

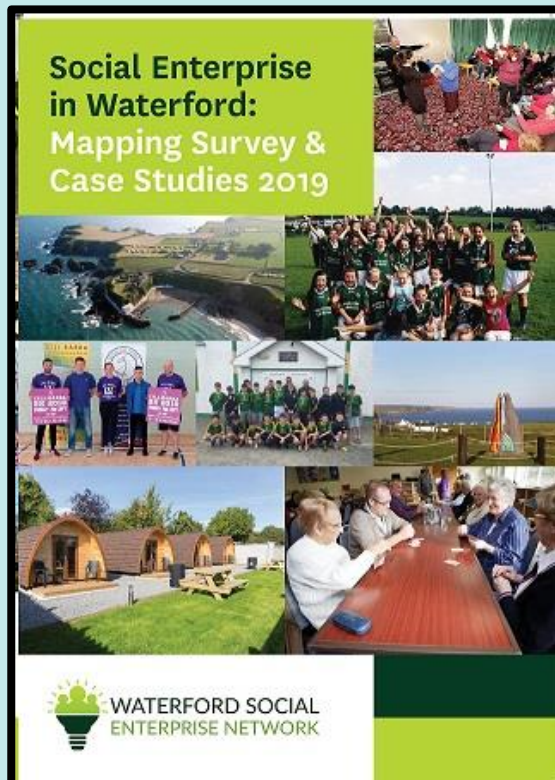


Communities Creating Jobs

Winter Newsletter 2019 ~Issue 27

2019 Has Been the Year for Social Enterprise in Ireland

- ✓ First National Conference on Social Enterprise Held in Dublin
- ✓ National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group Announced
- ✓ Waterford Social Enterprise Research Report Launched



ILDN Conference Held in Sligo and Dunhill's Anne Valley Nature and Wildlife Walk to represent Waterford in 2020 Pride of Place Awards.

All Stories and Photographs Inside



Bumper Christmas Issue Contents

First National Conference on Social Enterprise	3
National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group Announced.....	5
Waterford Social Enterprise Research Report Launched	6
Castlecomer Discovery Park, Co. Kilkenny.....	7
Creating a Heart in the Parish of Kilmaley, Co. Clare.....	8
Waterford Institute of Technology Champions Social Enterprise	11
Irish Local Development Network Conference in Sligo	13
RUBIZMO Conference and Business Innovation Awards.....	14
Sr. Magdalen Fogarty Honoured.....	16
FOLM (From Outdoors to Labour Market)	17
Dunhill Ecopark Food Producers Win Awards	19
Anne Valley Nature and Wildlife Walk	20
Carmichael Social Enterprise and Galway’s Living Bog.....	21
New CEO for An Cosán.....	23
Vantastic Wheelchair Accessible Car Rental.....	25

Editorial

Great strides have been made throughout 2019 in the development of social enterprise as a distinct sector which has so much to contribute to the social, cultural, technological, environmental and economic life of the country in the future. The more we get to know about it and the resources available the stronger we become in our efforts to transform urban and rural communities, society in general and the national economy.

This year we had the launch of the first ever social enterprise policy by Minister Michael Ring TD in Speedpak, Clonshaugh Business Park in Dublin on 18th July. The Department has since provided €800,000 for training and upskilling. In October an allocation of €1m from Dormant Accounts was made available in the form of small grants scheme (€2-€15,000) to assist small social enterprises. Finally, a very successful first National Social Enterprise Conference was held in Croke Park on Thursday 21st November. The Implementation of the social enterprise policy has got off to a flying start with a hard-working department team and minister putting down markers that they mean business. It is now down to the Implementation Team and every social enterprise in the country to respond in maintaining this pace throughout 2020. There is so much to be done.

Our CCJ board would like the Department Social Enterprise Unit and Implementation Team to prioritise the mapping of the sector and the development of a national register. This has to be the foundation stone for all work in the future. A register is an inclusive concept where everyone becomes involved, where no one is left isolated. We would then have a platform in which communications could take place on a regular basis between social enterprises, large and small and the Department Unit. So much information and learning can flow from this one initiative. A department social enterprise website would consolidate the collaborative relationship and so much more can follow. *On behalf of the Board, and all at CCJ, I would like to wish everyone involved in social enterprise a very Happy Christmas and Peaceful and Prosperous New Year*



**Senan Cooke, CCJ
Chairman**

You can check out our website at www.ccj.ie





First National Conference on Social Enterprise

To coincide with International Social Enterprise Day, Croke Park played host to Ireland's first National Conference on Social Enterprise on 21st of November last. The conference was attended by some 200 delegates from all over and proved a huge success for all concerned. The theme of the conference was **‘unlocking the transformational potential of Social Enterprise in Ireland’** and was opened by Mr. Michael Ring TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development.

The conference was designed to be participative and allow for all the views of delegates to be shared. The holding of the conference fulfils one of the commitments made in the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022. The conference also recognised the contribution which Social Enterprise makes to Ireland's economic and social development. There were four main aims to the conference.

1. To build awareness.
2. To engage stakeholders.
3. To share information about policy proprieties.
4. To create a space for networking and collaboration.

“Social Enterprises are an important part of the broader entrepreneurship ecosystem”

Among the key speakers on the day were Julie Sinnamon, CEO of Enterprise Ireland. Gerry Higgins, Managing Director of Social Enterprise World Forum. John McMullan Chairperson of Social Enterprise Northern Ireland. Iseult Kelly, CEO and Co-Founder of Food Cloud. Michael Kelly, CEO and Founder of Grow-It-Yourself also spoke on the day.

Ms. Sinnamon, (pictured right), of Enterprise Ireland remarked on her delight to be there and said that it was *“a great opportunity to recognise that social enterprises are an important part of the broader entrepreneurship ecosystem.”* She went on to say that the same social enterprises are *“contributing to economic growth while also having a hugely positive effect on society and the environment”*.



John McMullan, Social Enterprise Northern Ireland (L) and Gerry Higgins, Social Enterprise World Forum (R) who spoke at the conference.



One of the chief architects of the Conference, Mr. Andrew Forde (below left) who is Principal Officer for Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise at the Dept. of Rural and Community Development, and is responsible in that



role for monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan for Rural Development and for the next phase of rural strategy development has this to say about the conference. *“Now it is time for all to embed the language of Social Enterprise – innovation, impact, inclusion, sustainability, into the vernacular.”* He went on to say, in thanking everyone at the Conference, *“It’s a humbling experience bringing together 200 plus inspirational people with a common objective; to unlock the transformational potential of Social Enterprise. The aim is an inclusive and sustainable world. The paradigm shift is underway”.*

**Mr. Michael Ring TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development.
Opening Speech at the Conference.**



Since I launched Ireland’s first National Social Enterprise Policy in July, I have been overwhelmed by the momentum it created. Today’s turnout, and the level of interest in this Conference is evidence of that. This Conference marks a timely opportunity for us all to come together to communicate clearly about the contribution Social Enterprise makes to society, the economy and the environment.

Social enterprises also contribute to delivery of many Government policy goals in areas such as employment activation, affordable childcare, and the circular economy. Through the national Social Enterprise Policy, the Government’s objective is to create an enabling environment for social enterprise to grow in scale and impact.

My Department will work in partnership with all stakeholders in the delivery of the Policy, to enable social enterprises in Ireland to deliver their social objectives, to support jobs, and to have a positive impact in urban and rural communities.

Delivery of the Social Enterprise Policy is already well under way. I recently launched a new pilot Training and Mentoring for Social Enterprises, and a Small Capital Grants Scheme for Social Enterprises.

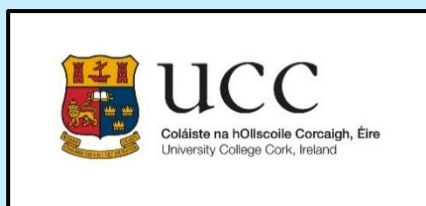
Many more initiatives will follow over the lifetime of the Policy. I am convinced that Ireland can become an international leader in Social Enterprise. Today’s Conference will showcase some wonderful examples of social enterprises, from those delivering services to local communities, right up to enterprises which are trading internationally. The Conference will allow us to share information and work together to maximise the impact of social enterprise on Irish society and the economy.



National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group Announced

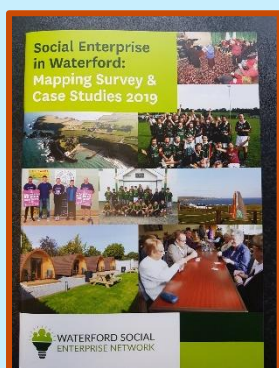
The National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group, which has just been announced, will be a key vehicle to oversee and advise on the implementation of the National Social Enterprise Policy which was launched in July last. Whilst responsibility for delivery of the Policy Measures remains with the Department, partnerships with a wide range of Social Enterprise stakeholders is key to the success and sustainability of the policy. It is anticipated that the group will meet three times per year with the first meeting to take place on the 6th December this year. The composition of the group which the Minister for Rural and Community Development Michael Ring TD approved in November this year is as follows.

1.	Department of Rural and Community Development (Chair)	Andrew Forde, Principal Officer
2.	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation	Phyllis Kelly, Assistant Principal Officer
3.	Department of Justice and Equality	Therese Molyneux, Assistant Principal Officer, Criminal Justice Policy
4.	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	Frank Maughan, Principal Officer, Climate Mitigation and Awareness
5.	County and City Management Association (CCMA)	Mary MacSweeney, Deputy Head of Economic Development and Enterprise, Dublin City Council
6.	Pobal	Richard Deane, Head of Programme Planning and Development
7.	Social Enterprise Task Force nominee	Brendan Whelan, CEO, Social Finance Foundation / Chairperson of Social Enterprise Task Force (SETF)
8.	Social Enterprise Task Force nominee	John Evoy, Social Enterprise Development Manager, Social Innovation Fund Ireland (SIFI)
9.	Social Enterprise C&V Pillar nominee	Ivan Cooper, Director of Public Policy, The Wheel
10.	Social Enterprise C&V Pillar nominee	Brid O'Brien, Head of Policy & Media, Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed
11.	Social Enterprise Stakeholder	Tammy D'Arcy, Founder and CEO, The Shona Project
12.	Social Enterprise Stakeholder	Rónán Ó Dálaigh, Founder and CEO, SEDCo
13.	Social Enterprise Stakeholder	Dr Senan Cooke, Dunhill Ecopark
14.	Social Enterprise Stakeholder	Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)
15.	Higher Education Institution	Dr Deiric O'Broin, Head of Social Enterprise, Dublin City University



Waterford Social Enterprise Research Report Launched

On Friday October 4th, WSEN (Waterford Social Enterprise Network), and DREL (Dunhill Rural Enterprises Ltd.), in association with WAP, (Waterford Area Partnership), launched their report into the social enterprise sector in Waterford.



The event was held in Renew Enterprises, Lacken Rd, Kilbarry and a large attendance enjoyed this very informative event. The report includes twenty-five local case studies ranging from Villierstown to Passage East and Tallow to Tramore.

The report was launched by Andrew Forde, Principal Officer, Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise Unit at DRCD, (Dept. of Rural and Community Development).

At the launch, (L to R)
Lisa from SPRAOI
Seamus Goggin, Research Officer
Andrew Forde, DRCD
Liz Riches, WSEN
Brendan Whelan CEO, SFF
Senan Cooke, Chairman, CCJ
Shauna from SPRAOI

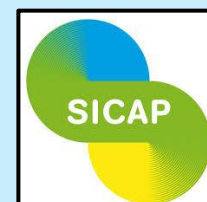


The new National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019- 2022 can be found at www.gov.ie

Should you require further information on the event contact;
Liz Riches, at WSEN, C/O Waterford Area Partnership
Outreach Office, 1st Floor,
Edmund Rice Heritage Centre, Barrack St, Waterford.

Tel: 086 700 7996 lriches@wap.ie Twitter: @waterfordsen

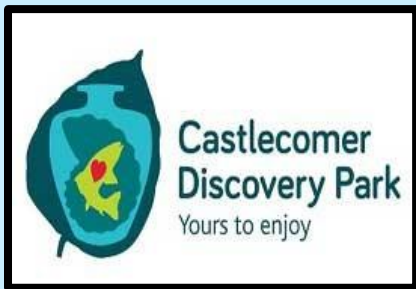
If you would like a soft copy of the report to be mailed to you, please contact Malcolm at The CCJ Office in Dunhill, Tel: 089 252 9885 or E-mail theccjoffice@gmail.com





Castlecomer Discovery Park, Co. Kilkenny

One of Irelands Outstanding Social Enterprises



Located in North Kilkenny in Castlecomer this once coalmining area has over the past decade engaged with success in rural regeneration. Since closure of its famous coalmines in the 1960s the area went into decline with closures of railway, businesses and public buildings. It wasn't until 2007 when the Discovery Park was opened that things began to look up and the once vibrant life of the coalmining days returned.

A local board of voluntary directors took out a lease on town property consisting of a courtyard, buildings and land. The Discovery Park is located in the Wandesforde Estate which a local person had purchased and who now leases the courtyard, building and land to the social enterprise board. Coillte owns part of the estate and has planted trees. The courtyard and houses have been renovated as craft workshops and a new building hosts a visitor centre, coalmining heritage video display, cafeteria and craft shop. The development of the adventure area combining trees, river and rocks has been professionally designed and landscaped. The activities completed to a high standard are used by schools, sports clubs, private companies wanting to develop discipline, fitness, teamwork, communication, leadership skills to name a few of the education and training uses on site.



The mission of the Discovery Park is to develop rural tourism, create jobs and help regenerate the town and surrounding areas. A new strategic development plan is near completion to 2025. Buoyed by its success it aims to set a target to become one of the best adventure parks in Europe. The success of the Discovery Park has generated new private enterprise developments most notably the Avalon Hotel across the road from the Park. The Comerford family, natives of the town and sponsors of Erin's Own GAA club Castlecomer invested, €5.5m in the hotel. It was reopened in 2018. It has quickly become a centre for tourism, visitors to Discovery Park, weddings, special events, meetings, workshops and

conferences. It is a great example on how social enterprise drives private enterprise in small towns and communities

Outstanding Achievements

Employment: In 2007 the social enterprise started off with 4 full time equivalents. The workforce has grown to 25 FTEs. At peak season in the summer employment rises to 62.

Visitors: 130,000 people visited the Discovery Park in 2018 which was 17% up on 2017. An increase is again expected for 2019.

Adventure Activities: There are currently 20 on- site activities in place from Ireland's longest zipwire, mountain biking, canoeing, walking, cycling, tree climbing and hatchet throwing.

Revenue: In 2019 income generated is set to reach €1.3 million mainly through trading.

Exchequer Returns: for 2018 amounted to €141, 007.

The progress of the company to date, its future potential, an additional 50 acres acquired under lease ensures that the socio-economic future of Castlecomer is very bright with social enterprise the main economic driver of economic development in the town.



Visit us at www.discoverypark.ie



Creating a Heart in the Parish of Kilmaley, Co. Clare

Kilmaley community is located 8 kilometres West of Ennis and is the largest rural parish in the Diocese of Kilaloe with a population of over 2000 people. The people of Kilmaley have been engaged in community development since the mid-1990s in particular when they set up Meitheal Kilmaley Development Association. Ever since then the developments have come in a consistent vein over the past twenty years. Kilmaley is made up of three districts, Kilmaley, Inch and Connolly with three churches, three schools and one GAA club.

The initial work of Meitheal was to research the needs of the parish. The second project was to organise a community employment scheme of 19 workers and a supervisor to enhance the overall visual aspect of the parish including crossroads, villages and buildings. This included building stone walls in different locations. Arising from the results of a research survey Meitheal focused on providing homes for the elderly and a day-care centre to accommodate people living in remote rural areas. Many of them were retired from farming and wanted to move into the centre where they would be safer and basic needs were covered. Some of them were living alone, without the capacity of properly catering for their basic needs such as heating, food, social interaction and other requirements. They started with 12 houses and a Day-Care centre which was opened in 2004 and in later years a further 12 houses, extension to the day care centre and an outreach service was added making it a first-class retirement complex with many specialist supports in place.

The Housing Complex and Day-Care centre “**Kilmaley Retirement Village**” (pictured below), now lies at the heart of the community. It is an outstanding example of voluntary effort in a rural community organised to best cater for the needs of people in the later stages of their lives. Another development was the provision of a Creche facility to cater for children of working families whose members are employed within and outside the parish and as far away as Shannon, Limerick and Galway. There are now 120 children being catered for with 14 staff again at the heart of the community. In general, the people have several reasons to come to the centre of the parish on a regular basis and meet each other as they go about their daily lives. The new public space and facilities brings the people of the parish together and it has become the village without a street. There are many benefits to be gained apart from direct use of any of the top-class facilities provided in terms of economic and social cohesion and community spirit. In the new heart created in Kilmaley community is the Church, school, shops, restaurant, Pub, GAA Club, Retirement Centre and Creche. A Group Water Scheme was developed in the early 1970s, a 56-unit housing scheme was built in the early 1990s and there is in excess of 20 acres of land zoned by Clare County Council for housing to accommodate future development. The lack of a public wastewater scheme is hindering further development, but the area has access to the Inagh/Kilmaley Group Water Scheme.

The overall complex is recognised by Oireachtas Ministers, Rural Development and the HSE. It is highly regarded as a best practice complex of choice facilities and is a tremendous achievement covering all stages of development from concept to completion. Local agencies including Council, Leader Partnership, HSE, Dormant Accounts, Rural Regeneration Fund and many others including extraordinary local voluntary fund raising helped to make it all happen.



Connolly village on the western side of the parish has been involved in the Tidy Towns Competition for the past ten years. It has won numerous awards for its beauty and development over the years. It continues to have a dedicated voluntary committee who meet regularly to plan for the future. In 2019 it received an increase of 12 marks for its enhancement which was above the national average. Connolly Development Company has been established to plan for future projects in the



village and has this year completed a beautiful Bog Walk just west of the village.

The GAA hurling club with blue and white colours is the dominant sport, recreation and active health centre in the parish. Hurlers and Camogie players have honoured and continue to honour the parish of Kilmaley by displaying their skills in Croke Park at Senior County level over a long number of years. The parish can boast of two All-Ireland Senior hurling medals, National League Medals a Munster Championship Medal and All Ireland Minor Hurling and U21 Medal, as well as 3 All Ireland Junior Camogie titles.

. In 2019 the club captured the U21 A hurling championship. Over the past ten years it has been very successful in all under- age championships. Club officials are quietly confident they can win a third senior hurling title within the next three years. Previous wins include 1985 and 1994. Many young players from West Clare which is football country join up with Kilmaley for the hurling. Miltown Malbay current senior football champions is west of Kilmaley and have some Kilmaley lads playing with them. In total the club has about 400 playing members from U6s to adults with camogie reflecting a similar picture.

Over past ten years €2.5m has been invested in club development. The club purchased 16 acres in the centre of the parish and have laid two full sized playing pitches, dressing rooms, and hurling wall. In partnership with Meitheal the complex also accommodates a children’s playground and astro-turf pitch which makes it a thriving centre of activity throughout the year.

The mix of developments provide welcome opportunities for employment. Many people from the parish are employed in Ennis, Shannon, Limerick and as far away as Galway. Local employment is mainly in farming, forestry and self-employment with an unusual number of small enterprises in the area. Supplementing these opportunities is employment created through local voluntary development. These include the Creche with 14 staff, retirement Village with 17 employees, a Community Employment Scheme with 19 participants plus a supervisor. There are 3 schools in the parish with a total of 20 teachers and support staff employed.



Meitheal is currently planning the development of a new community centre as they move to the next phase of development. A 1.5 acre site is currently being purchased beside the school to accommodate this new community centre which will comprise of a full-size basketball court and a mix of hot desks with fibre broadband, office space, meeting rooms and other facilities. A strong culture of Irish music, dance and drama pervades the area with many outstanding musicians among the youth which need to be supported and encouraged. The youth club has been re-established and is thriving thanks to the voluntary commitment of dedicated volunteers.

Connolly, Kilmaley and Inch are the three separate villages making up the largest parish of Kilmaley in the County. It is the voluntary spirit of the people from all three villages that make Kilmaley a lovely place to live.



**Kilmaley
Retirement
Village**





Excerpts from Cllr. Tom McNamara's Speech Opening Phase Two of Kilmaley Project

Kilmaley today, from humble beginnings, and due to the enormous voluntary efforts of the local community can hold its head high among other great parishes throughout the country.

It's a journey that started more than 20 years ago with the establishment of “Meitheal” Kilmaley Development Association and one that the wider community continues to make together to this day.

With the formation of “Meitheal” as the umbrella development organisation in the Parish, a group of local people brought their collective talents and life experiences to the table to help generate creative ideas and suggestions which help to improve the health and wellbeing of our parishioners.

This group of people are working in a voluntary capacity, often unnoticed, giving of their time and energy in the service of others and enriching our community.

To survive as a community into the future, we were tasked with adopting an innovative and proactive approach to community development.



This sub-committee worked tirelessly and in 2004 the first phase of the housing development which consisted of 12 houses, the Day Centre and Health Centre was completed at a cost of €1.8M, €1.55M of which was provided by Clare County Council through the Department of the Environment, €175K was received from the HSE and the remaining €90K euro was raised locally.

An extension to the Day Centre was completed in 2010 at a cost of €320K. €100K of this was allocated to KVHA through the Dormant Accounts Fund, a

further €125K was raised as a loan which we have now paid back and €95K was raised through a fund-raising drive here in Kilmaley.

“It is a story that all of us believe is only half written”.

To meet a growing demand for these services 12 additional houses were built in 2014 at a cost of € 2.26M.

Again, Clare County Council through the Department of the Environment funded €2.2M of the overall development cost with the remaining €60K raised locally.

Our future plans look to consolidate the progress made to date and develop new projects that meet the demands and needs of our citizens in the years to come.

Our community-led and innovative approach to planning our shared future has not failed us to date and we are confident it will stand to us for many years to come.

It is a story that all of us believe is only half written with the best chapters in this Parish's history yet to come.

Together, we are steadfast in our commitment to building a vibrant, caring, happy and healthy community with 21st century facilities and services for all of the people of Kilmaley - from the cradle to the grave.

If you would like any more information on any of the articles in this Newsletter, or if you would like to submit an article of your own or comment in any way on anything you have read here, please feel free to E-mail us at: theccjoffice@gmail.com

You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter and check out our Website: Links Below.

You can call or write to us at The CCJ Office, Dunhill Rural Enterprise Park, Dunhill Ecopark, Dunhill, Co. Waterford. Tel: 051 396 934 Monday to Friday 10.00 AM to 1.00 PM





Waterford Institute of Technology Champions Social Enterprise

The Department of Education at Waterford Institute of Technology recently hosted a seminar *Exploring the Role of Higher Education in Supporting the Emerging Social Enterprise Sector* in Dunhill Multi-Education Centre. The seminar, supported by the National Forum for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, highlighted the growing importance of the social enterprise sector and identified practical ways in which Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) could support its development.

Photo (L-R): John Evoy, Social Innovation Fund; Tammy Darcy, Shona Project; Dr Richard Hayes, Vice-President of Strategy, WIT; Richard Gavin, Department of Rural and Community Development; : Dr Mary Fenton, WIT; Laura Dennehy, Enactus Ireland; Dr Judith Breen, WIT; Dr Senan Cooke, Dunhill Multi-Education Centre; Joan Mangan, WIT.



Five speakers addressed the conference, including: Dr Senan Cooke, Author of **The Enterprising Community**; Tammy Darcy, Founder **Shona Project**; Laura Dennehy, Head of

Development, **Enactus Ireland**; John Evoy, Social Enterprise Development Manager, **Social Innovation Fund** and Richard Gavin, **Department of Rural and Community Development, (DRCD)**. These thought-leaders challenged HEIs to support the development of a world-class social enterprise ecosystem by: **(i)** formally acknowledging social enterprise in institutional strategy and priorities; **(ii)** creating a community of practice to develop links between practitioners and academics; **(iii)** including social enterprise in curricula; **(iv)** offering incubation space and accelerator programmes to social enterprises; **(v)** linking social enterprises to Government and EU agencies, philanthropists and HEI alumni. A key message of the seminar was the need for HEIs to conduct rigorous research to measure the impact of social enterprises, which would lead to greater recognition of the sector.

Speaking after the seminar, Dr Mary Fenton, Head of Department of Education, WIT said *“It is a really exciting time for the social enterprise sector, which is on the cusp of real growth and development. Today was a first step in developing a community of practice, where over 50 practitioners and academics*

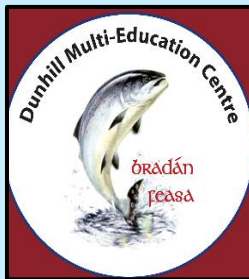


came together to discuss the potential for both to work together. There was a real energy in the room and the challenge now is for HEIs to meet the needs and expectations of the sector in practical and meaningful ways.” She continued “I am confident that WIT and other HEIs will play a vital role in building the capacity of those working within the sector and in raising awareness amongst students of ways in which they could contribute to the sector as volunteers, employees or researchers.

WIT offers a Level 7 Certificate in Social Enterprise Management commencing in January 2020. This part-time programme enables people working in the social enterprise and community and voluntary sectors to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies as social enterprise managers. For further details, please see www.wit.ie For more information, please contact Dr Mary Fenton mfenton@wit.ie / 087-202 9070.



Dunhill Multi-Education Centre where the Conference was held (L) and pictured below some of the speakers on the day.



Dr.Senan Cooke



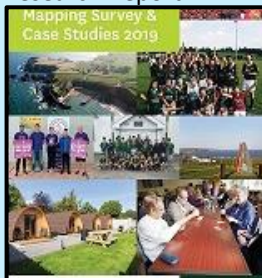
Richard Gavin



John Evoy



Research Report



Laura Dennehy



Tammy Darcy





Irish Local Development Network Conference in Sligo

Irish Local Development Network CLG, (ILDN), is the representative body for the country’s 49 Local Development Companies who deliver Tus, Local Employment Service, RDP LEADER, Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Jobs Clubs, Rural Recreation Programme, The Walks Scheme, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and social enterprise programmes across rural and urban Ireland. These are the core programmes of ILDN members, but they also deliver a range of other initiatives at national and European level that enhance the development of their communities through enterprise, training, activation, educational, health and community supports.

Local Development Companies, (LDC’s), operate in urban, rural and island communities of all population profiles and densities across the entire country.

Currently ILDN members, (CEO Joe Saunders pictured below), oversee €330 Million worth of economic activity each year supporting labour market access measures, rural development, social inclusion, community development and enterprise activity. The network is the largest non-governmental provider of local development supports and services in the state.

Recently over 200 people gathered for the annual **National Social Enterprise Forum and Expo** in Sligo where the event was hosted by Sligo LEADER. The event was held in Riverstown at the Sligo Folk Park, (pictured below). the Folk Park itself is a Social Enterprise that celebrates Irish rural life and heritage and has been in operation for 30 years.



The Expo was designed to help groups get non for-profit social enterprises off the ground by giving advice and best practice tips. Workshops and breakout sessions were also a feature of this year’s Social Enterprise Expo which also saw speakers like P.J. Rigney, the founder of the Shed Distillery in Drumshambo, Co. Leitrim, providing inspiration and insight. The Shed has 22 full time employees and began life in the Food Hub in Drumshambo. A good number of those employed here now were previously long term unemployed so it has proved a huge success.

Andrew Forde, Department of Rural Affairs and Development also spoke at the Expo about the future direction of social enterprises in Ireland. Mr. Forde is responsible for implementing the Action Plan for Rural Development.

The CEO of Sligo LEADER, Mr. Chris Gonley, (pictured right), said, in his opening remarks, *“Social Enterprises provide work and purpose for many people who might be lonely and unemployed. They can help to glue communities together”*.





RUBIZMO Conference and Business Innovation Awards



What is RUBIZMO? Irish Rural Link are one of 16 partners across 11 EU countries – Replicable Business Models for Modern Rural Economies, (RUBIZMO). This Horizon 2020 funded, which began in May 2018, will run for three years and aims to identify the vital ingredients for developing entrepreneurship and successful business models across the sectors of food and

agriculture, bio-based value chains and ecosystem services and in turn generate jobs and growth in rural areas. To achieve this, RUBIZMO will analyse business models from hundreds of previously funded and private enterprise initiatives. By examining the reasons for their success – or failure – in the context of their collaboration and support networks, the project will discover and share the key ingredients to recreate innovative business ideas all over Europe.

The RUBIZMO success factors will be shared with a wide number of rural actors through a set of practical tools supporting collaboration, entrepreneurship and business development in rural communities. In addition, active coaching and peer to peer training will be provided to rural entrepreneurs and networks to instigate sustainable business transformation.

Dunhill Ecopark – Business Case: Dunhill Ecopark is one of the Irish business cases put forward as a successful business case and model that has the ingredients that could be replicated in other parts of Europe. The success of Dunhill Ecopark as an incubating unit to allow rural entrepreneurs to start-up business and have the necessary facilities available to them to grow their business and create jobs in the local area with little or no impact on the environment. The surrounding area of Waterford was also selected as a ‘Hotspot’ for social enterprises. It is a great example of how community comes together with solutions to solve a problem in the local area and building the community, creating jobs and protecting the local environment and how social enterprise is a key contributor to rural development.

The RUBIZMO Conference: On the 24th October 2019, a Mid-Term conference of the RUBIZMO project, organised by Greenvote Europe, took place at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels, under the sponsorship of Sofia Bjornsson, (pictured right), a member of the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment. Over 100 European stakeholders, from the policy makers to representatives of trade associations and cooperatives attended the conference.



Some of the presentations at the conference included the current and future policy framework, including the upcoming revision of the Common Agricultural Policy, (CAP), but also the coordination work performed by the ENRD, (European Network for Rural Development), to link European and national stakeholders. This was followed by an analysis of key ingredients to foster the development of supportive business environments for rural business success. This session was also the opportunity to showcase three inspiring examples of local rural development strategies, which included Andrew Forde, from the Department of Rural and Community Development on the Government’s new Social Enterprise Policy. The conference also highlighted the work to date of the RUBIZMO Project, (Louise Lennon, RUBIZMO Project Manager, pictured left), including a look at some of the tools that will be developed as part of the project as well as the work of a sister project, **LIVERUR. (Living Lab Research Concept in Rural Areas).**





An Innovative Business Awards competition took place as part of the conference. This was open to the public to vote for the most inspiring business case in each of the three categories; food, bio-based value chain and ecosystem services. Eighteen business cases in total were put forward – six in each category. Dunhill Ecopark was the only Irish Business case nominated for an Award Ecopark and the winner of the category, Comana Crafts Village, Romania, with only a few votes between them.



Dunhill Ecopark the only Irish Business Case nominated for an award (pictured left), and below, Comana Crafts Village, Romania, winner in the category.



<http://rubizmo.eu/news/views/3c7e7e32-7ef3-4497-8f91-a4a76f77f266>

More information about RUBIZMO is available on <http://rubizmo.eu/> and you can follow the project on Twitter @Rubizmo

Irish Contact: Louise Lennon Irish Rural Link: louise@irishrurallink.ie



Sr. Magdalen Fogarty Honoured Founding Member of Clann Credo Recognised

The title of **Founding President of Clann Credo Community Loan Finance** was bestowed on Sr. Magdalen Fogarty at a Mayoral reception in **The Tholsel, Kilkenny Town Hall** on Friday September 27th. Sr. Magdalen is a member of the Presentation Sisters and lives in Kilkenny City.

Presenting her with the parchment acknowledging her immense

contribution to the development of social finance for community development in Ireland, Colin McCrea, Chairperson of Clann Credo, said, *“without the vision and determination of Sr. Magdalen, social finance simply would not have become the success it is today. Her determination over all these years ensured that Clann Credo established a very strong basis in supporting community development”*. Indeed, we in CCJ and DFBA would like to add our congratulations to Sr. Magdalen and recognise her impact on social enterprise. Clann Credo was the first group to offer finance to Dunhill, Fenor, Boatstown, Annestown, (DFBA) when it was set up.

In 1996, Sr. Magdalen established Clann Credo with funding provided by the congregation. Clann Credo is now Ireland’s largest social finance provider, having invested more than €125M in over 1000 projects countrywide. By supporting community-based organisations that do not have ready access to mainstream bank lending, Clann Credo enables communities to realise their ambitions.

As Sr. Margarita Ryan reflected, *“the Presentation congregation, from its very inception, has been blessed with women of vision and courage who, like Nano Nagle, stood out from the crowd because of their ability to think outside the box in their endeavours to find responses that would promote the greater good of society. Sr. Magdalen is one of those women of vision who certainly has stood out in terms of thinking outside the box and focusing on the greater good”*.

Sr. Magdalen’s, (pictured right), work was recognised as early as 2010 when she was invited to address the **United Nations Civil Society Forum in New York**. Clann Credo was commended and selected from 190 organisations assessed from 62 countries worldwide. In 2017 the OECD recommended that the Clann Credo model be replicated in other countries.

Speaking at the event to confer Sr. Magdalen with the title of Founding President, Paul O’Sullivan, CEO of Clann Credo said that Sr. Magdalen’s initiative in establishing Clann Credo has proved invaluable to hundreds of community-based organisations in every county in Ireland. *“Sr. Magdalen, and her congregation, the Presentation Sisters, had a vision to promote inclusive prosperity and develop social capital to benefit the entire community, whether this was to tackle issues of disadvantage, unemployment, environmental decay or inequality. Her work in developing Clann Credo, securing investment from over 20 other religious charities, in time led to the subsequent development of the Social Finance Foundation, supported by retail banks. This has enabled Clann Credo to expand its work over the past decade”*.



The benefits of the social finance Clann Credo provides are enjoyed in every county in Ireland, and the circle of gratitude is so wide that many people inside it don’t even know Sr. Magdalen is at the heart of it.

Daily we challenge ourselves with a question at the heart of Sr. Magdalen’s original quest to create a new model of finance: *“How do you help communities build resilience”*?

Sr. Magdalen has also been nominated for the Charity Impact Award as Trustee of the Year and all of us at CCJ and DFBA want to wish her the very best of luck when the winners are announced later this month. Although she has retired from the Clann Credo board she will continue to be the heart of it.

Clann Credo Information: www.clanncredo.ie





FOLM (From Outdoors to Labour Market)

By Aoibhín Ryan



FOLM is a new personal and social development project currently running in Ireland where the outdoors is the key element in helping young people realise their full potential. The project is aimed at young people between 18 to 29 years of age who are currently not in full time employment, education or training. The project is divided into three phases.

Phase 1: Recruitment and Engagement. **Phase 2:** Outdoor Learning. **Phase 3:** Coaching and Mentoring

I am an OL (Outdoor Learning) Trainer who helps facilitate phase two of this project. The outdoors is the catalyst, which creates the magic of this project. It is a seven-day expedition in the Irish mountains, which captures the heart of the young people by cooking, sleeping and hiking in the wilderness. The first pilots were set in the Kockmealdown Mountains, Co. Tipperary. This scenic seven-day journey facilitates a space for the young people to take a break from technology and return to the basics.

‘Where will we camp tonight? ... What will I cook for dinner?’ – Are very common questions I am asked while hiking each day. Life in the mountains lends itself to help you live in the moment. Locking eyes with a deer was the highlight for one participant. While another was accepting the challenge of hiking up that hill and afterwards feeling so proud having completed it. So why not take a long hike to think about where you are going with your life?

I know from my own experience it is the rhythm of your feet hitting the ground, travelling from one place to another, the walking helps to focus the mind to question on what it is I want to do after this. There are no distractions apart from the beauty of nature, which creates a deeper connection to the landscape as you travel through it.

As Nan Shepard (1977) says, *‘Eye and foot acquire in rough walking a co-ordination that makes one distinctly aware of where the next step is to fall, even while watching sky and land.’* In this way, the young people while out hiking are planning their next step in life. We focus their minds through daily themes which we explore through activities and discussions based on choice theory (Dr. William Glasser, 1998). That by taking part in the discussions we are simply making the participants aware of the possible tools they can use in future, for example, by meeting their six needs (survival, freedom, self-worth, fun, love and belonging) in an effective way.



The week starts with three OL trainers leading the group, demonstrating how to use the equipment, and modelling the different roles. As the week progresses the role of navigator, timekeeper, campsite manager, environmentalist, to name but a few, are entrusted to the participants to ensure they take responsibility for their role in their expedition. We strive to encourage experiential and strengths-based learning where strong skill sets are recognised and brought to the fore throughout the OL week. The participant takes note of their transferrable skills that they learn in the outdoors and are adapted to their everyday life back home.

As we navigate through the mountains, when the end is near there is an audible feeling of not wanting the experience to end. However, we will follow the words of VT (Venture Trust) as this project is modelled on the



expertise of VT and the University of Edinburgh, *‘start with the end in mind’*. We know all things must end but with the closing of one door, comes the opening of another. Here is where we want to capture and harness all the positivity, hardship and joy, which is endured on the mountain and for the young people to cherish it and bring it back home. Phase three, the coaching phase, is of the utmost importance. The coach is the important link in this chain as they bring the individual and help them reintegrate into society, from the outdoors and lead them to the labour market. The OL trainers will help the participant write up an individual action plan for their future, based on the discussions they have throughout the week. This is passed to the coach and for the next six weeks, the coach will help them, through group sessions and one to ones, where they may apply for jobs, write up their CV, and visit educational institutions depending on the needs of the individual. Following on from this there will be a further 6 months of mentoring where the coach will be checking up on their progress and making sure they are working towards the goals they set themselves in their action plans.



Why do I believe in this project? Simply because of the changes I have seen in the participants from the beginning, from no eye contact and little conversation to them asking questions, laughing and their growth in self-confidence. But do not just take my word for it, here are what some of the participants said after the programme, *‘best week of my life’*, *‘I’m more focused on what I want and how to get it’*, *‘sense of achievement is unreal. Especially when you get to the top of the mountain.’*

The rucksacks, rain jackets, rain trousers, tents and food are provided so there is no need to worry about having to buy the gear. The FOLM Project is an EEA (European Economic Area) funded project run by LIT (Limerick Institute of Technology). The best part about this programme is that it is FREE. The only thing we need is you and your enthusiasm to be part of this fantastic project.



LIT are currently recruiting nationwide across Ireland in rural towns and cities to try get over 300 young people through the programme in the next year. The expeditions will be running from March 2020 right through to April 2021. If you know anyone who would be eligible for this programme or you simply want to learn more about this project, we would love to hear from you.



We are also recruiting for OL Trainers so if you have experience leading groups, current first aid certificate, and a Mountain Leader qualification you can contact us below

Please ring Marie on 0504 28476.

E-Mail us at folm@lit.ie

Checkout our website www.folmweb.com

Follow us on Facebook at RDIatLIT



Dunhill Ecopark Food Producers Win Awards

With over 2500 products entered in recent years, the **Blas na hEireann Irish Food Awards** is the biggest competition for food quality in Ireland. Now in its twelfth year and with over 100 food and drink categories the competition, in recognising the finest in Irish food, awards Gold, Silver and Bronze awards as well as other key awards to the successful entrant. There are also special awards for Supreme Champion and Best Artisan Producer.

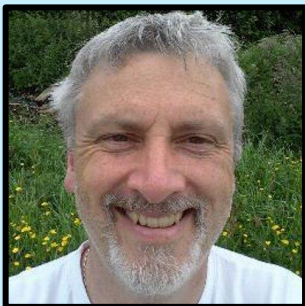
The Blas na hEireann awards are a blind tasting competition and the criteria on which the product is judged, as well as the judging system itself, was developed with the **Department of Food and Science at UCC**. In 2019 three food producers based at the Dunhill Eco Park were recognised and awarded for the quality of their produce.

The Pure Food Company, Irish Gourmet Butter and The Little Thai Kitchen all garnered plaudits for the excellence of their product. The quality and production of these products is a credit to their producers and show Dunhill, and them, at their best.

Irish Gourmet Butter have been operating out of Dunhill since 2017. They have a history of butter making as Mary Sharpe’s grandmother was all Ireland Butter making champion in 1936/37. Mary co-founded Irish Gourmet Butter with her husband Billy, (pictured opposite). This year they were awarded a Gold for their Lightly Salted Butter and a Bronze for their Taste of Morocco. They also won for Best in County.



The Little Thai kitchen began life as Tastefully Yours until it was purchased by Stan Kiely in 2016. They were known for their high-quality chutneys, relishes, sauces and pickles since their beginnings in 2010. Their curry sauces proved so popular it was decided they needed a branding of their own and so Little Thai Kitchen was formed. This year they took the Silver award for their Massaman Curry Sauce. All their ingredients are sourced from Central and Southern Thailand and are 100% natural. Little Thai Kitchen products are available in over forty shops. Michael O Cadhla, (Left) is Business



Development Manager at Kielys which operates Little Thai Kitchen.

The Pure Food Company was set up in 2014 by Cian Hawes. Cian, (pictured right), is a qualified horticulturist and a keen forager. He likes to go in search of local and underutilised natural and wild species of plants, seaweeds and mushrooms. Pure Food have a wide range of pickles, relishes and preserves and their Pesto Sauce has been recognised several times over the past few years. This year Cian was awarded a Bronze award for his Spinach and Basil Pesto. In 2015 he won a Gold for his Sundried Tomato and Chilli Pesto as well as a Gold for his Spinach and Basil pesto in 2016. Cian also won Best in Market for the fifth year in a row.



For More Information on the Food Producers, Just Click the Links Below

[Little Thai Kitchen](#)
[Irish Gourmet Butter](#)
[Pure Food Company](#)





Anne Valley Nature and Wildlife Walk

Dunhill Tourism Walking Trail scooped the 2019 Mayor of Waterford City & County Council award at the 15th Annual Waterford PPN Community & Voluntary Awards on Thursday November 21st at a gala awards ceremony in the Park Hotel Dungarvan. Dunhill Tourism Walking Trail will now represent Waterford at the **2020 Cooperation Ireland Pride of Place Awards**, a national competition. This prestigious award is presented to the group which demonstrates excellence in Community Participation and Involvement. The Judges said; *“This group is a clear demonstration of an active community – participation and cooperation. A high-quality project showcasing conservative and nocturnal habitat, biodiversity and heritage. The works undertaken demonstrates understanding of the need for access for people of all abilities”*. A packed house of over 240 people attended the ceremony which included Cllr. John Pratt, Mayor of Waterford City & County Council, elected representatives, sponsors, adjudicators, Secretariat members of Waterford PPN and voluntary group representatives from all over Waterford.

The following were winners on the night.

1. **Arts & Culture:** Waterford City Massed Band – Sponsored by BHP Insurance
2. **Community & Civic Pride:** Mental Health and Suicide Prevention – Sponsored by Local Link Waterford.
3. **Environment:** Tallow Landscaping Tidy Towns & Community Council – Sponsored by Waterford Local Enterprise Office.
4. **Community/Social Enterprise:** Dunhill Tourism Walking Trail – Sponsored by Waterford Local Enterprise office.
5. **Health & Active Community:** Dungarvan Boxing Club – Sponsored by CareChoice Social Inclusion – Surprise Surprise Dungarvan – Sponsored by Expressway.
- 6.

The winner of the Billy McCarthy individual award sponsored by WLR went to Ann Cheasty, (pictured below), from Tramore. The Irish Guide Dogs were the nominated charity of the evening. Big thanks also to Dungarvan Credit Union Sponsors of the awards brochure. More details and photographs of the awards ceremony to follow in the next issue or see Waterford PPN Facebook page.

For More Information on Irish Trails; Just Click Below
www.irishtrails.ie



**Award Winner
 Anne Cheasty and
 Dunhill Castle
 Seen from The
 Anne Valley Walk**





Carmichael Social Enterprise and Galway's Living Bog

Carmichael: Helping to Grow Social Enterprise

The first Irish government social enterprise policy was launched in July 2019. At the launch, Minister Michael Ring said that it would enable social enterprises **“to grow in scale, support jobs and make a positive impact on individuals and communities”**. Carmichael, which itself is a social enterprise, has been actively involved in providing social enterprise supports for many years.



As far back as 2011, Carmichael delivered training on corporate governance and business development in the **“new green economy”**. In 2014, we ran training for boards of community centres in the greater Dublin area. Many of these centres were starting to develop income generation through the provision of room rental and event management and needed help to develop sound business plans. In 2015, we ran extensive training programmes in the Munster region on Social Enterprise for Managers and Directors. Participating groups included community care initiatives, community theatres and local tourism. We also ran training and a pilot mentoring programme for trustees and managers of Community Services Programmes (CSP). This gave us

valuable insights into the challenges faced by these organisations. Many of them struggled to maintain and grow their social enterprise while at the same time managing their governance, HR, Finance and planning. In 2016, on behalf of Pobal, Carmichael delivered **“Growing Your Social Enterprise”**, consisting of a two-day course delivered in various locations around the country. The aim of the course was to support organisations funded by the Community Services Programme to grow and develop their social enterprise. The content focused on helping organisations with their service/product, increasing their traded income and helping with market research, strategy development and financial management. Organisations included community centres, heritage groups, community health care, sport and recreation and local radio.

In 2017, we commenced a Pobal funded business coaching programme for Community Services Programmes. Initially this was piloted in Limerick, Clare and Galway. Following positive feedback, it was rolled out across the country. We worked with organisations to develop their financial sustainability and income generation. Topics ranged from business planning to marketing and sales. The work involved meetings with boards and managers, action planning, training on customer service and the creation of publicity materials.

We have now delivered business supports and coaching to well over 50 social enterprises. These initiatives are spread right across the country, including offshore islands. We help them to draw up their own sustainability action plans. A significant amount of work revolves around improving communications, e.g. improving roadside signage for a heritage centre to attract more visitors; a new logo for a health and leisure centre; direct marketing to promote tourism on an offshore island. Plans to increase trading income include reconfiguring office and meeting room space in a community centre; development of fitness classes in a community gym and developing outdoor activities such as kayaking and coastal walking for a community-based holiday cottage initiative on an offshore island.

Case Study: Galway's Living Bog

Working with the local community in Mountbellew, this project is developing Carrownagappul bog, Mountbellew, Co. Galway; one of the largest extant areas of uncut high bog surface in east Galway. There is



also an interactive display at the Galway Teleworks building. This initiative aims to bring more visitors to the area to celebrate Galway's Living Bog. Carmichael's work entailed helping to develop communications, including the construction of a new website.



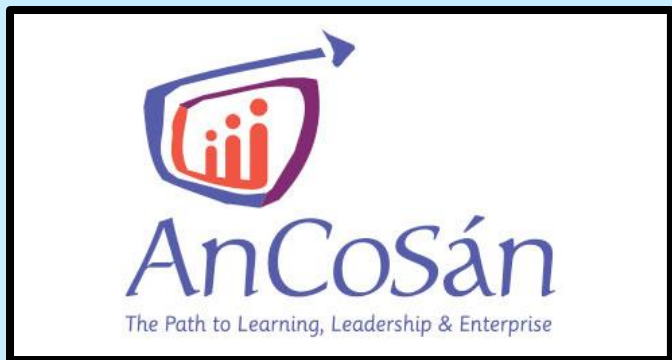
Currently Carmichael is developing a Social Enterprise eLearning Programme which will provide a total of 26 hours of online content. This draws on our extensive experience of working with social enterprises to date. Topics include: Human Resources; Marketing and Sales; Business and Organisation Development; Financial Management and Corporate Governance. This programme will be accessible online at the end of 2019.

For full details of Carmichael's training and consultancy, including eLearning, see:
www.carmichaelireland.ie/what-we-do/training-consultancy/



*Communities Creating Jobs
CLG would like to wish all
our readers, contributors and
supporters a very Happy
Christmas and a Peaceful and
Healthy New Year*





New CEO for An Cosán

An Cosán, the leader in empowerment through education, is pleased to announce that Heydi Foster-Breslin, (pictured right), has taken up as the new Chief Executive Officer. Heydi brings to An Cosán significant senior

leadership experience across human rights advocacy, social justice campaigning, education and the management of social services.

Heydi's appointment marks the opening of a new chapter for An Cosán as it seeks to expand the reach and impact of its services nationwide 20 years after opening its doors in Jobstown in 1999. An Cosán provides people of all ages with pathways to learning, leadership and enterprise, offering a variety of programmes in early years education and care, parenting, community, further and higher education.



Heydi Foster-Breslin said: *"I'm honoured and excited to lead An Cosán into the next stage in its further development. It is a hugely respected organisation with a tremendous team and a great track record of making a difference for individuals and communities in providing educational opportunities. Like everyone in An Cosán, I believe passionately in the transformative potential of education, particularly in breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting social inclusion. There are people and communities across Ireland who need the supports and services An Cosán is so good at providing. We can evidence the difference our programmes are making, and I would like to grow our resources, capability and partnerships to support more and more of those who can benefit."*



Heydi Foster-Breslin succeeds Liz Waters, (pictured left), as CEO. Liz retires from An Cosán at the end of 2019. In her 24 years at An Cosan, Liz has blazed a trail in educational innovation and helped the organisation scale up from a local to a national organisation.

Liz Waters said: *"This is an exciting time for An Cosán as we bring our local experience and capacities to a much wider constituency across the country. I am confident that Heydi is the leader An Cosán needs to grow this development. Her experience will prove invaluable and will drive the organisation forward with energy and purpose."*

Anna Durkan said: *"On behalf of the board and myself I am delighted to welcome Heydi to An Cosán as incoming CEO. Her experience and dedication to education and social justice will ensure the continued success of An Cosán. On meeting Heydi the first thing that struck me was her warmth and compassion and I look forward to working with and supporting her when she steps into the new role."*

It has been an honour and a privilege to work with Liz, her impact and contribution to An Cosán and community education are immeasurable, and we are most grateful to have had the opportunity. The Board and I wish her all the very best in her retirement and the next exciting phase for her."

About Heydi Foster-Breslin

Heydi Foster-Breslin is a Commissioner with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. Most recently she was the Chief Executive Officer of Mísean Cara, a development agency with an annual budget of €16



million that supports missionary development work in over 50 of the poorest countries around the world. Prior to this Heydi was the CEO at Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service. Originally from Guatemala, Heydi has extensive global experience advocating for human rights and providing social and educational services to minority groups including children, women, refugees and IDPs, members of the Traveller community in Ireland, Latino and African American communities, Sinti and Roma. She co-founded a school to address educational disadvantage among refugees, and Latino and African American children in inner city Boston, USA. She has a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Education is the Key to Eradicating Poverty and Social Injustice

(An Cosán Philosophy)

About An Cosán

An Cosán was founded by Dr Ann Louise Gilligan and Dr Katherine Zappone TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, in 1986. It is a life-long learning initiative offering adult community education nationally and early years education and care locally and regionally to people on low incomes who could not otherwise avail of educational opportunities. An Cosán offers a supportive and holistic environment, rooted in the philosophy that *'Education is the key to eradicating poverty and social injustice'*.

Coppercoast Trad Fest April 2020

AMADEUS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
**COPPERCOAST
TRAD
FEST**
Dunhill 17TH - 19TH 2020
CONCERTS · SESSIONS · WORKSHOPS
FRIDAY 17TH APRIL
Zoe Conway and John McIntyre
Tree Sound Folk
SATURDAY 18TH APRIL
Altan
3 On The Bund
SATURDAY AFTERNOON
Trad Competitions u18, u15, u12 in Kill
Other Local Groups, Workshops & Weekend Sessions
Instrumental/Singing/Special Needs and an Adult Ensemble
kindly sponsored by
DAWN MEATS
Cornhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

Two of the headline acts at the Coppercoast Trad Fest next April. Altan, pictured above, and Zoe Conway and John McIntyre





Vantastic Wheelchair Accessible Car Rental

Scheme so successful it expands its fleet of specialised cars



Minister for Rural & Community Development Michael Ring, TD joined the team at Vantastic at the inaugural National Social Enterprise Conference 2019 to launch a pioneering report on the value for money generated by the organisation’s car rental scheme. Using the most up to date research methods, the independently verified report shows that for every €1 invested, an extra €2.40 is created in return.

Minister Ring congratulated the Vantastic team on their success: *“Organisations like Vantastic are a vital part of our community and I think we often don’t realise how valuable their place is. This report is groundbreaking in that it puts a real financial value on the car rental scheme and should be seen as an example in the sector. I’m delighted to be able to support Vantastic in their efforts through funding provided by my Department through the Dormant Accounts Fund and the Community Services Programme (CSP). I’d like to wish members, their friends and families many happy hours of motoring in these new vehicles and indeed the whole fleet”.*

Vantastic was established as a registered charity and social enterprise in June 2000. Vantastic has a social mission to provide accessible transportation services for people with permanent or temporary mobility difficulties, physical and sensory disabilities, and works with individuals with wheelchairs, older people with mobility impairments, service providers and key statutory agencies. As a social enterprise, we exist for a social good and to make a difference in communities. The Vantastic Wheelchair Accessible Car Rental Service (or Vantastic Rental) is based on a membership model where clients can hire from a shared pool of rental cars owned and maintained by Vantastic. This is a cost-effective alternative to members owning their own car, particularly when that car is used infrequently. Like all of Vantastic’s fully accessible transport services, the Rental Service operates to provide our members with the means to ensure an independent lifestyle, a prerequisite to enabling them to participate in normal activities of daily living, i.e. work, education, health, leisure and social events.





The existence of our service is, however, not a validation of its worthiness requirement or the difference it makes. To better understand the difference this service makes we needed to be able to measure its impact on the service users. To achieve this, Vantastic undertook an in-dept Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of our Rental Service.

With inspiration from traditional economic approaches, such as Return on Investment and Cost-Benefit analysis, SROI is a modern method to quantify and evaluate the impact generated by Vantastic for our target groups and communities. Vantastic used SROI to evaluate our Rental Service because it is a principle-based approach for measuring extra financial value and allows us to independently assess our impact on stakeholders, identify ways to improve performance and enhance the performance of our investment into the Rental Service. Vantastic put together a special Project Advisory Group for this report, including Professors Mary Lee Rhodes and Sheila Cannon from Trinity College's Centre for Social Innovation. Both are experienced researchers in the wider non-profit sector. This SROI was independently assured to verify the results and ensure the analysis shows a good understanding of, and is consistent with, the seven principles of Social Return on Investment.

Professor Sheila Cannon of Trinity College's Centre for Social Innovation, who worked on the research says: ***“The value of this report goes beyond Vantastic and its stakeholders. Organisations like these are chronically undervalued, partly because of the difficulty in measuring their impact. This SROI evaluation responds to that gap by providing a detailed analysis of how to rigorously identify, measure, quantify and document the social value of non-profit activity”.***

Vantastic's car rental scheme aims to offer wheelchair users and other people with mobility problems the opportunity to ensure an independent lifestyle. Over the four years of the scheme to date, it's become a valuable part of its members' lives.

- 15 different members will use each rental car in a single year
- Members rent a car on average 4 times a year
- 300 people around the country are signed up as members

The positive benefits for the members of the car rental scheme also include:

- 74% reported a reduction in social exclusion
- 55% felt less stress and anxiety
- 42% enjoyed an improved sense of independence.

The SROI analysis that we completed found that Vantastic Rental generates a social value beyond its financial investment. For every €1 invested into the service, a social value of €2.40, within a margin of €2.09 to €2.60, is generated for our stakeholders.

Additionally, the SROI analysis highlighted three key recommendations. These recommendations are a result of extensive surveys, both phone and written, with various stakeholders of Vantastic's Rental Service. Apart from the direct service users themselves, these surveys included families and friends, staff, the Board, and five organisations who have a role in influencing policy and practice related to disability services and wheelchair accessible transportation in Ireland. The recommendations were:

Improving the business model and strategically developing the Rental Service

- To ensure stakeholders understand the service
- To expand Vantastic Rental depots and car fleet
- To offer a wider range of rental options
- To advocate for mobility allowances to be used to reduce rental costs

Partnership with service providers and commercial companies

- To work with disability and health services
- To increase promotion and awareness of the Rental Service
- To partner with private companies and commercial car rental companies



Improving internal processes and systems

- To continue to measure outcomes for the Rental Service and its members
- To review the online booking system for the Rental Service
- To provide members with regular updates and information



Vantastic Board Member Dermot Farrelly said it was an appropriate day to announce an expansion of the scheme: *“I’m delighted to confirm four more vehicles are being added to our rental fleet, thanks to a number of sources, including the Dormant Accounts Fund. We’re thrilled that our members have found it works for them and their loved ones too”*.

Chairperson of Vantastic, and user of the scheme Niamh Stanford says *“These days I use it when my kids are on holidays, I can take them away for the weekend, it means that if my partner is in work I can still be totally independent and it shows my kids a positive as well, because they see that Mammy can do it”!*

For us all in Vantastic the SROI Report will not be allowed to sit on the shelf, it is already an integral part of our Rental Service DNA. This process confirmed to the Vantastic Board that it can be committed to being impact focussed while returning a positive return on investment. Within Vantastic, social impact is the beginning and the end of what we do; the reason we exist. We believe that understanding our impact, measuring it rigorously and then sharing what we have found is an indivisible part of the impact itself. If we can also inspire others to create change – or use any of the learnings we might have gained in supporting the broader social enterprise sector – we stand available.

To view the full report please go to our website; www.vantastic.ie

If you would like any more information on any of the articles in this Newsletter, or if you would like to submit an article of your own or comment in any way on anything you have read here, please feel free to E-mail us at: theccjoffice@gmail.com

You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter and check out our Website: Links Below.

You can call or write to us at The CCJ Office, Dunhill Rural Enterprise Park, Dunhill Ecopark, Dunhill, Co. Waterford. Tel: 051 396 934 Monday to Friday 10.00 AM to 1.00 PM

