A Habitat Enhancement Plan for the Nanny River, Birmingham, Tuam Co. Galway

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The Nanny is a short, spring fed stream which emerges approximately 8km east of Tuam and flows through the urban environment directly to the Clare river approximately 3km west of the town. Per unit area, it is likely to be one of the most productive salmonid habitats in the catchment with high quality, high pH water and clean substrates throughout. Indeed when visited for a follow-up habitat survey in December 2022, numerous large redds were observed in the channel upstream of Birmingham bridge. The Nanny is closely linked to the Lough Corrib SAC where Atlantic salmon, Lamprey and otter are named as qualifying interests and there appears to be important wildfowl overwintering grounds along its banks near the Birmingham estate.

Despite this, there has recently been arterial drainage maintenance carried out on the channel in a rather unsympathetic manner whereby stone and gravel from the river-bed were needlessly removed, further compromising its already damaged instream conditions for use by annex 2 fish species. The wetland habitats in the surrounding lands are a mixture of alkaline fen and wet grassland which appear unlikely to be rendered more productive for agricultural purposes by further drainage. Subject to an evaluation of flood risk to housing in the immediate vicinity, they may also have flood alleviation potential upstream of Tuam and could be of benefit to the town and its environs as natural floodplain areas

The main theme of this project would, therefore, be to augment the already depleted supply of spawning gravel in this site of approximately 400m and return the hard substrates (cobble & rock) back to the channel from where they were removed. In the short term, this part of the channel should be protected by the establishment of a well vegetated aquatic buffer zone with no further, unnecessary drainage activity in the area. In the longer term, it is recommended that the Nanny sub-catchment should be evaluated in terms of its natural flood relief and biodiversity potential and importance as a salmonid channel, with reduced drainage activity and more environmentally sensitive riparian land management.

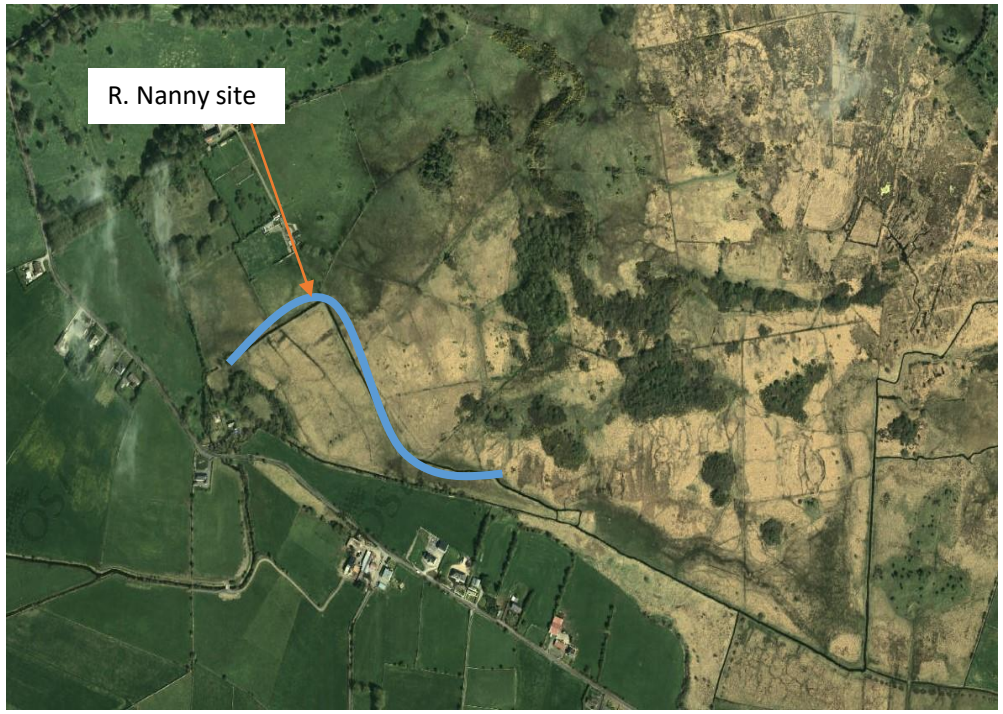

Fig.3. Aerial image showing the nature of land use in the Nanny Sub-catchment upstream of Birmingham Br.

Fig 4. Stones and weed and gravel recently removed form the Nanny R. during drainage maintenance

Example of large salmonid
Redd @ Ch 4090

11 of these spawning sites
Were noted in this channel
between on 4080 - 4140
The day of survey


1.
2.
Drinking trough & pump
3.
4.
5.
6.

1. Ch.4170: downstream end of low gradient section. Place gravel bed immediately upstream of gradient break point

Possible livestock access point here.
Provide pump & drinking rough if necessary


2. Ch4195: Lower half of low gradient section. Fence and plant broadleaves at low density to reduce instream plant growth and maintain moderate water temperatures during the summer months

3. Place 4 random boulders Downstream of 1st gradient break (Ch. 4470)

Protect riparian zone with fence and plant small numbers of trees where feasible

4. Place 1st gravel bed 2.5m upstream of gradient break (Ch. 4485) and 1 random boulders immediately downstream

At upstream end of this Reach (Ch.4490) place gravel bed and restore removed boulders to the channel (as required in section 8.2)

5. At next gradient break upstream (Ch.4520) place gravel bed and 2 random boulders

Protect riparian zone with Fencing and broadleaf planting

6. Continue upstream with fencing and sparse planting of broadleaves to protect watercourse and enhance riparian zone.

Note how local relief provides a well defined floodplain, this should be exploited to allow channel of the Nanny R. to naturalise wherever possible.