



## **Evaluation of *Gleann na Phúca*, A Glen River Creative Climate Action Project.**

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### **Content**

#### **1. Summary.**

#### **2. Project aims, evaluative background, and rationale for the approach taken.**

2.1 The project aims;

2.2 The evaluator's understanding of the approach to the *Gleann a' Phúca Climate Action Project*;

2.3 Implications of 2.2 for evaluation;

2.4 What constitutes "evidence" of positive outcome?

#### **3. Evaluation narrative.**

3.1. Meetings and links with relevant local, regional and national groups are included in the timeline but differentiated from GaP events by being set out in italics.

3.2. Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 - 'The Glen as A Place of Creative Encounter'.

3.3. 29th October 2023 - Spoon and Bloom Glen Mapping collaborative workshop.

3.4. 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2023 – Glen Water day.

3.5. 21st and 23rd November, 2023. Performances on site by students from the Theatre in Performative Practices Masters degree at UCC,

3.6. 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024 – World Wetlands day.

3.7. 23-24 March 2024 - World Water (Day) Weekend

- 3.8. 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024 - *Dawn Chorus event*
- 3.9. 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 - *Talk on Rain Gardens, etc.*
- 3.10. May 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 2024 - Activities as part of *National Biodiversity Week*
- 3.11. July 28<sup>th</sup> 2024 - Monster Parade and Botanical Odyssey at the Glen River Park.
- 3.12. August 17<sup>th</sup>– 25<sup>th</sup> 2024 - Events in Heritage Week.
- 3.13. Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> 2024. Rain Garden Information Session and Planter Building Workshop
- 3.14. Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> 2024. Grand Finale

**4. References.**

**5. Note on the author.**

**6. Appendix.**

## 1. Summary

The *Gleann na Phúca* project has enlivened and informed a wide range of participants across the generations, both about environment-related problems - water politics, pollution indication and the rising issue of climate change anxiety - and about the multiple benefits of cherishing a river and the green spaces surrounding it. While it has focused primarily on a local audience it has also demonstrated that, through collaboration and building networks with and across a wide variety of other individuals and institutions, such a project can act as a vital animator of environmental awareness and action with regional and even nation resonance. As such it has had a demonstrable impact that extends well beyond its immediate location. This is evidenced both by the responses of participants quoted below and by the range of professional individuals, organisations and educational institutions that have collaborated with the project team. The responses to the range of events and artworks created by the project make clear that the team has heightened awareness of a range of significant environmental issues across the generations, helped instil pride in, and respect for, the Glen river as a fundamental aspect of the local ecology, and has facilitated a sharpening of perceptions, not only with regard to local ecological issues, but to the need to connect the need for environmental action with people's everyday lived experience. As such the project has fulfilled its aims, namely to animate the diverse connections that the river and the park have with Cork's industrial and cultural heritage, deepen the bonds between place and community, and inspire positive action for stewardship by promoting a culture of reciprocity and advocacy for the river in the face of Climate Crisis.



## 2. Project aims, evaluative background, and rationale for the approach taken.

### 2.1 The project aims

The criteria used for this evaluation are derived from the project's stated aims, where a series of creative engagements are intended to:

Animate the diverse connections that the river and the park have with Cork's industrial and cultural heritage,

Deepen the bonds between place and community,

Inspire positive action for stewardship by promoting a culture of reciprocity and advocacy for the river in the face of Climate Crisis.

These aims were developed in the context of three of the Creative Climate Action Fund's core concerns: to help people rethink lifestyles, to connect to the biodiversity crisis, and to ensure a fair and just transition in making lifestyle changes.

## 2.2 The evaluator's understanding of the orientation of the *Gleann a' Phúca Climate Action Project*.

There is currently no consensus regarding best practice for evaluating a project such as *Gleann a' Phúca: A Glen River Creative Climate Action Project* (hereafter GaP). However, three general principles are understood as relevant. These are that:

- a]. *communities are best placed to identify their own needs and the means to address those needs;*
- b]. *creative methodologies are a key to a genuine community engagement and accessing less-heard voices;*
- c]. *creative placemaking supports communities to drawing first on what is around them, grow their own capability, and build strong partnerships with others to share learning and expertise.<sup>1</sup>*

This evaluation begins by identifying the evaluator's understanding of GaP's orientation. This understanding was tested by sending GaP project members a questionnaire based on elements of 2.2 and 2.4 below, (see Appendix One). Answers confirmed that understanding.

2.2.1 On the basis of its aims and initial event-by-event participant responses returned, it is clear that GaP's overarching aim is best characterised as to creatively *deepen the bonds between place and community*. The GaP team see themselves as part of the immediate community for which the Glen provides an environmental focus. However, the concept of "community" in the context of GaP's work is flexible and inclusive, rather than fixed and exclusive. This is indicated by its collaborating with other groups in both a national and local context, for example with the Mayfield Youth Café through creative sessions for girls (age 6-12) from the Traveller Community on 04.11.23 and a new initiative, devised by GaP, to work with traveller boys (age 8-12) begun 10.04.24. (Julie Forrester has been artist in residence with the Mayfield Youth Café since September 2023, offering weekly sessions to support the voluntary work by Rachel Coffey (Traveller Youth worker) and Brenda Stillell (artist/teacher). She found additional funding (LYCP/CETB) to support a new boys group, employing Youth Café workers Rachel Coffey (traveller Youth) and Brenda Stillwell (artist) to work alongside

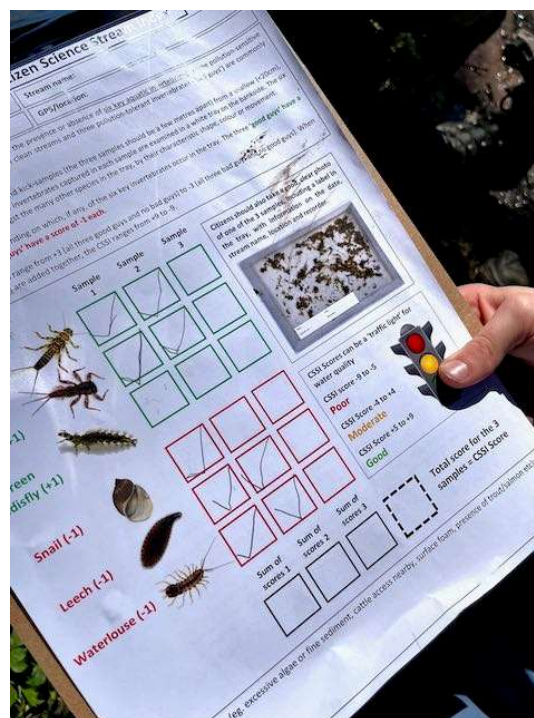
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<sup>1</sup> See *A Creative Placemaking Approach* at [https://thestove.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/24.3.25\\_CPA.pdf](https://thestove.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/24.3.25_CPA.pdf) p. 5.

her for a period of 8 weeks – ‘Feeling our way into our imaginations, bringing forth places in the Glen Park, even if we haven’t been there yet, talking about apple trees and rivers’).

2.2.2 GaP is understood as enacting a creatively animated, socio-environmental concern, one expressed through multiple interactions with a locality “housing” both humans and more-than-humans. Of the 53 participants who filled in detailed questionnaires, 46 travelled less than 5 kms to join an event and 5 less than 10 kms. In addition to confirming the project as “locally-based”, this can be taken as a measure of its relatively low carbon footprint. The project’s explicitly environmental aim, that of *promoting a culture of reciprocity and advocacy for the river in the face of Climate Crisis*, sits within this broader understanding and gives it greater specificity.

2.2.3 Given 2.2.2 above it should be noted that, while the team members identify professionally as artists, they also understand themselves as active members of a shared community. As such GaP departs from binary models of practice predicated on distinctions between “artist” and “audience” or “art production” and “art consumption”.<sup>2</sup> The GaP team are better characterised as observant animators and participants in processes they initiated but then co-created with others. Consequently the creative, cultural, community, and educational aspects of GaP events are blended through open-ended collective exchange. In this respect the team deploy multiple forms of practice that might be characterised as having become increasingly: ‘feral in combination with other forms of life’,<sup>3</sup> utilising an “ensemble” set of skills that extend creative practices well beyond the exercise of traditional art forms.<sup>4</sup>



*What's in the Water* (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024) Cognitive learning through citizen science. (Photo JF).

<sup>2</sup> Burke, Ockwell & Whitmarsh 2018: 96.

<sup>3</sup> Fuller 2008: 45.

<sup>4</sup> Biggs, 2021.

2.2.4 This orientation has implications for evaluation. The process of “deepening bonds” is primarily animated by an affect or emotion-led approach, now seen as more likely to promote engagement with climate change than cognitive-based approaches.<sup>5</sup> (It should be noted, however that, while GaP’s orientation privileges affect, it by no means excludes the cognitive and the directly scientific. See image above.). GaP’s aim to *animate the diverse connections that the river and the park have with Cork’s industrial and cultural heritage* contextualises the deepening of bonds and is inseparable from broader concerns with ‘keeping alive local memory and imagination as a reservoir of meanings, truths, and possibilities for a different future’.<sup>6</sup>

### **2.3 Implications of 2.2 for evaluation**

Recent academic studies of the use of participatory arts as an affective engagement with climate change note that the evaluation of ‘emotional effects ... on audiences are likely to be complex, long-term, yet non-linear and difficult to attribute to a particular moment’.<sup>7</sup> This is due to the fact that effective evaluation of impact would require the very substantive funding necessary for a protracted longitudinal study. Evaluation here adopts a narrative approach informed by accounts of process juxtaposed with direct (anonymised) quotation from participants and contextualised using quantitative data derived from participant questionnaires.

2.3.1 GaP was launched in September 2023. The evaluator initially chosen proved unsatisfactory and the author was appointed in February 2024 and so not involved in the initial discussions about evaluation or in the design of the questionnaire proposed for gathering data. While the project team has made every effort to gather participant responses using that questionnaire, these proved to be an unreliable basis for evaluation. For example, ticketing evidence shows that 25 people asked to attend the Glen Water Day workshop and walk (a walk later joined spontaneously by an unspecified number of park users). However only ten attendees filled in questionnaires.

In this context the following is indicative. Data derived from the questionnaire indicates that only 10 out of a total of 55 participants identified as male, that all but 2 identified as “white”, and that the majority were aged 45 years or older. However, extensive photographic evidence indicates this is in no way an accurate reflection of actual participation. It is clear that, for the most part, the responses of children – particularly the younger children clearly present in the photographic evidence at many events - is simply not captured by the use of elaborate questionnaires.

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<sup>5</sup> Burke, et al: 2018: 95.

<sup>6</sup> Finn 1996: 145.

<sup>7</sup> Burke et al. 2018: 96.



A visual sample of participants at an early event (Photo JF)



A visual sample of participants at the final event (Photo JF)

2.3.2 This evaluation also needs to acknowledge the broader context within which GaP's work is located by referencing the network of influence of which it is a part. This includes collaboration with professional individuals with a range of institutional affiliations, and with local, regional, and national organisations concerned with environmental issues and climate change. These include schools, regional agencies concerned with water, other environmentally-concerned cultural organisations, and national organisations such as *Bí Urban*. While the impact of GaP on this extended network cannot be quantified, it is important to acknowledge GaP's contribution it.

## 2.4 What constitutes "evidence"?

Evidence of participants' engagement with, and learning from, the explicitly environmental aspects of GaP will relate to *inspiring positive action for stewardship by promoting a culture of reciprocity and advocacy for the river in the face of Climate Crisis*. Such evidence is likely to display elements of *learning* and *care*. Indicative examples in response to the question: "Can you name three things you learned today"? are:

1. The amount of different wildlife in the Glen.
2. The joy in hearing others' different experiences of a place you think you know well.
3. How much the glen as changed even in our lifetimes.

Here positive emotional impact is identified in the context of both communal and environmental engagement. This form of engagement is less obviously apparent in an answer to the question: "What would you be willing to give up to help address the world bio-diversity crisis"? "Flights to warmer countries (can't fully give up flying unfortunately or I'd not be able to see family)". However, this answer indicates a concern with environmental stewardship in the context of multiple responsibilities.

2.4.1 To identify evidence relating to *deepening bonds between place and community*, requires acknowledging the complexities of that process. It is seen here in the context of building long-term relationships through generating: 'bottom-up, non-expert perceptions that locate climate change within people's everyday lived experience'.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, although questionnaires indicate that only nine of the individuals filling them in attended more than one event, this is not taken to mean that building such relationships was unsuccessful. Any such assumption would be challenged, for example, by the first response quoted in 2.4.5 below.

2.4.2 On the basis of responses over all, it is clear that GaP has facilitated a gradual reordering of currently dominant social presuppositions through adopting a "playful" approach. "Playfulness" here is equated with collective activity that animates a degree of emotional openness; as capable of destabilizing: 'the divisions between the mental and the material, and between persons and things, which are the twin foundations of possessive individualism'<sup>9</sup> as the psychosocial underpinning of the extractive, consumerist, and atomizing mentality responsible for the Climate Crisis.

2.4.3 This process of (often tacit) playful "destabilisation" echoes Gregory Bateson's third level of education: the ability 'to disassemble and rearrange the prevailing cognitive frame or

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<sup>8</sup> Burke et al. 2018: 98.

<sup>9</sup> Leach 2007: 110.



to dispose of it completely'<sup>10</sup> and is related to the 'imaginative rewilding' proposed by groups such as *Extinction Rebellion* as making 'new beginnings' possible.

2.4.4 This same "creative playfulness" facilitates mixing different forms of knowledge, understanding, fellow-feeling and histories by enfolding them in experiences of a particular place. In doing so it invites understanding of the complex interconnections between humans, places, knowledge and authority that are central to human and more-than-human reciprocity or 'dwelling as preservation'.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, by emphasising an approach based on "mutual accompaniment" rather than on the authority vested in professional specialists, this approach acknowledges an important contemporary issue. Namely, that our individual need and responsibility for engagement with specific places must now be related to active local engagement with a global ecological crisis.



Denise and Lydia's bark boat: "Making boats and floating them down the river bringing the joy of childhood play". (Photo JF)

2.4.5 Evidence relating to *the deepening the bonds between place and community* range from a participant's more inclusive sense of shared community to responses that openly challenge tacit social assumptions. In response to the question: "Why is the Glen important to you"?, one participant responded:

Because I live in the Glen, the more I know, the more I meet people, the more I realise how magical it is. I love the little communities, the connections, all made through our love of the park itself, the wonderful rhythms of the park, you can set your clock to the timings of the daily rituals of its visitors, beautiful place, lucky us to enjoy it

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<sup>10</sup> Bauman 2012: 13

<sup>11</sup> Cresswell 2020: 174.

daily...fairies, weirdos, animals, birds, trees, flowers, berries, plants, medicine, water, people, friends, neighbours, old, young, you can meet ANYONE in the Glen as well as its usual routine folk.... the Sin É of parks...great.

By contrast, a response to the question: “What would you be willing to give up to help address the world bio-diversity crisis”? Namely:

I spent the last 21 years giving up anything I could. Cycling to work, eating consciously and giving up the use of tv and electric appliances. Studying biodiversity and climate, retraining in social justice and now educating my students on climate change. I'm tired of this rhetoric where the responsibility is always put on the individual. This crisis is a political choice. I suppose, it's time for our generation to take up positions in society that can influence policies;

equally reflects a desire to deepen bonds between place and community. While the first quote does so in terms focused on multiple local connections, the second does so in terms of collective political choice and action and is particularly significant given the participant's work as a teacher.

### **3. The evaluative narrative**

The narrative below is structured as follows. GaP events are listed chronologically with reference, in each case, to the process involved together, where available, with some quantitative data.

It should be noted, however, that the team's ability to gather quantitative data significantly diminished during the summer of 2024. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 JF again noted that the questionnaires designed by the initial evaluator were not user-friendly, not least in being over-long. She noted two issues in particular, namely that:

- a). the majority of summer attendees were families with young (preteen) children who did not fill in the questionnaire and whose parents were necessarily focused on them at the conclusion of an event;
- b). both participants and organisers 'just want to be in the now of the event'.

She also added that the team was simply too small to be able to capture “vox pop” responses at the end of events. She noted, however, that informal responses over the summer have been enthusiastic and joyful, a claim supported by the visual evidence. It is also necessary to note that, while all summer workshops were booked out online, this was not a reliable indicator of attendance. The team noted that not all who booked attended events; indeed as many as 50% did not on one occasion. However, there was regular significant spontaneous participation “on the day”, both by visitors to the Glen and by people who just “came along on the day” without having booked, having seen posters and fliers.

Where possible general statements provide a context for any participants' comments quoted. Photographic material is included to provide visual evidence, a degree of nuance, or to qualify the implications of data.

**3.1 Meetings and other links with relevant local, regional and national groups, publics and institutions are included in the timeline, but are not numbered and are differentiated from GaP events by being set out in italics.** This italicised material evidences GaP's involvement in a range of appropriate activity within the wider community as part of a mesh of 'relational networks of actors and powers'.<sup>12</sup> (See, for example, the meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2024). This has extended GaP's aim of deepening bonds between place and community. The GaP website, which advertises (and provides evidence of) its activities, is also a catalyst in fostering connectivity in terms of the project's broader "outreach". See, for example: <https://gleannaphuca.ie/big-river-watch-3-6th-may-weekend-2024/>

**3.2 Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 - 'The Glen as A Place of Creative Encounter'**. A ticketed event booked out at the maximum of 35 participants, of whom 28 filled in questionnaires. The event was framed by the presence of the ecologist Éanna Ní Lamhna, who launched the second, enlarged, edition of the *Glen River Handbook* and encouraged identification of GaP with the authority of one of the best-known public figures in Ireland in the area of nature and the environment. The handbook is an education and outreach resource and a tangible expression of GaP and the Glen Resource Centre as linked hosting and outreach partners sharing a mission to involve local schools and community organizations. Attendees included city council bio-diversity officers, leaders from local schools and community groups and members of the Glen community. Julie Forrester (hereafter JF) introduced the GaP project and the artists Elinor Rivers (hereafter ER) and Annie Mar and Aaron Ross (hereafter AM & AR), before leading a creative mapping workshop to which Éanna Ní Lamhna contributed. (See <https://gleannaphuca.ie/hello-world/>)

3.2.1 In response to the question: 'Based on your experience today, would you be interested in attending other Gleann a' Phúca events'? 26 out of 28 questionnaires contained the answer 'yes'. All responses to the question: 'How do you feel after attending today's event'? were positive and included comments such as: 'Very informative & fun'; 'Great, brilliant to interact with community'; and, from a teacher at a nearby school: 'More open and positive towards bringing a class down to The Glen Park'.

3.2.2 GaP's approach is endorsed by responses to the question: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "The creative aspect of this project made me feel more engaged with bio-diversity and water health"' with 12 "agree" and 17 "strongly agree".

**3.3 29th October 2023 - Spoon and Bloom Glen Mapping collaborative workshops.** A ticketed event with 15 individuals attending the walk and 10 the workshop. 12 questionnaires were filled in but further individuals joined the walk spontaneously. The recorded age range was from under 18 to between 55-64. The event involved a collaborative mapping project to explore connections between biodiversity, culture and the ecosystem of the park and to plot desire lines and share memories of significant sites. (See <https://gleannaphuca.ie/the-glen-water-day-5-november-2023-gathering-gleaning-divining/>)

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of this form of relationality in a parallel context, see Humphris, Rauws & Horlings 2024:1.

3.3.1 To the question: 'Can you name three things you learned today?' relevant participant responses include:

'Gorilla Tree planting in the area, other peoples' attachment to the area, other paths and areas that I haven't explored'.

'There are civic amenities like bottle bank and supermarket which are part of the Glen experience'.

'Glen wetlands absorb flood water - protects Blackpool from flooding - otters have been in the Glen but have to cross the North Ring Road - bulrushes are a sign of improved water'.



*Mother and daughter describe their walk through the park (Photo JF).*

Questionnaires contained positive responses to attendees being asked how they felt after the event and about learned more about biodiversity and water health. Indicative responses include:

"Positively connected with people and the environment".

"Amazed at how much the Glen means to different people".

"Like part of a community".

4<sup>th</sup> November 2023 - *Imagining the Glen with the Mayfield Youth Café - session with Rachel Coffey and girls from the Traveller Community. Workshop based on feeling one's way into individual's imaginations, 'bringing forth places in the Glen Park, even if we haven't been there yet, talking about apple trees and rivers'.*

**3.4 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2023 – Glen Water day.** Two related events with 15 attending the walk (with further individuals joining them spontaneously in the park). and 10 at the workshop. Ten participants filled in questionnaires. Recorded age range under 18 to 55-64.

GaP offered a Slow Walk with botanist Jo Goodyear exploring waterside plants, followed by *Ordinary Gifts* with Elinor Rivers exploring human connection with water through a water divining workshop on site. See <https://gleannaphuca.ie/the-glen-water-day-5-november-2023-gathering-gleaning-divining/>



*Trying out the hazel*

3.4.1 The questionnaires show that all participants agreed or strongly agreed that the events made them 'feel more engaged with bio-diversity and water health', (despite, in one case, the attendee expressing a personal aversion to water divining). While for the majority of participants the benefits of the day were couched in terms of learning about the properties of plants and trees and about water divining, one response notes the broader informal sharing of information and concerns it facilitated, significantly referring to learning: 'A lot about projects that participants are involved in'.

**3.5 21st and 23rd November, 2023.** Performances on site by students from the Theatre in Performative Practices Masters degree at UCC, who had carried out some of their research practice in the Glen River Park. (N.B. see also 3.14.3 for details about the range of collaborative work this project would involve).

26<sup>th</sup> January 2024 - *Inaugural Rivers meeting – invitation to all Cork River Action groups to come together and share knowledge and resources at The Glen Resource Centre. The Group now meets the last Friday of every month at alternating venues. See <https://gleannaphuca.ie/rivers-group-meeting/>*

**3.6 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024 – World Wetlands day.** There were 16 Eventbrite registrations for this family event with *Ordinary Gifts* and some 30+ attendees on the day. 7 attendees filled in

questionnaires. Age-range 25 – 34 to 45 - 54. The day's events consisted of a silent walk and playful wetlands connection activities, including water divining and making a mandala by the Glen well for Lá le Bride (Bridgit's Day 1st February).

3.6.1 Responses suggest individuals were motivated by the idea of attending/participating in an interesting and creative local event and 6 questionnaire responses "agreed" and one "strongly agreed" that after attending they were "more informed about bio-diversity and water health." An indicative reflection on the communal aspect of the day is: "I feel refreshed, and peaceful, and gain a lot of positive energy from everything and everyone".

*23<sup>rd</sup> January. Rivers meeting #2 Held at SHEP Blackrock. Facilitated by Dr. Marica Casserino, School of Applied Psychology UCC.*

*9<sup>th</sup> February. JF invited by St. Marks BNS as part of their Creative schools programme to talk about Gleann a' Phúca and lead some mapping workshops with the boys based on their experiences of the Glen Park.*



*Drawing in what we know (Photo JF)*

### **3.7 23-24 March 2024 World Water (Day) Weekend**



Banner for the World Water (Day) Weekend 23-24 March 2024

3.7.1 Morning 23<sup>rd</sup> March – *What's in the Water: Citizen Science - Kick Sampling the River's water*. An exploration with Catherine Seale Community Water Officer and Trisha O'Brien, Catchment Scientist from The Local Authority Water Programme. 26 participants counted on the day, of whom only 2 filled in questionnaires (but see image below).



*'Kick sampling with Catherine Seale, Community Water Officer, and Trisha O'Brien, Catchment Scientist, as they help us to assess water quality' (photo JF)*

3.7.2 Afternoon 23<sup>rd</sup> March – *Ordinary Gifts Slow Walk*. This walk aimed to help participants develop a greater sensitivity to the life and nature of the Glen River through tuning into its waters. A slow walk followed the course of the river while criss-crossing the Glen's many bridges. Along the way participants stopped and focused on the water through various

sensory activities. Part of the walk was in silence and another part involved sharing river memories and stories.

3.7.3 Morning and afternoon of 24<sup>th</sup> March – *A Dog’s Nose View*. 8 participants filled in questionnaires. The planned walk around the park led by participants’ dogs, collecting smells, sounds and some of the park’s bounty was in part frustrated by bad weather. However, the pre-designed Zines and the gazebo enabled the group to capture each individual dog and dog guardian’s experience.



*Doodling dogs (Photo J F)*

29<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 – *Rivers meeting # 3 (Blackpool Community Hall)*. Work towards a group mission based on findings to date presented by Dr Marica Casserino. Jenny Ahern summarises potential for a Rivers Alliance for Cork City Catchment. The rivers group agree to hold a River seminar on 23 September to mark World Rivers Day (Sunday 22 September 2024). Local river activist Chris Moody from Save the Bride Otters Campaign led the group on a tour of the River Bride alerting the group to its beauty and precarity due to OPW approved flood development plans to further culvert its course through the city.

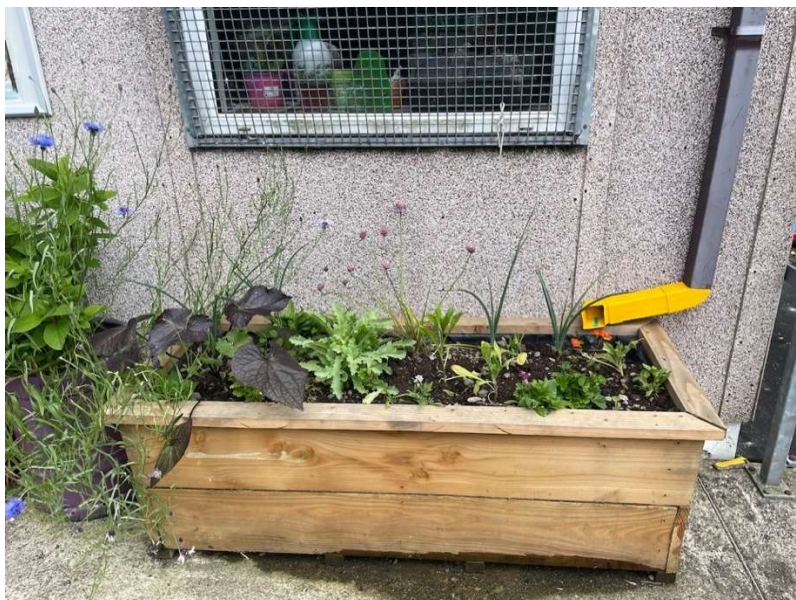
26<sup>th</sup> April - *Rivers meeting # 4 (The Glen Resource Centre)*.

**3.8 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Dawn Chorus event** (GaP with Birdwatch Ireland, Cork. A very well-attended event despite the early start. See <https://gleannaphuca.ie/events/dawn-chorus/>)

*J.F. obtains ward funding of 500 euros towards materials from the Green Party.*



**3.9 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024. *Talk on Rain Gardens, etc.*** (for Bio-diversity week) and a showing of BÍ Urban's film, as they were too busy to come to Cork. A free event co-hosted by GaP and Glen Community Gardens and supported from the Local Authority Water Programme. GaP working with Community health worker and Glen Gardener, Barry Hickey, who created a prototype rain garden planter for GaP's project from recycled timber. See: <https://gleannaphuca.ie/events/rain-gardens-talk-and-information-session/>



Planter (photo JF)

*JF secures some extra "ward funding" from local Green politician Oliver Moran for materials for a rain garden planter building workshop, provisionally planned for Heritage Week (17-25 August), depending on further funding.*

### **3.10. May 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 2024 Activities as part of National Biodiversity Week**

3.10.1 **May 23<sup>rd</sup>.** The planned **Spoon & Bloom Mapping Plant life with Jo Goodyear** – had to be cancelled due to Jo Goodyear's ill-health.

3.10.2 **May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Rain Garden:** joint workshop with the Glen Community Garden on building your own rain garden planter.

3.10.3 **May 25<sup>th</sup>. Seo Youth Festival** GaP worked with two groups of young people from the travelling community at Mayfield Youth Cafe for the Seo Youth Festival at The Marina Market, where the Glen Camp was set up in the Graffiti rooms.

3.10.4 **May 26<sup>th</sup>. Ordinary Gifts Púcaí walk with Jenny Butler – Bealtaine biodiversity with the Púcaí.** A walk introducing the folklore of Bealtaine with Dr Jenny Butler, folklorist and scholar of religions (University of Cork) in the company of Elinor Rivers, who offered some rituals that connected participants with the Glen.

See <https://gleannaphuca.ie/ordinary-gifts-pucaí-walk-with-jenny-butler/>

June. Cork Rivers Group Submission to Uisce Eireann Draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050 – see <https://gleannaphuca.ie/the-sixth-cork-rivers-meeting/>

July 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>: Full page articles: “Nature in the Glen thrives when given a touch of help” by Tom MacSweeney in the Echo and “River monsters descend on the Glen this weekend” by Niamh Aine Ryan in the Cork Independent, both on Gleann na Phúca activities.

### 3.11 July 28<sup>th</sup> 2024 Monster Parade and Botanical Odyssey at the Glen River Park.



Gazebo and information for participants in the Dripsey River Monster's event (photo JF)

**3.11.1 Welcome the Friends of Dripsey River monsters.** A successful and well-attended collaboration with the Friends of the Dripsey River involving examining the river water for evidence of Caddis Fly, May Fly and Stone Fly as indicative species in relation to water health. Participants used Citizen Science kick sampling tests to identify the creatures and then documented their findings.

See <https://gleannaphuca.ie/welcoming-the-friends-of-the-dripsey-river-monsters/> for short video.



“Stonefly” observing participants using sampling kits (photo JF)

### 3.11.2 Botanical Odyssey with Eoin Marshall and Spoon & Bloom.



Gerard O'Brien (photo JF)



**3.12 August 17<sup>th</sup>– 25<sup>th</sup> 2024 - Events in Heritage Week. An invitation to explore the Natural and Historical Wonders of Glen River Park: A Guided Walk and Creative Mapping Workshop. A two-part event.** (Both days booked out, with 25 + attendees each. Audience made up of roughly middle - retired age people who remembered the Glen through its phases, and younger people who did not).

**3.12.1 Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Part One.** This focused on personal memories connected with bio-diversity was led by Gerard O'Brien, whose family lived in the Glen when working for Gouldings Chemicals and who is author of *'Faeries, Felons and Fine Gentlemen - A History of The Glen, Cork, 1700 to 1980'*. He was invited by Spoon and Bloom for Gleann a' Phúca, to share tales about a childhood in the Glen. Part Two, led by Spoon and Bloom, has participants working together and collectively to map the journey through the park, piecing together the past with the present and designing our own individual visions for the future of the Glen River Park.

**3.12.2 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2024. Part Two.** Spoon and Bloom gathered stories for their animation *Step Into The Past With Gerard O'Brien* by invited participants to contribute to their map of the Glen. Gerard led two walks in the park. These offered a spoken excavation of both its historical importance and natural wonders, including insights into the park's past and the ways in which its landscape has shaped the lives and experiences of local residents over the years. The audience were again very engaged with issues of history, particularly the changing landscape and levels of bio-diversity and loss of species once present in the Glen.

**3.13 26<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2024. Rain Garden Information Session and Planter Building Workshop.** (This built on the previous information session during biodiversity week and was held at the Glen Resource Centre in collaboration with the Glen Community Garden).



Building planters at the Rain Gardens workshop (photo JF)

An invited event for three local schools: St Killians Forest School class (primary children with autism), Scoil Bernadette (Secondary School COPE) and St Brendans Girls NS (primary) along with members from various community gardens - Mayfield and Churchfield (Northside) and Togher (Southside), Men's and Women's Sheds Ballyvolae, and Mayfield and Glen Community Garden members. After an information session by JF, eight rain gardens were built from kits prepared by Barry Hickey from the Glen Garden. (The schools brought handy individuals and necessary tools and aim to build using the knowledge gained). After the lunch provided, Barry Hickey gave an information session on what soils to fill planters and advice on planting. The workshop was very well received, generated considerable interest in learning about water management and in future events.

### 3.14 **28<sup>th</sup> September, 2024. Grand Finale**

3.14.1 **Ordinary Gift Picnic 1.30 - 3 pm.** (Personal invitations / signs in the park. About 13 participants, including regulars and new attendees). Attendees included young families, friends, a local librarian, etc. An attendee who organises Tuesday Chit Chat sessions in Mayfield invited the team to come and talk. Positive discussion around how we live with and love our water, clean and dirty water issues, and who owns/ can be guardians of, the water? Games played with acorns and water magic.



Participants and picnic table at *Ordinary Gifts Picnic* (photo JF)

**3.14.2 Fuaim Mna Poetry Trail Launch 5 - 6.15pm.** 30 attendees - age range 30 - 90 years, including members of the families of the women and park walkers interested in history. Ann Dalton's work, capturing the spirit of the women from the War of Independence, the Civil War and early - mid 20th Century, was very well received and prompted emotional responses to the recitals and poetry. The QR coded bronze plaque audio trail leads participants on a journey through the park from the 1800s to the present day. (See p. 25 for an example of a QR coded bronze plaque in situ).

The launch of the Fuaim Mna Trail led into the Dance promenade.



Ann Dalton at the launch of the *Fuaim Mna Poetry Trail*

3.14.3 **Through The Valley She Runs 6.15 pm - 7 pm.** (A UCC Creative initiative in collaboration with *Gleann a Phuca*, *Dance Cork Firkin Crane* and *UCC Environmental Research Institute*). 35 attendees, including individuals from *UCC Creative*, and *Firkin Crane Dance Circles*. (A younger audience, couples and friends 30 - 50s). Dance artists Helga Deasy and Sara Hernandez collaborated with singer/musician Susan McManamon providing shruti drone and vocals. Very well received.



*Through The Valley She Runs* (photo Marcin Lewandowski | soundofphotography.com)

This piece was based on a co-creative process with the river, with the artists responded to the natural environment of the Glen, interweaving movement and sound in a meandering dance which followed the river, explored the relationship between imagination and riverscape, and drew attention to it as a source of life, healing and regeneration. The work is informed by insights gained on river ecology and the impact of pollution on aquatic environments through a collaboration with aquatic ecologist Dr Neil Coughlan, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, UCC, and by traditions of rivers as goddesses in Irish mythology. It explores how a practice of dance, sound and embodied awareness can create new ways of knowing and bring about perceptual transformation in how we relate to and connect with nature whereby imagination constitutes an opening of possibilities for a hopeful future for our planet.

Dancers and Musician led the audience through the park to the Glen Resource Centre.

For further images see: <https://gleannaphuca.ie/through-the-valley-she-runs/>

3.14.4 **Screenings and presentations 7- 9 pm at the Glen Resource Centre.** 50 + people, a mix of regular attendees, new faces, and friends. (Refreshments were provided by Rafalitus). This event consisted of four presentations / showings by Elinor Rivers, *Spoon and Bloom* (AM & AR), Dervla Baker, and a final summary of the *Gleann na Phúca*, Glen River Creative Climate Action project as a whole by JF.



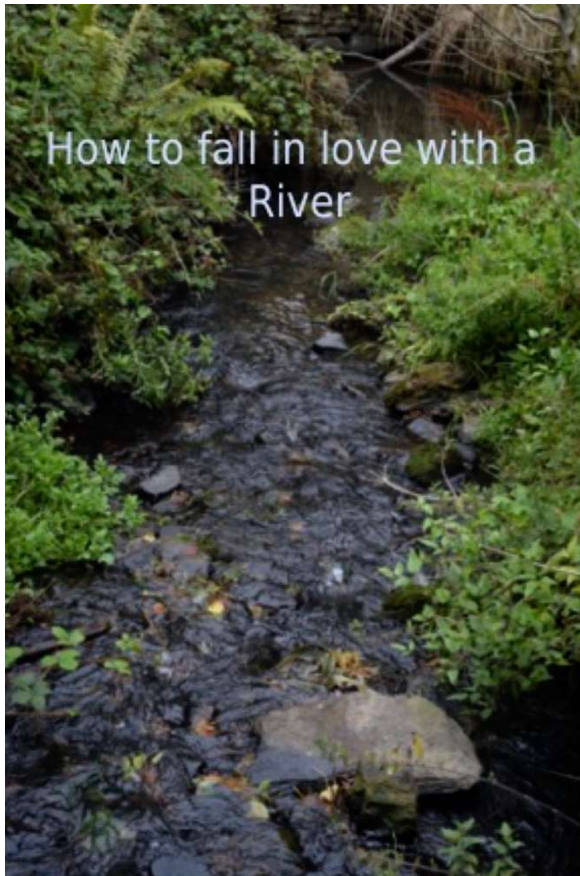
Screenings audience (photo John Admas)

Elinor Rivers gave a performative presentation and slideshow, gathering together elements and findings from a year-long program of participatory engagements with people and water.



Elinor Rivers presenting (photo John Admas)





### How to fall in love with a river

- Visit her often
- Take a silent slow walk by her and listen deeply
- Watch her eddies and currents in all her moods... lose yourself in them
- Explore old traditions, River Deities, the blessing of bodies of water, fairies and the crossing of waters
- Give her a small gift and dare to feel foolish
- Walk to her source
- Observe her plants and creatures over four seasons
- Notice that all is not well
- See her dirty waters and smell their reek
- Imagine she has rights just like you
- Deeply feel our disrespect... Grieve... then Act !
- Join with others, research, join a local rivers group

[www.lawaters.ie](http://www.lawaters.ie) [www.therivertrust.org](http://www.therivertrust.org) [www.legalguide.ie](http://www.legalguide.ie) (water & drainage)

Ask yourself, How has she changed you ?



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Creative  
Climate Action

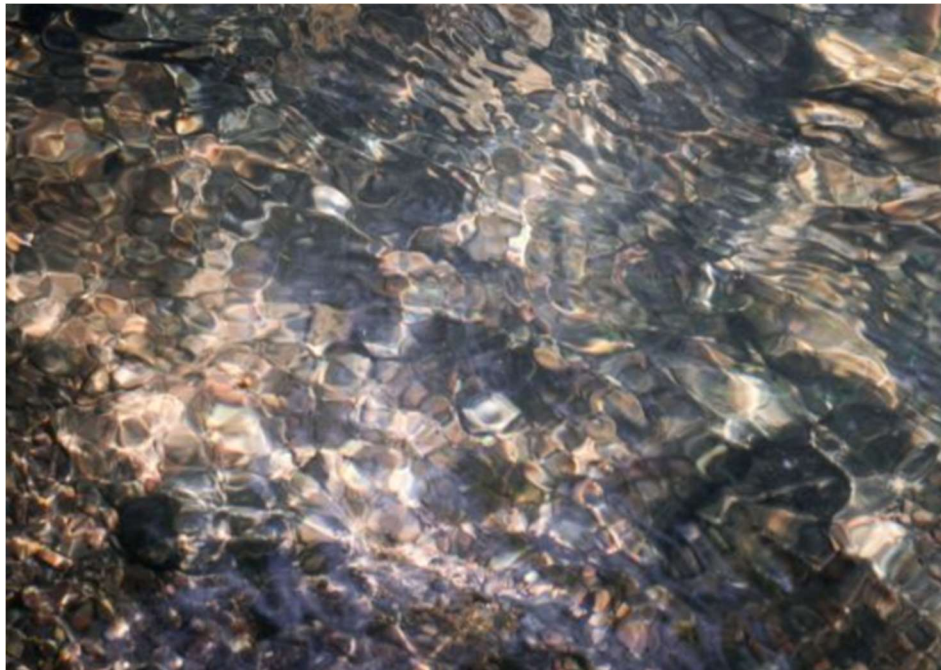


Elinor Rivers postcard 'How to fall in love with a river'.



AM & AR introducing *Glen Folk* (photo JF)

AM & AR presented the animation *Glen Folk*, which includes contributions from participants who attended drawing and mapping workshops in the park throughout the year. Link to the animation *Glen Folk* at: <https://vimeo.com/1017192058>



Still from *Glen River* (Dervla Baker)

Dervla Baker presented her film *Glen River*, with an original soundscape of field recordings by Neil Quigley. Drawing inspiration from the history of the Glen River Valley, the film traces the journey of the Glen River through the Glen River Park, exploring its interactions with various environments, such as stone-clad channels, marshy floodplains, and concrete weirs, and serves as a sensory anthropology of the river. The film utilizes underwater cameras, drone footage, and high-quality cinematography to immerse the audience in the river's narrative. Link to the film at: <https://vimeo.com/1017184091>

JF concluded the event by summed up a year of engagements and thanking all involved.

**3.14.5 Indicative feedback from the final event.** Feedback on this event included appreciation of individual presentations – “Lovely animations from Annie and Aaron, Dervla's film was beautiful and sensitive, Helga's performance was reverent and moving and I found Elinor's work very strong, great to see what she's being doing. A lovely event overall” - and comments such as: “Well done on the whole project. You have facilitated a beautiful community and raised awareness among many on the value of the park and its future”. Also: “It was really amazing to see all the diverse and creative outputs of the projects with so much potential for wider communication. You can be really proud of what you've achieved”. Significantly, in terms of impact and participant's future environmental engagement, the

feedback included requests for further projects and a request: “to join the mailing list for the Cork rivers group and join your next meeting to see how I can engage and support the team”.



A *FuaimMná* Poetry Post (photo AR)

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## **5. A note on the author.**

Dr Iain A. Biggs RWA is an independent lecturer, consultant, artist, and researcher who is currently working with the Welsh collaborative *Utopias Bach*. He has been an Honorary Research Fellow, Duncan of Jordanstone School of Art & Design, University of Dundee, and a Visiting Research Fellow at the Environmental Humanities Research Centre, Bath Spa University. A former Chair of the National Association for Fine Art Education (UK) and founding editor of the *Journal of Visual Arts Education*, his last academic employment was as Director of the PLaCE Research Centre, University of the West of England. He is co-author, with Professor Mary Modeen, of *Creative Engagements with Ecologies of Place: Geopoetics, Deep Mapping and Slow Residency* (Routledge 2021), and has contributed to numerous journals and book publications, including the *Routledge Companion to Art in the Public Realm* (2020) and 'Reweaving urban water-community relations: Creative, participatory river "daylighting" and local hydrocitizenship' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (Feb. 2020). He has acted as an external advisor, supervisor and examiner for doctoral research students in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Spain and the Netherlands, and as a consultant for *Narrating Rural Change* (Swansea University) and *The Rural Re-Imagined* (University of Dundee, Scotland and the Institute of Technology, Carlow, Republic of Ireland).

## **Appendix.**

### ***Gleann na Phúca* team questionnaire.**

Academic researchers acknowledge the value of both place attachment and local, situated knowledge in mediating the influence of climate change communication. However, they tend to assume positions that are neither accurate nor appropriate. For example, that emotional and visceral engagement with issues of climate change are usually 'through the use of imagery' rather than shared, creatively-catalysed, engagement with a particular place. One that is emotional, visceral and includes the situated knowledges the place activates. While they acknowledge the importance of building long-term relationships of trust that enable local people to modify their behaviour vis-vis the climate crisis and link this to creative projects that generate 'bottom-up, non-expert perceptions that locate climate change within people's everyday lived experience', they continue to use hard-and-fast binary categories like artist / audience and producer / consumer.

To help me understand your sense of your own role in relation to all this, I'd be very grateful if you could give me as full an answer to each of the following questions as you feel able.

Q. 1. How do you respond to the ideas set out above?

Q. 2. How near to Gleann na Phúca do you live and do you regard it as part of your local "world"?

Q. 3. What does "local" mean for you?

Q. 4. How would you describe your relationship to Gleann na Phúca, and to the Glen River as physical entities?

Q. 5. How would you describe your relationship to Gleann na Phúca as the site of a community of human and more-than-human beings?

It's been argued that some artists' practices have increasingly become 'feral in combination with other forms of life' (Fuller 2008: 45). Also that this generates "ensemble" or hybrid practices that are much more inclusive in terms of *what* is done and *how* it is done than traditional forms of art practice (Biggs, 2021). It's also argued that "ensemble" practices enact a "de-professionalized" or "non-disciplinary" intellectual approach that's necessary to caring for the ecologies of place.

Q.6. Do you broadly agree or disagree with the above? What is it that you most agree or disagree with?

Thank you again for your time. If I have further questions arising from your answers, may I contact you again?

Yes / No