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Biodiversity Action Plan for People's Park in Clarecastle.

Date: August 2021 –

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Acknowledgements

Clarecastle, Ballyea Heritage & Wildlife Group would like to thank Clare Local Development Company (CLDC), for providing the fantastic training course 'Training to Develop a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan for an Outdoor recreational Space in your Community'.

Many thanks for the guidance and support of trainers Linda Gilsenan and Fran Giaquinto throughout the course and particularly for advice offered during the site visit (reference attachment 01 for details).

Finally, a thank you to the local community groups of Clarecastle such as Clarecastle Tidy Towns Committee, Clarecastle Community Garden, Men's Shed and Clarecastle National School who shall support this plan into the future.



Fran Giaquinto and Linda Gilsenan in action with Eric Shaw, Christy Leyden, Betty Slattery & Jean Ryan of the Clarecastle, Ballyea Heritage & Wildlife Group in the Peoples Park, Clarecastle.

Introduction

This Introduction section shall detail the Clarecastle, Ballyea Heritage and Wildlife Group, Biodiversity and the Biodiversity in Clarecastle village and Peoples Park see detailed in (A) to (D) below.

Clarecastle, Ballyea Heritage & Wildlife Group

Clarecastle & Ballyea Heritage and Wildlife Group is a sub-committee of Clarecastle Community Development - their aim is to source, collect & publish Cultural, Historical, Wildlife and Natural Amenities material in order to raise awareness and to aid preservation of knowledge and amenities. The Group work in tandem with Clarecastle Tidy Towns under the overall umbrella of Clarecastle Community Development CLG.



*Ellen Quin picture pending



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Members of Clarecastle and Ballyea Heritage and Wildlife Group have attended the CLDC course 'Training to Develop a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan for an Outdoor recreational Space in your Community' which is scheduled to run from May to October 2021. This course shall enable the group to compile and implement a biodiversity action plan for the Peoples Park, Clarecastle.

This document is a biodiversity plan for the People's Park in Clarecastle. It includes an account of the habitats in the People's Park and recommendations for management to retain and enhance the park's biodiversity. The plan is based on fieldwork as well as consultations with the local Clarecastle community groups (Tidy Town's, Community garden, Scouts & Men's Shed) and Clarecastle National School.

Biodiversity

Scientists adopted the word Biodiversity in the mid-1980's and these days the word Biodiversity has become a default term for describing nature and its significance. Biodiversity is short for biological diversity. It means three things: all the species on the planet plus their homes/environments in which they live plus the relationships and interactions they form with other organisms.

Biodiversity has three intertwined features: ecosystem diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity.

Worldwide, biodiversity is currently being lost at an unprecedented rate and unfortunately Ireland is no exception. In May 2019 Ireland declared a climate and biodiversity emergency. According to the National Biodiversity Data Centre the most important drivers are habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, unsustainable exploitation, pollution and invasive alien species.

Clarecastle Village

Clarecastle village is situated beside the River Fergus and for this reason has estuarine, wetland & mudflat habitats, which is excellent for bird watching -particularly migrants. Due to its geological make up (limestone bedrock), the land is calcareous and for this reason tends to have similar flower, shrub and tree species, to that found in the Burren Co Clare. The village is mostly surrounded by farmland, where ample biodiversity can be found in hedgerows. As Clarecastle was the Port of Clare, there is a substantial amount of built heritage in the area, which now supports roosting & nesting birds and bats. Clarecastle is now largely a residential area and has many garden and parkland habitats, which support garden wildlife. There are also woodland areas such as Ballybeg Woods and Killone Abbey which support woodland animals and forest birds. Local lakes & ponds in the area, support water birds etc.

The People's Park is located in the centre of the village of Clarecastle and provides an amenity area for the local community. It serves as a walk through, to gain access Clarecastle National School and the GAA club facility. It has newly laid paths which provide easy accessibility for wheel-chair users and children's buggies. There is a new podium and seating area, which serves as an outdoor classroom for giving talks on Biodiversity to Local School children or other community groups.



Figure 1: Aerial view of Clarecastle People's Park showing the attractive layout of the footpaths



Figure 2: Paths to aid wheelchair & buggy access. Figure 3: Outdoor classroom area

The Peoples Park

The People's Park is primarily laid to grass. The east and north boundaries are lined with mostly native trees and hedgerow species. To the west, the park boundary lies adjacent to the sports grounds in front of which is a slope where a line of trees has been felled. This 'woodland area' has been left to regenerate but requires careful management. To the right of the entrance is an attractive stone wall and an enclosed green space which has been designated as an orchard and is currently planted with apple tree saplings, mature apple trees and cherry trees.



Figure 4: Grass land with mown path, giving easy access for spotting wildflowers & insects



Figure 5: Top row from left to right -Common Knapweed, vetch seed pods, Ox eye daisy, Bugle. Bottom row from left to right – Common Bind weed, Meadow vetchling with Buff tailed bumble bee



Figure 6: Native hedgerow



Figure 7: from left to right -Guelder Rose, Dog rose hips, Spindle wood berries, Blackberries



Figure 8: Recently felled woodland area beside GAA pitches – this area is in the process of regenerating itself



Figure 9: From left to Right – Thistle with bumblebee, Tutsan, Ragwort with orange tailed bumble bee and a nest of spiderlings in the wild grass



Figure 10: Orchard area & newly planted apple tree saplings, surrounded by stone wall.



Figure 11: From left to right – apple on tree, cherry trees (middle images x2) and Elder berries.

Native bulbs have been planted / planned to be planted under the Birch trees beside the entrance to the school – see listed below:

- Wild daffodil
- Tommasini's Crocus
- Native Irish Bluebells
- Snow drops
- Winter Aconites
- Autumn Crocus

Most of these are spring flowering but the latter two flower in late winter. Autumn flowering bulbs such as autumn crocus (*Colchicum* species) shall also be planted as these provide food for pollinators too. The bulbs can be planted in the grass near the Birch trees. The snowdrops, bluebells and winter aconites can be confined to under the hedges and around the large stones as they need some shelter. The daffodils and crocuses can be planted in the grass along the hedge. Importantly, when acquiring the bluebell bulbs, care shall be taken to source only the native Irish bluebell from reputable suppliers of native plants. The native bluebell is under threat from the invasive Spanish bluebell due to competition and hybridisation. The Spanish Bluebell is an invasive Alien species in the same legislation for control as Japanese Knotweed. The grass in shall be left unmown until the flowers have completely died back, otherwise the flowers will not reappear the following year. Once the leaves have died back the grass can be mown short if desired.



Figure 12: Birch Trees with native spring bulbs planted underneath.

Clarecastle & Ballyea Heritage & Wildlife Group now want to build on work done to date through Implementation of this plan, which shall lead to an increase in the park's biodiversity and thus ecological value. This plan shall also lead to an increase in educational opportunities for the adjacent school and the wider community.

Strengths

This Strength section shall detail the following: No invasive Species, Community Support and Site Potential as listed in (e) to (g) below:

No Invasive Species

The site is completely clear of invasive species which is hugely beneficial. To ensure this state is maintained an instruction procedure shall be generated and provided to volunteers and Contractors so that their equipment is cleaned before coming onto site and to ensure that they do not bring in fragments of Japanese knotweed, winter heliotrope and other invasives that are difficult to remove once colonised.

Community Support

There are a number of active groups, including Clarecastle Tidy Towns, Clarecastle, Ballyea Wildlife and Heritage group, Men’s Shed, Community Garden, Clarecastle National School and Clarecastle GAA in the locality to add much needed support to work on actions associated with this plan.



School children & their teacher using the Peoples Park for Biodiversity studies

Site Potential

The Peoples Park site has huge potential with the following habits observed (see table below), see ‘Site Description’ section below for more detail. This plan shall serve to enhance and develop existing and potentially new habitats, through completion of Action Plan section below.

Habitat
Area of Recently Cut Woodland, GS5
Old Stone Wall, BL1 & Grassy Verge, GS2
Treeline, WL2
Amenity Grassland (Improved), GA2

Table 1: Habitats found in the Peoples Park

Challenges

This Challenges section shall detail the issues experienced at the Peoples Park site as listed in (h) to (j) below.

Dog Droppings

There is an issue with dog droppings in the park. Dog droppings are unsightly, unhygienic and a nuisance to walkers, especially walkers with young children. It is an issue that shall be addressed through signage (see figure 13 below) and assessment of glove dispenser and bin to be installed and serviced.



Figure 13: Recently mounted Dog Fouling

Antisocial Behaviour

There was previously an issue with antisocial behaviour in the park in the evenings. Some areas of the park provided dense vegetation where dens were created. To prevent this from happening again new shrub growth can be kept trimmed when it grows above a certain height (See Area 1 below).



Figure 14: Regenerating woodland area needs to be managed carefully

Ash Die Back Disease

Close to this area are mature ash, all of which are diseased with ash dieback caused by the invasive alien fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. The trees were assessed during the site visit and it is deemed that these mature trees will die within 2 or 3 years, therefore actions have been included in the biodiversity plan to protect the public from falling branches.



Figure 15: Ash trees infected with Ash Die Back fungus in People's Park.



The Evidence for our Plan

An assessment was conducted to establish what special areas of conservation, animals, insects, and plant species that have been recorded to date in the vicinity of Clarecastle online.

A hedgerow study and Quadrat study was also completed to determine species present in the Peoples Park. A Mammal and bird study was also completed to set a base line of level of Biodiversity that can be currently seen at the Peoples Park prior to any actions being completed. A Carbon storage study shall also be completed see (k) to (r) below.

Biodiversity Data Centre website search outcome:

A review of the local area in which the site is located was conducted to build information on the status of species in the area before developing actions.

The People’s Park is located in the 2km² area of R37M. Using tools from the national biodiversity data centre website, a report was generated of species which have been recorded for this 2km² area.

Within this 2km² area, the following types of protected sites are present see table 2 below:

Site Code	Definition	Area Name
002165	Special Area of Conservation (SAC) These are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level.	Lower River Basin Special Area of Conservation
002048	Natural Heritage Area (NHA) this is an area considered important for the habitats present or which holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection.	Fergus Estuary and Inner Shannon, North Shore NHA
004077	Special Protected Area (SPA) – SPAs are required under the terms of the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the protection of bird species.	River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA
TBD	Special Area of Conservation (SAC) These are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level.	Edenvale / Rocky road area

Table 2: Protected sites in R37M

However, none of these protected areas form part of the People’s Park.

From the list of species recorded in the 2km² area, the focus was placed on species of conservation interest which could be positively impacted by measures implemented within this site. Looking firstly at significant recorded insects and then birds and mammals. The food and suitable habitats for these species were outlined so they could be considered for incorporation into the action plans for the site.

**Insects:**

Four significant species of insect were noted from the records as listed in table 3 below:

Species Group	Species Name	Food Plant	Habitat Required
Insects	Marsh Fritillary (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>)	Catterpillars: Devil's-bit-Scabious (<i>Succisa pratensis</i>) Adults: <i>Ranunculus</i> spp., <i>Cirsium</i> spp., <i>Leucantherum vulgare</i> , <i>Myosotis</i> spp., <i>Rubus</i> spp., Meadow Thistle (<i>Cirsium dissectum</i>), Tormentil (<i>Potentilla erecta</i>)	Wet grasslands, Coastal dunes, machair and cutover bog
	Small Heath (<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>)	Caterpillars: Fine grasses, especially fescues (<i>Festuca</i> spp.), meadow-grasses (<i>Poa</i> spp.), and bents (<i>Agrostis</i> spp.). Adults: nectar sources include Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>), Buttercups (<i>Ranunculus</i> spp.), Devil's-bit Scabious (<i>Succisa pratensis</i>), Fleabane (<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>), Greater Stitchwort (<i>Stellaria holostea</i>), Kidney Vetch (<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>), Ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>), Tormentil (<i>Potentilla erecta</i>) and Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>).	Unimproved dry grassland, coastal grey dunes and machair. Adults favour areas of grassland with low sward height and abundant flowers and isolated scrub.
	Wood White (<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>)	Meadow vetchling, vetches, birds foot trefoil	Vegetated Area
	Large Red Tailed Bumble Bee (<i>Bombus (Melanobombus) lapidarius</i>)	Thistles, Bird's-foot trefoil, Buddleia olylectic - <i>Trifolium</i> , <i>Ballota</i> , <i>Lamium</i> , <i>Cirsium</i> , <i>Campanula</i> , <i>Salvia</i> , <i>Centaurea</i> , <i>Vicia</i> , <i>Carduus</i> , <i>Laburnum</i> , <i>Castanea</i> , <i>Acer</i> , <i>Prunus</i>	Stones, burrows, stone walls in a range of habitats, including parks and gardens.

Table 3: Insects



Birds

Several bird species listed for this 2km area were aquatic species from estuarine waters. The site location of this plan cannot incorporate measures for these bird species and so the focus will be on the remaining birds.

Species Group	Species Name	Food	Habitat Required
Birds	Barn Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)	Insects	Buildings, Nest boxes
	Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	Small mammals, small birds, amphibians, insects	Trees, ledges of buildings, old nests
	Common Linnet (<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>)	Seeds, including dandelion seeds	Scrub, wasteland, heath
	Common Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	Spiders, crane flies, moths, mayflies, dragonflies, damsel flies, grasshoppers, earwigs, lacewings, caddisflies, flies, beetles, sawflies, bees, wasps and ants.	Cavities in trees, buildings
	House Martin (<i>Delichon urbicum</i>)	Insects	Buildings, Use nest boxes
	House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	Seeds, flowers, and weeds	Trees, Buildings
	Sand Martin (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)	Insects	Buildings, Use nest boxes

Table 4: Birds

From this list of bird species (see table 4), most rely on insects for some if not all of their dietary requirements with seeds. In general, once there is a good biodiversity of *flora* species present in a habitat, it supports a wide variety of insect species and thus a healthy food supply for many bird species.

However, the house sparrow and linnets include more plant species in their diets. Dandelion species should also be included in the biodiversity plan.

Mammals

Species Group	Species Name	Food	Habitat
Mammals	Brown Long-eared Bat (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>)	Insects	Open deciduous woodland, parklands, Use bat boxes
	Lesser Horseshoe Bat (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>)	Insects	Old buildings, attics, stone walls, holes in trees
	Soprano Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)	Insects	Woodland, Parkland, gardens, Use bat boxes

Table 5: Mammals

From this list (see table 5), most of these species rely on insects for their dietary requirements. Once there is a good biodiversity of *flora* species present in a habitat, it should support a wide variety of insect species and thus food supply for bat species.

Recommendations:

Based on the review of the insect, bird and mammal groups for the area, the following plant species could be incorporated into the plan to support these species (see table 6 below):

Table 6: Plant species to be considered.

Summary of Relevant Plant Species	Summary of Relevant Habitats
Devil's-bit-Scabious (<i>Succisa pratensis</i>)	Scrubland/Wasteland
Birds-foot Trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>)	Grasslands
Tormentil (<i>Potentilla erecta</i>)	Parkland
Buttercup species (<i>Ranunculus spp..</i>)	Woodlands/Trees
Meadow Thistles (<i>Cirsium dissectum</i>)	Buildings
Vetches (<i>Vicia spp..</i>)	Stone wall/Stones
Dandelion	



Figure 16: Plant Species to be encouraged at Peoples Park.



Peoples Park Hedgerow Survey

The following species were found in the hedgerow at the Peoples Park, see table 7 below

Table 7: Hedgerow survey

No:	Species:	Native / Non-Native:
1	Hawthorn	Native
2	Hazel	Native
3	Elder	Native
4	Ash	Native
5	Dog Rose	Native
6	Willow	Native
7	Bramble	Native
8	Blackthorn	Native
9	Ivy	Native
10	Dog wood	Non Native
11	Clematis	Non Native
12	Spindle wood	Native

As per Site visit report see attachment 1 for details, ‘Dogwood has been planted along the front of the hedge and elsewhere. This non-native has started to encroach the grassy areas and, over time, it will become increasingly difficult to control.’ An assessment shall be conducted by team and an action shall be detailed in plan below to address the management of Dogwood and the hedgerow area in general.

Quadrat Survey

The following 3 locations were subjected to a Quadrat survey, see list of species found in each as detailed in table 8 below. A 1 square meter quadrat made from strips of timber was taken and laid on the ground in a grassy area at 3 locations . All species of plants within the quadrat were identified This shall be repeated on an annual basis to measure how the community of species in the quadrat changes overtime. The objective is to increase the number and diversity of native flowers which grow in grassy areas.

**Table 8: Quadrat Survey data:**

Quadrat Location:	Species:	Negative / positive indicator:
1. Gravel Area designated outdoor sport equipment location	Yellow clover	+
	Dandelion	+
	Red clover	+
	Scarlet Pimpernel	N/A
	Cut leaved geranium	N/A
	Meadow buttercup	N/A
	Ox-Eye daisy	+
	Ladies Smock	+
	Germander Speedwell	N/A
	Common Sorrell	+
	Common figwort	N/A
	Birds Foot Trefoil	+
	Bush vetch	+
	Common Vetch	+
	Colt's foot	-
	Ragwort	-
Spear Thistle	-	
Ribwort plantain	+	
2. Regenerating woodland area	Silver weed	N/A
	Spear Thistle	-
	Nettle	-
	Tutsan	N/A
	Sorrell	+
	Ivy	N/A
	Willow sapling	N/A
	Hawthorn sapling	N/A
	Dock	-
	Ragwort	-
	yarrow	+
	Pignut	+
	Sycamore sapling	N/A
	Common Knapweed	+
Yellow Iris (yellow Flags)	N/A	
3. Grassland area (nearest hedgerow)	Ox-eye daisy	+
	Tufted vetch	+
	Daisy	N/A
	Buttercup	N/A
	Common Knapweed	+
	Sorrell	+
	Red clover	+
	White Clover	+
	Silverweed	N/A
	Rushes	+
Self-heal	+	



Figure 17: Plant species observed at Gravel area at peoples Park

Negative & Positive Indicator Species at the Peoples Park

The negative and positive indicators species as taken from the 'Reap, Plant Identification Key, For the Results-based Environment-Agri Pilot Programme' have been assessed as per table 9 below.

**Table 9: Negative & Positive Indicator presence in peoples Park**

Positive Indicator Species:	Present yes / no:	Negative Indicator Species:	Present Yes / No:
Marsh cinquefoil	No	Ragwort	Yes
Sorrels	yes	Thistles	Yes
Kidney vetch	No	Docks	Yes
Birds Foot Trefoil	yes	Nettles	Yes
Vetches & vetchlings	Yes	Perennial rye grass	TBD
Marsh marigold	No	Bracken	Yes
Cowslip & primrose	yes	Invasive Species:	None present
Ox-eye daisy	yes		
Tormentils	No		
Yellow composites	Yes		
Yellow rattle	No		
Meadow sweet	Yes		
Eyebrights	yes		
Large umbels	No		
Small umbels	Yes		
Bedstraws & Stitchwort's	No		
Marsh pennywort	No		
Carline Thistle	No		
Lady's mantles	No		
Sedges	No		
Wood rushes Spike rushes	yes		
Lady's Smock	Yes		
Wild thyme	No		
Louseworts	No		
Ragged robin	No		
Meadow Thistle & Marsh Thistle	No		
Common Knapweed	Yes		
Greater Knapweed	No		
Scabious	No		
Selfheal	Yes		
Bugle	No		
Orchids	No		
Mints	No		
Violets	No		
Harebell	No		
Forget-me-nots	No		



Birds seen at the Peoples Park

The following birds have been observed at the Peoples park in 2021 January to September 2021:

Table 10: Birds at Peoples park

No:	Bird Species:
1	Jackdaw
2	Rook
3	Starling
4	Blackbird
5	Robin
6	wren
7	Dunnock
8	Wood pigeon
9	Goldfinch
10	Pied Wagtail
11	Magpie
12	Blue Tit
13	Thrush
14	Redwing

Mammals seen at the Peoples Park

The following mammals have been observed at the Peoples park from January to September 2021

Table 11: Mammals at Peoples Park

No:	Mammal Species:
1	Pipistrelle bat
2	Rat
3	Rabbit
4	Fox

A Carbon storage in Tree study

This study is yet to be conducted but shall be completed prior to end of October 2021. We will review how much carbon is being stored and how much we are reducing carbon emissions in the People’s Park by reviewing our carbon checklist each year. This is shown in Appendix 2.

Site Description

Based on fieldwork, a habitat map was drawn up and shown in figure x. Using Fossitt's 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland', 2000, most of the park can be categorised as **'Amenity Grassland (Improved) GA2'**



Colour Code	Habitat
Red	Area of Recently Cut Woodland, GS5
Purple	Old Stone Wall, BL1 & Grassy Verge, GS2
Yellow	Treeline, WL2
All Other Areas	Amenity Grassland (Improved), GA2

Table 12: Habitat colour code key

Figure 18: Habitat map of Peoples Park

The second largest area in the park can be categorised as **'Recently Felled Woodland WS5'**. This area was cut in late 2019

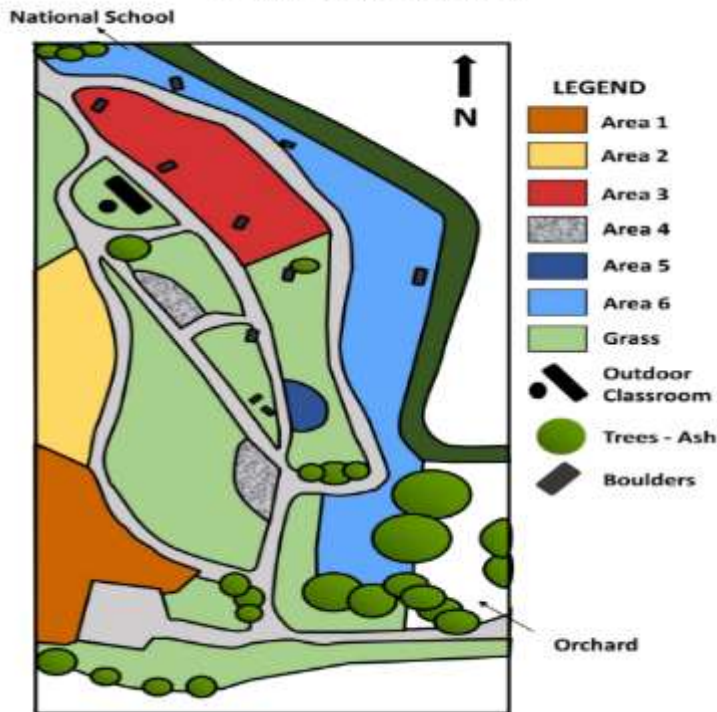
A **stone and mortar wall** runs through a number of areas in the park (**BL1**). Between the walls and the mown grass areas is an unmown 50cm wide strip on both sides. While this strip generally wouldn't be regarded as large enough to be a separate habitat, it is important in the context of this park, which is why it is included. It can be classified as **GS2-Dry meadows or grassy verges**.



Figure 19. (Left) Grassy verge GS2 (Right) Recently cut woodland (WS5) showing some trees left standing and natural regrowth. Signs of large mammals were recorded along the fence and the brambles.

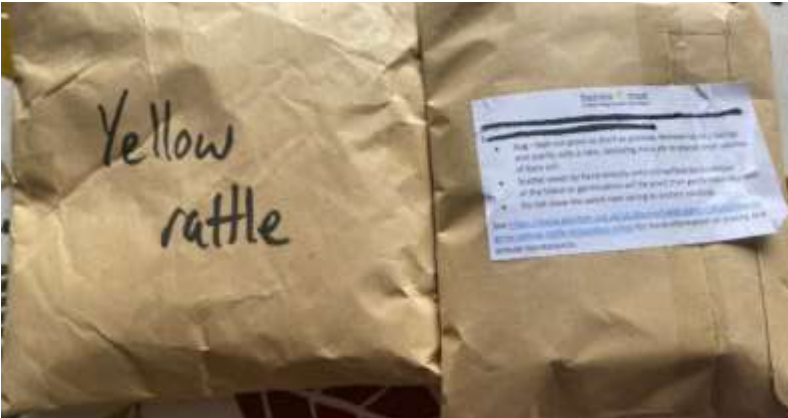
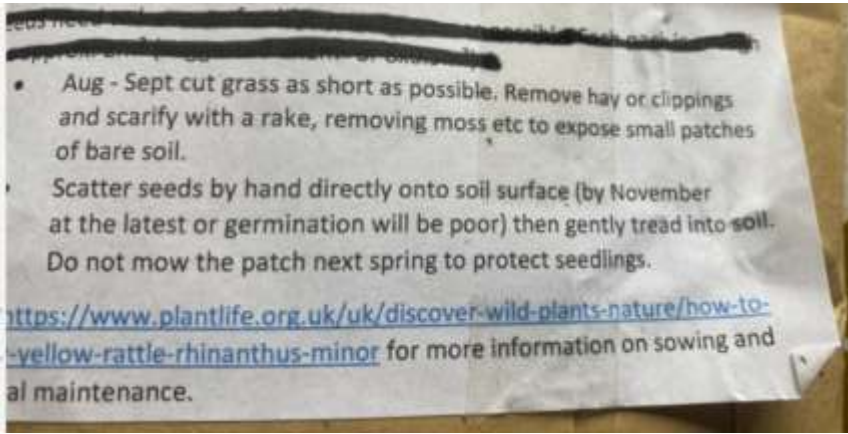
A linear strip of trees and shrubs borders the park to the east. It extends about 3m across and 4m in height. As it is dominated by trees (as opposed to shrubs) it is categorised as a **treeline (WL2)**.

PEOPLES PARK, CLARECASTLE



Priorities and Themes

- Protecting a habitat & protecting a species - Solitary bees and their nests in mounds alongside outdoor classroom area
- Creating a habitat – Manage re-generating woodland to create an attractive wildflower meadow area
- Citizen science and recording the species at our site - A baseline of species has been recorded as per this plan, further field studies and survey work shall indicate the success of our actions as detailed in the Action Plan section of this document.
- Education, working with schools and the community. Helping the community to build their confidence in plant identification skills – use the REAP book. A mini-Bio-blitz was conducted in the Peoples park earlier this year, a repeat of this actions shall be done annually to monitor and provide educational resource to local Clarecastle National School.
- Pollinator friendly planting schemes – a pollinator friendly bed and seating area to be considered as detailed below.
- Composting & Green waste – to be assessed as there shall be green waste generated during the management of grassland, hedgerow, and regenerating woodland area
- Seed saving and propagating native species – wildflower/trees – this shall be assessed for the introduction of Yellow rattle kindly donated by Burren Beo, for the control of wild grasses and introduction of Scabious
- Grassy area management – a set of instructions shall be generated for the management of areas as identified in the habitat map.
- Biosecurity to prevent the dispersal of invasive species – a set of procedures shall be generated for the prevention of introduction of invasive species.



Yellow rattle seeds for Peoples Park kindly donated by BurrenBeo

1.1 Vegetation Clearance

Bramble clearance and other vegetation clearance is best done in the winter months (Oct to Jan) to prevent disturbance during the spring and summer when wildlife will be nesting. Brambles are best cleared by hand, with a pair of secateurs. If they are strimmed, the stems tend to grow back vigorously and viciously prickly. In winter months, brambles can also be pulled or dug out by hand quite easily.

Grass Management

- Cut grass every 4-5 weeks between late April and late September.
- Remove the cut clippings and compost them appropriately. This will help to lower the nutrient levels in the soil which shall encourage more wild-flower growth, particularly positive indicator species as per REAP Guide

Grassy Slope Areas

- Retain the trees where possible. We noticed some nice willow which won't grow tall and provide a home to over 600 insect and lichen species.
- Strim the entire slope quite regularly this year (every 2-3 weeks). Please don't strim when docks and thistles are in flower because the seed could become widely dispersed. Always keep the cutting height at 10 cm or more.
- It is best to cut off the flowering heads of docks and thistles by hand before they set seed and rot in a barrel of water. When well-rotted, the liquid can be added to a compost heap. Follow these simple actions and the negative indicator species will begin to disappear.
- After strimming, immediately remove the cut clippings and compost them appropriately. This will help to lower the high nutrient levels in the soil which encourage the negative indicators and discourage the positive



indicators.

- Review the cutting regime in spring 2022. As the negative species lose their vigour, you can start to trim less often, perhaps once every 4-5 weeks between late April and late September.

Native Hedge Management

A hedge needs to be maintained, otherwise it will turn into a tree line. Hedges are trimmed to keep them under control, to thicken them. Constant trimming at the same height places a hedge under stress and can damage it but sympathetic trimming can thicken a hedge by creating new points from which growth can fill out. In the recent past hedges were managed by laying or coppicing.

Key points:

- Please adhere to the ban on hedge cutting between February and October to allow birds to nest safely. (Section 46 Wildlife Act 2000).
- The key to hedgerow management is learning to read your particular hedge. See <https://hedgelink.org.uk/hedgerows/hedgerow-management-advice> for excellent guidance. “Incremental height increase is the key to the hedge management cycle, sympathetically allowing a hedgerow to progress slowly through its natural growth cycle without putting it under damaging stress. It also promotes a dense healthy hedgerow and extends the period between rejuvenation. Using this approach, a hedgerow may take many tens of years to complete a full cycle of growth, and at all times during this remain dense, healthy and functional. **For example, by increasing the cutting height by 10cm every three years, it will take over 30 years for the hedgerow to gain only a metre in height”.**

Green Waste

Disposal of green waste shall be considered, and an assessment shall be carried out regarding the possibility of composting and creating dead hedges. The green waste facility in Inagh has been used to dispose of green waste since site visit, to address grass clippings left on the ground which is visually unattractive was deemed to encourage undesirable species. A set of procedures shall be generated as an action from this plan for the management of grassland areas and that all cut grass areas must be raked after cutting to remove the clippings or a mower shall be used with a collecting box.

Invasive Species

The site is completely clear of invasive species which is beneficial. A set of procedures shall be generated to ensure that contractors and volunteers properly clean their equipment before coming onto the site. This shall ensure that fragments of Japanese knotweed, winter heliotrope and other invasives are not introduced to the Peoples Park.

Dogwood management throughout the park shall be addressed through a set of procedures which shall be generated as a result of this plan.

Note January 2022 - CC Tidy Towns funded a Project using Landscaping Contractor to address and remove encroaching Dogwood from the St Michael’s Side & the GAA Side

Monitoring our actions and Citizen Science

Using simple scientific methods to measure how the plans actions are benefitting (or harming) biodiversity. This shall be conducted as per guidelines advised in webinar on biodiversity and citizen science at the link: <https://www.ouririshheritage.org/content/resources/ican-members-section/ican-biodiversity-talks-may-2021/biodiversity-for-citizen-scientists>.

Pollinator friendly planting bed, incorporating seating

A potential site was selected for a pollinator friendly planting bed which could be designed to incorporate seating and thereby include people who have mobility issues. An area 15 m long tapering from 3 m wide down to 0.5 m wide was selected. It was suggested during the site visit that a raised bed be created, 45cm in height (seating height) and import good quality, screened topsoil to fill the bed. Concrete or timber can be used to construct the bed and it was advised that getting professional advice on the construction would be essential, as it will be a permanent feature. Some images are included below for guidance – Note: ignore planting schemes depicted as these are not pollinator friendly.

A pollinator friendly planting scheme can be designed for the bed. Planting shall involve the selection of perennial, pollinating flowers: two flowering in springtime, three flowering over the summer and two flowering in autumn. These will be repeat planted through the bed with perhaps some ornamental grasses for year-round structure. It is essential that the bed is totally weed free before it is planted, this will make future maintenance much easier.



Figure 20: Left picture shows location of pollinator friendly bed, the right-hand pictures are samples of raised beds which incorporate seating.

Action Plans

Table 13: Action Plan for Peoples Park Clarecastle

Year	2021	2022		2023	
Months	Jul-Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
Theme: Grassy area management					
Strim the entire slope quite regularly this year (every 2-3 weeks). <u>Please don't strim when docks and thistles are in flower because the seed could become widely dispersed.</u> Maintain an average vegetation height of 10 to 25 cm .	Complete for 2021	Feb Strim <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
It is best to cut off the flowering heads of docks and thistles by hand before they set seed. Rot these in a barrel of water. When well-rotted, the liquid can be added to a compost heap. Follow these simple actions and the negative indicator species will begin to	Complete for 2021				



disappear					
After strimming, immediately remove the cut clippings and compost them appropriately. This will help to lower the high nutrient levels in the soil which encourage the positive indicators and discourage the negative indicators.	Complete for 2021	End of Feb 2022 cut & removed ✓			
Manage the grassy slope and other grassy areas as suggested in appendix 1 site visit document	Complete for 2021				
Protect the solitary bee nests in the grassy bank beside the outdoor classroom (taken from existing biodiversity plan).	Complete for 2021				
Dog fouling management to be assessed	Signage gone in & monitoring ongoing	April 2022 Contacted CCC re Signage			
Bulb planting underneath the Birch Trees, nearest school entrance	Complete for 2021				
Tree Management					
Retain the trees where possible. Willow saplings were observed growing (regenerating woodland area) which won't grow tall and provide a home to over 600 insect and lichen species. Allow naturally regenerating trees to grow unless they are in a very difficult position.	Complete for 2021				
Protect all the native trees on the site by using guards if necessary, to prevent ringbarking from strimming too close to their trunks and from anti-social behaviour.	Ongoing	Guards installed on all trees in the Orchard			
Continue to consider where to plant the specimen tree. It will require plenty of space. Don't plant it near the orchard (to replace the dying ash trees) as it will create too much shade.	Ongoing	Tree Audit will address			
Monitor the dying ash trees to ensure they do not become a public health hazard.	Ongoing	Tree Audit will address			
Manage the hedgerow, regenerating woodland and grassland areas as suggested in appendix 1 site visit document	Complete for 2021	Dogwood removed Jan 2022			
Ensure correct tree staking is adhered to in the Orchard area	Complete for 2021	New Guards			



		installed feb 2022			
Ensure Ivy is managed appropriately as per appendix 1 site visit document	Complete for 2021				
Seed saving and propagating native species – wildflower/trees					
Devil's bit scabious	On going				
Burren Beo donated yellow rattle which is best sown fresh in grassy areas	Planted in Sept 2021				
Theme: Pollinator friendly planting schemes					
Include a pollinator friendly planting scheme in the park and restrict all non-native planting to this bed.	On going				
Pollinator friendly planting bed, incorporating seating	On going				
Planting species from table 6 above, based on review of recorded fauna in the area.	On going				
Composting					
To be assessed with group and Community Garden team	Not desirable at this time				
Monitoring & Awareness Training					
Develop some citizen science initiatives to monitor changes to biodiversity over time. Conduct quadrat studies with Clarecastle National school children on an annual basis.	Complete for 2021, see study above and School mini Bio-blitz has been conducted in May 2021				
Develop educational initiatives and signage. Consider the creation of an ecological corridor which can be planned by children. Mini Bioblitz to be conducted on an annual basis. Pollinator signage to be mounted	On going				
Introduce biosecurity measures to keep the park invasive species-free by insisting that all equipment is thoroughly cleaned and checked before being brought into the site.	Procedures in progress				
Raise awareness about invasive species and how they are one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss through talks and signage	Procedures in progress				



[Type here]



A procedure shall be generated for the management of grassland, hedgerow, and woodland regeneration areas. This procedure shall also capture the prevention of invasive species being introduced to the Peoples Park area.	Procedures in progress				
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References:

- Plant identification Key REAP handbook
- National Biodiversity data centre website
- Biodiversity Plan for the Peoples park, Clarecastle, Mary Dillon



[Type here]



Appendices

Appendix 1:

CLDC 'Training to develop a biodiversity enhancement plan for outdoor recreational space in your community, running May to October 2021' site visit Linda Gilsenan & Fran Giaquinto 04th June 2021

Appendix 2: Our carbon checklist.

We will review this each year to demonstrate how our biodiversity actions are helping the People's Park to store carbon and reduce carbon emissions.



[Type here]



How we are reducing carbon dioxide and methane emissions from our site	We are doing this now	We plan to do this (say when)	This is not an action we plan to take
Green waste			
We are composting our green waste, especially grass clippings			No not at this time
We have arranged for our green waste to be disposed of at a waste facility (e.g., Inagh)	Yes		
We are using animals to graze our grassy areas rather than cut and lift			No, not a suitable site
We are encouraging other members of our community to compost their green waste at home	Yes		
We are raising awareness about green waste and how it contributes to climate change in our community	Yes		
We have stopped cutting our grassy areas or reduced the number of times we cut	Yes		
Herbicide use			
We have stopped herbicide use at our recreational site	Yes		
We are encouraging other members of our community to stop herbicide use	Yes		
We are raising awareness in our community about the dangers of herbicide use and how it harms and the soil and plant communities and leads to carbon release which contributes to climate change	Yes		
Machinery			
We are reducing the amount of machinery use at our recreational site	Yes		
We are raising awareness in our community about excessive use of machinery and how it contributes to climate change because it requires oil/petrol/diesel	Yes		
How we are helping our recreational area to store more carbon			
Trees			



[Type here]



We are protecting the native trees we have at our site by the following actions:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are putting guards around trees to they cannot be harmed by strimmers and mowers 	Yes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are teaching contractors/volunteers not to strim near trees. If the bark is damaged the trees will die. 	Yes & set of procedures are being generated for this		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are regularly observing our native trees to check they look healthy 	Yes		
We have adopted a policy to only plant native trees and to buy from nurseries that can guarantee the trees have been grown from Irish seed in Ireland.	Yes		
We are teaching other members in the community that native trees support biodiversity while non-native trees are unlikely to.	Yes		
We have adopted a policy not to buy trees imported from other countries because of the risk of introducing serious tree diseases.	Yes. Policy shall be attached to our overall Biodiversity plan		
We are measuring the amount of carbon our trees store using the method given to us in the training.	Planned for 2022		
We are collecting local tree seed and propagating them so we have our own stock of locally grown trees for the community to use and enjoy.	Planned for 2022		
Hedgerows			
We are maintaining our hedgerows to provide food, shelter, and ecological corridors for wildlife.	Yes		
We are planting new hedgerows with a mixture of native species.	To be reviewed in 2022		
We are encouraging other members in our community to plant native hedgerows and not use ornamental species such as laurel which have no biodiversity value.	Yes		
We are teaching our local community about the importance and value of good healthy hedgerows for wildlife	Yes		



[Type here]



Grassy areas			
We are seeking advice on how to best manage our grassy areas for biodiversity	Yes		
We are using quadrats to monitor the biodiversity in our grassy areas with aim of increasing the number of species year on year	Yes, see above results for 2021		
We are using quadrats to work out the cutting regime for our grassy areas	Yes		
When we cut our grassy areas, we remove the grass clippings to prevent nutrient build up and to encourage wild flowers	Yes in the Peoples Park		
We are managing our grassy areas to increase the diversity of grass and wild flower species. Species rich grassy areas store more carbon than species poor areas	Yes		
We are cutting our grassy areas less frequently to allow the wild flowers to establish	Yes		
We are protecting grassy areas which have orchids as the soil beneath these stores lots of carbon because of the soil fungi associated with orchids.	No Orchids in the Peoples Park to date		
Old stone walls and stone structures			
We are encouraging members of our community to protect old stone walls and structures because they provide homes for many insects and other invertebrates, bats, and birds	Yes		
We are adopting a policy not to spray herbicide near old stone walls and structures, and old gravestones	Yes		
We are adopting a policy not to power wash old stone walls and structures and old gravestones as this destroys the many lichens, mosses, ferns and specialist wild flowers which grow on them	Yes, Policy shall be attached to overall Clarecastle Biodiversity plan.		
Protect and maintain healthy soil			



[Type here]



Soil is one of the biggest stores of carbon on the planet. We are adopting a policy to protect our soils in our recreational area by not using herbicide, not using artificial fertilisers, and not leaving litter.	Yes		
We are encouraging members of our community to protect the soil they have in their gardens and to understand it is a very precious resource on which humans depend	Yes		
Education			
We plan to encourage and teach members of our community, including children, about how to store carbon in our communities based on three simple principles:	Yes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living things store carbon, dead things release it 	yes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High species diversity stores much more carbon than low species diversity 	Yes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always favour native species. Native species are always associated with their own communities of organisms which increase species diversity. Non-native species rarely have communities of organisms associated with them. 	yes		