

Ballinderry River Enhancement Project

BACKGROUND

The Ballinderry River Enhancement Project addresses the problems of diffuse pollution from agriculture on rivers and streams.

The upper Ballinderry River (Cookstown) is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is one of only three Northern Ireland rivers to retain its Freshwater Pearl Mussel population, and has in-stream habitat suitable for Water Crowfoot and otters along its banks. Atlantic salmon, white-clawed crayfish, lamprey and the unique dollaghan trout are also present in the river.



PROBLEMS

- Water quality in the Upper Ballinderry River is deteriorating due predominantly to diffuse pollution from agriculture.
- Water quality in the Lower Ballinderry, which is excluded from the SAC designation, is very poor. This is due to industry, inadequate sewage provision and intensive agriculture.
- The Freshwater Pearl Mussel, sometimes referred to as 'the lungs of the river', can only survive in very clean water.
- The various species found in the river require different habitat conditions.

SOLUTIONS

- Ballinderry Fish Hatchery is working in partnership with WWF to offer farmers along a tributary of the river, free, independent and confidential advice on how to reduce the risk of diffuse pollution from their farms affecting the Ballinderry River and its tributaries.
- Persuading the farmers to participate in agri-environment schemes, to encourage them to adopt water protection measures.
- Assessing the four main tributaries that feed into the SAC part of the River.
- Soil sampling of fields along the tributary and persuading farmers to adjust fertiliser application according to crop need.
- Providing local people with key cards allowing them to assess water quality – in terms of the biology.



BENEFITS

- River restoration, successful expansion of spawning areas – restoring salmon numbers and thus attracting anglers to the river.
- Reduced diffuse pollution and soil erosion arising from better riparian management.
- Raised awareness among local farmers regarding water quality issues.
- Dissemination of the key messages learned in the Ballinderry to farmers across Northern Ireland.
- Contribution to the EHS strategy for protecting biodiversity.

AUTHORS

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Information received from the Ballinderry River Enhancement Association, Cookstown and WWF Northern Ireland

www.wwf.org.uk/northernireland