

# Knock Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017



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

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to everyone in Knock who helped with the development of this plan. Special thanks to Nuala Kelly for helping to promote the biodiversity training, and the Community Centre and Knock House Hotel for the use of their venues. Thanks also to Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer, Mayo County Council, for all her support and assistance with the project.

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**Photos:** Janice Fuller

## **Introduction**

Knock is a small town in east Mayo just off the N17, the main route between Galway and Sligo. Famous as a major international Catholic site of pilgrimage, the Shrine in Knock is a focal point for the town and the wider area. The Shrine is set in 100 acres of beautiful landscape gardens and parkland providing a wonderful natural amenity for the town, as well as spiritual centre. The landscape around Knock is one of gently rolling farmland, bog, lakes and forestry. Several walking routes are being developed in the surrounding area so that walkers can enjoy the beautiful countryside.



The '*Knock Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017*' is a community-based biodiversity plan that outlines projects, activities and events that will run in the Knock 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 Knock 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 Knock 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 Knock are working to improve local amenities and the local environment. The Shrine grounds are actively managed to provide a beautiful backdrop to the Shrine. The *'Knock 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 Knock

The landscape around Knock is largely agricultural with several raised bogs, small lakes and stands of conifer forestry. The Shrine dominates the town centre and the extensive grounds around the Shrine are beautifully landscaped. Numerous trees and shrubs have been planted, and flower beds near the buildings. These grounds are a haven for walkers and also provide wonderful habitat for wildlife.

The entrance roads to the town from the N17 have natural grassland and wetlands that are full of wild orchids and other wildflowers in early summer.



*Common Spotted Orchid*

There are several small raised bogs in the surrounding landscape, such as Roosky Bog and Clarkefield Bog. Raised bogs started to form in former lake basins and depressions thousands of years ago after the end of the last Ice Age. Peat builds up very slowly over thousands of years to produce the deep layers of peat that are characteristic of raised bogs. The flora of raised bogs, such as the Bog cottons, Heathers and a rich variety of mosses, produces a tapestry of colour that changes through the seasons. Birds such as Curlew and Snipe nest in raised bogs, especially when there is a good cover of heather. Bogs are also an important part of our cultural heritage as they have been used for generations to provide fuel.



*Wetland in Knock*

### Knock Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017

	<b>Project/ activity</b>	<b>Project leader (group or individual)</b>	<b>Project partners</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
1	Develop composting facility in the Shrine Grounds to help promote composting in the area	The Shrine	Mayo CoCo, School	2015
2	Develop heritage trail highlighting all aspects of heritage- natural, cultural and built	Knock Tidy Towns	Heritage Officer	2015-2016
3	Plant native trees and shrubs in Shrine Grounds (e.g to replace extensive Leylandii hedgerow; as part of new landscaping plan)	The Shrine	Tidy Towns	Annually
4	Develop meditation walk and natural areas with seating in the Shrine Grounds	The Shrine	Tidy Towns	2016
5	Highlight local walking routes to enjoy nature	Walking Group	Mayo CoCo Walking Officer	2014-2015
6	Develop habitat map of town	School	Heritage Officer	2016
7	Incorporate wildlife-friendly planting schemes (e.g. roundabout, Kiltimagh Road, at flyover and other locations)	Knock Tidy Towns	Heritage Officer	Annually
8	Erect, monitor and maintain bird and bat boxes within the Shrine Grounds.	The Shrine	Tidy Towns, School	Annually
9	Plant native hedge around car park at Shanvaghera Church	Knock Tidy Towns	Heritage Officer	2016
10	Manage some areas of grassland in the Shrine Grounds as meadows, particularly on damp ground (mow in late	The Shrine	Heritage Officer	Annually

	spring and late summer)			
11	Annual Spring Clean	Knock Tidy Towns	School, The Shrine	Annually
12	Run nature walks, talks and biodiversity workshops during Heritage Week, Tree Week and Biodiversity Week e.g. bat walk, workshops on bird box building, gardening for wildlife, dry stone walling, and talks on local nature and wildlife.	Knock Tidy Towns	GMIT, Heritage Officer	Annually

*Mayo CoCo = Mayo County Council*

## **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 'Knock 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	Composting facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.mayococo.ie/en/Services/Environment/ReduceReuseRecycle/Composting/">http://www.mayococo.ie/en/Services/Environment/ReduceReuseRecycle/Composting/</a></li> </ul>
2	Develop heritage trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/Guide_to_Planning_and_Developing_Recreational_Trails_in_Ireland.pdf">www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/Guide_to_Planning_and_Developing_Recreational_Trails_in_Ireland.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.noticenature.ie/Walking_Trails_in_Ireland.html">www.noticenature.ie/Walking_Trails_in_Ireland.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf">http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf</a></li> </ul>
3	Plant native trees & shrubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/buds_of_the_banner.pdf">http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/buds_of_the_banner.pdf</a></li> </ul>
4	Develop meditation walk in natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/wildlife-friendly_garden.aspx">https://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/wildlife-friendly_garden.aspx</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/wildlife-gardening">http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/wildlife-gardening</a></li> </ul>
5	Highlight walking routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayo County Council Walking Officer 094 9047545; mayowalks@mayococo.ie</li> </ul>
6	Develop habitat map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.secadgreenyourcommunity.org/resources/Habitat%20Mapping%20Guide.pdf">http://www.secadgreenyourcommunity.org/resources/Habitat%20Mapping%20Guide.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.greenschoolsireland.org/_fileupload/biodiversity%20resources/Habitat_mapping.pdf">http://www.greenschoolsireland.org/_fileupload/biodiversity%20resources/Habitat_mapping.pdf</a></li> </ul>
7	Wildlife-friendly planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/wildlife-friendly_garden.aspx">https://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/wildlife-friendly_garden.aspx</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/wildlife-gardening">http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/wildlife-gardening</a></li> </ul>
8	Bird and bat boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=270">www.birdwatchireland.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=270</a></li> </ul>
9	Plant native hedge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/NaturalHeritage/Hedgerows/Hedgerow%20of%20Galway.pdf">http://www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/NaturalHeritage/Hedgerows/Hedgerow%20of%20Galway.pdf</a></li> </ul>
10	Manage grassland as meadow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.teagasc.ie/environment/Publications/BirdWatch/MeadowGrassland-TeagascBirdWatchIrelandLeaflet.pdf">http://www.teagasc.ie/environment/Publications/BirdWatch/MeadowGrassland-TeagascBirdWatchIrelandLeaflet.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/sites/ulster.live.wt.precedenthost.co.uk/files/files/Discover%20and%20Learn/UWT%20Meadow%20Creation%20Guide.pdf">http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/sites/ulster.live.wt.precedenthost.co.uk/files/files/Discover%20and%20Learn/UWT%20Meadow%20Creation%20Guide.pdf</a></li> </ul>

## 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 ( <a href="http://www.heritagecouncil.ie">www.heritagecouncil.ie</a> )
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 <a href="http://www.mayococo.ie">www.mayococo.ie</a> (Environment Forms Page) or telephone Sharon Cameron, Environment Awareness Officer, Mayo County Council, Aras an Chontae, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, on 094 9047360 or email – <a href="mailto:environment@mayococo.ie">environment@mayococo.ie</a>
Mayo County Council	Funding for Heritage Week events; contact Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer <a href="mailto:dcunningham@mayococo.ie">dcunningham@mayococo.ie</a> , 094 9047684
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: <a href="mailto:biodiversitypolicy@ahg.gov.ie">biodiversitypolicy@ahg.gov.ie</a>
Foras na Gaeilge	Foras na Gaeilge provides grants for signage and booklets etc. that include use of the Irish language

## Useful contacts and websites

Name (Group/ Individual)	Activities/ Expertise	Contact details
Deirdre Cunningham, <b>Heritage Officer,</b> 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

	<b>Name</b>
1	Nuala Kelly
2	John Nolan
3	Denis Kennedy
4	Maud Murphy
5	Peter McLoughlin
6	Patrick Burke
7	Mary Coleman
8	Anne Lavin
9	Raymond Heneghan
10	Theresa Sloyan
11	Michael Sloyan
12	Yvonne Morris
13	Sr. Caitriona
14	Bruce Kearns
15	Ann Lyons
16	Kathleen Rattigan
17	Kathleen Reddington
18	Jim Reddington
19	Caroline Conroy
20	Margaret Jackson
21	Marion Maloney