Use Case Scenario for Community-Led Actions:

VOLUNTEER-LED ACTIVITIES FOR WETLAND RESTORATION

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY- LED ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement number 101215504

BLUEACTIONAA

Disclaimer:

This document is NOT a BlueActionAA's deliverable. The information contained in this document has been collected ONLY with the purpose of developing the use case scenarios catalogue to inspire potential applicants to BAAC-01. Potential applicants are NOT allowed to use this information for their applications to BAAC-01 or for other purposes. The information contained in this document is presented as provided by the use case promoter. The information contained in this document has not been changed and has been presented below as received. For any further questions regarding the use of this use case, please contact the BlueActionAA's data controller at info@blueactionaa.eu.

SUPPORTED BY | IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

AIR CENTRE
Foras na Mara Marine Institute
ESF Your Partner in Science
SINTEF
PLOCAN Plataforma Oceánica de Canarias
NIVA Norwegian Institute for Water Research
universidade de aveiro
SDU University of Southern Denmark

Use case Overview

Use case title

Volunteer-led activities for wetland restoration

Short Description

This use case presents a community-led wetland restoration initiative developed in a coastal environment with high biodiversity potential. The initiative demonstrates how volunteer-driven, bottom-up action, supported by local authorities, environmental organisations and research partners, can deliver long-term and resilient nature restoration outcomes. Through practical habitat restoration measures, including the creation of shallow wetlands, management of invasive species, and low-impact infrastructure development, the project enhances biodiversity while maintaining public access and educational value. Community members are actively involved in planning, implementation and monitoring, fostering a strong sense of ownership and long-term stewardship. The use case highlights the importance of inclusive governance, sustained engagement, and adaptive management in addressing ecological degradation and climate pressures in coastal wetlands. Aligned with European biodiversity and climate objectives, the initiative provides a scalable model for community-led restoration applicable across diverse coastal and wetland contexts.

Country and Region

Coastal Region/Atlantic (Ireland)

Domain/Sector

Environmental Protection; Coastal Management; Tourism; Community-led Nature Restoration

Current status

Scaled/Mature

Geographical scope

Costal/EEZ

Organization's categorizaton

NGOs, foundations, community-based organisations; Research organisations and academia

Promoter's information

- Organisation's name: University College Cork (main); Glounthaune Community Association
- Place: Ireland
- EU Mission Restore Our Oceans and Seas related project: AAGORA

Use case duration

- From Year 2020 to: ongoing

Keywords

Community stewardship / Wetland restoration / Citizen engagement

Website link

https://aagora-dev.konnekt-able.com/cork-county/volunteer-led-activities-for-wetland-restoration?fullscreen=true

Use case picture

Design

Briefly describe how the use case is aligned/contributes to the objectives of the EU Mission Restore Our Oceans and Waters 2030.

This use case contributes to the EU Mission by restoring coastal and wetland ecosystems, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening citizen participation in environmental stewardship. It supports nature-based solutions for climate resilience and demonstrates governance approaches that connect local action with European environmental objectives.

Challenge's definition and Primary Objective

Coastal wetlands face increasing pressures from biodiversity loss, climate change, land-use change and declining community connection to nature. In many regions, historic land management practices and limited long-term stewardship have resulted in habitat degradation, invasive species expansion and reduced ecological resilience. At the same time, top-down conservation approaches often struggle to sustain long-term engagement and local ownership. Communities may be excluded from decision-making, leading to missed opportunities for local knowledge, commitment and innovation. The primary objective of this use case is to demonstrate how a volunteer-led, bottom-up approach can successfully restore and manage a coastal wetland ecosystem over the long term. By positioning local communities as active partners in design, implementation and monitoring, the initiative seeks to deliver measurable biodiversity gains alongside social and educational benefits. The use case aims to bridge the gap between policy ambition and practical delivery by aligning community action with local authority support, scientific expertise and broader environmental strategies. It illustrates how inclusive governance and adaptive management can overcome ecological and social challenges in nature restoration.

End users

Local communities and volunteers; Local and regional authorities; Environmental organisations; Researchers and practitioners; Educational institutions; Visitors and nature-based tourism operators.

Gender equality and diversity

The use case promotes inclusive participation by encouraging involvement across genders, ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Activities are

designed to be accessible, flexible and community-driven, with shared decision-making structures that value diverse perspectives and experiences.

Implementation

Implementers

Regional or local (public) authority; NGOs, foundations, community-based organisations; Research organisations and academia; Cultural and educational organizations.

Concrete Solutions and Actions taken

Actions include the restoration of degraded wetland habitats through the creation of shallow wetland scrapes to enhance feeding and roosting habitats, management of invasive plant species. Nature-based infrastructure such as boardwalks, observation points and interpretive signage is developed to support public access while protecting sensitive habitats. Educational activities include volunteer training, school visits and community events that promote environmental awareness and skills development. A collaborative governance structure supports coordination between community members, authorities and technical experts. Monitoring programmes track biodiversity, habitat condition and social engagement to inform adaptive management

Community Engagement Needs

The use case addresses the need for meaningful local involvement in environmental decision-making, opportunities for learning and skills development, and access to high-quality natural spaces that support wellbeing and social cohesion.

Community Engagement Measures

Engagement measures include open meetings, volunteer workdays, partnerships with local groups, regular communication, recognition of contributions, and inclusive forums for feedback and co-design.

Community Engagement benefits

Communities benefit from increased environmental knowledge, stronger social networks, enhanced wellbeing, new skills, and a shared sense of ownership over restored natural spaces.

Funded by the European Union

Monitoring and Evaluation

Technical Risks

Uncertainty in ecological outcomes; Sensitivity of wetlands to climate variability and sea-level rise.

Operational constraints

Exposure to coastal weather conditions; Dependence on volunteer capacity and continuity.

Legal/Regulatory Constraints

Environmental permitting requirements; Compliance with protected area regulations.

Ethical and Social Considerations

Ensuring equitable participation, transparency in decision-making, and fair recognition of volunteer contributions.

Results & Impacts

Outputs

Restored wetland habitats; Improved biodiversity and social monitoring; Community-led governance model; Educational and visitor infrastructure.

Outcomes

- Environmental impacts: Improved habitat quality and increased biodiversity in coastal wetlands;
- Economic impacts: Support for local nature-based tourism and low-cost restoration delivery;
- Social impacts: Enhanced community cohesion, environmental awareness and long-term stewardship.

Operational benefits

Cost-effective implementation through volunteer engagement; Improved long-term site management.

Lessons learned and take aways for the future

Long-term restoration success depends on trust, inclusivity, adaptive management and sustained community ownership.

Scalability

Local -> Regional; Regional -> Global.

Replicability

Highly replicable in coastal and wetland settings with supportive governance and engaged communities.

Transferability

Transferable to other ecosystem restoration contexts, including rivers, floodplains and urban green spaces.

Post project sustainability

Long-term sustainability is supported through strong community ownership, diversified partnerships, continuous volunteer engagement and integration into local and regional environmental strategies. Ongoing monitoring, education and adaptive governance ensure that outcomes are maintained and scaled beyond the initial project phase.

Funded by the European Union

BLUEACTIONAA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY-LED ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC

This project has received funding from the European Union´s Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under **Grant Agreement 101215504**