

Biodiversity Project in Creganna Beg

David O'Toole

25th May 2025

HISTORY:

Fifteen years ago on my own land beside my house, I extended an existing gateway from the main Creganna Road onto my lands and developed a gravel road from the gateway through the land to my house. It is important to note that this land borders on land owned by my neighbour Paul McDonagh and is well outside the special area of conservation known as Creganna Marsh.

The new pathway involved reshaping and infilling an area two hundred feet from the main Creganna Road. During the works an earth mound was created on the right-hand side of the gravel path.

About eleven years later (four years ago in 2021) I decided to undertake a biodiversity project (please see sketch map) on my land composing of approximately 1.1 hectares. The project planned consisting of:

1. The plantation of a native indigenous Irish tree forest to the rear of the site,
2. An orchard of thirty-plus fruit trees, mainly rare Irish varieties purchased from "Seed Savers" in Scarriff, Co Clare,
3. A wildlife pond (already existing),
4. A paddock for grazing animals especially horses as my eight-year-old daughter is a keen horse-rider.

I flattened the existing earth mound backwards and infilled the area back to the rear of the site with good quality topsoil (please see pictures of soil before Stage 2 tree planting). I calculated there were in excess of two hundred and fifty loads delivered (by measuring the height difference between my land and my neighbours land (please see attached pictures).

I started Stage 1 of the tree planting programme, planted the fruit trees and reseeded the area with meadow seed. Over two years ago I was contacted by Galway County Council who inspected the land without my knowledge, presumeably on the foot of a complaint. They

insisted I remove a container which was on the site and I did. They also complained about rubbish burning on the land near the houses. This was done by a tenant on the HAPS Scheme of Galway County Council who claimed he could not afford to get a bin of his own, (up to this he was using ours). I immediately put a stop to this and the tenant has since moved on.

Also during this inspection, they found a small area with substandard fill (i.e. bits of plaster, broken tiles, etc.,) which was put in by a rogue operator while I away at a conference in the United States. I had this removed and provided a receipt to Galway County Council for twelve loads of fill removed and delivered to Barna Waste.

Even though I thought I had addressed and complied with all the issues raised initially by Galway County Council, two months later I started to get enforcement notices from Galway County Council about removing all the fill and restoring the land to its original state. At no stage was I asked to meet with any official to discuss the project and to hear my viewpoint. I employed Gerry Hanniffy (Engineer) to put in for a Retention Application to Galway County Council. Gerry advised me to get an Environmental Impact Report as well so I engaged David Feeney, an Environmental Consultant, to do this to assess any potential effect on the surrounding area and also to assess the potential damage to the environment of digging out the whole site again and uprooting trees, flowers, plants, insects and animals that have already made this site their home.

Galway County Council refused to grant Retention Planning stating the environmental assessment should have been carried out before the development and continued to issue letters threatening court proceedings, because the enforcement orders were not complied with. They said there was nothing they could do and that I would have to apply for Substitute Consent from An Bord Pleanála -thus the reason for this submission.

At present the project is complete. Phase 2 of the tree planting programme is finished and trees, flora, fauna, birds and insects are all happy out. It has turned out to be a really special place. There are no invasive species on site (plant or animal). There are no pesticides used on site. Wild flowers, trees and wildlife are flourishing.

I have recently retired after working for the HSE for forty years. I have always had an interest in bee keeping but until now I have never had the time to persue it. I have done my best between the orchard and wildflower planting to support pollinators, expecially now as there is increasing evidence that native Irish bees are becoming an endangered species due to lack of suitable habitats. I have one active hive on site and more on the way.

I am a member of the Clarinbridge Tribal Bee Association and I have also registered with the Department of Argiculture, Food and Marine as a honey producer.

Finally, it is my wish this situation can be solved without the need for court proceedings. I note that in June 2023 Galway County Countil appointed their first ever Biodiversity Officer Ms Rosina Joyce.

I, for one, would like to work with Galway County Countil in resolving this situation and I would welcome wholeheartedly a visit by Rosina. Any advice or suggestions she has to improve the site or remedy any potential problems that she thinks are needed would be to and acted upon. I would prefer to work with the Council if it were at all possible.

Accompanying this report are multiple photographs etc., to support all that I have written.

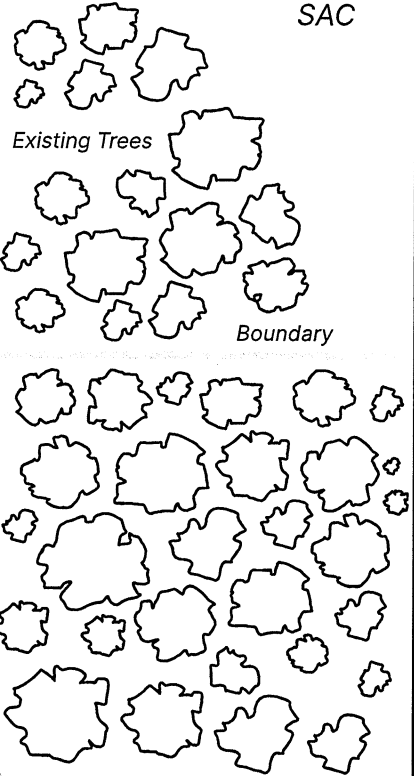
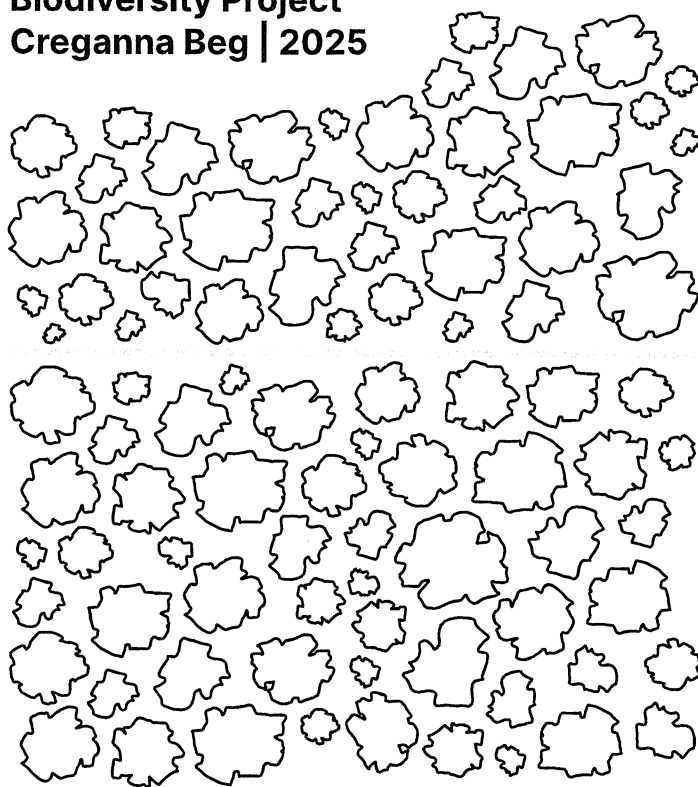
Yours sincerely,

David O'Toole,
Creganna Bay,
Oranmore,
Co. Galway, H91 N9CW.
Mobile: 087 947 1091

Biodiversity Project Creganna Beg | 2025

SAC

59 yds



Existing Trees

Ditch

Gate

Ditch

Ditch

78 yds

Grassland with
paddock for
horses

Solar Panels

Pond

Beehives

Orchard

Electric Fence

Earth mound

Ditch

Gate

80 yds

Grassland with
paddock for
horses

Access Road

Existing Hawthorn Hedge

Driveway to house

Gate

Garage

**Biodiversity Project
Creganna Beg | 2025**

SAC

Existing Trees

Boundary

Path

Existing Trees

Ditch

Gate

Ditch

Ditch

78 yds

Grassland with
paddock for
horses

Solar Panels

Pond

Beehives

Orchard

Electric Fence

Earth mound
from 2010

Gate

Ditch

80 yds

Grassland with
paddock for
horses

Access Road

Existing Hawthorn Hedge

Driveway to house

Gate

Garage

59 yds

ROAD

13:35

4G



Search Google Earth



30 m

