

To Hold in Trust

To hold something in trust, to be entrusted with the care of something, to be deemed trustworthy for a task or a position is a privilege and a responsibility. In October 2014 the communities of Inishowen took up the responsibility of caring for the local rivers by agreeing to form an Inishowen Rivers Trust.

This process began back in June 2012 when the organising committee of the Celebrate Water Festival in Moville, Co. Donegal had the idea of regenerating the old river walk along the banks of the Bredagh River. Six months later this project, entitled "Let it B - Biodiversity on the Bredagh", secured funding through the LA 21 Environmental Partnership Fund. In February 2013 Celebrate Water, Moville Tidy Towns, the local FÁS team and many members of the community began work to open up the walk way, enhance the biodiversity of the area and create awareness of the significant heritage that the river holds for the town of Moville. Over the next few months ideas and chat flowed as the community worked together by the river and we learned of the Ballinderry Rivers Trust in Northern Ireland. And thus the idea of forming a local rivers trust began.

In October 2013 a group of twenty four visited the Ballinderry Rivers Trust Hatchery in Cookstown where we were inspired by the work and commitment of the group and their positive relationship with farmers, statutory bodies, anglers and the local community. This gave renewed enthusiasm to the Bredagh project and in April 2014 Mark Horton, the NI Rivers Trust Co-ordinator and manager of Ballinderry Rivers Trust, visited Moville to present the idea of a trust to the local community. It became apparent at this meeting that the idea of caring for our rivers at a local level was not just the wish of people in Moville but of communities across Inishowen. Rivers Trusts are not new to Ireland. There are two trusts in the south-east of Ireland (the Slaney and the Nore) and several trusts in Northern Ireland. In the UK the Rivers Trust model has spread to cover almost all of England and Wales and the headquarters of the Rivers Trust is based in Cornwall. They provide advice to trusts, help in their set up and running and provide opportunities for the sharing of ideas and needs with other trusts. A trust takes time to set up (usually about 2 years) and it is our experience that this time is needed for the concept of a trust is take root in the minds of a community. Many formal and informal consultations build trust, giving people the time to digest the information and engage with as many groups as possible at a local and statutory level.

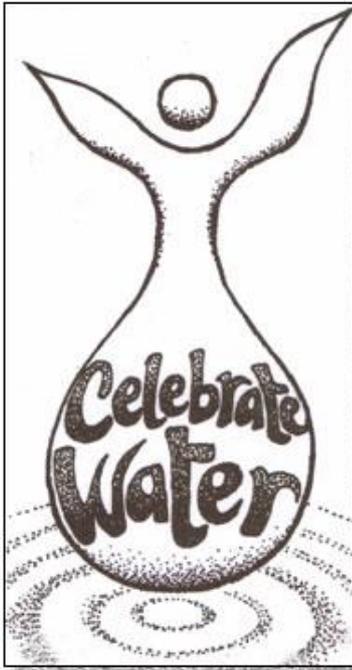
In our own journey of casting the net wider across Inishowen, this need for time was recognised and it was decided to offer a Rivers Trust Roadshow through the local libraries. This featured an exhibition, leaflets and information on what a trust does and why form a Trust. A Facebook presence was also developed where communities across the peninsula could engage and share

experiences, ideas or photos, such as those shared by local wildlife enthusiast, Mark Daly. Finally in October 2014 a public consultation was held and attended by representatives from across Inishowen. Some of the attendees included Brendan McLaughlin, a Buncrana angler, who has been a keen supporter of the trust project from the outset. Along with his colleagues, he has worked on improving the Mill River in Buncrana for walking and angling. Mervyn Norris, a farmer and accommodation provider, has also supported the project from the start and has attended walks and talks on the Bredagh project over the last two years. Mervyn would like to help maintain the waters of his local rivers for angling and farming for future generations. One of the speakers at the event was environmental historian Dr. Liam Campbell who originally hails from south Inishowen. Liam can be seen frequently on our TV screens in programmes such as "Lesser Spotted Ulster" promoting biodiversity and passionately emphasising the importance of keeping us connected with water and nature. The meeting was opened with a specially composed river song by Celebrate Water member Kathleen O'Hara Farren ([click here to listen to the song online](#)). There was also an exhibition space telling the story of the journey to date, a lunch and an open discussion format led by Mark Horton to tease out the issues and challenges faced by our rivers. The discussion concluded with the question, "Should we form an Inishowen Rivers Trust?". The answer - a unanimous Yes. Afterwards we were delighted to read the wide ranging interests and skill sets of people who have put their names forward to sit on the Board - marine biologist, angler, outdoor pursuit leader, photographer, accountant, architect, teacher, farmer, environmentalist, youth leader, therapist, community worker. It should be an interesting and exciting journey for all involved.

The next steps for the group are now clear - we will set up the trust as a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity. The Rivers Trust in the UK provide clear guidance on this process and we are currently engaging the services of a solicitor. Community members across Inishowen will be put forward as nominees for the Board of Trustees and Mark Horton will continue to provide guidance and advice. However each trust has its own individual identity and it is important that each trust finds a way of working that suits their local community groups so that they can work in harmony with their local environment. There are formal procedures to be followed but exploring ideas and considering what your trust can do is an important step. In future meetings we hope to explore the idea of a Rivers Charter - establishing core values by which the trust will operate. All groups working on Inishowen rivers will be encouraged to consider what we do and how we do it in relation to the these core values, helping to care for and cherish the rivers that connect us.

Celebrate Water

11 Dec 2014



About Celebrate Water

Celebrate Water is a community group that aims to raise awareness of environmental issues in a creative and fun way. The group is based in the Moville / Greencastle area of County Donegal but embraces the whole community in Inishowen and beyond. Celebrate Water particularly focuses on our relationship with water and biodiversity, encouraging a more eco-centric approach to caring for our water. The group aims to build community bonds and empower locals with new skills and knowledge. Celebrate Water has been thriving since 2011.

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