

Clarínbridge

Nature & Wildlife Plan

2013-2016



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Comhshaoil, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
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Introduction

Clarinbridge

Clarinbridge is a beautiful village in south Galway, close to the head of Dunbulcaun Bay, the most easterly inlet of Galway Bay. The name Clarinbridge is derived from the bridge across the Clarin River. The river took its name from the plank bridge that was built to replace the original hurdle cross. There is a particularly rich built, cultural and natural heritage in and around the village.



Clarinbridge was home to the Redington Family who owned much land and property in the village, including Kilcornan House, their family home. The Redingtons were responsible for the design and development of the village with its walled-in village green. The Church of the Annunciation was built between 1936 and 1938 in a classical style of architecture. Famed for its oysters, the annual Oyster Festival in Clarinbridge in September is a celebration of the native oyster and local oyster farming tradition. Clarinbridge is also known for its long and proud hurling tradition.

The *Clarinbridge Nature and Wildlife Plan* sets out a list of projects, events and activities that will run over the next three years in the Clarinbridge area for the benefit of nature and wildlife, the environment, and the local community. This document is a 'Biodiversity Action Plan' for the Clarinbridge area.

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 Clarinbridge, have active community-based groups such as Tidy Towns, schools, farming organisations, heritage groups 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 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 the variety of all living things- plants, animals, microbes and fungi. Biodiversity also refers to the places where plants and animals live (habitats), and the complex interactions among living things (the web of life), and their relationship with the environment (ecology).

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, pollination, pest and disease control, 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

Clarinbridge was selected as one of nine towns and villages in east Galway to produce a community biodiversity plan in 2013. The project was funded by the Leader Company, Galway Rural Development. Dr. Janice Fuller, Consultant Ecologist, facilitated the production of the plan. Three public meetings were held in early 2013 to identify potential projects, events and/or activities that would have some nature and wildlife component and that might be included in the plan. The final plan produced builds on existing projects and initiatives that aim to protect and enhance nature, the environment and natural amenities in the town, and includes some new projects.

Biodiversity Training was provided for interested individuals and groups in Clarinbridge 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. The focus of the training was to produce a Biodiversity Plan for the town.

Residents from Clarinbridge and the surrounding area met on three occasions with ecologist, Dr Janice Fuller (Appendix 1). Dr Fuller provided the training and facilitated the production of the Biodiversity Plan. The objectives and actions of the plan were decided by the local community.

Various agencies and environmental organisations were consulted as the plan was developed in order to learn more about biodiversity in the Clarinbridge area.

The project to produce a local Biodiversity Action Plan for Clarinbridge was a collaborative effort between Galway County Council, Galway Rural Development, People and Nature Project, Galway County Heritage Forum, Galway County Biodiversity Steering Group and the local community. 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 Clarinbridge

There are many places where nature and wildlife thrive in and around Clarinbridge: along the coast, in woodland, meadow, turlough and farmland, and by the river. People can enjoy this rich natural heritage strolling through Kilcornan woods or walking along the coast.

Kilcornan Wood

This beautiful Coillte property forms part of the original Redington Estate owned by the Redington Family. The woodland comprises c. 130 hectares of mixed woodland with deciduous trees such as beech, oak, ash, rowan, holly, birch and hazel, and coniferous trees such as cedar, Norway spruce and sitka spruce. Birds such as jay, long-eared owl and sparrow hawk, and mammals such as pine marten, bats and red squirrel are known to inhabit this woodland. There are about 8km of forest trails running through the woods that are popular with walkers. The ruins of a 13th Century Church is present on the site.



Bluebells carpet Kilcornan Woods in springtime

Clarin River

The Clarin River flows through Clarinbridge into the sea at Dunbulcaun Bay. It supports populations of Atlantic salmon, as well as sea trout, brown trout, sticklebacks and eels. Water quality in the river, however, has been reported as poor in recent years as it is moderately polluted.



Clarin River

Cowpark

The Cowpark is a remarkable area of meadow, scrub and woodland in the heart of Clarinbridge. Located to the east of the village centre, on either side of the Clarin River and along the northern edge of Kilcornan Wood, this 17-hectare site was put in trust by the Redingtons for the use of the people of Clarinbridge. Traditional light-grazing practices over decades and centuries have produced an ecologically diverse grassland, which is still grazed periodically by cattle.



Cowpark meadow

Extensive areas of meadow such as the grassland at the Cowpark are relatively rare today. The grassland in the Cowpark is species-rich with a variety of grasses, herbs (including orchids), mosses and liverworts. In summer it is teeming with invertebrates such as grasshoppers, burnet moths, common blue butterflies.

Birds such as swallows, martins, whitethroat, willow warbler, dunnoek, robin and song thrust have been recorded. Evidence of badger, fox and hares has been found, and bats undoubtedly feed over the grassland and river at night. Soprano pipistrelle bats, one of Ireland's smallest bats, have been recorded in the Cowpark. There is also some evidence of Brown Long-eared bats and Natterer's Bat in the adjacent woodland. The mix of meadow, river and woodland provides ideal feeding and roosting ground for several of our native bats.



The Cowpark is an invaluable community asset, used by a small number of individuals for grazing and potentially by the wider community as parkland for recreation.



Gordon D'Arcy leading a nature walk in the Cowpark

Farmland

Clarinbridge is a rural village surrounded by farmland with a rich mosaic of fields, hedgerows, stone walls, woodland and wetland. Nature and wildlife thrive in the quiet corners, along hedgerows and on the more marginal land.

Seashore

Clarinbridge is a coastal village on Dunbulcaun Bay, a long narrow bay on the inner shores of Galway Bay. Oyster cultivation has been an important part of the local economy in the area for generations. The annual oyster festival is a celebration of this living tradition and thriving business. The new and old piers are located on the northern edge of the bay, close to the centre of the village. Turf boats used to come in to the old pier from Connemara in days gone by. Boats also used to come in from Island Eddy in the summer for water supplies.



View of old and new piers in Clarinbridge

The seashore is a haven for wildlife. Freshwater springs can be seen at low tide on the old pier (Toberglorach). Habitats in and around Clarinbridge and Dunbulcan Bay include mudflats and sandflats which are not covered by seawater at low tide, salt marsh areas, orchid-rich calcareous grassland, shingle and stony beaches and the Clarin Estuary. Both the Clarin River Estuary and Dunbulcaun Bay are part of the Clarinbridge/ Kinvarra Bay Shellfish Waters, one of fourteen shellfish waters which are designated and afforded protection under European and Irish legislation. Oysters, mussels and clams grow naturally and artificially in the Clarin Estuary and Dunbulcan Bay. Inner Galway Bay is protected under nature conservation legislation as a Special Protection Area due to important populations of birds and habitats that occur in and around the bay.

Tonroe turlough

There is a small turlough at Tonroe north of the village and west of the N18. Turloughs are more or less unique to Ireland and occur in areas with karst limestone. They are temporary water bodies that are filled from underground water reservoirs. Turloughs are generally wet during the winter months and they dry out in the summer. Turloughs are considered as a priority habitat for nature conservation in the European Union because of their rarity world-wide and their importance for wildlife. Turloughs are hugely important for over-wintering birds as they provide excellent feeding grounds in grassy-watery shallows. They often have some interesting invertebrate populations (e.g. beetles and fresh-water shrimp) due to the lack of fish. Turlough at Tonroe is near the Hillpark and together they provide an ecologically diverse area for wildlife.

Hillpark

The Hillpark is a large area of grassland on gently sloping ground, which is located to the north-west of Clarinbridge Village. Privately owned, this area is mainly comprised of unimproved grassland. Other habitats present of conservation interest include calcareous heath, low scrub and species-rich calcareous grassland with abundant orchids.

Stradbally North

Stradbally North is located south of the village centre to the west of the N18. There is a small area of scrub and native woodland with hazel, oak, ash, holly, hawthorn, yew and rowan that has developed on land with limestone outcrops. The woodland supports a variety of bird and mammal species of local importance including red squirrels and pine martens. There are patches of semi-natural calcareous grassland around the woodland which support a high diversity of calcareous wild flowers.

Community Action

Clarinbridge is known internationally for the highly popular and successful Clarinbridge Oyster Festival. There are also many other local activities and events that are run by the community, some of which aim to highlight, protect and/or enhance the rich local cultural, built and natural heritage.

Clarinbridge Tidy Towns is a subcommittee of the **Clarinbridge Community Development Association (CCDA)**. The Tidy Towns group works on many projects to enhance the village and local environment including regular litter clean-ups, tree planting and landscaping. They collaborate with other groups to work on projects and run events. Everyone is welcome to help out with Tidy Towns' activities. See <http://clarinbridgetidytowns.weebly.com/> and www.facebook.com/pages/Clarinbridge-Tidy-Towns.



Members of Clarinbridge Tidy Towns group

Clarinbridge Local Heritage Group was founded in 2010. In 2010-11 the group received a grant from Galway Rural Development to run a 10-week course in Collecting & Preserving Folklore & Oral History, which was well attended. A further grant for equipment was obtained some months later.



Current activities are:

- Focusing on the relationship of Clarinbridge to the sea; collaboration with other local groups to this end
- Recording interviews with local residents
- Collecting photographic records of local built environment and its folklore /oral history with the aim of mounting an exhibition
- Gathering folklore/oral history from school children and the active retired
- Setting up an archive of all collected material.

- Collaborating with Church Anniversary Committee (75 years) in mounting events related to its history/folklore, and the publication of a commemorative book.

The main aim of the **Clarinbridge Arts Group** is to promote the arts and the various branches of creative activity by building on events and activities already taking place in the community, and on existing expertise and experience. The group aims to be inclusive and accessible to all, to showcase excellent local, national and international talent, and to encourage artistic endeavours in the visual & literary arts, music, song and dance.



Gordon D'Arcy leading a nature walk organised by the Arts Group

Scoil Mhuire National School has been involved in the Greenschools programme for some time. This environmental education programme awards a green flag for various themes such as water, transport, energy, recycling and biodiversity. The school has also participated in an oyster cultivation project.



Bat walk in the Cow Park, Clarinbridge organized by Galway Bat Group

Clarinbridge Nature and Wildlife Plan

	<i>Project/ activity/ action</i>	<i>Project leader</i>	<i>Project Partners</i>	<i>Time frame</i>
1	Develop nature trails/ way-marked walking routes in and around the village (along public roads and existing rights of way)	CCDA	GCC, GRD, Tidy Towns, Coillte	2014
2	Develop interpretive signage that focuses on rich natural heritage of the area (also include information on Tidy Towns website and leaflets)	CCDA	GCC, GRD	2014
3	Plant native trees and shrubs in and around village	Tidy Towns	Garden Centre, GCC	Annually
4	Support and promote school biodiversity projects	Clarinbridge National School	GCC, An Taisce	On-going
5	Promote allotment and home growing of vegetables	Galway Bay Allotments		Annually
6	Promote gardening for wildlife	Galway Bay Allotments	Tidy Towns, schools, GCC	Annually
7	Develop a coastal heritage project e.g. use of seaweed etc.	CLHG	Martin Ryan Institute, NUIG, GCC	2015- 2016
8	Enter the Golden Mile competition	Local residents	CCDA	2014
9	Run Annual Spring Clean/ Clean Coasts <i>Litter is a hazard for wildlife and also leads to pollution</i>	Tidy Towns	GCC, An Taisce	Annually

10	Run nature walks and talks (e.g. annual Cowpark Biodiversity Walk)	Arts Group	Heritage Officer, Biodiversity Project Manager	Heritage Week
11	Highlight and investigate the rich natural and built heritage of the Sea Road area of Clarinbridge	CLHG	Biodiversity Project Manager	2013-2015

CCDA- Clarinbridge Development Association, CLHG – Clarinbridge Local Heritage Group; GCC = Galway County Council

Monitoring and Evaluation

A local group will be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ‘Clarinbridge Nature and Wildlife Plan’. They will meet 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 most years. 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/)
Community Grant Scheme, Galway County Council	The objective of the Community 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	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. (E-mail elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie)
Environment Fund for Biodiversity Awareness Grant Scheme 2013	This grant was first offered in 2013. The main aim of the grant is to raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystem services. It is administered through the Biodiversity Policy Unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. For more information contact: biodiversitypolicy@ahg.gov.ie

Biodiversity resources

Table 1: Useful contacts

Name (Group/ Individual)	Activities/ Expertise	Contact details
Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer, Galway County Council	All matters relating to heritage	mmannion@galwaycoco.ie www.galwaycountyheritage.com (091) 509198
Elaine O’Riordan, Galway County Biodiversity Project Manager	Biodiversity, natural heritage, habitat mapping, community- based projects, biodiversity guidelines for community groups	elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie www.galwaycountybiodiversity.com (091) 495921
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.	Wildlife Ranger: John Higgins john.higgins@ahg.gov.ie
Galway Bat Group	Organise walks and talks on bats in Galway	galwaybatgroup@gmail.com
Vincent Wildlife Trust	Promote conservation of bats and other mammals; provide information and advice; organise walks and talks on bats	katemcaney@vwt.org.uk www.mammals-in-ireland.ie/
BirdWatch Galway	Promote conservation of birds and their habitats; conduct surveys and organise birdwatching events in Galway	www.galwaybirdwatch.org

Table 2: Contacts/ information sources for implementing the Clarinbridge Nature and Wildlife Plan

Action	Topic/ Activity	Information source
1	Nature trails/ way-marked routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
2	Interpretive signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity Project Manager (contact details above) • www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf?ext=.pdf • E.g. Rinvilla Park, Oranmore • E.g. BurrenLIFE (www.burrenlife.com)
3	Planting native trees and shrubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/buds_of_the_banner.pdf • www.treecouncil.com
4	School biodiversity projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.greenschoolsireland.org/_fileupload/biodiversity%20resources/Insect%20Hotel%20Habitat.pdf • www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/factsheets/naturegarden/
5	Allotment and home growing of vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.giyinternational.org/profiles/details/414/pages/pages/grow_the_giy_magazine
6	Gardening for wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.butterflyconservation.ie/wordpress/?page_id=33 • www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/Plants-for-pollinators • www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/wildlifegarden/
7	Coastal heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.coastalheritage.ie/ • www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/CoastalMarine/
8	Golden Mile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/GoldenMile/
9	Annual Spring Clean/ Clean Coasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.antisce.ie • www.galway.ie/environment
10	Nature walks and talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Officer, Biodiversity Project Manager • Galway Bat Group • Vincent Wildlife Trust (contact details for all Table 1)
11	Heritage of Sea Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.coastalheritage.ie/ • www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/CoastalMarine/

Appendix 1: List of participants in biodiversity training to develop biodiversity plan for Clarinbridge

	Name
1	Catherine O’Dowd
2	Angela Keane
3	Sylvia Moss
4	Sheila Gallagher
5	Kevin Moore
6	Mattie Keane
7	Michelle Tighe
8	Joe Murphy
9	Garret Sherry
10	Ann Fox
11	John Burke
12	Geraldine Moloney
13	Mike Divilly
14	Mark Green
15	Niall Geraghty
16	Clare Griffin
17	Hedy Gibbons
18	Mary Mullins
19	Frank Bannon
20	Pat Cormican
21	Joe Keane
22	Bríd Glynn
23	Mary Mullins