

Biodiversity Plan for Spanish Point



Spanish Point Community Group

Biodiversity in Spanish Point

Introduction

Who are we?

Spanish Point Community Group was formed in 2015 with the aim of enhancing our area for the local residents and visitors to the area. There are forty-five members who work in a variety of different ways to promote the social, environmental, economic and general development of the area through a series of sub-committees. We work with Clare Local Development Company, Clare Co. Council, An Taisce, Clean Coasts, N.P.W.S., Tús and local businesses to further our aims. We are an established group in the area with several successfully completed projects. These include provision of an outdoor gym, design and production of historical information panels, development of walking routes with explanatory leaflets, creation of a website (www.visitspanishpoint.ie) and organisation of annual summer events – e.g. barbeque, nature walks at beach. We communicate regularly with all residents of the area by newsletter/ Facebook.

There were six members of the group involved in the preparation of this Biodiversity Plan. We attended a Biodiversity Training Course and workshops on Habitat Mapping, Coastal Planting and the Control of Japanese Knotweed delivered by Mary Dillon and Dr. Janice Fuller from Burrenbeo. The training course and workshops were funded by CLDC through the LEADER programme.

Where is Spanish Point?

Spanish Point is on the west coast of Co. Clare approximately 30 km due west of Ennis. It is bounded to the north by the Clonbony river, to the south by the Annagh river while the whole of its western boundary is fronted by the Atlantic Ocean. Spanish Point is a discovery point on the Wild Atlantic Way.

Why is Spanish Point special?

Spanish Point is a beautiful scenic area with a blue flag beach on the Wild Atlantic Way on the West Coast of Clare. It is approximately three kilometres south of Miltown Malbay on the N67. The permanent population of less than two hundred expands during the summer months as many of the visitors have holiday homes in the area. Many of these non-permanent residents are involved in the Spanish Point Community Group and make a valuable contribution to the development of the area. Spanish Point is also a Special Area of Conservation and a Special Protection Area with both a sandy and a rocky beach with a chain of sand dunes which are in need of stabilisation as there are three major blowouts. Coastal erosion impacts the area with substantial rock falls in need of reinforcement with rock armour.

Our objectives are

- to identify and map the flora and fauna
- to preserve and manage the biodiversity and the ecosystems in the area
- to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity.

Part of the area to the north of the beach is of geological and biological significance. The rocks date back over 330 million years and show wave cut platforms, ripple beds and goniatite fossils. Fragile sea fans and rare sponges, as well as an excellent diversity of red and brown seaweeds, make this a special area of conservation.

How did Spanish Point get its name?

Our place name dates back to 1588 when two ships of the Spanish Armada were wrecked off the coast here. According to local folk memory many of those drowned and the few survivors executed by Boetius Clancy the sheriff of Clare were buried in a common grave at a place referred to locally as Tuama na Spáinneach.

History of Spanish Point

The earliest development of the locality began in 1712 when Thomas Morony took a lease of land here in West Clare then referred to as Poulawillin at a rental of £90 per annum from the Earl of Thomond. This land was then purchased in 1750 by Thomas's eldest son Edmund. It was then divided into two farms and set on thirty-one-year leases to two local landlords. When the leases expired, Edmund's eldest son also named Thomas decided to come to Spanish Point with his family where he built Miltown House and established the Miltown House Estate. He saw the potential of this beautiful seaside location encouraging friends to come and build saltwater lodges, Morony providing the sites. In 1808 he united with other adventurers to draw up plans to build a Hotel and Tepid Baths which when built was for a short period referred to as "the largest hotel in the British Isles". This complex which also contained a large square of stables, the Atlantic Hotel, and Tepid Baths attracted wealthy visitors to Spanish Point to benefit from the fresh sea water baths and seaweed baths. The Atlantic Hotel became the centrepiece of early nineteenth century tourism along the scenic Clare coastline. In Spanish Point he also built houses for his own sons and daughters adjacent to the hotel. Many of these houses are still occupied to this day. Further information on the history of the area is available on www.visitspanishpoint.ie/history.



The Atlantic Hotel established Spanish Point as a premium holiday destination in the early nineteenth century.



Miltown House, now the Convent of Mercy.



Commemorative stone to mark the visit of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain to Spanish Point in 1986

Biodiversity Action Plan



Cowslips



Bluebells on road verge

	Project	Details	Potential Collaborators	Timeframe
1.	Sand Dunes Stabilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact NPWS for permission • Train up members in how to replant marram • Identify and select which dunes will be replanted first • Replant marram in stages • Fence off replanted area with appropriate explanatory signage • Monitor and maintain fence and signs 	NPWS, CLDC -LEADER, Clare Co. Council, Community Foundation of Ireland, Clean Coasts, Hawthorn Nurseries, Department of Rural and Community Development	September 2019 to September 2022
2.	Wattle Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact NPWS for permission • Source wattle fencing • Erect wattle fencing to replace old fencing (with explanatory signage) protect the marram grass and to stop the sand from blowing away and reduce footfall in these areas. 	NPWS, CLDC -LEADER, Clare Co. Council, Community Foundation of Ireland, Clean Coasts, Hawthorn Nurseries, Department of Rural and Community Development	September 2019 to September 2022
3.	Sand ladders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact NPWS for permission • Sourcing and placing of sand ladders to discourage people from walking on the sand dunes 	NPWS, CLDC -LEADER, Clare Co. Council, Community Foundation of Ireland, Clean Coasts, Department of Rural and Community Development	April 2020 to April 2021
4.	Eradication of Japanese Knotweed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train members in how to identify Japanese Knotweed • Map locations of Japanese Knotweed • Liaise with Clare Co. Co. re signage and eradication 	CLDC – LEADER, Clare Co. Council	September 2019 to September 2022
5.	Pollinator Friendly Planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members will attend biodiversity training to identify pollinator friendly plants which will be used by the 	Hawthorn Nurseries,	March 2020 to March 2022

		community group in the memorial garden and other flower beds.		
6.	Bug and Bee Hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source bug hotel made locally from local reused materials • Select suitable location (beside memorial garden) • Install bug hotel 	Hawthorn Nurseries, Urchin and Buoy,	September 2019
7.	Biodiversity Awareness Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey area for cowslips and bluebells • Recommend to members to mow around these plants while they are in flower • Recommend not using fertilisers on these areas • Design and erect Information panels and posters at the Beach to educate the public about the Biodiversity and flora and fauna of the area with a special emphasis on seaweed • Update and insert photographs in the Nature and Wildlife section of the Spanish Point Community Group's website • Include biodiversity tips and hints in the annual community newsletter which is distributed to all homes in the area • Design and print booklets -possibly children's colouring books – on biodiversity in the area 	Clare Co. Council, Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, Department of Rural and Community Development	October 2019 to May 2020
8.	Beach and Roadside Clean Ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out beach and roadside clean ups twice a year • Adopt a Road scheme -members 	An Taisce, Clean Coasts, Clare Co. Council, local schools, scouts	Biannual - April and September

		regularly pick “truck trash” from road sides		
9.	Bat Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate if bats are nesting under Bealaclugga Bridge Erect educational signage if appropriate 	Bat Conservation Ireland,	March 2020
10.	Stone walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the biodiversity in the many stone walls in the area Erect educational signage as appropriate 	Biodiversity Ireland, local schools	February 2020 to February 2021



Limpets, sea anemones and dog whelks found in the rockpools and on the rocks

Resources

www.cldc.ie/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sand_dune_stabilization

www.japaneseknotweedireland.ie

www.gov.ie/en/.../department-of-rural-and-community-development/

www.hawthornnurseries.com/

www.communityfoundation.ie/

www.clarecoco.ie/

www.irishseedsavers.ie/

www.wildlifemanagement.ie/bug-hotels/

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie>

Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment

<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/>

Heritage Officer - Clare Co. Council

<https://www.gov.ie/en/.../department-of-rural-and-community-development/>

An Taisce - National Spring Clean

www.nationalspringclean.org/

Clean Coasts

<https://cleancoasts.org>

<https://www.batconservationireland.org/>

National Parks and Wildlife Service -

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

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie>

www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/natural/buildings_stone_walls.htm

<http://visitspanishpoint.ie/nature-wildlife/>

Potential funding sources

The biodiversity subcommittee will investigate, identify and source funding from LEADER, Clare Co. Council community grants and Community Foundation of Ireland by checking the eligibility requirements and completing the application process and hopefully secure the funding.

Ensuring Success

We will ensure success by making certain that all members of our community group become involved in the different aspects of our plan. There will also be opportunities for members of local businesses and the wider community to play important parts and we will encourage and welcome their involvement. Members of the Biodiversity Sub Committee will monitor and evaluate progress, bring together the diverse strengths within our community and ensure that, through community teamwork, momentum is maintained and that the plan is completed on time.



Sunset at Spanish Point