

Action Plan for Nature for Creggs

2011- 2014



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Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
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Photos: Janice Fuller

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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

Creggs

Creggs is a beautiful village in east Galway, located close to the Roscommon border nearly 80km north-east of Galway City and 42km north-east of Tuam.

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



Creggs Village

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 Creggs, 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 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 for interested individuals and groups in Creggs 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.

Residents from Creggs and the surrounding area met on three occasions with ecologist, Dr Janice Fuller, to develop the biodiversity plan (Appendix 1). 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 local community.

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

Creggs is situated in the River Suck valley within a beautiful landscape of farmland, bogs, callows, lakes and woods.

The River Suck lies a few kilometres to the east of the village. The section of the River Suck closest to the village is designated as a Natural Heritage Area and Special Protection Area due to the presence of extensive callows, a type of wet grassland found in river floodplains, other wetland habitats, and important bird populations including Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Golden Plover and Lapwing. The River Suck eventually flows into the Shannon. The Derryhippo River, a tributary of the River Suck, flows through the village and the Heritage Park. The Suck Valley Way, a popular long distance walking route, runs close to the western edge of the village.

The Heritage Park, a wonderful natural amenity for school children, residents and visitors, is located close to the national school in the village. Many native trees and shrubs have been planted within the Park, which is managed in a wildlife-friendly way. A Nature Trail through the Park adds to the experience and educational value. There is also a butterfly garden in the Park and interpretive signage. There is an attractive old stone bridge over the river at the edge of the Park, and Daubenton's bat has

been recorded in this area. This type of bat likes to feed over watercourses and roost under stone bridges.



Entrance to the Heritage Park

There are several raised bogs and cutover bogs in the landscape around Creggs several of which have been designated as Natural Heritage Areas, including Kilmore, Funshin and Camderry bogs. Bogs are a rare habitat internationally and are hugely important for wildlife.



Bridge over Derryhippo River

There are many commercial forestry plantations and small woods in and around the Creggs parish. The Suck Valley Way runs through the woodland around Mount Mary, which is an outcrop of Old Red Sandstone. Dereen Wood at Rosmoylan, a few kilometres north of Creggs village, is an area of native woodland surrounded by bog that includes many native species including the rare native shrub, Bird Cherry.

There are also several small lakes in the area including Moat Lake and Ballydacker Lough at Hollygrove.

Community Action

Creggs Rural Development Association (CRDA)

CRDA was established in 1999. One of the main activities of the association is to participate in the Tidy Towns competition, which it has done every year since it was set up. While the initial focus was on tidying the village and presentation, improving the natural amenities of the village has become a high priority, and protecting and enhancing the natural heritage of the area. Creggs has increased the marks it receives in the Tidy Towns competition dramatically from the early years and continues to go from strength to strength, particularly in the Wildlife and Natural Amenities section.

Kilbegnet/ Ballinakill Historical Society

Creggs has a rich historical legacy that is promoted today by the Kilbegnet/ Ballinakill Historical Society, which runs a Heritage Centre in the village. Creggs was the scene of the last public speech of Charles Stuart Parnell in 1891. The historical society has produced various publications over the years, which document the rich history, folklore and heritage of the area.

Creggs GAA Club

Creggs GAA Club has a long and proud tradition, established over one hundred years ago and providing young players the opportunity to develop their skills from an early age. The Club is currently undergoing a major pitch and fencing development, which will lead to a significant improvement in its facilities. The Creggs Rural Development Association has worked with the club in recent years, providing assistance and expertise in relation to tree planting as part of a landscaping scheme for the club.

Creggs Rugby Club

Situated in the heart of the village, Creggs Rugby Club was formed in 1974. The Creggs Club is continuously upgrading its facilities, and its main pitch and floodlighting systems are of a very high standard. The Creggs Rugby Club Committee supports the work of the Creggs Rural Development Association.

Creggs National School

Creggs NS is participating in the Green Schools programme and is currently working on the Biodiversity Theme. The school has worked on nature and wildlife projects for many years, and the students regularly visit the Heritage Park, which is next to the school grounds.



Creggs village

Action Plan for Nature for Creggs

Objectives of Plan

1. To raise awareness and appreciation of natural heritage in Creggs
2. To protect and enhance nature and wildlife in Creggs
3. To promote enjoyment of nature for all

	Action/ Project	Lead Partner	Other partners	Timeframe
1	Run biodiversity projects in school as part of Green Schools programme	Creggs NS	GCC, Creggs TT, An Taisce	Annual
2	Develop a willow play area in village	Creggs TT	GCC	2013
3	Plant native trees and shrubs as boundary treatment in GAA grounds	Creggs GAA Club	Creggs TT, GCC	2012
4	Renovate natural heritage signage in Wildlife Park	Creggs TT, FÁS	GCC	2012
5	Erect heritage signage at other locations in village	Creggs TT	GCC, GRD	2013
6	Develop nature trail walking routes in area e.g. Derryhippo	Creggs TT	GCC	2013
7	Develop seating area in Wildlife Park to allow enjoyment of nature and wildlife (part of Suck Valley Way)	KB Historical Society	Creggs TT	2012
8	Plant native trees in Rugby Club grounds and ID trees	Creggs Rugby Club	Creggs TT	2012
9	Produce booklet on nature and wildlife in	KB Historical	Creggs TT	2013

	Creggs area. Include local placenames that have been collected for area.	Society		
10	Erect and maintain a variety of bird and bat boxes in Wildlife Park and village	Creggs TT	Creggs NS	Annual
11	Manage the grassland in the Heritage Park as a wildflower meadow	Creggs TT, FÁS	GCC	Ongoing
12	Plant native bird cherry in Heritage Park near river	Creggs TT, FÁS	Creggs NS	2012
13	Develop sensory garden area with wheelchair access in Wildlife Park	Creggs TT	Creggs NS	2011- 2012
14	Prepare Habitat Map for village and environs	Creggs TT	Creggs NS, GCC	2013
15	Run nature and wildlife walks and talks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beekeeping - Bat walk - Composting - Growing herbs and their uses 	Creggs TT	Creggs NS, GCC	Annual
16	Run a Tree ID project to identify and label trees in the Wildlife Park and the village	Creggs TT	Creggs NS, GCC	2012

Creggs TT = Creggs Tidy Towns

GCC = Galway County Council

KB Historical Society = Kilbegnet/ Ballinakill Historical Society

Monitoring and Evaluation

A committee will be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the '*Action Plan for Nature for Creggs*'. 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 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 (091) 509198
Elaine O’Riordan, County Galway Biodiversity Project Manager	Biodiversity, natural heritage, habitat mapping, community-based projects	elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie (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 Ireland's 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, John Higgins (093) 47502 www.npws.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).

Appendix 1:

List of participants in biodiversity training to develop biodiversity plan

	Name
1	Carmel O’Roarke
2	Fiona Brandon
3	Sean Brandon
4	Kathleen McKeague
5	John Kelly
6	Bina Harris
7	Nora Bligh
8	Larry Kilcommins
9	Seamus Keane
10	Tommy Gately
11	James Scott
12	Berney Higgins