

Killala Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017



*An action of the County Mayo Heritage Plan
2011-2016*

Acknowledgements

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Text: Janice Fuller (www.janicefuller.ie)

Photos: Denis Quinn, Killala Facebook Page, Aideen Ryan, Janice Fuller

Introduction

Killala is a market town situated at the mouth of the Moy Estuary on the north coast of Mayo. Famous for the occupation of the town by a French army in 1798, Killala is steeped in history and heritage. Located in an area of breath-taking scenery, the surrounding landscape is a rich mosaic of agricultural fields, stone walls, wetlands, hedges, small woods and eskers, in addition to the suite of coastal habitats- sandy beaches, dunes, rocky shores and mudflats.



The ‘*Killala Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017*’ is a community-based biodiversity plan that outlines projects, activities and events that will run in the Killala area over a three year period for the benefit of nature and wildlife, the environment, and the local community. This plan aims to raise awareness of, protect and enhance the rich natural heritage in the area.

Biodiversity training was provided for the community in Killala in order to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the many benefits of biodiversity for people, communities and the environment. Three biodiversity training sessions were held in Killala in early 2014 with a view to producing a local biodiversity plan for the area. The training and production of the plan was facilitated by a consultant ecologist but the projects in the plan were decided by the local community. This project is an action of the County Mayo Heritage Plan 2011-2016.

***Biodiversity** simply refers to all living things (including plants, animals, microbes, fungi and people), the places where plants and animals etc. live (habitats), the interactions among living things (the web of life) and their environment (ecology). Biodiversity is the nature all around us, everywhere and in our everyday life. Biodiversity is life and sustains life on Earth. Biodiversity provides us with clean air and water, food, fuel, building products and medicines. It also provides us with many free ‘services’ such as nutrient recycling, pollination and water filtration etc. Making space for nature in our towns and villages enhances*

and protects the local environment, and improves our quality of life by providing natural amenities for recreation (e.g. swimming, fishing, walking and relaxing).

There is a vibrant community in Killala as evidenced by the huge number of community groups active in the area. Many are working to improve local amenities and the local environment. The *'Killala Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017'* is an opportunity to learn more about the rich natural heritage in the area, to protect and enhance this wonderful resource for the benefit of nature and wildlife, visitors to the area and the local community.



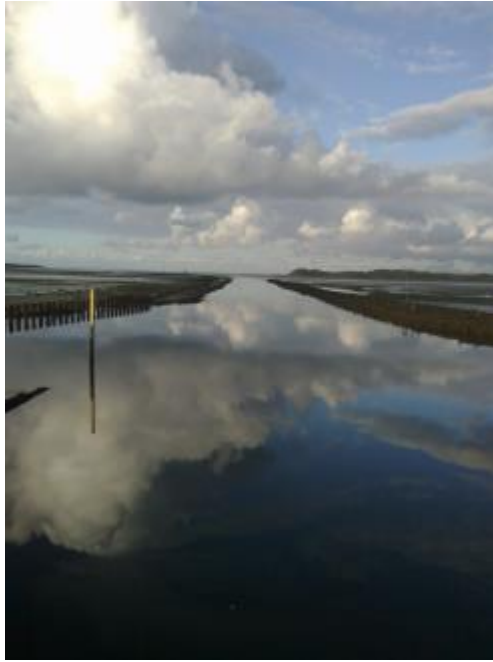
Re-enactment of 1798 French landing in Killala as part of The Gathering in 2013

Nature and wildlife in Killala

Killala is situated in a stunning location at the mouth of the Moy Estuary in north Mayo. There is a wealth of coastal habitats along the shore including sandy beaches, sand dunes, saltmarsh, mudflats, sand-flats and rocky shore. Killala Bay and the Moy Estuary have been designated for nature conservation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to the excellent range of good quality coastal habitats, and due to the presence of some important species such as the Common Seal.



The diversity of habitats and rich feeding grounds at the mouth of the estuary means that this area is particularly important for birds. In fact the area has also been designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) due to the presence of bird populations of international significance, in particularly wintering wildfowl such as Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Sanderling, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank and Red-throated Diver. The Bay and the Moy estuary are considered to be one of the most important sites in the region for wintering waterfowl.



According to the Mayo Branch of BirdWatch Ireland, Killala is one of the best places from which to watch sea and shore birds, especially from October to April (http://www.birdwatchmayo.org/birding_sites/). In and around the harbour area, waders, geese and ducks can regularly be seen. The car park opposite the Old Deanery Cottages is an excellent location for watching birds when the tide is low and Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin and Oystercatcher may be present. From the end of the pier the sand banks can be viewed where Cormorants, Grey Plover and Golden Plover roost. The Blue Flag beach at Ross is another good bird-watching spot where Great Northern Divers, Red-throated Divers and Common Scoter might be spotted out to sea.



Out in Killala Bay, Seals, Dolphins and Porpoises can often be seen. The dune system on Bartragh Island is considered one of the best in the county because of the lack of disturbance. There are also sand dunes at Ross beach.



View of dune system on Bartragh Island



Star fish found on the shore near Killala

Killala is a rural town within a largely agricultural landscape. Much of our wildlife is found on farmland in the quiet corners of fields, hedgerows, scrub, woods and wetlands. Lough Meelick is a small lake south-east of the town with a wetland fringe. It is significant for its population of Thin-lipped Mullet, which is rare in Irish waters.



There is a small esker just south of the town that is covered in a beautiful Hazel wood. This esker is designated as a Natural Heritage Area. A notable feature in the town is the abundance of mature trees. Many trees have also been planted in the Town Park. The Western Way walking route runs through the town and provides access to the countryside.



Killala and environs also has a rich ecclesiastical heritage including the prominent round tower in the town, Moyne Abbey, Rosserk Abbey, Rathfran Abbey, the Church of Ireland Cathedral, Meelick Castle, old graveyards, old bridges and the old railway line. Wildlife can be found in these old structures, birds and bats, mosses, ferns and lichens.



St Patrick's Cathedral with Killala Round Tower in the background

Killala Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017

	Project/ activity/ event	Project leader (group or individual)	Project partners	Time frame
1	Promote natural heritage of Killala (produce signage/ booklet/ phone app./ biodiversity page on local websites etc.).	Killala Community Council	Heritage Officer	2015
2	Develop nature walks/ walking routes to highlight rich natural heritage of area	Heritage Group	MCC Walking Officer	2015-2017
3	Plant game crops to provide food and cover for game birds and other wild birds	Killala Gun Club	Schools	Annually
4	Highlight and support green flag activities in local schools e.g. building bug hotels, putting up bird feeders and nesting boxes, planting for pollinators.	Killala NS, Newtownwhite NS, Templemary NS	MCC, An Taisce	Annually
5	Participate in Clean Coasts- annual clean-up of coastal areas	Tidy Towns/ Angling Club/ Coastguard	Schools, MCC, An Taisce	Annually
6	Plant native trees and shrubs in and around the town, in school grounds; get advice on suitable trees to plant- develop tree planting strategy.	Tidy Towns/ Schools	MCC	Tree Week
7	Put up bird nesting boxes and bat boxes in appropriate locations; monitor and maintain	Schools/ Tidy Towns	Heritage Officer	2015-2017
8	Develop edible section in Town Park- plant native varieties of fruit trees and shrubs (Seedsavers) and herbs etc.	Tidy Towns/ Heritage Group	Edible Landscape Project	2015-2017
9	Set up a GIY (Grow It Yourself) garden group; Establish Community Garden with polytunnel	Residents associations	GIY Ireland, Leader	2015
10	Establish a Common Swift nest box project	Denis Quinn/ Heritage Group	GMIT- Castlebar (Lynda Huxley)	2015
11	Run Annual Spring Clean	Tidy Towns	MCC, An Taisce, Schools	Annually
12	Promote bee keeping group and planting for pollinators	Killala Beekeeping Group	Irish Beekeepers Association	2015
13	Run nature walks and talks (e.g. swifts, bats, birds, bees, trees and tree planting)	Heritage Group	Heritage Officer	Heritage Week

MCC = Mayo County Council

Ensuring success

The successful implementation of a local biodiversity plan requires commitment from the community to support the projects, activities and/or events outlined in the plan. Ideally a local group should be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the 'Killala Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017'. They should meet at least twice a year in order to set annual goals and to review progress to date. The Mayo County Heritage Officer will be available to support the local community implement their plan.

Resources for implementing the plan

	Project/ activity/ event	Resources
1	Interpretive signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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/Irish_Walled_Towns/Bored_of_Boards__lowres_.pdf
2	Developing nature walks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayo County Council Walking Officer: www.mayowalks.ie/WalkingTrails/ • 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
3	Planting game crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.teagasc.ie/publications/2012/1170/Growing_Crops_for_Wildlife.pdf
4	Green flag/ schools projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.greenschoolsireland.org/themes/biodiversity.198.html • www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/factsheets/naturegarden/
5	Clean Coasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.cleancoastsireland.org/
6	Planting native trees and shrubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/buds_of_the_banner.pdf
7	Bird and bat boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.birdwatchireland.ie/Portals/0/pdfs/GBS_Nestboxes.pdf • www.batconservationireland.org/pubs/reports/Leaflet_3_batboxes.pdf
8	Edible section in Town Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://ediblelandscape.ie/
9	Community Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.giyinternational.org/pages/giy_community_garden_initiative • http://greensideup.ie/community-gardens-2/ • http://www.bordbia.ie/aboutgardening/GardeningArticles/ScientificArticles/The_Benefits_of_Community_Gardens.pdf
10	Common Swift nest box project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.birdwatchmayo.org/birds/facts/Swifts/SwiftsCastlebar_Westport_2012.pdf
11	Annual Spring Clean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.antaisce.org • www.mayococo.ie
12	Beekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://mayobeekeepers.com/ • http://www.irishbeekeeping.ie/html/become.html
13	Run nature walks and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayo County Heritage Officer

talks	
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Potential funding sources

Fund/ Funding Body	Description
Leader	Leader 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 Leader Programmes criteria for projects.
The Heritage Council	The Heritage Council offer grants to community groups and individuals for heritage projects. See their website for details of the grant application criteria and application process (www.heritagecouncil.ie)
Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund, Mayo County Council	This fund is administered by the Environment Section of Mayo County Council; it promotes sustainable development by assisting small scale, non-profit environmental projects at a local level. Application forms and further information are available online at www.mayococo.ie (Environment Forms Page) or telephone Sharon Cameron, Environment Awareness Officer, Mayo County Council, Aras an Chontae, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, on 094 9047360 or email – environment@mayococo.ie
Environment Fund for Biodiversity Awareness Grant Scheme 2013	This grant was 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 provides grants for signage and booklets etc. that include use of the Irish language
Mayo County Council	Funding for Heritage Week events; contact Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer dcunningham@mayococo.ie , 094 9047684

Useful contacts and websites

Name (Group/ Individual)	Activities/ Expertise	Contact details
Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer, Mayo County Council	All matters relating to heritage	dcunningham@mayococo.ie Tel: 094 9047684 www. mayococo.ie/heritage
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.	District Conservation Officer (098)49996
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 Ireland, Mayo Branch	Promote conservation of birds and their habitats; conduct surveys and organise birdwatching events in Mayo	www.birdwatchmayo.org/ birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com
Irish Wildlife Trust (IWT), Mayo Branch	IWT is a conservation charity committed to raising awareness of Ireland’s natural heritage and protecting it for future generations.	Contact Seán Murphy at IWTmayo@gmail.com
Mayo Naturalists’ Field Club	The aim of the Field Club is to promote an interest in all aspects of natural heritage.	www.mayococo.ie/en/Services/Heritage/MayoNaturalistsFieldClub/

Appendix 1: List of participants

	Name
1	David Munnelly
2	Denis Quinn
3	Aideen Ryan
4	Patricia Quinn
5	Seamus Smyth
6	Annette Maughan
7	Rebecca Gallagher
8	Paddy O’Hora
9	Niamh Ruttledge
10	Fiona Reilly
11	Des O’Boyle
12	Kevin McDonnell
13	Caroline Tuffy
14	Seamus Tuffy
15	Ger Heverin
16	Padraig Munnelly
17	Mary Kinhart
18	Pat Kinhart
19	Janet Hughes
20	Donal Hughes
21	Josie Barrett
22	Anita Rowland
23	Jarlath Munnelly