



Ripple News

Rivers Involving People, Places & Leading by Example

Edition 3 Summer 2009

RIPPLE Sets Example for River Basin Management Plans

The Draft River Basin Management Plans for Northern Ireland public consultation closed in June, as part of the implementation of the European Water Framework Directive (WFD). It is the most substantial piece of European water legislation to date, designed to improve and integrate the way rivers, lakes and coastal waters are managed throughout Europe. The plans should map how Good Ecological Status (GES) will be reached by 2015. They reveal that 88% of rivers in the Ballinderry river system currently do not meet the European water quality standards set.

The objective of the Directive is for inland and coastal waters to reach (GES) by 2015. This means that water quality must achieve at least good status across a number of elements including insect life, plants, fish, levels of hazardous and dangerous chemicals, water flow and physical modifications.

The primary reason for lower quality water in the Ballinderry area is not clearly identified but is thought to be due to a high level of nutrient enrichment within the catchment resulting from 'numerous pressures'. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency plans propose to improve only 22% of these rivers to meet the deadline. In addition, the Ballinderry River has been classified as Heavily Modified due to a number of changes made to the river for flood risk management. This means that a lower quality standard will be set for the Ballinderry.

WWF Northern Ireland and Ballinderry Fish Hatchery are concerned that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's draft Plans show no clear route to meeting EU water quality targets in 6 years, risking large infraction fines for the Northern Ireland public purse. In response to the public consultation the Fresh Water Task Force, called for higher levels of ambition in line with EU water quality targets, final Plans which set out concrete steps to achieve improvement and a greater level of public engagement.

"Government departments alone cannot achieve the improvements necessary to raise our local freshwater environment to the standards required by Europe," said Dr Claire Cockerill, WWF Freshwater Policy Officer. "The RIPPLE project shows exactly what can be achieved through a community led river management project that is supported by government agencies and other key stakeholders. The government acknowledge the RIPPLE project as a best practice example of community led river management. We urge them to adopt this project as a template that could be adapted and implemented for the management of water bodies across Northern Ireland."

For more information on the draft plans visit www.ni-environment.gov.uk, to view the Ballinderry Local Area Management Plan visit www.ni-environment.gov.uk/ballinderry_lma.pdf or email ccockerill@wwf.org.uk.



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Fish Release Day
Saturday 8th August '09
Help release over 1000
baby fish into the river.
See back cover
for more details.



ON THE RIVER THIS SEASON

Life abounds during the fresh mornings and long warm evenings of the summer. The river banks are literally buzzing with the sound of insects skimming the water, whilst the trout, lying in the deep cool pools, occasionally rise with a splash to feed, leaving a wake of ripples on the water's surface.

Watch out for narrow tracks on the grassy banks where otters are sliding into the river. Up-river the water crow-foot is in full bloom with carpets of tiny white flowers floating on shimmering green weed. For the patient observer, a blurred flash of brilliant blue and gold will signal the arrival of the majestic kingfisher as fledglings leave the nest. Visit places like the canoe steps at Ardtrea, Wellbrook or the Dunamore River Walk – take a picnic, sit quietly and you will be surprised what you see.



RIPPLE ACTION PLAN AT BALLINDERRY FAIR

Over 300 people enjoyed fun and games in the sunshine on at the Banks of the Ballinderry Fair which saw the launch of the RIPPLE River Action Plan.



Next to the millrace, opposite Wellbrook Beetling Mill, a tent village brought organisations like NIEA, Department of Agriculture, NI Water, Queens University and Conservation Volunteers NI to provide information to the public on what was being done to help improve and protect our special river. This was along side the fun and games that take place each year such as the National Trusts River Banks Games, BREAs Fly-tying and Crafty Little Fishes, WWF's watery mini-beast hunt, Mid-Ulster Photography Club's River In Pictures display and Ballinderry Fish Hatchery's Aquarium. As ever the millrace duck race proved popular with enthusiastic duck backers egging on their plastic duck to the finishing post.

"The Fair is a wonderfully fun day, crammed full with activities and crafts that bring the river to life. It is a fantastic opportunity to engage with the local community and other environmental organisations, within a friendly atmosphere, surrounded by a beautiful location," Sophie Atkinson, The National Trust's Conservation Officer for Wellbrook commented. "It is always a thoroughly enjoyable day, with a great community spirit".

Invited guests from Government Departments, Non-Government Organisations and the local community attended the official launch of the RIPPLE River Action Plan, setting out the community's ideas for delivering their visions for the Ballinderry River. WWF's Head of Freshwater, Dave Tickner spoke at the launch, commenting on the various river plans he witnesses in Europe, Africa and Asia, "The RIPPLE Action Plan is the best community plan I've come across."

This is a testament to the work of you, the Ballinderry community, so please be proud! The first 29 actions in the Plan are well underway with RIPPLE Champions driving them forward. The next set of actions needs to be tackled, with more Champions. If you would like to become a RIPPLE Champion or help with any of the actions in the plan please contact Mark on 028 867 61515 or on ripple@wwf.org.uk

A copy of the plan can be downloaded at www.wwf.org.uk/ripple or by contacting Mark.

BALLINDERRY BIDS FAREWELL TO LYN BYRNE

Lyn's two year apprenticeship scheme as Invasive Species Officer with LNLBAC has come to an end. During her time Lyn established a Giant Hogweed eradication programme on the Drumard tributary of the Ballinderry and was a RIPPLE Champion, creating the Invasive Plant Management Group. Lyn will be greatly missed and we wish her every success in her future career.

If you would like to join the fight against invasive plants on the river and get involved in our invasive plant management group then please call Mark on 028 867 61515 or e-mail cure@ballinderryriver.org

PADDLE POWER – *DISCOVERING THE UNSEEN RIVER*

Most of us see the river from the riverbank or from one of the many hundreds of bridges which span the Ballinderry and its tributaries. But for a few, the only way to see the river is by sitting on it and going with the flow. An enthusiastic local kayaker, Eddie Black and a keen canoeist, Alan Bates recount their affairs with the majestic Ballinderry.

“The Ballinderry is a beautiful thing and is really underused by kayakers and canoeists,” Eddie tells us. “When you paddle along with the flow of the river you move very quietly allowing you to see wildlife that would otherwise remain hidden from sight. On our trek we saw a kingfisher, a pair of swans and the largest number of swallows we had ever seen in one place in our lives. The kids loved it as it was just like being on safari.”



“We met a fisherman on the way down whose kid had kicked his ball into the river,” Eddie continues. “As the kayak is easily manoeuvred I was able to release the ball from the tree branch it had wedged in and paddle back across the river to reunite the ball with its owner. We all stopped to chat for a while before heading on. Downstream of Ballinderry Bridge the river widens into the vast Lough with many an old boat shored up for the long-term. Then it was a gentle paddle along the sandy Lough shore towards Ballyronan Marina.”

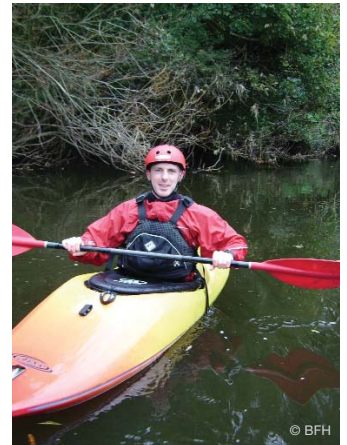
Alan Bates and five friends from Belfast set off in Open ‘Canadian’ Canoes on their first Ballinderry paddle from Cookstown to Ballinderry Bridge.

“We started from Cabin Wood and paddled to the picnic area just upstream from Ardtrea Bridge,” Alan said.

“This is ideal for the more adventurous paddler as there is a series of natural rock gardens and weirs most of the way down. The next section from there to Coagh was much more sedate and would be ideal for novices or families, but would require the provision of canoe-steps to enable you to avoid the weir just before Coagh. It was a great day’s paddling and we will definitely be back”.

More could be done to provide access points and facilities for all river users– somewhere to leave the car, a picnic bench, safe, agreed access to the river bank, water safety equipment and an understanding with other river users on how facilities can be utilised and shared. For example, a wooden canoe launch platform could double up as a disabled angling platform. Low-lying branches over the river causing bank erosion during floods and snagging angler’s lines can prove dangerous to negotiate on a canoe. Pools and riffles created for fish also add character and excitement for the river canoeists.

The RIPPLE project is looking at how access to the river for recreation, could be improved and made safe for different groups. It is clear that if we all work together we can create features that suit a multitude of needs. The next step is to bring different river users together to discuss how we can work together. If you would like to get involved in this work or have suggestions on how access can be improved contact Mark on 028 867 61515 or at ripple@wwf.org.uk



GETTING INVOLVED COULDN'T BE EASIER

If you would like to get involved in the RIPPLE project or find out what is happening on the river in your area then please contact us.

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River Events

All RIPPLE events are **FREE** of charge.

**Monday 3, Tuesday 4
and Wednesday 5
August 2009
Young River Watchers
Summer Scheme***
11am – 1pm

Summer fun and games for 4 -11 year olds. Join in a range of activities teaching children about the river and its wildlife including watery mini-beast hunt, riverbank footprint safari, river science activities, crafts and games.

*This is a National Trust event: There is a charge for this event – £3 per child per session.

Wellbrook Beetling Mill, Corkhill Road

**Saturday 8 August 2009
River Skills:
Fish Release Day**
12 – 2pm

Join us at Dunamore River Walk to help release over 1000 baby trout into the upper Ballinderry River. Name and release your own fish, see how fisheries managers restock rivers and learn about the importance of fish for healthy rivers.

Dunamore River Walk (Car park & Picnic Area), Cookstown/Omagh Road

**Wednesday 26 August
2009
Riverbank Picnic**
1 – 3pm

Bring a picnic to Wellbrook Beetling Mill. Take part in the river bank games, hear stories about the wildlife of the Ballinderry and test your knowledge in the riverbank treasure trail. Fun, games and relaxation for young and old. Tea/Coffee and juice provided.

Wellbrook Beetling Mill, Corkhill Road

**Saturday 5 September
2009
Ballinderry Fish
Hatchery and River
School Open Day**
12 – 4pm

Come and learn what goes on behind the doors of the hatchery. After visiting the River School hear how the hatchery has helped save local Dollaghan from the brink of extinction, learn about Europe's most success breeding programme for the globally endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel and venture in to the Glen and over the waterfall to meet the mysterious White-clawed Crayfish. Fun for all the family.

Ballinderry Fish Hatchery, Orritor Road, Cookstown

**Saturday 26 September
2009
River Skills: River
Watch Bug Hunt**
1 – 3pm

Join us on the banks of the Ballinderry, near Cookstown, and discover what river insects can tell us about the water quality. Learn how you can become a 'water scientist' and take part in the 'Ballinderry River Bug Survey'

Cabin Wood, Coosktown

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