



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

PRESS RELEASE

Irish Water hosts visit by local pupils to Dunhill Integrated Constructed Wetlands

The Wetlands protect the environment, are a sustainable wastewater treatment facility and provide an invaluable recreational and educational amenity for the local community

Friday, 27 October 2017 - Irish Water and Waterford City and County Council today hosted a visit by local school pupils and other residents to the Dunhill Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW) site in Co Waterford.

Pupils from Dunhill National School were welcomed by Cllr Pat Nugent, Mayor of Waterford City and County Council, and James O'Toole, Irish Water's Operations Lead, before being taken on a tour of the site led by Dr Tomás Murray of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICWs) are a type of sustainable wastewater treatment system that is designed to look and function as a natural wetland. Constructed wetlands are created for the purpose of treating wastewater from rural communities like Dunhill in an environmentally-friendly way before allowing it to return to the water system safely.



Pupils from Dunhill National School with Cllr Pat Nugent, Mayor of Waterford City and County Council, James O'Toole, Irish Water's Operations Lead, Pat McCarthy, Waterford City & County Council, and Dr Tomás Murray, National Biodiversity Data Centre. Picture: **Patrick Browne**

Integrated constructed wetlands are carefully planned to integrate into the natural surrounding landscape; they enhance biodiversity and are built using natural materials like native plants, trees, soil, sand and stones. They protect the environment, are a

sustainable and natural wastewater treatment method and provide a valuable educational and recreational resource for the communities they are based in. Among the facilities at the Dunhill site is a River Window which was installed with the support of the local community. This offers a viewing point to observe the animals and plant life that are living in the river which drains the Dunhill-Annestown Valley Catchment area. The River Window also allows visitors to Dunhill to see how life in the river may change during different conditions and seasons.

Among the many examples of flora and fauna that can be seen at Dunhill are plants like ragged robin, flag iris, meadowtails, cattails and spreadwort which attract bees and butterflies that can help with pollination. Hawthorn, blackberry, holly and bilberry bushes are also growing on site.

There is also a wide range of wildlife living on the site, including otters, water bats, frogs and newts. The site also provides a perfect habitat for visiting and resident birds including kingfishers, herons, little egrets, cormorants, moorhens and grey wagtails. Other features include a weather station and a number of educational features such as informational signage and a webcam.

The initial Dunhill Constructed Wetland was built in 2000 by Waterford City & County Council. An extension to the site was commissioned in 2012, increasing the number of wastewater treatment ponds to five, which gave the wetland extra capacity to treat more wastewater from a growing local population. Irish Water has been working in partnership with Waterford City & County Council at Dunhill from 2014. Since its inception, the project has received huge support from the local community and has proved to be a popular visitor attraction. The site is also linked to the Anne Valley walking route.

Welcoming the pupils to Dunhill Integrated Constructed Wetlands Mayor Pat Nugent said: "This is a wonderful facility for the community in Dunhill. I am particularly pleased to see local pupils here learning about sustainability and biodiversity and the importance of protecting our local environment. Since the project got underway in 2002, it has received great support from the local community and I am confident that it will continue to be used by locals and visitors to the area for many years to come." James O'Toole, Irish Water's Operations Lead, said the site epitomised Irish Water's commitment to sustainability in its treatment of wastewater.

"Waterford City & County Council, the Department of the Environment, Dr. Rory Harrington and the local community have to be commended in pioneering the Integrated Constructed Wetlands concept here at Dunhill. This is a fantastic recreational resource for the community to enjoy. It is a lovely setting to go for a walk or jog and is home to a variety of wildlife. The Dunhill ICW enhances biodiversity, protects the environment and is a sustainable solution for wastewater treatment in the area. Integrated Constructed Wetlands form part of Irish Water's sustainable model for wastewater treatment in Ireland."

Irish Water is involved in a number of Integrated Constructed Wetland Projects around the country. Dunhill, Glaslough in Co. Monaghan and Clonaslee ICW in Co Laois, were already progressed prior to the formation of Irish Water, while a number of others are

currently at design or planning stage including at Lixnaw in Kerry, Saleen in Cork, Muff in Donegal and a further 11 sites which are undergoing feasibility assessment.

More information on Integrated Constructed Wetlands can be found on the [Irish Water Website](#).

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