



Ripple

Visions for the Ballinderry



This document reflects the views of the community living in the Ballinderry River catchment. It captures the ideas of over 300 local people.

It has been produced as part of the *Stepping Stones to RIPPLE* scoping project, funded by WWF Northern Ireland, facilitated by Ballinderry Fish Hatchery under the guidance of the Rural Community Network.

Stepping Stones to RIPPLE, Rivers Involving People, Places and Leading by Example, demonstrates how community planning and effective public engagement can bring benefit to the river environment.



“I remember being sent down to the river in the summer with soap and a towel to wash.”

This booklet sets out what we, as a community, have agreed are priorities for our River – The Ballinderry.

“The Ballinderry River is close to our hearts and we want to make sure that it remains a vital part of the local area for years to come.

The Ballinderry River was where we learned to swim, to fish, ate summer picnics and a favourite courting spot for young Romeos. It was the backbone of Cookstown’s vibrant linen industry and the inspiration for authors and poets such as Jonathon Swift. This rich history should be remembered, celebrated and built upon.

Times are changing and so is the way we think about our river. We want to make it as important a place for the next generation as it is for ours. We want a river which supports the local community. The Ballinderry has real potential to promote health, leisure and tourism in a rich environment full of wildlife. The community can work together to realise this potential.”

“We want better access along the river”

To truly **enjoy** the beauty of the river, the community believes people need to **experience** it for themselves.

It needs to be **easier to get to** the Ballinderry. We would like more paths or user-friendly amenities in or along the river to provide facilities for the local community and to **promote tourism**.

Access to the river is a very complicated subject because of issues of liability and land ownership, so these facilities must be **agreed by all members of the community**. They must be sensitively located, designed, managed and promoted.





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“I lived in a house with a lane which ran down to the river. Across the river there was a weir and ‘footstick’ to walk over. When the river flooded, and we needed to get to school, our Mum would take her shoes off, roll up her skirts and carry us over.”

“There was always a crowd of us who used to swim in the river at Glenavon Weir – the crayfish there used to scare the wee ones out of the water.”



“The big house (Lissan) was powered by the river and it was somebody’s job to scrape the leaves off the screen to keep the lights on in the ballroom. When there were big parties and the dancin’ was going on to the early hours, the lights would sometimes start to dim. So a wee boy was sent to wake the scrapin’ man.”

“We want better understanding of the river environment”

The water coming out of our taps and the water in our river is all part of the same cycle.

We, the community, want more people and businesses to **understand** this water cycle and how they **impact** on the Ballinderry River.

More information about the river and its special plants and animals needs to be available. To distribute this information, **better educational links** should be created between schools, businesses and environmental organisations. We would like to see **river skills** such as biological water quality testing promoted and passed on.

The Ballinderry River should be used as an **‘outdoor classroom’**.



Camlough, that calm lough, fringed with reeds,
Lies secret in the quiet hills of Tyrone.
There, among cobweb-crocheted whins, with
A sudden spring,
A sighing gurgle –
The river's begun.

Plaiting and purling, silkily sliding –
the water wanders along.
Tinkling and wrinkling, rumbling and tumbling –
this is the river's song.

Placid it passes through Dunamore, ranunculus
Drifting over the pearl-musselled gravel bed.
A heron hefts itself into the sky; an otter lithely
Insinuates itself into tangled riverside weeds.

Plaiting and purling, silkily sliding –
the water wanders along.
Tinkling and wrinkling, rumbling and tumbling –
this is the river's song.

Wellbrook, and the weight of wheel and weir and years
Curls and whirls in the boulder buttoned flood
That, hiding speckled trout and snub nosed dollaghan,
Slips on past Cookstown, cradling salmon parr and smolt.

Plaiting and purling, silkily sliding –
the water wanders along.
Tinkling and wrinkling, rumbling and tumbling –
this is the river's song.

Below Big Bridge and Coagh Bridge fishermen cast and hope
And muse, as feather, leaf, twig drift lazily past,
Twirl into the merging dark Lissan Water,
Swirl as the river surges through Ballinderry,
Under the Footgo, into Lough Neagh at last.

Plaiting and purling, silkily sliding –
the water wanders along.
Tinkling and wrinkling, rumbling and tumbling –
this is the river's song.

Maura Johnston, Moneymore

Our river and us



*“As I gaze down from Slieve Gallion
to the famous Lough Neagh Shore,
And when I’m feeling lonely many
miles away from home,
I think back to happy days
spent by a river in Tyrone.”*
Joey O’Neill, Magherafelt

“We want a clean river”

We, the community, want **less pollution** and less litter going into the Ballinderry River and its tributaries.

This is easier said than done. Pollution entering the river comes from many sources, so cleaning it up needs the **co-operation** of government departments, businesses, land owners, households and visitors to the area.

We would like to be **more involved** in monitoring water quality in the river and work with Government to enforce pollution controls. We would also like to put in place a **‘River Stewardship’** scheme to encourage more water-friendly practices and reward those who help protect our special river.



“When we were youngsters, we used to play along the river all the time, but there’s so much about pollution on the news these days, I wouldn’t let my children anywhere near it.”





“There used to be crowds of people who would go down to the river to look for ‘sliggins’ – local name for freshwater pearl mussels – to see if they could find a pearl. At that time there were loads of them in the river bed. That was before the diggers came to drain the channels.”

“I’ve seen foxes using the Footgo bridge. But I’ve also seen whitrecks (stoats), along the river banks and grey wagtails, dippers and kingfishers nesting under the bridge.”

“We want more wildlife in and along the river”

The Ballinderry River is home to many important plants, fish and animals. But we want more.

We, the community, would like to see wildlife corridors where there are **healthy habitats** and **better protection** for plants and animals. Invasive species, like Giant Hogweed, need to be eradicated from our river banks to make room for our native plants and make the **river safe for us to use**.

Managing flooding in a more natural way such as creating wet meadows and planting trees will be good for **increasing biodiversity**. Allowing the land to flood naturally will bring the benefit of rich river nutrients.



The community holds the key to make this vision a reality

Local people will be taking this Vision forward over the coming years. They aim to turn these dreams for the Ballinderry River into a reality for the whole community.



Better access • Clean river • Better understanding • More wildlife





Ballinderry Fish Hatchery
Orritor Road
Cookstown BT80 9ND
t. 028 8676 1515



WWF Northern Ireland
13 West Street
Carrickfergus BT38 7AR
t. 028 9335 5166

www.wwf.org.uk/ripple
ripple@wwf.org.uk