



GOLD AWARD

SUBMISSION REPORT

to

Eco-Congregation Ireland

October 2020



INTRODUCTION

The application for auditing of our work for our last Eco-Congregation Award was on the 7th December 2018. Since this, our journey has progressed and developed in many directions, while holding firm to our vision:- to see our local community and churches adopt an eco-approach to worship, lifestyle, property, finance management, community outreach and contact with the developing world.

Our dedicated and valued members have continued their commitment to Westport Eco-Congregation and our submission reflects their efforts.

This report is submitted to Eco-Congregation Ireland for consideration, for The Gold Award. The sub-committee of: Bríd McAuley and Caroline Goucher have formulated this report of the projects since our last application, the judging on 7th December 2017 and the presentation of our award on 22nd April 2018. Since then we have been busy.

The Four Main Headings are:

1. **Spiritual**
2. **Practical**
3. **Local Community**
4. **Developing World**

For this report we are adding the following focused headings:

5. **Climate Change**
6. **Biodiversity**
7. **Engagement with Other communities.**

Each item listing our actions will have the heading "Award Headings" most applicable to the award categories as listed above.

Liaising with other Parishes

Award Headings: **Engagement with other communities.**

- Skibbereen, County Cork (Dec 2019-Feb 2020) Anita Henderson, Chairperson of the Parish Assembly of Skibbereen Parish, Cork, and Ross Diocese asked for direction in setting up an eco-parish in Skibbereen, which we gladly gave.
- Cloughjordan: (18 Nov 2019) Brid McAuley and Caroline Goucher prepared a Zoom Presentation for a gathering of 35 people from diverse community groups, in Cloughjordan Village Hall with Rev. Clifford Guest. This presentation also included a lively and engaging Q&A session. As a result of this meeting, a committee of 9 enthusiasts was formed and they continue to do trojan work on eco matters.
- Louisburgh: (19 Feb 2019) Brid McAuley and Caroline Goucher accepted the invitation of Helen Fahy of the Louisburgh Pastoral Council to give a talk on the background to the projects WEC have completed. The parish representatives were most welcoming and continue to promote many eco themes within their other parish groups.
- Roundfort, Robeen, Carras Eco-Congregation Parish: (14 Nov 2019) Mary Manning and Caroline Goucher accepted the invitation of Mary Trench and Sr.Catherine Brennan to attend a meeting with those who had gathered to commence their journey as an 'Eco-Parish'. We shared our events and experiences to date with them. This evening included a lively Q&A followed with tea and scones. This is a relationship between parishes that will continue to grow.



Mary & Caroline from Westport Eco-Congregation with Sr. Catherine, in Robeen Community Hall with Mary Trench and members that formed the Roundfort, Robeen and Carras Eco-Congregation Group.

Liaising with other Mayo Communities

Award Headings: **Engagement with Other communities & Local Community**

- **GMIT Mayo Campus:** Supporting their 'Green Campus' initiatives liaising with the Sustainability Officer about projects and promotion/supporting their events.
- **Knock Shrine:** Attendance at events, liaising with Ann Lavin about projects.
- **Ard Bhride, Sisters of Mercy Castlebar:** Attendance at events, liaising with Sr.Margaret Tiernan about possible projects.
- **Mayo Public Participation Network (Mayo PPN):** We are a registered member of the environmental college and we contribute to their newsletter.
- **Mayo Environmental Network:** We have a representative on their committee and are influencing local issues via Mayo County Council and The Mayo PPN.

Collaborations: Westport Eco-Congregation has members who are part of other groups. This linkage ensures that we are all are connected in many ways

- **The Pastoral Council:** We have a representative that attends their meetings and liaises between the two groups.
- **Holy Trinity Church** Have a representative elected to our committee to ensure that dialogue and collaboration are formalised.
- **Coastal Communities for Climate Action:** This group of adults formed to gather on the main town square in support of Greta Thunberg's school strikes 'Fridays 4 The Future'.
- **ECO-WEST** Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) with SEAI, The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. Westport Eco-Congregation is supportive of this new budding group that is researching the potential for local energy generation in the West Mayo Area.
- **Bertra Beach Working Group:** Westport Eco-Congregation is represented as part of the local stakeholders, engaging with the relevant authorities to develop a tiered approach to the extensive coastal erosion issues on this local sand dune structure in Clew Bay.
- **Croagh Patrick Sustainable Access and Path Restoration:** This is a €200k project to provide safe access to the holy mountain and ensure pilgrims high-quality experience.
- **The ALPHA programme:** Many of our members attended and supported the ALPHA programme that was rolled out in the parish in 2019 & 2020.

Media Award Headings: **Local Community Spiritual Climate Change Biodiversity**

Grass Cutting: We encouraged and supported Mayo County Council's and Westport Tidy Towns' move to reduce grass cutting since 2019. There was much negative commentary about the proposal initially, (<https://www.mayonews.ie/news/31689-westport-to-change-grass-cutting-for-biodiversity>) but it has since been embraced to protect and manage pollinators.

Westport Biodiversity Plan 2018 – Launched in April 2018 (<https://youtu.be/HKqlf1KDLgQ>)

National Media:

- We made 10 contributions to the ECI Newsletter since 2018
- We made approximately 80 contributions to local Newspapers in the last 2 years
- We contributed to ICC Climate Justice Affirmations Blog Post <https://www.irishchurches.org/news-blog/5387/annual-events-and-caring-for>
- We were named One of Westport 'Seven stars of Sustainability' by Destination Westport, the local tourism group. <https://www.destinationwestport.com/seven-sustainability-stars-in-westport>
- Our committee member, Pat Fahy, who is also Westport Tidy Towns Biodiversity Officer, has a monthly article on biodiversity in the local newspaper (The Mayo News).
 - Give the lawnmower a break this summer – Biodiversity Officer, 19 MARCH 2019 <https://www.mayonews.ie/news/33436-give-the-lawn-mower-a-break-this-summer-biodiversity-officer>
 - Perennially priceless 13 AUGUST 2019 https://www.mayonews.ie/living/outdoor-living/34125-perennially-priceless?fbclid=IwAR3T96b4ikFISdCFIUGEHSDBbN2tar18kTPtDmXP3RWl_IIeQ8p5rhM_nc

Speaking Opportunities:

- Holy Trinity Westport Harvest Festival 2020
- St. Mary's Church Westport May 2020
- Castlebar Harvest Festival 2018
- Turlough Harvest Festival 2018
- St. Mary's Church Westport Advent 2018
- Our committee member Kathleen Friel was invited to talk about Eco-Congregation to Sancta Maria College in Louisburgh.
- Kathleen Friel and Mary Manning talked to the children at Lankhill National School on eco matters 2019
- Caroline Goucher spoke to the community at 'Books at One' in Louisburgh 2019 on environmental issues.
- ['Harnessing the Hope' – rising to the challenges of 'Laudato Si'](#) (18 May 2019) An engaging day of discussion facilitated by Lorna Gold on the reality of the danger that climate change poses for our future. Brid McAuley spoke about Westport Eco-Congregation at this event



Social Media *Award Headings:* **Developing World** **Local Community** **Spiritual** **Climate Change** **Biodiversity** **Practical Engagement with Other communities**

We have created an extensive online presence on all the major social media platforms to promote our work and to support the global community to 'Care for Our Common Home'. This ensures that we connect at every level with the global community and at a local level for the promotion of all relevant causes and our advocacy work.

Links to Social Media:

Website: www.westportparish.ie/ecocongregation <https://www.westportparish.ie/copy-of-parish-newsletter>

Twitter: @WestEcoCong <https://twitter.com/westecocong?lang=en>

Facebook: Westport Eco-Congregation <https://www.facebook.com/WestportEcoCongregation/>

YouTube Channel: Westport Eco-Congregation
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmmXR0Fv3GeC5q3la_g7_fw

Biodiversity in Westport

Pat Fahy was named a 'Local Biodiversity Champion' in the Irish Wildlife Trust Biodiversity Awards, for his work on behalf of Westport Tidy Towns in promoting pollination and propagation projects in the town. He is also titled 'The Biodiversity Officer' of Westport Tidy Towns and is a member of Westport Eco-Congregation Committee.

As a biodiversity officer, he has been instrumental in changing the way the Westport Tidy Towns committee and local volunteers look at wildflowers and wildlife around the town. "There are actually more points in the Tidy Towns competition for wildlife habitats and biodiversity than there is for litter picking," he told The Mayo News.

This relationship is an excellent example in the sharing of resources and the support between all the Community, Voluntary and Environmental groups in Westport. We are connected and assist in all the projects that add value in the town. These relationships continue to grow and prosper just like the pollinator flower beds and buzzing bees in the town and its environs.



Photo: Public areas are planted with pollinators that flower to encourage bees. This strip is by the river between the two church buildings in the centre of Westport Town



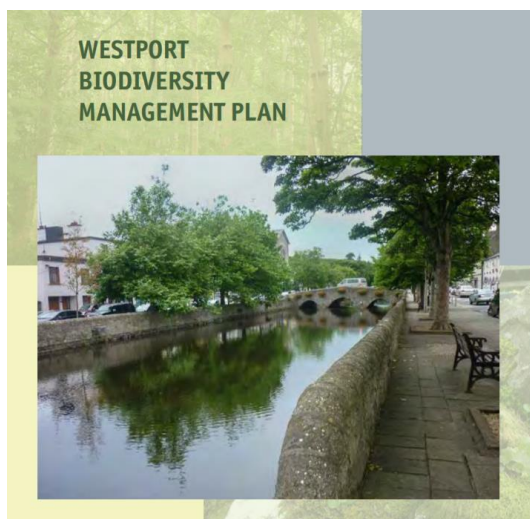
Westport Wildlife & Tidy Towns



Photo: Rice College Wildlife Pond



Pollinator Friendly Baskets on Market Lane, it began with one shop and the idea spread, 5 baskets and 4 tree planters, with nasturtiums and nicotiana. It has been observed over the summer period, that ever since the flowers bloomed, more of the local shop keepers decided to spruce up some of their own shop fronts. These lift the atmosphere of the side streets of the town.



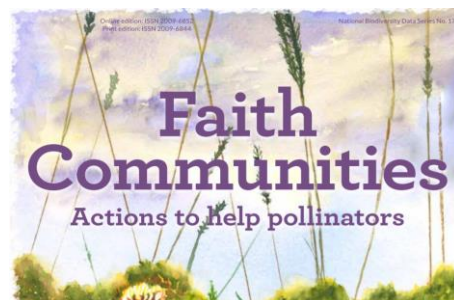
WESTPORT BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN was launched in 2018 after extensive public consultation <https://youtu.be/HKqlf1KDLgQ>

Link to document: https://www.mayo.ie/getmedia/6d5d8332-9525-4377-97f5-9b6f4fae24cc/Westport-Biodiversity-Plan_Final-May-2018.pdf

We have also promoted and encouraged consideration of the "Faith Communities: Actions to help Pollinators"

<https://pollinators.ie/resources/>

https://pollinators.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Faith-Communities_actions-to-help-pollinators-2018-WEB.pdf



AROR Project - Developing World

Award Headings: **Developing World** **Local Community** **Spiritual** **Climate Change** **Biodiversity**

The people of Westport, County Mayo have always had a great interest in Third World issues. In 1982 they formed a partnership with the town of Aror in Kenya. The objective was to establish positive and lasting development aid for a particular area rather than sending emergency relief when it is too late. This programme continues to provide a profile of Westport and Aror and the relationship that has developed between the towns.

Aror has a population of 18,000 people, about 3 times as many as Westport. Life in Aror could not be more different to Westport, with an average yearly income of about IRL £12.50, the average life expectancy of 52, and infant mortality at a rate of 8 times that in Ireland. 75% of the illnesses suffered in Aror are preventable and organisations such as the Medical Missionaries of Mary provide healthcare and education to the region. Further support came when a group from Westport took the opportunity to visit Aror and saw first-hand what needed to be done to help. Michael O'Donnell describes his experience in Kenya and how they have extended the twinning partnerships between other towns in Mayo and Kenya. More: <http://www.westportaror.com/>

IN 2020, in promoting greater eco-awareness in Westport, part of that message is that the effects are not only beneficial locally, but also have an impact at a much wider level. We promote the idea that our transitioning from overuse and overspending is reflected in the transitioning for poorer areas for their good.

Westport Aror Partnership, which is a long-established initiative, continues to receive the support of the parish. This is primarily done through our individual members' involvement with its various activities, whether from fundraising events or creating awareness within the community on the positive environmental impact it has at the local level in Aror.

Recently we have developed closer ties with Trocaire. This is to help bring more focus on how our actions locally have an impact on communities in the developing world. We have done this by having Trocaire members speak at a Town Hall meeting, on YouTube Video and during the Laudato Si book club.



Photos: Members of Westport Eco-Congregation with the delegation from AROR



Photo: Project information at the main entrance of St.Mary's Church

factsheet

- Partnership founded in 1982
- Longest established such initiative in Ireland
- Publishes Annual Report; accounts certified annually
- Administration costs are minimal and travel costs financed by members
- Featured on several Irish and U.K. television programs, including 'Radhare' (1991)
- Recognised by the Holy See for its services to the developing world (1992)
- Recognised and cited in the 'Irish Aid Strategy Plan' (D.F.A.1993)
- Honoured with the Community Award at the 'Mayo People of the Year' awards (1997)
- Published 'Letters from Africa' (1998)
- Received 'Cathaoirleach's Community Award' from Westport Town Council (2008)
- Hosted visit by Kenyan Ambassador, Ms. Catherine Muigai Mwangi (2009)
- Hosted visit by Kenyan Ambassador, Mr Richard Opembe (2017)




Make donation:
 Bank of Ireland, High St., Westport, Co. Mayo
 Account name: Westport Aror Kenya
 Account number: 54564207
 BIC: BOFIEZD
 IBAN: IE22BOFI90399854564207

Westport Credit Union:
 Account name: Westport Aror Kenya
 Account number: 116558

Contact us:
 Westport/Aror (Kenya) Partnership,
 The Mall, Westport, Co. Mayo, Ireland, Tel: 098 25063,
 Email: westportarorkenyapartnership@gmail.com

www.westportaror.org

Registered Charity: The Westport/Aror (Kenya) Partnership
 is a registered charity. RCN: 20020163

YEARLY EVENTS

Earth Day Award Headings: **Developing World Local Community Spiritual Climate Change Biodiversity**

Earth Day (22 April 2020) Online promotion to join the 50-year anniversary and to celebrate the Theme of 'Climate Change'

Earth Hour Award Headings: **Local Community Spiritual Developing World Climate Change**



Photos: Celebrating Earth Hour at The Sentinel, Westport - March 24, 2018, With piper Jim Faulkner.

2018 Earth Hour We encouraged the community to unite for the global event, to witness the 'switch off' and dimming of lights with a celebration of song & community on The Octagon, Westport, followed by 'Tea & Tunes by Tealight' in local coffee shops - Christy's Harvest and Leafy Greens' Cafe where Fairtrade tea and coffee were served while listening to songs by candlelight with local musicians. Students and teachers from local schools designed beautiful posters for us, which we used to advertise the event around the town.

2019 Earth Hour Our event expanded significantly this year. We had a choir & musicians and a young activist from the Friday School Strikes to speak. Christy's Harvest and Leafy Greens' local coffee shops opened their doors for tea and entertainment. It was encouraging that more business premises participated in 2019 than previously

2020 'Earth Hour - At Home': (annual event)

As lights across the globe were powered down, we took the opportunity to focus on the power down within our homes. We launched our first online YouTube video, inviting people to join us in powering down but also to meditate in stillness, with our focus on our connection to the Earth. For this, we had a guided meditation, some prayers, and a beautiful song 'A Message from Mother Earth'. This has received over 600 views! While we posted it to mark Earth Hour 2020, this video is relevant every day. If you have not yet tuned in, take a listen! We encourage you to take 15 minutes to pause and connect to nature. We look forward to celebrating Earth Hour in March 2021. #EarthHourIRL #Connect2Earth Link: <https://youtu.be/HRculK7YgJc>



Photos: Gathering at The Octagon, For Earth Hour 2019.



Photos: The Mayo New Article of the Gathering at The Octagon, For Earth Hour 2019.

Laudato Sí Week Award Headings: **Spiritual** **Developing World** **Climate Change** **Biodiversity**

This year, To celebrate Laudato Sí Week and the fifth anniversary of the publication of LaudatoSi written by Pope Francis in 2015, we looked again at a virtual presentation from Westport Eco-Congregation. We were delighted to share an interview with Jane Mellett, Laudato Sí Officer at Trocaire on the significance of Laudato Sí, its relevance now in this time of Covid19, and what we can do to play our part both individually and collectively. Link:

<https://youtu.be/k6MAhW2D08I>

Mary Manning our chairperson, spoke about the encyclical Laudato Si by Pope Francis at Mass in St Mary's Church at the end of Laudato Si week.

This was broadcast on the churches You Tube channel and Facebook Live.

World Environment Day Award Headings: **Developing World** **Climate Change** **Biodiversity**

2020 World Environment Day We had an online promotion to join those around the globe and the UN General Assembly in their theme of 'Celebrate Biodiversity'. This day is the Peoples' Day to do something for the Environment and promote the Sustainable Development Goals.

Season of Creation Award Headings: Spiritual Local Community Climate Change Biodiversity

The **Season of Creation** runs annually between September 1 and October 4. It is a time of year when Christians around the world are invited to pray and care for creation. In Westport, the Holy Trinity & St. Mary's Communities join in promoting events in the town.

2018 Mayo: Towards a Cleaner Coast' Westport Eco Congregation ran a very successful 'Clean Coasts' talk in Westport Town Hall in September. Up to 80 people attended on the night when speakers included Becky Finn Britton from 'An Taisce Clean Coasts', Eithne Larkin from 'Leave no Trace', Fergal O'Dowd from GMIT who encouraged us to take part in the year 'Coast watch' survey. Louise Hastings from 'Keep our beaches Clean' outlined the power of one person using social media to gather local volunteers to clean up the beaches in Louisburgh after she witnessed appalling litter on Old Head beach during the heatwave in late June. This one-off litter pick event became a regular event over the summer months. Her talk inspired all present to take further action to keep our beaches clean. Following on from this Westport Eco-Congregation along with local volunteers carried out a clean-up in the Rosbeg area. Our thanks to all the volunteers and to Mayo County Council for sponsoring our event.

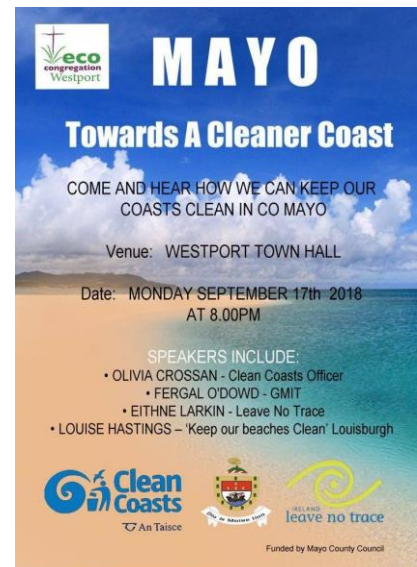


Photo: Members of the committee and the speakers on the night of the 'Mayo: Towards a Cleaner Coast' Event



Coastal clean-up on Sat 22 Sept at Rosbeg and were joined by locals - we were delighted to report that there was not a great deal of litter.

2019 Generations together for Actions for Climate Change was a wonderful success. We were truly blessed to have such inspirational speakers as Theo Cullen Mouze, Amber Farrell, Saoirse McHugh, and Lorna Gold - each one of them brought a unique perspective on Climate Action. The auditorium was almost full and the reaction to this event was very encouraging.

Lorna Gold was also interviewed on Midwest 'Faith Alive' programme by Monica Morley as a promotion for this event.

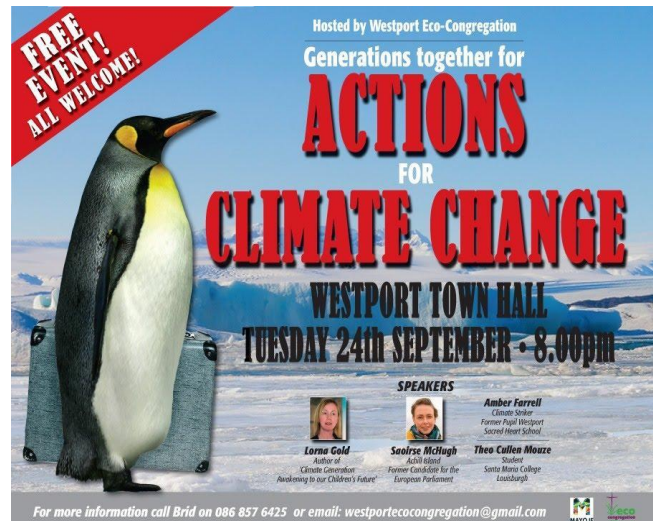


Photo: Members of the Westport Eco-Congregation with the speakers for 'Generations together for Action on Climate Change'. This awareness raising event was the jewel in the crown for Season of Creation schedule of events for 2019. During this time of Climate Emergency, the full house in Westport Townhall was inspired by the passion of all the speakers, who offered encouraging positive actions we could take, as we continue in the Care of our Common Home.

2019 Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle Westport Eco-Congregation hosted the ECI Climate Justice Candle for the Season of Creation. It was displayed in Holy Trinity and St. Mary's Parish Churches to raise awareness of the connection between our lifestyle choices and the injustices in the developing world associated with Climate Change. On 22 September 2019, Mass and service were celebrated with a contribution from the committee to focus on our interconnectedness.

Eunice Hall and Michael Hall (Principal of Sligo Grammar) parishioners of St. Salvator's Parish in Glaslough, Co. Monaghan, were present on the night, and the candle was passed over on its ecumenical journey through the parishes of Ireland.



Photo: Members of The Westport Eco-Congregation in the handover of The ECI Climate Justice Candle. L to R: Mary Murphy, Kathleen Friel, Brid McAuley, Michael Hall (Principal of Sligo Grammar), Eunice Hall, Mary Manning, and Caroline Goucher. Photographer: Frank Dolan.

2020 Season of Creation As Covid19 restrictions continued, our Season of Creation events had to be delivered online. Westport Eco-Congregation hosted a hugely successful on-line study group on Laudato Si' facilitated by Jane Mellett of Trocaire. This 6-week course began on Sept 1 and finished on Oct 6. We had 50 participants on Zoom for this event. The feedback was most encouraging. No doubt it will be thought provoking in the weeks that follow.

2020 Season of Creation We had planned an Inter-faith gathering in Nature to bless and celebrate our Earth. As this could not take place, we invited representatives of as many faiths and traditions as possible to offer their prayer/blessing in a videoed event. This video was launched on Sunday October 4th, the feast of St. Francis, on YouTube. This has been very well received. This link to this is: <https://youtu.be/ir80NTBPuOY>



Left to right:- Rev. Jen McWhirter, rector at Holy Trinity Church, Kathleen Murphy, Fr. Charlie McDonnell, Adm. St. Mary's Church, Fr. Shane Costelloe, Brid McCauley, Kathleen Friel and Kevin Barrett at the installation of the Climate Justice candle in St. Mary's Church...Season of Creation 2020.



Canon Jen McWhirter, rector of Holy Trinity Church, Westport at the installation of the Eco-Congregation Climate Justice candle on Oct. 4th, 2020.



Mary Manning

2018 Harvest Festivals Caroline Goucher gave the Harvest service address at both Turlough and Castlebar Church of Ireland services. Caroline gave a rousing address appealing to the congregation to consider their actions in terms of Climate Change. Fr Charlie McDonnell addressed Holy Trinity Westport Harvest service and he also addressed the issue of Climate Change.

2020 Harvest Festival: Mary Manning addressed the congregation of Holy Trinity Church to raise awareness of Climate Justice and how our lifestyle choices affect people in poorer countries. This coincided with the installation of the Eco-Congregation Climate Justice candle.

Advent Award Headings: **Spiritual** **Local Community** **Climate Change**, **Biodiversity**

2017 - In Holy Trinity Church & St. Marys Church we promoted the 'Care of Creation' at all Masses and services for the first weekend of Advent. We asked people to write a pledge towards 'An Eco-Christmas'. We then joined all these pledges in a 'Chain for Change', which was used to decorate the churches.

2018 – We promoted the 'Care of Creation' at all Masses in St. Mary's Church in the first weekend of Advent, using the Chain of Change.

2019 - Promotion of 'Tips for an Eco-Christmas' and we continued to sell our Christmas postcards.

2020 - Our plans are to display our own 'Eco-Congregation Climate Justice Candle' in St. Mary's and Holy Trinity Churches to focus on the 'Care of Our Common Home' at Christmas. We promote sustainable consumerism at the time of year when excessive spending and unwanted gift giving is part of the old norm. Every year we build upon the message of the year before and promote shopping locally and ecologically.



2017 Christmas Recycling Workshop We hosted VOICE's Recycling Management Workshop, first in the initial nationwide rollout of awareness in new Recycling regulations in the country. This event answered the simple question of what goes in what bin! We also gave 'Eco-Christmas Tips' to encourage the public to reduce their consumption in this season of excess - tips on how to make more sustainable choices & eco-gift ideas were offered.



This was the last event of 2017, which was only a few weeks after the judging of the last award.



2018 Re-cycled Christmas Tree We made and displayed a re-cycled Christmas tree – made of pages from magazines – for The Holy Trinity Christmas Tree Festival. Like all good ideas it was not as easy as it looked and took endless patience. Thanks go to Mary Manning, Karin, Kathleen Friel and Kathleen Murphy who stuck with it and saw it through. Thank you also to Kathleen Murphy for her hospitality in the true Christmas Spirit.

Photo: The Eco-Congregation Tree of recycled paper

2018 Christmas Postcard initiative aimed to focus on reducing waste that is created at this time. This was achieved by producing a high-quality Christmas postcard to be used as an alternative to the traditional envelope-contained card. People still hold a great tradition of sending cards to those near and far, and we encourage using our postal service, given it is under threat. This Christmas Postcard uses half the paper of a normal card and has no envelope. We aimed to raise awareness around our consumer habits and waste production, particularly during the festive season. This initiative was funded by the Environment, Climate Change and Agricultural section of Mayo County Council, through the Anti-Litter, Anti-Graffiti Awareness Initiatives.



Photo: Launch of the Christmas Postcard initiative with the winning photographers

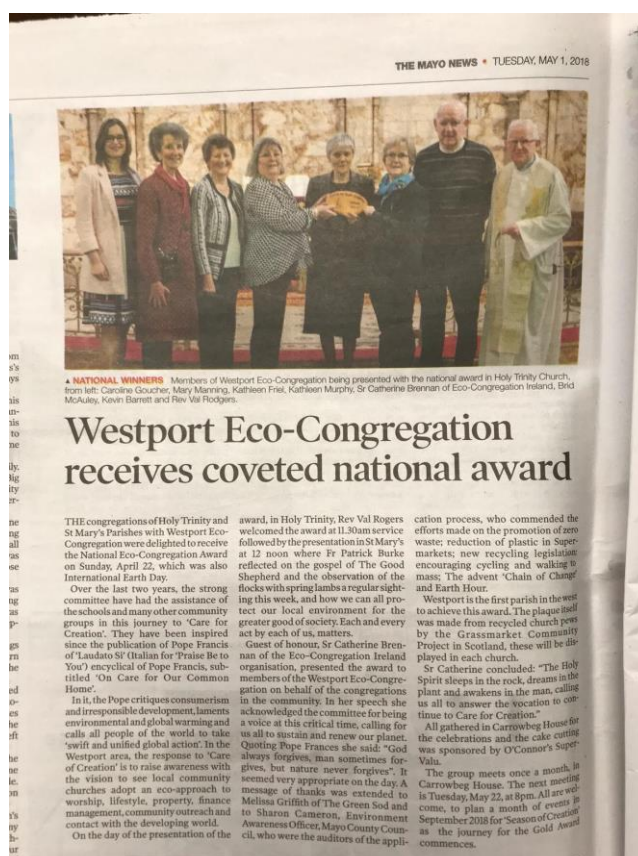
List of other Events in which Westport Eco-Congregation was involved 2017 - 2020

Award Headings: **Spiritual** **Practical** **Local** **Community** **Developing World** **Climate Change** **Biodiversity**

2018 National Eco Congregation Award: We received our National Eco Congregation award on Sunday 22 April 2018 - with both Churches being presented with plaques by Sr Catherine Brennan - this was followed by a cup of tea and slice of cake to celebrate the award.



Photo: Members of Westport Eco-Congregation with Rev. Val Rogers, rector of Holy Trinity Church, proudly receiving the Eco-congregation award from Sr. Catherine Brennan.



2018 Ard Bhríde Environment Week organised by the Sisters of Mercy in Castlebar which members of Eco Congregation Westport attended. The theme of the day was 'How we got here - Tracing the roots of Climate Change.' presented by John Cleary



At the Sisters of Mercy's Ard Bhríde house in Castlebar

2018 Sick of Plastic Day In collaboration with the Tidy Towns Committee, 'Shop & Drop' Sick of Plastic day took place in stores in Westport on Saturday, April 21st. It was a day of action on Supermarket Packaging where we asked all our supporters to "Shop and Drop" - shop as normal and then drop unwanted packaging to highlight all the unnecessary packaging on products. Our members were shocked at the quantity of plastic that passed through the checkouts!



Photo: SICK OF PLASTIC participants gather with Supervalu Manger Liam Campion, students from local schools and members of Westport Tidy Towns & Westport Eco-Congregation



Photo: SICK OF PLASTIC participants gather with shoppers in SuperValu, Westport. (April 2018)

2018 Tidy Towns Clean-up in August

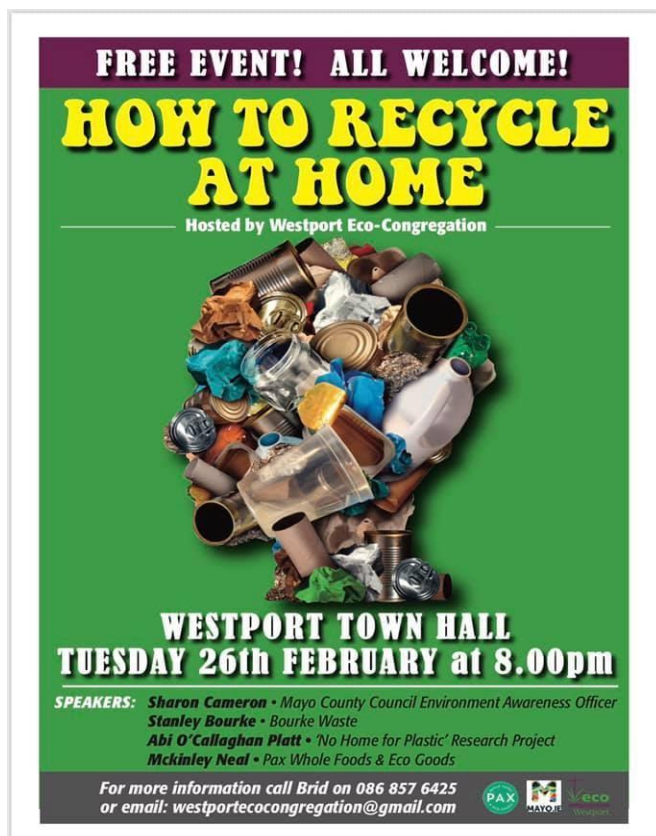
Members of Westport Eco-Congregation helping to clean the streets of Westport, with the Tidy Towns.



2018 Biodiversity Week in Tourmakeady – Life on the shores of Lough Carra, this talk was attended by members of our group on 9th June 2018, hosted by Dr. Verena Bernard and Lynda Huxley of GMIT 'Swifts Project'.



2019 How to Recycle at Home



2019 How to Recycle at Home: In February we ran a successful event on Recycling in your Home, to raise awareness on Recycling, while complying with the new national regulations. We provided simple and easy tips on how to recycle better at home.

Expert Speakers on the night were: Sharon Cameron Environment Awareness Officer of Mayo County Council; Stanley Bourke, Bourke Waste; Abi O'Callaghan Platt, 'No Home for Plastic' Research Project; McKinley Neal, PAX Whole Foods & Eco Goods. This event was well attended, and it was the most informative meeting. Following on from the meeting it was suggested a permanent recycling display was needed. We received sponsorship from Chris Harper@MySigns.ie for the display which was designed for us by Philip Murphy. We displayed this poster in O'Connor's SuperValu in Westport as a reminder to shoppers of the items that can be recycled. The 30ft banner 'Small Steps lead to Big Changes' was displayed along the entrance corridor to the store.



2019 Climate Fest



2019 Climate Fest in GMIT on Sat 28th Sept 2019, we provided an information stand on the day in the main Auditorium. In collaboration with the Sisters of Mercy, Mayo County Council, and many local and national groups. It was a wonderful day of networking and knowledge building for all who attended. Many of the committee members attended the event and manned our stand - talking to the attendees about Eco-Congregation.



2019 Tidy Towns clean-up: (June & July) Our Members helped The Westport Tidy Towns on their summer clean-ups to ensure the town is clean for the judging season. Each week they designate an area to each community group, proving 'that many hands make light work'.



2019 Knockranny Woods Clean-Up: We joined with Sídhe Sound Healing therapist, Melanie Walsh, in support of Westport Tidy Towns and Mayo County Council for a unique Magical Woodland 'Sound Bath' in Knockranny Woods, on a Sunday afternoon in July. The stresses and strains of every day melted away with the healing power of the Himalayan Singing Bowls and Crystal Bowls. Drums, Rattles, Thunder Maker Spring Drum, Bells and Chimes and the beautiful sound of the healing Gongs. After the 'Sound Bath', attendees (aged 5-80+) collected 20 bags of rubbish. The participants enjoyed the connection with Nature.



2019 JCI Awards: We nominated PAX Whole Foods & Eco Goods who were National runner-up winner for 2019 and the winner in Mayo at The National JCI Ireland National Conference held in Westport for eco-friendliness.

Westport is proud to be home to this shop promoting package-free shopping.



2020 Lenten Film Series Promotion of 4 film events hosted by ALPHA organising committee.

2020 Online Lenten Campaign Our social media platforms promoted a 'Fast' from excessive consumption.

2020 Mayo Climate Action Awareness Workshops: Mayo County Council hosted a series of 5 themed workshops throughout County Mayo on: Coastal Impact; Community Energy; Household Energy; Personal Consumption and Transport. We promoted these thought provoking workshops. Several our members also attended.

2020 St. Patricks Day Parade We had big plans to participate in the Westport Chamber of Commerce Town Parade as the theme focused on Climate Change. This event was cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions. Our committee member, Pat Fahy was to have been honoured with the role of Grand Marshal of the parade for his work on Biodiversity within the community.

2020 Constitution During the lockdown period, due to Covid 19, we met many times via Zoom to draft a Constitution for Westport Eco-Congregation. For this we looked at themes such as:- Structure, Governance, Transparency, Election of Officers and Finances. Then we agreed our Terms of Reference as a Community and Voluntary group in line with the Mayo Public Participation Network. It was a valuable process towards having clear guidelines for all our future work. This will be ratified at our AGM in October 2020.

Social Media

We will continue to maintain our online presence. We have an extensive presence on social media to promote our work and to support the global community to 'Care for Our Common Home'.

Website: www.westportparish.ie/ecocongregation

Twitter: @WestEcoCong

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WestportEcoCongregation/>

YouTube Channel: Westport Eco-Congregation

A portfolio of all of our events can be viewed at;
https://www.facebook.com/WestportEcoCongregation/photos/?ref=page_internal

Submission

We present this report on our work and activities at Westport Eco-Congregation since our last award in 2017. This is our application to Eco-Congregation Ireland for the Gold Award.

Thank You for this opportunity, From All The Members of Westport Eco-Congregation

Date: 1st November 2020