



# Community Wetlands Forum



## Shannon Town Community Wetlands

[Study Visit](#)

### Site details

- The wetland site is an approximately five-acre site within the town in the ownership of Clare County Council.
- It is bordered by two schools, a leisure centre, playground, residential area, playing fields and the Shannon Scout's urban campground. The town park is close by.
- After drainage and planting with spruce trees the site was largely abandoned and became a waste ground.
- Inspired by the Clare County Council Green Infrastructure Plan published in 2013 which identified the Shannon Wetland as an area of importance for biodiversity and wildlife within the town, the Shannon Town Community Wetlands Committee was established in October 2016 with the purpose of restoring the site for wetland habitat and nature conservation

### Léanta Dúlra na Sionna

Is talamh dramhaíola a bhí sa láithreán seo tráth. Uair amháin bhí sé draenáilte go mór agus curtha le crainn sprúis le linn an ama a raibh an tSionainn á cruthú mar Bhaile Nua. Rinneadh oibreacha fairsinge draenála ar an láithreán a thriomaigh an bogach agus tréigeadh an láithreán. In 2016, thug Coist Bogach Phobal Bhaile na Sionna faoi athchóiriú a dhéanamh ar an suíomh le haghaidh gnáthóg bhogaigh agus caohnú dúlra.

### Background

The establishment of Shannon Airport in the 1940s and the world's first industrial free zone in the late 1950s led to the growth of the town of Shannon at the confluence of the Shannon and Fergus Estuaries. Started in the 1960s the town grew rapidly. Today Shannon is the second largest town in County Clare. Three low drumlins rise from a flat landscape that, prior to the building of the embankments, was subject to flooding. This wet environment was subject to extensive drainage in the 1960s and 70s to allow for the development of the town.

## The committee

The committee is made up of representatives of Dúchas na Sionna, the town's heritage group, Shannon Tidy Towns, Shannon Men's Shed, Club na Sionna, Shannon Archaeological & Historical Society, Conradh na Gaelige, Wolfe Tones GAA and other interested people. The committee is fortunate to have the support of Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Community Water Officer with LAWPRO (Local Authority Water's Programme). It is fair to say that without Ruairí's guidance, support, sheer hard work and friendship the Shannon Town Community Wetlands would have fallen many times.

## Key Stakeholders and Community Consultation

In addition to LAWPRO there is regular consultation with key stakeholders and in 2018 a Technical Advisory Committee was established to advise the project. It is made up of representatives from LAWPRO, Clare County Council, NPWS, EPA and the Community Wetlands Forum. From the outset community participation has been an essential element to the wetland project. The voluntary group hold regular information events and consultation with the local community particularly on World Wetlands Day and during Heritage Week each year.



## The project

In the first two years of its existence the committee focused on securing funding and developing a design plan for the development of the wetlands. The initial works involved removing the conifers that had been planted and the dense undergrowth which had developed over the last forty years or so. Once clear it was possible to see and access the centre of the site for the first time in many years. A perimeter footpath was upgraded. Much time and effort was given to ascertaining if there were any onsite sources of water as anecdotally we knew that a stream had once traversed the site. However, it was discovered that the stream had been channelled and culverted during the drainage works and now ran underground at some distance from the wetland site. A site survey and hydrology report identified the wettest portions of the site and work began on creating a network of four interconnecting ponds by deepening these areas and compacting the clay which is the base layer of the site. The natural ground and rainwater began to fill the ponds and soon the dragonflies and damselflies were flitting around the ponds. The water rises and falls according to the level of ground and rainwater available. Any overflow is fed from one pond to the other through the interconnecting channels. Naturally the site is wettest in winter and driest during periods of fine weather.

A natural bund giving access to the centre from either end of the site was constructed during the pond creation phase. This allowed easy access into the interior of the site and greatly enhanced its recreational value. Some of the logs from the conifers were used to create seating areas to facilitate school workshops and the rest were piled into log piles and are slowly decomposing.

The site links well with the newly upgraded Town Park, and the Shannon Estuary. Together they provide complimentary green and wetland spaces for the people of Shannon to enjoy. Three benches, which were being replaced in the park were re-used to provide seating in the wetlands and add considerably to the enjoyment of those visiting the wetlands.



## Engagement with schools

Since 2021 the committee has worked with LAWPRO to deliver a series of biodiversity workshops to local schools. Over 200 primary and secondary school students have attended these bi-lingual workshops delivered by one of the committee members overseen by Ruairí Ó Conchúir, the Community Water Officer. A third series of workshops will be delivered in September 2023. The participants learn about the importance of wetland habitats in mitigating climate change, engage in the identification of wetland flora and fauna species and take part in pond dipping and identifying the macro invertebrates to be found. The students also learn about the decomposition rates of the various types of litter that is regularly encountered on the site and are introduced to the concept of Leave No Trace.

## Key challenges

Being an urban site one of the ongoing challenges is the litter pollution which regularly gathers on the site. In conjunction with the Tidy Towns group in Shannon the wetland group organises regular litter picks on site and engaged with a local company, SES Aviation in an intensive clean up in April 2022. Anti-social behaviour in the form of drinking is also an issue in various secluded areas. The biggest disturbance to wildlife on the site is dogs being allowed to run off the lead in the meadow. Likewise, the practice of residents dumping their garden waste around the perimeter is impacting the site's biodiversity. We are hopeful that over time public awareness will be raised through the biodiversity workshops and new signage which is currently being developed. As with most volunteer organisations attracting new members is an ongoing challenge.

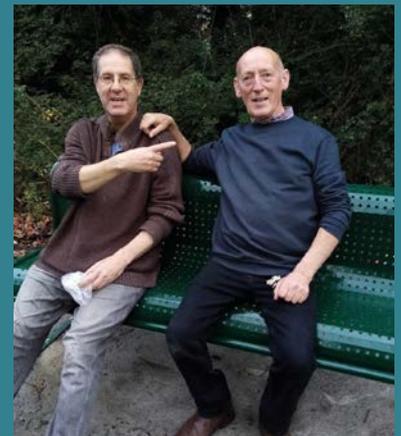




# The Future

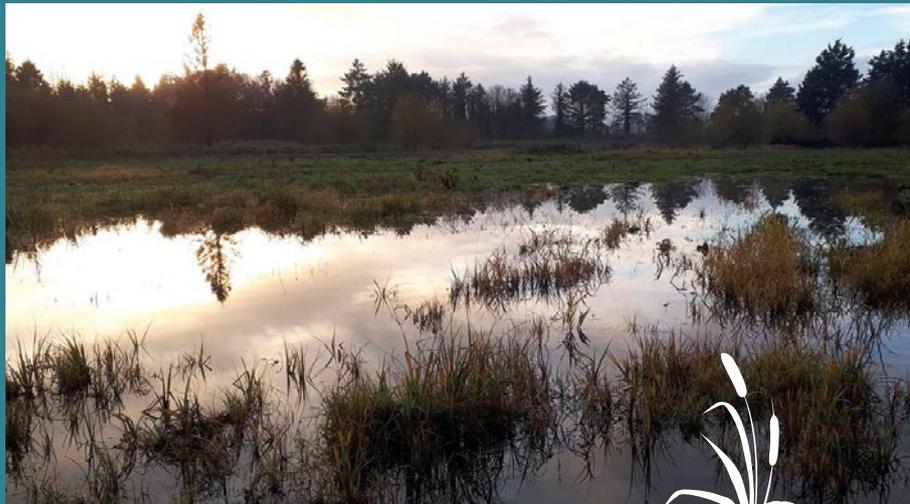
In 2020 Clare County Council undertook an assessment of the flora of the site. The committee hopes to build on this report by commissioning a comprehensive management plan to ensure best practice in developing and protecting the wildlife habitats and biodiversity of the site while at the same time continuing to enhance the recreational and amenity value for the people of Shannon. It is anticipated that display signage will soon be in place and the group plans to continue and expand its range of biodiversity workshops.

When the Wetlands group began the project, the plan was that Clare County Council would take back responsibility for the site once it had been developed. Once a management plan and display signage are in place it is anticipated that responsibility for the site will once again come under the remit of Clare County Council. The wetlands committee will continue to work with the local authority and with other stake holders to enhance and protect the biodiversity, recreational and educational value of this urban wetland site.



# Funding

The Shannon Town community Wetlands would like to thank the funding bodies who ensured that this project could take place. LAWPRO, FLAGs West, Clare County Council, Shannon Municipal District, the Heritage Council, Creative Ireland, and Ei Electronics.



### Photographs:

Ruairí Ó Conchúir, John O'Brien, Tom Chambers, Micheál Mac Gearailt, Carmel Shaw, Jimmy Doyle, Olive Carey, Stephanie Haugh.

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