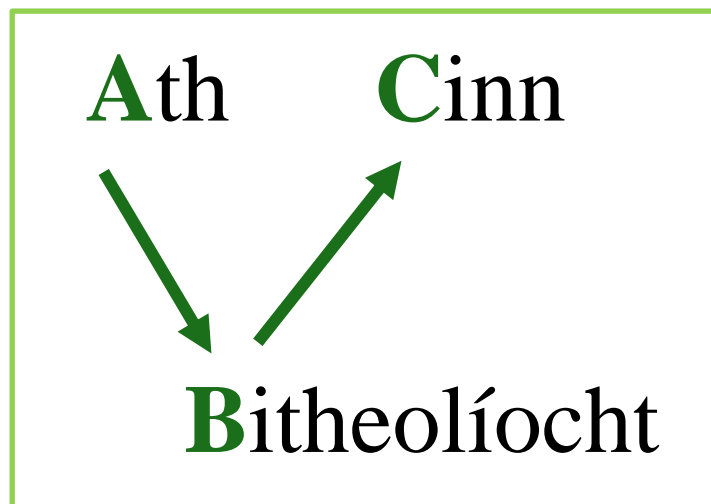


Headford Biodiversity Plan



2013-2016



*This project received grant aid from Galway Rural Development Company Ltd.,
Rural Development Programme which is financed
by the Irish Government under the Rural Development
Programme Ireland 2007-2013 and by the European
Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe
investing in Rural Areas.*



Text: Dr Janice Fuller

Photos: Headford Environment Group, Janice Fuller, Sylvia Mathews

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Frances O'Reilly for booking the venue. The 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.

Disclaimer: This report contains commercially sensitive and confidential information which should be treated in the strictest confidence. Galway Rural Development cannot accept responsibility for omissions or inaccuracies contained herein.

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Headford	4
Biodiversity Action Plans	4
Process to produce the plan	5
Community Action.....	10
Headford Nature and Wildlife Plan	12
Funding sources	13
Biodiversity resources.....	14
Appendix 1:.....	16

Introduction

Headford

Headford is a small town in north Galway, close to the eastern shores of Lough Corrib. The surrounding countryside is a mix of productive agricultural land, miles of dry stone walls, hedgerows, woodland, wetlands, turloughs and lakes. The Headford area has a rich built heritage, the most famous of which is the beautiful Ross Errily, a friary founded in 1350. Headford is a popular angling centre situated close to the eastern shores of Lough Corrib. Greenfields, about 6.5km west of the town, is its boating harbour.



The *Headford Biodiversity Plan* sets out a list of projects, events and activities that will run over the next three years in the Headford area for the benefit of nature and wildlife, the environment, and the 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 Headford, 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), 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

Headford 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 Headford 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 Headford 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 Headford area.

The project to produce a local Biodiversity Action Plan for Headford 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 Headford

The Headford landscape reflects the underlying limestone bedrock in the area with many miles of stone walls along field boundaries, productive agricultural land, turloughs and limestone pavement. The landscape is low-lying and gently undulating. Close to the eastern shore of Lough Corrib, Headford is a long-established angling centre.



Fairy foxglove growing on old stone wall

Stone walls form many of the field boundaries and are a feature of the Headford landscape. Old stone walls are often clothed in mosses, lichens, small ferns and flowers, and provide nooks and crannies for insects, lizards and small birds. Hedgerows are also common along roads and in fields. They provide an abundant source of food, cover and shelter for wildlife. Hedges, and to a lesser extent old stone walls, act like wildlife corridors that allow birds and small mammals to move through our agricultural landscapes.



Enjoying the Golden Mile route

There are many fine trees in the old demesne near the town. An award-winning Golden Mile runs through the demesne and highlights much of the rich natural heritage of the area. There are also small pockets of

native woodland with Ash and Hazel in the wider landscape. Trees and woodland greatly enhance our landscapes and have huge value for wildlife, especially birds and bats.



Landscape on Golden Mile route through old demesne

The Black River runs through the town and along the Galway-Mayo border. Wet and watery places are often great for wildlife as many birds, fish, insects and molluscs like to live in or near rivers and lakes. The River Walk which starts in the town centre provides a wonderful natural amenity for the town and a chance to enjoy the river and nature.



The Black River

There is a great diversity of bird life in and around Headford due to the mix of habitats present: farmland, wetland, hedgerows, turloughs and lakes. The Birdwatch Ireland members have been surveying birds in the Headford area (and the rest of the county) for many years. Birds recorded in include large numbers of geese and duck including the scarce Greenland White-fronted Goose, Greylag Geese, Wigeon, Teal and Shoveler. Common Gulls and Arctic Terns breed off Inchiquin. The elusive Kingfisher has been recorded at Ower and Doolough. Whooper Swans arrive in large numbers and take up residence on the many wetlands in the area. In summer, warblers can be heard especially Willow Warblers but also Sedge

Warblers, Whitethroats, Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps. Songbirds are plentiful in Headford including Wrens, Robins, Tits and Blackbirds. Redwing and Fieldfare are winter visitors.

Rostaff Bird Sanctuary, just 3km north-west of Headford (and just inside the Mayo border), is a wonderful place to enjoy waterbirds. Large numbers of Golden Plover, Lapwing, Wigeon, Teal, Curlew and many more can be seen in the winter months on the lake. There is a long-established bird observation hide present, which was set up jointly by the Black River and District Gun Club and the Galway Branch of BirdWatch Ireland.



Members of Headford Environment Group & Neil Sharkey on the 2013 Dawn Chorus birdwatching event

Community Action

The **Headford Environment Group** aims to raise awareness of environmental issues in the community, by promoting initiatives that highlight the value of the natural and built heritage in Headford. The Group also aims to increase participation in protecting the environment. They have run a wide variety of projects over the years e.g. organising an annual series of nature walks and talks, entering the Golden Mile competition, establishing the Community Garden, and producing heritage signage for the Headford area. The Headford Environment Group also organise the Annual Spring Clean in Headford every year. For more information see <http://headfordenvironmentgroup.org/>. New members are always welcome.



Heritage signage developed by Headford Environment Group

The **Headford District Association** was established in April 2003 to address the needs of the area in social, cultural, environmental and business terms. The Association aims to promote the profile of the Headford area as an ideal commercial and cultural location in which to live, work and play. Over the years the Association has worked on a wide range of projects including the town sewerage scheme, children's Playground, the website (www.headford.ie), town twinning, amenity walk, heritage projects and the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

The **Headford Community Garden** was established in 2013. The garden has plots for individuals/families, shared plots and a plot for children. The garden will include wildlife-friendly features as it develops, and there is a plan to include a sensory garden within the site. Community gardens provide a wonderful opportunity for communities to learn together, sharing knowledge as well as produce, and enhancing the local environment.

Like many towns and villages in Ireland, Headford has an active **Men's Shed** group. They have been involved in a range of workshops and activities to date including woodturning, photography, hillwalking and first aid. A Men's Shed is a community based organisation which is open to all men. The idea behind the movement is to provide a safe, friendly and inclusive environment where participants can gather and/or work on meaningful projects.



Headford Annual Spring Clean



Headford Community Garden

Headford Biodiversity Plan

	<i>Project/ activity/ action</i>	<i>Project leader</i>	<i>Project Partners</i>	<i>Time frame</i>
1	Develop Community Garden; promote wildlife-friendly planting e.g. planting for butterflies and pollinators, birds etc.	Community Garden Committee	GCC, Biodiversity Project Manger	2013-2016
2	Put up, monitor and maintain bird and bat boxes (e.g. in schools, along River Walk etc.)	HEG	Headford Men's Shed	2013-2014
3	Promote schools biodiversity projects e.g. bug hotels, biodiversity gardens, nature-themed art competitions; support Green Schools programme	Schools (Frances O'Reilly)	HEG, Men's Shed, Biodiversity Project Manager	2013-2014
4	Conduct wildlife audit and prepare habitat map of Headford and environs	Kate McAney, HEG	NUIG, BirdWatch	2014-2015
5	Promote the natural heritage of Headford (e.g. birds, bats, wildflowers, watercourses), and highlight problem such as invasive species, through signage, phone app and webpage (http://headfordenvironmentgroup.org/); e.g. bird signage at Greenfields.	HEG	Biodiversity Project Manager	2014-2016
6	Plant native trees and shrubs (in town, school grounds etc.)	HDA	GCC	Tree Week
7	Run nature walks and talks e.g. to highlight birds of prey, hedgerows, the Black River etc.	HEG	Biodiversity Project Manager	Annually
8	Develop Black River Walk (based on existing framework document)	HDA	TÚS/ RSS, Inland Fisheries Ireland	2013-2014
9	Run Annual Spring Clean <i>Litter is unsightly, and poses a threat to wildlife and the environment</i>	HEG	An Taisce, GCC	Annual
10	Enter Golden Mile Competition	HEG	Local residents	2014

HDA = Headford District Association; GCC = Galway County Council, HEG = Headford Environment Group, NUIG = NUI, Galway

Monitoring and Evaluation

A local group will be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the 'Headford Biodiversity 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
Foras na Gaeilge	Foras na Gaeilge provide grants for signage, booklets etc. that include some use of the Irish language

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 Headford Nature and Wildlife Plan

Action	Topic/ Activity	Information source
1	Community Garden and wildlife friendly gardening	<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/ • www.giyinternational.org/profiles/details/414/pages/pages/grow_the_giy_magazine
2	Bird and bat boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.birdwatchireland.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=270 • www.batconservationireland.org/pubs/reports/Leaflet_3_batboxes.pdf
3	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/
4	Wildlife audit and habitat map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.greenschoolsireland.org/_fileupload/biodiversity%20resources/Habitat_mapping.pdf • www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Wildlife/Habitat_Survey_Guidance/Habitat_Survey_Guidance_Hyperlinked_2.pdf
5	Natural heritage 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
6	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
7	Nature walks and talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Officer, Biodiversity Project Manager (contact details above) • Galway Bat Group • Vincent Wildlife Trust (contact details above)
8	Develop Black River Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.noticenature.ie/Walking_Trails_in_Ireland.html • www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Management_Standards.pdf • www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/Guide_to_Planning_and_Developing_Recreational_Trails_in_Ireland.pdf • www.fisheriesireland.ie
9	Annual Spring Clean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.galway.ie/en/Services/Environment • www.antisce.ie
10	Golden Mile Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/GoldenMile/

Appendix 1:

List of participants in biodiversity training to develop biodiversity plan for Headford

	Name
1	Frances O' Reilly
2	Claudia Luig
3	Kate McAney
4	Nigel Malcom
5	Eric Corbett
6	Marlene O'Connor
7	Mags Sheehan
8	Simon Smith
9	Ross King
10	Christian Kubernot
11	Venetia McEllin
12	Kay M Guy
13	Helen Veale
14	Neil Sharkey
15	Paul Burton
16	Rosina Joyce
17	Derek Lockhart
18	Aengus McMahon
19	Kathleen McMahon
20	Sylvia Matthews
21	Mary Hoade