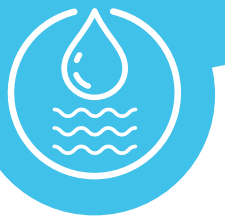




CASE STUDY: MIDLETON GAA, CO. CORK

WATER



1885
Middleton

The challenge we faced:

Our club is very active in the Healthy Club Project and in GAA4All through our Magpie All-Stars but when we joined the Green Club Programme we were very new to Biodiversity and Water projects.

We had a look around our club to see where we could improve our procedures and cut down on harmful products while maintaining our grounds. We also sought to engage with our membership and the local community to find expertise in this area.



The actions we took:

- One of the first actions we took was to eliminate chemicals in the control of grasses around the perimeter of the grounds.
- In our new grounds in Park South Middleton we left large areas of the land flourish as wild grass areas.
- We also have 2-3 acres of wild grass land that we left to nature, and this was alive with different flowers, plants and insects throughout the year.
- We planted approx. 150 meters of perimeter driveway with flowers which looked beautiful when in full flower.
- We are installing 'bug hotels' and a nesting box for solitary bees around the ground.
- Despite an initial desire to trim along the banks of the river that runs through the perimeter of our land we were advised to let nature take its course as this would strengthen the banks. We concluded that the best protection would be an unmown, wilded buffer zone of about three metres (experience with rock armour in higher reaches had actually led to some erosion). Many lengths of the river are buffered with an unmown zone keeping banks relatively intact.





What we learned about biodiversity and wildlife in and around our club:

- One of our members, Geoff Eastaway, is constantly monitoring the condition of the river and the plant, fish, insect and animal life along the banks of the river. In January 2022 Geoff undertook a baseline survey of river invertebrates utilising the LAWPro (Local Authority Waters Programme) monitoring protocol.
- We have also spoken with local birdlife groups about installing bird boxes on site and Geoff regularly monitors birds and wildlife in Park South. All the common species are present, but species of particular interest include buzzard, sparrowhawk, raven, kingfisher, cormorant, grey wagtail, goldcrest and, somewhat unusually, spotted flycatcher, wheatear and peregrine.
- There has been evidence of wildlife including otter, mink (near Cahermone), rabbits and foxes. The probability is that there are hedgehogs as well and bats are also present along the river. There is good butterfly and moth representation, and small hatches of sedges and smaller mayfly have been seen on the river.
- Monitoring and general fishing has turned up brown trout, thornies (three-spined sticklebacks), elvers and the elusive, nocturnal stone loach. Salmon and sea trout are known to pass upstream and hold in at least two pools on GAA stretch (the river is closed by law to salmon fishing and strict restrictions apply to methods allowed for trout fishing in order to conserve and build stocks).

Who we partnered with:

We engaged with the local SECAD (South East Cork Area Development) Partnership on Biodiversity and with Middleton Area Rivers Group (MARG).

Funding we received:

Our total costs were approximately €3000 and we received €1250 of LAWPro (Local Authority Waters Programme) community funding through the Green Club Programme.





Picture of the kingfisher courtesy of John Tait

Other Green projects the club is involved in:

ENERGY & WATER MANAGEMENT:

- We are monitoring our energy and water usage and hope over the coming years to build a knowledge bank of our usage to see where we can make savings.
- We have changed the lights in our club to LED lights and have them on time switches to control their usage.
- In our new development the emphasis will be on energy saving devices that reduce the need for maintenance and promote sustainability.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

- We are working to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of single-use plastic containers.
- We are committed to collecting and sorting litter into recyclable and general waste bins.

The next steps for Midleton GAA:

- We hope to continue the process we started and introduce more club members to the biodiversity project. While people are increasingly conscious and aware of climate change there's a continuing need for engagement and raising awareness.
- We have offered our grounds to SECAD (South East Cork Area Development) to use for training purposes and will continue to engage with SECAD and their workshops.
- The local Scout Group are based on our lands and in partnership with them we intend to promote the Biodiversity theme in local schools. We also continue to have strong interaction with Midleton Area Rivers Group (MARG).
- We are hoping to begin a large-scale development in our new grounds in Park South which will see a lot of our new grounds turned temporarily into a building site. While this work is progressing, we intend to interact closely with the developer to ensure energy saving and biodiversity projects are incorporated into the work.

Read more about Green Club projects at: gaa.ie/greenclub