

MAHAREES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

- Maharees Conservation Association CLG was established in 2016 to tackle changes that were taking place in Maharees due to negative impacts of climate change and unregulated access to the sand dune system.
- The Maharees archipelago is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, due to its exposure to Atlantic storms and low-lying land. Wild camping and repeated trampling of the sand dunes were affecting its natural defence against storms and sea surges.
- Damage to the sand dune system led to wind-driven sand making the roads impassable 17 times in the winter of 2015/16.
- Maharees Conservation Association volunteers stabilise and protect the sand dunes by planting marram grass and erecting chestnut fencing to manage access and protect sensitive areas.
- These conservation efforts now include informing and empowering locals and visitors to protect the biodiversity of the area and foster long-lasting sustainability habits.

This leaflet has been produced as a creative response to the learning from Neart na Machairí, a two-year project run in partnership between Maharees Conservation Association CLG and Dingle Hub, funded by the Creative Ireland Programme under its Creative Climate Action Fund II

Neart Na Machairí
Creative | Coastal | Resilience



Creative
Climate Action



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



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Follow
MAHAREES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
on social media for a full calendar of fun and
informative, expert led events.

ONLINE RESOURCES



Visit our website at
mahareesconservation.com to
download the Maharees Heritage
Trail app and the following
beautifully illustrated guides:

- Sand Dunes of the Maharees
- Birds of the Maharees
- Wildflowers of the Maharees

To learn more about the unique heritage of Maharees, visit
mahareesplacenames.com and explore the wonderful books
on local history available online and locally.



Maharees Conservation Association
Protecting | Enhancing | Preserving

Photo: Caroline Flynn

Go gently
on
Maharees

WELCOME

Mharees is a 5km tombolo* nestled between Brandon Bay and Tralee Bay, renowned for its beautiful beaches, sea swimming, watersports, and heritage.

It is home to rare birds, marine life, plants, and animals, and as a designated special area of conservation it is recognised as an important wildlife conservation area on an Irish and European level.

It is also a special place called home to 300 residents all year round and 3000 residents every summer.

* A tombolo is created when a deposit of sand and stones connects the mainland coast to an island.

PROTECTING THE SAND DUNES



PHOTO: MAHAREES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Excellent sand dune recovery has been observed as a result of planting marram grass and erecting chestnut fencing.

Marram grass stabilises the dunes by capturing wind-driven sand while chestnut fences designate beach access routes and prevent the marram grass from being trampled.

Support the conservation efforts by:

- never wild camping.
- taking care never to have an open flame near the dune system (for example, bonfires, smoking or cooking).
- staying on designated paths. Marram grass is fragile. It can be destroyed by just ten footsteps.
- getting involved in organised beach clean-ups and marram grass planting events.

HERITAGE

Preserving the unique cultural heritage of Maharees is also a key activity of the group.

Stay tuned on social media for events centered on traditional skills and crafts, particularly around Heritage Week and the annual September Gathering weekend.

You can also explore the Maharees Heritage Trail - a scenic, coastal walk, covering a 10km circuit of Maharees tombolo.



ARTWORKS BY SILKE MICHELS AND EMER FALLON
CREATED AS PART OF THE NEART NA MACHAIRÍ PROJECT

BIODIVERSITY

Mharees has a unique ecosystem created and constantly changed by the wind, rain, and sea. Most famously, Maharees is home to the Natterjack Toad, Ireland's rarest amphibian. The sand dune system also hosts a huge variety of rare plants and wildflowers.

Tralee Bay is an important breeding site for critically endangered marine species like Angel Sharks and White Skates. Seagrass meadows provide nurseries and feeding grounds for many fish, invertebrate species, and wintering Brent Geese. Dolphins, seals, and whales are regularly spotted.

Mharees is also famous for its rich diversity of seabirds, from migratory species to those who breed on the islands and in the dune systems. The Ringed Plover and Little Tern are particularly vulnerable to human activities during the summer months.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Be mindful of how you move through Maharees. This can significantly help protect the vulnerable sand dunes, habitats, and species:

- use designated car parks.
- stay on the main beach access routes and avoid walking through the sand dunes.
- keep dogs on leads so they don't chase breeding and migratory birds, other wildlife, or farm animals.
- be aware that many ground-nesting birds, like Skylark and Ringed Plover, are nesting on the sand dunes and beaches of Maharees. Disturbing these birds can leave their nests unprotected, leaving chicks and eggs vulnerable to predation by larger birds & animals.

Photo: Caroline Flynn

REGENERATIVE TOURISM & SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS

In the summer months there is an influx of activity in Maharees. A survey in August 2019 recorded 23,040 cars travelling the Maharees road in one week.

Regenerative tourism is community-led; it focuses on creating a positive impact and ensuring tourism benefits the environment and local communities, as well as the economy. It can make for a meaningful and long-term relationship between visitors and local communities.



PHOTO: MARTIN SCHOPPLER

GOOD SUSTAINABILITY HABITS ON AND AFTER YOUR VISIT

- walk or cycle when possible.
- when driving, be careful and respectful of walkers and cyclists and only use designated car parks.
- explore local bus options from Castlegregory village to surrounding areas via locallinkkerry.ie
- camp at official campsites only.
- Maharees is renowned for its locally grown vegetables and fresh fish. Support local by purchasing from local shops and at the Sunday market in Castlegregory.
- be aware of your energy use, particularly water usage during the summer months.
- avoid single-use and disposable items and recycle or compost your waste.