



Ripple News

Rivers Involving People, Places & Leading by Example

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On track for better river access

RIPPLE is paving the way for better access along the Ballinderry and its tributaries with a number of projects that are helping to achieve the community's vision of 'Better access along the river'.

Last month saw the official opening of the new riverside walk at Cabin Wood. The creation of paths along the Killymoon River was initiated by RIPPLE following the completion of a feasibility study of potential new access opportunities along the river. The project was made possible by the formation of a partnership between Cookstown District Council, the Woodland Trust, RIPPLE and the Ballinderry River Enhancement Association (BREA). The project is jointly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Landfill Community Fund.

Over 100 people from the local area, including 60 pupils from Holy Trinity and Cookstown Primary Schools attended the official launch of the new paths. As part of the Woodland Trust's 10th anniversary celebrations of its Millennium Woods programme, 110 native trees were donated by the Trust and planted by the school children.

RIPPLE Champion Frank Mitchell explained "Interpretation panels are being added to the walk covering everything from the history of the area to its rare and precious wildlife, with a lot of information for the panels contributed by the Cookstown History Group, nature enthusiasts and experts from the local community. This is a project with the local community truly at its heart".

In another project, RIPPLE, in partnership with Cookstown District Council's Tourism Department, is designing a series of walking cards and a map of river-side and lough-side walks in the area. The cards will allow people to plan walks and learn about the features of interest in each area. In addition to the cards, more detailed information about the walks will be available online through the Recreation section of BREA's new website www.ballinderryriver.org

On the river, BREA is working with the Mid-Ulster Canoe and Kayak Club to identify opportunities for canoeing. Stretches of river are being assessed for their suitability for canoes and kayaks, with the view that these can be graded in terms of paddling difficulty. Eddie Black, manager of the Mid-Ulster Canoe & Kayak Club, said "parts of the river system are ideal for beginners with slow moving waters, while other parts would only be suitable for the more experienced kayaker. By surveying and grading the system we can begin to build up a picture of where canoeing can take place and how we can work with other river users, such as anglers, to enjoy the river together".

If you would like to find out more about how RIPPLE is helping to improve access along the river contact Mark Horton (RIPPLE Project Coordinator) or Frank Mitchell (BREA Conservation & Access Officer) on 028 867 61515 or at brea@ballinderryriver.org



Learn the art of fly-tying
Free classes
January 2011



ON THE RIVER THIS SEASON

The winds have turned and the frosty hand of the northern air is gripping the Ballinderry valley. The trees parade their autumn spectacle of red, orange, yellow and gold, just before the sharp frosty breeze clears the branches and fills the river with leaves; each floating like a tiny boat on a silent journey to the lough. Beneath the ripples of the misty river salmon rest after their long journey from the seas off Scandinavia and Greenland, returning home to bury their eggs in the speckled gravels of the Ballinderry. The dollaghan trout make their final heave from lough to river, running the streams to their spawning grounds. All is calm before the frantic splashing of spawning begins.



CURE SCOOP TIDY NI AWARD

October saw CURE volunteers invited to Stormont for the Tidy Northern Ireland Coca Cola Coast Care Awards. Beating strong competition they came back to the Ballinderry with the award for Best Partnership 2010, £200 equipment funding for CURE and a firm pat on the back from the Minister for the Environment, Mr Edwin Poots MLA.

The Coast Care Awards are held each year by Tidy NI to recognise the role beach cleaning groups play in protecting our coastline; however, Tidy NI have recognised the growing role that volunteer groups are playing in cleaning up our inland waterways and threw the competition open to river and lough groups.

CURE, which stands for 'Clean Up the River Environment', is a volunteer group which was established in 2009 through the RIPPLE River Action Plan, in which the community had identified the need to form a task group to clean up the problem of littering along the river and create riverside habitats for its precious flora and fauna.



Eamon Cullen, RIPPLE Champion and CURE Coordinator, explains "Litter enters the river by fly tipping and during floods but no statutory agency will take responsibility for the problem once it has entered the river. It has been left to the community to take the problem in hand. As the role of CURE becomes better known, we are increasingly being contacted by local community groups along the river requesting that joint

clean-up days are organised. Other interest groups are getting involved, such as the 1st Cookstown Scouts and the local canoeing club who canoe across the river to retrieve hard-to-reach litter and in-river rubbish".

CURE now has over 40 members and is still growing. So far, the group has held 8 clean-up days and has removed the equivalent of 3 skip full's of rubbish from the banks of the Ballinderry's rivers. In its place, CURE has opened up lost access, erected over 40 bird boxes, a barn owl box, a bat box, bug hotels and bird feeders. CURE members are also beginning to record the wildlife they see at the sites they clean up and are planning to revisit them to ensure that the litter problems remain under control.

CURE volunteers are also taking on the role of 'community wardens' at the newly created walkway along the river at the Cabin Wood near Cookstown. A special focus will be placed on this area of high amenity value, with regular litter picks planned as well as tree planting and habitat creation projects.

Frank Mitchell, RIPPLE Champion and BREA Conservation and Access Officer said "We hope that through this community volunteer initiative, supported by the Ballinderry River Enhancement Association, the wider community will appreciate the value of the river environment and think twice before throwing rubbish over a bridge and into the river below".

CURE is always looking for volunteers to get involved in its cleanup days and riverside projects. If you are interested in getting involved and would like to find out more, please contact Mark Horton on 028 867 61515 or e-mail cure@ballinderryriver.org



RIPPLE RIVER ACTION PLAN MAKES WAVES IN GOVERNMENT-LED RIVER PLAN

The Ballinderry River Action Plan, developed through RIPPLE, has been incorporated into a Northern Ireland Environment Agency plan for the Ballinderry River, as part of Government's commitment to the EU's Water Framework Directive.

The EU Water Framework Directive is the most comprehensive and ambitious piece of EU legislation ever devised for the protection of our freshwater environment. The regulations set in place a timeframe in which each member state must: determine the health of all its rivers, lakes, groundwater's and near-shore coastal waters; create plans on how to improve and protect these; consult with the public on the development of the plans and implement a programme of measures which will ensure that all the waterbodies meet the target of 'Good Ecological Status' by 2015.

The Ballinderry is part of the enormous Neagh-Bann International River Basin District (IRBD), incorporating all the rivers flowing into and out of Lough Neagh. As the Blackwater River rises in Co. Monaghan, the plan is cross boarder and therefore 'international'. The strategic Neagh-Bann IRBD plan was published in December 2009; however, this did not contain the detail on how rivers within the IRBD, like the Ballinderry, would meet the 2015 target.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), responsible for developing the plans, has appointed

a Catchment Officer to the Ballinderry. Dr Eileen Mallon has been tasked with creating the more detailed Ballinderry Local Management Area (LMA) plan.

Over the last three years, through the RIPPLE Project, the community of the Ballinderry River system have developed, and begun to implement, our own River Action Plan which contains an incredible amount of detail and has, at its core, local knowledge and expertise on the river. BREA and WWF have been working hard with NIEA to identify how the actions in the RIPPLE River Action Plan can help contribute to achieving the EU target of Good Ecological Status by 2015.

Mark Horton, RIPPLE Project Coordinator, explains "the actions which the community identified under the Visions of 'a clean river' and 'more wildlife in and along the river' have almost all been incorporated into the Ballinderry LMA as they directly contribute to achieving Good Ecological Status. Actions under the Visions of 'better access along the river' and 'a better understanding of the river environment' are more often than not a means through which the first two Visions can be achieved, so many of these actions have been adopted as well. It is remarkable that a community-led river management plan is helping to achieve EU objectives, but it goes to prove that, if people are given the opportunity to make decisions on their local environment, and are then encouraged to take action, there are no limits to what can be achieved".

RIPPLE's Ballinderry River Action Plan has provided NIEA with a unique opportunity to incorporate a high level of community involvement into the development of the Ballinderry LMA and made way for partnerships to form which will see the river and local people benefit.

The amalgamation of the two plans is an ongoing process and will be regularly reviewed. It is hoped that, by combining the forces of the community and Government, we can accelerate the improvement we all want to see in our precious river and that others can learn from this unique partnership which has developed in the Ballinderry River system.



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.

**Saturday 4
December 2010
CURE Event
12.00 – 3.00pm**

Join CURE and 1st Cookstown Guides (Derryloran) for an afternoon of tree planting, litter picking and making bird feeders at Cabin Wood and the new Killymoon Riverside Walk. All are welcome to attend but children under twelve must be accompanied by an adult. Membership to CURE is free and the benefits to you and the river are endless...get involved and get active! For more information call Mark 028 867 61515 or e-mail cure@ballinderryriver.org

Cabin Wood, Cookstown

**Mondays 10th, 17th,
24th, 31st January and
7th February 2011
River Skills – Fly-tying
7.00 – 8.30pm**

You don't have to be a fisherman to learn the intricate and beautiful art of fly-tying. With feather, fur and tinsel learn how you can match the hatch of our amazing river flies, taught by local fly tiers. All materials are supplied and people of all ages and all abilities are welcome. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Places are limited so book now to secure your place on this five week course. Call 028 867 61515 or e-mail brea@ballinderryriver.org

Ballinderry Fish Hatchery Ltd, Orritor Road, Cookstown

**Big Spring Clean Event
(during Tidy NI's Big
Spring Clean Week
8th-17th April – date of
clean-up to be confirmed)**

Join CURE and the Coyles Cottage groups, in partnership with Tidy Northern Ireland and Cookstown District Council on a 'big spring clean' of the Gort Moss and Coyles Cottage Walk. All are welcome but children must be accompanied by an adult.

Rain coats and sturdy footwear recommended.

**Saturday 7 May 2011
River Skills: The Birds
of the Ballinderry River
and Lough Neagh
Wetlands
9.00am**

Join local bird expert Brendan McKeown on a walk from Coyle's Cottage to the Ballinderry Footgo to see the native and migratory birdlife that frequents the lower Ballinderry River and the shores of Lough Neagh. Good, sturdy, footwear and raincoat recommended. Binoculars essential.

Tea, coffee, scones and great craic for all on return, in the 300 year old Coyles Cottage, kindly provided by the Coyles Cottage Women's Group.

Meet at Coyle's Cottage, Kinturk

**Saturday 28 May 2011
Banks of the
Ballinderry Fair
12.00 – 5.00pm**

Family fun and games on the banks of the river at Wellbrook Beetling Mill. Visit the river aquarium to discover what lurks beneath the ripples of the Ballinderry, try your hand at fly-tying, choose your duck for the mill-race duck race and name and release your own baby dollaghan trout into the river. Learn how the river helped drive the linen industry at the Ballinderry's famous Beetling Mill.

Wellbrook Beetling Mill, Corkhill

FREE admission to the Fair

Entry fee applies for tours of the mill (NT members FREE)

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



www.wwf.org.uk/ripple

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