

The Erne Rivers Trust Report Sept 2016- Sept 2017

Summary

We have had little activity during the year and remained financially dormant due to limited resources available. The Interreg “Source to Tap” project started at the end of this period by the umbrella body “Rivers Trust” and we hope to be involved more in it in the coming future.

Lack of support by NIEA which was required under the Water Framework Directive is leaving many Rivers Trusts fending for themselves.

Our main activities have been within the local connections throughout the Catchment and representation in various ways.

I do not see these activities change much within the near future until the NIHE involve the River Trusts as is happening in Wales, England and Scotland.

The Trustees continued to build linkages and networks with other organizations, relevant Research Institutes, Government agencies and NGO’s. The principle emerging initiatives relevant to the Erne system in this period have been the funding of the Lough Erne Lakeshore Partnerships (LELP) and the development and funding of the Source to Tap Project.

Funding/Accounts

During this period no monies have been spent (except on accounting) as we failed in the few grants available to secure any support for the Erne Melvin Hatchery with its subsequent closure and loss of facilities. This left us without funding for any activities over the year and limited chances in the near future.

Activities

Despite limited funds we have kept evolved in various activities:

Rivers Trust Meeting

This meeting brought a number of Northern Ireland Rivers Trusts together. The common theme expressed was the good environmental work being done by the Rivers Trusts for the communities across Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These activities lead to the improvement in “well being” of the local communities. The secondary discussion was on how unsupported the River Trusts are within Northern Ireland reminding the English Delegates of the Bleak 1980’s in England when they started.

Educational Research in Relation to the environment

Very useful discussions were held with Noel Elliott the CEO of the Field Studies Council in Derrygonnelly on the Sillies River; concerning outdoors and environmental education programs with schools.

The position of the ERT is that if we are to make progress on increasing outdoors and environmental education in the schools here; we need the development of a broad coalition of all environmental interests to support this. This is necessary to make

progress with the Educational authorities and also local and regional levels of Government.

Representation on SIFF

We are represented on the SIFF (Salmon Inland Fisheries Forum) ministerial committee which meets quarterly in Portadown. This gives us insight into the work of DEARA and future developments.

Erne Melvin Hatchery

We tried unsuccessfully to get grants for this exceptional facility to stay open. We attended Talks on the use of hatcheries and the options available in Dublin. When closure occurred we worked with the Omagh Fermanagh District Council to try and find use for the facilities. Currently the site is out for commercial tender.

Source to Tap Project

Throughout the Spring of 2017 the focus was on assisting in ensuring that the Source to Tap Project was funded and was centred in Enniskillen. ERT approached Waterways Ireland and they were able to find space in their HQ building in Enniskillen to host the Source to Tap Project. Trustee also assisted StT in the training of their newly appointed staff on interaction with the farming community on water quality issues.

Local Community

We have been consulted and helped put some articles in the local Newspapers over the year. An Article on the facewipes found in Lough Erne above Enniskillen got good Coverage. These are the remains of raw sewage being pumped into Lough Erne.

Southern Ireland Community

In the Autumn efforts were made to make contact with other organizations working on the Erne watershed including possible groups or contacts that might have an interest in the work of the Erne Rivers Trust, Through Bernie O'Flaherty, co-ordinator of Irish border regions contacts were made with a number of groups that previously assisted Monaghan County Council and/or have interest in rivers that are tributaries of the Erne. We are in the process of identifying more active groups in the Cavan area. Gretta McCarron, LAWCO's Community Water Officer for Monaghan Louth and Cavan. It is hoped that these regions will also work with the cross border Source To Tap Interreg project in the Erne and Derg and assisting the Erne Rivers Trust to engage further with the wider catchment.

Some of groups involved in Southern Ireland:

www.catchments.ie

Waters and Communities Office

Oifig an Údaráis Áitiúil um Uisce agus Pobail

Finally we strive to continue and are finding more support South of the Northern Ireland Border which we hope to do things in the future.

Albert Keys

Chairman Erne Rivers Trust.