

Community-led Conservation of Coastal Wetlands for Climate Adaptation in Maharees

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Maharees Conservation Association CLG

Voices and Vision for Ireland's Wetlands

Irish Ramsar Wetlands Committee

23rd June 2026

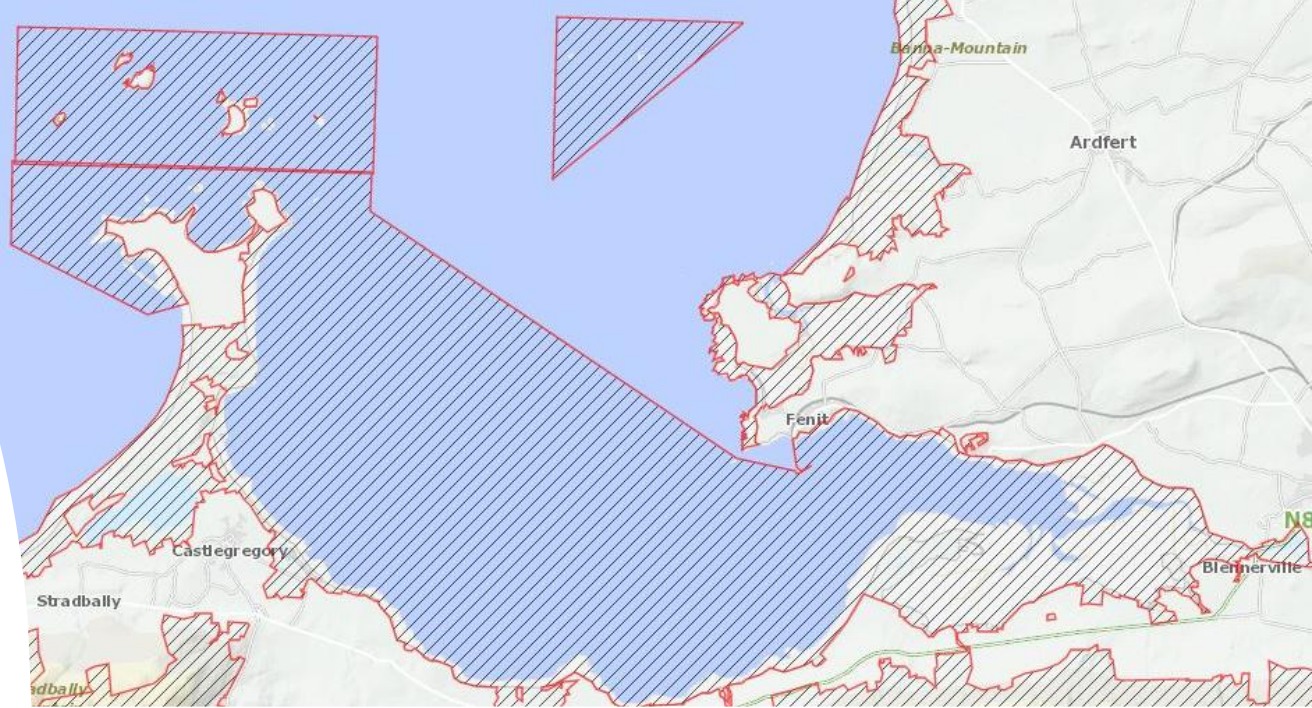


Maharees Conservation Association

Protecting | Enhancing | Preserving

THE CONTEXT – TOURIST DESTINATION

- On the 'Wild Atlantic Way', on the 'Dingle Way'
- The Longest Beach on the West Coast of Ireland
- On Irish Times 'Best Beach in Ireland' list
- Blue Flag Beach
- Surfing destination
- *In 2016: Wild Camping reputation*
- Commonage
- 368 year-round population
- Inhabited since Bronze age
- Habitat designations:
 - SACs
 - SPA





THE CONTEXT – HABITAT

The Maharees is a “tombolo” or finger-like spit that connects several offshore islands with the mainland – on the north of the Dingle Peninsula

- The Maharees, together with Tralee Bay to the east and Brandon Bay to the west, make up an extensive complex of coastal habitats and support a rich variety of wildlife. The peninsula is part of the ***‘Tralee Bay and Maharees Peninsula, West to Cloghane Special Area of Conservation (SAC)’*** and is designated as such under the EU Habitats Directive for a variety of habitats that it supports, such as **Tidal Mudflats, Atlantic Salt Meadows and Estuaries**. The SAC is over 11,000 hectares, stretching from Tralee town to Brandon Point, spanning over 25 km of coastline

Human Behaviour/ Lack of Awareness/ Lack of Facilities/ Lack of Coastal Management...was taking its toll on our sand dunes



Magherabeg Cut

- trampling/ parking/ camping/unregulated access
- use of ATVs/dune scrambling
- fires on dune and beach



Over the winter of 2015-16, the **only** road in and out of the Maharees peninsula was **impassable** on **17** occasions.

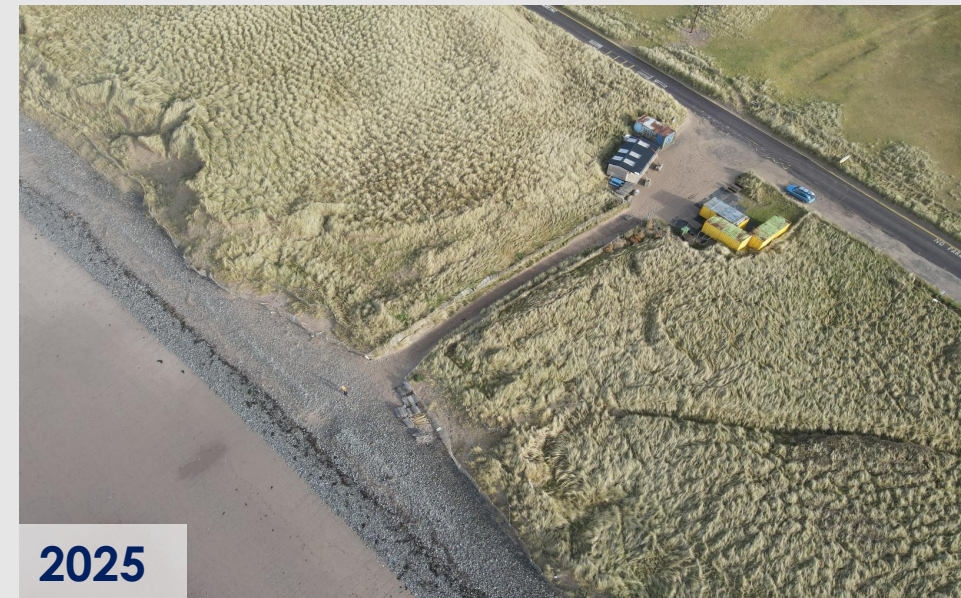


Photo credits: Tim Smith

Community-led Dune Restoration using Nature-based Solutions: Magherabeg Cut



Community-led Dune Restoration using Nature-based Solutions: Magherabeg Cut



Regenerative Tourism

“A concept that goes beyond sustainable tourism, aiming not only to minimise negative impacts but also to actively contribute to the restoration and regeneration of ecosystems, communities, and cultural heritage” (Failte Ireland, 2024).

“...It is crucial that indigenous people retain a degree of control over tourism in the face of any future development and, equally important, that communities are able to maintain the transmission of cultural heritage across generations” (Qi, Pforr and Dit, 2024).

A series of Highly Successful Community-Run, Biodiversity Week, National Heritage Week Community and Regenerative Tourism Events Throughout 2022-25 – supported by Kerry County Council, The Heritage Council and LAWPRO

Explore The Maharees

Summer Schedule

Biodiversity Heritage Events 2022

July	10	Sun	10am	Mermaid's Purse Hunt with Clara Dolan	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	14	Thur	11am	Maharees Heritage Walk	Spillane's Car Park
	16	Sat	11am	Jellyfish Talk with Clara Dolan	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	21	Thur	10am	Beach Clean	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	21	Thur	9pm	MCA Table Quiz	Green Room
	23	Sat	11am	Maharees Heritage Walk	Kilshannig
	24	Sun	2pm	Wildflower Walk with Clara Dolan	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	28	Thur	11am	Marram Planting	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	30	Sat	11am	Rockpool Exploration with Clara Dolan	Kilshannig
August	4	Thur	2pm	Beach Clean	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	6	Sat	11am	Maharees Heritage Walk	Spillane's Car Park
	11	Thur	11am	Maharees Heritage Walk	Kilshannig
	11	Thur	9pm	Maharees Heritage Table Quiz	Green Room
	13	Sat	11am	Rockpool Exploration with Clara Dolan	Kilshannig
	20	Sat	11am	Maharees Heritage Trail Walk (10km)	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)

Brought to you by Maharees Conservation Association
Details on Facebook

Explore The Maharees

Summer Schedule

Biodiversity Heritage Events 2023

July	8	Sat	21:30	Toad Evening	Castlegregory Golf Course
	9	Sun	14:00	Maharees Geology	Spillane's Car Park
	16	Sun	10:00	Marram Planting	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	20	Thur	11:00	Heritage Walk Garrywilliam	Spillane's Car Park
	20	Thur	20:30	MCA Fun Table Quiz	The Green Room
	23	Sun	10:00	Bird Spotting	Kilshannig
	27	Thur	11:00	Heritage Walk Kilshannig	Kilshannig
	29	Sat	14:00	Wildflower Safari	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	30	Sun	10:00	Rockpool Exploration	Kilshannig
August	1	Tue	11:00	Brandon Bay Beach Clean	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	3	Thur	11:00	Heritage Walk Garrywilliam	Spillane's Car Park
	5	Sat	12:00	Rock Pool Exploration	Kilshannig
	6	Sun	10:30	Mermaids Purse Hunt	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	10	Thur	11:00	Heritage Walk Kilshannig	Kilshannig
	10	Thur	20:30	MCA Fun Table Quiz	The Green Room
	12	Sat	10:30	Jellyfish Talk	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	19	Sat	11:00	Living Heritage Event	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)

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Details on Facebook

Biodiversity Week in The Maharees

BIODIVERSITY EDUCATION EVENTS 2024

Explore The Maharees

Summer Schedule

BIODIVERSITY HERITAGE EVENTS 2024

July	6	Sat	21:30	Toad Evening	Castlegregory Golf Course
	13	Sat	11:30	Mermaid's Purse Hunt	Spillane's Car Park
	18	Thur	20:30	MCA Fun Table Quiz	The Green Room
	21	Sun	13:00	Wildflower Safari	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	25	Thur	11:00	Heritage Walk	Kilshannig
	27	Sun	10:30	Bird Spotting	Kilshannig
August	3	Sat	12:00	Maharees Heritage and Nature shows	Castlegregory Agricultural Show
	4	Sun	10:00	Rockpool Exploration	Kilshannig
	6	Tue	11:00	Brandon Bay Beach Clean	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	7	Wed	11:00	Heritage Walk	Fahamore
	8	Thu	20:30	MCA Fun Table Quiz	The Green Room
	10	Sat	11:30	Shark and ray egg case identification	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	14	Wed	11:00	Heritage Walk	Fahamore
	18	Sun	09:30	Seaweed Identification	Fahamore
	20	Tue	12:00	Grass and Wildflower Identification	Béal Geal (Blue Flag Beach)
	25	Sun	10:30	Jellyfish Art	TBD
				Curragh making demo	Fahamore

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Details on Facebook

Bird Talk

Bird Party



0:30

ig

Gardening for Nature talk

with Thomas O'Connor and Poppy Overy



Wednesday
22 May, 19:30

Castlegregory Clubrooms

Wildflower Discovery Walk

with educator Darach Ó Murchú



Sunday
26 May, 11:00

Béal Geal (Sandy Bay)

Free events. Please book on email:
Mahareesconservation@gmail.com

A series of Highly Successful Community-Run, Biodiversity Week, National Heritage Week Community and Regenerative Tourism Events Throughout 2022-25

Bird Spotting with Ed Carty (left), Logainmneacha/Placenames Walk with Martin Lynch (right)



“Another fascinating, informative and enjoyable event organised by MCA... Learned much about local traditional practices and crafts in the best of company. The walks were one of the highlights of the summer. Many thanks to all concerned.”

MH – summer visitor comment about our living heritage event



Locally Led Adaptation

Principles for Locally Led Adaptation

“ Looking down the line and
getting in front
of what’s coming ”



To be successful, community development initiatives must **originate from the citizens themselves**. The people who live in a community must have ‘ownership’ of the process and the will to work toward bringing about the necessary change.

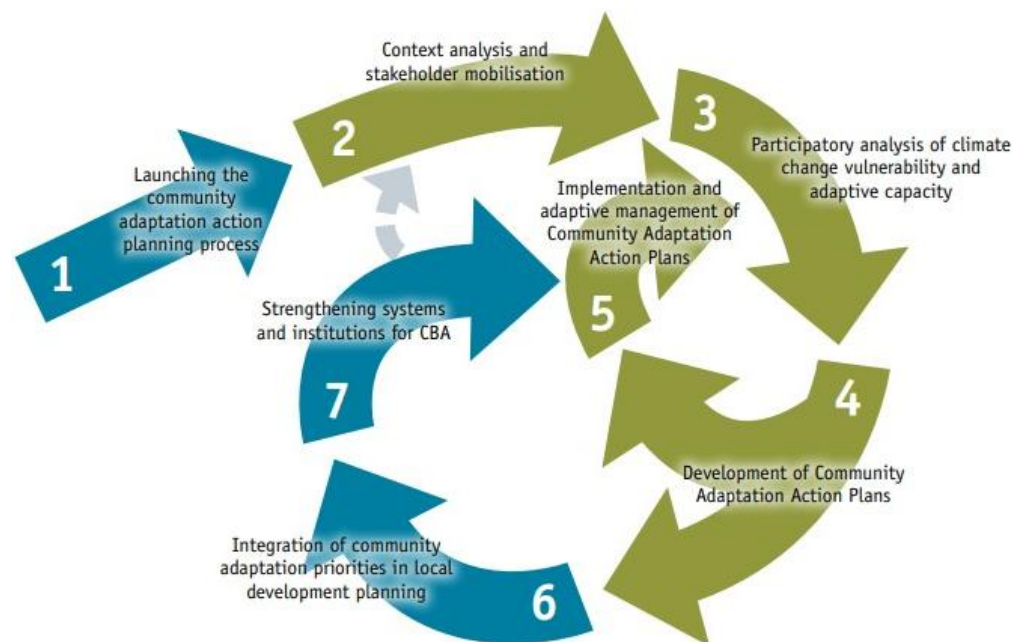
Otherwise the process will either fail or result in the creation of a plan of action that is never fully carried out.

(Vincent, 2014, p.106)



Community-based Adaptation CARE (2015)

The community adaptation action planning process



Step	Purpose	Key Activities
1	Launching the community adaptation action planning process	Identify purpose, process and stakeholders for the CAAP process
Community adaptation action planning		
2	Context analysis and stakeholder mobilisation	Understand the overall context; mobilize stakeholders to support and/or participate in the CAAP process
3	Participatory analysis of climate change vulnerability and adaptive capacity	Build common understanding of climate change vulnerability and adaptive capacity of different local level institutions and groups within the community
4	Development of Community Adaptation Action Plans	Agree a Community Adaptation Action Plan, to serve as a road map to guide implementation, revision and monitoring of community adaptation priorities and support financial resource mobilisation.
5	Implementation and adaptive management of Community Adaptation Action Plans	Strengthened adaptive capacity and reduced vulnerability of different groups to climate-related risks
Creating an enabling environment for planning and implementation		
6	Integration of community adaptation priorities in local development planning	Ensure that local development plans are responsive to and supportive of community adaptation priorities identified in their action plans
7	Strengthening systems and institutions for CBA	Strong local systems and institutions (community, government, private sector and civil society) that enable CBA

The Maharees Community Vision and Climate Adaptation Planning Process

(Adapted from CARE, 2015)

1. Understanding and building relationships with stakeholders
2. Understanding the risks ahead
 - and the areas for action
3. Deciding where we want to be by 2050
 - having a vision that people buy into
4. Deciding how we get there
 - putting a plan together – in the areas for action
5. Putting the plan in to action
 - with the commitment of the community
 - plugging in to Local Authority and State Agency Plans and available schemes
6. Reviewing and improving the plan
 - a living document



2. Understanding the risks ahead



...and areas for action



2. Understanding the risks ahead and the areas for action

– EPA (2025)

Ireland's Changing Climate

Met Éireann, the Office of Public Works, the EPA, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have developed projections that inform the NCCRA based on two emission scenarios: a moderate emissions scenario (RCP4.5), and a high emission scenario (RCP8.5). The NCCRA assesses risk for three time periods: up to 2030 (current), 2050 (mid-century), and 2100 (late-century). Below we provide an overview of projected changes in Ireland's climate by mid-century (2050) under a high emissions scenario:



Ireland's climate is projected to get **warmer** with average temperature increasing across all seasons and on an annual basis, while the number of heatwaves is also projected to increase.



Ireland is projected to become **wetter** overall with an increase in average annual rainfall.



Increased seasonality in rainfall projected with wetter winters and drier summers, with **more frequent droughts** projected for Summer and Spring months.



Sea levels are projected to **continue to rise** around Ireland's coastal areas with an average increase of 0.26 m by the mid-century and 0.65 m by end of the century, increasing exposure to coastal flood risks.



Ireland's oceans are projected to become **more acidic**.



A **minor decrease in average windspeeds** is projected for Ireland. While northern Europe could be affected by **fewer but stronger windstorms**, projections are uncertain.



2. Understanding the risks ahead and the areas for action

– EPA (2025)

Risks are categorised into 9 different systems

These systems make up Ireland's society and economy, encapsulating multiple economic sectors.



Biodiversity & Ecosystems

Encompasses diverse natural habitats and their ecological functions.



Built Environment

Includes human structures to support daily life, including buildings, transport and communications.



Energy

Covers the production, conversion on energy system, and distribution of energy resources.



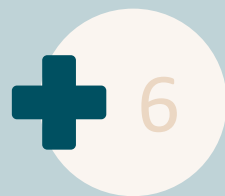
Economy and Finance

Includes the financial and insurance markets and economic stability.



Food Production and Supply Chain

Involves the processes and systems for growing and distributing food.



Health

Includes medical services and overall human well-being.



Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

Relates to oceanic and coastal habitats and their biodiversity.



Social

Encompasses societal structures and governance systems.



Water Security

Focuses on the availability and management of water resources.



2. Understanding the risks ahead and the areas for action

– OPW

High-End Scenario

0.1% AEP Event

2 Active Layers

+ Add Layer

[-] National Coastal Flood Hazard Mapping 2021 - High-End Future Scenario 2

On

0.1% AEP (1 in 1000 year) Flood Extents ①

Off

0.5% AEP (1 in 200 year) Flood Extents ①

Off

10% AEP (1 in 10 year) Flood Extents ①

On

0.1% AEP (1 in 1000 year) Flood Depths ①

Off

0.5% AEP (1 in 200 year) Flood Depths ①

Off

10% AEP (1 in 10 year) Flood Depths ①

0 - 0.25m

0.25 - 0.5m

0.5 - 1.0m

1.0 - 1.5m

1.5 - 2.0m

>2m



3. Deciding **where** we want to be by 2050

...having a vision that
people buy into.



A multi-stage, community-designed, community-delivered process of consultation with **multiple opportunities** to engage and **multiple means** of engagement

2

Open-Ended Questions

hand delivered to households by members of Maharees Conservation (May 2024)

What makes Maharees special to YOU?

What would YOU like a future Maharees to be?

48

Responses collected

- in sealed boxes at Neart na Machairí events
- online via a Google Form
- by Post

Agenda driven by Community

Responses transferred to closed-ended questionnaire and hand-delivered to each household and collected by members of Maharees Conservation (Nov 2024)

181

250

adults responded

72%

est. response rate



What would **YOU** like a future Maharees to be?

Our Vision

That our community is informed and resilient in the face of climate change, that we protect our wildlife, our traditions, our heritage.

- That we have traffic and visitor management systems in place for the safety and comfort of all
- That we have the supports we need to protect our community, to adapt to the effects of climate change and to transition to an energy-efficient community
- That our young people can have a future in Maharees

▶ That we are united in our vision and work together for our community.

To validate the vision

a series of workshops were held where minor edits were agreed

3 x Community
Workshops (2025)



3 x School
Workshops (2026)

4. Deciding **how** we get there

... putting a plan together
– in the areas for action.



Deciding how we get there – putting a plan together – in the areas for action



DRAFT

Chapter 2 Objectives

The objectives in this plan are framed as:



1 Built environment

- OBJ Build resilience of infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events and climate change impacts
- OBJ Build community resilience through access to housing to support a year-round population



2 Energy

- OBJ Build resilience in energy supply infrastructure to adapt to future climate change-related power interruptions



3 Food Production & Supply Chain

- OBJ Build resilience in food production and supply chain



4 Biodiversity & Ecosystems

- OBJ Protect, restore and enhance the natural heritage of Maharees



5 Social, Health & Community Preparedness

- OBJ Increase the social resiliency of Maharees against weather and climate emergencies



6 Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

- OBJ Increase the resilience of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems in Maharees



7 Economics & Finance

- OBJ Align the local economy to support the long-term resilience of Maharees



8 Water

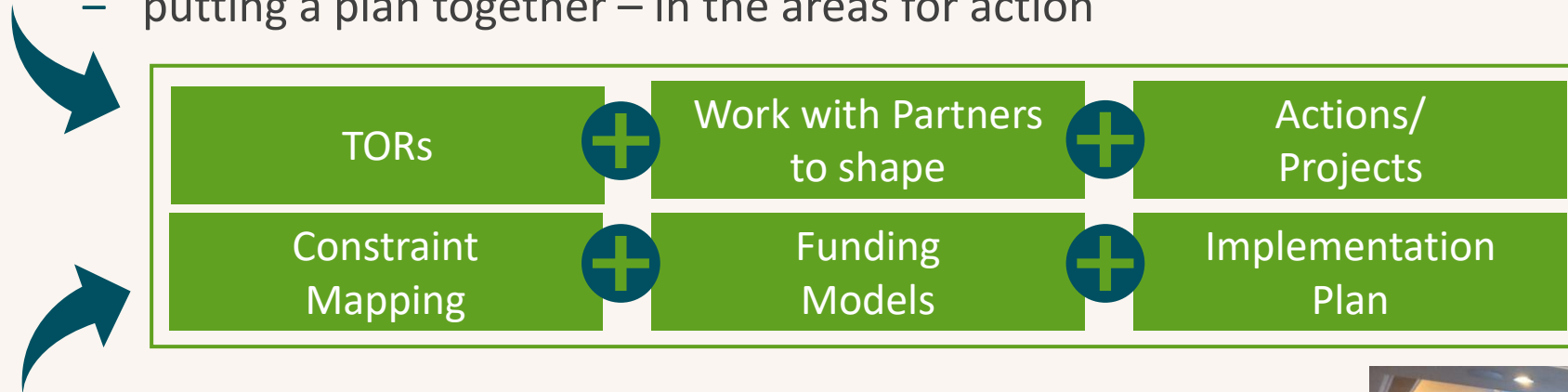
- OBJ Build resilience to assure a quality water supply in the face of climate impacts.



Next steps

4. Deciding how we get there

- putting a plan together – in the areas for action



5. Putting the plan in to action

- with the commitment of the community
- plugging in to Local Authority and State Agency Plans and available schemes

6. Reviewing and improving the plan

- a living document



Climate Change Opportunities – EPA (2025)

Climate change ...also opens up a range of opportunities that can be leveraged to enhance Ireland's resilience and sustainability. By strategically addressing these opportunities, Ireland can drive economic growth, improve public health, and promote environmental sustainability. These opportunities for Ireland are outlined below.

O1: Opportunity of changes in average temperature to tourism leading to increased tourism and expansion of outdoor activity tourism **There is an emerging opportunity for an increase in tourism due to warmer climates that can lead to longer tourist season, thereby attracting more visitors during the off-peak season. ... this can also potentially lead to increased footprint and risks related to impact on the Biodiversity and Ecosystem System (i.e., B15) and increased tourism in peak seasons can put a strain the Water Security System (i.e., WS05).** (EPA, 2025, p. 62)



Ringed Plover

Irish Name: Feadóg chladaigh
Scientific name: *Charadrius hiaticula*
Bird Family: Plovers

The red list features the birds which are of most concern and require urgent action. The amber list includes species which are of concern but which have not yet become critically endangered and the green list features birds which are stable or prospering.



Data Collection

Surveys via easy-to-use Google survey form

12 survey participants in Maharees / Brandon Bay area

15 survey sections to enable shortish survey duration 15 – 45 mins





thank you for engaging with us

For more information, please contact us at: mahareesconservation@gmail.com