



IDENTIFY:

PREVENT & PROTECT Water quality and your club

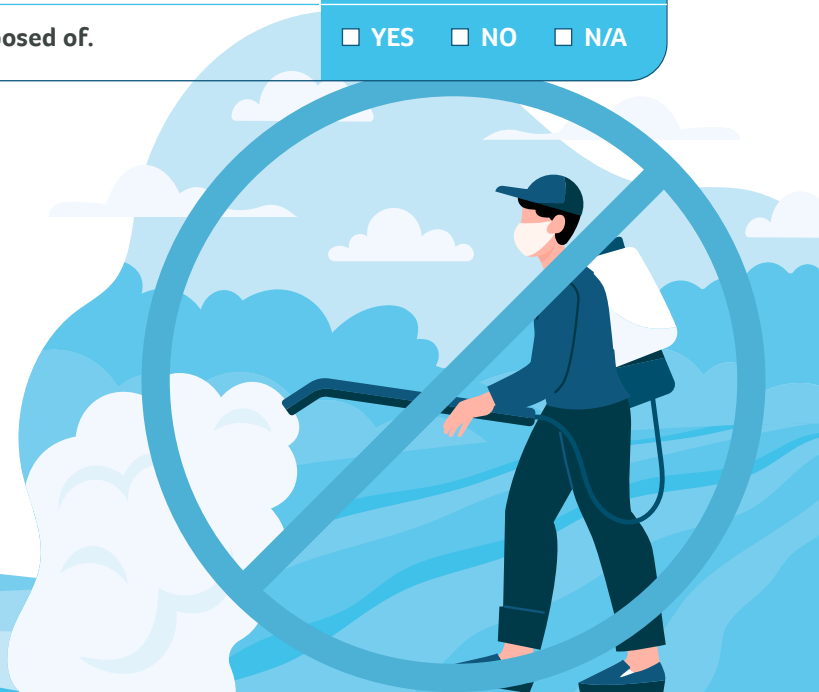
Pollutants entering waterways or water bodies can cause habitat destruction, kill aquatic wildlife, cause poor water quality and ruin the amenity value of our rivers and water bodies.

This 'Prevent & Protect' checklist will help your Green Team identify where your club might be causing or have the potential to cause harm to water quality and waterways. The action ideas on the pages that follow give more details on the items on the checklist and include simple and practical steps your club can take to reduce or eliminate harm.

WATER QUALITY PROTECT & PREVENT CHECKLIST

1.	All drains are correctly connected, with all wastewater going into the foul drains.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
2.	There are posters or signs up in the clubhouse to help reduce the risk of drain and toilet blockages.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
3.	All oils (e.g., diesel, central heating oil, petrol) are correctly and safely stored in secure and well-maintained storage tanks.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
4.	The septic tank is regularly maintained and desludged. The area around the tank is regularly checked for leaks or ponding of wastewater.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
5.	Use of chemicals, e.g., herbicides, has been minimised and any chemical use is in accordance with best practice guidelines.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
6.	All grass clippings are sustainably disposed of.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Check that any chemical use is in accordance with best practice guidelines.





1. Check Your Connections

THE ISSUE:

- There are two main drains on GAA club grounds: surface water drains (also known as storm drains), for rainwater, and foul drains, for wastewater from the clubhouse toilets, taps and plumbed appliances.
- Surface water drains take rainwater, untreated, to rivers or the sea, while foul drains take wastewater to treatment plants or to your septic tank.
- If drains are connected wrongly, polluted water from the clubhouse will run directly into rivers or the sea, damaging biodiversity and wildlife and posing a threat to human health.

THE ACTION:

Check that the drains from your clubhouse – e.g., from toilets, sinks and plumbed appliances like washing machines and dishwashers – are connected to the foul drains and aren't running into surface water drains. See <http://www.connectright.org.uk/> and <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/niea-proper-use-drains-leaflet> for more information and advice.

2. Avoid Blockages

THE ISSUE:

- When poured down the sink, fats, oils and grease from catering or club activity, as well as food scraps and coffee grinds, can cause serious blockages in pipes and drains and can result in sewer overflow and risks damaging water quality, biodiversity and human health.
- Anything other than the 3 Ps – pee, poo and paper – flushed down a toilet can cause blockages in your clubhouse and in the sewer system and can cause damage to the marine environment.

THE ACTION:

Use the posters at <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub/water> in your clubhouse toilets and kitchens to raise awareness among clubhouse users.

3. Store Oil Safely

THE ISSUE:

- If your club stores oil (e.g., diesel, central heating oil, petrol) on club grounds, ensure that this poses no risk to the environment, water quality or human health.

THE ACTIONS:

- Check that your oil storage tank is adequately and suitably supported, is secured and stable and that your oil storage complies with regulations in your jurisdiction.
- Your tank should be located at least 10m from surface water courses (e.g., rivers, streams, field drains) and 50 m from wells or boreholes.
- Regularly inspect your tanks for any signs of leaks, corrosion (steel tanks) or deformation or discoloration (plastic tanks).
- Check that all pipework is free from damage and adequately supported or protected.
- Check if your tank is bunded (i.e., that oil is stored in a 'tank within a tank'). Bunding offers protection against oil spillage. This is mandatory in the six counties for tanks over 200 litres. See <https://www.netregs.org.uk/media/1890/guidance-for-pollution-prevention-2-2022-update.pdf> for details and for best practice for smaller tanks
- Keep an emergency spill kit on site in case of any spill, leakage or accident. Contact your local authority (26-counties) or the NI Water Pollution Hotline 0800 807060 in case of any urgent water pollution incident.



4. Maintain your Septic Tank

THE ISSUE:

- If your club wastewater discharges to an on-site septic tank, ensure this is maintained properly to avoid contamination of water or harmful discharges that could damage biodiversity and human health.

THE ACTIONS:

- Check the area around the septic tank regularly to ensure there are no signs of ponding or soil contamination
- Have the system serviced and desludged regularly. Contact your local authority for a list of permitted contractors. NI Water provide this once a year for free to customers in the six counties: <https://www.niwater.com/arrange-septic-tank-emptying/>
- Ensure that grease, excessive bleach or chemicals, food, disposable items and rainwater aren't getting into your system. Use the following resources to minimise blockage risks to your septic tank: <https://www.water.ie/help/blockages/think-before-you-pour/>
<https://www.water.ie/help/blockages/think-before-you-flush/>
<https://www.niwater.com/bag-it-and-bin-it/>
- More advice is available at: https://www.protectourwater.ie/Leaflets/1_POW-WhatYouNeedToKnow_Eng.pdf

5. Reduce Chemical Use

THE ISSUE:

- The use of chemicals such as herbicides or pesticides in your club grounds can cause serious damage to biodiversity and water quality.

THE ACTIONS:

- Consider eliminating pesticide and herbicide use in your club. See the 'Reduce Use of Herbicides' information sheet in the 'Identify' section of <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub/biodiversity> for a herbicide-elimination case study from Mullingar Shamrocks
- Where herbicide use cannot be avoided, spot treat the target areas only
- Do not spray in wet conditions or when heavy rain is forecast
- Do not spray near gullies, manholes or storm drains
- Store all chemicals safely
- Ensure that all groundspeople, volunteers or staff from community employment schemes that are involved in groundskeeping are fully briefed on safe and responsible use of chemicals
- For more tips and advice see: 'Reduce Use of Herbicides' information sheet at <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub/biodiversity>
<https://www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/media/pesticides/content/sud/ResponsiblePesticideUsePublicAmenityGardenAreas200217.pdf>

6. Sustainable Management of Grass Clippings

THE ISSUE:

- If grass clippings are collected on-site and incorrectly stored, the liquid that is produced during decomposition of the grass can leach into the soil and cause harm to water and biodiversity.

THE ACTIONS:

- Mulch your grass clippings so that they do not need to be gathered and stored.
- If you collect your grass clippings for compost, ensure that the composting station is on a hard, impermeable base so that liquid does not leach into the soil or surface water drains.
- If your club can neither mulch nor safely compost your grass clippings, talk to your waste management provider about green waste collection.