

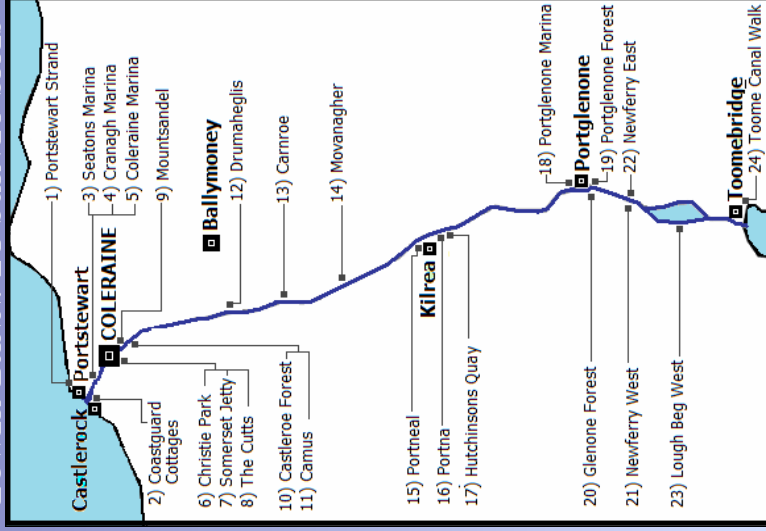
LOWER BANN: USERS ATTITUDES

The following tables highlight the 115 survey respondents rating of access provision and overall management aspects along the Lower Bann corridor. These responses/ratings can help inform future policy and decision making.

ACCESS PROVISION (% of 115 responses)	RATING SCALE					Don't Know %
	V	P	O	R	E	
For the Dis-	4	17	30	32	4	1
For Water-based Activity	2	2	6	48	37	6
Game Fishing		1	7	35	8	50
Coarse Fishing		2	7	35	9	48
Walking	2	4	4	33	50	9
Cycling		10	17	27	21	25
Car Parking		8	20	44	24	4
Picnic Areas		10	21	43	13	13
Campsites	6	22	11	11	2	48
Public Toilets	4	48	20	15	5	8
Refreshments	34	39	9	4	1	13

MANAGEMENT ASPECTS (% of 115 responses)	RATING SCALE					Don't Know %
	V	P	O	R	E	
Navigation	1	3	10	54	14	18
Safety / Rescue	2	10	19	47	4	18
Water Quality	3	9	30	33	1	24
Access	1	9	14	30	1	47
Environmental Education	3	10	23	51	6	7
Maintenance	4	8	11	64	12	3
Promotion	4	20	25	16	4	31
Historic Sites		10	16	10	1	64

LOWER BANN: 24 SURVEY SITES



THE LOWER BANN RECREATIONAL USERS SURVEY

SEPTEMBER 2008



USER ISSUES AND AWARENESS

- 56% of survey respondents had experienced or witnessed some form of disturbance factor on or along the river - the majority of these incidences were caused by inappropriate use of water-craft
- 87% of survey respondents were able to identify at least one organisation that had a management remit for the Lower Bann
- Only 39% could specify a site of historic or environmental importance along the river.

Lower Bann Advisory Committee

Set up in 1994, the LBAC has 3 key advisory functions:

- 1) Drainage and navigation
- 2) Conservation of the natural and man made heritage
- 3) Management and sustainable development of land and water based recreation.



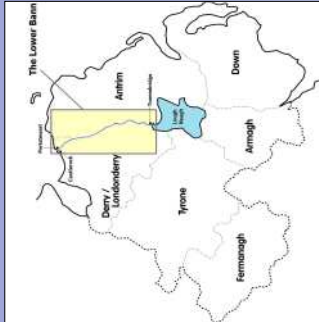
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Summary findings from a research study focusing on leisure and recreation on and along the Lower Bann River in Northern Ireland

THE LOWER BANN RECREATIONAL SURVEY

The Lower Bann is one of the most important rivers in Northern Ireland flowing some 40 miles (60km) from Lough Neagh to the Atlantic Ocean. Navigable for its entire length the river has long been a communication highway and a bountiful natural resource for the earliest human settlers.



Nowadays the river and its environs are becoming increasingly important for leisure and recreation activities. The river lends itself for many different types of usage, it is renowned for its game and coarse fishing, its width and depth make it particularly suitable for watersports such as waterskiing while there are also established cruiser boat and sailing boat communities on the river. The sports rowing clubs based Coleraine are well recognised for their prowess, while the opening of a new canoe trail in 2008 should herald an increase in the popularity of this activity.

Lower Bann and Lough Neagh

With regard to land based access and recreation there are several important sites and activity centres along the river corridor. The beaches at Castlerock and Portstewart adjacent to the Lower Bann estuary are popular with holidaymakers and locals alike, while Christie Park in Coleraine and the Canal Walk in Toomebridge are important recreational resources for their respective townships. Several other sites, ranging from marinas to picnic areas, offer access opportunities for recreation and leisure e.g. the Newferry and Drumaheglis sites are zoned for watersports. Other recent initiatives have included the opening of the Lower Bann Cycle Way and the publication of a new Lower Bann River Users guide in the summer of 2008.

It is in this context that the Lower Bann Advisory Committee commissioned a research study to provide a user baseline. Originally planned to take place during the July to August period the survey had to be delayed until September due to high rainfall and bad weather.

RECREATIONAL SURVEY

The Lower Bann survey was undertaken over a long weekend in September 2008. By chance this weekend was sunny and warm, the first in several weeks. However the river water levels and flow rate were still above average. This was no surprise given the high rainfall experienced in Northern Ireland in the summer of 2008. As part of the survey, recreational and leisure activity was monitored for a 3 hour period at 24 key sites along the river corridor and headcounts per site and by activity collated. In addition, a personal questionnaire was targeted to a sample of the people observed at each of the 24 sites in order that more qualitative information could be gained.

As a result of the survey headcount exercise 946 people were observed over the 3 days. Some 30% of these were recorded at Portstewart Strand while Christie Park in Coleraine (11%), Drumaheglis Marina in the Ballymoney Borough (8%) Mountsandel Forest in Coleraine (6%) also accounted for many of the people observed. For a variety of reasons no people were observed at 3 out of the 24 survey sites included in the survey i.e. Portneal site was closed for refurbishment, while Lough Beg site was inundated due the high water levels. Similarly, work was ongoing at the Bann Rowing Club canoe steps in Coleraine town centre.

- The key activity 'categories' observed were;
- ➔ 52% - Land Based Recreation e.g. walking
 - ➔ 23% - General Relaxation e.g. picnicking
 - ➔ 19% - Water Based Recreation e.g. sailing
 - ➔ 6% - Fishing, both coarse and game

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

115 out of the 946 people observed agreed to participate in the questionnaire survey. (71% male/29% female). The information they provided helps to build up an interesting picture of both recreational usage patterns and users attitudes to the river and its environs.



Coarse angler pictured at Newferry

Survey Questionnaire continued

The following bullet points help summarise a number of the main questionnaire survey findings;

- 77% of respondents were on a short visit from home e.g. less than 3 hours.
- Similarly, 65% of respondents stated they lived within 2 miles of the river.
- 39% of respondents visited the river most days, while a further 26% visited at least once a week.
- Walking was the main activity identified by respondents who visited the river (38 people) followed by dog-walking (25) & general relaxing (24)
- While significant numbers of the respondents were participating in various water based activities on the days of the survey e.g. 7 were sailing, the following table provides interesting feedback on the 'new' activities that they would like to try in the future. Water based activities feature prominently.

NEW ACTIVITIES <i>Respondents would like to try -</i>	No. of People
◇ Game Fishing	17
◇ Cruiser Boat	16
◇ Passenger Boat	14
◇ Jetskiing	14
◇ Powerboating	13
◇ Wakeboarding	11
◇ Canoeing	10
◇ Kayaking	8
◇ Wind Surfing	6
◇ Waterskiing	6
◇ Kite Surfing	5
◇ Surfing/Bodyboarding	4
◇ Day Boat	4
◇ Picnic/BBQ	4
◇ Go Swimming	4
◇ Mountain Biking	4
◇ Coarse Fishing	4
◇ Rowing (sport)	3
◇ Bird Watching	3
◇ Sailing	3
◇ Leisure Cycling	2