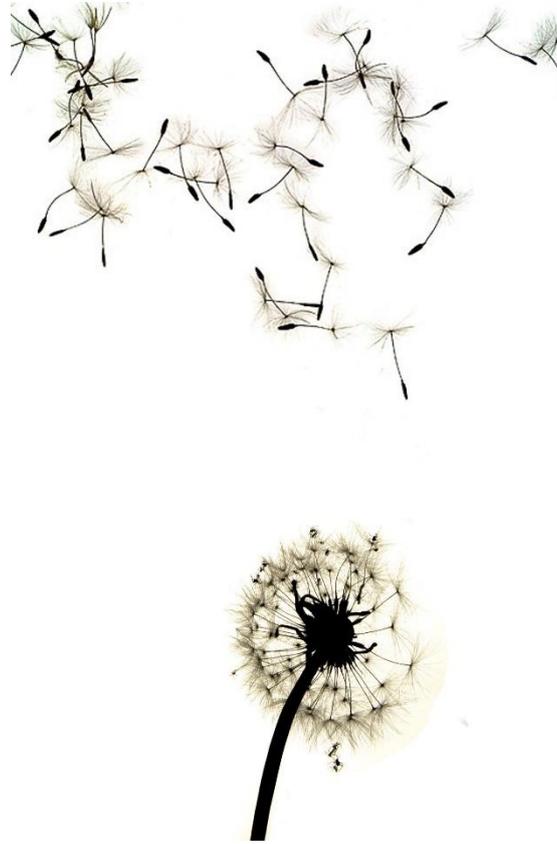


UCC Civic and Community Engagement & SECAD Partnership



A Preliminary Report on a Community and University Biodiversity Action Project



Civic and Community Engagement
Comhpháirteachas Cathartha agus Pobail



Cork
County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

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Acknowledgements

The initiative is a partnership of University College Cork, SECAD and the communities of Carrigtwohill and Passage West.

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Introduction

Globally, biodiversity (biological diversity) is declining and despite increased awareness and efforts to halt its loss, biodiversity remains threatened by human activities. Major causes of global biodiversity loss include overexploitation of natural resources, urbanisation and intensive agricultural use. Loss of biodiversity has led to universal acceptance of the need to coordinate action for biodiversity on a global scale. Recently Ireland has declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and the European Union has announced a Green New Deal (2019), an ambitious goal to become the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

This report presents an overview of a *Community and University Biodiversity Action* (CUBA) project that was launched during *UCC's inaugural Community Week in October 2019*. The CUBA project is a partnership of University College Cork, SECAD Partnership and the Cork communities of Carrigtwohill and Passage West. In time, additional communities across the region will become involved. The initiative represents a pioneering effort to bring community and university expertise together to address Ireland's biodiversity crisis. Local community expertise will work together with academia in a collaborative manner to build capacity within community and university to help biodiversity.



About the Partners

SECAD Partnership

SECAD is a local partnership company whose remit is to provide a range of rural development and social inclusion supports to communities. SECAD operates across a number of regional territories and also on a national basis. Primarily, the organisation works within the county (administrative area) of Cork in the area east and west of Cork Harbour.

Its vision is to be a leading European community development organisation delivering exceptional service and promoting innovative collaborations to address issues of disadvantage and sustainability with public, private, academic and community partners. Through its Wild Work initiative SECAD is harnessing its community development experience and expertise to enable local communities to have a real impact on environmental issues through increasing people's awareness, respect and understanding of biodiversity and empowering and enabling them to act.

University College Cork

UCC's Civic and Community Engagement initiative is a university wide effort to advance the university's public engagement through outreach, partnerships, volunteering, community based research and community based learning. UCC's Green Campus initiative is a student-led,



research-informed and practice-focused initiative to promote sustainability in UCC and beyond. In 2018, UCC became the first university in Europe to be awarded a Gold Star from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

UCC's Environmental Research Institute (ERI) and School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences (BEES) are international leaders in natural

world research, teaching and innovation.

Local and National Policy Context

In 2017 Ireland launched an ambitious National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021. The plan sets Ireland's vision for Biodiversity:

“That biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally.”

The plan specifies 7 national policy objectives in support of this vision:

1. Mainstream biodiversity into decision-making across all sectors
2. Strengthen the knowledge base for conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity
3. Increase awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystem services
4. Conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside
5. Conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine environment
6. Expand and improve management of protected areas and species
7. Strengthen international governance for biodiversity and ecosystem services



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Department of Culture,
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About Carrigtwohill and Passage West

Carrigtwohill is located c. 15 km east of Cork City centre off the N25. Though some people would think of Carrigtwohill as a village, it has the highest percentage of growth of any town in Cork County in recent years, with a very young profile in the population. The 2014 Cork County Development Plan envisages significant further growth for Carrigtwohill, both in a residential sense and also in a business sense in terms of industrial development and technology manufacturing.



Passage West is a residential area c.14km south of Cork City centre located on the western shores of Cork Harbour. Passage is an important residential alternative to Cork City and its



environs, particularly Douglas. Recent housing development has typically been in the form of large housing estate developments. Passage West has historically been of importance as an industrial, shipbuilding and railway terminus, but this has gone into decline over the years.

The landscape of both communities is designated a scenic landscape and provides an excellent opportunity to develop a vibrant place to live. Both Communities are located within Cork Harbour, much of which is recognised as internationally important for biodiversity; particularly bird species. In addition to marine and freshwater habitats, a broad range of interesting wildlife can be found in terrestrial habitat types occurring in each community such as hedgerows, semi-natural woodlands and calcareous grasslands.



Passage West and Carrigtwohill Biodiversity Action Plans

SECAD Partnership is one of the named representative organisations in *Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021*. In 2017/ 2018 SECAD and Cork County Council facilitated the development of Town and Village Renewal Plans in Carrigtwohill and Passage West. As part of the planning process, SECAD established local biodiversity working groups and assisted each community to develop biodiversity themed actions for the renewal plan. Bespoke five-year biodiversity action plans were produced in addition to the main renewal plans for each community. A range of actions were developed across the thematic areas outlined below. Each plan identifies partnership with academia as a key action, reflecting the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

Passage West and Carrigtwohill Thematic Areas

1. Habitat mapping
2. Wild Places – for play and recreation – for people and for biodiversity
3. Managing green spaces to benefit pollinators and biodiversity
4. A community garden and allotments
5. Education and research
6. Caring for wetlands
7. Monitoring, recording and knowledge sharing
8. Bees, Bats and birds
9. Otters
10. Preserving places with biodiversity features of interest
11. Preserve biodiversity habitats in hedgerows and old stone walls
12. Managing invasive species
13. Karst (limestone) features associated with Carrigtwohill

The plans can be accessed online at <http://www.wildwork.ie/project/biodiversity-action-plans/>

About the Community and University Biodiversity Action Project

UCC's Civic Engagement Plan commits the university to the development of exemplary community partnerships, advancing UCC's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals. In 2018 SECAD and UCC began exploring how a community and university partnership could be formed to support local communities engaging in biodiversity action. This would leverage UCC's institution wide support for community engagement and the universities commitment to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDGs 11, 13, 14, 15; drawing on expertise across the university, e.g. Green Campus, Environmental Research Institute, School of BEES, ISS21 etc.

The project takes a *Community Based Biodiversity Management* approach, where local community expertise works together with academia in a collaborative manner to build capacity within community and university to address biodiversity. The objective of the project is to enable local citizen action on biodiversity in a way that is participatory and empowers local communities to manage biodiversity for social, economic, and environmental benefits. This community-centred approach strengthens local decision making and recognises local communities as legitimate frontline actors in the biodiversity conservation and restoration effort.

The project advances UCC's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals. UCC staff and students with an interest in supporting citizen initiated biodiversity projects will engage on a range of actions with local biodiversity working groups in Carrigtwohill and Passage West established by SECAD. Civic engagement is not just about academia serving community, it is also about co-production and being open to the potential that exists in civic society to inform and collaborate on third level research and education.

Indeed, the challenge of the climate and biodiversity crisis requires a new approach to knowledge production that is transdisciplinary, and inclusive of community. New forms of integrative knowledge and community empowerment practices are called for, that leverage interconnected systems – economic, environmental, social, political, and technological – to effect change. Alongside practical action, the Community and University Biodiversity Action Project launched during UCC's Community week in 2019 presents an opportunity for such reflection and development. The project sets out a number of actions that closely contribute to the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021.

UCC Community Week 2019 - Community and University Biodiversity Action Project Launch.

During UCC's Community Week in October 2019 all of the partners, community and university, involved in the Community and University Biodiversity Action Project (CUBA) came together, with over 20 people in attendance.



The event forged a deep relationship between the local communities of Carrigwohill and Passage West, SECAD Partnership and UCC. Prior to this event a lunchtime workshop was held in the Spring of 2019 for UCC staff interested in getting involved in the project, and a number of individual follow-up meetings were organised. Each of the community groups were also individually consulted to generate potential project ideas and commitments.

Community and University Biodiversity Action Project Plan

During the UCC Community Week 2019 event a number of projects were identified. These are aligned with the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 to ensure that our local actions are contributing to the overall realisation of national policy objectives. The project involves a number of actions across:

- ❖ Community based research: Supporting and encouraging the communities to carry out biological recording and other citizen science projects.
- ❖ Training and knowledge development and awareness raising.
- ❖ Volunteer Mobilisation
- ❖ Grant identification
- ❖ Capturing learning from the initiative and dissemination

The emphasis in the CUBA project is on quality over quantity of outputs, and progression over a manageable timescale that is respectful of local resident's time. Implementation of projects will recognise the importance of community leadership and ownership of the overall initiative.

- ❖ The overall timeline for the project is in line with each communities Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2023.
- ❖ Each project has a project lead who will be responsible for collaborating with the communities to advance their individual project, sometimes in collaboration with others identified in UCC.
- ❖ Each community will take on 1 – 3 of the projects a year. In some cases the same project may be undertaken in both communities.
- ❖ William O'Halloran, supported by a project management group, will facilitate the process of monitoring progress and furthering the collaborations as required.
- ❖ A project review event will be held during UCC Community Week 2020. It will bring everyone together again to evaluate progress, share stories and celebrate successes.

Community and University Biodiversity Action Projects 2019-2023

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE 1

MAINSTREAM BIODIVERSITY INTO DECISION-MAKING ACROSS ALL SECTORS

Project 1.A: Establishment, Monitoring & Management of the Community-University Biodiversity Action (CUBA) Project

The CUBA project is a partnership of University College Cork, SECAD Partnership and the Cork communities of Carrigtwohill and Passage West. The project advances UCC's commitment to the United Nations SDG's 17: Partnership for the Goals, and SDG's 11, 13, 14 & 15. UCC staff and students with an interest in supporting citizen initiated biodiversity projects will be mobilised on a range of actions with local biodiversity working groups in Carrigtwohill and Passage West. In time, additional communities across the region will become involved.

Project Lead: William O'Halloran, Martin Galvin UCC Civic and Community Engagement, Maria Kirrane Green Campus, Paul Bolger ERI, Annalisa Seti ISS21.

Collaborators: Community representatives, ISS21, School of BEES and other partners.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE 2

STRENGTHEN THE KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY

Project 2.A: Community Tree Mapping

This citizen science project will involve both communities in mapping signature trees in their locality; raising the profile of the trees and developing a process for their conservation by each community. Little or no protection exists for trees in Ireland, especially stand-alone specimens and therefore this project will develop a replicable template for the identification and mapping of such trees, and their preservation. An ancillary aspect of this project is the development of supportive IT tools to assist with data monitoring.

Project Lead: Dr Eoin Lettice, UCC School of BEES and UCC Green Campus.

Collaborator: Dr Anna Kingston, Community Academic Research Links

Project 2.B: Intergenerational learning using nature, virtual reality cameras and oral history to improve community well-being.

This project will use virtual reality cameras to capture nature imagery towards improving people's well-being. Young people with an interest in technology will be asked to capture nature imagery using virtual reality (VR) cameras, to share their results with people who may not have access to nature, e.g. older people in the community and others with limited mobility. In turn older people will be asked to share with young people their stories of the past in terms of landscape and nature in the local community, incorporating a strong oral history element. An educational event (or events) in the community will be held, themed around nature topic such as birds, bees, bats, etc. Participants in the event(s) will learn about nature in their community and be made aware of the cognitive well-being benefits of nature.

Project Lead: Dr. Annalisa Setti, ISS21 and UCC Psychology Dept.

Collaborator: Cork Folklore Project.

Project 2.C: Oral History

Capture nature related local knowledge, stories and folklore in each community, particularly from elderly people.

Project Lead: Communities of Passage West and Carrigtwohill.

Collaborator: Dr Anna Kingston Community Academic Research Links, Cork Folklore Project.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE 3

INCREASE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS SERVICE

Project 3.A: Community Biodiversity Day.

The United Nations has declared May 22 as International Day for Biological Diversity to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. Ireland's National Biodiversity Week (organised by NPWS and the Irish Environmental Network) is held at that time. UCC will assist both communities to mark this day, for example providing speakers and assisting with other community based activities.

Project Lead: William O'Halloran and Ciara O'Halloran, UCC Civic and Community Engagement.

Collaborators: ERI, MAREI, Green Campus, ISS21 and others across the university.

Project 3.B: Wolves and the story of Ireland.

Wolves were once an integral part of the Irish landscape until they were exterminated in the late 1700's. Probable Wolf remains have been found in a cave in Carrigtwohill. Wolves are a useful engagement tool with audiences of all ages, as people are captivated by the sense that they once walked the land here in Ireland. An education programme themed around Irish wolves will be developed to grow a sense of excitement about natural history in Carrigtwohill (and Passage West) by teaching people about wolves and how their fate was inextricably linked with unprecedented mass destruction of wild Irish habitats in and around the 1600's.

Project lead: Dr. Kieran Hickey, UCC Geography Dept.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE 4

CONSERVE AND RESTORE BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

Project 4. A: Re-wilding for people and nature.

This project will involve identifying sites in the region that can be temporarily re-wilded; e.g. brownfield plots of land where wild natural habitats such as scrub and semi-natural grasslands can be encouraged in the period when the lands are idle. In instances where future development is to happen, pro-environment policies are needed to ensure that elements of wild habitats can be retained. There is potential for community conservation of such lands. Local debate on socio-environmental sustainability and economic development is needed. The project will map these sites and develop supportive policy proposals to Cork County Council.

Projects Lead: SECAD / Wildwork, Dr Breffni Lennon, Cleaner Production Promotion Unit, School of Engineering.

Collaborators: Centre for Planning Education & Research and UCC Geography Dept.

Project 4.B: Attitudes to meadow management

Attitudes from the general public towards long grassy meadows are quite negative, especially when meadows are in the later stages of their growing season, i.e. prior to cutting and when everything has gone to seed. This project will develop a public survey to assess attitudes and perceptions to wild meadows, and to also engage and educate people about meadow management in community settings.

Project lead: UCC School of BEEs. Collaborator: ISS21

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE 5

CONSERVE AND RESTORE BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Project 5.A: Cork Harbour Conservation and Restoration Community led Otter and / or Bat survey

From experiences of seeing otters in their community, Passage West residents have suggested conducting an Otter survey that can be carried out by local people. The project will also investigate the importance of places in the Passage environs for Otters. This could also be rolled out in Carrigtwohill.

Project Lead: School of BEES.

Collaborator: Dr Anna Kingston, Community Academic Research Links

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE 6

EXPAND AND IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS AND SPECIES

Project 6. A: Conservation Volunteers: Mobilise a volunteer base from UCC in support of the management of protected areas and species.

There is potential to initiate a UCC staff and student Conservation Volunteer programme. UCC is developing a staff volunteer day and this could be leveraged in support of the CUBA project. Developing opportunities for student volunteering for environmental causes was one of the actions called for in UCC's Report on Student Volunteering in 2018. At a minimum UCC staff and students will be invited to join the Biodiversity Action Working Groups in Carrigtwohill and Passage West, especially staff residing in either community.

Project Lead: Martin Galvin, Ciara O'Halloran, William O'Halloran, UCC Civic and Community Engagement.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE 7

STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Project 7. A: Resourcing the initiative

Identify and support applications for funding for community projects e.g.

Community Foundation for Ireland's Biodiversity grant round, LEADER, Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund and the Heritage Council etc.

Develop research grant applications for research initiatives in support of the initiative. e.g. IRC, Horizon Europe etc.

Project Leads: SECAD, William O'Halloran, Martin Galvin, Paul Bolger, Sonia Monteiro (ERI Research Grants Coordinator), Maria Kirrane, and others across the University.

Project 7. B: Capturing the Learning and Dissemination

The goal of this project is to identify and capture the learning from the CUBA initiative, and contribute to its replicability across other communities. In this regard a number of outputs are envisioned:

- Conduct a case study on the community based biodiversity management approach as a framework for engaging communities with university.
- Potentially recruit postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers to support research projects and overall learning.
- Develop policy briefs containing supportive policy recommendations for local and national government.
- Develop a paper and presentation for submission to practitioner and academic conferences.
- Conduct a project review meeting in October 2020 during UCC's Community Week.

Project lead: William O'Halloran, Martin Galvin UCC Civic and Community Engagement, Paul Bolger ERI, Maria Kirrane Green Campus.

People Involved

Local Community Volunteers

Biodiversity Action Plan Working Groups in the communities of Carrigtwohill and Passage West.

SECAD

Ryan Howard CEO

Suzanne Kearney Programme Manager/Assistant CEO

Karen Loxton SECAD/Wild Work

William O'Halloran SECAD/Wild Work

University College Cork

UCC Community Engagement Officer: Martin Galvin

UCC Sustainability Officer: Maria Kirrane

UCC Civic and Community Engagement: William O'Halloran

Environmental Research Institute: Paul Bolger (Manager), Sonia Monteiro (Research Grants Coordinator)

MAREI: Clare Watson and Elizabeth Creed

School of BEES: John Quinn, Simon Harrison, Fidelma Butler, Eoin Lettice, Philomena Fogarty, Maggie O'Sullivan

School of Applied Psychology: Annalisa Setti, Marica Cassarino.

School of Engineering: Aoife Hughes, Breffni Lennon.

Centre for Planning Education & Research: Karen Rae

Geography Dept. Kieran Hickey, Ray O'Connor

School of Applied Social Studies: Mícheál O h-Aodáin

Department of Food Business and Development and the Centre for Co-operative Studies: Carol Power, Bridget Carroll

Student Experience: Michelle Nelson (Student Services), Maura O'Neill (Student Well-being).

School of Education: Wesley O'Brien

UCC Library: Ann Byrne

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