

Louisburgh Nature & Wildlife Plan 2014-2017



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

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone in Louisburgh who helped with the development of this plan. Special thanks to Maggie O’Conor for helping to promote the biodiversity training, and the Louisburgh HQ and Louisburgh Parish Hall for the use of these venues. Thanks also to Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer, Mayo County Council, for all her support and assistance with the project.

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Introduction

Louisburgh is an attractive town on the southern shore of Clew Bay. The Sheefry Hills form the backdrop to the town and Croagh Patrick lies to the east. The area around Louisburgh is highly scenic and there are several spectacular beaches close to the town. Louisburgh is a planned town constructed in 1795 and built on the Bunowen River. The Irish name for the town, Cluain Cearbán, means meadow of the buttercups.

The ‘*Louisburgh Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017*’ is a community-based biodiversity plan that outlines projects, activities and events that will run in the Louisburgh 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 Louisburgh 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 Louisburgh 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 are several community groups and two schools in Louisburgh. Community groups such as the Tidy Towns group and Louisburgh HQ are working to improve local amenities and the local environment. Both the primary school and secondary school in the town are participating in the Greenschools Programme and have Green Flags. Rural Social Scheme participants also make a huge contribution to the upkeep of the town and surrounding area by doing beach clean-ups every week, cutting the grass in public green spaces and sports grounds, assisting with school garden projects and growing much of the floral displays for the area in the local scheme’s polytunnel. They work with Louisburgh Tidy Towns, Louisburgh HQ and the schools, and have been instrumental in the development of cycling/ walking routes in the area.

The *'Louisburgh 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 Louisburgh

There is a wealth of wildlife habitats in and around Louisburgh. The Bunowen River flows through the town forming the main focal point. The River rises in the Sheefry Hills and flows through peatland, wetland and rough pasture to the sea just north of the town. Although this is a spate river, there are some deep pools providing excellent lies for salmon and sea trout. Many birds take advantage of the abundant insect life in the river or nest in the wetland vegetation that fringes the river. Herons are regularly spotted along the river and if you're really lucky you might see a Kingfisher.

The coastline near Louisburgh has a range of habitats with sandy and rocky shores, sea cliffs and coves. The beautiful beaches at Carrowmore, Old Head and Bertra are havens for wildlife as well as people. Seals and dolphins are regularly seen in the area. Numerous different types of coastal birds can be spotted from the shore. Oystercatchers, Turnstones, Ringed Plover, Redshank and many more wading birds can be seen along the shoreline. Great Northern Divers and Brent Geese are regular winter visitors. Fulmars nest on the sea cliffs.



Harebells along road to the beach (Photo: Derek McLoughlin)

Inland, the landscape is a rich tapestry of farmland, wetland, bog, scrub, woodland and forestry. Old Head Wood is a beautiful, windswept Oak woodland with trails for walking and exploring. It is the only significant Atlantic Oak woodland that occurs directly adjacent to the coast in Ireland. An abundance of nesting birds utilise the wood including Long-tailed Tit, Spotted Flycatcher and Chiffchaff. Woodland is a relatively rare habitat in Mayo and therefore woods such as Old Head Wood are particularly important refuges for woodland flora and fauna. Exotic conifers have been removed from the woodland. The invasive species, *Rhododendron ponticum* and Japanese Knotweed, are both present in the area and both pose a

serious threat to biodiversity if not dealt with appropriately. Old Head Wood is a long established Nature Reserve and is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation.



Honeysuckle

The uplands close to Louisburgh are swathed in blanket bog and heathland. These peaty habitats are both rare in an international context. A mix of heathers, bog cottons, sedges and mosses form mix the plant cover on the bog and heath. Insect-eating plants such as Sundew and Butterwort can be found in the wetter parts of the bog where they make up for the lack of nutrients in the peat by catching flies in their sticky leaves.



Sticky leaves of Sundew, an insect eating plant found on bogs

Louisburgh Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017

	Project/ activity	Project leader (group or individual)	Project partners	Time frame
1	Set up a Louisburgh Conservation Group to highlight natural heritage of the area and run conservation projects.	Will Williams, Mark Reed	RSS, Heritage Officer, NPWS, CVI	2015
2	Investigate possibility of establishing a Irish Red Grouse Conservation Project for Louisburgh area	Nick Harman	Mayo BirdWatch, NPWS, Irish Red Grouse Conservation Project	2015-2017
3	Include biodiversity section on local websites (<i>Louisburgh Online and Louisburgh- Killeen Heritage</i>)	Louisburgh HQ, Friends of Old Head	Mayo CoCo	Annually
4	Organise a calendar of biodiversity-related events e.g. tree week, biodiversity week, heritage week events (<i>nature walks, birdwatching, tree planting, whale watching, beekeeping etc.</i>)	Will Williams	Heritage Officer	Annually
5	Conduct a wildlife audit for Louisburgh area (<i>local experts, schools, community employment scheme participants</i>)- <i>collate existing information and any information gathered during the life time of the plan</i>	Conservation Group	RSS, GMTI, BirdWatch, NPWS, Heritage Officer	2015-2018
6	Participate in Clean Coasts and Annual Spring Clean	Tidy Towns	RSS, Schools, Surfers, An Taisce, MayoCoCo	Annually
7	Develop a map of beats on the Bunowen River	Louisburgh	Inland	2015

		HQ	Fisheries Ireland	
8	Develop heritage signage interpretation plan for Louisburgh including natural heritage.	Tidy Towns	Heritage Officer, BirdWatch Mayo	2015- 2017
9	Run schools biodiversity projects (<i>vegetable garden, natural play area- willow sculpture, leave no trace, raising oak seedlings, bug hotel etc.</i>)	Schools	RSS, Louisburgh HQ, Tidy Towns	Annually
10	Develop local nature trails/ walking routes	Louisburgh HQ	RSS, Mayo Walking Officer	2015- 2017
11	Protect and enhance habitats in Old Head Wood, run walks and talks to highlight natural heritage of the wood	Friends of Old Head Wood	NPWS, Mayo CoCo, Walking Officer	Annually
12	Develop biodiversity project at playground e.g. Sally garden, following ecological advice based on habitat audit of town.	Tidy Towns	RSS, Heritage Officer	2015
13	Erect bat boxes under new bridge and new bird boxes in suitable locations (also monitor and maintain all boxes).	Tidy Towns	RSS, Heritage Officer	2015- 2016

NPWS = National Parks and Wildlife Service, GMIT = Galway-Mayo Institute Technology, IWDG = Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, MCC = Mayo County Council, CVI = Conservation Volunteers Ireland

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 'Louisburgh 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	Louisburgh Conservation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.conservationvolunteers.ie/
2	Irish Red Grouse Conservation Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.greypartridge.ie • www.npws.ie/publications/irishwildlifemanuals/IWM50.pdf • www.npws.ie/publications/irishwildlifemanuals/IWM50.pdf • www.rathcormacgunclub.ie/articles_229852.html
3	Biodiversity section on local websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Officer
4	Calendar of biodiversity events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Officer
5	Wildlife audit of area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Officer • Mayo Naturalists' Field Club • www.secadgreenyourcommunity.org/resources/Habitat%20Mapping%20Guide.pdf
6	Clean Coasts Annual Spring Clean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.cleancoastsireland.org/ • www.nationalspringclean.org
7	Map of beats along Bunowen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inland Fisheries Ireland (Louisburgh office 09866404)
8	Heritage signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.roscommoncoco.ie/en/Services/Heritage/Publications/Telling_People_About_Our_Heritage-Interpretation_and_Signage_Guidance.pdf • www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Irish_Walled_Towns/Bored_of_Boards__lowres_.pdf
9	Schools biodiversity projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.greenschoolsireland.org/themes/biodiversity.198.html • www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/factsheets/naturegarden/
10	Develop nature trails, walking routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayo County Council Walking Officer: www.mayowalks.ie/WalkingTrails/ • 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
11	Old Head Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Old Head Wood is designated as a Special Area of Conservation due to the importance of the habitats present in a European</i>

		<p><i>Context. Any plans or projects for the woodland should be discussed in advance with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPWS District Conservation Officer (098) 49996 • www.npws.ie • www.npws.ie/protectedsites/specialareasofconservationsac/oldheadwoodsac/ • www.npws.ie/media/npwsie/content/images/protectedsites/conservationstatement/CS000532.pdf
12	Sally Garden at Playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=588
13	Bird boxes 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
14	Community garden and sustainable gardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.giyinternational.org/pages/giy_community_garden_initiative • http://greensideup.ie/community-gardens-2/ • www.bordbia.ie/aboutgardening/GardeningArticles/ScientificArticles/The_Benefits_of_Community_Gardens.pdf

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	This grant was offered in 2013 and may be offered again. 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/
Inland Fisheries Ireland		www.fisheriesireland.ie Ballyhip, Louisburgh (098)64404
Discover Ireland	Water-based trail to explore	http://www.discoverireland.ie/Arts-Culture-Heritage/old-head-blueway-louisburgh/91601

Appendix 1: List of participants

	Name
1	Alex White
2	Anne Marie O'Malley
3	Barbara Cox
4	Brenda O'Malley
5	Clement Quinn
6	Dermott Cox
7	Ellen Cox
8	Gabriel Tucker
9	Geraldine Mitchell
10	Gloria ?
11	Iso Jorgensen
12	John McDonagh
13	John O'Malley
14	John Staunton
15	Kate Petrovic
16	Kirsten O'Dwyer
17	Maggie O'Conor
18	Mark Reed
19	Nick Harman
20	Paula Halpin Cannon
21	Rhona Chambers
22	Róisín Byrne
23	Sarah Ingham
24	Tommy Conroy
25	Will Williams