



Claregalway Area Biodiversity Plan

Plean Bithéagsúlachta Bhaile Chláir

2021~2024



Riálas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland
Funded by the Department of Rural
and Community Development



EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
Europe Investing in Rural Areas



The LEADER Programme 2014-2020 is financed by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Rural Development Programme Ireland (LEADER) 2014-2020 and by the EU under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.



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Introduction

Claregalway is a Gaeltacht village located about 10 km north of Galway City. Originally founded on the banks of the beautiful River Clare, its name is stemmed from this with “Baile Chláir na Gaillimhe”, translating directly as “town of the Clare, in Galway.” The population of the village is approximately 1,500. There are two primary schools in the village, and a secondary school. There are lots of businesses located in Claregalway, with many located in the Corporate Park. Within the village itself there is a church, hotels, supermarkets, restaurants and cafes, beauticians, hairdressers, pharmacies, a community hub and many more. There are many active community, sports, and recreation groups, particularly Claregalway GAA.

Claregalway is steeped in historical and cultural significance, and the castle and the friary are just two historical buildings in the village. Not only does Claregalway have the River Clare, it is also lucky to have Kiltroque castle, turloughs, Montiagh bog, Nine Arch bridge and many more features, which are both rich in biodiversity and beautiful attributes of our area.



Claregalway Tidy Towns

Claregalway Tidy Towns was set up in 2008. The main purpose of the Claregalway Tidy Towns group is to maintain and improve the built, natural and cultural heritage of Claregalway by engaging with the whole community of Claregalway including businesses, schools, sporting and recreation groups and voluntary groups. Initially the group concentrated on litter pick-ups and flower planters. However, over the past few years the group has enhanced the biodiversity and sustainability of the village in response to the global biodiversity and climate change crises. Two years ago, the group ran a “flower and pollinator project” which involved a bee art competition and workshops with the local primary school children, leaving grass areas grow wild for pollinators, a bee walk and talk and bee/butterfly monitoring. The group recently obtained LA21 funding for a River Clare Sculpture project.

Members of the group have wide ranging interests including archaeology, geology, culture, history and Irish language. However, it was only recently that the group developed a keen interest in nature and biodiversity. This prompted the group to apply successfully to complete biodiversity training with Burrenbeo in January 2021. Eight people from Claregalway participated in the course and learnt a great deal about archaeology, geology, culture and especially nature and biodiversity. The course instilled a real pride of place for all members. The members are Eoghan Concannon, Caitríona Cunningham, Coralie Mureau, Joe Cormican, Vincent Lyons, Conor Trill, Eoghan Gallagher and Stephanie Carrabine.



Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Claregalway Tidy Towns biodiversity group is to protect and enhance the village’s built-heritage and biodiversity, with the help of the whole community.

The objectives of the group are as follows:

- Highlight the many unique assets in Claregalway, both built and natural, that are rich in biodiversity.
- Develop and put in place actions to increase awareness of and enhance biodiversity in Claregalway.
- Connect people and community organisations to their local nature which increases positive behaviour towards wildlife, environment, and habitats.

Built Heritage

Claregalway Franciscan Abbey/Friary

The Claregalway Abbey or friary, like so many others of that time consisted of a church, cloister and domestic buildings. It was founded as early perhaps as 1240. The Franciscan friars settled in Ireland firstly in Youghal in 1226, the year of St. Francis death. The practice was for a group of friars to come to a town and find a house in which to stay. The main group then moved on, leaving a few behind to establish the new foundation.

The Claregalway foundation the first Franciscan Friary in Connacht was made at the request and with the help of John de Cogan. It was richly endowed by the MacFeoris or Birmingham family, a member of which presented the friars with the lands of Cluan Melayn or Cloonmoylan in 1368.

But the most remarkable feature of the ruined friary is its tower and belfry, visible from miles around. “A curious piece of architecture” observed a visitor in 1752



but of the thirteen such towers still standing, only the one in Adare comes near to rivalling in beauty that of Claregalway. Built in the fifteenth century it rests on arches thus giving access at floor level to the Chancel, nave, north transept, and cloister.

Viewed from outside, the tower 80 feet high looks higher than it did when the church had its roof. The line of the roof is indicated by its inverted “V” on the east side. String courses divide the height of the tower into steps, and the gutter level is marked by another string, as well as by the protruding spout stones. The sides are almost square giving the belfry a graceful appearance from every viewpoint.

In towered churches such as this the two cross walls of the tower formed the division between the nave and the choir. The nave and chancel are the same width.

The glory of the typical friary was its east window, the largest and most elaborate in the whole building. The Claregalway window, a replacement for earlier lancet windows belongs to the 15th century. It has five lights separated by mullions which continue upwards to form gracefully proportioned interlacing tracery. Just below the tracery are head pieces resembling transoms.

Franciscan records show a list of Friary guardians (superior) dating from 1629 right through 1872 after which the title of guardians was abolished.

The friary is undoubtedly the most notable landmark in the parish of Claregalway. For over 700 years it has withstood the ravages of time, weather, and man. It provides a very visible reminder of our heritage and religious tradition. The annual cemetery Sunday maintains this religious tradition. When one walks in the cloister courtyard with the river Clare flowing gently in the background, one can escape the hustle and bustle of modern life and the constant noise of traffic on the N17 (now the N83). Here one can achieve a sense of peace and tranquility.

Claregalway Castle

A de Burgh castle, shown here photographed from the ‘Convent Field’, the local name for the field between the friary and the main road. The castle was built later than the friary perhaps as late as the 15th century. One of a number of de Burgh castles in this area, it was built in a strategic position, within arrow flight of the river Clare. It is 40 feet by 35 feet with walls four and a half feet thick the entrance is by an archway of cut stone seven feet high. The outer door was protected by a falling portcullins of iron manipulated by a windlass from inside. There is a murdering hole over the entrance hall, and a round hole at the bottom of the staircase to give light and fire through. There are no windows in the lower 20 feet, only loopholes. These details, as well as the arrangement of rooms inside suggest a barracks for troopers rather than a residence.

A well-preserved spiral staircase ascends for the first 35 feet and narrow stairs from there to the top. In an upper room with Gothic windows there is a carving of a face, said to be the trademark of An Gobán Saor, reputed to be the builder of the round towers.

In 1538 Lord Deputy Grey gave possession of the castle to Ulick de Burgh for whom the title of Clanrickarde was created in 1543. He died in 1544 and it was his successor, Richard, was granted the friary by Elizabeth I in 1570. In one of the many fights between the de Burgh family, the castle of Claregalway, described as his “chief place of strength and importance, both to curb the town of Galway and command the country thereabouts”, was surprised by captain Thomas Burke of Anbally in January 1642 “through the negligence of my tenant Jonakin Lynch, the carelessness of my warders there and the deceit and practices of a Franciscan friar.”

When Dr. Eamon O'Donoghue acquired the Castle in 2000, the building was in danger of collapse. The roof of the Castle had been removed in 1653, following the famous Siege of Galway by Cromwellian forces. Mature trees sprang from the upper floors and the stonework was under threat. A major reconstruction programme was drawn up under Conservation Architect David Johnson, a former inspector of national monuments with The Office of Public Works.

Eamonn O'Donoghue never forgot the childhood picnic shared with his brothers and sisters and parents beside the bridge at Claregalway Castle. His father, Tom, a Toomevara man, a great hurler, and a civil engineer with Cork County Council, had a passion for Ireland's romantic ruins. A photograph was taken of all seven O'Donoghue's lined up grinning at the bridge. The family still have it at their Cork home. But Tom's passion passed on to several of his children. Eamonn studied Medicine in Cork, and Archaeology under Michael J O'Kelly, the man who brilliantly interpreted the ancient tombs at Newgrange.

Shortly after his appointment as ophthalmic surgeon to the Western Health Board (HSE), Eamonn set out to find the Castle. He had no idea where it was, except that it was near the city. He drove out every approach road to Galway until one evening there it was—a vast crumbling tower, ivy-clad, with ruined buildings within its courtyard, exactly as he remembered as a child.

On that very first evening of re-discovery, Eamonn met Canon Callanan, the local Parish Priest at the time, and an entertaining classicist, who told him some of the history of the area. Taken in conjunction with the spectacular ruins of the nearby Franciscan Friary, the medieval bridges, the village itself, the “ghosts of other buildings and landmarks” (really only visible from the air), it soon became clear to Eamonn that this was a monument of major significance. Its battlements not only protected a main road into Galway, but looked down on the ancient Barony of Clare, which originally incorporated the vast and fertile plains of east Galway, known in pre-Norman times as Magh Seaola, and witnessed its evolving story.

The Castle was owned by John Buckley Jr (formerly of Spiddal House), then living in Indonesia, who agreed to sell. The next challenge was to get the various permissions required for a major transformation, and the team to make it happen. Two friends, David Newman Johnson, former Keeper of National Monuments, and Archaeologist Leo Swan gave moral and expert support. Galway County Council was, from the start, supportive in principle, but there were difficulties with the many conservation agencies along the way. “I wanted to do the job as correctly as possible, but there is a need to re-evaluate the evolution of conservation principles in Ireland today,” said Dr O'Donoghue.

Delays were costly and drawn out. And now, more than a decade later, the restoration programme is almost complete on this important 15th century tower house—one of the largest and most significant tower houses in the west of Ireland. Visitors can get a close view of the sympathetic restoration programme carried out by Master Builder Michael Herwood from Cloonacauneen and French Stonemason Jean Baptise Maduit.



The Nine Arches Bridge Restoration

The bridge was erected in stone in the early 1700s. Cut and dressed rock from a local quarry would have been used by skilled stone masons, cutters and a large number of men to give the facing stones the splendid finish and all of this was done by hand! They would have mixed mortar of local sand, water, and lump lime (made by burning limestone in a local kiln).

The Arches were short-lived however, as in 1765, shortly after their construction, John Borkin, a local landlord from nearby Lackagh, changed the course of the river—diverting it away from under the Nine Arches to a deeper channel about 30 metres further north. His plan was to improve the drainage in the area and to make the river navigable to Tuam, but this was thwarted by unbreakable rock in Lackagh. There are two old stone plaques set in the wall on either side of the north end of the bridge that commemorate the work by Borkin. These stones were taken from the original bridge that stood there.

The present bridge was constructed in 1957, (extended in 2012 as part of flood alleviation works) and replaced the previous narrow bridge. The main road was also widened at that time and the front of the Nine Arches Bridge was destroyed in the process and covered in debris. Up to that time, the Galway to Tuam road passed over the Nine Arches. Claregalway Amenity Group initiated the restoration of the Nine Arches in 1997 and it was successfully completed in 2002. This involved:

Removing the spoil from in front of the bridge.

Re-facing with cut stone on the roadside of the bridge, using traditional lime mortar.

Erecting protecting pillars.

Performing other landscaping work.



Biodiversity in Claregalway

Global and National State of Biodiversity

Biodiversity is declining worldwide at an exponential rate, and the Worldwide Fund for Nature's Living Planet Report 2020 showed a fall of 68% in monitored populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016. The State of Nature Report in 2019 found that there are 272 species threatened with extinction in Ireland including the small blue butterfly, the cuckoo bumblebee and spiny dogfish. One third of Ireland's bee species are also threatened with extinction according to the All-Ireland Pollinator plan. In 2021 Bird Watch Ireland reported that 26% of Irish wild bird species which equates to 54 species are now threatened with extinction.

Causes and solutions of Biodiversity decline

The loss of biodiversity has been driven by increasing growth rates in global trade, consumption, human population, and an enormous move towards urbanisation. The main causes of biodiversity loss include habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive species, climate change, pollution, overexploitation of resources, excessive use of chemicals and lack of knowledge, appreciation and understanding of biodiversity loss.

We can stop or reduce biodiversity loss by consuming less, producing sustainably, reducing the drivers of biodiversity loss, and conserving and restoring natural habitats (Global Biodiversity Outlook 2020).

Biodiversity in Claregalway

The natural heritage of Claregalway hosts a variety of habitats, species, and ecosystems. Claregalway's bedrock is limestone, Burren formation (Geographical Survey Ireland), consequently the soil is fertile supporting an array of flowers.



Local anglers, farmers, Galway County Council and other interested statutory and non-statutory bodies as per action plan below.

There are two Natura 2000 sites in Claregalway: River Clare SAC and Kiltullagh Turlough NHA. Other habitats which have high biodiversity value include Montiagh Bog, Hedgerows and native species, and semi-natural grasslands. Claregalway also has many urban green spaces. In July/August 2021 Claregalway Tidy Towns members will draw up a habitat map for Claregalway village.

Claregalway has many species including fish species, butterfly species, hoverfly species, bat species, bird species, the common frog, hares and badgers.

River Clare

The River Clare in Claregalway is a Special Area of Conservation because it is included in the Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation. The River Clare flows from Ballyhaunis in Co Mayo through the towns of Tuam, Corofin and Claregalway before entering the great Corrib on its eastern shores. It is the largest tributary (93km long) of the Corrib-Mask catchment. In the past the river was used for people to travel along, gather food and as a source of nourishment. An article from the Connacht Tribune in 1939 described the River Clare as "the best fishing spot for salmon and trout West of the Shannon" (Claregalway Parish History book). However, drainage works carried out on the River Clare in the 1950s and 1960s impacted negatively on the catchment's ecology including the removal of riparian wildlife. The lack of riparian vegetation on the perimeters of the river corridor can contribute to the deterioration of the river's habitat quality. Water temperature is a crucial factor in the survival of Salmonids, and riparian wildlife can offer the shade needed to keep water temperatures cool. These fish largely need a water temperature below 20 degrees Celsius to thrive. Dredging works still take place in the present day.

Today the River Clare supports various aquatic related species such as Trout and Salmon, Grey Heron, Otters, Bats and Crayfish for example. Stretches of the River Clare are migratory routes for Salmonids returning to spawn which takes place in the tributaries mainly such as the Abbert, Grange and Sinking river. The water quality of the River Clare is moderate according to the EPA's 2018 water assessment.

The group would like to improve the water quality of the River Clare through educating the local community, planting vegetation and trees in riparian habitat and consulting with, local anglers, farmers, Galway County Council and other interested statutory and non-statutory bodies as per action plan below.



Kiltullagh Turlough

Just outside Claregalway village off the Oranmore road is Kiltullagh Turlough which is a Natural Heritage Area (NHA). Migratory wintering birds feed on Kiltullagh Turlough.

Montiagh Bog

“Montiagh” means the house of turf. Montiagh bog is an Atlantic blanket bog and it is located along the River Clare between the townlands of Cahergowan, Cloon and Pollaghrevagh. Bogs have been fundamental in providing for local communities in the form of peat cutting and were integral to the social development of Claregalway over the years. Montiagh land is low-lying, and in winter it is liable to flooding. Some of the land is good pasture (Source:Galway Community Heritage).At present farming takes place in the good pastureland adjacent to Montiagh Bog. Turf is still cut in some places in Montiagh Bog, and hunting and fishing is carried out. Peatlands are a major factor in carbon sequestration and their declines can impact humans negatively going forward. They are a natural asset and must be protected adequately. Unfortunately, there is a problem of illegal dumping in Montiagh bog which is being investigated by Claregalway Tidy Town members and Galway County Council.

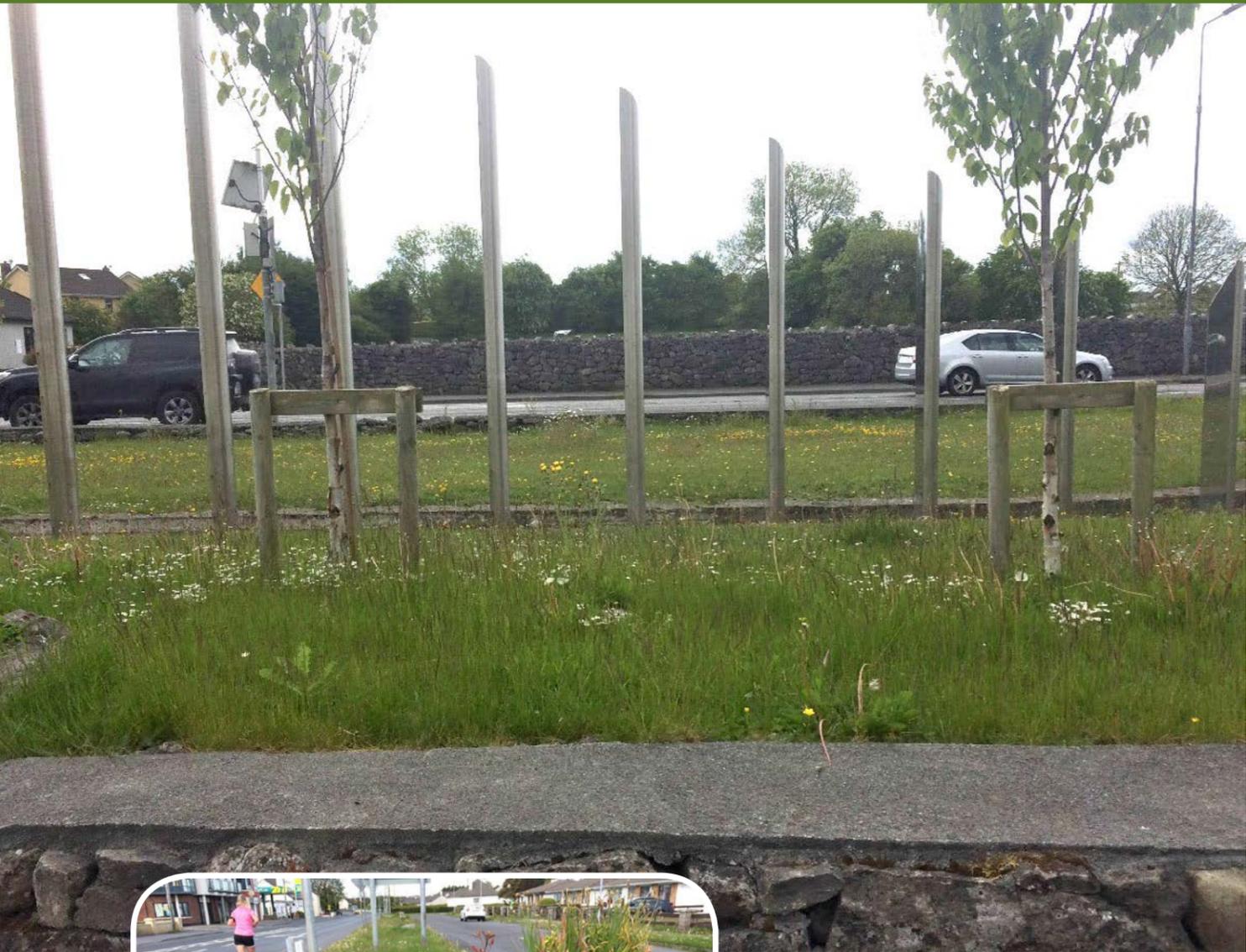
There are many hedgerows with trees such as hawthorn, blackthorn, willow, ash and sycamore growing along Montiagh bog which form ecological corridors. Birds noted in Montiagh Bog include the Whooper swan, heron, cuckoo, swallow, swift and willow warblers. In Summer 2020, Tidy Towns members Cairíona Cunningham and Eoghan Concannon conducted bumblebee and butterfly monitoring surveys for the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Claregalway Tidy Towns biodiversity group would like to encourage people to walk and cycle through Montiagh Bog. By walking and cycling in nature, people connect with nature, and by appreciating nature people would be more likely to protect it.



Hedgerows and Native Trees

Claregalway does have hedgerows and native trees along its roads and in the surrounding farmlands. There is also a coniferous plantation in Montiagh bog. Roughly 12% of wooded areas cover the landmass of Ireland with this being as low as 1% in the early 1900s. A lot of coniferous, Sitka Spruce plantations were established in the post WW2 period in an attempt to boost the economy. They were grown to be sold for timber, not so much for ecological reasons. These plantations can be harmful to local native species and are not particularly natural to the area. The Claregalway Tidy Towns biodiversity group would like to plant more native trees and hedges in Claregalway village to support biodiversity, as detailed in action plan below. Information signs will be put beside trees/hedges which are growing in Claregalway and signs will be put beside planted trees/hedges to inform the public about the importance of trees/hedges and their species names and details.



Urban Green Space

There are a number of urban green spaces in the seven estates in the village, along by the businesses, schools and historic areas and along the roadsides. The aim of the Claregalway biodiversity plan is to increase the biodiversity value of these green areas by implementing the pollinator plan for these areas, to plant more trees and hedgerows, to start up a community orchard and garden, and to put in place bird and bat boxes as per action plan below.



Bats

There are 27 species of mammals that are resident in Ireland, 9 of which are species of bats. The Irish species of bats are:

- common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
- soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)
- Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*)
- Nathusius' bat (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)
- Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*)
- whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*)
- brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*)
- lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)



Bats are the only mammal capable of true powered flight. All of the Irish bat species are insectivorous; they can eat as many as 3000 insects in one night. Irish bats use echolocation to be able to fly and catch prey at night. They produce high-frequency sounds beyond the range of human hearing and listen for the echoes that bounce back off objects in their surroundings. Irish bats become active in late spring/early summer until returning to hibernation from October/November. The River Clare provides an ideal foraging habitat for bats in Claregalway due to the high level of insects. Bats are protected by law in Ireland under the Wildlife Act, 1976; Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000; EU Habitats Directive [92/43/EEC]; European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. Unsympathetic building and bridge renovations, woodland management, pesticides, removal of hedgerows, roost disturbance and light pollution are some of the major threats to Irish bat populations.



Common Swift in flight



Swifts

The Common Swift (*Apus apus*) is the only species of Swift that can be found in Ireland. It is a migratory bird species that arrives in Ireland to breed in late April/early May and returns to southern Africa in August; a round trip of 14,000 miles. Swifts fly about 2 million miles in their lifetime. They can be found nesting in small crevices in old buildings and in

the eaves of houses. Swifts tend to pair for life and are also site-faithful, meaning that they return to the same nest every year. Therefore, the loss of nest sites due to building renovations and the lack of potential nesting sites in modern buildings is a major threat to Swifts. The Swift population in Ireland is in decline with a reduction of 40% in the last 10 years. Swifts can be helped by raising awareness and encouraging building owners to protect nest sites. Swift nest boxes can be installed to provide more nesting sites in the community.

Pollinators

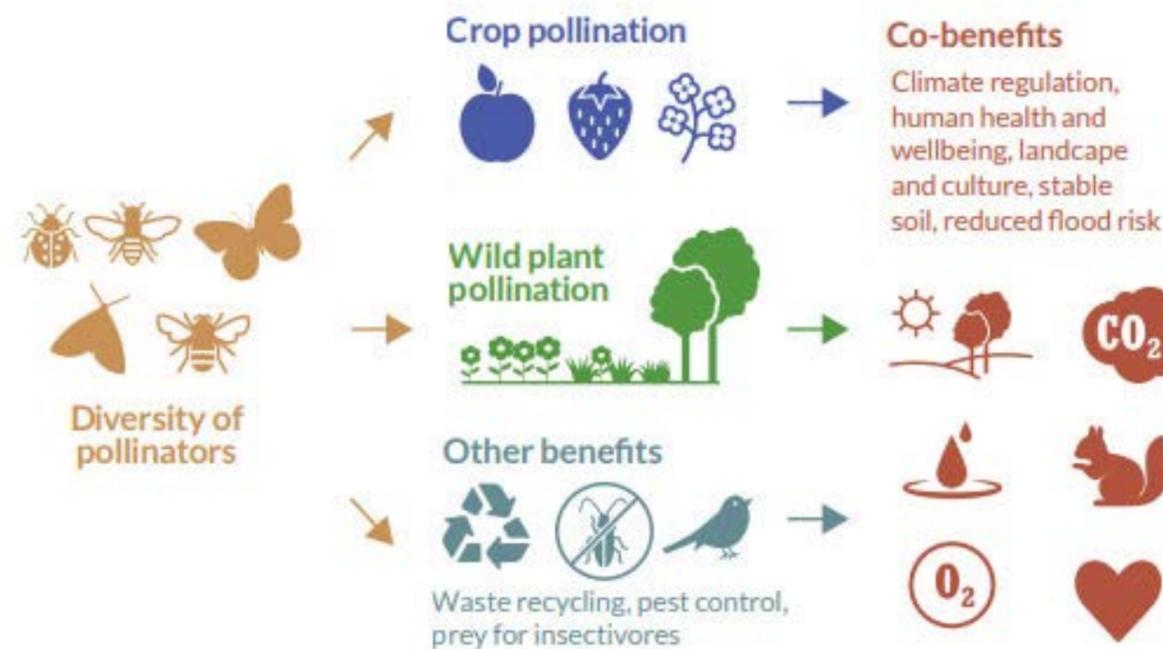
Worldwide there are many pollinators which pollinate our flowers including birds, bats, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, small animals and bees. In Ireland, our pollinators include butterflies, moths, wasps, beetles, hoverflies, and bees. Bees are the best pollinators, and we have 99 bee species including 1 honeybee species, 21 bumblebee species and 77 solitary bee species. Pollinators are declining globally and in Ireland one third of our bee species are at risk of extinction.

Importance of Pollinators

Pollinators are very important because they pollinate 78% of our flowering plant species, and they pollinate 71 of the 100 crops that provide 90% of the world's food supply. In Ireland, the annual value of animal pollination to home produced food crops €59 million per year. Insect-pollinated plant species play important ecological roles, e.g. providing fruits and seeds for birds and other wildlife, contributing to nutrient cycling (e.g. nitrogen fixation), and to climate change adaptation. Furthermore, wild pollinator conservation measures can directly benefit other beneficial taxa, such as natural pest enemies that enhance biological control, see diagram below.



Protecting pollinators brings many benefits



Causes of Decline

Pollinators are declining in due to habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation (homelessness); decline in wildflowers (hunger), pests and diseases (sickness), pesticides (poisoning) and climate change (changing environment).

Habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation is caused by the loss of natural and semi-natural habitats. By converting natural and semi-natural habitats to intensive farmland, forestry and urban/industrial use there is a loss of food plants and nesting sites for pollinators.

Decline in wildflowers are largely due to changing farming practises e.g. move from hay to silage production & increase in fertiliser & pesticide use, and in our tendency to tidy up the landscape by mowing and spraying pesticides in our gardens & parks, and along roadsides and field margins.

When managed pollinators are brought into Ireland, they can bring new pests and diseases. Pests and diseases are the main threat to honeybees.

To meet global population growth and increased food demand the agriculture sector is now using the highest volume of pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, fungicides) than in other point in history. Some insecticides show clear negative effects on the health of pollinators. Although herbicides and fungicides may not directly affect pollinators, herbicides reduce the amount of food available to pollinators.

Climate change impacts negatively on pollinators because there are changes in the timing of flowering, and the timing of emerging pollinators from hibernation, and the risks to pollinators associated with more severe weather events.

Reversing the Decline

The All-Ireland pollinator sets out the solutions below to reverse the decline of pollinators. Some of these actions are incorporated into Claregalway’s action plan under the ‘pollinator’ section.

- Plant patches of urban areas with wildflowers
- Incorporate pollinator friendly plants into gardens.
- Allow lawn weeds such as dandelions and white clover to flower.
- Incorporate wildflower strips within cropped fields.
- Allow field margins to grow wild.
- Incorporate clovers into grass-dominated swards.
- Incorporate artificial solitary bee nests into urban gardens.
- Reduce or stop using pesticides
- Preserve and increase the amount of semi-natural and natural habitats especially natural grasslands
- Reduce mowing



Hoverfly sp. feeding on leek flower (photo: Coralie Mureau)

Pollinators in Claregalway

In Summer 2020, Tidy Towns members Caitriona Cunningham and Eoghan Concannon conducted bumblebee and butterfly monitoring surveys for the National Biodiversity Data Centre. They found the following bumblebee species: *Bombus terrestris*, *Bombus lucorum*, *Bombus hortorum*, *Bombus pascuorum*, *Bombus pratorum*, and *Bombus lapidarius*. Butterfly species found were the small white butterfly, the small tortoiseshell butterfly, the orange tip butterfly, the peacock butterfly, the speckled wood butterfly and the large white butterfly. Solitary bee species and the honeybee were also found. Flowers growing along the bog include dandelions, meadowsweet, thistles, yarrow, tufted vetch, silverweed, and oxeye daisy.

Education and Community Engagement

Importance of Environmental Education



Environmental education and motivating people to stand up for their environment is one of the best responses to environmental problems including biodiversity loss. As mentioned in the biodiversity section we can stop or reduce biodiversity loss by consuming less, producing sustainably, reducing the drivers of biodiversity loss, and conserving and restoring natural habitats (Global Biodiversity Outlook 2020). It is important to educate people on how to stop or reduce biodiversity loss. The goal of environmental education according

to the Belgrade Charter 1975 is “to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones”.

It is very important to connect people to their local nature as they are more likely to behave positively towards the environment, wildlife and habitats. Nature connectedness is also associated with physical and mental health benefits (Professor David Sheffield from University of Derby).

Education and Community Engagement in Claregalway

Education and community engagement is a crucial part of our biodiversity plan for the whole community of Claregalway. The community includes local schools, businesses, and residents. A variety of communication methods will be used including social media, workshops, field trips, practical conservation events, nature & heritage walks and talks, emails, word of mouth and competitions.

Social Media

Facebook page will be updated regularly to inform, educate, and increase awareness surrounding biodiversity in the area. It will also be used to promote upcoming events and show the people of Claregalway what is being done by the Tidy Town's group.

This will hopefully foster a community spirit surrounding the beauty that Claregalway has to offer and showcase points of interest both built and natural. Continuous engagement and education will hopefully encourage more people to join us in Claregalway Tidy Towns and help us to care for and nurture our built and natural heritage.



Schools

Claregalway Tidy Towns will work with the two primary schools and secondary school to protect and enhance biodiversity and to educate students, through many methods, some of which are detailed below.

Coláiste Bhaile Chláir have established a gardening club in their polytunnel which features some raised beds. Students regularly carry out a litter pick of the grounds.

Biodiversity Workshops and Fieldtrips with Schools

Claregalway Tidy Towns ran “pollinator and flower” workshops and “river pollution” workshops with schools in 2019 and 2020, details are as follows:

Pollinator and Flower Workshops

In 2019 Claregalway Tidy Towns member and environmental educator Caitríona Cunningham delivered flower and pollinator workshops and field trips with Claregalway Educate Together. The children were invited to enter the “Let’s bee friends” art competitions. For this competition children were asked to draw and colour a picture showing how to encourage bees to stay near the homes. Children drew, colored and painted fabulous pictures of bees foraging on flowers, and flowering trees, and bees nesting in long grass. One winning entry from the junior classes and another winning entry from the senior classes were awarded a family ticket to Slieve Aughty honeyfarm sponsored by Claregalway Tidy Towns. Twelve runner-up entries were awarded “Bee bombs”, wildflower seeds sponsored by SuperValu. Claregalway Tidy Towns and SuperValu awarded the children their prizes at the beginning of June, and information and photos about the bee art competition was publicized in the Connacht Tribune. Caitríona will deliver online pollinator and flower workshops to local schools in May and June 2021, and Claregalway Tidy Towns will invite schools to participate in a bee art competition for schools.

River Clare Sculpture Project

In 2019 Claregalway Tidy Towns successfully received funding from the Community Environment Action Fund to deliver the “River Clare Sculpture Project”. The purpose of this project is to connect Claregalway residents in particular children and teenagers with their local River Clare, to educate Claregalway residents on the importance of the River Clare ecosystem for wildlife and how to keep the River Clare clean. In Spring 2020 Tidy Town members Eoghan and Caitríona delivered interactive water pollution & river ecosystem workshops to students from Claregalway N.S., Claregalway Educate Together and Coláiste Bhaile and Chláir. Unfortunately, the project was paused in March 2020 due to Covid-19, however it is anticipated that the project will resume in Spring 2022. The next phase of the project will involve bringing the students onto the River Clare for kick-sampling, and nature art workshops with Gordon Darcy where students will make sculptures of River Clare’s flora and fauna.

Community Education Events

There will a range of community education events throughout the year including biodiversity walks and talks, orchard and garden events and conservation action days.



organic growing contributing to a more sustainable, more diverse environment for wildlife and biodiversity, also the space would promote good physical and mental health and mitigate against climate change utilising water harvesting and composting wherever possible and propagating the plants that source the garden.

Community Conservation Events

Claregalway Tidy Towns intends to run the following conservation events for the community:

Regular Litter pick-ups

Work in the Community garden and orchard.

Contribute to establish nature walking routes by taking part in “step, snap and send” Facebook photography competition in May 2021.

Heritage Week “Hay-making” event

Tree planting and hedge laying action days

Pollinator pledge to protect pollinators for estates and businesses.

Think Before You Flush Campaign for businesses to help keep water clean.

Community Biodiversity Walks and Talks

In Summer 2020 for heritage week, bee expert Janet Laffey from Green Sod Ireland delivered a pollinator talk and walk to Claregalway Tidy Towns volunteers. Claregalway Tidy Towns plan to run a pollinator haymaking education event for heritage week 2021 in a parish field adjacent to the Abbey. There will be a “Pollinator walk & talk” for adults & pollinator games for children e.g. find the most pollen in field, see biodiversity action plan. In Autumn 2021 Claregalway Tidy Towns plan to run bat & history walks and talks around the Abbey and Castle, see biodiversity action plan.

Community Orchard and Garden

A community garden and orchard would provide the opportunity for all those involved to learn about the importance of, and take an active part in local food production, healthy eating and community action. It would include an orchard (apple/plum/pear and soft fruit) medicinal planting, food growing, a range of flowers and shrubs supporting wildlife, and would create opportunities in volunteering, horticultural up-skilling, up-cycling, and link up with community events in the town. The garden would be an organic demonstration garden, with

Project	Action	Leader and partners	Time Frame
Com- munity garden	<p>1. Identify a possible location:</p> <p>Small area at the back of the Claregalway hotel</p> <p>Corporate park (new development in front of park)</p> <p>Green area in a residential estate: Cúirt na habhainn or River Oaks (link up with resident associations)</p> <p>Claregalway Castle grounds.</p> <p>2. Temporary or permanent community garden.</p> <p>If temporary: pots and moveable raised beds.</p> <p>If permanent: raised beds, water harvesting, composting and orchard.</p> <p>In the future: Day Centre & New community area.</p> <p>3. Involve community via social media, open days and events</p> <p>4. As above, create a diverse environment for wildlife and biodiversity</p> <p>5. Set out features including children’s area, Wildlife area, Composting area, medicinal/herbal area</p> <p>6. Hold workshops such as planting for pollinators, grow your own and propagation of plants, in distant future beekeeping.</p> <p>7. Have a market and giveaways to increase variety of plants in community.</p>	<p>Stephanie & Coralie Coláiste Bhaile Chláir secondary school (food growing and tunnel)</p> <p>Claregalway Educate Together & National School.</p> <p>Horse owners or for horse manure</p> <p>Resident associations</p> <p>Men’s shed</p> <p>Local garden centres</p> <p>Community Gardens Ireland</p>	<p>May- October 2021</p>
Bat/Swift survey & boxes	<p>Phase1: conduct swift and bat surveys in the area to identify nesting locations. Identify bat species and roosting locations.</p> <p>Phase2: Work for groups such as local Men’s shed to build swift and bat boxes.</p> <p>Phase3: continued monitoring of swift and bat box use. Eventually build concrete swift boxes and woodcrete boxes for bats. Host bat/swift walk and talks to involve community and raise awareness.</p>	<p>Conor Trill</p> <p>Swift conservation Ireland & Bat Conservation Ireland</p>	<p>March 2021-on-going</p>

Project	Action	Leader and partners	Time Frame
Walking routes in- terpretive map	<p>Phase1: Ask people to send photos of nature from around Claregalway as part of the “Step, Snap, Send” photography competition on Facebook.</p> <p>Phase2: Bring together photos and produce route maps with nature and history.</p> <p>Phase3: Display maps around village with QR codes to provide info on route and biodiversity along the walk.</p>	<p>Joe Cormican (leader)</p> <p>Eoghan Gallagher</p>	<p>Spring-Summer 2021/2022</p>
River Clare in- terpretive boards	<p>Phase1: Research existing interpretative boards in Galway City, Milltown, and other locations. Discuss with angler groups, schools and inland fisheries.</p> <p>Phase2: Produce boards with help of graphic designers.</p> <p>Phase3: Display boards around Claregalway village.</p>	<p>Vincent (leader)</p> <p>Coralie, Eoghan C, Caitríona.</p> <p>Local schools.</p>	<p>Summer 2021-22</p>

Project	Action	Leader and partners	Time Frame
Pollinator Project	<p>1. Promote pollinators in estates*, schools, farms & businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify estates' resident's development associations, schools, farms & local businesses. Request estates' resident's development associations, schools, farms & businesses to take the pollinator pledge & incorporate a few actions from All Ireland Pollinator Plan to assist pollinators (letter). Award participating businesses schools, farms & residents associations with "Tidy Towns pollinator stickers" Display pollinator signs in Irish and English on areas managed for pollinators "Nature Wildlife Area. Do not cut or spray". <p>*Estates: Summerfield, Lakeview, Mainistir, River Oaks, Churchfield, Cúirt na hAbhann, Gleann Mhuirís</p> <p>2. Pollinators & road verges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify road verges* for pollinators Investigate feasibility of Galway County Council leaving road verges grow long for pollinators. Consult with Community Employment programme director. Display pollinator signs in Irish and English on areas managed for pollinators "Nature Wildlife Area. Do not cut or spray". <p>*Road verges: Montiagh Rd., Outside church, Outside Lakeview, Along R381</p> <p>3. Protecting existing pollinator habitats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing pollinator habitats by putting together habitat map for Claregalway Request resident development associations, local businesses, farmers, schools and Galway County Council to protect exiting pollinator habitats e.g. hedgerows, ivy. Award participating businesses schools, farms & residents associations with "Tidy Towns pollinator stickers" <p>4. Plant pollinator friendly flowers & trees/shrubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate pollinator friendly flowers into planters Identify areas where wildflowers & flowering trees/shrubs can be sown Plant wildflower seeds & flowering trees/shrubs & place sign informing the public about wildflowers & pollinators <p>5. Pollinator workshops & art competition with schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver pollinator workshops in schools & inform children about pollinator art competition. Display children's art in local shop Award winning entries with prizes <p>6. Bumblebee and butterfly monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor for bumblebees and butterflies in Claregalway village by participating in National Biodiversity Data Centre monitoring programme. <p>7. Pollinator haymaking education event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For heritage week celebrate pollinators by hosting a haymaking event in parish field adjacent to abbey. "Pollinators walk & talk" & pollinator games for children e.g. find the most pollen in field. <p>8. Make Claregalway pesticide free</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist pollinators. 	<p>Caitríona Cunningham (leader)</p> <p>Tidy Towns members: Joe Cormican, Conor Trill & Eoghan Concannon.</p> <p>Residents' development associations in estates.</p> <p>Local businesses.</p> <p>Galway County Council.</p> <p>Community Employment programme director.</p> <p>Schools.</p> <p>Farmers.</p>	<p>Summer 2021 & every summer</p>

Project	Action	Leader and partners	Time Frame
River Clare Sculpture Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> River pollution & River Ecosystem workshops with schools Kick sampling workshops along the River Clare with schools Visit to local sewerage plant TBYF campaign for local businesses, residents & farmers Paint fish beside village drains Sculpture art workshops with schools Display sculptures along the River Clare 	<p>Caitríona Cunningham (leader)</p> <p>Gordon Darcy (artist)</p> <p>Tidy Town members: Eoghan Concannon & Eoghan Gallagher</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Businesses</p> <p>Inland Fisheries</p> <p>Local Angler Group</p> <p>LAWPRO</p> <p>Galway County Council</p>	<p>Spring 2022</p>
Habitat map of Claregalway & Artistic map of Claregalway	<p>Claregalway Tidy Towns will complete a workshop with Burrenbeo and will develop a habitat map of Claregalway.</p>	<p>Caitríona & Eoghan C & Coralie</p>	<p>Summer 2021</p>
Tree/Hedge planting	<p>Identify sites and undertake actions to plant trees and hedges in suitable locations.</p>	<p>Caitríona (leader)</p> <p>Tidy Towns members</p> <p>Tree experts (Janice Fuller, Rob Steed)</p>	<p>Autumn 2021 / Spring 2022</p>
Environmental Education	<p>Update Facebook page regularly to inform and educate. Arrange events such as pollinator talks, bat walk and talks etc.</p>	<p>Caitríona & Eoghan G</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Project	Action	Leader and partners	Time Frame
River Clare - Freshwater protection	<p>A phased basis approach to explore different avenues of river restoration of key ecological features, on the lower reaches of the River Clare.</p> <p>Phase 1: Create a submission paper, as a basis for discussion and feedback with stakeholders, i.e landowners, community groups and other stakeholders such as state agencies to communicate the benefits and opportunities of the proposed project.</p> <p>Phase 2: Given the buy in of the project, with project partners explore next steps in preparation for actions such as Environmental Impact Assessments and Feasibility Studies given the sensitive nature of the SAC</p> <p>Phase 3: Taken into account the outcomes of phase 1 and 2, begin to devise a project plan/ strategy to implement appropriate measures for river restoration i.e tree planting/ habitat enhancement</p> <p>Other activities: Nutrient sampling and kick sampling exercises to gather data on the state of water quality in the river, which can feed into project plans and funding applications</p>	Eoghan C & Caitriona Landowners, LAWCO (local authority waters and communities office), Cairde na Chlair (anglers), IFI (Inland Fisheries Ireland), NPWS	2021-22
Invasive Species	<p>-Get a local expert to survey Claregalway for Invasive species from Galway County Council</p> <p>-With our project partners consider what mitigations would be most necessary to eradicate the species</p> <p>-Raise awareness through social media and physical signage</p> <p>-Write about the crayfish plague on the River Clare which emerged in 2018/19</p>	Eoghan C, Landowners, Galway County Council invasive species expert Elaine O'Riordain, NPWS	2021-2022

Project	Action	Leader and partners	Time Frame
Peatland Development	<p>-Phase 1: Identify the issues and opportunities of the peatland area with project partners and landowners through stakeholder engagement</p> <p>Phase 2: With project partners devise a project plan to assess what measures can be taken to provide ecological restoration to the area.</p> <p>Phase 3: Based off the outcomes of phases 1 and 2 begin to carry out the necessary measures needed to carry out some project actions</p> <p>Other activities: Clean the illegal dumping and contact GCC & landowners for measures to prevent this happening again.</p>	Eoghan C (Leader) Landowners, GCC (Galway County Council), Irish Peatland Conservation Council , NPWS (National Park and Wildlife Service), Irish wildlife trust, Galway heritage office (Marie Mannion) Aidan Cunningham (illegal dumping) acunningham@galway-coco.ie & Anthony Ruffley aruffley@galway-coco.ie Tommy O'Boyle (litter warden)	2021- 2022
Woodlands in Lydican and Montagh Bog	Chat with landowner re opening up for public access	Caitriona/ Coralie/Eoghan C	
Claregalway's nature in the past	Read & translate Claregalway school pupils' accounts of nature in the past	Caitriona	

Resources

Project	Resources
Community Garden and Orchard	Communitygardensireland.ie Greensideup.ie
Bat/Swift Survey & Boxes	<p>https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Leaflet_3_batboxes.pdf</p> <p>https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BCIrelandGuidelines_BatBoxes.pdf</p> <p>https://birdwatchireland.ie/app/uploads/2021/01/5362-BirdWatchIreland-BatBox_leaflet_HR.pdf</p> <p>Saving Swifts guide by BirdWatch Ireland (Includes information on wooden Swift boxes):</p> <p>https://birdwatchireland.ie/app/uploads/2019/10/Saving-Swifts-Guide_pdf.pdf</p> <p>Swift survey advice: http://www.swiftconservation.ie/survey-advice/</p> <p>http://www.swiftconservation.ie/</p>
Walking Routes Interpretative Map	Habitat mapping workshop with Burrenbeo
Pollinator project	All Ireland Pollinator Plan
Habitat Map of Claregalway	Habitat mapping workshop with Burrenbeo
Tree/hedge planting	“Our Trees” by Tree Council of Ireland
River Clare Project	Inland fisheries website EPA website www.catchments.ie



Funding

Failte Ireland - <https://www.failteireland.ie/Identify-Available-Funding.aspx#:~:text=F%C3%A1ilte%20Ireland%20helps%20to%20support,grant%20schemes%20and%20strategic%20partnerships>

LAWPRO - <http://watersandcommunities.ie/community-water-development-fund/>

The Heritage Council <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding>

Creative Ireland Climate fund - <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/blog/creative-climate-action-fund-seeks-to-spark-artistic-imaginations/>

Laurie Healy Credit Union Fund - <https://www.caracreditunion.ie/the-lauri-healy-community-sponsorship-awards-now-open-for-applications/>

Community Foundation for Ireland - <https://www.communityfoundation.ie/grants/types-of-grants>

County Council Community Support Grants - <http://www.galway.ie/en/services/communityenterpriseeconomicdevelopment/grantschemes/>

Local Leader Company, Galway Rural Development- <http://www.grd.ie/>

Foras na Gaeilge <https://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/funding-schemes/?lang=en>

Local sponsorship, fundraising, etc.



Sunset on the River Clare (photo: Coralie Mureau)

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to all Claregalway Tidy Towns Biodiversity group for all the work put into developing this plan and all the actions. Thanks also to all who supplied photos for the plan.

Thank you to Burrenbeo for providing biodiversity training.

Thanks to all residents of Claregalway who engage with Tidy Towns through Facebook or attending clean ups.

We look forward to working with residents, businesses, school, and community groups to bring this plan to fruition.

Ní neart go cur le chéile!



burrenbeotrust
connecting people and place

This biodiversity plan is one of six that came about as a result of the 2021 Community Biodiversity Training and Awareness Programme delivered by the Burrenbeo Trust and funded by Galway Rural Development. Up to eight participants from each community attended a place-based Biodiversity Training course, which included 10 hours of initial activity-based learning covering all aspects of heritage but focusing on Biodiversity. This culminated in each community creating a Biodiversity plan. Workshops on various topics were provided to the communities in order to give them the skills necessary to put their plans into action. Creating their own plan gives each community a strong sense of ownership and agency. Each of the six plans is unique and reflects the interests, skills and needs of the local community.

Design and printing of the plans was funded by Galway County Council.



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland
Funded by the Department of Rural
and Community Development



EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
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The LEADER Programme 2014-2020 is financed by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Rural Development Programme Ireland (LEADER) 2014-2020 and by the EU under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.