



# Mulranny

County Mayo, Ireland

ENTENTE FLORALE EUROPE 2019  
INFORMATION PORTFOLIO





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# Welcome / Céad Míle Fáilte



Is mór an onóir dom é fáilte a chur roimh mholtóirí idirnáisiúnta an Entente Florale go Co Mhaigh Eo le moltóireacht a dhéanamh ar an Mala Raithní, atá ar cheann d'iomaitheoirí na hÉireann i gcomórtas na bliana seo.

It is my great honour to welcome the International Jury of Entente Florale to County Mayo to adjudicate Mulranny as one of Irelands representatives in this year's competition.

Mayo is renowned for its diverse, wild and spectacular landscapes, offering some of the best scenery in the Country. Mayo can also boast a number of impressive geographical attributes – Ireland's longest coastline, Ireland's largest island, Ireland's highest sea cliffs at Keem, and Ireland's only fjord at Killary Harbour. In addition to these attributes, Mayo prides itself as the heartbeat of the Wild Atlantic way and nestled along that route is the spectacular village of Mulranny, a gem on the Mayo Coastline.

Mulranny is a most beautiful village overlooking the Atlantic waters of Clew Bay. The village is surrounded by mountain terrain, wooded areas, coastline, sheltered bays, rivers and of course the sea. Mulranny is a vibrant tourist destination which offers a wide variety of activities and services.

The people of Mulranny and the surrounding areas are a proud people. Their sense of place and Community is strong and their vision and commitment to their village is unwavering.

Mayo County Council are very proud of the Mulranny Community and have been happy to support their journey participating in Entente Florale.

I hope that you will see the beauty and unique offering that Mulranny has to offer when you visit with us on July 26th.

I look forward to meeting you then.

## **Peter Hynes**

Chief Executive, Mayo County Council

It gives me enormous pride to welcome the International Jury of Entente Florale to the beautiful coastal village of Mulranny on Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way.

Mulranny is a very special place with an amazing community spirit, constantly giving of their time in a voluntary capacity, no doubt that is why the 'fruits of their labour' is being recognised by Entente Florale.

On behalf of all my colleagues in the Municipal District, I wish you all a very pleasant visit to Mulranny and look forward to meeting you on July 26th.

## **Cathaoirleach (Chairman/Mayor)**

Westport-Belmullet Municipal District

Céad míle fáilte – a hundred thousand welcomes to our village of Mulranny. When it was announced that our small, yet stunningly beautiful place was to represent our country at Entente Florale, we were overjoyed! Having gladly accepted the challenge our community realised that this was a great opportunity to showcase our unique landscape with its many challenges. We are passionate people with a resolve to ensure that the magnificent and dramatic landscape that surrounds us should be protected for the many generations that will follow us.

I wish to publicly acknowledge the support our community has received from the many people – young and old. Lets all celebrate as we welcome our international guests.

## **Mary Joyce**

Entente Florale Steering Committee Chair

# Introduction

Mulranny is a scenic coastal village located on the Northern shore of Clew Bay on the west coast of Ireland along a National Secondary road (N59) at the junction of the Corraun / Achill Peninsula. The village acts as a gateway to Achill and the Mullet Peninsula. Mulranny translates to Maoil Raithne or Malla Raithne in Irish meaning “Hill of the Ferns”. Mulranny is a popular tourist destination due mainly to its landscape setting on the Wild Atlantic Way, its proximity to Ballycroy National Park and Great Western Greenway.

There is evidence of a small settlement located at Mulranny in the 1830's but the village developed with the arrival of the Westport to Achill Railway line in the 1890's. Many of the existing buildings in the village date back to the early 1900's. Mulranny's defining features are its natural environment, its built railway heritage, quality access via high amenity cycling and walking trails and an active community that engage directly with visitors thereby enriching their experience of a unique area. Many of these preserved structures have been restored and are actively managed by the community.

Mulranny enjoys a rich legacy of Victorian railway heritage. It became a tourist destination in 1884 when the Midland Great Western Railway was built under the Light Railway Act. By 1897 the Great Southern Hotel opened. Subsequently the distinctive Mulranny Causeway was built linking the hotel to the beach and pier, along with 7 miles of Victorian trails. The political unrest in the 1920s and '30s affected business in the hotel and this forced the railway line to close in 1937. The hotel remained open until 1977. It was then sold to private investors. Business declined in the recession years of late '70s and early '80s and the hotel once again closed its doors in 1989.

In 2008, in the post “Celtic Tiger” recession, Mulranny faced two longstanding challenges:

- 1) The village was bereft of public footpaths, making it unsafe to circulate through
- 2) Obvious tourism potential remained untapped

A fundamental change in approach was called for and came in the form of Community Futures. Mulranny became an early adopter of the Scottish ‘Community Futures’ development model. Embedded in public consultation and democracy a number of new groups were prescribed by the Mulranny Community Futures Plan.





## Planning and Development

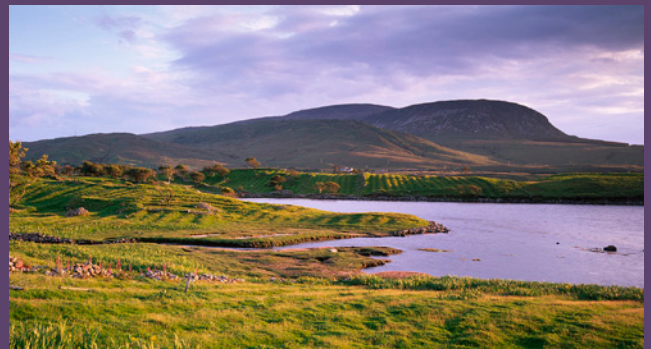
Mulranny is located within the Westport- Belmullet Municipal District which is one of the four Municipal Districts that make up County Mayo. The Mayo County Development Plan 2014 - 2020 provides for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Mayo. The Plan guides the future growth and development of Mayo, taking European Directives and National legislation such as the Regional Spatial & Economic Policy Guidelines and the National Planning Framework into consideration. It sets out a strategic framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of Mayo. It lists Mulranny within 'Tier 3 - Other towns & villages' of the settlement hierarchy. The plan is the over arching statutory policy document guiding development in the Mulranny area. The village is located on a 'Scenic Route' as designated by the County Development Plan and views south from the village overlooking Clew Bay are protected. There are two structures within the village which are on the List of Structures on the Record of Protected Structures, The Great Southern Hotel (now Mulranny Park Hotel) and the Roman Catholic Church.

Mulranny is set within outstanding natural scenery on the Wild Atlantic Way. It is located on an isthmus, a narrow neck of land that joins the Corraun Peninsula to the Nephin mountain range and separates Clew Bay from Bellacragher Bay. The land to the North

of the N59 road rises steeply, which is an obvious contrast to the land on the southern side of the road which falls away steeply towards the sea.

### ENVIRONMENTAL COMPONENTS

The village is enclosed to the south by the Clew Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA), to the west the Corraun Plateau (SAC) whilst to the north of the village it is bounded by the Nephin Mountain Range which is a Special Area of Conservation (SPA).



A distinctive saltmarsh, unique because of its size (approx. 22 ha) has developed in the sheltered conditions behind Mulranny's Blue Flag beach. It has considerable botanical interest such plants as Sea thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Saltmarsh grass (*Puccinellia fasciculata*), Glasswort (*Salicornia europea*) and Sea-Blite (*Suaeda maritima*) are in evidence. The full transition from maritime to terrestrial plants is present and it attracts a considerable variety of birdlife.

### COMMUNITY ROLE IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Mulranny Community Futures was established as a formalised community group in 2009 following the community's participation in the Mayo Community Futures programme. Following an extensive 18-month public consultation process, the Mulranny Community Action Plan 2010-2015 was developed and the Communities Vision for the village was set out that;

*'Mulranny with its beautiful coastal setting on the shores of Clew Bay will preserve and enhance its natural environment.'*





*It will be a great holiday centre and a good place to live and work within an enterprising and organised community’.*

The plan highlighted the priorities that the community wanted to see carried out under the following headings:

- Environment & Outdoor Activities
- Visual improvements to the Village
- Tourism and Promotion
- Roads, Traffic and Parking
- Community Facilities and Services

A number of priorities have been successfully achieved, e.g. extensive village enhancement to include village promenade, traffic calming, extension of footpaths, widening of narrow roads and provision of additional car parking.

The group renewed the action plan in 2016 by identifying the projects and actions which the community wished to focus on for the next five years. Mulranny Community Futures CLG consists of two representatives from each community group within the village, providing support and guidance to these groups to help drive the initiatives and support community priorities identified within the Community Action Plans.

A strong, dependable and supportive relationship has been built with the various public bodies and particularly with Mayo County Council as a direct result of this collaborative approach. The village community is pro-active in promoting the village. In 2010, a Village Design Statement was prepared by the Council in collaboration with the community. The aim of the Village Design Statement was to create a long term vision and plan of action going forward.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

The community has implemented a Green Plan for the village and has become a Sustainable Energy Hub. The vision is a unique environment that will be preserved and enhanced for future generations, carbon neutral and eco-friendly. The Plan provides a programme of building upgrades and projects to

make the community less reliant on fossil fuels and more environmentally friendly generally.



## **ST. BRENDAN'S VILLAGE COMMUNITY PROJECT**

This project has been recognised by CECODHAS (the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing) as an exemplar worthy of replication in how to help people stay in their communities where they have spent most of their lives.

This community project was Mulranny's response to the migration of older and disabled people to far-away institutions when they could no longer look after themselves. Not alone did it stop this exodus, but actually reversed it with a number of older people having returned from distant institutions. This award winning project has succeeded in providing a continuum of support and care for vulnerable older and disabled people in Mulranny for the past 20 years.

It started as a voluntary day centre in 1984 which progressed to 17 low support sheltered houses in 1994, followed in 1998 by the addition of St. Brendan's High Support Unit, providing medium to high support accommodation for up to 36 people. The St. Brendan's guarantee is that no matter how old or disabled you are, you have the opportunity to stay in your own area, if that is your wish. The project at present employs 71 people contributing in excess of one and quarter million euro annually into the village economy through wages alone.

The St. Brendan's Horticultural Project is a successful community enterprise growing an abundance of fruit and vegetables for the use of the residents of St. Brendan's Village. The surplus produce is made available, together with locally caught fresh fish through



‘St. Brendan’s Market’ located at the Amenity Centre, Mulranny. This community retail outlet generates valuable extra funds for the St. Brendan’s Village project. The planting beds and three large polytunnels are located directly behind St. Brendan’s Village on the Great Western Greenway.

Public lighting in Mulranny has recently been upgraded to reduce light pollution in the area and the community is a strong advocate for dark sky friendly lighting. The Mulranny community is also a founder member of the Friends of Mayo Dark Skies Steering group and regularly hosts dark sky related events and viewing nights.



## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Mulranny is a microcosm of Mayo featuring mountain uplands, blanket bog and heathlands, linear shaped farms, or “stripes” as they are known locally, coastal grasslands, salt marshes, beaches, mudflats and coastal inlets. These diverse landscapes and seascapes are part of the European Natura 2000

network and are accessible by the Great Western Greenway and by the Mulranny Loop Walk.

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY

The importance of green infrastructure is recognised in Policy P-08 and Objective O-05 of the County Development Plan 2014-2020:

**P-08** It is a policy of the Council to ensure a high level of green infrastructure (e.g. communal green space, private gardens, institutional land, local parks, river corridors, floodplains) provision in each of the Key Towns.

## AREA PLANS FOR THE KEY TOWNS

### Objective

**O-05** It is an objective of the Council to:

- Identify green infrastructure deficiencies in each of the Key Towns and to actively seek to create or enhance green infrastructure
- Resist the loss of existing private or public green infrastructure in Key Towns unless an alternative site is provided in a suitable location
- Retain or improve access to green infrastructure
- Ensure that any new development in the Key Towns does not increase flood risk in the relevant catchment area





# Sustainable Environment

## WATER QUALITY

Mulranny is located in the Erriff - Clew Bay Catchment and the village of Mulranny is in the Murrevagh Waterbody which is currently at 'Review' category as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) status is 'Unassigned' as the waterbody is not included on a monitoring programme. However, the nearby Bunahowna River to the east of Mulranny is at 'Good' Status under the WFD as there is biological monitoring undertaken. Mulranny is located adjacent to the Clew Bay Coastal Waterbody which in 2011-2015 was assigned 'Good Status'. (It was previously 'High Status' for 2010 - 2012.)

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mulranny supports the achievement of the Connacht Ulster Region Waste Management Plan 2015 - 2021 objectives through:

- Households availing of a segregated kerbside collection in the form of three bins: recyclables, food and organic waste and residual waste
- Bring site facilities located in the village for glass and clothing
- Using the Council-operated Civic Amenity Site located at Derrinnumera, Newport which provide a wide range of recycling and reuse services
- Participation in Waste Prevention events in partnership with Mayo County Council

## MULRANNY GREEN PLAN GROUP

The Green Plan is a new system that uses behavioural change to tackle climate change. It is a clear framework outlining practical actions across seven themes: Energy Usage, Green Procurement, Carbon Production and its effects on Biodiversity, Water, Climate and Society. Mulranny was the first village or town in Ireland to adopt the Green Plan. Communities are encouraged to start the Green Plan in one building and expand to other community buildings and the community.

To start the Green Plan, improvements were carried out to the Tourist Office:

- all lighting was changed to LEDs
- the building was insulated

- windows and doors upgraded
- all chemical cleaning products eliminated
- water usage reduced
- a rainwater harvester installed for watering nearby planters

At the Tourist Office there are facilities for community light bulb and battery recycling, an insect hotel, bird boxes and a book swap shelf. There is a food drop box where holidaymakers drop non-perishable food as they depart Mulranny which is then distributed by local charities.

In 2016, in collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Green Plan group introduced a free summer bus service between Mulranny and Ballycroy National Park so that visitors could reduce their carbon footprint.

Before adopting the Green Plan, the Tourist Office was heated with an open fire with either coal or turf being used as a fuel. A stove was installed and the idea of trialing the use of invasive species *Rhododendron* (*Rhododendron ponticum*) as a fuel source was developed and the 'Rhododendron to Fuel' project was born.

All of the changes at the Tourist Office resulted in the carbon footprint of the building being reduced by 75%. Mulranny received an honorary mention at the recent Citizens Assembly on Climate Change. To raise awareness and to reduce plastic waste the group purchased stainless steel cutlery for the National School to avoid the need for plastic cutlery that was being delivered daily with school meals.

## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMUNITY

In 2018 Mulranny joined the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) Sustainable Energy Community Programme and developed a Community Charter. Plan Energy Consultants are now working with the community to develop an Energy Master plan for Mulranny. The Energy Master plan will include a full energy audit of the Mulranny Park Hotel and the Amenity Centre and a Register of Opportu-



nities for future energy conservation works to homes and businesses and opportunities for renewal energy projects. To launch the development of the plan a community event was held 'Let's make Mulranny Cosy'. Following this event Mulranny took part in its first Better Energy Communities Grant programme and a number of initiatives have been undertaken:

- Ireland's first free bulb exchange took place where the community brought along their old high energy light bulbs and exchanged them for free low energy LED bulbs
- The community had an opportunity to meet with the consultants and received information about the Warmer Homes and Better Energy Community scheme

- A full LED lighting upgrade was carried out at Mulranny National School
- an energy fabric upgrade at the Old Irish Goat centre
- improved attic insulation at the Tourist Office

A Home Energy Event took place with an expert from the SEAI. Homeowners could ask about energy efficiency problems and they had an opportunity to sign up for the chance to have a free Better Energy Rating Certificate (BER) carried out on their home. 15 BERs were carried out on local family homes earlier this year. The group plans to apply for another Better Energy Communities grant to carry out any planned works on these and other homes following the release of the BER reports.





## Built Environment

Mulranny cannot be regarded as a traditional village in that its linear development along the now N59 road has been piecemeal and drawn out over time. Therefore the village encompasses a wide variety of vernacular building styles;

- small traditional thatched cottages,
- 2 storey traditional slated houses up to the mid 20th century
- varying styles and forms latter 20th century

These building styles are knitted together and subordinated by the natural lush vegetation, and they remain visually subservient to the spectacular natural setting and views. As one drives through Mulranny it is the views and setting one observes not the built environment.

From the 1890s the construction of the Railway brought in a designed architectural heritage of a superior quality notably ;

- the Railway Station and its associated water tower, signal boxes, goods shed and nearby railway bridges etc
- the Hotel and its associated Causeway and pump house

These buildings have a distinctive quality and character having been built either partially or fully in brick brought in by train from Dublin.

### CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The early 20th century saw the design and construction of the Church by the Architect RM Butler in Celtic Revival Style. For almost 120 years this church has been the place where the community has gathered to celebrate moments of great joy and significance or seek comfort and solace at times of sadness, tragedy and loss. The building and its grounds are lovingly maintained and enhanced on an ongoing basis by the local Mens Shed and the Tidy Towns Committee.

### VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

In 2010 Mayo County Council, in consultation with the community prepared the Mulranny Village Design Statement (VDS) which set out to address issues regarding the built environment. This statement;

- acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between the built and natural environment, and the importance of nurturing both
- identifies the strengths and weaknesses of Mulrannys built environment and sets out a plan of action to respectively maximise the positives and eliminate the negatives
- Provides design guidelines to promote appreciation, awareness and procurement of quality design and finish in the built environment
- Provides an invaluable tool for obtaining funding for projects as the social, environmental and economic benefits of the clearly outlined solutions are made abundantly clear in the document.

### RECENT WORKS

**Railway Hotel Restoration:** Following decades of economic decline this hotel closed its doors in 1989 and fell into dereliction. Thankfully in 2005, the Celtic Tiger economy facilitated the old Railway Hotel to be sensitively restored, re-opening as the Mulranny Park Hotel. Essential modern extensions to the hotel served only to set off the original Edwardian architecture in all its restored glory. The refurbishment was of a very high standard and includes an indoor heated swimming pool and gym and provides much needed employment for the local community.

**Footpaths project:** In 2014 Mulranny enjoyed the provision of safe footpaths along the length of the village. Mayo County Council and the community worked together to ensure the construction of quality local stone walls, railings, street furniture etc.

**Mulranny Promenade:** The Village Design Statement had clearly proposed a 'Promenade' as a solution to many of the village's problems. This promenade would utilise unsightly derelict wasteland lying on the south side of the village and address road safety





issues. It would provide a scenic stopping point for greenway cyclists, Wild Atlantic Way tourists and residents alike, all maximising on Mulrannys spectacular, but as yet undiscovered, views over Clew Bay. Despite the severe economic recession, funding was granted and this large village centre public realm area was completed in 2016. This has been a 'game changer' in attracting visitors to the village, boosting economic activity, while providing a village centre for residents, and winning several awards.

**Railway Station Restoration:** In 2014 Mayo County Council sought to re-invent the derelict railway station as a heritage exhibition and outdoor activities space. The loss of the roof around the year 2000 had drastically accelerated the dereliction of the Station House. Only the brick walls remained salvageable and the distinct original setting of the building had been encroached upon by car parking and holiday homes. The design challenge was to restore the original building respectfully and prolong the life of this heritage building. The building was reconstructed with a careful conservation ethos, but innovative design features were also incorporated.

**Traditional Dry Stone Walls:** Mulranny Stone Wall Festival commenced in 2005 and continues annually, with visitors and the local community, restoring the railway line's substantial dry-stone walls. And promoting a wider conservation and appreciation of this indigenous rural asset.

## FUTURE CONSERVATION PLANS

**The Causeway Restoration Project:** This unique structure has suffered damage over the years due to natural erosion and misguided but well intended repair works. In consultation with conservation and ecological expertise a plan is being developed to re-instate the original machair grass thus providing a naturally draining carpet to this spectacular walkway

**Pier Enhancement Works:** Mayo County Council and the community have been awarded funding for these works which include the addition of a floating pontoon and extension to the slipway. Consultations took place with all relevant heritage and environmental bodies to ensure best practice and conservation.

**Promotion of Architectural Quality:** Since April 2019 planning applications in Mulranny are being assessed by the Municipal District Architect to promote an improvement in design quality and suitability to setting.



## Landscape

Mulranny offers beautiful coastal landscapes and seascapes. Its diverse vistas can be accessed along the 6km loop walk, from the Victorian Causeway and hand cut stone Pier.

Mulranny is located on an isthmus, a narrow neck of land that joins Corraun Peninsula to the Nephin mountain range and separates Clew Bay from Bellacragher Bay. It is this feature that endows Mulranny with a unique dichotomy of landscapes and seascapes.

Mulranny's Clew Bay coastline is dominated by Rosmurrevagh Machair, (Irish Ross Magh Riabhach) meaning 'the Promontory of the grey plain'

Machair consists of a mixture of siliceous sand derived from glacial tills and sediments and calcerous sand derived from the shells of animals which lived on the offshore platform. These rare Machair systems are only found on the North-Western coast of Ireland and Scotland. 'Machair is also described as low lying fertile plain' or 'Sandy Sea Shore Plain'. Rosmurrevagh machair is rich in biodiversity, being home to the intrepid Bird's Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Night scented Sea Campion (*Silene uniflora*), Belted Beauty Moth (*Lycia zonaria*), migratory Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla*) and the red listed Great Yellow Bee (*Bombus distinguendus*).

The machair sand plains and salt marsh are of immense ecological interest as the area is rich in flora, fauna and birdlife. The salt marsh has developed in the quiet, sheltered conditions behind Mulranny beach. It is distinctive because of its complex drainage pattern. The salt marsh has a wealth of flora and fauna, particularly Orchids (*Orchidaceae*), Sea Lavender (*Limonium*) and the spectacular Sea Pink Flower (*Armeria maritima*) which carpets the entire marsh in the month of May. Examples of some commonly found species are: Curlew (*Numenius*), Wigeon (*Mareca*), Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Godwits (*Limosa*), Oyster Catchers (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Dunlins (*Calidris alpina*), Sand Pipers (*Scolopacidae*), Terns (*Sternidae*) and Gulls (*Laridae*).

Bellacragher Bay 'the bay of the plunder' is located North-West of Mulranny village. It is sheltered by the Corraun massif and remote from the Atlantic currents. It also basks under the steep southern face of Claggan Mountain. These features collectively give rise to Mulranny's mediterranean microclimate.

Mulranny is famous for Ireland's largest stand of Mediterranean Heather (*Erica erigena*) as well as ancient Oaks (*Quercus*) and Scots Pines (*Pinus sylvestris*). It is extremely rare to find this heather species in Ireland. It extends from the north-west of the village towards the rear of the hotel and along the N59 to Belmullet.

### THE OLD IRISH GOAT (*capra hircus*)

The Old Irish Goat (*Capra hircus*) is a critically endangered rare native landrace breed of goat. The Old Irish Goat (*Capra hircus*) is highly adapted to the Irish landscape and climate. The males in particular are impressive animals, featuring long hair, bodacious coifs, beards and sideburns, with impressive horns. The females have a more delicate frame and a matriarchal role, their lineage is the social thread of the herd. The Old Irish Goat (*Capra hircus*) is an unrealised, economic, cultural and tourism asset, that Ireland is obliged to preserve and promote, with a negative conservation outlook. It exists in isolated feral herds across Ireland, where it is generally either being indiscriminately culled or inadvertently cross-bred out of existence, the latter recognised as the primary vector for native breed losses globally. Efforts to research the Old Irish Goat (*Capra hircus*) and later conserve it commenced in Mulranny, in 2009. Having secured ancient primitive goat DNA from all the natural museums in the UK and Ireland, the society commissioned the first DNA study of Irish and UK primitive goats in 2013. This ground breaking study yielded an astonishing result effective





tively discovering a new goat breed in Europe; the Old Irish Goat (*Capra hircus*). Overall, these findings identify Mulranny goats as some of the last modern representatives of the 'Old Irish' type of goat, once ubiquitous throughout the island, and highlight them for much needed conservation efforts.

A Community initiative to preserve the Old Irish Goat (*Capra hircus*) commenced in 2011. The Old Irish Goat Visitor Centre operates out of the former Garda station (police) under licence from the Office of Public Works, since 2013. The Centre offers an original, "one-of-a-kind" visitor experience with a global appeal. The project has received official backing under the Mayo Sustainable Agriculture Strategy published in May 2019.

## SOIL QUALITY

### Nephin Beg Locally Led Agri-Environment Project

Farming in harmony with the Upland Environment is close to the heart of the Mulranny Community so much so that local farmers have come together to seek assistance in managing their farming enterprises in this unique environment. The overarching aim of the Nephin Beg locally Led Agri-Environment Project is to promote the integrity of upland peats in the Nephin Beg range thus enhancing biodiversity, maintaining water quality, fostering carbon sequestration and enabling a farming way of life that has been and will be sustainable for many generations to come.

Situated overlooking Clew Bay on the Western seaboard, in County Mayo, the Nephin Beg range is unique mountainous landscape ideally suited to High Nature Value (HNV) farming.

To the north of the mountains is Owenduff bog, one of the last intact blanket bog systems in Western Europe and an important scientific and scenic feature of neighbouring Ballycroy National Park. Much of the landscape in the uplands is part of the Natura 2000 Network including the Owenduff Nephin Complex SAC (000534) and SPA (04098) adjoining the Clew Bay Complex in the lowland area. This connectivity between neighbouring Natura sites contributes to

the protection of rare and important habitats and species under the EU Habitats and Birds Directive.

The eastern catchment of the Nephin Beg range is home to the Marine Institutes's Burrishoole Research Facility, an important site for Salmon (*Salmo salar*), Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Eel (*Anguilliformes*) research since mid-1950s. Long term ecological monitoring is conducted on the flora and fauna of the lakes, rivers and streams of the Burrishoole and Owengarve catchments, in combination with high resolution climatological and hydrological measurements.

Visitor numbers to the area are increasing annually due to the Wild Atlantic Way, the Great Western Greenway, Ballycroy National Park, looped walking trails and other tourism attractions. The Wild Nephin Wilderness area was designated in 2014 and is a 15 year programme to rewild 11,000 ha. of forestry.

Ballycroy National Park and Wild Nephin have jointly been awarded Gold Tier status as an International Dark Sky Park, meaning that there is a management plan in place to ensure light pollution and its impact on biodiversity is controlled.

For centuries the Nephin Beg uplands have been farmed sensitively using traditional methods of shepherding and farm management. Headage payments during the 1980's and '90's under Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) incentivised the stocking of upland peats in the area with unsustainable levels of sheep, leading to overgrazing and peatland degradation. Subsequent schemes featured de-stocking and the introduction of rest periods significantly benefited the habitat quality of the commonages and livestock condition. However, these practices haven't been followed up in a sustained manner to ensure environmental success. Currently there is little incentive to encourage young farmers to continue farming the uplands. Over the last few years, local hill farmers, have become increasingly concerned about the condition of uplands. Improvements made under previous farm schemes may be lost along with traditional hill farming skills and the unique "hefted" Mayo Black Face Mountain Sheep breed.





ELLACRAGHER  
BAY

ACHILL

NEPHIN MTS.

LOOKOUT  
HILL

SCHOOL

CHURCH

PUMP  
HOUSE

ESSENCE  
OF  
MURKANN

SHANGALA

SALT  
MARSH

CAUSEWAY

TRAWOUGHTER  
BAY

FOIREANN  
SALT MARSH

AN t-oileán Uaigneach

BEACH

CLEW BAY

CURRAUN





GREAT WESTERN GREENWAY

ST. BRENDAN'S  
VILLAGES

ENVIRONMENTAL  
CENTRE

THE PARKS

WASHING  
POOL  
BRIDGE

COMMUNITY  
CENTRE

LIME  
KILN

N59 NEWPORT →

DUCK ROAD

MACHAIR

CASLAGH

PIER

TRA BUI

PURTALAEH

CURVE  
OF THE  
FAIRIES

GAIRI  
BEACH  
NA BPAISTI

Illustration by Pamela Gray



## Green Spaces

### GREAT WESTERN GREENWAY

The most notable piece of Green Infrastructure in the Mulranny area is the Great Western Greenway which runs to the north of the village settlement. The Greenway which was the first of its kind in Ireland and is the flagbearer of successful Greenways has helped revitalise the tourism industry in Mulranny. The Mulranny to Newport section was the first to be constructed and was made possible as a result of the goodwill and co-operation of local landowners who granted permissive access for the route. The 42km off road Greenway runs from Westport to Achill on the old Great Western railway line. The tourism sector within the village has significantly increased since the opening of the route in 2011.

### BEACHES

Clean Blue Flag beaches and beautiful coastline offer an enhanced outdoor experience for all. Mulranny has three beaches:

- Mulranny Beach (Blue Flag Beach)
- Murrevagh Beach
- Purtalahee Beach

Since 2006 the beach at Mulranny has held Blue Flag status. The mission of the programme works towards sustainable development at beaches through strict criteria dealing with water quality, environmental education, environmental management and safety. This site has consistently achieved extremely high bathing water quality, which is represented in the high-quality catchment area. On the beach, initiatives such as the #2minbeachclean keep the area

litter free and raise awareness of the issues of ocean plastic. The beach is lifeguarded from June to September each year, with up to 200 visitors a day.

Both the Mulranny Environment Group and Murrevagh Environment Group ensure that the beaches are kept litter free all year round and they organise a clean up for Clean Coasts Day to raise awareness of the importance of these amenities to Mulranny.

### MULRANNY LOOP WALKS

Mulranny offers beautiful coastal landscapes and seascapes. Its diverse vistas can be accessed along the 6km Mulranny Loop Walk, from the Victorian Causeway and the hand cut stone pier.

### MURREVAGH CEMETERY

Murrevagh cemetery was consecrated in 1942. Prior to that date burials took place to Killeen, Burrishoole and Ballycroy graveyards. A local family donated the ground. A cemetery committee was set up in 2004 who have put a comprehensive plan of improvement in action since then.

### GOLF

Golf has been played in Mulranny since the late 1800s in conjunction with the Great Western Hotel. It moved to its present location in 1968 when it was affiliated to the Golfing Union of Ireland. It is a nine hole course with alternative tees for the back nine. It is situated on the North Shore of Clew Bay with panoramic views of Croagh Patrick and Clare Island. Part of the maintenance of the course involves grazing by the native sheep population.





# Planting Permanent and Seasonal

## GRASS CUTTING

Mulranny Tidy Towns Committee has made a conscious decision to focus its efforts on enhancing and sustaining the natural environment. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015 – 2020 addresses the rapid decline in Ireland's bee population with one third of bee species threatened with extinction. In partnership with Mayo County Council, Mulranny has signed up to the Plan and has an agreed set of actions to protect pollinators. The focus has been to manage the areas throughout the village in a pollinator friendly way by reducing the frequency of mowing and creating pollinator friendly corridors throughout the village. The Great Yellow Bee (*Bombus distinguendus*) once widespread throughout Ireland is now deemed endangered with what is deemed to be the last sustainable population in the country now located in the Greater Mulranny and Erris area. Mulranny community in partnership with Mayo County Council and University College Dublin have embarked on a study to identify and map the remaining population of the Great Yellow Bee (*Bombus distinguendus*) and is working with the local farming community and state agencies to identify how the population can be both protected and sustained.

## INVASIVE WEEDS

The four main invasive weed species present throughout the village are:

- Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)
- Giant Rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctorial*)
- Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*)
- Montbretia (*Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora*)

The community, together with Mayo County Council have mapped and treated all infestations of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) in the greater Mulranny area. Mayo County Council is currently developing an invasive weed strategy for the County and has consulted with the Mulranny community. Representatives from the community have been trained on how to botanically identify these invasive weed infestations and map them using a dedicated survey app (Survey 123). Mayo County Council carries out an annual treatment programme in partnership with the community which has resulted in excess of 90% of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) infestations being recorded and treated. The focus in the short term is to complete all surveying and treatment of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and in the medium to long term it is intended to replicate the process for the three remaining invasive weed species.

## FLORAL DISPLAYS

The focus of efforts throughout the village in recent years is to move away from summer bedding style floral displays. The local indigenous goat population provides a challenge. Despite best efforts the goats have on several occasions simply destroyed these displays.





## Environmental Education

Mulranny prides itself in delivering and participating in a variety of environmental programmes with a strong focus on raising awareness of protection of the environment.

### SCHOOLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Community playgroup use the outside resources in the locality including the beach, mountain, greenway and 'lookout hill' to nurture the children's awareness of their natural environment, thus encouraging them to become active citizens in their local community.

Mulranny National School has 52 pupils enrolled and the school is currently preparing for its 7th Green Flag award – Global Citizenship Energy. Over the last two years the school has carried out wonderful work in their journey on environmental education including learning about fair trade and the principles of human rights. The children planted native trees and have a great knowledge of their marine environment which is embedded in the beautiful beach mosaic that they have created.

The school is very proud to be a Green School and in 2018 was awarded the Green Flag for Global Citizenship Litter & Waste. The school took part in the energy event 'Let's make Mulranny Cosy' and students compiled energy surveys which were completed by those who attended the event.

The school encourages sustainable travel by organising regular walk, cycle and scoot to school events as part of the Green Schools programme. As part of this programme the school organises an annual beach clean-up.

The school partners with the Marine Institute using the coastline as an outdoor classroom by taking part in the Institute's 'Marine Explorers Education Programme'.

The children go on an annual Seashore Safari where they find lots of marine creatures and learn about life along the beautiful shoreline. The children also walk along the steps and Causeway and learn about the grasses, trees and edible plants that grow there. The school takes part in the Irish Food Boards 'Food Dudes' programme which encourages increased consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables. The school has a school garden where vegetables and fruit are grown to compliment this programme.

The older teenagers continue to strengthen links with the community by generously volunteering their time and skills in projects such as engaging in youth ministries in the church, Tidy Town's involvement, sporting activities, volunteering in St. Brendan's nursing home and various fundraising events.





### MEN'S SHED

The Men's Shed participated in a Reuse Workshop as part of National Reuse Month. The workshop introduced them to the skills that they need to upcycle and reuse materials in their community work. The Men's Shed assisted with the construction and installation of the Insect Hotel.

### REUSE SCHEMES

Water refill points are provided at the Tourist Office and Activity Services Centre to encourage a move away from single-use plastic bottles.

### BIODIVERSITY EDUCATION

Biodiversity forms a hugely important part in Mulranny's fabric. Mulranny became the first Tidy Village to be awarded National Nature Award for research, regeneration and interpretation of one of Europe's rarest habitats – Rosmurrevagh Machair. In 2019 Mulranny Tidy Towns was delighted to take part in a new Biodiversity training programme for Tidy Town Community Groups in County Mayo. The workshops raised awareness of local biodiversity and how this is linked to the 'Leave No Trace' ethos and outdoor recreation.

The Mulranny Habitat Mapping & Biodiversity Action Plans are important educational resources in the community while the greenway orchard and the biodiversity garden serve as practical educational tools. The Old Irish Goat Visitor Centre and production of the Old Irish Goat Flyer and Exhibition are great additions to awareness raising.

The Greenway Orchard, developed in 2012 involved planting 66 native trees and fruit trees. Along with being attractive it supports and feeds many species of birds and mammals.



### GEODESIGN WORKSHOP

In 2016, Mulranny held a Geodesign workshop in collaboration with Mayo County Council and the Heritage Council. This gave the community an alternative method of future planning. The workshop was based on 10 themes:

Renewable Energy, Water Management, Housing, Habitat Biodiversity, Enterprise (Tourism) Enterprise (Farming), Cultural Landscape, Environmental Protection, Transport and Community Facilities.

### SURVEYS AND INFORMATION EVENTS

The Tidy Towns Committee in conjunction with other community groups host information events on topical issues such as recycling, climate change, cleaner coasts, greener cleaning and sustainable travel. Many surveys have been completed by householders in relation to biodiversity. Bird Watch Ireland's Garden Bird Survey proves very popular and informative.



### GIFT OF HANDS

The Gift of Hands is a great example of practical environmental education. It is a not-for-profit group run entirely by volunteers. It creates innovative and unique craft items made almost entirely from recycled materials. The group receives offcuts and strips from Foxford Woollen Mills which used to be put into landfill and over the 9 years that the group has been together, have taken many tons of material and made it into peg weaved rugs, patchwork throws, cushions, decorative items and soft toys. Over the summer months the group has its own craft shop and the profits from sales are donated to various charitable organisations and projects which need support.

## Effort and Involvement

For a small village Mulranny is fortunate to have a diverse number of voluntary bodies working in harmony for the betterment of the Community. These groups range from festival organisations to Mulranny Industrial Development Trust to Active Retirement to Community Choir and Pipe Band. All of the Community Groups demonstrate their concern and take responsibility for their environment. The effort of these dedicated groups has been recognised through a range of environmental, heritage and tourism awards.

- ULI Excellence in Placemaking Award) 2019
- Gold Award - Ireland's Best Destination for Responsible Tourism 2016
- Overall Winner - Ireland's Responsible Tourism Awards 2016
- Clean Coasts National Ocean Hero Award 2015
- The GreenPlan® - Ireland's First Accredited Village 2015
- Silver Award Winner Best Destination for Responsible Tourism 2015
- Fáilte Ireland's Best Small Tourism Town 2013
- A European Destination of Excellence (EDEN) Award Winner 2011 for regeneration of natural heritage sites
- National Notice Nature Award Winner 2007



The spirit of co-operation between voluntary groups in the village is evident from the early 1980's when a novel fundraising event to raise funds to build an amenity centre was undertaken by the entire community with the election of the Baron/ Baroness of Burrishoole. Four local people were chosen as candidates to run for election. The election rules were



simple - the candidate who raised the most money was elected. By the end of the fundraising and the election of the Baroness of Burrishoole the community had succeeded in raising £24,500. This covered the cost of building the centre which included a meeting room, indoor handball alley, toilets, showers and two tennis courts. The second phase of the centre was completed in the early '90s with the addition of a catering kitchen, a large community room which facilitated additional games like indoor football, basketball and badminton as well as community functions. The Amenity centre has provided generations of young people with a place to meet and play sports and is now providing space for active retirement activities with the provision of bowls.





The Amenity Centre is the hub of village activity and hosts meetings for environmental and other community groups:

### 1. Mulranny Tidy Towns

Mulranny Tidy Towns Committee was set up in 1991 and has participated in the National Tidy Towns competition since then and has increased its marks annually to be top of its category in County Mayo. In 2017 and 2018 the village was awarded Bronze medal status. The Tidy Towns Committee has led or played a part in most of Mulrannys achievements over the last two decades.

### 2. Irish Countrywomen's Association

In 1978 Mulranny was a thriving tourist village but lacked an organisation for bringing local women together for social, educational and personal develop-

ment purposes. The ICA Guild was formed to meet these needs.

### 3. Mulranny Environmental Group (MEG)

- Hosts the annual Mulranny Stone Wall Festival;
- Habitat mapped over 2,000 hectares;
- Developed the Mulranny Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Developed the Mulranny Loop Walk;
- Produced the Mulranny Natural Heritage Flyer;
- Hosts information events for Heritage Week annually;
- Supported the first Geodesign workshop in Ireland

### 4. Old Irish Goat Society (OIGS)

The Old Irish Goat Society, Mulranny has led the re-discovery of Ireland's "lost" native breed of goat, the Old Irish Goat (*capra hircus*).





## Tourism & Leisure

County Mayo has an established reputation as a tourism destination in the west of Ireland. Its visitor offering is based on an impressive and pristine natural environment, distinctive historical and cultural attractions and a warm visitor welcome. Mayo is renowned for its diverse, wild and spectacular landscapes, offering some of the best scenery in the country.

Designation of large areas of land and coastline as special areas of conservation and protection and the establishment of the Wild Nephin National Park Ballycroy has positioned the county as a wild destination for responsible and passive tourism.

With travel patterns in recent years leaning to more active travel experiences, visitor participation in hiking, cycling and water-based activities has grown significantly to include the Great Western Greenway, Bangor Trail and Western Way making West Mayo a destination of national importance.

The Great Western Greenway has transformed the cycling product offered in Ireland and has shown how cycling infrastructure can regenerate a rural environment as well as attract huge participation. In 2011, its first year of operation, 145,000 people utilised the Great Western Greenway and numbers have now increased to over 250,000.

### COUNTY MAYO TOURISM STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Mayo County Council adopted a Tourism Strategy titled Destination Mayo - A Strategy for the Future Development of Tourism in County Mayo 2016 - 2021. Its implementation is ongoing across the 86 actions, these actions incorporate a number of areas: Adventure Tourism, Food, Educational Tourism, Festivals & Events, Golf, Walking, Cycling, Accommodation & Hospitality and Enterprise & Investment.

### MULRANNY TOURISM

Mulranny is very much an integral part of the Tourism offering in West Mayo. The Mulranny Tourism Group, a dynamic community group, was set up in 2010.

Within the first year a new Tourism website [www.mulranny.ie](http://www.mulranny.ie) was developed and a derelict building was brought to life by the community, with support from the local LEADER programme, and became the new community-led volunteer-staffed Tourist Office. This office is now recognised by Fáilte Ireland (Irish Tourist Board) as an official 'Tourist Information Centre'. Over the years that followed the group took on a number of initiatives that have succeeded in reviving the Mulranny Brand and have developed the village as a 'visitors hub' for Mayo.

This Tourism Group has also developed a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan for Mulranny in a collaborative process with the local tourism Service Providers and with support from the EU Rural Alliance Programme.

A wide range of activities are available around Mulranny including high amenity walks, a links golf course, blue flag beaches, sea kayaking, shore and sea angling, artistic adventures, fine dining and excellent leisure facilities. Mulranny perched on the Wild Atlantic Way is the gateway to Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park, North Mayo's Ceide Coast, Achill Island and only 20km from the heritage town of Westport and the County town of Castlebar.

### ACCOMMODATION OVERVIEW

In Mulranny and indeed the wider Clew Bay area there is a good mix of various accommodation offerings to include high-quality Hotels, Guesthouses and Campsites. The Mulranny Park Hotel offers a capacity for close to 200 guests. In the wider area of Clew Bay the capacity available is over 3,600 guests.

### MULRANNY MARKETING & PROMOTION

The objective for Mulranny is to market the area as a destination of choice for domestic and international visitors, particularly those with an interest in adventure and slow tourism. Key to this is working collaboratively with tourism industry partners to develop exciting and innovative experiences to include Clare Island and Inishturk Island, and the greater West/North Mayo area.



## MEDIA PROMOTIONS

As part of Mulrannys collaboration with industry partners, various promotional campaigns to include TV, radio, print and social media streams are being delivered. This work includes collaborating with media production companies, travel writers, bloggers and a range of journalists.

## VISITOR EXPERIENTIAL PLAN – CLEW BAY

Local tourism businesses in Mulranny along with community groups as well as other interested parties and individuals are currently working with consultants on Fáilte Ireland's Visitor Experience Development Plan to bring together a series of stories, ideas, and opportunities that could be used to boost tourism in the area.

## GOURMET GREENWAY – FOOD TRAIL

The Gourmet Greenway is a food trail devised by Mulranny Park Hotel, in association with several local food producers, to showcase the wonderful artisan food in the vicinity of Mulranny. Using the Great Western Greenway as its backdrop, this food trail highlights the selection of local food producers and



provides an opportunity to visit and purchase the fare of the producers.

## MULRANNY ACTIVITY SERVICES CENTRE

The newly refurbished Railway Station House now known as the Mulranny Activity Services Centre serves as a facility for Greenway users and outdoor enthusiasts, bike hire facilities, tour guiding services and a kite surfing centre. The local Rural Social Scheme who maintain the Greenway, also known as the 'Green Patrol' are based at the centre as well as the Dark Skies Community Group.





