

# newsletter

Summer 2019 – Issue 2



Schools watching Catchment Films

## Education Pilot Programme Celebration Day takes Flight

Following the completion of the CatchmentCARE education pilot programme, a celebration day was held in the Mellon Country Inn, Omagh on Wednesday 19th June.

The event saw the eight participating schools come together and showcase the excellent work carried out throughout the course of the project. Some amazing displays were on show including –

Water cycle and ground water models designed by pupils from Florencecourt & St Mary's Primary Schools in the Arney Catchment

Some marvellous poetry and literacy work completed by Carnall, St McCartan's and Augher Central Primary Schools in the Blackwater Catchment and

River story maps and interesting information on the wildlife found in and around the Finn river by Scoil Naisiunta Colmcille, Fintown, Scoil Naisiunta An Choimin, Commeen & Scoil Naisiunta Tabhog, Cloghan in the Finn Catchment (**continued inside**).

## Education Programme Celebration Day (contd)

Alyn Jones from the River Backwater Catchment Trust spoke to the audience about the huge amount of work that the pupils had achieved.. He praised the children's (and teachers') enthusiasm and engagement throughout the seven-week programme and flagged up the new education programme, which will be developed in the future..

CatchmentCARE partner organisations, community groups and environmental educators all turned out to see the displays and chat to the children about their river journeys.

The highlight of the event was the launch of three specially commissioned river catchment films, produced by photographer, Gardiner Mitchell. The films included drone footage of the Arney, Blackwater and Finn rivers, interspersed with shots of local wildlife and film of the pupils taking part in river studies, trips to Marble Arch Caves and carrying out classroom project work, all voiced over by the young people themselves!!

The messages coming out of the films, from the children were very clear, **we love our local river and all the wildlife that relies on it and we need to look after in for the future – our future!! – Will You Help Us Look After It??**

The films can be seen on the CatchmentCARE facebook page at - [www.facebook.com/catchmentCARE](http://www.facebook.com/catchmentCARE)



St McCartan's Primary School Display

Scoil Naisiunta An Choimin

Scoil Naisiunta Colmcille

## A Word from the Project Manager

Welcome to Issue 2 of our CatchmentCARE Newsletter, where we will be keeping you updated on the progress we're making in rolling our CatchmentCARE Project.

CatchmentCARE aims to establish 3 water quality improvement projects in the Arney, Blackwater and Finn Catchments and to install 51 boreholes across the region to monitor water quality below ground. By carrying out a combination of policy, catchment and community actions, we hope to have a measurable impact on water quality which will be transferable beyond the three catchments and contribute to a project legacy.

Key actions currently being carried out or planned, some of which you can read about in this edition, include:

- A 'Scoping' study, to provide a consistent evidence base for proposed works across the three catchments.
- Some excellent engagements with a number of schools across the three catchments as part of a pilot approach in 2019 which we look forward to developing further over the course of the project.
- Three oversight committees have been established which will steer aspects of Community Engagement; Water Framework Directive (WFD) Coordination and Technical issues across the catchments and jurisdictions.
- A new 'Community Incentive Scheme' (CIS) will be launched shortly, which will support local capacity building and knowledge exchange. The scheme aims to support cross border 'catchment improvement projects' in the Arney, Blackwater and Finn catchments.

# Community Incentive Scheme Launched

A new CatchmentCARE 'Community Incentive Scheme' (CIS), will be launched in August 2019 to support cross border 'catchment improvement projects' in the Arney, Blackwater and Finn catchments. Project funding will be available through the CIS to support communities in looking after and caring for their local river systems, including associated lakes.

The scheme will help local community organisations contribute to improved management of river catchments and is open to volunteer groups, community groups and NGOs, schools and third level education organisations, youth groups and sports clubs, not for profit organisations and farming groups.

To be eligible, groups should be located within their local community, have primary aims and objectives in line with the CatchmentCARE Project, aim to benefit their local river or improve water quality through effective and innovative means, and create a positive legacy within their local river catchment.

Funding will be up to the amount of €25,000. Exceptional proposals exceeding this amount will be considered if they are cross border based and fully compatible with the objectives of the CatchmentCARE Project.

Listed below are the kind of projects that will be considered for support. This is by no means an exhaustive list and we would encourage additional innovative ideas to help connect communities with the local rivers.

- Wildlife sightings / Biodiversity protection
- Pollution watch
- StreamScapes projects
- Safe Access points & Demonstration Areas
- Community Litter Awareness Campaigns
- Community River walks
- River Bio Blitz
- Adopt a spring/ know your holy well/ protect your water well
- Agriculture / Land Use
- Interpretation / Signage / Display material
- Education Materials / Resources

The Project Catchment Officers in the Arney, Blackwater and Finn Catchments will help groups to develop project ideas and proposals for submission for funding under the scheme. Interested parties should make contact with the relevant Catchment Officer to help develop their proposals:

Arney Catchment: Lisa Doyle, [lisa.doyle@fisheriesireland.ie](mailto:lisa.doyle@fisheriesireland.ie)

Blackwater Catchment: Tom Woods, [thomas.woods@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk](mailto:thomas.woods@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)

Finn Catchment: Sean Gallanagh, [Sean.Gallanagh@loughs-agency.org](mailto:Sean.Gallanagh@loughs-agency.org)



# New CatchmentCARE Education Programme Flows Along

A number of primary schools within the CatchmentCARE project's three catchment areas recently took part in a 7 week education programme between April and June 2019.

The pilot programme involved educators from the River Backwater Catchment Trust visiting a number of schools, where they delivered a range of topics from: general introduction to water; water cycle; local rivers and associated wildlife - to more detailed information on river studies and measurements; looking at pollution; as well as river bank erosion and how it affects the river system.

The schools taking part in the pilot were -

Arney Catchment - Florencecourt & St Mary's Primary Schools

Blackwater Catchment – Carntall & St McCartans Primary Schools, Clogher & Augher Central Primary School

Finn Catchment - Scoil Naisiunta Colmcille, Fintown , Scoil Naisiunta An Choimin, Commeen & Scoil Naisiunta Tabhog, Cloghan

The programme included a visit to a local river close to the schools, where pupils carried out monitoring and invertebrate studies, as well as a visit to Marble Arch Caves, where the children learned about the underground cave system to look at groundwater flows.

The pupils also constructed a story map of their local river system and worked with Gardiner Mitchell Photography to narrate drone footage and wildlife footage of the river.

The learning outcomes from the pilot programme and feedback from the participating schools, teachers and pupils will shape a further three year education programme from 2020.

Watch this space for more updates in the next Newsletter!



# Activity on the Arney

Fermanagh's youngest environmentalists from Killesher and Florencecourt primary schools have pulled on their wellies to investigate the ecological status of the Larganess River at the Tully Mill complex, Florencecourt.

Disturbing the gravel bed of the river releases the invertebrates that live there, which can be caught in nets and identified. This process is called kick-sampling and the species types present, and their abundance, are good indicators of the health of the river in that location. Our junior scientists recorded a variety of species including the larvae of mayfly, stone fly, caddis fly and diving beetle, which confirmed the high status of that particular river section. Training is available through CatchmentCARE for anyone interested in monitoring a stream near them.

Just down the road on the Claddagh River another discovery was made; this time it was the remains of a large fish tail. Samples of the scales from the tail have been sent to DAERA for analysis; we will let you know when the results are in. Not only does the tail show that an adult salmonid was in the river, it also suggests that a predator, most likely an otter, is exploiting the river habitat.

Larger local mammals also took to the Arney River to paddle canoes from the Arney Bridge to Lough Erne as part of the Cuilcagh to Cleenish, a great place heritage project. One participant waited over six decades to experience the river from this perspective and was not disappointed. Another paddle is planned for September so please don't wait that long to try it for yourself.

Arney, over and out.



## Study to evaluate the sustainability of beef and sheep production in low soil phosphorus conditions

Many beef and sheep farms are applying more phosphorus (P) fertiliser and have a higher soil P concentration than is required to maintain productivity. As part of the CatchmentCARE project the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) is conducting field trials to evaluate the sustainability of beef and sheep production under lower soil phosphorus conditions in the Blackwater catchment. Plots at three sites will receive varying rates of chemical fertiliser over the growing season to determine the minimum phosphorus input required to support productivity while reducing losses to water (Picture 1). Grass yield will be harvested and measured twice annually and herbage quality and changes in soil phosphorus will be assessed. The aim of the study is to identify farm specific nutrient management advice for extensive grassland farmers within the Blackwater catchment.

Currently two soil phosphorus tests and index systems are used in Ireland; the Morgan P test in the south and the Olsen P test in the north. Harmonising these two systems will improve the interpretation of soil P test results in cross-border catchments, and will enable more consistent fertiliser policies and recommendations to be delivered. In collaboration with the Teagasc Agricultural Catchments Programme, CatchmentCARE staff at AFBI have begun analysis of over 1,000 soil samples (Picture 2) to compare both index systems and environmental risks.



Picture 1: Experimental plots within a grazed field on a Clogher farm. Each plot will receive varying rates of P fertiliser. Grass yield and grass quality will be measured.



Picture 2: Preparation of soil samples collected from cross border catchments, for Morgan and Olsen soil P test comparison

# Blackwater River Training

An important part of the CatchmentCARE project is to engage with landowners, farmers, anglers and local communities to upskill individuals to look after their local rivers into the future. In May 2019, a series of river training events took place in partnership with NIEA and Dr Ken Whelan to help local groups understand how to sample their local rivers.

On Tuesday 21st May, Mary Toland from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) carried out a one-day 'Introduction to RHAT training' (River Hydromorphology Assessment Technique) at Quinn's Corner, Dungannon and the nearby Parkanaur Forest Park. Fourteen participants from CatchmentCARE partners and local community groups, took part in the course, which involved an indoor presentation defining river typologies and reference conditions and features (natural and manmade). RHAT attributes and a desktop study demonstrating GIS maps and pressure layers was carried out. The afternoon entailed a visit to the Torrent River in Parkanaur Forest Park to carry out two on the ground RHAT surveys.

On Wednesday 22nd & Thursday 23rd May, Dr Ken Whelan delivered an interesting 'Small Streams Course' to 15 individuals from a range of statutory and voluntary organisations. This citizen science based training programme covers the collection of data on fauna, flora and hydromorphology. It provides volunteers with the required skills and training to walk and monitor the small streams in their particular location. The objective of the assessment is not to intentionally seek out pollution points but to assess the status of small streams.

Both courses were well received from all involved and will help contribute to the citizen science element of CatchmentCARE, whilst contributing to project legacies.



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## CatchmentCARE Project Partners

Lead Partner: Donegal County Council (DCC)

Partners: Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI)  
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon  
Borough Council (ABC)  
British Geological Survey (BGS)  
Geological Survey Ireland (GSI)  
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)  
Loughs Agency (LA)  
Ulster University (UU)

