



# Our Vision for Ballinaglera

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## Ballinaglera

Ballinaglera<sup>1</sup> is a small parish in the North-East of Lough Allen. It covers an area of nearly 59 km<sup>2</sup>. The boundaries of the parish are mostly natural. In the East and Northwest there is the Lough Allen and the Shannon, in the South the Stony River and in the East and Northeast the Sliabh An Iarainn Mountains. Therefore, the East of Ballinaglera is a mountainous horse-shoe valley made by the Yellow River, and the West is beside Lough Allen and Shannon shores.

It is a boundary-village, marking the middle of Leitrim. It is close to Cavan and to the border of the ancient Provinces of Connaught and Ulster. It is part of the Leitrim Way (*Beara-Briefne Way*), and it can be accessed through the R207 and the Ballinamore side road. Like other towns in the northern part of Lough Allen, the economy of Ballinaglera relies mostly on family farming. Also, *Coillte* has 358.23 hectares of land for forestry, which means that 6% of Ballinaglera belongs to this business. Summarizing other plantations, around 10-12% of the land is dedicated to forestry.

Ballinaglera features some historical interest places. History goes back to 3000 B.C., the time when some Giants Graves (megalithic monuments) in the townland of Clerhanmore were put into place. There are also remains from the Iron Age (500-300 B.C.) in the shape of Ring Forts. Later on, it is said that in the early Christianity, around the V-VI Century, St. Beo-Aodh (St. Hugh) founded a school and a monastery in a place named Tobar Beo-Aodh –where you can find St. Hugh's Well today. In the Modern Age, Franciscans built a church and cemetery in Fahy Townland –the graveyard is still there. The present St. Hugh's Church was completed in 1842.



Ilustración 1. Tobar Bheo-Aoidh (St. Hugh's Well). Orange deposits due to the soil rich on iron.

<sup>1</sup> Historical and other local references from: Clancy, E. and Forde, P. J. (2003) *Ballinaglera and Inishmagrath. The History & Traditions of two Leitrim Parishes*. Maura Clancy.



As previously mentioned, in the East Ballinaglera is surrounded by the Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), part of the Natura 2000 network. Part of its 97.4 km<sup>2</sup> are within the borders of Ballinaglera –the section comprehends the uplands of Slieve Anierin, Knockacullion, Bencroy, Benbrack and The Playbank mountains. The SAC leaves an unprotected horseshoe valley where the Yellow River is born and flows. Yellow River is a water runoff from the SAC, which makes of it an important ecosystem that indicates the health of the area.

In the North-West, where the Shannon River meets Lough Allen, you can find the Kilgarriff Marsh proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). In the West, part of the Lough Allen shores is a pNHA too. Even though a pNHA does not have a strong protection policy, these shows the natural interests of the region.



Ilustración 2. Designated areas in the Ballinaglera surroundings.

## Our vision

Ballinaglera is a privileged place. Surrounded by protected mountains in the East and Lough Allen in the West. You can only access it through the North or the South by the R207 (or through a mountain side road). This difficulty to reach our region makes Ballinaglera a perfect place to preserve and enhance biodiversity without the pressure of an intensive tourism. It has some important heritage places, such as St. Bridgit Well, St. Hughes Well, St. Hughes Sweathouse or Innismagrath Island. It is a suitable place to develop a biodiversity action plan that aims to enhance our Nature.

A vision is not a list of short or mid-term objectives, but a long-term perspective that works as a cornerstone to develop the objectives that we will be presented in the **Overview and objectives** chapter. Thus, our vision is one of

- a community of farmers and other workers that lives from and for Nature;
- a community that knows what non-human neighbours has and how to protect and respect them;
- a community that has the tools and resources to enhance Biodiveristy;
- a local government that cares about our natural heritage;
- new generations that are conscious about other living beings;
- a Lough Allen that is respected and treated as if it is Leitrim's heart;
- clean rivers with vibrant banks;



- a place where habitats are respected so curlew and other endangered species can live in, with a responsible removal of invasive species;
- actual pNHA becoming really protected so Leitrim becomes a County with the 20% of its area protected, as the Nature Restoration Law proposal says;
- ancient non protected places regarded as places to respect;
- governmental schemes that help landowners to preserve biodiversity.

This idealistic vision is a lead to follow in order to achieve a Ballinaglera where Biodiversity and land usage co-exist in a symbiotic way.

## Sources and links

*Sources are in order of appearance.*

Clancy, E. and Forde, P. J. (2003) *Ballinaglera and Inishmagrath. The History & Traditions of two Leitrim Parishes*. Maura Clancy.

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Coillte (2022) Coillte Boundaries – Public Web Viewer. ArcGIS.  
<https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=51dfc0cfd9ce438eafead6d933786be9&view=list&sortOrder=desc&sortField=defaultFSOrder#overview>