Potential collaborators</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
Increase awareness of our existing natural environment by identification, survey and mapping	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	The Community Foundation for Ireland are assisting us in securing the services of a professional ecologist to guide us in this work. We will also seek assistance from the Irish Wildlife Trust, Biodiversity Ireland, Clarebirdwatching.com, Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group	October 2019 to October 2020
Redesign and construction of the Fair Green amenity area in the centre of the village to incorporate biodiversity	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	Anne Byrne Garden Design	Design in 2019, construction in 2020
Survey and elimination of invasive plant species	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	Invasive Species Ireland	September 2019
Series of illustrated talks by relevant experts on the variety of habitats in our area	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	Clare County Council – Clare Biodiversity Plan, Irish Wildlife Trust, Biodiversity Ireland, Clarebirdwatching.com, <a href="#">Irish Peatland Conservation Council</a> , Irish Whale and Dolphin Group	Ongoing
Production of information literature to be placed in our visitor information area	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	All of the above	Spring 2020
Design a heritage walk in the village with information leaflet	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	Doonbeg Community Development Ltd, Doonbeg National School, local residents, Clare Library	Winter 2019 / Spring 2020

<b>Project/ activity/ event</b>	<b>Project leader</b>	<b>Potential collaborators</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
Replace older planting in public spaces with pollinator friendly perennials	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	Biodiversity Ireland	Annual
Promote a litter free Doonbeg, identifying problem areas: sources of pollution, at-risk habitats, fly-tipping of rubbish	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	Doonbeg National School, Doonbeg Community Development Ltd.	Ongoing
Continue native tree planting: Rowan, Birch, Crab Apple, Holly, Hawthorn, Alder, Blackthorn.	Doonbeg Tidy Towns	Clare County Council, Doonbeg National School, Doonbeg Community Development Ltd.,	Ongoing

## Funding sources

Potential sources of funding that could assist with implementing actions in the plan include the following:

<b>Fund / Funding Body</b>	<b>Description</b>
Clare Local Development Company	This leader company offers full and part funding for a variety of community-led biodiversity projects.
The Heritage Council	The Heritage Council offer grants to community groups and individuals for heritage projects.
Community Grant Scheme, Clare County Council	The scheme is available to support community and voluntary groups wishing to undertake specific projects under the relevant categories of the scheme.
Clare Biodiversity, Clare County Council	Elaine Keegan, Biodiversity Project Manager
Foras na Gaeilge	Foras na Gaeilge provide grants for signage, booklets etc. that include some use of the Irish language
The Marine Institute	The Marine Institute provides funding for biodiversity related research in the marine environment.
The Community Foundation for Ireland	This foundation offers funding to employ a professional ecologist for a community-led biodiversity projects.

## Contacts/ information sources for implementing the Doonbeg Biodiversity Plan

Topic	Information Source
Redesign and construction of the Fair Green amenity area in the centre of the village to incorporate biodiversity	Professional garden designer Anne Byrne <a href="http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/buds_of_the_banner.pdf">www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/buds_of_the_banner.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.treecouncil.com">www.treecouncil.com</a> <a href="http://www.biodiversityireland.ie">www.biodiversityireland.ie</a>
Survey and elimination of invasive plant species	<a href="http://invasivespeciesireland.com">http://invasivespeciesireland.com</a> <a href="http://www.biodiversityireland.ie">www.biodiversityireland.ie</a>
Series of illustrated talks by relevant experts on the variety of habitats in our area	Irish Wildlife Trust Irish Whale and Dolphin Group <a href="http://www.butterflyconservation.ie">www.butterflyconservation.ie</a> <a href="http://www.birdwatchireland.ie">www.birdwatchireland.ie</a>
Production of information literature to be placed in our visitor information area	Irish Wildlife Trust Irish Whale and Dolphin Group Heritage Officer, Clare County Council Fáilte Ireland <a href="http://www.biodiversityireland.ie">www.biodiversityireland.ie</a>
Design a heritage walk in the village with information leaflet	Heritage Officer, Clare County Council Fáilte Ireland Clare County Library Local Studies Centre
Replace older planting in public spaces with pollinator friendly perennials	<a href="http://www.biodiversityireland.ie">www.biodiversityireland.ie</a>
Promote a litter free Doonbeg	Environment Section, Clare County Council

Doonbeg Tidy Towns would like to thank **Burrenbeo Trust** for providing training in biodiversity which has facilitated the development of our Biodiversity Plan. We would like to especially thank Mary Dillon for her advice and guidance.

Thank you to **Alan Soutar**, Soutar Images, Doonbeg, for permission to use his photographs.

**Doonbeg Tidy Towns**

**September 2019**