

Biodiversity Plan for Calasanctius College, Oranmore

2011- 2014



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Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government



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Photos: Áine Clarke

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Galway County Heritage Forum and Galway County Biodiversity Steering Committee initiated the project, in partnership with Galway Rural Development. Miriam Stewart, Galway Rural Development, Marie Mannion and Elaine O’Riordan helped develop the project, and provided assistance and guidance to the project manager, Janice Fuller, which is gratefully acknowledged.

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Introduction

Oranmore and Calasanctius College

Oranmore is a small town in east Galway, located about 10km east of Galway City centre and on the shores of Galway Bay. Calasanctius College is a thriving secondary school that serves the local community.



Students from Calasanctius on tree identification walk with Elaine O’Riordan

The *Biodiversity Plan for Calasanctius College, Oranmore* sets out a list of projects and activities that will run over the next three years in the school and Oranmore area for the benefit of nature and wildlife, environment, the school and local community.

Biodiversity Action Plans

Biodiversity Action Plans provide a framework for protecting, managing and/or enhancing natural heritage in the area through action led by the local community. The process of producing such a plan creates an opportunity to co-ordinate action among local groups, individuals, statutory bodies, and other organisations.

Many towns and villages, like Oranmore, have active community-based groups such as Tidy Towns, schools, farming organisations, anglers, scouts etc. that work tirelessly for the benefit of their members and the community. The production of a local biodiversity action plan can help ensure that school and community-based projects will not have a negative impact on biodiversity, and may have positive impacts on nature, the natural environment and amenities in the area e.g. through raising awareness, habitat creation and/or appropriate habitat management.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is another word for natural heritage, nature, wildlife, flora and fauna. Biodiversity includes all living things, the places that plants and animals live (habitats), and the interactions among living things (the web of life).

The natural world (i.e. biodiversity) provides us with many essential ‘goods and services’ – clean air and water, food, fuel, building materials, fertile soils, nutrient recycling systems, pollination of plants including many crops, control of pests and diseases, medicines etc.

Biodiversity has many benefits for local communities by providing natural recreational amenities (e.g. parks and green spaces, walking and biking routes, picnic spots, places for fishing and angling), local educational resources and environmental protection. Allowing room for nature and wildlife in our towns and villages makes them more attractive and interesting, protects our environment, and improves our quality of life.

Process to produce the plan

Biodiversity Training was provided to transition year students (class of 2010- 2011) in Oranmore in order to raise awareness of what biodiversity is, why it is important, where it is, and the many benefits of biodiversity for people, communities and the environment. Transition year students and their science teacher from Calasanctius College, and members of the Oranmore Tidy Towns group met on three occasions with ecologist, Dr Janice Fuller, to develop the biodiversity plan (Appendix 1). A short training session was also held in September 2011 for the new transition year (class of 2011- 2012).



Calasanctius College transition year students with trainer, Janice Fuller

Dr Fuller provided the training and facilitated the production of the local biodiversity action plan. The objectives and actions of the plan were decided by the students in partnership with their teacher and Oranmore Tidy Towns. They will continue to work together to implement the plan.

Various agencies and environmental organisations were consulted as the plan was developed in order to learn more about biodiversity in the Oranmore area. These include: National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Vincent Wildlife Trust, Bat Conservation Ireland, Galway Bat Group, and BirdWatch Galway.

The project to produce a local Biodiversity Action Plan for Oranmore was a collaborative effort between Galway County Council, Galway Rural Development, People and Nature Project, Galway County Heritage Forum, Galway County Biodiversity Steering Group, the local secondary school and Tidy Towns group. The project to produce local Biodiversity Action Plans is an action in the County Galway Biodiversity Action Plan 2008- 2013, which is part of the Galway County Heritage Plan 2009-2014. It was initiated by the Galway County Heritage Forum and the Galway County Biodiversity Steering Group, in partnership with Galway Rural Development.

Nature and Wildlife in Calasanctius College and Environs

Located on the shores of Galway Bay, Oranmore has a rich built and natural heritage. Galway Bay is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) due to the habitats and species of nature conservation importance present, especially bird populations of interest.

Galway Bay is considered important in a European context as well as at a national level. Habitats found along the coast at Oranmore include saltmarsh, rocky and muddy shores.



Polypody fern growing on stone wall in school grounds



Bug hotel built by students from Calasanctius

Cregganna Marsh, just south of the town, is another Special Protection Area, designated due to the important bird habitats and populations present. This site is of major importance as a feeding site for Greenland White-Fronted Geese.

There are several springs in the area, Oranmore well, streams and wetlands. Some of the wetlands that fringe the inland edge of the town are designated as part of the Galway Bay Complex SAC. Rinville Park is a popular natural amenity a few kilometres south-west of the town centre. The Park contains a mix of woodland, wetland, wet woodland, pond, stream, meadow, dry calcareous grassland and amenity grassland habitats. There are several walking routes through the park and woodlands.

There is also a wealth of built heritage in the area including Oranmore Castle, Rinville Castle and Hall, Ardfry Castle, old graveyards and dolmens along the coast road. Old stone buildings and bridges can be important roosting sites for bats. Leisler's bat, soprano pipistrelle and common pipistrelle bats have all been recorded in the Oranmore area.

School and Community Action

Calasanctius College – Calasanctius College is a co-educational secondary school that serves the Oranmore area and its hinterland. It is one of the few secondary schools with three Green Flags and the school community are working on their fourth flag. This reflects the school's strong commitment to protecting the environment. The Biodiversity Plan will complement existing Green Schools activities within the school. Calasanctius College also has strong links with the community in Oranmore. Students from the school collaborated with Oranmore Tidy Towns to produce the award-winning recycling area in the town. For more information see <http://calasanctius.ie>



Student from Calasanctius preparing for tree planting

Oranmore Tidy Towns – Oranmore Tidy Towns group are a sub-committee of Oranmore Community Development Association. The Tidy Towns vision for Oranmore is to ‘create a picturesque village and develop a litter free, clean, green environment. Oranmore Tidy Towns run many projects that aim to improve the appearance of the village, reduce litter and littering, and that benefit the local environment and biodiversity. They have erected bird boxes in various locations around the town and in school grounds; provided native trees and shrubs for school children to plant in school grounds; and developed the award-winning recycling area in the town.

For more information see: www.oranmore.ie/our-community/tidy-towns

Biodiversity Plan for Calasanctius College

Objectives of the Plan

1. To raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity within the school and Oranmore town
2. To increase local knowledge of nature and wildlife in Oranmore
3. To enhance biodiversity within the school grounds and local area

	Action/ Project	Lead Partner	Other partners	Timeframe
1	Plant flowers for butterflies (flower boxes/ planters) in school grounds	TY	Tidy Towns, Old Galway Society	Annual
2	Participate in Annual Spring Clean of Oranmore	GS	Tidy Towns, An Taisce, GCC	Annual
3	Organise bat walk	TY	Galway Bat Group	Annual
4	Maintain and monitor bug hotel	TY	GCC	Ongoing
5	Conduct shoreline survey	TY	Marine Institute, GMIT, NUI, Galway	2013
6	Erect Biodiversity Information Board within school (in partnership with Green Schools programme)	TY/ GS	Tidy Towns	2012
7	Erect and maintain bird feeders and nesting boxes	TY/ GS	Tidy Towns	Ongoing
8	Develop biodiversity mural in school	TY/ GS	Art teacher	2012
9	Link action with local primary schools	TY/ GS	Tidy Towns, schools	2011- Ongoing
10	Plant native fruit tree varieties in school grounds	TY	Tidy Towns, Irish Seed Savers Assoc., GCC, Old Galway Society	2011
11	Run a 'name that tree' project; each type of tree will be named in Irish and English, and sign made for each one in hardwood.	TY, Woodwork classes	Tidy Towns, Tree Council	2011- Ongoing

12	Organise a biodiversity skills workshop	TY	Tidy Towns, GCC	2012
13	Survey springs in Oranmore	TY	GCC, GMIT, NUI, Galway	2013
14	Prepare habitat map for Oranmore village	TY/ GS	Tidy Towns	2013
15	Organise birdwatching walk in Oranmore	TY	Tidy Towns, BirdWatch Galway	Annual
16	Highlight features of biodiversity interest within and adjacent to school; make wooden signpost indicating where features are.	TY, Woodwork classes		2012

GCC = Galway County Council (Heritage Officer, Biodiversity Officer, Environmental Officer)

TT = Oranmore Tidy Towns

TY = Calasanti College Transition Year

GS = Green Schools Committee

Monitoring and Evaluation

Transition Year students from Calasactius College, their science teacher, and members of the Oranmore Tidy Towns groups will work together to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan '*Biodiversity Plan for Calasactius College, Oranmore*'. The transition students will meet regularly to discuss projects in the plan, and will meet with Oranmore Tidy Towns at least twice a year in order to set annual goals and to review progress to date. The committee will liaise with the Galway County Heritage Officer and the Galway County Biodiversity Project Manager.

Funding sources

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

Fund/ Funding Body	Description
Galway Rural Development	This leader company offers full and part funding for a variety of community-led projects. Discuss potential projects with the Community Development Workers prior to submitting applications to determine if they meet the GRD criteria for projects.
The Heritage Council	The Heritage Council offer grants to community groups and individuals for heritage projects every year. The deadline for applications is usually in November but this can change. See their website for details of the grant application criteria and application process (www.heritagecouncil.ie)
Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund, Galway County Council	This fund is administered by the Environment Section of Galway County Council; it promotes sustainable development by assisting small scale, non-profit environmental projects at a local level. (www.galway.ie/en/Services/Environment/CommunityInitiatives/LocalAgenda21/)
Heritage Grant Scheme, Galway County Council	The objective of this Heritage Grant Scheme is to promote interest, education, knowledge and pride in, and to facilitate appreciate and enjoyment of the heritage of County Galway. Applications are invited once a year, usually in the Spring. (www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/HeritageGrants/)

County Galway Biodiversity Project	<p>The County Galway Biodiversity Project Manager, Elaine O’Riordan, applies for funding to wide range of funding bodies and organisations; community groups access this funding for biodiversity-related projects by contacting her directly. She will also assist groups with funding applications.</p> <p>(E-mail elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie)</p>
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Useful contacts for more information

Name (Group/ Individual)	Activities/ Expertise	Contact details
Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer, Galway County Council	All matters relating to heritage including biodiversity and funding.	mmannion@galwaycoco.ie www.galwaycountyheritage.com (091) 509198
Elaine O’Riordan, Galway County Biodiversity Project Manager	Biodiversity, natural heritage, habitat mapping, community-based projects	elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie www.galwaycountybiodiversity.com (091) 495921
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Responsible for the protection, conservation and management of the inland fisheries resource	Contact: Kevin Rogers, Senior Environmental Officer (091) 563118
Galway Bat Group	Organise walks and talks on bats in Galway	galwaybatgroup@gmail.com
Vincent Wildlife Trust	Promote conservation of bats and other wildlife; provide information and advice; organise walks and talks on bats	katemcaney@vwt.org.uk
BirdWatch Galway	Promote conservation of birds and their habitats; conduct surveys and organise birdwatching events	www.galwaybirdwatch.org
Irish Seed Savers Association	Promote conservation of genetic crop resources; provide advice and information about native varieties of fruit and other crops; sell fruit trees	www.irishseedsavers.ie

Galway Rural Development	Support and work with community groups to develop new initiatives in their area; provide funding for community-based projects	www.grd.ie 091 844885
The Heritage Council	Promote conservation and management of Irelands' heritage; provide information and advice to community groups; also provide funding for heritage projects	www.heritagecouncil.ie
National Parks and Wildlife Service	Responsible for the protection of Ireland's natural heritage, particularly sites designated as Special Conservation Areas, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, and Nature Reserves etc., and species of conservation concern e.g. hen harriers.	Conservation Ranger Rebecca Teesdale (091) 870340 www.npws.ie
National Biodiversity Data Centre	Collect and collect biodiversity data from all over the county, and produce biodiversity maps	www.biodiversityireland.ie/mapping-biodiversity-in-your-local-area/
Shane O hEithir, Community, Enterprise and Economic Development Unit, Galway County Council	Provides groups with support for Tidy Towns including advice on a wide range of topics and issues	soheithir@galwaycoco.ie (091) 476502 www.galway.ie/

Further reading

- Galway County Biodiversity Action Plan 2008- 2013
- Galway County Heritage Plan 2009- 2014
- Biodiversity Guidelines for Communities (Galway County Council)

(all available from the Heritage Officer; www.galway.ie).

See also Oranmore Local Area Plan

www.galway.ie/en/Services/Planning/DevelopmentPlans/LocalAreaPlans/AdoptedPlans/OranmoreLocalAreaPlan/

Appendix 1: List of participants in biodiversity training to develop biodiversity plan; 2010- 2011
Transition Year class and 2011- 2011 class (in capitals)

	Name
1	Niall Mc Loughlin
2	Aoife Harte
3	Nicole Collins
4	Thomas O'Reilly
5	Darren Hennessy
6	Dylan Glynn
7	Cillian Beirne
8	Christopher Connors
9	Cian Duffy
10	Johnathon Jennings
11	Catherine Speirs
12	Eanna King
13	Dara Mulrooney
14	Samuel Benherrou
15	Niall Geoghegan
16	Ronan Walsh
17	Niall Eames
18	Mia Murphy
19	Mark Kavanagh
20	Aisling Harte
21	Margaret McNulty
22	Margaret O'Neill
23	Daniel O'Neill
24	Sinead Jacobsen
25	Daniel Conneally
26	Mrs Lally
27	Fiona Gill
28	Aine Clarke
29	LORNA COLLERAN

30	CIARA CONNOLLY
31	KAREN CONNOLLY
32	KAREN FOX
33	SINEAD DONNELLY
34	LIANNA HYNES
35	KELLY MALONE
36	MEGHAN McCARTHY
37	ELAINE MORAN
38	ORLA O'FLYNN
39	VASSILI SAMSONOV
40	OLIVIA FLAHERTY