

A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS WORKING WITH WATER, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE





Working with water, biodiversity and climate

www.watersandcommunities.ie

Upper lake Glendalough, Co Wicklow in the heatwave 2018 – photo by Fran Igoe



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Protect our high-status water bodies. High-status means water in pristine or almost pristine condition.



INTRODUCTION

- About 60% of our bodies are made up of water and in young babies it can be as high as 78%. By looking after the water we drink we are looking after ourselves. International research clearly shows that clean, healthy waterways and the activities they support bring many benefits, from clean drinking water to promoting good mental health.
- Every rural area has water flowing through it. Internationally it has been shown that by working with nature, people have a better quality of life. The EU LEADER programme offers opportunities for people living in rural Ireland to maximise the benefits that nature and water can provide. These benefits can range from improving the aesthetics of an area where they live, improving water quality for drinking and recreational opportunities and so benefitting local economies. All of these depend on the availability of clean water.
- All waterways are important and we can all play our part in protecting and restoring them for everyone's benefit. From a small drain or stream to larger waterways such as lakes or the coast, local communities can play their part by getting actively involved in their conservation or enhancement. Ireland has some of the best waters in Europe, including **high status** waters here which support Atlantic salmon, Freshwater pearl mussels and other wildlife that are now threatened with extinction and these too need active community support.

Climate Change:

Many of the examples described in this document will provide benefits as Ireland prepares for the predicted impacts of Climate Change (e.g., some will help reduce flooding impacts and others will sequester carbon).





LEADER THEMES 2014-2020

All of the LEADER Themes have some relevance to water: The Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources and the Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity are particularly relevant to protecting and enhancing water quality and the multitude of benefits to local communities that good water quality supports.

The following pages give some examples and ideas around potential projects and what communities need to consider when putting together an application for LEADER funding to enhance their local environment.

Therefore the benefits go beyond water quality and in so doing provide an opportunity for communities to engage in a meaningful way in the protection of their local environment.

RDP Theme:
Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

SUB THEMES:

- Rural Tourism
- Enterprise Development
- Rural Towns
- Broadband

RDP Theme:
Social Inclusion

SUB THEMES:

- Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities
- Rural Youth

RDP Theme:
Rural Environment

SUB THEMES:

- Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources
- Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity
- Development of Renewable Energy

Introduction:

This section gives a summary overview of the headings under the LEADER Programme (2014-2020) with some important information on the eligibility of costs associated with planning in ecologically sensitive areas under the **“Water and Biodiversity”** sub-themes only.

WORKING FOR BETTER WATER QUALITY



LEADER FUNDING FOR WATER AND BIODIVERSITY

Training – up to 100% of a project can be grant funded

Learning about nature and water is enjoyable. It is also important if we are to understand what can be done to protect and enhance our environment. Training also upskills people on what is the best approach and what needs to be done.

Analysis and development – up to 90% of a project can be grant funded

The Local Action Group (LAG) may offer funding for analysis and development type projects in respect of the following –

- actions to promote analysis and development of rural or rurally-sourced products;
- feasibility studies;
- development plans;
- resource audits;
- development of prototype products and services.

Costs associated with planning requirements in environmentally sensitive areas

Analysis and Development now supports the cost associated with planning requirements in environmentally sensitive areas for capital projects under the Rural Environment Theme (Sustainable use of water, Biodiversity etc). Expenditure on assessments, surveys and other reports required for the purposes of securing planning permission and/or fulfilling other statutory obligations are therefore eligible for LEADER funding as a stand-alone Analysis and Development (A&D) project as defined in Section 6.4 of the LEADER rules.

Note it is envisaged that such Analysis & Development projects would pave the way for the subsequent delivery of environmental capital projects, whether funded by LEADER or otherwise. As such, the use of Analysis & Development for this purpose will be periodically reviewed to ascertain if this is the case or whether particular restrictions/amendments should be put in place.

Department of Rural and Community Development (effective 22nd June 2018)

Capital Grants – up to 50% grant aid for Private Project Promoters and up to 75% grant aid for Community Project Promoters (Minimum funding threshold of €1,250 to €5,000: Maximum €200,000 or €500,000 for Community Projects not involving Economic Activity)

Projects eligible for capital grants are those that result in tangible on the ground work. These could range from information signage, biodiversity trails to habitat restoration works. A range of examples are given in the following pages.

Note that for Analysis and Development and Capital Grants 5% cash contribution for community projects is required from applicants.

Minimum funding threshold - LAGs may not approve funding of less than €1,250 for a project. LAGs may apply a higher minimum funding threshold, which in any event may not be higher than €5,000.



Working with water, biodiversity and climate

TRAINING PROJECTS

UP TO 100% OF A PROJECT CAN BE GRANT FUNDED UNDER THE TRAINING HEADING

- **Biodiversity:** Training offered to citizens in understanding their local environment by knowledgeable experts in their field; e.g., classes on catchment science and water management, flood risk and natural protection methods, chemical & non-chemical control of invasive species.
- **Biosecurity:** Training in biosecurity best practice; from managing personal clothing to work equipment around water bodies.
- **Citizen Science:** Training people in doing the science themselves. Everything from recording butterflies and birds to using aquatic bugs to test water quality.
- **How to develop a water body community management plan:** Training in the basics of making a management plan for a water course: e.g., what is involved in getting to know a local water body; how to get people interested and promote their engagement; identification of issues and how to go about putting together an integrated water body or catchment management plan.





ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT

UP TO 90% OF A PROJECT CAN BE GRANT FUNDED UNDER THE ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT HEADING

Actions to promote analysis and development of rural (rurally-sourced) products;

- Development of sustainable tourist initiatives; eg., eco-friendly blueways and greenways, outdoor biodiversity class rooms (bringing people closer to nature)
- Feasibility studies to manage habitat issues; Projects to examine measures that could limit or control pollution or invasive species or improve habitat
- Development plans to protect a local water body; Develop a community based management template for the protection and enhancement of a water body
- Resource audits of wildlife; Survey of key species or habitats of biodiversity importance
- Development of prototype products and services; Development of survey methods – e.g. Citizen Science, bespoke measures to address wider environmental issues and understand factors affecting water.
- Costs associated with planning in environmentally sensitive areas; Assessments, surveys and other reports required for the purposes of securing planning permission and/or fulfilling other statutory obligations for projects under the Rural Environment Theme and heritage projects as defined in Section 6.4 of the LEADER rules.





DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE VISITOR INITIATIVES

Eco-friendly Blueways & Greenways:

- Identify water as unique and of interest to visitors
- Look at potential route options
- Early into the project, consult and involve the relevant state agencies, for example Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Make sure that the project is sustainable – it should enhance nature rather than impact on it

Use the route as a way to bring about further improvements to the environment on view (e.g., clean up litter, highlight or address sewage discharges, and so on)

Outdoor biodiversity class rooms (bringing people closer to nature)

- Outdoor classrooms are a great way to engage people in nature
- Plan the outdoor classroom with people expert in the area on view
- Early into the project, consult and involve the relevant state agencies, for example Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Decide on scale of the project
- These projects can often be low cost (e.g. creating a river access for pond dipping)
- Larger projects such as the provision of board walks over bogs or wet ground are usually more costly
- Consider constructing a bird hide to avoid disturbance to wildlife by viewing public

Indoor biodiversity and river class rooms

- Dedicated room or classroom to engage people in nature and educate on local waters can compliment outdoor classrooms

Public engagement in waterways and nature through recreation

People enjoy being surrounded by nature and it has been shown that spending time in nature is good for our health. Bringing people closer to nature, if done properly is a way to not only improve an areas attractiveness but also to increase public's awareness of nature and their health.

Examples include:

- River/lake/ coastal walks with an ecological focus
- Bird watching facilities promoting good water & biodiversity management
- Amenity area/ picnic area with an ecological focus
- Canoe/kayaking amenity trails with an ecological focus

FEASIBILITY STUDIES TO MANAGE WILDLIFE HABITATS

Wildlife habitats vary across different environments; in water, on land and even in the air. The issues affecting habitats also impact on water quality, quantity and biodiversity.

Projects aimed at improving wildlife habitats (e.g. to control pollution, invasive species or improve physical habitat) usually require studies to understand what is going on. Where physical works are proposed, planning permission may be required, and in sensitive areas such as Natura 2000 sites, planning constraints can require additional information over and above that needed for work in unprotected areas.

This extra information required can include, Environmental Impact Assessments, Appropriate Assessments, additional ecological studies, Flood Risk assessments and more detail around what is proposed and environmental mitigation measures.

The relevant agencies requiring consultation could include Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Local Authorities, and Office of Public Works. A planning professional may be needed to help pull together the relevant information and deal with planning requirements.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PLANNING REQUIREMENTS IN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

Analysis and Development now supports the cost associated with planning requirements in environmentally sensitive areas for capital projects under the Rural Environment Theme (Sustainable use of water, Biodiversity, etc). Expenditure on assessments, surveys and other reports required for the purposes of securing planning permission and/or fulfilling other statutory obligations are therefore eligible for LEADER funding as a stand-alone Analysis and Development (A&D) project as defined in Section 6.4 of the LEADER rules. See *page 3 for further details.*





DEVELOPMENT PLANS TO PROTECT A LOCAL WATER BODY

Every water body is different and unique in their own way. It is internationally recognised that the best way to protect our rivers, lakes and coastline is where the local community are directly involved in their care. This can range from just keeping an eye on things to getting actively involved in solving problems and carrying out restoration work. Before

carrying out work in a water body, it is good practice to draw up a development or management plan with the relevant stakeholders for the protection and enhancement of a water body. Usually the more community based and focused the plan is, the better the outcomes and the longer term success of the plan.



NOREvision LEADER funded project – creating a vision for the River Nore

Steps involved in developing a water body development plan

1. Agree where and what the water body is.
2. Who are the community and interest groups (called stakeholders)?
3. Develop a vision with the relevant stakeholders through engagements (this can range from public meetings, one-on-one meetings with landowners, focus group meetings, social media discussion groups and so on)
4. The visioning process, led by a suitably qualified expert, is a good approach to underpin any plan as it helps to create a shared understanding of the water body or catchment with the relevant stakeholders, including the local community
5. Collect relevant data and, where necessary, collect additional information
6. Draft actions within the plan in agreement with the stakeholders
7. Include in the plan considerations for a longer term vision for the water body
8. Organise a meeting to launch and sign off the plan with the stakeholders



RESOURCE AUDITS OF WILDLIFE: *Survey of key species or habitats of biodiversity importance*

The rural environment is home to biodiversity in all its forms. Some species are important from scientific, conservation or regulatory points of view. In addition, some are of cultural significance to local areas, or are valuable as they could underpin the quality of a visitors experience or a local community's sense of pride of place.

Surveys of species by suitably qualified experts can be an important means to understanding our environment and planning for sustainable local enterprises (e.g., birdwatching, whale watching). The planning of greenways and blueways should consider such surveys as they serve to not only provide information to enhance the quality of the development but can also inform strategic planning for species protection within any such development. It is recommended that these surveys are supported or complimented by Citizen Science.



Working with water, biodiversity and climate



Development of innovative products, services and citizen science

Innovative and novel survey methods, techniques or prototypes help improve our knowledge of the environment. These can include the development of equipment specific to survey, monitor or test different or new approaches.



CAPITAL PROJECTS



FOR WATER, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE

Restoration / Conservation

1. Planting of trees and riparian plants
2. Riparian management work – e.g., fencing off cattle access (demonstration type projects only)
3. Techniques to manage rainwater or soiled water ingress to rivers (e.g., carpark runoff, etc.)
4. River restoration works
5. Fish passage – e.g., modification of weirs
6. Invasive species control (planning and/or one off control)
7. Silt trapping
8. Community Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) - e.g., Natural Flood Retention Measures (NFRM), bioswales, raingardens, water butts
9. Pond creation – biodiversity habitats – outdoor classroom
10. Constructed wetlands – novel nutrient treatment systems
11. Wild flower meadows
12. Rare species conservation initiatives – e.g. capital costs around setting up-captive breeding centres

Note: The above is dependent on acquiring landownership or a lease, who the project promoter is and whether they cross into primary Agriculture (i.e., can the project be funded through Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) funding programmes). There is a limitation on land costs (limited to 10% of Total Project Cost). Ongoing costs are not eligible for LEADER funding. Check with your LEADER service provider.



PLANTING OF TREES AND RIPARIAN PLANTS



Trees along rivers

Trees are important along rivers as they provide shade and shelter for fish, help to stabilise river banks, help regulate floods and their leaves provide food for aquatic creatures. Too many trees can however reduce sunlight which can reduce fish numbers by affecting instream algae and the food chain. Tree management may form part of a larger project.

Tree planting: Where there are not enough trees, projects can plant trees along river banks. Care should be taken to plant the right type of trees in the right areas. Only plant native trees along river banks. Other native riparian plants such as Meadow Sweet or Yellow Flag Iris could also be considered where ground conditions are suitable.

Tree pruning: Where tree cover is too dense causing excessive shading of a river, carefully planned pruning will increase sunlight access. This can also provide additional angling access. It is recommended to get advice from Inland Fisheries Ireland and National Parks and Wildlife Service on how best this should be carried out.

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RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT WORK

e.g. fencing off of livestock access
(demonstration-type projects)



*Riparian or river banks often need to be managed. Livestock access can be a particular problem for rivers as animals can collapse the river bank by trampling or soil the water on entry.

Fencing is normally used to manage livestock access. However, sometimes management needs to be more nuanced for a particular water course. For example, a limited grazing regime may be beneficial as it may control excessive vegetation growth, which conventional fencing will not allow.

Innovative fencing solutions or novel approaches to fencing require an approach that takes into account the local situation and objectives. For example, controlled grazing along riparian margins, or fencing that is compatible with a flood plain. This action could form part of a larger biodiversity or water management project.

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THINK PROJECTS...

Planting of native wildflowers and vegetation in habitat restoration project

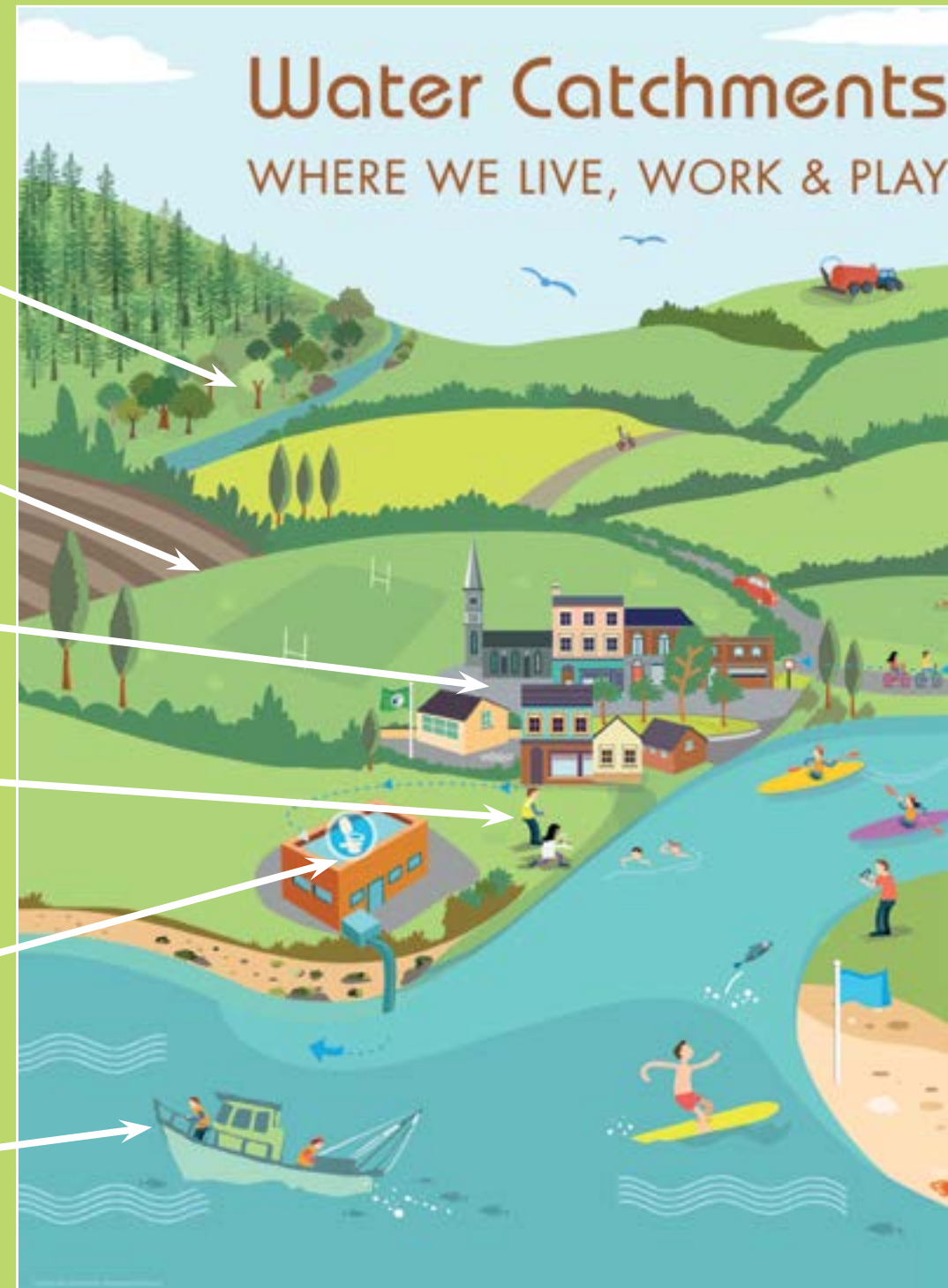
Silt trapping or 'Slow the Flow' Natural Flood Retention Measures such as the addition of large woody debris to drains

Rain garden and SuDS

Innovative techniques for monitoring water quality and biodiversity

Rainwater harvesting on roof of buildings and use of recycled water

Coastal or lake nature safari and stewardship project by local fishermen and recreational users



...THINK RIVER CATCHMENTS



Fish passage project

Tree planting and riparian biodiversity work

Citizen science project led by anglers

Bespoke breeding boxes for birds and mammals

Wetlands to promote wildlife and reduce pollution and flooding

Removal of invasive species and biosecurity planning

Putting a plan together: where it all begins. Feasibility studies and planning involving all of the community in the catchment

Outdoor biodiversity classroom



RIVER RESTORATION WORKS



Many streams and rivers have been degraded by drainage programmes. Drainage often leaves the river with a uniform featureless character that can be damaging to fish and other river wildlife. A redesign of the river channel to mimic natural river conditions will improve the river for fish and biodiversity in general. River restoration can often also reduce flood risk by reducing river bank and instream erosion and increasing overall channel stability. River restoration can take the following forms: river bank or instream habitat rehabilitation (improving existing impacted conditions), restoring riparian areas (bringing the physical and ecological condition of the river bank back to what it once was), reintroducing instream habitat (adding specific instream habitat formerly lost) and reconnecting fragmented habitat (joining up habitat often separated by development such as by road crossings or weirs). The ideal situation of course is to let a river return naturally to its former wild state, but this is often not possible due to competing land uses.

Note: The above is dependent on acquiring landownership or a lease, who the project promoter is and whether they cross into primary Agriculture (i.e., can the project be funded through DAFM funding programmes). Ongoing costs are not eligible for LEADER funding. Instream habitat work will require permission from Inland Fisheries Ireland. Check with your LEADER service provider.



FISH PASSAGE

reconnecting fragmented habitat

Manmade barriers along rivers and streams can restrict and even prevent the movement of fish and aquatic invertebrates. Large weirs and dams in particular are a major problem particularly for salmon, trout and rare fish such as lampreys. Fish passes (sometimes known as fish ladders) will allow fish to ascend over these obstructions. In certain circumstances removal of the obstruction is recommended to improve the quality of the habitat upstream.

Note: *The above is dependent on acquiring landownership or a lease, who the project promoter is and whether they cross into primary Agriculture (i.e., can the project be funded through DAFM funding programmes). Ongoing costs are not eligible for LEADER funding. Check with your LEADER service provider.*



Fish pass placed to help Atlantic salmon and other fish species migrate over a weir on the River Nore – the footprint of the fish pass is visible to the left of the weir in picture as riffle water in a flood.



INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

(planning and/or one off control)



Invasive species are a particular problem along Irish rivers and lakes leading to a loss of biodiversity and even destabilised river banks. Species such as the noxious Giant hogweed and the Himalayan balsam are relatively easy to control. Other species such as the Japanese knotweeds require more effort but, also can be controlled if a biosecurity (invasive species control) plan is put in place.

Note: It is important that permission is obtained from the landowner by the project promoter.



Himalayan balsam



Silt trapping in a farm drain

SILT TRAPPING



Clay washed into rivers from field drains can pose a problem for fish and aquatic invertebrates. This clay can smother the eggs of salmon and trout and kill invertebrates including the Freshwater pearl mussel. Trapping of silt using silt traps is an effective way to manage and prevent silt from entering rivers and can be done by either the construction of small wetlands or purpose built traps which can then be emptied at intervals. Silt trapping could do done as part of a larger project.

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NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS FLOODING AND POLLUTION

Community Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems initiatives - e.g. Natural Flood Retention Measures, swales, wetlands, rain gardens, water butts



Rain water falling on hard surfaces such as roof tops, paving, footpaths and roads can result in increased flooding and pollution. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) can mitigate such increased runoff and reduce the risk of flooding. Rain water can also become contaminated by dog or bird faeces, motor vehicular fluids and windscreen washings as it flows across these hard surfaces. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems can also reduce the effect of such contaminants by intercepting them and using nature based processes to bind them up or break them down.



Examples of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems include swales, wetlands, bioretention ponds, rain gardens and water butts at the end of roof downpipes. Normally several of these are used together for maximum effect. These can be incorporated into village (e.g., by Tidy Towns) or community centres, and the water can then be used for things like watering flower beds. In open countryside, Natural Flood Retention Measures (NFRM) can be used to slow down flood water providing protection to rural villages and property. Tree planting, water attenuation areas, large woody debris placement are just some of the techniques used.

These methods also contribute to Climate Change mitigation.



Example of Rain Gardens treating surface water runoff from a road

Note: The above is dependent on acquiring landownership or a lease, who the project promoter is and whether they cross into primary Agriculture (i.e., can the project be funded through DAFM funding programmes). There is a limitation on land costs (limited to 10% of Total Project Cost). It may be important to discuss with Local Authority. Ongoing costs are not eligible for LEADER funding. Check with your LEADER service provider.



COMMUNITY POND – BIODIVERSITY HABITATS – OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

The number of wetlands and ponds in Ireland is decreasing. Yet these are crucial habitats for a range of wildlife from dragonflies and waterhens to frogs and newts. These, in turn, support other species of wildlife such as grey heron and otters. Therefore, the local pond can be important for supporting a range of species and research from the UK has shown recently that they are also important as feeding areas for bats.

Costs associated with the project could include, land purchase or lease, project planning and management, excavations, lining the base of the pond and planting with suitable aquatic plants. These projects can serve as outdoor classrooms.



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CONSTRUCTED WETLANDS – nature based nutrient treatment systems

Wetlands

Wetlands are invaluable for a whole range of reasons. They provide extra water storage in the countryside, are habitat for wildlife and help reduce flood risk. Wetlands have been shown to be effective at removing pollutants from water and can also double up as nature reserves as they attract a range of wildlife species.

Manmade constructed wetlands can be used in the treatment of polluted water which otherwise may contaminate a local water course. They can be used where water treatment has not been fully effective, for a variety of reasons, (e.g., where tertiary treatment is not available) and can “polish” the water by removing contaminants.

Wetlands bring additional wildlife benefits and in many cases community amenity benefits by:

- Improving flooding resilience
- Improving water quality
- Promoting biodiversity



Note: The above is dependent on acquiring landownership or a lease, who the project promoter is and whether they cross into primary Agriculture (i.e., can the project be funded through DAFM funding programmes). There is a limitation on land costs (limited to 10% of Total Project Cost). It may be important to discuss with Local Authority. Ongoing costs are not eligible for LEADER funding.



WILDFLOWERS

for nature



Wildflower meadows are aesthetically pleasing and provide significant support to the wide range of pollinators normally associated with the countryside. With the intensification of agriculture and increased use of herbicides and pesticides, pollinators in Ireland have undergone a serious decline. It is important therefore that we maintain sufficient space or buffer strips along water courses especially where land use is intensive.

Planting wildlife strips along riparian areas in villages and towns or along field margins provide important food sources for bees and other pollinating insects.

Costs associated with wildflower meadows include the cost of land (if not donated), the wildflower itself and ongoing management costs (e.g., mowing). This can be done as part of a larger project.

Remember it is important to only plant native Irish seeds rather than non-native seeds that may be on sale in standard retail outlets.

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CITIZEN SCIENCE

Citizen Science is an emerging field that puts the citizen to the centre of the science. Large scale surveys can take place if enough suitably trained and qualified citizens get involved. For years citizens have been involved in the recording of bird census data. More recently with the establishment of the National Data Biodiversity Centre (www.biodiversityireland.ie), a network of citizen recorders has been established across the country for a range of species. In support of these recorders, there are online apps with which the information can be recorded and stored in data repositories.

Citizen Science in water quality monitoring is an emerging field. Citizens can be trained in the “reading of a catchment”, using waterbugs to establish water body health and how to conduct water body safaris, where sources of pollution can be detected.

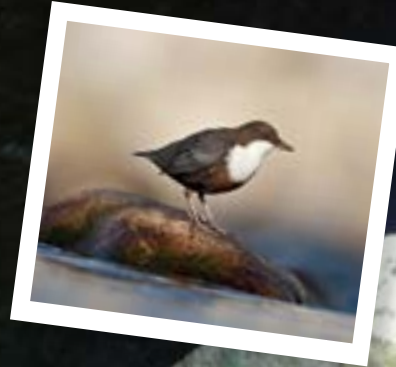
Small scale citizen science projects can be facilitated through training. However larger scale citizen science projects, which need expert involvement and access to equipment and databases require larger budgets and therefore once off training may not be sufficient. A more significant project budget may be required.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

- Involves recording wildlife or habitat/issues through a network of trained volunteers
- Engages people with biodiversity and water
- Generates valuable scientific data

CREATING HOMES

for Wildlife



**Putting up nest boxes
for the dipper,**
*a charismatic river bird
and an indicator of
clean water*

Wildlife flourishes when basic living requirements are met, such as an adequate food supply, shelter, suitable breeding areas and clean water. If any of these are limited, wildlife will not thrive. However there are things that we can do to assist, even in urbanised areas. The provision of bird boxes, otter holts, bat boxes, bug hotels or small ponds in the right place can go a long way to help wildlife, and with appropriate signage will increase public awareness. Leaving land aside, or rewilding, of course is the most desirable option but let's take it one step at a time...



RARE SPECIES CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Sometimes wildlife needs a helping hand through breeding programmes, especially if a species is in danger of extinction.

Conservation breeding programmes can assist in the recovery of threatened species, sub-species or unique populations. Captive breeding is sometimes practiced to conserve species of birds, mammals, invertebrates and even fish. The establishment of seed banks and areas to grow

particular plants is also an important practice in biodiversity conservation.

Costs can include capital costs associated with the premises, necessary equipment and the exercise of setting up the programme, including collection or translocation of individual species for a captive breeding conservation programme.

Right: Developing a hatchery for Freshwater Pearl Mussels in Waterford.
Above: Photo of Freshwater Pearl Mussels.



WATER CONSERVATION



Climate change is beginning to impact on our environment. The wasteful consumption of water is now becoming a bigger issue than ever before. Rather than depending completely on water abstracted from our rivers, lakes or our groundwater (which effectively feeds our rivers and lakes), collecting and storing rainwater is a good way to reduce our impact on water availability. Storing of water also leads to better water security especially during dry weather when abstraction sources can be depleted or even run dry. Remember the recent drought of 2018.

Options to consider include;

- Rainwater harvesting for your community
- Development of feasibility studies and water conservation plans
- Better management of water in community, buildings, villages and farms

By being more aware of conserving water in our homes and communities, we can contribute to building a sustainable water supply for everyone.

Visit www.taptips.ie for information on what you can do at home to help conserve water.





BRINGING WATER AND BIODIVERSITY BENEFITS TO THE OTHER LEADER SUB-THEMES



Maybe your project does not strictly come under the water and biodiversity themes. But have you thought about how you could incorporate water and biodiversity into your project proposal? Many projects, even capital projects, can be developed to conserve and even improve water quality and biodiversity. It is all in the planning. So if there is a watercourse within your project area, or you have a project and would like to increase its benefit for wildlife, why not contact the Local Authority Waters Programme for advice on how best to maximise its potential for amenity use. Even that drain beside the community centre or GAA pitch could hold potential for better water and biodiversity benefits.

Examples of LEADER sub-themes where water could be incorporated include:

- Rural Tourism: e.g. signage, angling, kayaking, riverside walks, biodiversity tours, bird watching, traditional boating activities.
- Enterprise and Development: e.g. nature-based companies and outdoor experiences.
- Rural towns: e.g. improvement of river habitat and aesthetics in rural towns, river habitat restoration, creation of angling opportunities for tourism and youth.
- Basic services targeted at hard to reach communities: e.g. awareness-raising and water security projects.
- Rural youth: e.g. angling, kayaking, nature bush crafts, hiking, etc.
- Development of renewable energy: e.g. innovative techniques to crop willow for biomass production

EXAMPLES OF LEADER PROJECTS

Examples from current and previous LEADER Programme

TRAINING

Training projects can be broad in their approach (e.g., biodiversity) or take a more targeted approach, such as training to tackle certain invasive species. Ideally training should be organised with a view to follow up action by the attendees of the training course. Where possible community groups should end up with an action plan which can then be delivered through other funding mechanisms including the LEADER programme, collaborations with state agencies, private industry, stakeholders and volunteers. A typical example is given below (Put out to tender by Louth LEADER Partnership).

Name of project: Brief introduction to the concept of Water Catchment Management and to the nature of our rivers and coastline

Project promoter: Louth LEADER Partnership

Funding: 100 % to a maximum of €24,000



Communities in Dundalk Bay gather with staff from the Local Authority Waters Programme to discuss the many benefits that water and biodiversity have in the area.

Objective: To help groups understand the need to conserve and protect our water resources and biodiversity; To develop capacity and knowledge of best practice in environmental management and the steps required to implement small projects to protect water and biodiversity in a safe manner; To equip groups to develop local biodiversity and water management projects in their towns, villages and local communities; To support and encourage groups to communicate their actions to the wider community and to develop an Action Plan.

Brief description (as per tender document): The training will include the development of a water resources management plan for interested groups. The trainer/facilitator will offer individualised support and guidance in the development of the plan; and Study Visit; A field/study visit outside Co. Louth to showcase the benefits of best practice water management projects. Each workshop will be facilitated by an expert who will create an interactive session whereby participants can contribute and discuss issues or concerns they may have. The idea of this training is to provide basic knowledge that can be built on by further practical training initiatives and to enable and assist the participant to develop a water resources management plan that may be used to seek funding under the “Water Resources” sub-theme in the LEADER 2014-2020 programme.

Contact needs to be made with the Local Community Water Officer prior to commencement of training courses.

Budget: Max €24,000 The successful tenderer is expected to cover all costs (venue hire, all field/study trip expenses, training materials etc.), associated with the development and delivery of the Water Resources Management Training.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Capital projects provide either a physical outcome or the development of a service. These could be habitat restoration projects aimed at improving nature or a service that protects and enhances biodiversity. There is no reason why these could not compliment a tourism project as long as wildlife and water quality are not degraded in the process.



The Duhallow Angling Centre of Excellence not only taught local farmers and landowners how to fish but also developed a greater appreciation locally of the fantastic rivers flowing through their land. This project worked closely with the DuhallowLIFE project to improve the environment for all of the rural community in Duhallow to enjoy.

Providing angling opportunities

Name of project: Duhallow Angling Centre of Excellence

Project promoter: Kanturk & District Anglers

Funding: €40,500 - 75% to a maximum of €78,346

Objective text: To develop Angling in Duhallow

Brief description: The project developed an Angling Centre of Excellence which included the following: The carrying out of necessary technical studies to develop the centre of excellence for angling in Duhallow (North Cork). This included the marketing and promotion of fishing and angling in Duhallow. Facilities including car parks, stiles and foot bridges were developed. Improved access for the visitor and local resident angler was provided to promote sustainable use of the angling resource. A leave no trace ethos was promoted for Duhallow's waterways and the practice of "catch and release" encouraged to provide for a more sustainable fishery and tourism resource. The project supported the best practice to river management which included cleaning up of litter, linking in with other habitat restoration projects to improve the anglers experience.



Before works - severely eroding river banks causing sedimentation of salmon and trout spawning habitat. A vulnerable population of threatened Freshwater Pearl Mussel is also being impacted downstream and the farmer is losing land.

The photos show some of the habitat restoration work carried out on the River Dalua, Co Cork by the Duhallow Angling Centre of Excellence in partnership with the DuhallowLIFE project. By working with the local community, a considerable number of volunteers engaged and materials were also donated to the project.

Name of project: Restoration of Dalua

Project promoter: Kanturk & District Anglers

Funding: €40,500

Objective: Restoration Works for River Dalua

Brief description: The River Dalua upstream of Kanturk town is an important and popular angling destination for locals and tourists. A large section was impacted by unrestricted cattle access. Cattle trampling and poaching led to the collapse of the river bank,



During works – working to reduce the rate of erosion by using a mixture of tree planting, rock and bank reprofiling. Large willow stakes are planted to bind the banks with their roots.



After works - two years after the work was completed, the river bank has completely naturalised. The willow trees and riparian vegetation have now grown up providing habitat for a range of wildlife and livestock are fenced off to prevent trampling of the banks and soiling of the water.

increased erosion and sedimentation. Organic enrichment due to cattle defecation also occurred. The project restricted cattle access to the river and allowed for the recovery of trout and salmon stocks. The invasive plant species Himalayan balsam was also removed by hand and the project aimed to conserve sandmartin nesting holes in the river banks. The project involved stabilising sections of river bank while also fencing livestock from the river. This work was done in partnership with the local farmer and a range of local community groups and supported also by Inland Fisheries Ireland. This project complimented a larger EU LIFE project providing an integrated approach to improving water quality, biodiversity and the quality of angling along this stretch of river which is also a Special Area of Conservation. This project secured the necessary planning and consents from NPWS, Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Local Authority (see text re Analysis and Development which outlines funding opportunities for the planning of water and biodiversity projects in environmentally sensitive areas)."

IRD Duhallow CLG

All LEADER themes can potentially help the environment: Going for the Win Win:

Example: enhancing the environment whilst delivering a project through any of the LEADER themes.

Name of project: Pitch and Putt Course and walk, Newmarket

Project promoter: Newmarket Development Association and IRD Duhallow CLG

Funding: Feasibility Study: €9,000; Pitch and Putt Capital Development €150,000; Community Lighting and Walkway €74,075.



State of the art Pitch and Putt course with walk to serve the local community of Newmarket and visitors. Greening of this project had additional benefits for nature and water quality.

Objective: Pitch and Putt Course to promote Rural Tourism with enhanced biodiversity features.

Brief description: Most LEADER capital projects can potentially impact on the environment. If the project is planned in consultation with people with knowledge of ecology and the local environment, not only can negative impacts be avoided, but so can expensive planning processes, through better design taking the environment into account. Better again, many projects can actually result in an improved environment if biodiversity and water are considered in the design and implementation from the beginning.



The impacted drain showing the absence of quality habitat for fish and other species.

Here is a simple example from a project developed by IRD Duhallow CLG. The project plan was to redevelop the old pitch and putt course into a state of the art pitch

and putt course in the town of Newmarket to service the entire region, and to develop a walk around its perimeter. Consultation with the environmental team based in IRD Duhallow, the local Duhallow Birdwatch and the Environmental Working Group and state agencies led to not only a better environmental outcome but also a better visitor experience. Here is what happened.



A pool with carefully placed boulders were placed to create hiding places for fish and areas where river birds such as wagtails can stand.

First off, a feasibility study was conducted to see how best to fully utilise the Pitch and Putt Course which was falling into disrepair. This led to a capital project with the full redevelopment of the Pitch and Putt Course. The design team met with the various environmental experts to make provisions for the management of any potential run off of fertiliser from the greens to adjacent water courses. There was a nearby drain, which was once a stream but due to historic drainage works, it was in a degraded environmental state. This drain discharges into an important river which is



Left: Featureless stream just before restoration works began.



The river bank was reprofiled and a meander put in the stream. Rocks were introduced to increase the diversity of habitat in the stream and provide cover for fish.

Natural weirs to increase aeration of the water together with gravel for use by spawning fish were added giving the stream a more attractive character - sound and vision!

a Special Area of Conservation for Atlantic salmon, otter and other species. During the construction of the pitch and putt course, ponds were designed to intercept any potential nutrient loss from the greens. These were vegetated using locally sourced aquatic plants from surrounding farms and planted by volunteers. The stream was restored using the equipment on site and redesigned by fishery experts to reflect natural conditions. Inland Fisheries Ireland carried out before and after fish stock surveys and found that the numbers of fish increased significantly after the works were finished. The ponds are now full of wildlife including dragonflies and are used every summer as an outdoor classroom for a junior biodiversity camp. Once the Pitch and Putt project was concluded, the group recognised the value of putting a walkway around the Pitch and Putt facility and applied for a LEADER Project to develop and light a walkway. To top it all off, this section of the walk along the stream is consistently voted as the “visitors favourite experience” by walkers using the walk. So, with a bit of planning and consultation with the right people, your project could also turn out to be a biodiversity friendly initiative and enhance nature for everyone’s enjoyment.

By linking the biodiversity elements with the other LEADER elements, a Rural Tourism, Rural Towns or even a Rural Economy

project could avail of additional funds from the Water or Biodiversity Measure of LEADER through a linked project in order to deliver multiple outcomes within the same project. *IRD Duhallow CLG*

Name of project: Lough Derg Native Fish Biodiversity Survey



The survey included netting using sophisticated techniques imported from Sweden in collaboration with a number of Irish and international universities.

Public outreach was a big part of the project, sharing the wonderful discoveries with the community.

Project promoter: Lough Derg Angling Federation
Funding: €10,000

Objective: To carry out a Citizen Science survey of the native fish stocks and biodiversity in Lough Derg

Left: Citizen scientist anglers and project partners sampled 1,000's of trout and other fish species to get a better understanding of Lough Derg's unique fish populations.

Brief description: The project aimed to collect genetic material from native trout in the lough to determine what types occur and identify the most productive spawning streams contributing the lough. Unique fish species such as landlocked lamprey and the rare Irish pollan were also investigated, and research into the relationship between the fishes and their foodwebs was carried out. The work included netting surveys, genetic and stable isotope analysis, invertebrate work, searches of historic material and public outreach. This project formed part of Ireland's largest inland waters Citizen Science survey of fish stocks ever undertaken providing valuable information on Ireland's unique natural heritage.

Galway Rural Development Company Ltd.

Name of project: Well of Ara Proposal

Project promoter: Tipperary Chamber of Commerce

Funding: €7,892.90

Objective: To develop a natural walk along the river in Tipperary Town and enhance its biodiversity.

Brief description: The project aims to rehabilitate the River Arra which flows through Tipperary Town by restoring natural meanders, spawning gravel for fish and planting of native water plants. The project will turn the town towards this neglected river, celebrating its beauty and naturalness. On completion the rehabilitated river will serve as an outdoor classroom and area where people can come and relax. The River Arra is a Priority Area for Action under Ireland's River Basin Management Plan which aims to improve water quality and this project will enhance the public's appreciation of the river.



Local people get to learn of what water bugs are in the stream.

Name of project: Kildanogue Duckponds, Tipperary

Project promoter: Ardfinnan, Ballybacon, Grange and Newcastle Gun Club

Funding: €150,000

Objective: To open the man-made duckponds to the public as a leisure and educational amenity.



Children take part in one of the outdoor classroom events in preparation for the big restoration project.



Feeding the ducks is a joy for small children and a great way to get everyone outdoors.

Bridge and path around one of the ponds.

Brief description: The works included developing hard-core paths which are wheelchair and buggy friendly, wooden bridges, railing, outdoor furniture, a car parking area and entrance, as well as a viewing platform and hut. There is interpretive signage placed right throughout the site to help visitors identify all of the diverse flora and fauna.

South Tipperary Development Company CLG



A duck race of a different kind!



Information note from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) regarding the LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme

This document is a guide and should not be viewed as a summary of the LEADER 2014 – 2020 Operating Rules. The LEADER 2014 – 2020 Operating Rules should always be consulted regarding the eligibility of a project for LEADER funding.

- The eligibility or otherwise of projects are covered by the LEADER 2014 – 2020 Operating Rules and Circulars, that have or may be issued by the DRCD LEADER Unit. There may be updates to these Operating Rules so it is always advisable to check these regarding the eligibility of projects for LEADER grant aid and also any other requirements such as procurement, etc.
- The Local Action Group (LAG) ultimately decides whether a project is funded or not, the amount of grant aid and the rate of aid to be provided. Because a project may be eligible in the LEADER 2014 – 2020 Operating Rules does not mean that it will be grant aided by the LAG.
- It should be noted that “Works” that normally come within the remit of Local Authorities are not eligible for LEADER funding. Where it is not clear whether a project could be considered to come under the remit of the Local Authority (e.g. ornamental street lighting or footpaths), the LAG should consult with the Department of Rural and Community Development prior to approving funding. Work that is the responsibility of State Agencies such as the OPW is not eligible for LEADER funding.
- Agriculture is an ineligible sector for funding, LAGs should firstly ascertain if the activity/animal has been covered by any current or previous DAFM scheme. Furthermore, if the activity does not qualify for DAFM funding, that does not automatically mean that it will qualify for LEADER funding as the core activity may still be deemed to be “agriculture” e.g. goat farming, poultry production, fruit, small scale market gardens, etc.
- LEADER does not grant aid project management cost post LEADER project completion.
- LEADER does not grant aid promoter labour costs. However for community applicants subject to certain conditions outlined in the LEADER 2014 – 2020 Operating Rules, contributions-in-kind can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work) which must be based on the verified time spent and the rate of remuneration for equivalent work. The LAG must ensure that the rate applied is properly justified in the application. The maximum rate allowed is €14 per hour.

Where a project promoter has an idea for a project to be funded under the LEADER 2014 – 2020 programme, they should in the first instance contact the LAG or its Implementing Partner (IP)* with an Expression of Interest to discuss the possible eligibility of the project for LEADER funding. If the project is viewed as being eligible for funding the project promoter will be asked to complete an application form. Where the LAG/IP is unsure as to whether the project is eligible for funding they can contact the LEADER Unit with the details of the proposed project and ask for guidance on the eligibility or otherwise of the project.

*** a good idea is to contact your local Development Company in the first instance for ideas, help, ideas, allowability, amount of available funds and general guidance etc. The Local Authority Waters Programme will also assist where we can and may be able to advise on other funding options.**

MAP OF COMMUNITY WATER OFFICER LOCATIONS

If you have an interest in developing projects that could enhance and safeguard our Water Resources; increase Awareness around Water; improve Water Conservation and Water Quality and Biodiversity please contact the Local Authority Waters Programme Office by email at info@lawaters.ie or phone at 0761 06 6230 for ideas and advice.

The Local Authority Waters Programme is a Local Authority shared service funded by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and is managed jointly by Kilkenny and Tipperary County Councils.

LAWPRO office: 0761 06 6230



CWO Base	Mobile
Donegal Town	085 808 5603
Carrickmacross	085 808 5756
Carrick-on-Shannon ...	085 808 5495
Castlebar	085 808 3064
Galway	085 808 5533
Navan	085 808 3682

CWO Base	Mobile
Dublin	085 808 3725
Kilkenny	085 808 4067
Limerick.....	085 808 3715
Cork.....	085 808 3059
Tralee	085 808 3716
Tullamore	086 859 9514

Working with water, biodiversity and climate