



Curry GAA Biodiversity Action Plan County Sligo



Collated in consultation with Curry GAA,
by Woodrow Sustainable Solutions Ltd.

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Front page photo: *[Curry GAA, Facebook]*

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The funding for this work was provided by Sligo LEADER Partnership. The development of this plan was part of a wider biodiversity programme that included delivery of workshops, training and different biodiversity plans for communities across Co Sligo. This biodiversity programme was delivered by Woodrow who were appointed to deliver this work following their success in public tender process.

The workshops, and training materials and recordings of sessions are available to the public at <http://woodrow.ie/resources>

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Introduction

'Biodiversity' means all of the living things in an area: plants, trees, birds, mammals, insects, spiders, the fish in our waters, even things we can't see, such as the bacteria in the soil.

In late 2021, and early 2022, community volunteers enhanced their knowledge of biodiversity in their area by participating in a programme funded by Sligo LEADER Partnership. They attended workshops, training courses, explored their area and were supported by ecologists from Woodrow. Their ideas and actions are collated into this Local Biodiversity Action Plan. This plan aims to guide the work of Curry GAA to raise awareness, and enhance appropriately, the wildlife and habitats of the surroundings of Curry's GAA club.

This plan does not intend to detail every possibly action, but focuses on the main hopes of the community for biodiversity. Further detailed resources and information sheets have been provided separately and are also available at www.woodrow.ie/resources.

Location and Setting

The nature of the surrounding landscape showing the boundary of the adjacent SAC is clearly visible in the aerial image of the club in **Figure 1** below.

Biodiversity at the Curry GAA club

Linear habitats such as hedgerows and treelines, ditches, are an important feature of the biodiversity at the Curry GAA club.

Green spaces in the GAA club provide opportunities for further enhancing biodiversity.

Biodiversity projects that have already been initiated on the Club grounds include:

- Creation of a walking path
- Planting of bulbs
- Maintenance of the wooded area

Aims of this Plan

This local biodiversity action plan for the Curry GAA club sets out practical measures to help the wildlife and habitats on the grounds of the Club.

The aims are:

- To make recommendations for the management of habitats within grounds.
- To make proposals and suggestions for practical projects that can be carried out by club members
- To set out opportunities for informing and educating both local people and visitors about the importance and intrinsic interest of local wildlife and biodiversity.

Curry GAA Community Biodiversity Action Plan

Project No.	Project	Where	Time of Year to implement	Potential Partners	Notes
1	Create a colourful, welcoming and biodiverse focal point for the entry of the club.	<i>In planters, baskets or tubs at the entrance of the club.</i>	Plant bulbs in autumn, seeds in spring.		Use pollinator friendly plants in the club colours green and white. Planting perennials will reduce cost and effort.
2	Build bee/ bug hotels to provide nesting Sites for pollinators	<i>At south facing wall of the spectator stand.</i>	Can be build any time. Best to be hung in spring		Great activity to include children
3	Create community garden/ vegetable patch.	<i>Behind spectator stand/ along southwest corner of the grounds</i>	All Year		Potential to include grandparents
4	Plant fruit trees	<i>Behind spectator stand/ along southwest corner of the grounds</i>			Integrated into the community garden. Potentially planted by team as season ends with a plaque indicating the year.
5	Enhancing/ planting of native shrub/ hedge.	<i>Along the Site boundaries.</i>	Sept-Oct		
6	Change the grass-mowing regime, benefit wildflowers	<i>Behind spectator stand/ along southern and western side of the grounds</i>	March - August.		Mow paths rather than the entire area

7	Enhance/ extent the woodland area	<i>Northern section of the grounds.</i>	-		Potential to get founding and guidance through the Neighbourwood scheme.
8	Create outdoor Gym/ sensory trail	<i>Western section of the Grounds, potential to integrate sandy area</i>	All year around		
9	Erect bat and bird boxes	<i>Where there are trees – by the wooded area and on newly planted trees. On the buildings on Site. Provide information board on the bat species occurring in Curry.</i>	Year round, but Spring is best		Possibility to host a workshop on making and erecting bat and bird boxes or to carry out bat survey - involve local experts if possible.
10	Erect bird feeders	<i>On trees near benches where birds can be watched from a distance.</i>	All year – Autumn/Winter is best		Will require maintenance and regular cleaning of bird feeders to avoid disease etc.
11	Set up benches to enjoy nature	<i>At woodland, along newly created path</i>	All year round		
12	Use natural methods of pest & weed control - Identify areas where weed control is not necessary	<i>Everywhere if at all possible!</i>	All year round		-Replace slug pellets with wildlife-friendly pellets, or use natural repellents such as crushed eggshells, coffee grounds or copper tape. Replace chemical weedkiller with 'green' alternatives (which can be homemade) or use a flame torch to spot treat.

					-Source plants and shrubs for planting that have not been sprayed with pesticides.
13	Piles of leaves left in quiet corners to benefit hedgehog and invertebrates	<i>At the back of a flowerbed or at the base of a hedge where there won't be any disturbance over the winter. This is especially important for hibernating species like hedgehog.</i>	Autumn/Winter		
14	Set up signage to explain biodiversity measures	<i>At all actions taken</i>	All year around		

APPENDIX 1: Details of the proposed actions for biodiversity

Project 1: Create a colourful, welcoming and biodiverse focal point for the entry of the club.

Plant planters, baskets, hanging baskets and/ or tubs with pollinator friendly perennials. Using perennials will be more cost efficient in the long run and is more sustainable. The Clubs colours can be used to create a flower display:

WHITE	GREEN
Perennial Candytuft (<i>Iberis sempervirens</i>)	Spurge (<i>Euphorbia species</i>)
Perennial Phlox (<i>Phlox paniculate</i>)	Green hellebore (<i>Helleborus viridis</i>)
Common Star of Bethlehem (<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i>)	Common asparagus (<i>Asparagus officinalis</i>)
Baneberry (<i>Actaea japonica</i>)	Fennel (<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>)
Sweet Alyssum (<i>Lobularia maritima</i>)	Stipa 'Ponytails' (<i>Stipa tenuissima</i>): grass to provide structure

https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NBDC_flyer_Pots-for-Pollinators_LR.pdf

<https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pollinator-Sports-Clubs-guide-WEB.pdf>

Project 2: Build bee/ bug hotels to provide nesting Sites for pollinators

At south facing wall of the spectator stand. Pollinators need food sources in reach of their nesting site. Creating Vegetable patches (Project 3), planting fruit trees (Project 4) or changes in the mowing regime (Project 6) will provide food sources for pollinators.

This is a great project to involve children.

- <https://pollinators.ie/the-secret-life-of-solitary-bees/>
- <https://pollinators.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/How-to-guide-Nesting-2018-WEB.pdf>

Project 3: Create community garden/ vegetable patch.

The areas along the south and west of the pitches can be used to set up a community garden/ vegetable patch. This would allow for more involvement of family members such as grandparents and provide information and education for the children in the club.

<https://www.meath.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2020-06/Garden%20Wildlife%20Booklet.pdf>

<https://greensideup.ie/start-up-essentials-for-community-gardens/>

Project 4: Plant fruit trees

Create a small orchard area. Teams can eat/ use fruits of the orchard. Potential to let teams plant trees at the end of the season with a plaque indicating the year/ names etc.

<https://www.bordbia.ie/globalassets/lifestyle/resources/organic-gardening-english/planting-an-orchard-and-strawberries.pdf>

Project 5: Enhancing/ planting of native shrub/ hedge.

Planting/ enhancing hedgerows around the grounds can provide shelter for players and spectators as well as local wildlife.

Guidance on the appropriate management and species can be found in section B here:

<https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pollinator-Sports-Clubs-guide-WEB.pdf>



Project 6: Change the grass-mowing regime, benefit wildflowers



The creation of a wildflower meadow is as simple as reducing the mowing regime. This will allow food sources for pollinators to grow. Paths can be mown into the meadow for walking tracks/ access to vegetable patches (Project 3) etc.

Guidance on mowing regimes can be found in section A here:

<https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pollinator-Sports-Clubs-guide-WEB.pdf>

Aim to reduce frequency of mowing at these locations and let vital pollinator species like clover and dandelion flower before the first cut (leave them until April). If you need to cut grass before April, consider leaving a margin of unmown grass to allow corridors of biodiversity. Stepped verges or a thin wildflower strip left along boundary edges –vision/road safety is a first priority. Cutting and removing clippings can increase biodiversity in these areas. Identify areas where changes in cutting regimes could increase biodiversity and where owners and management are open to changes in management regimes– e.g., verges, housing estates and small pockets of amenity grassland as well as local GAA clubs, faith buildings and schools. Designate an area to be managed for wildlife (signage is available through the all-Ireland pollinator plan: <https://pollinators.ie/resources/signs/>)

GENERAL ADVICE: Identify some green areas or lawns that have clover growing in them. Clover is easily identified at any time of year by the characteristic three leaflet structure of the leaves. If there are other species of wildflower such as dandelions, bird's foot trefoil or even self-heal growing in the lawns then that is even better.

Raise the blades on your lawn mower to the highest setting and cut the lawn less often. How often you cut will depend on the time of year and how fast the lawn is growing. The aim is to allow the dandelions, clovers and other wildflowers to grow and bloom but you can maintain a neat appearance by topping the grass when it grows taller than the flowers.

Project 7: Enhance/ extent the woodland area

The area in the North of the ground currently supports a small woodland. The area can be maintained and enhanced. There is the potential to apply for the Neighbourhood Scheme for funding (funding can also include signage and facilities such as benches and paths).

<https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/crops/forestry/grants/NeighbourWood-Scheme.pdf>

Project 8: Create outdoor Gym/ sensory trail

Outdoor Gym equipment can be placed along the path to use for training. This can be in combination with a sensory trail with sections of a bare foot path and balancing equipment.

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/sensory-trail-design#:~:text=A%20sensory%20trail%20has%20a,in%20a%20multi%2Dsensory%20journey.>

<https://www.footfiles.com/subject/barefoot-parks>

Project 9: Erect bat and bird boxes

Where there are trees – by the wooded area and on newly planted trees. On the buildings on Site. Provide information board on the bat species occurring in Curry.

[-https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/nestbox-designs-for-birds-and-wildlife/](https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/nestbox-designs-for-birds-and-wildlife/)

[-https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BCIrelandGuidelines_BatBoxes.pdf](https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BCIrelandGuidelines_BatBoxes.pdf)

Project 10: Erect bird feeders

Excellent Advice and Guidance:

- What food should I use?
- What time of year is best?
- Feeder Hygiene?
- Cold weather – frost and snow?
- How to deter pests from feeders.

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/garden-birds/feeding-your-garden-birds/>

Possibly an option to put up bird feeders and follow an 'Adopt a bird feeder' policy with the club members where they take turns to have responsibility to clean and refill the feeders – can be especially important in Winter months.

Project 11: Set up benches to enjoy nature

Can be set up where they point at biodiversity action that have been taken.

Project 12: Use natural methods of pest & weed control - Identify areas where weed control is not necessary.

- Replace slug pellets with wildlife-friendly pellets, or use natural repellents such as crushed eggshells, coffee grounds or copper tape.
- Replace chemical weedkiller with 'green' alternatives (which can be homemade) or use a flame torch to spot treat.
- Source plants and shrubs for planting that have not been sprayed with pesticides.

Advice and case-studies - <https://pollinators.ie/pesticide-free-places/>

Project 13: Piles of leaves left in quiet corners to benefit hedgehog and invertebrates

- Helping Hedgehogs Guidance and Advice:
https://biodiversityireland.ie/app/uploads/2022/02/Helping_Hedgehogs_A4_WEB_ENG.pdf

Project 14: Set up signage to explain biodiversity measures

Set up signage at biodiversity measures taken to promote knowledge and understanding for biodiversity. This can include information about species such as pollinators, birds and bats that use the grounds or explanation for actions such as the mowing regime.