

SocialiSE

Part of the Awareness Raising Initiatives for Social Enterprise (ARISE) Scheme 2021



Worker in Speekpak, a Dublin based Social Enterprise dedicated to providing efficient, reliable and innovative packing and e-commerce fulfilment solutions

INSIDE

THE BIG INTERVIEW

LARRY O'NEILL,
CEO SDGP P4&5

MONEYGALL'S COMMUNITY GYM P3

ENTERPRISING POSTS

YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA
P12

Summit will drive growth in social enterprises

The SocialiSE Summit in June will be the centrepiece to a nationwide drive to encourage more communities and community groups to set up social enterprises.

The ILDN's annual social enterprise conference and expo will be held at the F2 Centre in Rialto, Dublin, on June 29.

Commenting, Larry O'Neill, chair of the ILDN's Social Economy Working Group, said: "There is huge growth potential. We can all contribute to the social economy, and we can all benefit from it."

The social economy accounts for three percent of Ireland's GDP whereas in Italy it is close to 11 percent - and that's a figure that Ireland should target to improve on, said Mr O'Neill.

The development of Ireland's social

economy can also be stimulated by encouraging people to become involved in social enterprise. Mr O'Neill said. Work to change the paradigm of the social economy was already underway with improving governance and professional standards becoming essential to the social enterprise offering.

Interview on Page 4



All roads lead to F2 on June 29

The impressive F2 Fatima Centre in Rialto, Dublin, will be the venue on June 29th for the #SocialiSE 2022 summit to showcase the work of Ireland's social enterprises. A facility for the local and wider area, the magnificent development uses a community and social enterprise model to drive economic development and create employment opportunities.

The F2 Centre helps to support and sustain social impact programmes for the Rialto and wider Dublin 8 community. The work of F2 Social Enterprise ('Community Empowerment') has grown to include an impressive array of services including property management, a concierge service as well as catering and cleaning services.

WELCOME

Welcome to a new publication called 'SocialiSE', a periodic publication that will bring you news and essential updates all about the SocialiSE 22 Summit to be held in Dublin on June 29th!

The newsletter will include features about different Social Enterprises around the country and showcase all the great work that's happening across our network.

It's a pleasure to be able to look forward to June's event as it provides an opportunity for many of us to meet in person for the first time in two years after the devastation caused by the Covid pandemic.

This unprecedented health emergency left virtually no family untouched in some way, but it also underlined the importance of Ireland's many social enterprises which stepped up in a very significant way to serve the communities they spring from. That's why it so important to cherish and value social enterprises.

The SocialiSE newsletter will act as a vehicle to learn more about each other's work and showcase stories from communities across Ireland ahead

of our summit at the F2 Fatima Centre in Rialto, Dublin. If you would like a story or social enterprise featured in our next newsletter, just get in touch and let us know.

We'd like to hear what you think of the first edition – what you liked, didn't like and any great ideas you have for future editions. See back page for details.

Donie McGrath

Employment & Enterprise Co-ordinator, ILDN

The **SocialiSE Summit** for Social Enterprises will take place on 29 June in the F2 Centre in Dublin. The event is free for social enterprise workers and those in the community interested in setting up a SE. Places will be limited so we recommend booking early at https://socialise_summit_2022.eventbrite.ie



COMMUNITY FOCUS



A weighty facility: Moneygall Community Gym, Co Offaly

Lift-off for Moneygall's community gym

Henry Healy is perhaps the man most associated with Moneygall, Co. Offaly. Indeed, following the visit to Ireland of Barack Obama in 2011, when it was revealed that Henry was the then-US President's distant cousin, and he appeared in the pages of the country's newspapers posing alongside the head of state and First Lady Michelle Obama, he was probably the most recognisable face in Ireland.

Now, more than ten years on, Henry spends his time acting as treasurer and grants officer for the Moneygall Development Association (MDA), a local group dedicated to supporting community projects in the area.

Two problems identified by the MDA were the significant debt hanging over the Moneygall community hall, and the lack of gym facilities for the town's 300-plus population.

"We hit on the idea for the gym when we got together a committee to revive the community hall. It seemed like a good fit," said Henry.

"We actually had the idea in early 2019. We aimed to open in 2020 but the pandemic hit and stalled our progress. We even did Zoom Bingo to service the debt on the hall while we waited to get started.

"We applied for funding from the Offaly Local Development Company and got advice on the equipment that would best cater for the needs of the people most likely to use it – so strength and conditioning equipment for sports teams, and machines for cardio workouts. We opened in June last year.

"There are 316 people living in Moneygall and we have 100 members, so people are coming from outside the town to use the facility. Meanwhile, the community hall's debt is being managed by the membership. It's a complete success in that sense."

The gym is a polished and professional operation, the refined sheen extending to the booking system which is managed through an app. There is also a high-tech entry system which only allows access to members with a fob.

Henry said the gym keeps its overheads down through a "memorandum of understanding" with the gym manager, a full-time coach who looks after the running of the facility in return for using it as a base for his personal training business.

"It's an arrangement that works for us in that we have someone there full-time, and from his point of view, it allows him develop his business," says Henry, who adds that his relationship with Mr Obama did not end on the day of his initial State visit.

Henry has visited the White House numerous times subsequently, on one occasion even bringing along members of the MDA. During one trip to Washington DC, Henry was received in the Reception Room of the White House where he presented Mr Obama with a jersey from the local soccer club.

"I was over a few times before he left office. I travelled in the car with him and we even had a pint together

in Washington DC once. It's been an amazing journey," he said.



Slainte! Henry pictured with cousin Barack Obama

FAST FACTS:

- The Moneygall Gym opened its doors in 2021
- The town has a population of 300-plus
- The gym has up to 100 members
- One full-time manager runs the facility

NEWS

ARISE raising awareness of Social Enterprises

In July 2017, the Government assigned policy responsibility for social enterprise to the newly established Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The then Minister Michael Ring cited it as "an unprecedented opportunity for policy on social enterprise to be developed, for the first time, in a coordinated and integrated way alongside other initiatives to support organisations that are providing services to communities, or tackling social or socio-economic issues".

The first example of this was the publication of the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022 by DRCD. This was the product of research work, perusal of national and international research papers on social enterprise, discussions with stakeholders, and a public consultation process.

Its objective is to create an enabling environment for social enterprise to grow and contribute more fully to Ireland's social and economic progress. The success of the Policy depends in large part on the success in communicating the message about what Social Enterprises are, with the public, amongst social enterprises and

other businesses, and across the civil and public service.

In partnership with social enterprise stakeholders, DRCD has developed the Awareness Strategy for social enterprise in Ireland. Its main aims are to:

• **Provide a common approach to the communications and language around social enterprise.**

• **Foster a common understanding of the value of social enterprise.**

• **Collectively empower social enterprises to have a voice and a role in raising awareness.**

As part of this strategy the DRCD launched the Awareness Raising Initiative for Social Enterprise (ARISE) scheme which provides funding to social enterprises and their support and network organisations to carry out awareness raising initiatives that will increase awareness of social enterprises and their potential.

Funding for this scheme is provided from the Dormant Accounts Fund. Launching the initiative in September



Minister Heather Humphreys

2021 Minister Humphreys said: "The supports will help the Social Enterprise sector to raise awareness of the vital role that Social Enterprises play in contributing to a sustainable and inclusive recovery. My Department will continue to work towards supporting the role of social enterprises, as set out in the National Social Enterprise Policy."

The SocialiSE summit, which will be held on the 29th of June 2022, this Ezine and associated videos have been funded under Strand 2 of the scheme. This is aimed at Social Enterprise Network and Support organisations, to deliver more general or sectoral messages on what social enterprises are, and their potential to deliver sustainable and inclusive development and recovery.

SocialiSE Summit22

“We must use the summit to drive growth of social enterprises right across Ireland”

- Larry O'Neill

Dramatically growing the social enterprise sector in Ireland is a key aim of the SocialiSE Summit, the ILDN's annual social enterprise conference and expo, which will be held at the F2 Centre in Rialto, Dublin, on June 29th.

A gathering of social enterprises and communities where social enterprises from across the country can showcase their work in a trade fair-like environment, the SocialiSE Summit will include breakout sessions and workshops, guest speakers and stands that reflect various stages in the development of social economy projects.

The Summit is aimed at helping existing social economy projects to develop and encouraging community groups around the country to consider the possibility of setting up as a social enterprise project.

With this in mind, Larry O'Neill, the CEO of South Dublin County Partnership and Chair of the ILDN's Social Economy Working Group has spoken about the challenge and importance

of growing the social economy in Ireland.

“The very fact that we have to explain to community groups what social enterprise is tells us that we've a job of work to do here, but for the first time ever there is a national strategy for social enterprise under the leadership of the Minister and senior officials in the Department of Rural and Community development,” he said.

“One of the aims is to sell the social enterprise message to local communities, and there are some really terrific examples of how local communities can help themselves by setting up a community enterprise. Possibly the most popular one is community childcare. It benefits the community. It benefits the staff because they are on better terms and have more training and support than they would have in the private sector, and it benefits the children because the ratios are much lower on average in community childcare than in private sector childcare. We can see three benefits there straight away.”

Larry points out that only three percent of Ireland's GDP is

made up of social enterprises whereas the figure for Italy is close to 11 percent. The ILDN sees huge potential to develop the sector within existing communities and community groups.

“Existing community groups already have a social conscience, and they have an ethos among themselves that they are not there to make personal profit. I would encourage them to have a very good look at what they are doing right now to see if any part of it fits the social economy model. This will allow them to access resources that are aimed at social economy development and expansion,” he says.

“The local development network can help them. We have over 80 officers in 49 offices around the country who specialise in social enterprises. People who go into these offices will get empathy and a helping hand. We're saying to people it doesn't make a difference what bit of the jigsaw you bring, we can all contribute to the social economy, and we can all benefit from it. And we have the connections to all the resources needed to help them get up and running.”

Larry identifies bureaucracy as the key challenge to growing the social economy in Ireland. “Bureaucracy is a huge problem because it is putting people off so much. The development of social enterprise is very organic. One organisational chart for a social enterprise might look completely different to another, but each model would be as good, because it is organic,” he says.

"We all have different needs and different skills"

“We all work at different paces, and we all have different needs and different skills so while there might be a set profile of the steps that will be taken there is no time scale, and the state find that very hard to deal with. The state has systems in place where a grant must be fully expended or returned by specific dates. The social economy doesn't work that way.”

Larry believes that the sector needs to evolve professionally so that those providing social economy services are freed up from bureaucracy. “We have to change the paradigm of the social economy. Those of us in positions of authority or influence have to provide the governance for all the volunteers to allow them to do the job they want to do. There is a need for a level of professionalism in the governance side of this business,” he says.

He cites Recycle It in Clondalkin as an example of the



Larry O'Neill, CEO, South Dublin County Partnership

benefits social economy projects bring to their community. The door-to-door white goods collection service collects disused white goods such as fridges or cookers free of charge. “That means it is not dumped in the forestry, so it has a huge environmental benefit,” he says.

“They trained up people who wouldn't easily get work elsewhere, people who were ex-drug addicts, ex-offenders, people with disabilities, so there was a benefit there and because the labour is from the local community and the activity is based in the local community, there is economic gain for the area as well. You've got a triple benefit in that social economy project.”



Social Enterprise Expo 2019

He sees environmental projects, transport, particularly in rural Ireland, and care of the aged as areas where social projects could have a big impact. “The aged have been treated badly because we let the private sector sell care as a commodity,” he says. “The services on offer are pathetic. I think the community can do a much better job on that.”

He would also like to see the social economy provide an outlet for the abundance of skills in Ireland's migrant communities. “I think we are beginning to see some of the migrant communities coming into social economy projects at a better level rather than driving vans or sweeping floors. We could use social economy projects to develop more opportunities that would allow them a platform to move on with their careers.”

NEWS



Dormant Cash funds enterprises

Money from the Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF) has since last year provided grants of up to €80k to provide training and mentoring to social enterprise managers, directors and staff across the country.

The COVID-19 Social Enterprise Regeneration Programme, with a focus on strategic planning, digital innovation, capacity building and governance, has assisted social enterprises to strengthen their operations, and repurpose or diversify their trading income during the COVID-19 pandemic. operating

environment.

The scheme was launched by the Minister for Rural Affairs and Community Development Heather Humphreys. The Local Development Companies with their extensive network of offices and personnel have delivered this important programme across the country.



Jim welcomes awareness drive

ILDN chair Jim Finn says the public will be able to learn more about Social Enterprises and the positive impact they have in our communities, thanks to the support of the Department of Rural & Community

Development 'in developing the capacity of Social Enterprises and showcasing the

vital work in our communities." He added: The SocialiSE 2022 summit will be a key output of a campaign to drive awareness of Social Enterprises across Ireland. We're grateful the campaign has received funding provided by the Department of Rural & Community Development's (DRCD) Awareness Raising Initiative for Social Enterprise Scheme (ARISE)."

Donegal initiatives win funding

Grants ranging from €200,000 to €110,000 have been offered by Donegal County Council to development projects at Cairde le Cheile, Letterkenny Community Development Project, Letterkenny Community Centre, Cara House Family Resource Centre, Congress Resource Centre and the No Barriers Foundation. The total amount awarded from the Social Enterprise Capital Grant scheme is €1,006,574. Letterkenny-Milford Mayor Jimmy Kavanagh said the support will enhance many vital community services. He said: "This is great news for all the social enterprises concerned that will allow them to continue their excellent contributions to the community with confidence into the future, without the worry of financial pressures and paying for premises."

Consortium wins contract for first National Social Enterprise Census

A decision to award a contract to implement Ireland's first National Social Enterprise census has been welcomed by the Irish Local Development Network.

The national body that represents Ireland's 49 Local Development Companies said the census would lead to better planning and resourcing for social enterprises.

ILDN CEO Joe Saunders welcomed the move by the Department of Rural and Community Development to award the contract to a consortium comprising SERI (Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland), ILDN and Amárach Consulting.

ILDN members have a network of over 80 social enterprise support officers nationwide who deliver a wide range of supports to social enterprises through the LEADER, SICAP, Social Enterprise Regeneration Programme and the Community Services Programme.

Commenting, Mr Saunders said: "The significant benefit for Irish communities and society generally is that, for the

first time, we will get a comprehensive picture of the impact of the sector that will allow for more accurate planning and resourcing. The Social Enterprise sector is a huge contributor to economic well-being and social justice in this country and ILDN welcomes the opportunity to play a further role in developing its future."

ILDN Chair Jim Finn commended the Minister for Rural and Community Development and her officials "for recognising the need for this pioneering Census and for ensuring the resources to operate it."

ILDN member, Shauna McClenaghan, Joint CEO of Inishowen Development Partnership along with our other colleague Pádraig Casey of Ballyhoura, who are also both Directors with SERI, welcomed the announcement. Shauna said: "This is pivotal to the development of the sector and the consortium are well placed to deliver a reliable, comprehensive census showing the potential of social



Shauna McClenaghan, Inishowen Development Partnership

enterprises to contribute to social and economic progress". Welcoming the announcement, SERI chair Fergus Finlay said: "This is a landmark moment for the consortium headed by SERI and provides great recognition and opportunities for the membership of SERI and the consortium team."

The National Social Enterprise Census will be completed in the second half of 2022.

SocialiSE People

Q&A

with Cllr John Carroll

Independent councillor John Carroll talks to SocialiSE about the positive impact the Community Service Programme (CSP) has had on Birr, his hometown in Co.Offaly.



What is a Community Service Programme (CSP)?

The programme provides funding for not-for-profit community services that are, at least in part, staffed by people who are either unemployed, disabled, former prisoners or a member of an ethnic minority group.

How did you become involved?

We took over the running of Birr Swimming Pool in 1997. The CSP was new at the time so the pool was one of the first to get funding. The central plank of the programme is on-the-job training. We convinced the relevant government department that we could train people to be swimming coaches or lifeguards, or personal trainers in the gym.

How would you assess the impact of the CSP on your community?

The swimming pool was very run down when we took it over but since then we've invested nearly €3million to improve the pool and extend the gym. The investment means that every child in Birr – a town of 5,000 people, or 12,000 if you include the wider area – can now swim. In fact, people come from as far as 25 miles away to use the facilities. As a result the pool has a turnover of around €35,000 a month.

Later we set up the Crickle Sports and Recreation Centre, also in the parish of Birr, under the Community Halls Caretaker Scheme. The site was originally a handball club but we expanded the number of sports to qualify for more funding. As well as the sports centre, we have two handball courts while the athletic club lease the field beside it. It's a CSP now in the sense that it is subject to the same criteria as the swimming pool. It's very much a community centre.

How do the staff benefit from the programme?

At the pool, we only had budget for three full-time equivalents (FTE) in the beginning. One FTE is 39 hours. So rather than hire one person for one FTE, we hired two and gave them both a lot of flexibility to work 19.5 hours each, or hired three and split the hours three ways. At the pool and the centre, we host a lot of sports team training sessions so a normal 9am-5pm job for one person doesn't really suit. It's better for the facilities and for the staff themselves if the hours are divided. People who left us have gone on to become full-time coaches or work in hotels. It's been a great success.

What are some of the challenges these CSPs face ongoing basis?

Like any business, overheads have to be managed. The pool is looked after by a nine-person voluntary board and a full-time manager. We probably pay out around €6,000 a month for light and heat at the pool. We take on contracts to replenish the operating fund. For instance, we've been awarded grants from the Sports Council of Ireland to run a programme to increase schoolchildren's physical fitness. At Crinkle, Vodafone paid us to a mast on top of the handball alley. Ultimately, we wouldn't be able to survive without CSP funding.

Pooling community resources in Birr!

First opening its doors in 1974, Birr swimming pool is a non-profit organization run by the community for the community. It prides itself on the cleanliness of its facility and the friendliness of the staff. The facility was completely refurbished in 2007 and reopened as Birr Leisure Centre. In 2018, the centre extended its changing room facilities and gym, adding a whole new array of state-of-the-art fitness equipment. The jewel in the crown is a fabulous 25-metre heated swimming pool with a separate toddlers' pool, a poolside Jacuzzi, sauna and steam room. In the gym, there is pride in having the best equipment to match the customer's hard work and commitment leading to happier, healthier lifestyles. There is also a private studio for fitness classes and personal training. The Leisure Centre is open seven days a



week with early morning lane swimming and fitness classes along with afternoon and evening sessions. It operates on a non-profit basis, providing affordable membership rates for all members of the community. Both the gym and pool are wheelchair accessible and are open seven days a week from 7 am–10 pm on weekdays and 8.30 am–8 pm at weekends.

COMMUNITY FOCUS



Good work: The Cairde Enterprises workshop in Limerick

In Limerick – training people to look beyond crime and punishment

For many people who have been through the criminal justice system, the stigma attached to receiving a sentence can hinder their progression and reintegration into society.

In many cases, employment becomes difficult to find, leading to a range of potential issues that ultimately make it more likely they will reoffend.

Indeed, according to the Central Statistics Office, around half of former prisoners commit another offence within 12 months of their release, while those serving sentences of three to six months were most likely to reoffend within the same period.

Cairde Enterprises was set up in Limerick City in 2015 to counter this trend. Born from PALLS, a centre which provides accredited training courses in design, woodwork and horticulture for clients of its funder, the probation service, Cairde's mission is to bridge the gap between training and employment by offering skilled work in a setting that allows staff to develop a professional history.

"The social enterprise was a great fit for us as it offers

progression," says PALLS manager Ian O'Brien.

"We have a social enterprise manager and two full-time general operatives on our staff. Both of our general operatives came through PALLS. We have people involved in the PALLS training scheme who take part in the social enterprise as volunteers, to hone or develop their own skills or get more experience.

"In our workshop, we predominantly make wooden products like benches, bird boxes, planters and garden furniture, and we have a wood-cutting service here as well. We also upcycle furniture."

Ian has been manager of PALLS for three years. He admits that, in that beginning, his responsibilities with the training programme conflated with the running of Cairde.

"Up until our social enterprise manager was hired in November 2020, Cairde didn't have any dedicated staff. My role was coordinating existing staff members to develop the business, bringing in funding and managing various aspects of the governance side of things, all while trying to drum up contracts," he says.

"The business stuff was kind of chicken and egg. You need contracts to have staff, but you need staff to meet contracts. It was all part of a balancing act to get it to culminate to one point."

While Cairde relied on social enterprises across the country to get its products to market in the early phases, Ian points to recent partnerships with the Irish Bee Conservation Project as an example of how the company's methods have become more sophisticated.

"We've come a long way in a short space of time. Other social enterprises were an outlet for our product when we didn't have one, like We Make Good in Dublin or the Urban Co-Op in Limerick," he says.

"Initially, we stayed within the social enterprise sector. Now we're trying to move towards the business-to-business market rather than business to customer. That allows us to move more volume – so rather than sell to 200 customers, we're trying to sell to one or two customers who sell to 200 customers.

"In the last 12 months, we've done great work with the Irish Bee Conservation Project. Some of the projects have been part of the circular economy or had an environmental impact and it's nice to be associated with those kinds of projects as well."

The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic halted the company's progress but senior staff used the idle time to great effect, developing a website and sales platform for the company's wares.

"We've come a long way in a short space of time. Other social enterprises were an outlet for our product when we didn't have one"

"During lockdown, it became impossible for the workshop guys to stay on site. Our social enterprise manager and the warehouse manager were able to continue working on different areas but the physical manufacturing suffered. The down time allowed the management to develop cairdeonline, ie, which was an invaluable use of time," says Ian.

"Previously, Cairde's online presence would have been embedded in the Palls website but it wasn't user friendly so we had to develop something different. We have the site now but it's always evolving as we try to improve it and reach more people.

Ian is grateful to his Local Development Company PAUL Partnership who organised an emergency fund to support social enterprises across the county throughout the pandemic. That effort also led to the formation of a social enterprise network in the Treaty County, which Ian says has

FAST FACTS:

- Cairde Enterprises was formed in 2015
- It receives funding through Pobal
- It has grown to employ a full-time staff of three
- Two staff are graduates of the PALLS training scheme

been a valuable resource for exchanging ideas and advice.

"We got back to the workshops last year. We got great support from Pobal, our funders, and the Local Development Company was fantastic in helping us keep the lights on during Covid. Out of that there's now a social enterprise network in Limerick. It went from a discussion group to formalised network," Ian says.

"We're always trying to promote the work that we do. It's only through raising awareness that you get people's attention and they realise that this is something they should get behind.

"The products on our website highlight the talent that is in people who might not have had the opportunities to explore a skill before. To see their product for sale, there's huge value to individuals in that. It gives them a sense of accomplishment."

Ian believes Cairde Enterprise's impact on the local community in Limerick is immeasurable.

"People are coming from long-term unemployment and now they have a job. There's a benefit to the home unit, the local community and for society in general. It's more than just a job."

'These supports are critical for people'

The PALLS centre can be found on the Dock Road in Limerick City, the base from which it offers a range of fully accredited training courses in design, woodwork, metalwork, IT and horticulture for clients of the probation service.

The facility is fully equipped with handcraft workshops, training spaces, counselling rooms and a large kitchen for cooking classes, plus office space for project workers, administration and management.

PALLS manager Ian O'Brien is passionate about the contribution it makes to the community through its various support schemes and programmes.

"We have programmes for people coping with addiction issues and a community support scheme which is a structured early release programme for people who have received a sentence between three months and 12 months. And then we have a garden where we provide training as well," says Ian.

"You might have 100 people taking part in the programme in any given year. You're helping to tackle unemployment, mental health issues and all sorts of other stuff. These supports are critical and crucial for people."

The centre's city centre location is within walking distance of Limerick Prison and the Probation Service Office and provides easy access to commuters from all parts of Limerick City. PALLS' city centre location facilitates access and attendance for people from all communities in Limerick.



PALLS manager Ian O'Brien



Good times: the Pullough shop has been bringing people

A community pulling together at Pullough Shop

Martin Buckley is one of an estimated 700 people living around the village of Pullough, Co. Offaly. For many of them, the closure of the local shop in 2015 suddenly meant a ten-minute drive to the nearest town for household basics like milk and bread.

With doubt looming over the village Post Office and the local pub only opening at weekends, Martin felt the community was without a focal point.

“Our village was under threat,” he said. “There was so little happening and when people moved into the village we found we didn’t know them because we had nowhere to bump into each other. It was at that point that a few of us came together with the idea of setting up our own little shop.”

An eight-person committee was convened and Martin, elected chairman, began looking into similar projects around Ireland. His research brought him into contact with volunteers from Lorrha, Co. Tipperary, whose community shop would become a model for Pullough.

The search for a premises brought the committee to a number of local sites before they landed back on the site of the original shop, which was already kitted out with display units, shelves, fridges and a counter.

A grant from the Offaly Local Development Company and a volunteer-led refurbishment effort helped make the site presentable in only a matter of months.

“A lot of bits and pieces went into getting the shop up and running. To begin, we got insurance sorted and re-connected with the shop’s old suppliers – the milkman, breadman, anyone the former owner dealt with previously,” he said.

“We cleaned the premises and painted it. People came to help us with things you wouldn’t have considered – like

signage – and then we opened in in June of 2017. We said we’d do it for three months initially but we’re doing into almost five years now. Having said that, we still rely on funding to keep going.”

Martin, who works a two-hour shift every week along with his full-time job with RehabCare, insists that volunteers remain the backbone of the project.

“The shop wouldn’t be what it is without the volunteers. We open from 10am to 7pm Monday to Friday, then 10am to 4pm on Saturday and a few hours more on Sunday so people can get their papers. We have a team of eight and everyone does a couple of hours here and there.

“During Covid, the volunteers kept the shop open. Even during the winter time, when you might not get anybody in and money is tight, the volunteers are there.

“We try to survive in winter and look forward to spring and summer because we are on the Grand Canal Greenway. That’s attracting people into our village. They come to the shop looking for drinks, minerals and ice creams. That’s an added bonus for us.”

FAST FACTS:

- Local newsagents in Pullough closed in 2015
- A community-led replacement opened in June 2017
- Eight volunteers run the store
- The Pullough Shop is open seven days a week

Media Matters: Telling Your Story

Newspapers and broadcasters love a good story and social enterprises have plenty. But the trick is to have your key messages - and photos - at the ready!

The successes of social enterprises will be discussed at the SocialiSE Summit in June with plenty of examples of what can be achieved by volunteers working with local development companies.

The media has a real appetite for stories about social enterprises and that’s something to bear in mind when approaching journalists – or dealing with an approach from a journalist – about your social enterprise.

A good example of a social enterprise that was profiled in the media Connemara Therapeutic Riding (CTR), which received assistance from FORUM Connemara’s Local Community Development Programme (LCDP).

CTR is hosted at Errislannan Manor Riding Centre, a spectacular 200-acre estate, found on a quiet secluded, peninsula just a few miles outside of Clifden, Co. Galway.

CTR is a not-for-profit social enterprise, founded in 2015 by a group of parents of children with special needs. It is used by more than 60 people of all ages, including children, who attend as part of the curriculum in local schools. Riders can be introduced to it from as young as four, and the whole enterprise is kept going by an army of volunteers and local fundraising as well as receiving assistance from the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Here’s some tips for telling your social enterprise story:

- **Put people forward from your Social Enterprise who can concisely explain what you do**
- **If possible, provide quotes and testimonials from participants and users or clients of your social enterprise – the people it benefits**
- **Get good pictures – get a volunteer photographer or volunteer to take some ‘media ready’ photos. They need to be high-resolution and be people-focused – e.g photograph a group of three people – not 10!**
- **Have a media liaison/PRO who can provide facts and figures if needed and who is relatively easy to contact**
- **Develop a Media Kit for your website - this is basically an FAQ but for journalists with all the key info about your social enterprise and contact information!**



Social Enterprise Connemara-style: Therapeutic Riding in action

Therapeutic Riding (TR) is an equine-assisted activity which can be effective in improving balance, co-ordination, emotional control, self-confidence, self-esteem and community integration. It provides an intense, multi-sensory experience, can aid core muscle tone and posture, support the development of motor ability as well as helping with sensory and social skills. It’s a rich cocktail of really big positives.

As well as stables and an outdoor arena, the centre has a unique sensory trail which leads through a wooded area down to the sea. The trail, personalised for each rider, includes learning stations with an outdoor xylophone, abacus and devices and toys that illustrate words, animals and nature.

One of the volunteers includes the former RTÉ journalist Susan Byrne, who now lives near Clifden and acts as a leader and TR side-walker. “It’s extremely rewarding to see the joy that the riders get from TR and from these beautiful ponies,” she says.

In a feature article in the Irish Independent, CTR committee member Niamh Philbin described how Errislannan was an idyllic base for TR which has widespread backing across the entire community. She also provided context for how CTR had come about and how this social enterprise had been built from the ground up.

“There is such tremendous goodwill in the local community towards CTR. Our fundraising efforts are always very well received in the community. Without the support of our community, our volunteers and our local development company FORUM Connemara, it would be impossible to deliver this fantastic service. We are also very fortunate to have been recently awarded Community Services Programme (CSP) funding which will enable us to employ four people including a full-time manager.”

The article explored how, for attendees and their parents, CTR had become a treasured part of the week. Not only is it a chance for people to take part in an equine activity, it nourishes physical and mental wellness. This part of the article was a key message that drove home to audiences the power and value of this social enterprise.

The ‘Irish Independent’ feature was accompanied by lovely photographs that showed the CTR programme and activities in action, underlining the importance of good visuals to help tell story. The piece also included testimonials and quotes from participants and volunteers.

SOCIALLY SPEAKING!



Active Connections
@Actconn

Our Ember camp enjoy the weather sunny or not sunny.

#waterford #Wexford #kilkenny
#Carlow and #tipperary

Expanding our services-expanding our impact



cairdeenterpri1
Limerick, Ireland



cairdeenterpri1 Do you wish that you could repair, restore or upcycle a piece of furniture but wouldn't know where to start? Come and speak to us about it and we can do just that 😊 have a look at a couple of previous projects or come visit our website page www.palls.ie or call us on 061-608180 📞 #palls.ie #cairdeenterprises #socialenterpriseireland #furniture restoration #design #upcycling #repair #CNC #newleaseoflife #project

actconn



actconn Some #wildcooking in #Wexford
A wonderful way to build bonds and skills.



Live | Invest | Visit
@Sligo

Minister @HHumphreysFG officially opened the newly refurbished and upgraded An Chroí Digital Hub in Tubbercurry today, a great addition to business in south Sligo.

#SligoLIV #Tubbercurry #Digital
@connectedhubs @AtlanticEconCor
@Entirl @WesternDevCo @sligococo
@SligoLeader



Moneygall Community Gym
9 March at 15:12

🔥 FREE GYM CLASSES & INDUCTION FOR OVER 50's 🔥
Moneygall Community Gym in conjunction with Healthy Ireland
Offaly & Murray Fitness are delighted to offer
🔥 Free Gym Induction
🔥 Free Classes
🔥 5 weeks
🔥 Thursday Mornings 10am - ... See more



sdscsp1



sdscsp1 Sports First Aid Training Course on Saturday, 26th March at 9.30am in Brookfield Youth and Community Centre... more

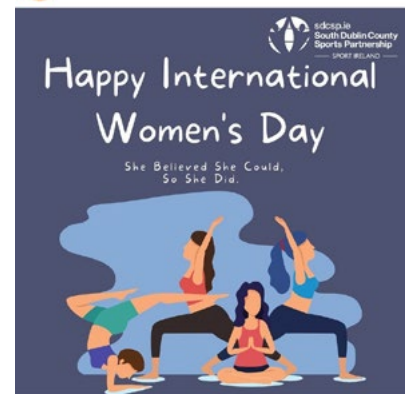


Recreate Ireland
@RecreateIreland

We're partnering with Meath County Council to host BRAKE-FEST, a family bicycle event on Saturday 21st May 2022. We want to squeeze the brakes on global warming. We'll work with 300+ children & families on the day. All part of National Bike Week running from 14th - 22nd May 2022.



sdscsp1



sdscsp1 Happy International Women's Day



liquid.therapy
Rosslough, Donegal, Ireland



liquid.therapy WE'RE BUILDING OUR TEAM!

