

CORCA DHUIBHNE INBHUANAITHE A CREATIVE IMAGINING

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PROJECT TEAM

LEARNING BRIEF FEBRUARY 2023



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme





BACKGROUND

Corca Dhuibhne Inbhuanaithe - A Creative Imagining was a creative climate action project based on the Dingle Peninsula involving a creative artist working with ten farm families over the course of a year between January 2022 and January 2023.

It was funded by the inaugural [Creative Climate Action Fund](#), an initiative administered by the [Creative Ireland Programme](#), in collaboration with the [Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications](#), to support creative, cultural and artistic projects that build awareness around climate change and empower citizens to make meaningful behavioural transformations. The project was led by the [Dingle Hub](#), in collaboration with the [Green Arts Initiative in Ireland \(GAI\)](#) and [MaREI](#) (The Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine). It was supported by the [West Kerry Dairy Farmers Sustainable Energy Community \(SEC\)](#). The project team comprised [Catriona Fallon \(GAI\)](#), project manager; [Lisa Fingleton](#), embedded artist; [Deirdre de Bhailis](#), Dingle Hub manager; and [Clare Watson \(MaREI\)](#), reflective learning & evaluation lead.

This project aimed to tackle the challenge of addressing greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture through a creative lens, with an embedded artist bringing their unique perspective to the project, helping to generate new ways of thinking, fresh perspectives and alternative approaches. Key to this was listening to the

farming community, providing them with a safe space to share their thoughts and concerns, and giving them a voice in the climate discussion. The focus was on supporting ten farm families to identify solutions that would work for them, and to imagine a low carbon farming future for the Dingle Peninsula and wider society. This experience was mediated through a creative lens.

The initial aims of the project were:

- To bring about an attitudinal change and shift in values within the farming community on the Dingle Peninsula, with regard to the role that agricultural emissions play in Ireland's carbon footprint.
- To support the farming community in transitioning to less carbon intensive methods including approaches that will sequester carbon and support biodiversity.
- Combining practical and creative approaches, to create an understanding in the wider community about the challenges that farmers face, thus creating a more supportive environment in which farmers can diversify.



REFLECTIVE LEARNING AND EVALUATION METHODS

This learning brief focuses on the experience of the *Corca Dhuibhne Inbhuanaithe* project team (Catriona, Lisa, Deirdre and Clare) and includes our approach, expectations and learnings, and what we feel the project has achieved.

The initial data was based on the answers we each gave to the following questions in February, May and September 2022 - *What are your expectations for the project and what it will achieve? What aspects of the project excite you? What aspects are/will be challenging for you?* Additional insights and information were added by members of the project team during the writing and reviewing process.

For more information, please see the [Methods Table](#)

www.dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/creativeclimateactionproject/





In July 2021, the *Corca Dhuibhne Inbhuanaithe* project was awarded €180,660 from Creative Ireland. In November, Lisa Fingleton was selected as the project's embedded artist. In late December, ten local farmers/farm families were recruited from an Open Call to participate in the project.

Between February and October, eight familiarisation trips to sustainable farms and other projects of interest, were organised for the participating farmers and project team. These included: Thomas Reidy's Organic Farm, Stradbally, Dingle Peninsula; Maharees Conservation Association, Dingle Peninsula; The Burren Programme, Co. Clare; Green Gas Anaerobic Digester Plant, Shanagolden, Co. Limerick; Gearóid Maher's Dairy Farm, Cappamore, Co. Limerick; Glenilen Farm, Gurteeniher, West Cork; Top of the Rock Pod Páirc and Walking Centre, Drimoleague, West Cork; The BRIDE Project, Castlelyons, Co. Cork; MacGillycuddy Reeks European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Project, Beaufort, Co. Kerry; and Kerry Woollen Mills, Beaufort, Co. Kerry.

In June, Minister Eamon Ryan visited the farm of Michael and Sandra O'Dowd (participants in project) at Ballycrispin near Castlemaine and later met three other *Corca Dhuibhne Inbhuanaithe* farmers in the Dingle Hub. In August, Tom and Nora Greaney (participants in project) hosted a farm walk for the participating farmers and project team in Flemingstown. Some of the group also visited Leagh Organic Farm and Lisa and Rena's organic

farm, the Barna Way, in North Kerry. In September, some of the farmers visited, and contributed to, a 30m Creative Climate Wall at the Ploughing Championships and they participated in two Climate Conversations at the event. Over the year, the farmers attended a workshop on climate change, a seminar on the mental health impact on farmers, a meeting on carbon sequestration, and a discussion on climate policy. They also participated in five online group discussions. Two 'Guthanna ón nGort/Voices from the Field' public events were organised, the first on the 20th April as part of Féile na Bealtaine and the second on the 29th July as part of Féile Lios Póil. A Farmers' Forum was held on the 30th September, as part of the Dingle Food Festival. In early September, Lisa and filmmaker, Chris Garrett, filmed interviews and footage on each farm. The final production, incorporating all the farm portraits, was due to be publicly screened in the Blasket Centre, Dun Chaoin, on the 8th December 2022. However, because of icy road conditions it had to be postponed. The screening was successfully held in the same venue on the 18th January 2023.

For more information, please see the [Activities and Events Table](#) and [Media Table](#)



Catriona prepared a very detailed Artist's Brief. This, along with the job advertisement, was circulated widely, including internationally, in early October 2021. Thirty-five artists applied.

The process was supported by the West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC and four committee members sat on the selection panel (Dinny Galvin, Colm Murphy, Michael Kelliher and Michael Dowd), alongside Catriona, Deirdre and Clare from the project team and Sheila Deegan from Creative Ireland. Catriona prepared a short list of ten candidates and provided summaries. Panel members individually graded and then collectively chose five candidates for interview on 16th November. Because of Covid restrictions, the interviews were held online. Each candidate was paid €200 to prepare a short presentation on the approach they would take.

'A big thumbs up from me for the whole process. It worked because the process was managed. I suppose like many of us I started off thinking, gosh I'm not sure I'm qualified to select... but I thought it was a fantastic experience. We were getting insights into a world we would have been very unfamiliar with.' (Deirdre)

'I really enjoyed the interview and the opportunity to meet everyone, and the farmers in particular. It was great to hear their perspectives and to have them as an integral part of process.' (Lisa)

'It took most of the day, but I was delighted to give the commitment to it.' (Dinny)

'We were all prepared. I won't say we were 100%, you'd never be 100%, but I think on the day, before the interview started, we were lined up and we knew what everyone was to do, what questions were to be asked and everyone had their question. I got relaxed as we went forward, we were all part of a team.' (Michael K)

'It was great to be involved to see how the interview panel, how different people, would pick up on different things and ask different questions. You'd get the feel for them alright soon enough, if they were suitable to be going to farmers and getting their hands dirty!' (Michael D)



We wanted to directly support farmers on their diversification journey and to monitor the project's impact, we felt it was important to work with an identifiable group of farmers/farm families throughout the year.

We capped the number at ten because we knew small groups foster trust and relationship building and they allow for greater participation, flexibility and more effective individual and collective learning. Keeping numbers relatively low also meant that we could encourage and cater for other family members who wished to fully participate or dip in and out of the various activities.

'It was great to see the wider farm families becoming involved throughout the project, including children and partners. The project has created bonds of friendship between the families and real momentum for action.' (Lisa)

We put out an open call for participants, to allow for full transparency and inclusivity. At the end of November 2021, a recruitment flier was printed in Irish and English and circulated on the peninsula, and an advertisement was placed in the West Kerry Live newspaper. An information sheet for interested farmers was uploaded onto the project webpage, along with a user-friendly online interactive Expression of Interest form. We held an [online information session](#) for interested applicants and the recording was uploaded to the website afterwards.

15 farmers/farm families applied. The final ten were chosen by the project co-ordinating team, including the four representatives of West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC. The project was committed to including farms at different transition stages and didn't select farmers who were already very advanced on the journey. We also wanted the group to represent different types of farming and different areas on the peninsula.

It is important to note here that, because we put out an open call, we had no control over who applied. While we wanted to get some farmers who had not yet considered taking climate action, we knew that those who responded had already taken the first step by self-selecting and being interested or curious, and some had already started their diversification journey.

For more information please see [Resource Documents](#).

THE APPROACH TAKEN BY THE PROJECT TEAM

From the beginning the project team took an inclusive, personalized approach to working with the ten farmers/farm families, which helped to build relationships and trust. We wanted them to feel they were listened to and heard, and that their experiences were validated.

'I think we've captured their imagination, which is what we said we'd do. I think we've responded to what they've asked for. I think we've really listened to them. I think we've been very respectful. I was looking at their faces on the photographs from the end of project film screening and I could see the laughs and the smiles, and I was hoping we'd get to that stage because I felt like it can be quite serious and daunting when you're talking about climate change. So, it was lovely to see the laughs. I think what we've done is we've validated their experiences. I think the filming process has validated them as farmers, them as people, them as community people.' (Lisa)

When it came to organizing dates and times for events and trips, communication was individual and direct and involved phone calls, reminders, clear schedules and agendas, and checking that everyone was okay with what was planned.

'We want them to know that we value their involvement in the project, that we will be flexible, and that we want to make sure that their participation is enjoyable and uncomplicated!' (Catriona)

While we decided on the first few trips, the farmers were asked in feedback sheets to indicate what they would like to learn or visit during the year. And, as far as possible, this was then arranged.

We were very fortunate to be able to assemble such a strong and diverse project team, with a variety of skills, knowledge and experience. This gave us confidence.

'When writing the proposal, I was fearful that while this project has much positive potential, it also had the potential to go horribly wrong. That fear is much abated now as I see the expertise of the entire group in action, from stewardship to impact evaluation and now having Lisa on board completes an already strong team.' (Deirdre)

'Such a brilliant mix of people all with a common goal of seeking solutions to the many challenges. Powerful!' (Lisa)

'Every project has to keep us moving forwards towards that long term vision and goal. And every bit of capacity building brings positive change.' (Deirdre)

The sustainability of the project was key. In April 2022, we drafted a [Sustainability Policy](#) which was reviewed and agreed by the project team and participating farmers. It was uploaded to the project page on the Dingle Peninsula 2030 website. The policy ensured that sustainable travel, sustainable and local food, and zero waste were prioritised throughout the project.

'It was very important to me that we approached the project in a way that would minimise our own carbon footprint - and that of the group. This meant looking at travel and food options throughout so that they would be as sustainable as possible.' (Catriona)

Between January and March, Catriona and Lisa visited the ten farms. Between March and September, Lisa revisited them, spending time on each one, walking, drawing, taking photos and listening. This included an inspiring day with Séamus and his new-born lambs, feeding the sheep overlooking the Blasket Islands and chatting in Irish. She also spent an afternoon on Joe's farm with the cows and Rosie the goat, taking note of all the wildflowers growing in the meadows and the ancient stone walls. Lisa went back to the farms once or twice as part of the filming process, so each farm was visited at least three times and often more.

Some of the farmers' children are really creative so the visits provided a lovely opportunity to encourage them to draw and make art. A few of them came to the Ploughing Championships to draw on the Creative Climate Wall and they also visited the Earth Rising Eco-Art Festival (where the Wall was displayed) in IMMA, The Irish Museum of Modern Art.

'I hope it is encouraging for them to see a professional artist at work and that it might inspire them to follow a career in art.' (Lisa)

'Working closely with the farmers on the Dingle Peninsula over the last year and visiting each farm several times has been a real privilege. It has given me a unique opportunity as an artist, to understand their deep connection with the land and their growing concerns about climate change. Together, through drawing and film we have creatively explored their current experiences and their ideas for the future in terms of taking climate action and protecting biodiversity.' (Lisa)

LEARNINGS

Aspects of the Project that Excited Us

Working with the ten farm families. Giving them an opportunity to talk openly about their thoughts and feelings on climate change. Opening conversations around new ideas. Watching how the farmers interacted with the creative aspects and how this influenced their thinking and practice. Watching the farmers develop relationships with each other.

'The insights from the farmers in relation to climate change - they are so clearly at the coal face. They can see it happening before their eyes. The imagery they gave us of animals sweating in slatted sheds because January is too warm, of polytunnels being blown away, of expanding drains to deal with excessive rain, of roses growing at Christmas, of skilled stone craft, was so impactful.' (Lisa)

The potential for real learning, change and action.

'For all that it was very intimidating initially, the most exciting part was engaging with the farmers - spending time with them, gaining a better insight into their concerns, their thinking on how diversification can work for them. Seeing 'light bulb' moments where attitudes can be seen to be really shifting. The potential of the project to have an impact.' (Catriona)

'We're achieving loads of things, the connections that we're building with the farmers just warm my heart every single day. Some started out a little cynical about climate change and science, but it is good to ask questions. I feel like they've really come full circle, you know, that they really want to do stuff now.' (Lisa)

Being outside on farms, connecting with nature.

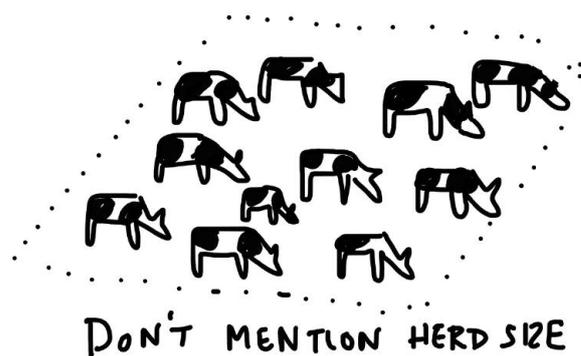
Going on the familiarisation trips/site visits and listening to the enthusiasm at the back of the bus!

Focusing on the importance of producing and selling local food locally and encouraging farmers to grow and share their own food.

'I think the fact that we had local food at every event, and that we tried to source food from the farmers themselves, was really important. I think that really shows the farmers that we're serious.' (Lisa)

Learning from the farming community about what might really work, and having time to listen, learn and process the challenges. Watching how creativity can spark the imagination even on something as challenging as climate change and agriculture.





Seeing Lisa's drawings.

'I love seeing Lisa's reflections on everything that has happened to date. Seeing audiences and farmers engage with her approach is very rewarding as that is the kernel of the project.' (Catriona)

Being creative and responding to climate change creatively. Being able to make visual what other people use words to describe.

'I'm really excited about the drawings. I think they're really reaching people which is lovely and that's been nice for my confidence because I was often frustrated, 'Why can't I draw like somebody else?' But I'm actually enjoying that I can help people to visualise their own thoughts and words through drawing.' (Lisa)

Empowering the farmers. The project gave them opportunities to speak in public, sometimes for the first time, and to be involved in discussions with members of the public and policy makers. Some of the farmers voiced their concerns and what supports they require directly to Minister Eamon Ryan. However, as one of the farmers put it - listening is one thing, being able to act is another.

'I think he gets it now, but I don't know if he can do a whole lot about it.' (Michael, July 2022)

What we Achieved

The project definitely sparked the farmers' imagination, particularly Lisa's sketching on the farms and her drawings at the climate change workshop and then on the Creative Climate Wall at the Ploughing Championships. However, because the project was so busy, it never really felt like we had enough time to be as imaginative as we would have liked.

Over the year, the project team gained a better and more compassionate understanding of the challenges facing farmers. The project built a sense of solidarity, support, friendship and shared learning amongst the farmers involved. The farmers have a better understanding of how climate change and climate action impact on agriculture, but not quite to the extent we would have hoped for. This is an ongoing journey.

While the process was transformative and real, it is too early to say if it has caused sustained long-term change in the lives of the farmers and families involved. It will be important to assess the impacts again annually over the next five years.

Despite efforts, we were not able to carry out an effective baseline study to determine the public views on farming and climate change before the project began. Therefore, we don't have a sufficiently strong grasp of how the wider community perceives the project or has been affected by it. Nevertheless, we did host a number of public events to engage the public and we tried to encourage people to engage with the project through articles in the media and social media posts. We hope we will gain a better understanding of the impact as the film is disseminated in a supported way over the coming year or two.

Choosing to work with a group of ten farmers/farm families as opposed to a bigger number, or the broader 'farming community', was very effective. It gave us a chance to work intensively and directly with the same people throughout the year and was an efficient use of the resources available. It also aided in the evaluation process as it allowed us to follow the progress of, and monitor the impact of the project on, this specific group.

All the farmers have said that the project has:

- broadened their thinking.
- brought climate action issues and the importance of local food to the fore.
- heightened their awareness and appreciation of their surroundings and the efforts they are already making.
- convinced them of the need to protect and promote biodiversity.
- demonstrated the positive role of creativity and art, particularly in relation to climate action.

Many of the farmers decreased their use of artificial fertiliser and chemicals during the year and two have begun the process of converting their farm to organic methods. One farmer is currently planting 500 trees, one plans to plant 500-600 metres of hedging, one is considering forestry, and another, agri-forestry. One farmer is thinking about cutting his stock (cattle/sheep). One farmer has ordered a solar powered water pump and electric fence, another is looking at producing renewable energy on their land. Three farmers are considering glamping pods as a



way of diversifying. The project has changed one farmer's view of public transport and she is now using the Local Link bus. It also gave two farmers their first experience of public speaking. As a result of links made through the project, two farm families recently joined Kerry Social Farming. Four of the farmers were actively involved in drawing on the Creative Climate Wall at the Ploughing Championships.

Interestingly, all the farmers have said how important the social aspect of the project was for them. They are all very keen for the group to continue in some form and to continue their transition journey together.

We have produced a number of outputs from this project: Three films '*Guthanna ón nGort/Voices from the Field*' (profiles of the ten farmers), '*A Creative Imagining*' (short documentary on the project) and '*The Future is in the Fields*' (short film about the Creative Climate Wall) and three learning briefs '*The Creative Climate Wall*', '*The Experience of the Participating Farmers*'; and '*The Experience of the Project Team*'.

In January 2023, at the end of the project, over 100 people watched the premier screening of '*Guthanna ón nGort/Voices from the Field*'. Of the 40 members of the public who attended (alongside project participants and invited guests), 19 responded to

an on-line Survey Monkey afterwards. 84% were inspired, 11% happy and 5% emotional; all said the film was either 'very important' or 'important' in helping people to understand farming on the Dingle Peninsula; 95% said it was 'very effective' or 'effective' in showing how farmers are affected by climate change; 89% said it was 'very effective' or 'effective' in showing how farmers are responding to climate change. 84% felt that art and creativity is 'extremely important' or 'very important' in encouraging people to take climate action.

We are planning further screenings over the coming year, if future funding allows, and the learning briefs will be widely disseminated to practitioners and policy makers.

We leveraged the foundational work of the Dingle Hub on other agri-initiatives to enable us to propose this project. It has now delivered deep and meaningful impact for the farming community and strengthened those relationships even further. Building that social capital is hugely valuable to the work of the Hub and to the expansion and development of further projects and initiatives.

For more please see the following tables: [Did we Meet our Expectations?](#) and [Outcomes & Impact](#)



CHALLENGES

How do we provide tangible options for diversification without being prescriptive, while knowing that Creative Ireland really wants to see results? This question resulted in a lot of discussion at the beginning of the project.

'We're not standing up on a podium saying this is what you need to do. We're presenting options, discussing alternatives, and I think these discussions will become more detailed, in depth as time goes on...shifting their mindset, helping them to think in different ways.' (Catriona)

'We don't want to be prescriptive in saying these are the changes that the farmers could make, okay? But on the other hand, we have a real opportunity to give some light and some hope to farmers. From my perspective as a farmer, there's nothing I would love more than to be part of a project that was really practical. I would love something that would say, these are your options, as opposed to giving me big picture things that I can't ever respond to.' (Lisa)

'Yes, we can be open and respond to what the farmers want but I would like some clarity and we should think about it a bit more. What are these practical steps we'd like people to take? We need to think about the ten actions that might be useful to farmers.' (Lisa)

'We're not asking them to make changes, we are trying to explore what the opportunities and changes might be, and we're then trying to support, enable and empower them to decide for themselves on each of their farms, what they could or want to do. It's a little less directional I think.' (Clare)

'The way that we provide tangible impact is to help increase the farmers' understanding that options to address climate change can be of benefit and can help sustain the farming enterprise into the future.' (Deirdre)

Judging how much to push and lead, versus going at the farmers' pace, bearing in mind the importance and urgency of the issue, the challenging political context and the complexity of the required response. What can farmers actually do to take climate action?

'We really want to avoid leading farmers down a cul de sac.. I've been on this journey maybe a little bit longer and I've explored a lot of the options and I

see that there is no easy solution to a lot of these because even if you want to do the best yourself, you're stopped at every level of policy. The supportive policy is just not there. The practice is just not there. And then the funding is just not there.' (Lisa)

'Sometimes I feel a bit overwhelmed by the slow pace of change as evidenced by what I hear from the farmers - there is little sense of the urgency of the situation. But we can't be responsible for causing stress or anxiety, or pushing people into denial or defensiveness so we need to proceed cautiously. Finding the sweet spot is the challenge.' (Clare)

'This is going to be a long journey, and these are just the first steps.' (Catriona)

We were trying to run a full-time project with part-time workers. Catriona and Lisa were both to work part-time on the project and had other work commitments outside of this. Clare was to contribute the equivalent of one day per week and Deirdre was to be on hand when required. All of us, particularly Catriona and Lisa, worked over and above what we had originally committed to. This was because the inclusive, personalized approach to working with the ten farmers/farm families was time consuming and difficult to shoe-horn into part-time working hours.

'One of the things I've learned was that it wasn't a project that I could do on particular days. I could never say I'm going to do Thursday and Friday, because if something needs to be ready for Wednesday, well, I have to do it on Monday.' (Catriona)

'I'm exactly the same...it was hard to find the balance between different projects. And, because I was really enjoying this project and the engagement with the farmers, I really didn't want to switch off from it. It was a project that just kept on growing. Every action led to something else, and we far exceeded what we intended in the beginning.' (Lisa)

At times, we felt weighed down by a sense of responsibility caused by:

- The responsibility of the different roles and making sure that everything worked effectively.
- The sense of responsibility to Creative Ireland and a feeling of pressure to deliver.



- Trying to honour the trust and faith the farmers put in us.
- The uncertainty about how the project would evolve and the need for flexibility.
- The seriousness and urgency of climate change and our own personal responses to it.

There is a little bit of apprehension, anxiety, because this is all untested, this has to be flexible because it's responding to things as they happen - obviously it has to be a flexible project, if the direction shifts too much then that does throw me because I have a certain kind of path in mind. There are all these little events that happen that have to go well, and the fact that we're not all working in one building, so we're all in different places, that makes it more difficult. We're trying to connect with each other.' (Catriona)

'I would echo that as well, I have to say. I did feel anxious that the project felt vague in the beginning, and I wasn't sure where it would go. I feel like we've so much to learn. I feel a big responsibility. I think it's so important, climate change.' (Lisa)

'I think we need to have more discussion about the anxiety and challenges piece, draw it out a bit and see if we can allay it. It's probably an on-going discussion because there's the two things: one, the pressure of the project and expectations, and responsibility for

the farmers to some extent, we don't want to let them down, but it's also the other thing about our own, absorbing the climate picture and how we deal with that as the year goes by.' (Clare)

[Unfortunately, because of time pressures, this didn't happen]

Initially, it was sometimes difficult to find space and time for the creative process.

'I need lots of time to think and process experiences in order to respond creatively. I'm worried that I will say yes to so many things that my time will go on meetings and admin. I need to be able to say no to things to protect the creative process which needs to be fed and nurtured.' (Lisa)

Trying to keep travel emissions to a minimum by using public transport or cycling as much as possible was onerous, time-consuming and challenging in adverse weather.

For Lisa, it was a five-hour return bus trip between her home and Dingle town. Moving around the peninsula was difficult in wet weather and challenging physically, although the new Local Link bus service came in very handy. Carrying cameras and art materials, wet weather gear, etc. was hard on a bus or bike. Nevertheless, Lisa stuck with it throughout the year as much as possible.

For Clare, a one-way trip from her home, near Ballydehob in West Cork, to Dingle town by public transport could take as long as 8-9 hours, depending on timing and connections (and involved first going up to Cork). This was only tried once!

Promoting the project and securing media coverage was more difficult than originally envisaged.

The challenges included:

- The flexible nature of the project, which meant it was difficult to develop a media strategy at the outset.
- Differing expectations within the team about how much focus to put on PR/Media, particularly in the first half of the year. One expectation was that media coverage was necessary throughout the project to 'spark the public imagination' and build up relationships with interested people from the outset, so that they could follow the journey and attend our public events. The other expectation was that the outcomes of the project would be the focus of media attention towards the end of the project when we had a 'real story' to tell and outputs to deliver.
- For the first nine months, we did not have a dedicated resource to cover PR and instead relied on the part-time Dingle Hub Communications Manager, who was already fairly stretched. We also had some support from Creative Ireland Communications. However, we struggled to garner much national media attention. In October, we hired our own PR consultant.
- We worked through the Dingle Hub social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). This meant that we were not able to post regularly or in our own time.
- The general lack of media attention may have reflected the broader tendency to focus on bad news rather than good news stories.

Trying to shift the understanding of the general public around the role of farming and climate action, and the need to pay more for sustainably grown local produce was a big ask. This was because:

- While working with ten farm families was clear and focused, working with the public is more nebulous.
- It is a long-term, ongoing task, the impact of which is hard to quantify in the short-term.
- People self-selected to come to our events which largely meant they already had a connection or interest in what we were doing.

What will happen when the project ends?

'I would be a bit concerned that it could all just dissipate as those things sometimes do. You know, a group of people spend time together doing something and then for whatever reason, if there isn't a formal setup to keep that group together, then all of that positive energy can just sort of slowly drift away.' (Catriona)

In our initial proposal, we did not allow for the time and resources required to disseminate the project output (film) after the project ended. Similarly, we did not allow for the extra time required to interview the farmers (which had to be done after the project ended) and for the project team to input into and review the learning brief drafts. We were lucky in this project because we had the back up support and experience of Dingle Hub, MaREI and the resources provided by the SFI Discover award to help tide us over this period and to give us the resources to go looking for further resources!



RECOMMENDATIONS

- For collaborations and partnerships such as this, it is important to resource the role of collaboration co-ordinator, over and above project manager and artist. The co-ordinator is not necessarily involved in the day-to-day activities and decision making but is there to ensure that relationships and communication within the collaboration are supported and maximised. In our case, the Dingle Hub is in a position to provide this role going forwards and the person will support a number of different projects. But some funding will be required from project budgets.
- A project of this size and ambition should have a full-time project manager, particularly where there is an ongoing community engagement element. Some projects might only interact sporadically with their community on an events-based approach. Ours was consistent throughout the project.
- The four members of our steering group had a really strong grasp of the various issues around climate change (farming, community engagement, carbon calculating, climate policy etc). This level of understanding was critical. It would be very difficult for a group to successfully manage a project like this if they didn't have that capacity.
- Do not underestimate the effort and extra time required to ensure that sustainable travel, sustainable food and zero waste principles are manifested throughout project activities and actions.
- It would be advisable to establish a clear media strategy from the outset and a clear process for engaging people in the journey during the year, and to bear in mind that the 'real story' and the outputs to support it may only come at the end of the project.
- An active project of this size should have its own social media accounts.



- Time and resources need to be allocated early in the project timeline to creating an online presence (website, or web landing page) which is regularly updated with events and activities. This can be challenging to maintain otherwise.
- Be careful of scheduling public events too early in the project, before clear outputs have been created - don't rush in!
- If projects want to accurately assess the impact of their activities on the general public, it is best to use a scientific polling company to carry out randomised and representative surveys before the project begins and after it ends.
- Supporting the broader dissemination of our outputs (in our case the film and learning briefs) is now very important. For one-year projects in particular, follow-on time should be included in the initial project proposal, for dissemination. We estimate that, in our case, this will require one day per week, over a period of 6 months.
- Similarly, additional time after the project ends should be included in the initial proposal for reflective learning and evaluation. This would cover the final interviews and analysis, write up, review and editing phases of the learning briefs and tables (in our case, there were three briefs and five tables). This involved six weeks of full-time work for Clare after the project ended. It also required a lot of thought and input from the rest of the project team which, when combined, added up to about 12 extra working days.
- For larger projects, it is essential to have the foundational support, scaffolding and continuity provided by a community organisation (in our case, the Dingle Hub) in order to ensure maximum long-term impact. Our project did not start (and probably could not have started) from scratch. We benefitted from the fact that the West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC had already been established by Dinny Galvin, with the support of the Dingle Hub and Catriona. Now that the project is finished the Dingle Hub is playing a crucial role to ensure that the outputs are widely disseminated, and that existing and future projects can benefit from the learnings. The layering role and inter-relationship between projects will also allow the farmers from our project to gain further support and to get involved in other projects should they so wish.
- The project team was unanimous in their commendation of the way in which Creative Ireland managed this funding scheme. Whilst the application process was rigorous and demanding, the support and guidance from Creative Ireland staff was consistent throughout the project. Drawdown of funds and final reporting was straightforward and not unduly onerous. This approach is one we would recommend for future iterations of the Creative Climate Action Fund.
- Funders need to give careful consideration for follow-on projects because it is important to build on the work that has already been carried out for it not to go to waste, and to maximise impact. It is much harder to start from scratch.



REVIEW OF THE EMBEDDED EVALUATION PROCESSES AND THEIR IMPACT IN CORCA DHUIBHNE INBHUANAITHE - A CREATIVE IMAGINING

Dr Maria Power, Community Consultants, carried out a review of the embedded evaluation processes, including the use of reflective learning in the project. One-to-one online interviews, guided by six questions, were held with each of the four staff (Catriona, Lisa, Clare and Deirdre). These were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The following are the conclusions:

Embedded evaluation contributes positively to the overall impact of projects, as was confirmed by the team in this project.

The processes used to evaluate the project resulted in a deeper understanding of farmers' involvement and of the responses and interventions required for farmers to engage in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Such rich data provided significant insights for the learning briefs produced as some of the outputs from the project, which can be shared with a variety of policy makers and stakeholders. Embedded evaluation and reflective learning significantly enhanced the project experience and its impacts, by reflecting and focusing the attention of staff and farmers on a regular basis. It also supported the effective implementation of the project by making well-informed decisions and changes as required.

The reflective learning and evaluation process built social capital, trust and confidence in the project among staff, stakeholders and, most importantly, the farmers. As the process was embedded and ongoing it facilitated the early identification of evidence of what was working/not working and supported real time responses to such evidence. This helps to embed evidence into practice much more quickly than evaluation after projects have been completed.

Regular reflection can aid learning as seen in this project - data collection methods were varied and adapted as circumstances required. Staff and farmers responded to the different evaluation methods positively though some staff had a preference for verbal interviews over written feedback. It was agreed that reflective learning can and should aid project management and delivery, but the part-time nature of the workers involved limited how the full impact of this connection could be captured or realised.

In general, while there was no total consensus, it would appear that the role of the embedded evaluator should be independent, i.e., from outside the host organisation. A closer review of whether the evaluator should influence project decisions or not (i.e., the pros and cons of being an insider v outsider, including power dynamics) requires further examination.

While there were many benefits to having an embedded evaluator and regular reflective learning sessions in this project, there were some key challenges. The following items require careful consideration prior to embedding evaluation in future projects:

Initial preparations: significant and focused time is required at the outset of projects to prepare for the processes involved and consequences of embedding evaluation. This includes, sharing understandings, experiences and interpretations of key terms and approaches. Anticipating potential pitfalls/tensions and most importantly ensuring clarity and understanding of everyone's role in the project is essential. This includes developing shared understandings of what collaboration means and looks like in action.

Resourcing project workers adequately is essential, particularly if significant time is required for on-going reflective practice, adaptations and written work/reporting. The time required of workers can be anticipated from the outset but should be listed as a task to be assessed prior to the commencement of the project.

Team leadership/supervision is essential but in particular new, innovative and dynamic projects, require clear leadership, support, supervision and regular communication. Tensions arise on many projects, and it must be clear to all how such differences can be resolved.

All of the above needs to be budgeted for adequately in the project proposal.

‘We’re achieving loads of things, the connections that we’re building with the farmers just warm my heart every single day.’

(Lisa)



EWE
Extreme weather events

‘I love seeing Lisa’s reflections on everything that has happened to date. Seeing audiences and farmers engage with her approach is very rewarding as that is the kernel of the project.’

(Catriona)

‘Every project has to keep us moving forwards towards that long term vision and goal. And every bit of capacity building brings positive change.’

(Deirdre)



‘Such a brilliant mix of people all with a common goal of seeking solutions to the many challenges. Powerful!’

(Lisa)

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- The committee of the West Kerry Dairy Farmers Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) for providing such crucial guidance and support from the outset.
- The Dingle Hub team for providing back up services and for so ably helping with large events.
- The MaREI engaged research team for providing on-going support, particularly with the reflective learning and evaluation aspects.
- The Creative Ireland Programme and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for providing ground-breaking funding and support through the Creative Climate Action Fund, which supports creative, cultural and artistic projects that build awareness around climate change and empower citizens to make meaningful behavioural transformations.
- The financial support from the SFI Discover Programme (received by Dingle Peninsula 2030 for 2021/22 to strengthen legacy structures and ensure continued learning and impact), which enabled capacity building and the bringing together of the people and expertise required to support and facilitate this and other projects.

This is one of a series of three learning briefs on this project:

1. ***The Experience of the Participating Farmers***
2. ***The Experience of the Project Team***
3. ***The Creative Climate Wall***

Clare Watson (MaREI) led the reflective learning, evaluation and writing process, with crucial and valuable support and input from Catriona Fallon (GAI), Lisa Fingleton, Deirdre de Bhailis (Dingle Hub) and all the farmers involved. Maria Power, Community Consultants, engaged by MaREI, carried out a review of the embedded evaluation processes and use of reflective learning in the project.

Photography by Manuela Dei Grandi and Dominic Walsh. Filming by Chris Garrett and Editing/Colour grading by Clint Fitzgerald.

Drawings: c. Lisa Fingleton

FILMS

For more please see the following videos: [*Corca Dhuibhne Inbhuanaithe: A Creative Imagining*](#) Interview with embedded artist, Lisa Fingleton at the end of the project, January 2023

[*The Future is in the Fields*](#) at the Ploughing Championships, September 2022

[*Guthanna ón nGort: Voices from the Field*](#) Film trailer, directed by Lisa Fingleton, December 2022

