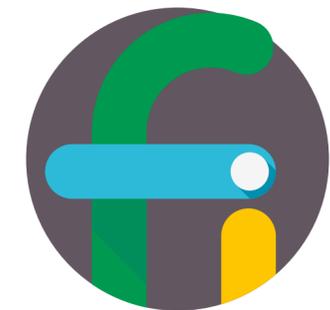


Appreciative Inquiry Report

Arranmore Island Donegal



Future Innovators
Learn. Design. Empower.

Project Overview:

The Future Innovators Project is a PEACE IV funded project, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body and delivered by Co-operation Ireland in partnership with Belfast Interface Project, Donegal Youth Service, Animorph Co-operative and the University of Essex. Future Innovators promotes community-led social innovation and social enterprise; it builds the capacity of local communities to apply innovative thinking to social problems and develop creative solutions that foster a greater sense of community cohesion, and where possible, sustain these solutions through the adoption of a social enterprise model.

Target Areas:

- Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland (Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Monaghan, Cavan, Louth)
- Northern Ireland – Urban Village Areas:
- Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan (North Belfast)
- Colin (West Belfast)
- Eastside (East Belfast)
- Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets areas (South Belfast)
- Bishop Street, Bogside and Fountain areas (Derry/Londonderry)

The first stage of the Future Innovators Project was to undertake an Appreciative Inquiry into each of the target areas. This took place from September 2021 ~ May 2022. The aim of this was to develop a deeper understanding of the local context in each of the areas, identify existing community structures and social innovation/enterprise initiatives, highlight the strengths within communities and unpack possible gaps or challenges this project could help address. This report will provide a summary of our findings from the Appreciative Inquiry process undertaken on Arranmore Island, Donegal and demonstrate how these findings will be used to shape the delivery of the Future Innovators Project.

Main Activities



Appreciative Inquiry Model – the 5 D's

Appreciative Inquiry Framework

Future Innovators adopted this framework to structure out Appreciative Inquiry phase.



1. **Define.** Clarify the topic of inquiry. What exactly do we want to ask/find out?



2. **Discover.** What is working well? What are the key markers of success in the community?



3. **Dream.** Based on past achievements and success, now imagine the possibilities of what could be. What are your wishes, hopes or aspirations for your community? How can we do more of what is good / what works?



4. **Design.** Refine the ideas of what could be to establish what should be. What are the priorities? What is best for everyone?



5. **Deliver.** Now with an understanding of the community values and ideals, what will it take to make this a reality?

Arranmore Island, Donegal.



Arranmore Island (Oileán Árann Mhór) is situated three miles off the County Donegal coast and has an area of seven square miles.

With no land bridge, the island is served by two roll-on/roll-off car ferry services. There are a number of emergency services present on the island including Donegal Fire Service, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and an ambulance service. The island has a medical health centre with two GP doctors and two community nurses. Arranmore has two national schools. Following much local campaigning, a secondary school was opened in 1991, which encouraged young families from the island's diaspora to relocate to the island in the 1990's and early 2000's. The secondary school has been noted for its high level of academic attainment and today, approx. 50% of the student body now travel to the island from the mainland each day to be educated on Arranmore; a complete reversal of pre-1990's era.

The 2016 census recorded the island winter population of 469 persons, which swells to between two to three times that number in the summer months with returning islanders and diaspora, students and staff attending an Irish language college, and tourists. However, Arranmore's long term sustainability has been under threat from depopulation and emigration in recent decades. The island has been designated as being "Extremely Disadvantaged"¹ by a series of government reports that measure indicators such as the unemployment rate, educational attainment and the age profile of inhabitants.

Arranmore Island also has a number of community groups and co-operatives serving different roles to the community. Comharchumann Oileán Árann Mhór Teo is a co-operative

providing a holiday home village, sports facilities and a small centre including a café and space to provide tourism services and deliver training courses and small public events. Comharchumann Forbartha & Fostaíochta Árann Mhór (CFFAM) is a community centre and employment development organisation. CFFAM offers a range of services and activities for islanders and visitors to the island including youth services, PCs for IT training, sports and concert hall, a gym and a men's shed. Throughout the year it also focuses on the natural amenities of the sea, beaches and island by offering kayaking and sailing. Arranmore Island Community Council was set up in 2014. It is a voluntary run body with councillors elected from across the island's community, by the community. The council's main remit was to tackle the island's declining population. The island council also runs the social enterprise MODAM gteic/ Árann Mhór, the island's digital shared workspace and Ireland's first offshore digital hub. It has also been working on improving employment opportunities for islanders and returning diaspora. Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation (IIMRO) also has a base on the island and exists to collaborate with groups throughout Ireland and across Europe who are working to implement recognition of small offshore islands in the new EU Common Fisheries Policy.

¹The Pobal-Haase Deprivation Index for Small Areas. New Deprivation Measures from the 2006 Census of Population for Atomic Small Areas (SAs). Trutz Haase, December 2010

The Appreciative Inquiry event took place on 12th March at Ionad An Chroís Bhealaigh on Arranmore Island and involved three sessions:



Dream

1. **Dream/(Discover).** Our aim for this session was to come away with a better understanding of the local challenges and which ones should be prioritised within this project. We also asked a few questions to learn about any existing social innovation or enterprise ideas in the area, particularly those working well in the area.



Design

2. **Design.** Our aim for this session was to workshop and refine proposed social innovation/enterprise ideas, and to present a prototype version of digital toolkit. Attendees were then invited to give feedback and help co-design the development of the digital toolkit.



Deliver

3. **Deliver.** Our aim for this session was to better understand the community's needs, what types of support that would be of most benefit, and to begin to roadmap the way forward to make any proposed social innovation/enterprise projects a reality. We also asked questions around the planning and format of future activities so that we can try to put things in place that suit the majority, and outlined next steps of the project and how to get involved (as an organisation or an individual).



Session 1 – Dream/Discover Findings



The top priority issues:

1. Declining population on the island
2. Employment opportunities
3. Housing availability
4. Waste management
5. Climate change concerns
6. Local Authorities lack initiative and difficult to get decisions made
7. Lack of year-round indoor facilities for young people and wider community

In small groups, attendees engaged in a comprehensive discussion covering the various challenges they encounter living on the island. Discussions then evolved to recognise the positive initiatives already working well and benefits of living on Arranmore Island, and considering if these could offer a strong foundation to develop future social innovation initiatives.

Attendees brought forward a vast range of innovative and exciting solutions that could address some of the challenges they had identified in earlier discussions.

- Improved bicycle infrastructure (charging points for ebikes). Range of community and tourism services could be generated from this.
- Partner with Local Authorities to start a waste management and recycling campaign. E.g. similar to Clean Coasts Leave No Trace campaign.
- Set up a waste recycling/repair initiative – upcycling and repair items rather than dispose of them and buy new. Could have a social aspect or start as a social enterprise.
- Set up year-round activities e.g. set up a running club, geo-caching group, indoor rock climbing, basket making, foraging trips, MMA, kickboxing, yoga, jiving, pilates.
- Research into self-sustaining energy initiatives that could be exported and result in job creation. Link with Energy Co-operative Ireland.



Session 2 – Design Findings

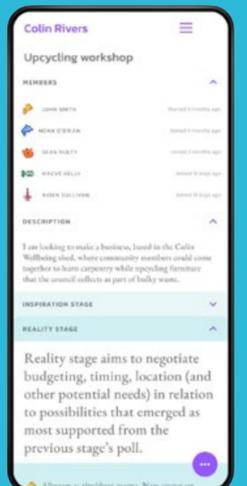
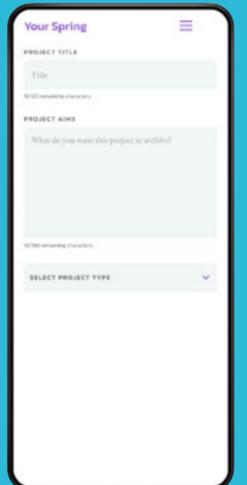
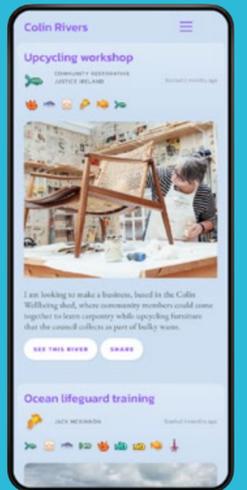
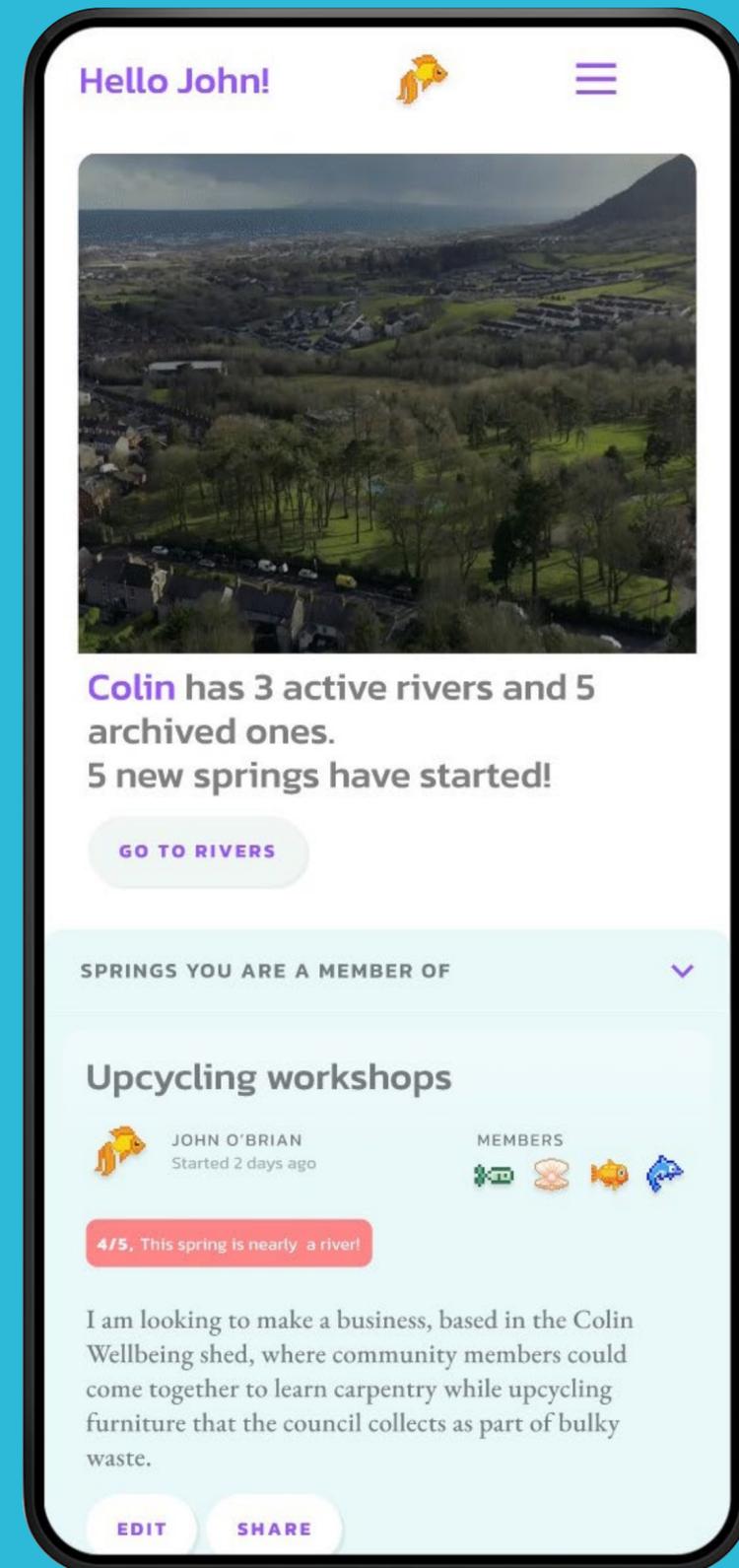
A tutorial of the digital platform/toolkit can be accessed [here](#).

Digital Toolkit

Participants were presented with a prototype version of the digital toolkit. Through exploring its various features and applications, participants helped to co-design the further development of the toolkit by assessing the specific benefits that would be most useful and relevant in this area.

Main Findings:

- Attendees already had a strong idea of who they should approach to leverage the resources and power needed to get projects off the ground.
- Individual projects can require a range of skills, resources or capabilities to make them happen. The platform will introduce a mechanism to collate relevant tools together so that they are easily accessible and connected to specific projects.
- Staying motivated through the peaks and troughs of project planning and delivery was well noted during the session. The platform will incorporate a digital companion to provide friendly encouragement and help motivate users to stay engaged.



Session 3 – Deliver Findings

Support Needs:

Participants identified the following support needs:

- Training in a range of areas e.g. how public policy decisions are made, research skills, innovative technologies for waste management, project management, marketing and communication.
- Business start-up mentoring.
- Flexible apprenticeships for young people in trades.
- Comparison studies/learning visits to see other social innovations in practice e.g. Inishmore community owned recycling centre.
- Support with set up costs.



Next Steps:

We then outlined the next steps of the Future Innovators project to participants:

1. Delivery of a localised Social Innovation Training & Development Programme.
2. The Innovation Team will reach out to continue the co-design of the digital toolkit.
3. Appreciative Inquiry Findings Report will be shared.



Other Appreciative Inquiry Activities

Stakeholder Engagement

Community Survey / social
media campaign



Stakeholder Engagement

We also conducted a number of one-to-one meetings with a range of community and statutory stakeholders to raise awareness of the project, receive their input on how the project should be delivered in the local area and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Youth Engagement

Three Appreciative Inquiry engagements were held in the local secondary school, Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada, with Transition Year students. Students were introduced to the concepts of social innovation and social enterprise,



drawing from examples existing in their community to develop understanding. During the sessions the benefits that social innovation and social enterprise could bring to communities and methods involved in making it happen were discussed. The students then explored their own ideas and the possible ways of making their concepts a reality in their community and the methods they would use. They also investigated ways of applying these methods to ideas which might improve the school experience to benefit future generations of students and considered the benefits of deliberative democracy in deciding on a final project they could apply to their school. On completion of the engagement with the school, feedback on the sessions was very positive from both staff and students alike.

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