

Ballycastle Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017



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

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone in Ballycastle who helped with the development of this plan. Special thanks to Mary Munnely and Barbara Kelly for helping to promote the biodiversity training and organising the venue. Thanks also to Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer, Mayo County Council, for all her support and assistance with the project.

Text: Janice Fuller (www.janicefuller.ie)

Photos: Janice Fuller, Gretta Byrne

Introduction

Ballycastle is a beautiful village on the dramatic north coast of Mayo. Downpatrick Head lies to the east and the internationally renowned Céide Fields to the west. The beautiful and rugged coastline at Ballycastle is one of sandy beaches, sand dunes, rocky coves and sea cliffs. Inland the landscape is agricultural with wetlands, rivers, woods and extensive bogland to the west.



The ‘*Ballycastle Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017*’ is a community-based biodiversity plan that outlines projects, activities and events that will run in the Ballycastle 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 Ballycastle 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 Ballycastle 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).

The Tidy Towns group in Ballycastle are working to improve local amenities and the natural environment in and around the village. The *'Ballycastle 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.



Nature and wildlife in Ballycastle

There is a wealth of nature and wildlife in and around Ballycastle. There is a range of coastal habitats along the shore including sandy and shingle beaches, sand dunes, rocky shoreline and seacliffs. These all provide a range of habitats for wildlife, particularly birds. The northern coast of Mayo is excellent for birdwatching. Kittiwakes, Auks and Fulmars nest on the sea cliffs near Ballycastle. Choughs can also be spotted along the coast. Whimbrels, Dunlins and Oystercatchers can be seen along the foreshore as they search for a tasty morsel. Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and Wheatears are in abundance in wetlands and bogs.



Walkers on Sralagagh Loop

Inland, the landscape around Ballycastle is a mix of farmland, wetland, scrub and hedgerow. Extensive blanket bog lies to the west of the village. Céide Fields is an internationally renowned site for its Neolithic farming heritage, buried under the peat. Blanket bog is a type of peatland that expanded in Ireland as woodland was cleared for farming by Neolithic people and the climate became wetter. It develops on acidic bedrock where the waterlogged conditions and low pH allow peat, which is just dead plant material, to accumulate.



Ballycastle Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017

	Project/ activity	Project leader	Project partners	Time frame
1	Develop walking routes in Ballycastle area (e.g. along coast from Downpatrick to Ballycastle, heritage walk, Ballinglen area etc.)	Ballycastle Walking Group	Mayo CoCo	2014-2017
2	Run Annual Spring Clean and Clean Coasts	Tidy Towns	FÁS/ TÚS/ RSS?	Annually
3	Run nature walks and talks during Heritage Week and the Ballycastle Festival e.g. coastal birds, whales and dolphins, flowers of the bog, seaweed id and uses etc.	Céide Fields, Festival Committee	Tidy Towns, NPWS, Heritage Officer	Annually
4	Promote the development of better access to the sea and our marine heritage	Tidy Towns	Mayo CoCo	2014-2015?
5	Run nature and art project	Women's Group	Ballinglen Arts Group	2015?
6	Develop a plan for interpreting heritage in the area (e.g. signage, website, leaflets etc.)	Tidy Towns, Céide Fields	Heritage Officer, Mayo CoCo	2015?
7	Promote schools biodiversity projects	School and playschool	Heritage Officer, Tidy Towns	Ongoing
8	Church in the glen- clean up the avenue to Ballyglen Church	Tidy Towns	Heritage Officer	2015-2016

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 'Ballycastle 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	Developing walking routes	<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
2	Annual Spring Clean and Clean Coasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.antaisce.org • www.mayococo.ie • www.cleancoastsireland.org
3	Run nature talks and walks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Heritage Officer • Mayo Naturalists' Field Club • BirdWatch Mayo Branch
4	Promote access to sea	
5	Run nature and art project	
6	Develop a plan for interpreting local heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Heritage Officer • www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf?ext=.pdf
7	School biodiversity project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.greenschoolsireland.org/themes/biodiversity.198.html • www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/factsheets/naturegarden/
8	Church in the glen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Heritage Officer

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	Gretta Byrne
2	Mary Munnelly
3	Rosalind Callander
4	Michael Callander
5	Barbara Kelly
6	Sue Mackill
7	Paul Tighe
8	Florrie McBrien
9	Des Langan