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Source to Tap Newsletter: Issue 1



The Project

Source to Tap is an innovative and exciting, cross-border partnership project. It will focus on the River Erne and the River Derg catchments which cross the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. It aims to develop sustainable, catchment-scale solutions for the protection of rivers and lakes, which are the main sources of our shared drinking water.

In this issue

- Welcome
 - Project Launch – Full “Stream” Ahead
 - Meet the Team
 - Catchment Focus
 - Gearing up for Citizen Science
 - Join our Riverfly Monitoring team
 - Educate don't Contaminate
 - A Christmas gift for the Erne and Derg Rivers
-

Welcome to the first issue of Source to Tap News

The Source to Tap project is the first of its kind! We want to tell you about your Source, your Tap, and everything in-between.

Over the next four years, the Source to Tap project will explore sustainable and cost-effective measures to reduce water quality pressures that impact the River Erne and River Derg cross-border catchments. It will work to secure safe drinking water sources, healthier rivers and lakes, ensuring compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive. This will deliver a variety of environmental, social and economic benefits to the catchment.

To achieve this ambitious goal Source to Tap will work with farmers and land managers to help reduce the volume of herbicide and soil filtering into the watercourse. It will also pilot measures with forestry operators to reduce water colouration and turbidity caused by forestry felling and replanting operations.

In addition, the project aims to restore 135 hectares of land adjacent to watercourses back to natural peat habitat. Such measures will naturally filter the water and reduce the amount of silt entering watercourses. As a direct result of the project sustainable catchment management solutions will be created. It is hoped that this will be used as a flagship example to be shared across Northern Ireland, Ireland and beyond.

To accompany this, we will engage with schools and the local community to educate and empower local people to take pride in their precious freshwater environment. By providing local volunteers with the necessary skills and tools we can deliver a community-led volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Initiative. This will effect changes in attitudes towards protection of our water.

This €5.3 million project is funded by the EU's INTERREG VA programme through the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) together with funding from the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland and the Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) in Ireland. The project is delivered by a partnership, led by Northern Ireland Water and it includes Irish Water, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), East Border Region, Ulster University and The Rivers Trust.

Project Launch – Full "Stream" Ahead



The Source to Tap project was officially launched on 8th December 2017.

Unfortunately due to the adverse weather conditions and in the interests of health and safety the launch event was called off.

However our first project roadshow has been scheduled for the new year and we cannot wait to tell you about our plans for Source to Tap.

Thank you to those made the start of this journey so promising and to those who have signed up to help us with our exciting plans for 2018 and beyond.

You have our commitment to keep working together to make our water better!

Meet the team

Our team will play a vital role in the growth, delivery and success of the Source to Tap project.



Diane Foster

Project Manager

I am the Project Manager for the Source to Tap project having previously been involved in setting up another cross-border water management project. I have many years' experience in catchment management, research management and partnership working.

What does Diane love about our rivers and lakes?

Diane loves the way our rivers and lakes enhance our countryside and provide a habitat to such a myriad of creatures within their hidden depths, from the smallest of organisms to beautiful fish and the iconic mammals which wander along the riverbank.



Lisa Stewart

Project Officer

I am a recent Masters Graduate in European Planning from Queens University Belfast with experience in community engagement, environmental planning, conservation and sustainable development. I am one of the Project Officers who will be working on 'Source to Tap'.

What does Lisa love about our rivers and lakes?

I love how they are threads of history. I grew up on an Island, so I was always out in our fishing boat with my father and grandfather. They would teach me about the fish species and other aquatic life. The lake was a staple in our family history of clinker boat building and hire, so I have a strong family connection to the water.



Lyndsey Herron

Project Officer

I am a PhD graduate of Queen's University Belfast where I researched conservation grazing on sand dunes. I have experience in conservation, environmental education and community engagement. I am one of the Project Officers who will be working on 'Source to Tap'.

What does Lyndsey love about our rivers and lakes?

I grew up in the countryside and living beside a river has given me the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the variety of wildlife that exists in our rivers and streams.



Patrick Gallagher

Project Officer

I have many years' experience in monitoring of river, lake and bathing water quality and working to protect the freshwater environment. I am one of the Project Officers who will be working on 'Source to Tap'.

What does Patrick love about our rivers and lakes?

I love the way our rivers provide natural habitat for our wildlife making every day by the river interesting when you never know who will you meet each day.



Mark Horton

Project Officer Support

I have many years' experience in river management, freshwater species conservation and community involvement in the protection of our freshwater environment. I am supporting the work of the project officers by overseeing the learning and outreach and public engagement side of the project, as well as the delivery of the Land Incentive Scheme.

What does Mark love about our rivers and lakes?

I love the way our rivers have shaped the landscape we live in today, from the places we live to the places we love to relax #loveyourwater



Phoebe Morton

Catchment Scientist

I hold a degree in Biology, during which I worked with The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust in Scotland, and a PhD in Environmental Science, which focussed on the impacts of different types of management on peatlands. My role on the project is to set up and maintain equipment which monitors different aspects of hydrology and water quality.

What does Phoebe love about our rivers and lakes?

I really enjoy discovering new aspects of waterways, whether it be creatures I haven't seen before, assemblages of plants or simply a new spot away from the stresses of modern life. I'm also an occasional wild swimmer and love the excitement of being enveloped by that cool water!



Karen Atchison

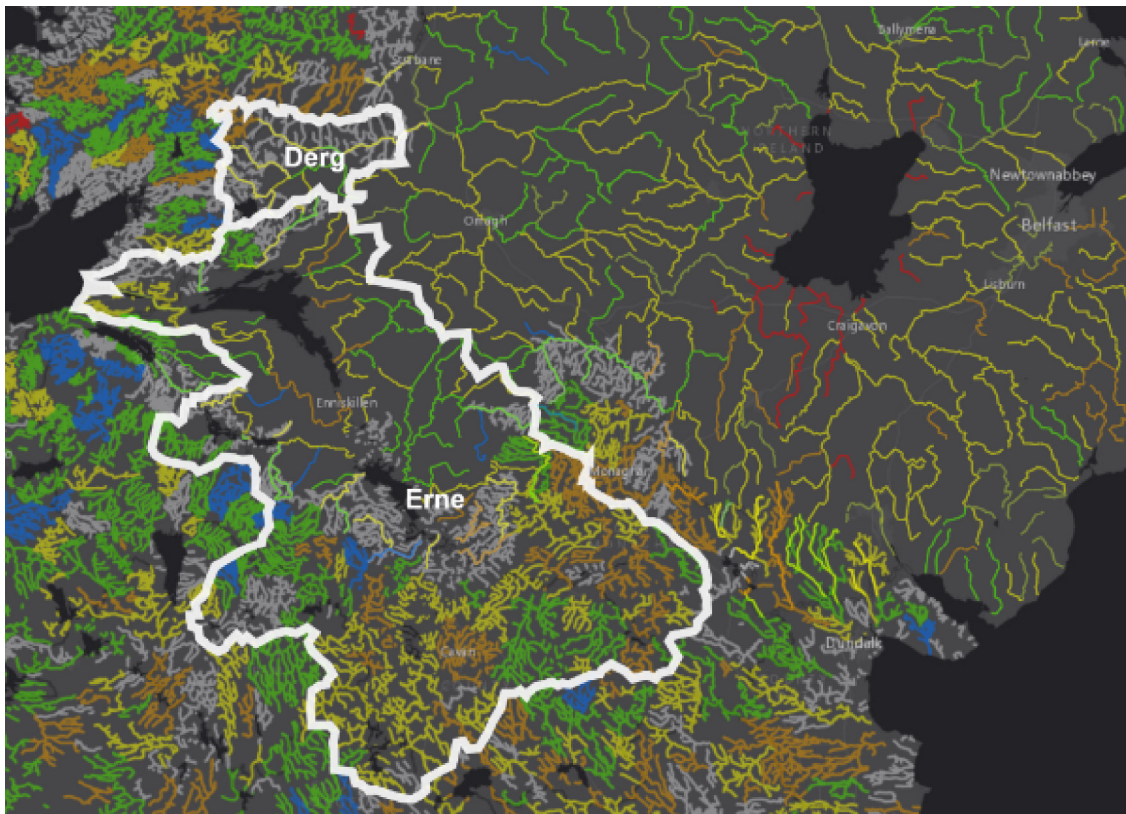
Project Finance & Administration Manager

I am a qualified accountant and I hold a degree in Environmental Conservation. I have a wealth of experience including co-ordinating a Landscape Partnership in Wales. My role is to keep the project within budget as well as providing administrative support.

What does Karen love about our rivers and lakes?

I love to take the time to just sit, watch the wildlife and absorb the peaceful and calming influence of water, away from the hustle and bustle of our modern lives.

Catchment Focus



Source to Tap will focus on the River Erne and the River Derg catchments which cross the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The project area will include parts of counties Fermanagh, Donegal, Tyrone, Cavan, Monaghan, Leitrim and Longford.

The Erne Catchment

The River Erne rises in County Cavan and flows for almost 100 km through Lough Gowna, Lough Oughter, Upper Lough Erne, Lower Lough Erne and Lough Asseroe before entering the sea at Ballyshannon, County Donegal.

The total catchment area of the Erne is 4374 km². For almost 50km from Crossdoney (south west of Cavan Town) through to Enniskillen in County Fermanagh the River Erne can be difficult to distinguish as it winds its way through interconnected loughs nestling among the Drumlin hills of Cavan and South Fermanagh.

The Derg Catchment

The River Derg emerges from Lough Derg in County Donegal and flows for approximately 12 km before merging with the Mourne Beg River, 2.5 km above Castlederg in County Tyrone. The Derg River continues through the lower Derg Valley and merges with the River Strule just below Ardstraw to form the Mourne River. The Mourne River subsequently flows into the River Foyle just below Strabane.

The total catchment area of the Derg is 438 km². The River Derg and its tributaries have a channel length of approximately 60km.

Visit our Mapping Portal

Gearing up for Citizen Science



Our three project officers are just back from an interactive training course called, Outdoor Learning through Citizen Science, held by Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) at Queens University Belfast.

It was led by experienced community scientists, who outlined the concept of citizens participating in data gathering through science. The course has equipped our project officers with the knowledge and skills to lead the Source to Tap community-led River Fly Monitoring Scheme.

OPAL is a UK-wide citizen science initiative that empowers anyone to explore and engage with nature through science. OPAL develops activities and resources, including its national surveys, which allow people to get closer to their local environment while collecting important scientific data.

Join our Riverfly Monitoring team



Photo by Mike Beard

We have plans to recruit 36 voluntary members of the public to be trained and upskilled in river invertebrate monitoring.

This will give volunteers the opportunity to collect real life data for the Source to Tap Project, making a real difference to environmental protection. Volunteers will play an important role in monitoring and protection of their local freshwater environment from which their drinking water is sourced.

The scheme involves volunteers carrying out monthly checks on the number of invertebrates present at their designated site, and then feeding the information back to us. The number of invertebrates tells us how good (or bad) the water quality and habitat is at each location, so the more invertebrates found, the healthier the river is. The monitoring can help to flag up pollution incidents if suddenly the numbers of invertebrates decrease significantly. A site that continually generates poor results highlights to us where we need to focus our conservation efforts.

The information is also used as baseline data, so that we can compare how a site fares after we have made habitat improvements in the area.

If you would like to volunteer or find out more about our Riverfly Monitoring Scheme email us at: info@sourcetotap.eu or visit our website www.sourcetotap.eu

Educate don't contaminate



You only have to flick on the TV or turn the pages of your local paper to hear about a pollution incident.

One of the key pollutants is pesticides which include herbicides, fungicides and insecticides. The main problem in our waterways is the herbicide MCPA.

MCPA is a grassland herbicide; it is specifically designed to kill weeds without harming crops and is a common active ingredient in both agricultural and domestic herbicide products. MCPA is widely used for controlling the growth of weeds like the Common Soft Rush which has flourished in grasslands due to a combination of wet weather and poor drainage.

Once in the water it can take 3-4 weeks to break down without treatment. Wetter weather itself causes increased difficulties for farmers. Increased soil compaction and poaching brought about by livestock on wetter ground can block drains. This increases soil erosion and soil washes off the land and blocks the drainage systems leaving wetter ground all round. This wet ground then encourages the growth of rushes, hence the need for the spraying of herbicides.

MCPA is a problem as it does not bind to soil particles, so it is readily washed off into water through run off. The reservoir of MCPA within the soil can be leached directly into watercourses through land drains and other point sources (mainly in the farm or farmyard). Leaks and spills from storage areas or from handling operations such as mixing, filling and washing can also be problematic. Diffuse sources (mainly in the field) that arise during or after application from processes such as spray drift, run-off and drainage can also cause difficulties (Teagasc, 2017).

Many weed species that were once susceptible to and easily managed by certain herbicides have developed resistance. These weeds are no longer controlled by applications of previously effective herbicides. Because of repeatedly using a certain type of herbicide on the same land, many different species of weeds have developed resistance to these chemicals. Think of an antibiotic that cured you once but didn't work the second time.

Are you doing exactly what is says on the tin? Extra dosages of MCPA will simply not rectify the rush infestation. This poses major challenges and a more complicated water treatment processes to remove MCPA from the water before it reaches our taps for our consumption.

A Christmas Gift for the Erne and Derg Rivers

Prevention is better than cure as the old saying goes, and with the festive season approaching, a time renowned for indulgence and excess, we could then turn the very same thoughts to the Erne and Derg Rivers which also might suffer from a bit of indigestion.

With increased use on water supply, dishwashers and washing machines over the festive period we are in turn increasing volumes of chemical detergents going down our drains, not to mention the Christmas turkey grease and fat, blocking drains and waste water pipes and overloading our septic tanks and local waste water treatment plants.

Much has been seen on the news recently of 'fatbergs' due to fats, oils and grease being poured down sinks and drains, causing nuisance and distress to those affected by them and placing considerable pressure on waste water treatment plants and the rivers that receive the effluent.

In addition, many household detergents and toiletries contain phosphate, the same chemical used in fertilisers to make plants grow. Increased amounts of phosphate in our rivers cause huge algal blooms in the summer, which block light from the water below. Also, when the algae die the bacteria decomposing it sucks oxygen from the water – in the worst cases suffocating fish and insects living in the river.

So, before the festivities begin and during your festive shopping sprees why not spare a thought for the Erne and Derg rivers this Christmas and try the following:

- There are lots of environmentally friendly household cleaning products available nowadays which contain less or no chemicals so pop a few into your basket ready for the washing-up,
- Use as little detergent as possible – it saves you money and helps protect our rivers!
- Consider this sensible advice - "Bag It and Bin It – Don't Flush It!" aimed at preventing the nightmare of blocked sewers and drains.

- Make sure your septic tank is not about to overflow – septic tanks work well if the waste has time to settle and the bacteria has time to clean the water before it flows out of the pipe.

Further advice is available at www.niwater.com/bag-it-and-bin-it

Our funders

A project supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)



Our Partners



Upcoming events



Project Road Show

Come along to
the Ballinamore Library,

Co. Leitrim

18 January 2018, 18:00 -
19:30

Meet the team and find
out more about the
Source to Tap Project.

Find us



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