

Ardrahan Area Biodiversity Plan 2021~2024



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland
Funded by the Department of Rural
and Community Development



EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
Europe Investing in Rural Areas



The LEADER Programme 2014-2020 is financed by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Rural Development Programme Ireland (LEADER) 2014-2020 and by the EU under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.



Introduction

The Ardrahan for Nature community biodiversity group is composed of residents from the Ardrahan area who have come together because of their love of nature, their interest in learning more about their local place and the intention of helping preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the area through awareness raising and actions as outlined below. The group is reaching out to other local community groups, schools and interested individuals in the area with a view to work together for the benefit of the natural environment and the well-being of the community as a whole.

Ardrahan Village is situated on the R458 (formerly N18) in South Galway 10km north of Gort. The 2011 Census recorded a population of 540. Facilities include Garda barracks, Irish Fibre Crafters studio and shop, Art workshop and church (CI). In Labane you will find the National school, a community childrens' playground, a creche, undertakers, church (RC), a pub, car sales and service, supermarket, deli, ATM, petrol station and hardware shop along with the parish hall.

**Cover Image: Ardrahan with Slieve Aughty mountains in background taken from Brackaloon lake
Left: Castletaylor**

Nature/Biodiversity and Heritage

Ardrahan Grasslands SAC (Special Area of Conservation)

Natural Heritage

Ardrahan is on the edge of the Gort Lowlands. The underlying geology of the area is limestone which was laid down 350mya under a subtropical sea similar to the Burren. Erosion has resulted in the flat topography. The local landscape is mainly agricultural land with some wooded areas, turloughs and some Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), notably the Ardrahan Grasslands, which is an SAC due to the presence of Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) Arctic Alpine heath and the naturalness of the turlough.

Castletaylor Wood 43ha is the largest wooded area nearby. This Coillte restoration yew woodland is about 3km from the village off the Craughwell road. The conifer plantation was removed some years ago to allow natural regeneration to increase biodiversity. Many native trees have regenerated as a result with a predominance of birch, whitebeam, holly and hazel. Some tall Monterey pine remain from the past providing perches for birds of prey. Yew cuttings from Garryland nature reserve were planted to supplement the mature yew already present. There are a number of trails through the woodland, some are wide with a good surface but most are tracks.

There are many fine stone walls in the area, quite a few of these, especially the higher walls are remnants of the old estates of Cregaclare and Tullira. Hedgerows are not abundant but a lot of the walls are covered in ivy providing a late season nectar source, berries throughout the winter and year-round shelter for insects, birds and small mammals. Fox, hare, rabbit and badger live in the area and red squirrel and pine martin are to be found in Castletaylor wood. Barn owls and long eared owls are also present. There are large rookeries near the village and starling murmurations are sometimes seen on winter evenings. The turloughs are frequented by winter visitors including whooper swans, lapwings and wild ducks such as mallard, teal, tufted duck.



Above: Silhouette of Ardrahan castle ruin

Below: Church of Ireland; clock tower

Built Heritage

The iconic castle ruin stands on a height beside the road on the edge of the village. There are four more castles in much better condition within a 3km radius of the village. Castletaylor, Drumharsna and Ballymaquiff, all uninhabited ruins. Tullira castle which is privately owned, has been restored to its original glory.

There are several archeological monuments in the area including, ring forts, barrows and standing stones as well as the remains of the old church and round tower in the Church of Ireland graveyard in the village, cillins, milestones, the market cross and village pump are witness to times past.

Ardrahan is the only planned village in south Galway. Built by the Taylors of Castletaylor to house the workers of their estate. c1855-60 Michael Taylor was responsible for the construction of the old Post Office, and the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) Barracks - the current Garda barracks. The architectural value of these buildings, which are still occupied today, is recognised by their inclusion in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.





Ardrahan RIC barracks (now Garda Station) and Taylors Hotel (now Joyces) 1899 (watercolour and pencil) by Jack B Yeats

Cultural Heritage

Catholic church in Laban; Church of Ireland Ardrahan; Community Hall Laban originally built with a loan from Edward Martyn and funds raised by the community during the Celtic Revival at the beginning of 20th century. The hall, known as “The Loughnane Quinn Memorial Hall” opened in 1941 is built on the site of the ruin of the Edward Martyn Hall. Canon Considine PP of Ardrahan was the indomitable force behind a hard working enthusiastic parish committee who spared no effort in a massive fundraising campaign to build this fine Community Hall. GAA is very important in Ardrahan especially to the youth of the area. There have been a lot of improvements to playing pitches recently.

The perimeter path is well used for exercise by the community. Ardrahan Laban Development Association (ALDA) has done a lot to promote and preserve local heritage including restoring the Cregaclare mausoleum and erecting an information board in the village. The Tidy Towns; Ardrahan gun club; ICA; Social and Active group for older adults are some of the local community groups.

The Saturday Market is well supported providing a great social outlet for the community as well as good quality fruit, vegetables, baked goods and fresh fish.

Project Actions 2021~2024

Project/activity/event	Project leader (group or individual)	Potential collaborators	Skills Training Requirement	Time frame	To date
Develop Face-book page	Ardrahan for Nature	-	Social Media Training required	-	Done
Plant native trees, shrubs in public spaces	Ardrahan for Nature	Galway Co. Co. FÁS RC Parish Church	Funding training required	0-3 yrs	100 native trees planted in local estate. Horticulturist consulted
School Visits/ Biodiversity presentation & activities eg Build a bug hotel	Ardrahan for Nature	NPWS		0 - 2 yrs	
Biodiversity in Art & Poetry Montage	Ardrahan for Nature	Primary Schools		0 - 2 yrs	
Talks & Walks:				0 - 2 yrs	
Archaeology	Ardrahan for Nature	Rory O' Shaughnessy		June 2021	Rory O' Shaughnessy agreed to do an online talk.
Ecology		NPWS		2021	NPWS Rangers agreed to do a) nature walk b) bat walk
Birds		BW Ireland			
Foraging		----tbc----			
Heritage Farm					
Gun club talk		Stephanie Healy ---tbc---		2021	
Flora & Fauna Information Board	Ardrahan for Nature	Galway Co. Co. NBDC		0 -2 yrs	
Pollinator friendly reduced mowing of public spaces	Ardrahan for Nature	Galway Co.Co. FÁS		0-2 yrs	Reduced mowing confirmed by council GAA erected biodiversity signage
& GAA grounds					
Pollinator friendly planting of Labane traffic island	Ardrahan for Nature	Galway Co. Co. FÁS		0-2 yrs	



Church of Ireland, Ardrahan

Potential Funding Sources

Grants are not open all year round so check back later in the year if they are closed.

County Council Community Support Grants - <http://www.galway.ie/en/services/communityenterpriseeconomicdevelopment/grantschemes/>

Local Leader Company, Galway Rural Development- <http://www.grd.ie/>

Foras na Gaeilge <https://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/funding-schemes/?lang=en>

Clean Coasts Grant Scheme <https://cleancoasts.org/our-initiatives/clean-coasts-volunteering/clean-coasts-grants/#:-:text=Clean%20Coasts%20groups%20can%20apply,close%20on%2030th%20April.>

Failte Ireland - <https://www.failteireland.ie/Identify-Available-Funding.aspx#:-:text=F%C3%A1ilte%20Ireland%20helps%20to%20support,grant%20schemes%20and%20strategic%20partnerships>

LAWPRO - <http://watersandcommunities.ie/community-water-development-fund/>

The Heritage Council <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding>

Creative Ireland Climate fund - <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/blog/creative-climate-action-fund-seeks-to-spark-artistic-imaginations/>

Laurie Healy Credit Union Fund - <https://www.caracreditunion.ie/the-lauri-healy-community-sponsorship-awards-now-open-for-applications/>

Community Foundation for Ireland - <https://www.communityfoundation.ie/grants/types-of-grants>

Other options include local sponsorship and crowd funding using a websites like fundit.ie.

The Wheel Funding handbook has excellent advice on how and where to apply for grants https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-09/the_wheel_EPA_Fundinghandbook_web.pdf

Project/activi-ty/event	Project leader (group or individual)	Potential collaborators	Skills Training Requirement	Time frame	To date
Pollinator friendly plants in existing planters	Ardrahan for Nature	Tidy Towns Committee	Pollinator training required	0 - 1 yrs	Planters provided to tidy towns outside Garda Station
Erect barn owl boxes, bat boxes & swift boxes	Ardrahan for Nature	BWI Bat Watch Ireland CI Ardrahan	Training required	0 - 2 yrs	
Reduce/cease laying poison & spraying chemicals	Ardrahan for Nature	Galway CoCo FÁS NPWS		0-2 yrs	GAA open to suggestions work in progress
Litter pick & dog fouling action	Ardrahan for Nature	Tidy Town Committee Galway CoCo		0 - 1 yr	
Hedgerow audit with a view to planting more native hedgerows	Ardrahan for Nature	Ecology Students	Mapping skills training required	0-2 yr	



100 native trees planted in Caislean Raithin

Last December 100 small native trees and shrubs were planted in the Ardrahan council estate by resident members of the group and other volunteers. A mixture of birch, willow, rowan, hazel, hawthorn, holly, elder, crab apple, guelder rose, spindle and four semi-dwarf apple trees will provide pollen for bees and other insects and later in the year fruit or berries for birds. Seaweed and well-rotted manure were added as natural fertilisers; sawdust from hardwoods, newspaper and cardboard were used as mulch around the saplings to stop grass growing. Our local councillor, PJ Murphy, allocated funding for the trees supplied by Celt native tree nursery. An area of grass in front of the trees will be let grow like a hay meadow in accordance with the council's pollinator friendly reduced mowing regime and a path around the whole area will be mown for people to walk and enjoy.



Planters outside Garda Station provided by Ardrahan for Nature

Compost; peat free: Enrich, peat free, from Galway Stone, Ardrahan - Enrich is a compost manufacturer and is the largest producer of peat free products in Ireland. Ecofective sprinkled around herbs and flowers, non toxic, just forms a physical barrier. Flowers: Wallflowers x2, Scabious x2, Lupins (white) x3, Forget-me-nots x1, Centaurea Montana, Wood Anemone, Foxgloves x2, Rudbeckia x2 Herbs: Chives, thyme, lemon balm, mint, parsley and fennel.

Resources

Archaeological monuments and protected structures

<https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/>

Old maps and aerial photos <http://map.geohive.ie/>

Place names <https://www.logainm.ie/en/>

Stories - The schools collection, 1930s <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes>

Old music of your local place <https://www.itma.ie/digital-library>

Old photos of your place <http://images.galwaylibrary.ie/greenstone/cgi-bin/library.cgi?c=t3&a=p&p=about>

Census archives <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>

Other Resources

There is information on archaeological excavations that took place in your area and much more at **www.heritagemaps.ie**

A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, by Samuel Lewis, 1837. You can search for information on your local place at **<https://www.libraryireland.com/topog/placeindex.php>**

The Digital Repository of Ireland is a national digital repository for Ireland's humanities, social sciences, and cultural heritage data. You can search for records from your local place at **<https://www.dri.ie/>**



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connecting people and place

This biodiversity plan is one of six that came about as a result of the 2021 Community Biodiversity Training and Awareness Programme delivered by the Burrenbeo Trust and funded by Galway Rural Development. Up to eight participants from each community attended a place-based Biodiversity Training course, which included 10 hours of initial activity-based learning covering all aspects of heritage but focusing on Biodiversity. This culminated in each community creating a Biodiversity plan. Workshops on various topics were provided to the communities in order to give them the skills necessary to put their plans into action. Creating their own plan gives each community a strong sense of ownership and agency. Each of the six plans is unique and reflects the interests, skills and needs of the local community.

Design and printing of the plans was funded by Galway County Council.



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



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