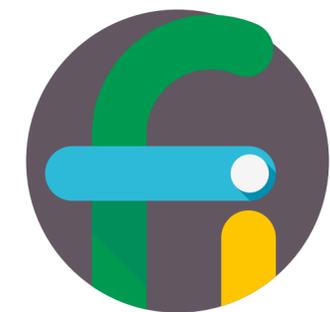


Appreciative Inquiry Report

South Belfast Urban Village Area



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 in the South Belfast UV Area, 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?

South Belfast Urban Village Area

A significant amount of community outreach and engagement has been undertaken in the area in recent years. The map below provides a snapshot of the range of ongoing and future initiatives being brought to the area through the efforts of the local community sector and the Urban Village Initiative.

Further info can be found [here](#).

This outreach work has helped us understand the local context and engage with communities through the lens of community-led social innovation.

Appreciative Inquiry event took place on 22nd April at the Ormeau Baths in the South Belfast UV Area, 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



Priority issues:

1. Support for ethnic minority communities, particularly African communities, living in Northern Ireland.
2. Inclusivity, equality and support for an integrated future for all communities.
3. Ethnic minority communities feel cut off from accessing key services and facilities.
4. Need for physical regeneration in the South Belfast UV Area.
5. Poor physical and mental health is prevalent throughout these communities.

Other issues noted included: support to enter employment or further education, childcare, increasing tourism offering in the area, improved public transport to connect the area to the wider city and short-term funding makes it difficult to plan sustainable, long-term actions.

Attendees did recognise a number of initiatives that are working well across the area, that are a foundation to build on:

- Good Relations Programmes
- Partnership working
- Local campaigns for regeneration
- Social Housing Campaign
- Sunshine not Skyscrapers campaign
- Homework Clubs
- English Classes
- Sporting Activities

Attendees contributed to discussions around potential projects that could flow from the priority issues they identified. In particular, attendees proposed the setting up a sustainable Sudanese restaurant and community initiative to potentially include a social space, childcare facility and fitness suite.



Session 2 – Design Findings

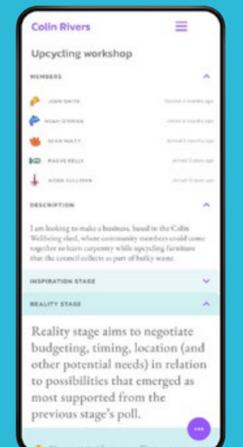
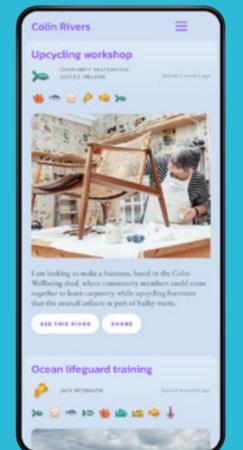
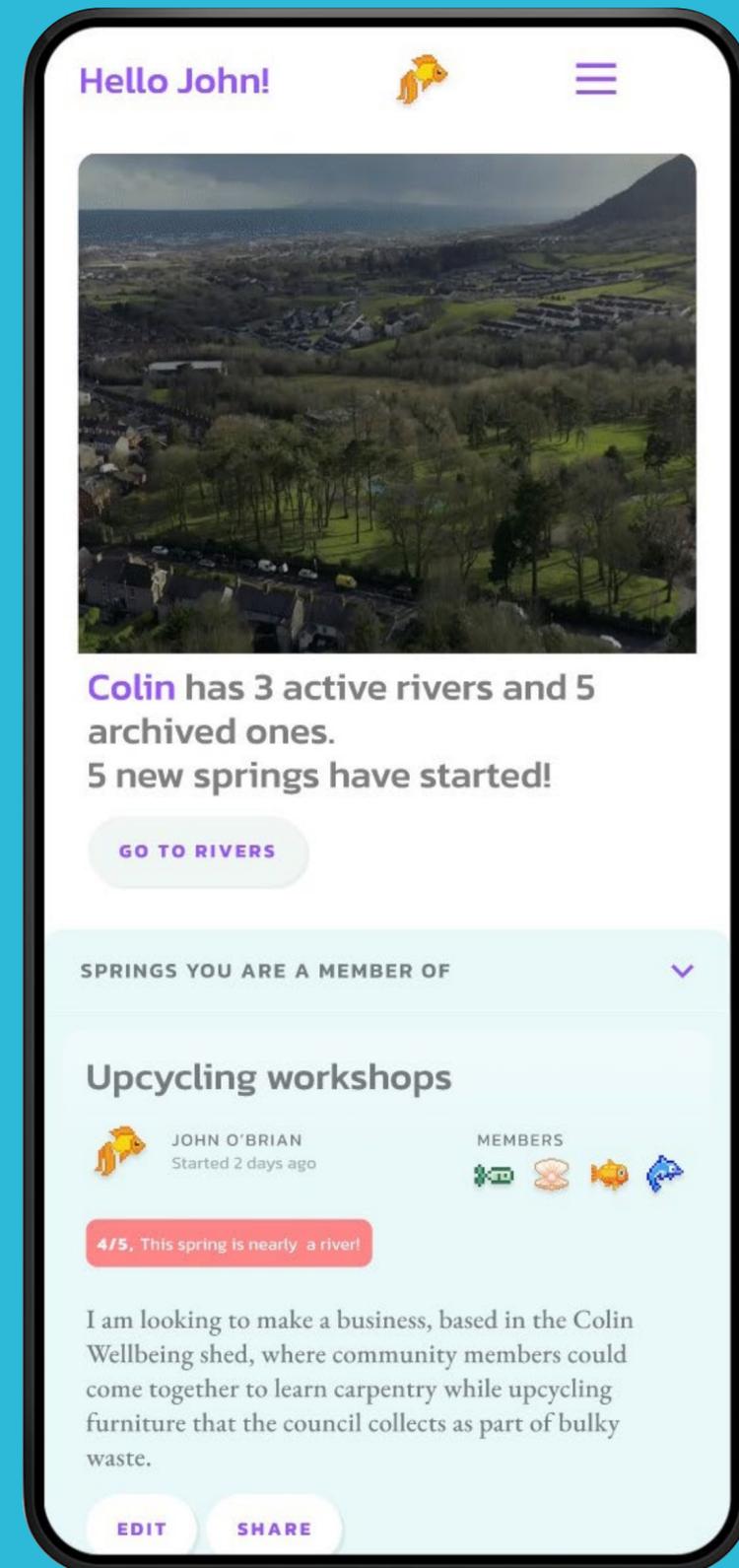
A tutorial of the digital platform/toolkit can be accessed [here](#).

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:

- We sought to understand how the platform could support refugee communities as they strive towards becoming more self-sustainable.
- The role of women in food preparation for the wider community arose as an opportunity for female Sudanese chefs to kick-start a community-run social enterprise.
- The platform would need to guide them through stages where they gain clear understanding of the legal and practical requirements via resources.
- Community members also highlighted an importance of being able to reach out to people who already established their businesses to ask them for advice directly. E.g. through a messaging function.
- As the platform progresses, these findings will be incorporated to develop resources that are collaborative and relevant across various contexts.



Session 3 – Deliver Findings

Support Needs:

Participants identified the following support needs:

- How to develop a sustainable business plan.
- Guidance on accessing funding and investment.
- Support with idea creation and project design.
- Introduction to technology that could support individuals and groups to develop and implement social innovation projects in their community.

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.



Community Survey/ Social Media Campaign

Throughout the Appreciative Inquiry process we also used social media to engage people in the project. Through targeted advertisements on Facebook and Instagram we disseminated an online survey to give community members in the target areas an opportunity to contribute their ideas to the development of the project. We also distributed flyers in the areas to capture those who may not be on social media. In return for completing the survey, respondents were entered into a prize draw to win a £40 shopping voucher. We had 50 responses from across all Urban Village areas. 5 winners were randomly selected using unique ID's.

Find us on social media!

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<https://cooperationireland.org/projects/future-innovators/>

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