

# **An Cheathrú Rua**

## **Local Community Nature Plan**

**2016 - 2021**



## Contents

Acknowledgements:.....	2
An Cheathrú Rua Local Community Nature Plan .....	3
Introduction .....	3
The scope and vision of the local nature plan .....	4
People and Nature An Cheathrú Rua .....	4
Actions .....	6
Resources .....	8

### **Acknowledgements:**

The support and assistance of all the participants in the development of the Community Nature Plan for an Cheathrú Rua is gratefully acknowledged including those who attended workshops and meetings and who made contributions by phone or email.

The background information on the local community and biodiversity of an Cheathrú Rua was collated by Dónal Ó Broin. Photographs are reproduced with kind permission of Annie Devane and Breda Lydon

Thank you to An Cromptán and the library for hosting the meetings and the launch. Thank also to Galway County Council and NUI Galway for facilitating the plan through the Galway County Biodiversity Project.

# An Cheathrú Rua Local Community Nature Plan

## Introduction

Biodiversity is the term used to describe the variety of life on earth. This includes the differences among and between all the living organisms on earth such as plants, animals and micro-organisms like bacteria and fungi. Biodiversity also includes the differences between the different habitats that these species live in and the ways in which living organisms interact with each other and the world around them or simply the 'Web of Life'.

People too are part of biodiversity. We depend on a range of other species for food, clothes, medicine and other raw materials and to provide a healthy, stable environment for us to thrive.

A local biodiversity or nature plan provides a framework for communities to set priorities and deliver actions for biodiversity at the local level. These plans adopt a bottom up approach to nature conservation as they are developed co-operatively by local people and will be managed and delivered at this level. Local nature plans offer an opportunity to develop partnerships between local communities and local authorities, state agencies and NGOs and other bodies.

This development of this plan was instigated by the Tidy Towns group of An Chearthú Rua and the process was facilitated by the manager of the Galway County Biodiversity Project, Elaine O'Riordan. The consultation process involved two workshops. The first workshop served as a 'brainstorming' session where local community representatives met and identified biodiversity features of interest, local issues and resources. Other persons with an interest or statutory role in biodiversity conservation on the Island were contacted by email or phone for input also.

From this a broad list of possible actions was produced which were discussed and refined at the second workshop. Further consultation on the draft plan was carried out by email/phone and a final list of actions for the plan agreed.

The plan is for five years from 2016 to 2021. A biodiversity work group will be formed which will meet regularly to progress the plan and monitor the results. The plan was formally launched in September 2016.



## The scope and vision of the local nature plan

This is a community led nature plan. It highlights the biodiversity of An Cheathrú Rua that our local community holds dear and sets out actions that we would like to implement to help promote, conserve and enhance the local natural environment. The development and implementation of the plan is at the community level in the spirit of a shared appreciation of and commitment to our biodiversity in An Cheathrú Rua .



## People and Nature An Cheathrú Rua

An Cheathrú Rua is a peninsula in South Connemara situated between Cuan Chasla and Cuan an Fhir Mhóir. It is best known for its culture and heritage. It is one of the strongest Irish-Speaking Districts. Folklore, Traditional Song and Dance are very strong. The Community of An Cheathrú Rua is a vibrant one. There are sporting, social and cultural clubs. There are two Irish Colleges. People and clubs cooperate with one another. Young and old relate well to one another.



The landscape is one of small lakes and low hills surrounded by the sea. The peninsula itself is of pleasing appearance and there are beautiful views from it towards Oileáin Árain and the Beanna Beola. The beaches are renowned, particularly Trá an Dóilín (“the Coral Strand”) which is formed from maerl – a rare Coralline algae. The sea surrounding an Chearthú Rua is considered a ‘biodiversity hotspot’ due to the great variety of marine plant and animal life found there.

There are a good few lakes, of which Loch an Mhuilinn is the largest, but Loch na Naomh, located high on Cnoc an Phobail, is the most regarded and deemed blessed. While none of the hills are particularly high, there are good views from them. Granite is the base rock. The land is of poor quality with stone walls built around small fields so the landscape is largely covered by a mosaic of semi-improved grasslands including wet grassland with flowers such as meadow sweet, purple loosestrife and flag iris; and dry acid grassland grading to heath where heather, gorse, and wild thyme are to be found. Many of the fields are now overgrown with bracken and brambles. Japanese knotweed, an invasive weed has become a problem in parts and the local community have been active in trying to eradicate it. Birds of land and sea including the curlew, oystercatcher and swans are to be seen and heard. Older generations had great knowledge of all of these and knew all their names, but the younger people are not so knowledgeable.





The population of about 2,500 mainly lives alongside the coastline or along the main roads. There are two established villages, Casla and An Cheathrú Rua. The housing stock is good; few of the old thatched dwellings survive. There are electrical, water and communications networks. There is a rubbish collection service. There is a

limited sewerage scheme in An Cheathrú Rua village ; otherwise individual septic tanks or treatment plants are used. Oil is supplanting turf as the principal fuel source. There are no active bogs left on the peninsula, but people have turbary rights elsewhere. Agriculture and Fishing used to be the main activities, but these have largely been replaced by tourism, industry, services, educational, communications, media and construction related employment. There are two industrial estates, one in Casla and the other in An Cheathrú Rua. Both villages have Post Offices, shops, public houses and other business outlets. Raidió na Gaeltachta's headquarters and a District Courthouse are located in Casla. There is a Church, a Health Centre, a Parents' Support Unit, a Library, a Garda Station, a County Council Office, a Fire Brigade Station, an Ambulance Station, a Credit Union Office, a Football Pitch, an All-Weather Pitch, a Sports Hall with Meeting Rooms, a Community Hall, a Development Cooperative, a Primary School, a Comprehensive School and a University Campus in An Cheathrú Rua. There is another Primary School in An Tuairín.

There are two principal quays, Céibh an tSrutháin on Cuan Chasla and Caladh Thaidhg on Cuan an Fhir Mhóir. There are smaller piers and boatslips also. While fishing has declined, these are widely used by the traditional boats. Sailing and diving activities also take place.

There is a regular bus service to Galway. There are also private bus and hackney services. The private car is the main mode of transport.



There are two cemeteries, one at Barr an Doire the other at Cladhnach. There are the remains of an old church at Barr an Doire.

***Photographs Annie Devane and Breda Lydon with kind permission***

## Actions

Area/Feature	Possible Actions	Potential Partners	Timeframe
Litter/Dumping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise regular litter clean up events.</li> <li>Organise upcycling/recycling/composting demonstrations/workshops</li> </ul>	Tidy Towns Schools Galway County Council An Taisce	Ongoing 2016-2021
Nature Trails, Walks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map/identify routes for nature walks or cycle trails around An Cheathrú Rua</li> </ul>	Rural Recreation Officer Galway County Council Failte Ireland	2017-2018
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify suitable sites for nature signs or other interpretive installations</li> <li>Develop nature guides, spotter sheets etc for local habitats/species such as the sea shore, lake, bog, birds, animals</li> </ul>	Tidy Towns Local business Schools Galway County Council	2017-2018
Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plant more suitable native trees</li> <li>Organise annual tree week events</li> </ul>	Tidy Towns Galway County Council Library Tree Council Coillte	Annually
Wildflowers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify sites to be managed as 'wild areas'.</li> <li>Encourage homeowners and businesses to grow native wildflowers.</li> </ul>	Tidy Towns Galway County Council	2017 -2021
Invasive Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and treat Japanese knotweed on public/community owned sites.</li> <li>Provide information on Japanese knotweed and other invasive species to the public</li> <li>Engage with and support land owners and residents with knotweed on their property.</li> </ul>	Tidy Towns Galway County Council Library	Ongoing 2016-2021
Birds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put up owl boxes at suitable locations</li> </ul>	John Lusby, Raptor group, BWI	2018-2019
Bees, butterflies and other insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create habitats for pollinators and other insects e.g. bug hotels, bee habitats, flowers for insects etc</li> </ul>	Schools Tidy Towns Galway CoCo	2017
Built heritage and historical sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage nature-friendly management of built heritage and</li> </ul>		Ongoing 2016-2021

	historical sites.		
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise events to inform the public and raise awareness of the biodiversity of An Cheathrú Rua</li> </ul>		Annually
Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with all parts of the community on biodiversity projects including schools, older people, residents, land owners and businesses</li> <li>Look for new ways to engage locals and visitors in biodiversity activities</li> </ul>		Ongoing 2016-2021
Best Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit to carrying out all projects following best practice so that no action causes harm to any habitats, species or the local environment.</li> </ul>		Ongoing 2016-2021

## Resources

### Key Contacts

1. Elaine O’Riordan, County Galway Biodiversity Project Manager.  
E-mail [elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie](mailto:elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie); Tel 091 495921,  
<https://www.facebook.com/peopleandnature/>
2. Marie Mannion, County Heritage Officer, Galway County Council.  
E-mail [mmannion@galwaycoco.ie](mailto:mmannion@galwaycoco.ie); Tel. (091)509198  
<http://galwaycommunityheritage.org/>
3. Christy Cunniffe, Community Archaeologist. E-mail  
[galwaycommunityarchaeology@gmail.com](mailto:galwaycommunityarchaeology@gmail.com)  
<http://field-monuments.galwaycommunityheritage.org/>
4. Mark Molloy and Sinéad Ní Mhainín, Environmental Awareness Officers, Galway County Council (Co-ordinate Green Schools, composting demos, annual spring cleans, stop food waste etc. <http://www.galway.ie/en/services/environment/> ).  
[mkmolloy@galwaycoco.ie](mailto:mkmolloy@galwaycoco.ie), [snimhain@galwaycoco.ie](mailto:snimhain@galwaycoco.ie), Tel. 091-509510
5. Rosaleen Ní Shúilleabháin – Rural recreation Officer. Forum Connemara (But covers whole County). [R.nishuibheallain@forumconnemara.ie](mailto:R.nishuibheallain@forumconnemara.ie), Tel. 087 737-5599

### Biodiversity-related resources

#### Trees and tree planting- ‘Galway’s Living Landscapes Part 2: Trees and Woodland’

- <http://heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/heritage-publications/galways-living-landscapes-part-2-trees-woodland>

#### Native varieties of fruit trees- Irish Seed Savers Association

- [www.irishseedsavers.ie](http://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.greenschoolsireland.org/fileupload/biodiversity%20resources/Habitat_mapping.pdf)
- [http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/uploads/docs/publications/Communities\\_publications/Parish\\_Wildlife\\_Toolkit\\_WEBv2.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](http://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](http://www.noticenature.ie/Walking_Trails_in_Ireland.html)
- Rosaleen Ní Shuilleabháin, Rural Recreation Officer, FORUM Connemara Ltd. (Galway). Tel. 091 593410 or 087-7375599 , E-mail [r.nishuilleabhain@forumconnemara.ie](mailto:r.nishuilleabhain@forumconnemara.ie)



- **Interpretive signage/ materials**

- [http://www.roscommoncoco.ie/en/Services/Heritage/Publications/Telling\\_People\\_About\\_Our\\_Heritage-Interpretation\\_and\\_Signage\\_Guidance.pdf](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/Board\\_of\\_Boards.pdf](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/miscellaneous/Board_of_Boards.pdf)
- <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/wildlife/Interpretive-trail-signs-exhibits.html>

### **Building bird or bat boxes**

- <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=270>
- [www.batconservationireland.org/pubs/reports/Leaflet\\_3\\_batboxes.pdf](http://www.batconservationireland.org/pubs/reports/Leaflet_3_batboxes.pdf)

- **Planting to attract wildlife and pollinators**

- [http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Local-communities\\_actions-to-help-pollinators\\_April-2016.pdf](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Local-communities_actions-to-help-pollinators_April-2016.pdf).
- [www.butterflyconservation.ie/wordpress/?page\\_id=33](http://www.butterflyconservation.ie/wordpress/?page_id=33)
- <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/bees-needs>
- [https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/conservation-and-biodiversity/wildlife/rhs\\_pollinators\\_plantlist](https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/conservation-and-biodiversity/wildlife/rhs_pollinators_plantlist)
- <https://www.rspb.org.uk/makeahomeforwildlife/wildlifegarden/>
- <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/irish-pollinator-initiative/>
- <http://www.ipcc.ie/advice/wildlife-gardening-tips/>

- **Creating a wildflower meadow**

- <http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/meadows-grassland>
- <http://www.wildflowers.ie/>
- <http://www.bordbia.ie/consumer/gardening/organicgardening/Worksheets/Wildflowers%20meadows.pdf>
- [http://www.fingalbiodiversity.ie/resources/encouraging\\_garden\\_wildlife/Wildflower%20Meadows.pdf](http://www.fingalbiodiversity.ie/resources/encouraging_garden_wildlife/Wildflower%20Meadows.pdf)

- **Invasive species**

- Contact Elaine O’Riordan for advice
- <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](http://www.npws.ie)

### **Environmental NGOs**

BirdWatch Ireland

[www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)

Irish Peatland Conservation Council

[www.ipcc.ie](http://www.ipcc.ie)

Irish Wildlife Trust

[www.iwt.ie](http://www.iwt.ie)

An Taisce

[www.antaisce.org](http://www.antaisce.org)

Irish Whale & Dolphin Group

[www.iwdg.ie](http://www.iwdg.ie)

Vincent Wildlife Trust

<http://www.mammals-in-ireland.ie/>

Conservation Volunteers Galway

<https://www.facebook.com/ConservationVolunteersGalway>

Green Sod Ireland

<http://www.greensodireland.ie/>

Bat Conservation Ireland

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

### **State organisations**

Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

[www.ahg.gov.ie](http://www.ahg.gov.ie)

National Parks and Wildlife Service

[www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)

Environmental Protection Agency

[www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)

## Funding

Funding Body	Description	More information
Heritage Council	Heritage Grants for heritage projects- includes community-based projects (calls usually announced at the end of the year or early in the new year for February submission)	<a href="http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/grants/grants/">http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/grants/grants/</a>
Galway County Council	Agenda 21 grants for community based environmental projects (calls usually announced during the summer)	<a href="http://www.galway.ie/en/services/environment/environmentalawareness/communityinitiatives/localagenda21/">http://www.galway.ie/en/services/environment/environmentalawareness/communityinitiatives/localagenda21/</a>
Galway County Council	Community Support Grants for community projects including heritage projects (calls advertised on website and local press early in the year)	<a href="http://www.galway.ie/en/services/communityenterpriseeconomicdevelopment/financialsupports/">http://www.galway.ie/en/services/communityenterpriseeconomicdevelopment/financialsupports/</a>
Forum Connemara	Leader funding for community-based development projects	www.forumconnemara.ie
Galway Rural Development	Local Community Development Programme	<a href="http://www.grd.ie">www.grd.ie</a>
The Ireland Fund	The Ireland Funds support communities in various ways including projects to protect the natural environment.	<a href="https://www.theirelandfunds.org/">https://www.theirelandfunds.org/</a>
IPB	Community Engagement Fund- The purpose of this year's fund is once again to support projects rooted in the local area, led by local people and to improve the quality of life for those living in their community.	<a href="http://cse.ipb.ie/">http://cse.ipb.ie/</a>

---