

EMERGE COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PLANS

PREPARED FOR:

Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office



Funded through the Just Transition Fund and the Carbon Tax Fund



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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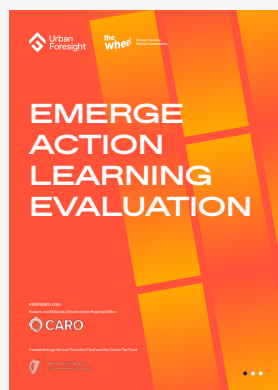
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UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF EMERGE

Our delivery of EMERGE concludes with three reports, which reflect upon what has been achieved and next steps for community development.

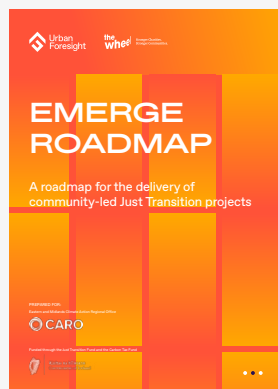
An assessment of the successes and learnings developed through the delivery of EMERGE is used to inform recommendations for further community capacity-building support within the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland.

Evaluation ↘



To answer the question of ‘how’ did EMERGE make an impact, our evaluation encompasses an assessment of the process undertaken, outputs from the training workshops and key findings. Our honest and open assessment identifies areas for further action and insights into how future programmes could benefit from our experience of delivering a community-focused training and mentoring scheme.

Roadmap ↘



Our roadmapping document draws upon the lessons learnt throughout the delivery of EMERGE to provide community-led actions which require further implementation beyond the life of this programme. Many communities expressed a desire for ongoing support, reflecting an area of need to enable the continued development of community-led projects.

COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PLANS

ABBEYLEIX



Image source: <https://www.laoispeople.ie/duncan-stewart-to-launch-abbeyleix-energy-masterplan/>

Context

Abbeyleix is a town located in County Laois, with a rich history associated particularly with Abbeyleix Abbey. The town also has natural attractions in Abbeyleix Estate.

The key groups within the town attended our in-person workshop, namely the Tidy Towns Group, Laois Down Syndrome Group and Abbeywell House. While these groups all had ideas for key projects to pursue, they all worked in isolation. Of these groups, only a representative of Abbeywell House engaged with EMERGE's mentoring offer.

Support received

Following the in-person workshop, the representative of Abbeywell House engaged in three mentoring discussions. Abbeywell House is a wellness retreat and therapy centre which delivers creative, integrative and holistic therapy.

The first session explored the background to the business and its ambitions for growth. The second session explored relevant funding streams which aligned with business goals. Based on these two sessions, Urban Foresight developed an action plan which was further developed by the business owner. Urban Foresight then provided further feedback and explored next steps in a final follow up meeting.

Project outline

To accommodate support for additional needs and increase accessibility, the owner of Abbeywell House hopes to expand into a new premises within Abbeyleix. The idea of developing health and holistic therapies, increasing overall site accessibility,

development of a wellness garden/ garden market, and accommodation (ecotourism-pods) was explored within the mentoring sessions.

The owner of Abbeywell House sought to obtain funding for the business. Through the EU JTF, the ecotourism accommodation piece seemed the most applicable for Fáilte Ireland's strand of funding to support the economic diversification of the local economy through the development of the regenerative tourism sector.

Checklist

A summary of the key themes emerging from the project checklist are outlined below:

- **Approximately €300,000 required for business development**
The representative of Abbeywell House had considered costs required for the project and had researched funding sources prior to the support of EMERGE. The broader development of the project is projected to take approximately 10 years.
- **Organisational form**
Key positions such as funding manager, community liaison and project management remain to be confirmed and the representative of Abbeywell House is keen to hire additional staff. The legal form and organisational policies also needed to be finalised.
- **Securing buy-in**
The representative was unsure of whether key community stakeholders were aware of the broad objectives for the project.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

Urban Foresight recommended that Abbeywell House explore category 2 – development of sustainable/ low carbon tourist accommodation of the Fáilte Ireland EU JTF funding stream by highlighting the tourism benefits of the development. The business owner has already developed an in-depth business plan and thought through costs and required resources.

Therefore, the action plan provided an opportunity to explore how the business plan can be adapted to highlight tourism. The business owner has a clear sense of the amount of funding required so requires guidance to ensure compliance with EU JTF guidance. The Just Transition Activator for County Laois should support Abbeywell House to submit an EOI.

Another core recommendation is to increase collaboration within the town, linking up with other key groups and actors, such as Down Syndrome Laois and a local B&B, Preston House.



Action plan for Abbeyleix

Guide ▾	Urban Foresight thoughts ▾	Community response ▾
Problem		
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Expanding into new premises within Abbeyleix to accommodate additional needs (e.g. young people with ASD) → Relying on income to support further growth and expansion of the business → High need for additional support for those with disabilities → Increased accessibility 	
Inputs		
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Time to build the programmes associated with the new facilities → Hire additional staff- integrated therapeutic staff → Fit out of building to increase accessibility → Design fees and project development costs → Funding (total project cost estimated to be circa €1.25m) to maintain the building 	<p>Funding to develop the different strands in phases e.g.; Health and Holistic therapies, Wellness Garden/ Garden market supporting local producers and supporting tourism day/weekend visits. (Try and acquire the field behind building and develop as a self-sustaining plot of local produce/ and live on accommodation).</p> <p>Integrating local businesses with holistic theme of centre as well as providing a space for weekend/day wellness and accessible to all.</p>
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Primarily by Jo Saunders 	Support of a small team employed locally.
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Collaboration with Preston House, a local B&B → Down Syndrome Laois 	I.A.F.W.A.



Action plan for Abbeyleix

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Outputs – Activities		
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Additional professionals have expressed interest in developing the garden to create an ecotherapeutic environment → Work to adjoining back yard and walled garden → Creation of ecotourism pods-creating overnight accommodation → Making adjustments to make the site accessible → Running wellness weekend for 2/3 days and will include Walking Meditations, Tree Bathing, Silent Retreats, Grounding and Earthing and Basic Horticulture 	<p>Ideas include a garden market to attract local tourism, a wellness weekend, and workshops on personal development and wellness.</p> <p>Integrative therapies housed within centre and accessible to all.</p> <p>Provide group space/ community social area to encourage different projects/ activities to come and use the space also.</p> <p>Promote low carbon activities such as Cycling, Bog Walks, Silent retreats, etc.</p>
Outputs – Participation		
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Abbeywell House will offer multiple service provisions for families, individuals, couples, adults and young people in County Laois more broadly, as well as the community of Rathdowney → New facilities will attract tourist groups from around the country and beyond → Qualified professionals who can use the facility or eventually seek employment 	<p>Preston House B&B.</p> <p>Eco-conscious travellers.</p>



Action plan for Abbeyleix

Guide ▾	Urban Foresight thoughts ▾	Community response ▾
Outcomes		
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Securing investment into the business→ Design of eco pod accommodation	
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Creation of eco pod accommodation→ Diversifying the business into tourism activities→ Increased accessibility of facilities e.g. wheelchair accessible→ Increased marketing of Abbeywell House	
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Increased support to those with varied levels of mental health distress, illness and trauma through additional therapies and programmes→ Supporting increased tourism locally	

ABBEYLEIX

ABBEYSHRULE



Image source: <https://www.longfordleader.ie/news/news/598993/broadband-fears-linked-to-abbeyshrule-yard-hub.html>

Context

Abbeyshrule is a small village in County Longford, situated on the royal canal. The community benefitted from the national JTF and council monies which enabled the retrofit of a derelict site at Abbeyshrule Harbour to create the Yard Hub. The remote working hub houses collaborative coworking spaces and meeting rooms. Funding received through the national JTF was also utilised for the development of bog walking trails, but the community is looking to expand this work further. These developments are being driven by a voluntary community group, formalised as The Yard Hub CLG.

Support received

Abbeyshrule were referred to Urban Foresight by the local SEAI SEC mentor. Urban Foresight supported the community through two mentoring sessions and the development of an action plan. Questions were raised around State Aid and de minimis, revenue vs capital, and match funding.

Project outline

The community in Abbeyshrule is looking at a solar PV installation on the remote/co-working hub premises. The building currently has an A2 energy rating, but The Yard Hub CLG aims to increase the resilience and environmental sustainability of the site whilst decreasing energy usage.

The mentoring discussions explored the installation of solar PV and concluded that to increase resilience the group could look to package solar PV and battery storage together at the site. If using an inverter that can work in island mode the battery could power the site for 2/3 days in case of emergency.

The site is constricted in terms of overall size and roof space. The Yard Hub CLG could explore placing additional solar panels at nearby sites, but this would likely require a governance structure such as a cooperative, as opposed to the current not for profit CLG.

Recommendations and next steps ▾

The Yard Hub CLG seeks to gain funding through the Priority 1.2 strand which is administered by Pobal. To do so, the group need to confirm their floor space and energy requirements, and ensure their project is compliant with the LECP before they prepare a concept note for submission to Pobal. There is a role here for Longford County Council to ensure compliance with the LECP, and to provide broader oversight on the project's development.

In terms of ongoing support, Abbeyshrule is connected with the SEAI SEC mentor. SEAI also has a renewable energy support scheme whereby SEAI appoints a trusted advisor to the development of particular projects. This is an additional form of support alongside the Pobal funding submission for the community to explore moving forward.



Action plan for Abbeyshrule

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Further increasing the sustainability of a remote/co-working hub – the building is currently an A2 rating following its retrofit → Increasing resilience and decreasing energy usage → Increasing environmental sustainability of the building (despite limitations regarding roof space and site size)
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Building upon first phase of JTF funding and funding from the council used for the retrofit → Need to confirm floor space and current energy requirements → Confirm funding requirements → Produce concept paper for Pobal strand of EU JTF (deadline 17th November)
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Need to look at the governance documents and confirm what activities are allowed for a not-for-profit CLG/charity → If looking to expand the solar to other sites it may be worth setting up another energy governance company (e.g. an energy cooperative)
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Securing the approval of the Longford County Council and ensuring alignment with the Longford LECP → Waterways Ireland
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Solar installation on a remote/co-working hub → Develop a narrative/story around increasing resilience and environmental sustainability by using solar and battery → Could also include an inverter which can work in island mode which can work independently from the power grid if required → Potential to add solar panels to additional sites



Action plan for Abbeyshrule

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Support of local community → Those utilising the remote/co-working space → Further collaboration with Longford County Council
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Determine the correct governance structure → Confirm floor space and current energy requirements → Decide on the optimal location and scale of solar PV installation and battery storage
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Installation of solar PV and battery storage → Increased sustainability rating of the remote/co-working hub
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Providing a resilient remote/co-working hub facility for the local community → Decreasing the overall energy usage of the facility

DRUMLISH



Image source: <https://www.longford.ie/en/live/towns-villages/drumlish/>

Context

Drumlish is a highly cohesive community located in County Longford, with a broad variety of active projects being led by a range of actors.

Support received

Drumlish were referred to Urban Foresight by the local SEAI SEC mentor. Urban Foresight supported the community through three mentoring sessions and the development of an action plan.

Project outline

Drumlish had a range of community projects they hoped to progress using EU JTF.

The primary project within the community is the development of a 1MW solar farm, together with a community walking trail and LED lighting. They have already undertaken significant feasibility work and have just secured funding for the next phase which involves a more detailed feasibility and design phase. The land for the solar farm is a decommissioned landfill site which is owned by the Council, which is agreeable that the site can be used for these purposes.

There are two main issues to be settled before the project is a certainty. Firstly the issue of using the remediated landfill as a site for a solar farm. Secondly, there is an issue with grid connectivity as there is a significant distance between the location and the nearest sub-station capable of accepting the connection. The group received advice on the financials (initial and operational costs, and what could be done with the revenue stream created), required certification, and the potential development of battery storage and grid balancing.

There are also some possible tourism projects within the community, led primarily by one key actor. One of their projects is the conversion of a listed building into a restaurant. Another is the development of tourist accommodation within the town, using 7 properties they have already acquired. The final project is the development of an equestrian centre with log cabin accommodation facilities.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

For the solar farm project, the community sought to submit a concept paper for the Pobal strand of EU JTF and were aware of how their project aligned with the LECP. As the concept for this project is well developed, ongoing strategic support from Longford County Council would increase viability.

The natural fit for the tourism oriented projects was the Fáilte Ireland Grant Aid Scheme. The Just Transition Activator for County Longford should support the community to submit EOIs for eligible projects.

While the development of restaurant and café facilities was deemed ineligible within the funding guidance, the tourism accommodation piece lends itself specifically to Category 2 – Development of Sustainable Tourist Accommodation (as planning permission has already been granted). For the equestrian centre and log cabin project Category 3 – Capital Project Planning & Design would enable preparatory work to be completed and plans to be drawn up.



Action plan for Drumlish

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Reuse of decommissioned landfill site → Diversification of local economy → Creation of income stream to stimulate local development
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Existing feasibility work → Expected total costs are approximately €1,476,000 – grant of €1,000,000 required alongside €476,000 of match funding (for solar PV, site development, project delivery costs, recruitment of staff) → Ongoing operational and maintenance costs → Resource to develop a concept paper for Pobal strand of EU JTF
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The entity which will run the site is still TBC → Currently being driven by Drumlish community with support from the county council
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Secured funding for a more detailed feasibility and design phase → The council – own the site, could potentially provide match funding
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 1MW solar farm, with a community walking trail and LED lighting → Reuse of decommissioned landfill site → Establishing grid connectivity → Potential addition of EV chargers → Potential development of battery storage system



Action plan for Drumlish

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The local community at Drumlish → Enhanced collaboration with the county council
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Clarity on grid connection → Gain agreement from the county council → Planning permission and EPA certification → Submission of concept paper under Pobal EU JTF
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Reuse of decommissioned landfill site → Creation of direct employment → Training for operations staff
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Contribution to Longford’s climate action objectives → Stimulating the development of similar projects through the creation of a revenue stream → Diversification of the local economy

GLINSK



Image source: <https://www.discover suckvalleyway.ie/suck-valley/heritage-culture/castles/glinsk-castle/36/>

Context

Glinsk is a village within County Galway. Until recent generations Glinsk had been a rural community dependent on farming, however there is now a lack of employment opportunities in the village. Home to a number of heritage sites including Glinsk Castle, Glinsk has a rich heritage and potential to grow its tourism sector.

Support received

Glinsk reached out to the Wheel relatively late in the mentoring process, so Urban Foresight held one mentoring discussion with the community. As part of the EMERGE support, two action plans were produced for the community, to address two very different project ideas. Urban Foresight offered to provide feedback on these after completion by the community member.

Project outline

Several major projects are underway in the town. One relates to the development of a modern community centre and children's playground on an 8 acre field recently purchased by the community. To date, the community has tarmacked, fenced and lit a walking path from the field to the centre of the village. The community centre will house an indoor astroturf, a gym, meeting rooms and a coffee/social space.

Another project relates to the development and launch of a master energy plan for the community in mid-November, which will look at the way energy is used locally and provide suggestions to increase sustainability. The project costed €10,000.

The final project in Glinsk is the development of Glinsk Castle – an iconic heritage point in the area in critical condition due to erosion. The castle is linked to an abbey/monastery, which received a grant of €20,000 from the Heritage Council in 2021 for the completion of a conservation plan. This year the Heritage Council provided a further €20,000 to do another phase of conservation. The community would like to protect the castle in a similar way and develop a tourist attraction which can showcase the heritage of the area. To do so, the community have purchased a 13 acre site across from the castle for the development of Glinsk Heritage Park for biodiversity purposes. The tourist attraction would therefore bring together the Abbey, Glinsk Castle and Glinsk Heritage Park.

Urban Foresight developed action plans for the community centre and Glinsk Castle projects.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

Pobal's strand of the EU JTF seemed most appropriate for this community, provided that both projects align with the LECP. Urban Foresight recommended looking at how the community centre could feed into training and skills development locally.

Support in understanding the strategic fit of this project and alignment with the LECP should be provided by Galway County Council.

Additionally, the development of Glinsk Castle is eligible for EU JTF, particularly Fáilte Ireland's Grant Aid Scheme through Category 1 – Development or Enhancement of Sustainable Visitor Experiences, or Category 3 – Capital Project Planning & Design.

The community is at the early stage of development of this project and will require further support from the Just Transition Tourism Activator for County Galway to develop EOIs.



Action plan for Glinsk

Project 1: Glinsk Community Centre

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The rural community had been dependent on farming until the last generation – they are now in a transitional period → Lack of local employment opportunities and long commutes to major employment hubs → Existing community centre opened in 1988 is no longer fit for purpose
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The community have bought an 8 acre field for the new community centre development – the first phase (a children's playground) and a pathway to the centre of the village opened recently → Potential to apply for funding under Pobal's strand of EU JTF, provided that the project conforms with the relevant LECP – resource will be needed to submit a concept paper for November 17th
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Currently being driven by key actors within Glinsk community
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → If seeking funding under Pobal's strand of EU JTF, the community will need to engage with the local authority and confirm that the project aligns with the LECP
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → New community centre development to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport and fitness facilities e.g. an indoor astroturf and gym • Meeting rooms • Hub for remote working • Community childcare facility → Use building for training and skills development → Potential for accessibility adaptations to the building



Action plan for Glinsk

Project 1: Glinsk Community Centre

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	→ Members of the local community – increasing local cohesion and a location for remote working
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<div>→ Collaboration with the relevant local authority to ensure alignment with LECP</div> <div>→ If achieved, a concept paper for Pobal’s strand of the EU JTF must be submitted by 17th November 2023, and the formal application will be made between 11 December 2023 – 23 January 2024</div>
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<div>→ Build of a modern and fit for purpose community centre</div> <div>→ Increased provision of sports and remote working facilities</div>
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<div>→ Increased skills and training locally</div> <div>→ Increased community cohesion</div>

GLINSK



Action plan for Glinsk

Project 2: Glinsk Castle

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Renovation of a national monument and an important heritage landmark of the Glinsk area which has become damaged through erosion → Showcasing the heritage of the area → Creation of a local tourist offering by connecting Glinsk castle with the Abbey/Monastery → Capturing the benefit for the walkway/cycleway development which Glinsk sits on
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Conservation plan for the Abbey funded by the Heritage Council (€40,000 over two phases) → Potential opportunity for funding through the Fáilte Ireland strand of the EU JTF (e.g. Categories 1, 3 and 4 – resource required to submit an EOI)
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Currently being driven by key actors within Glinsk community → Consider formal governance structures required to apply for EU JTF
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Liaise with the local Just Transition Tourism Activator once they are put in place → Consider the current ownership of the castle/Abbey sites and planning permissions required for the development of the site
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Showcasing the heritage of the area → A 13 acre site opposite the castle has been bought to develop a Glinsk heritage park for biodiversity → Develop a tourist attraction which brings together the Glinsk Castle, Abbey and park



Action plan for Glinsk

Project 1: Glinsk Community Centre

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Creation of a tourist destination will encourage tourists to visit Glinsk → This will create new potential income streams for local people and local businesses
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Potential to submit an EOI for the Fáilte Ireland strand of EU JTF → Concept development/feasibility/design studies for the castle element (if not already complete), to complement the conservation plans for the Abbey
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Renovation of Castle/Abbey → Increasing the local tourist offering through the development of Glinsk Castle, Abbey and park
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Supporting the diversification of the local economy → Conserving and showcasing the area's unique heritage sites

KILCORMAC



Image source: <https://visitkilcormac.com/our-community/>

Context

Kilcormac is centrally located between the towns of Tullamore and Birr in County Offaly. It brands itself as the gateway to Lough Boora Discovery Park.

Kilcormac Development Association (KDA) has been a presence in Kilcormac for 40 years and works to provide vital community services for all living in the community. KDA manages St. Joseph's Community Centre which is open 7 days a week. It has several office spaces, a large sports of function hall, two smaller training rooms all for rent for at affordable costs

Support received

KDA joined the Ferbane workshop delivered by the Wheel. They were looking at a consortium bid but were still developing ideas. The aim was to continue to develop Kilcormac as a tourist destination linked Lough Boora. The group had already been successful in gaining funding from previous rounds of the JTF. There was a possible tourism project to develop a campervan/touring site.

Project outline

In the mentoring session it was confirmed the campervan/touring site is being taken forward by the landowner on his own.

The projects to be taken forward were centred around the community centre in Kilcormac. The main project focused on the restoration of the mill wheel located within the community centre site. There was the possibility of adding a small generator to the wheel and deliver a small amount of electricity to the centre. This would not be a significant amount but would be a good educational tool.

The restoration of the mill wheel could also form part of a wider project to develop the industrial heritage of the site and Kilcormac more generally. This could be a heritage trail round the town and interpretation of various sites.

The KDA has also acquired a site on the edge of Kilcormac next to the GAA field. This contains a historic building which could be restored and provide space for a number of projects. This is perhaps a longer term project.

Checklist

A summary of the key themes emerging from the project checklist are outlined below:

- **Understanding project implications**
KDA have worked to understand the social and environmental implications of the project and secured community buy-in.
- **Well defined internal decision making structure**
KDA is a legal entity with agreed upon objectives and organisational policies. A project team has been formed, with well defined roles and responsibilities.
- **Understanding the lifetime of the project**
The group have determined a realistic timeline of the development of the project, whereby construction/implementation will begin in 2023/2024 and remain ongoing until 2032. Additionally, the project will create an asset which will require ongoing maintenance.
- **Costing the project**
The group understood that they need to factor in salaries, overheads, professional fees, construction, marketing and ongoing maintenance costs. However, the total project cost is unknown at this time as they are currently in phase 1 of the project.

Recommendations and next steps ↴

While multiple funding options were discussed with the KDA, Pobal's funding was most appropriate. At this stage, it is not clear if the project at Kilcormac is covered by the relevant LECP. There are also issues around State Aid and the suitability of the project to benefit from the Block Exemption regulations.

In terms of next steps, the KDA needs to discuss the mill wheel project with Offaly County Council to see if it aligns with the LECP. Therefore, there is a role for Offaly County Council to provide strategic oversight on this project.



Action plan for Kilcormac

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Existing JTF project – develop a tourism and business hub. Just broken ground. Café, Pod Cast Room, toilets, bike hub, tourist office and upstairs a community working hub → Made an application for EV Charging point → New projects – Gateway to Lough Boora. Aim to get visitors to stay longer in Kilcormac. Audio Heritage trail. Developing signage. Aural history project around industrial heritage of Kilcormac. How do we market the project → A need for more tourist accommodation → Old mill wheel. Phase One funded. Next phase to add generator to wheel power the Community Centre. Also develop an educational interpretation element
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Detailed plan on renovating the mill wheel to supply renewable energy → Collect materials for the interpretation project and guided walk → Develop the old castle site near the GAA fields (Long-term project)
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Kilcormac Development Association
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Offaly Council → Kilcormac Killoughey GAA Club



Action plan for Kilcormac

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Renovate the Mill Wheel to preserve the industrial heritage for future generations → Use the wheel to generate a small amount of renewable electricity for the Community Centre → Use the Mill Wheel as part of a heritage interpretation project
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A tourist attraction to ensure visitors to Lough Boora visit Kilcormac for longer → Residents of Kilcormac who want to find out more about the industrial heritage of the town
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The restoration and preservation of the mill wheel → Development of a heritage interpretation trail
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Renewable energy generation for Community Centre → New tourist attraction in Kilcormac → Improve the facilities at the Community Centre
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Visitors have more reason to stay for longer and spend more money with local businesses

KILLESHIN



Image source: <https://www.laoistoday.ie/2021/08/30/killeshin-community-come-together-to-open-new-walking-facility-at-stunning-local-waterworks/>

Context

Killeshin is a rural village located in County Laois. The community aims to develop a hydro generator, located at an amenity park in the old Killeshin Water Works.

Support received

Throughout the delivery of EMERGE mentoring, Urban Foresight established connections with two of SEAI's SEC mentors, and Laois Tourism. One of these SEC mentors referred a community member from Killeshin to Urban Foresight towards the end of the mentoring process. One mentoring discussion was held with the community to discuss potential funding avenues.

Project outline

Run by Killeshin Community Development committee, the project consists of installing a hydro generator on the site of a redundant waterworks to utilise the energy available there for community benefit. If connected to the grid it is possible the hydro generator could generate income to support broader community development, as community facilities such as a children's playground will be developed around the site.

Additionally, the Killeshin Community Development committee would like to renovate an existing industrial building at the waterworks site for use as a men's shed with three-phase power. Urban Foresight discussed how this project could be best positioned to target EU JTF funding, and suggested presenting the men's shed as more of a workshop maker space. A development of this type of community infrastructure could support local enterprises, schools and community upskilling.

The mentoring discussion also explored:

- The possibility of additional battery storage, a further walkway and some PV solar panels
- Additional costs beyond installation, including maintenance and training costs
- The governance structure required
- Permissions required

Recommendations and next steps ▾

The best funding option for this project seemed to be Pobal's support for the implementation of local and regional economic strategies. After confirming that the project confirms with the LECP for County Laois, the first step for the community is to submit a concept paper and receive feedback from Pobal.

In terms of ongoing support, Killeshin has a strong connection with the local SEAI SEC mentor, who is able to signpost them to relevant support moving forward. Laois County Council should also provide strategic guidance on the project's alignment with the LECP and permissions required.



Action plan for Killeshin

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Reuse of redundant waterworks site → Creation of renewable energy → Income generation to boost the community
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → €85,000 to get the hydro generator scheme up and running (including installation and connecting to the grid) → Concept paper for Pobal funding to be submitted by 17th of November → Budget and indicative costs required
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Community Development Association – to consider what type of structure will need to be established (e.g. will require a tax or CRO number) → Potential for income generated to cover ongoing maintenance costs
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Gain support of the local authority and coordinate with LECP
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → In future will look to add a number of walks around the amenity into adjoining lands → Install and connect a hydro generator to the grid (to create income) → Renovation and reuse of old industrial building into makerspace/workshop with 3 phase onsite and equipment for local businesses and skills development (e.g. woodworking). Will require installation of basic amenities also (e.g. windows, heating, toilet) → Income would be used to promote local development (e.g. kids playground) → Potential to add PV panels to the site (either on the roof of the building or surrounding land)



Action plan for Killeshin

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Could provide a facility for retrofit training in the county – potential scope for partnership between these projects → A facility for use by the local community and local businesses → The wider local economy
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Renovation of industrial building and redundant waterworks site → Potential of adding PV panels to the site to boost renewable energy generation
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provision of new upskilling facilities for local residents/ facilities for local businesses
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Killeshin Community Development Association to consider number of indirect jobs created, how many people will use the space, and potential carbon savings → A means of energy generation to boost the local economy

MOATE



Image source: <https://www.westmeathindependent.ie/2023/11/21/moate-walking-trail-plan-receives-key-seed-funding/>

Context

Moate is located in the triangle of Mullingar, Tullamore and Athlone (County Westmeath) and has a population of approximately 2763. The EMERGE project engaged with Moate Action Group (MAG), a community organisation established in 2014 to support the sustainability of the economic, cultural, and natural environment of Moate town. MAG is in the process of developing the broader 'Moate Linear Park Project', a 6 km park based on the Dublin to Galway Greenway. The project was initiated in 2015 and aims to attract tourists to the town, increased employment, strengthen the business sector and enhance the old rail trail. As a result, the community seemed cohesive with a strong vision for the direction of development in Moate.

Support received

Two mentoring sessions were held with Moate Action Group (MAG). The first session focused on the scope of the Linear Park Project more broadly to identify a specific area to take forward using the EU JTF. Once this had been decided on, Urban Foresight produced an action plan for a segment of the project. A further session was then organised to discuss feedback and next steps for MAG moving forward.

Project outline

For the focus of the EMERGE support, MAG selected the development of the crannog and Viking site, which can be packaged as an individual project which fits within the broader vision for the development of the greenway. MAG hopes to develop a crannog reconstruction and walkway through the bog at this particular site, using a phased construction beginning with the boardwalk. The group seeks to obtain funding to conduct a feasibility study for the development of the crannog site.

Checklist

A summary of the key themes emerging from the project checklist are outlined below:

→ Effective decision making

MAG is effectively communicated the project's objectives with key community stakeholders and has an established decision making structure to oversee the management of the project. MAG is an established legal entity which is able to secure and manage funding.

→ Support obtaining funding required

Overall, the Linear Park Project is projected to cost between €3 and 4 million. The group needs support to break the broader project down into achievable stages to enable them to identify relevant funding pots.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

While buy in from key community groups has largely been achieved, MAG needs to gain control of the land through a letter of agreement for public right of way access. Later plans for the addition of a velorail at the greenway would require approval from Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ).

MAG would like to apply for funding Fáilte Ireland Grant Aid Scheme. MAG has clear plans for project development and would benefit from further guidance from the Just Transition Tourism Activator for County Westmeath.

Their intention is to apply for Category 3 – Capital Project Planning & Design, which, if successful, could be used for the completion of a feasibility study, design fees, project management and concept development among other fees. The group also expressed interest in pursuing funding under Category 1 – Development or Enhancement of Sustainable Visitor Experiences once permissions have been obtained.

The group is already connected with a representative of Westmeath County Council, which has been a useful support thus far. Continued support in this vein will enable further project development.



Action plan for Moate

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Problem		
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Linking up experiences North of Moate → Further development of the 6km Dublin to Galway Greenway → Strengthening of Linear Park project – building upon the momentum of previous projects with a view to developing more ambitious projects in future (such as a Velorail) → Realising the value of existing heritage assets (Viking finds and Crannog site) → Education on bogs, biodiversity and conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Link to Integrated Plan, which will include the Moate Town plan and the projects which have been carried out by MAG over the past years → The CIE issue must be addressed in the short AND long term. A specific plan has been prepared for the park → The Velorail project should proceed in the short term. Identify views. Design Crannoge. Board walks. Road access. Involve landowners → Purchase replicas. Select site for crannoge. Design boardwalks → OPW rewatering. Peatlands project. Rewilding. A Biodiversity Corridor with the planting of Native tree species will be prioritised to mitigate the Ash Dieback problem (80% to 90% of trees are Ash) → An Arboretorial Management System put in place for horticultural/ educational purposes for the approx. 6km long corridor
Inputs		
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Funding for a feasibility study to explore the development of the Crannog site → Resources for the phased construction of the site- beginning with the creation of a boardwalk then adding a Crannog reconstruction → Funding could be sourced from EU JTF, LEADER 2023-2027 among other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Archaeological support will be required and there will be a cost factor. Location will be an issue. Acquisition of land may be required. → Design and construction together with costings are needed → Funding sources need to be identified Funding for Tree Planting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coillte/ Other Grants are available for large-scale Tree Planting schemes Investigate potential sources



Action plan for Moate

Guide ▾	Urban Foresight thoughts ▾	Community response ▾
Inputs		
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → An established legal entity, MAG, has been supporting the development of the town since 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The regeneration team and Westmeath Co. Co. must be involved. A management plan needs to be prepared
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Gaining control of the land is required → Buy in from other key community groups has largely been established → Aligned with Moate Town Master Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The CIE issue remains. Road access needs investigation. Approach to landowners outlined on page 4 → The community, business and individuals need to part of this project
Outputs – Activities		
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Conduct a feasibility study → Create a boardwalk → Link in with existing assets → Biodiversity planting → Viewing points → Signage → Approach local landowners and obtain letter of agreement, outlining what conditions they would stipulate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Application made – Outdoor recreation. Look for more grants → Research boardwalks and design and cost → Local walks to assets. Signage – theatre, services, pubs and amenities → A Biodiversity Corridor with the planting of Native tree species will be prioritised to mitigate the Ash Dieback problem (80% to 90% of trees are Ash) → An Arboretorial Management System put in → Investigate Trails through existing and proposed Tree Planting → Investigate rest/seating areas – large areas of biodiversity have been identified as good seating areas for horticultural/educational purposes within the approx. 6km long corridor → Identify locations, information cost → Design and costing → Prepare approach – design type of access, draft conditions



Action plan for Moate

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Outputs – Participation		
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The projects will be used to attract more tourists to the town → It will provide additional amenity land and cultural activities for residents → It will help businesses develop more business opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A clear understanding of Tourism strategies and plans is vital. The target market and their expectations is vital. The marketing approach and packaging is vital. We need help from Fáilte Ireland → The integrated /comprehensive plan needs to be understood. Help is needed from outside agencies → Business needs to understand and be actively involved. The Biodiversity element will help with Educational and Sustainability courses and practices within the Schools and Business College curriculums allied with Community involvement through a specific strategic, goal-orientated horticultural project on the 6 km corridor which is accessible to all
Outcomes		
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Determining public right of way access → Connecting areas of the greenway to the lake → Enhancing the experience of existing trail users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Progress this item → This part of the linear park plan → This process has already started – peatlands project, video presentation. Research on attractions – monastic settlement, Ballinderry crannogs, wetlands



Action plan for Moate

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Outcomes		
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increased tourism offer to attract local, regional, national, and international visitors to the town → Development of additional tourist attraction using Viking finds and Crannog reconstruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Marketing/tourism plan. Work with Bord Failte → Prepare a design and construction plan. Source Finance
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → To boost the Business sector and create both direct and indirect employment → Biodiversity benefits → Stimulating increased awareness and education around bogs → Integration and networking of geographical areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Businesses MUST buy in to this. Age profile Encourage enterprise through seminars, contact with agencies, Resources in Business college, TUS, Agencies, UCD Training courses, etc → Seminars, annual event, Rewilding, information. Reinvigorate the existing planting on the proposed route to include a greater diversity of Native Tree Planting in the area → This will also have a major impact on the mitigation of the loss of a high percentage of the existing trees through Ash Dieback → ‘Our resources are not always on our own doorstep. Make ourselves known

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF GROUP WATER SCHEMES



Image source: <https://www.eolasmagazine.ie/a-broadened-vision-for-the-future-of-the-group-water-scheme-sector-in-ireland/>

Context

The National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) is a representative and advisory body for a range of Group Water Schemes (GWS) in communities across the Midlands. Each GWS receives advice on how to set up as a cooperative or a CLG, before taking care of treatment and distributing water to communities. Examples of supported community GWS include:

- Clareen GWS (Offaly)
- Killeigh GWS (Offaly)
- Rath GWS (Offaly)
- Corracreigh GWS (Roscommon)
- Mid Roscommon GWS (Roscommon)
- Oran Ballintubber GWS (Roscommon)
- Polecat Springs GWS (Roscommon)
- Ardcroney GWS (Tipperary)
- Ashill GWS (Tipperary)
- Moyne GWS (Tipperary)
- Glinsk Creggs GWS (Galway)
- Milltown Community GWS (Galway)
- Ballacolla GWS (Laois)
- Cullahill GWS (Laois)
- The Heath GWS (Laois)

Support received

The National Federation of Group Water Schemes engaged in one EMERGE mentoring session, to gain guidance on relevant funding streams and how to best position their project. They were referred to EMERGE by the SEAI mentor for their Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) and had not been involved in previous stages of the programme.

Project outline

In their 2019 strategic plan, NFGWS selected 36 GWS to participate in energy auditing support which would help NFGWS to develop a model to be rolled out to the sector more broadly. As part of this, a number of GWS expressed interest in implementing measures to reduce their carbon footprint and produce co-benefits for biodiversity. As a result, the NFGWS hoped to gain advice on funding that community schemes could be signposted to, or alternatively a scheme which would enable NFGWS to submit a bid for a collective pot of funding for all communities within the EU JTF territory.

For the communities which fall within the Just Transition area, two funding streams were recommended.

1. **The National Parks and Wildlife Service's support to enable the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands**
Funding under this strand of support could enable GWS to conduct feasibility and design studies, stakeholder engagement activities, restorative measures, implementation of measures to monitor restoration and rehabilitation, and education.
2. **Pobal's funding to support the implementation of local and regional economic strategies**
An application under this strand would involve grouping the communities together to meet the €200,000 minimum funding threshold for the implementation of sustainability and energy efficiency measures.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

The first steps for enabling a funding application under the National Parks and Wildlife Service's support is to consider, in-depth, what specific support for biodiversity measures and studies will be required for each of the communities. Resource is then required, either at a community-level or from within NFGWS, to develop the EU JTF application.

To enable an application under the Pobal strand of EU JTF, Urban Foresight recommended that the NFGWS ensured all GWS align with the LECs for the relevant counties. They must also ensure that they have buy-in from both the county councils and the communities within their membership. Following that, resource would be required to pull together the concept note for Pobal's funding support (which has since closed for applications).

There is a role for Offaly, Roscommon, Tipperary, Galway and Laois County Councils to provide guidance on whether the project aligns with the LECs and ongoing strategic support for projects in their jurisdiction.



Action plan for National Federation of Group Water Schemes

Project 1: The National Parks and Wildlife Service's Biodiversity Funding

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provision of an advisory body for group water schemes to increase the accessibility of advice → Increase understanding of co-benefits for biodiversity and climate action, whilst maintaining water quality → Encouraging restoration and rehabilitation at a range of EU JTF eligible sites
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 10 energy audits have already been completed and several energy projects have already been installed → The catchment area for each scheme has been determined → Resource to develop a bid for the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) strand of EU JTF
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Overseen by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes → Consideration of whether it is necessary to set up as a cooperative or CLG → Consider how each individual project will be managed
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → NPWS → Buy-in of communities within membership → Agreement of landowners



Action plan for National Federation of Group Water Schemes

Project 1: The National Parks and Wildlife Service's Biodiversity Funding

Guide ▾	Urban Foresight thoughts ▾
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 36 group water schemes selected to test a support model to roll out to broader membership → 10 schemes are interested in putting measures in place to reduce their carbon footprint and study co-benefits for biodiversity → Potential to apply for funding under the National Parks and Wildlife Service's support for the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands and wetlands → This could fund feasibility and design studies, stakeholder engagement activities, restorative measures, implementation of measures to monitor restoration and rehabilitation, education → Consider what specific support for biodiversity measure/studies will be required in each community
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Utilise funding from the National Parks and Wildlife Service → NFGWS need to consider which wider stakeholders will be impacted by the programme. → Support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clareen GWS (Offaly) • Killeigh GWS (Offaly) • Rath GWS (Offaly) • Corracreigh GWS (Roscommon) • Mid Roscommon GWS (Roscommon) • Oran Ballintubber GWS (Roscommon) • Polecat Springs GWS (Roscommon) • Ardcroney GWS (Tipperary) • Ashill GWS (Tipperary) • Moyne GWS (Tipperary) • Glinsk Creggs GWS (Galway) • Milltown Community GWS (Galway) • Ballacolla GWS (Laois) • Cullahill GWS (Laois) • The Heath GWS (Laois)



Action plan for National Federation of Group Water Schemes

Project 1: The National Parks and Wildlife Service's Biodiversity Funding

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Identify projects in each of the NPWS within the JTD areas to submit bids for projects → Submitting an EU JTF application for funding from the NPWS
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use of funding to complete feasibility and design studies/stakeholder engagement/restoration measures/monitoring of restoration and rehabilitation/education and awareness-raising until 2026
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Biodiversity enhancement benefits for communities involved → Template for rolling out community restoration and biodiversity enhancement measures which can be applied to the broader membership



Action plan for National Federation of Group Water Schemes

Project 2: Pobal's Renewable Energy Funding

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provision of an advisory body for group water schemes to increase the accessibility of advice → Costs relating to the use of electricity in the treatment facilities managed by group water schemes → Supporting communities to meet the objectives of the EU JTF with regards to sustainability and energy efficiency
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 10 energy audits have already been completed and several energy projects have already been installed → Resource to develop an application for Pobal's funding to support the implementation of local and regional economic strategies → Consider what schemes/purposes surplus money raised through the sale of renewable energy will be used for
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Potential for funding to be overseen by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes → Consideration of whether it is necessary to set up a new community energy company as a cooperative or CLG
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → If packaging all community renewable schemes together for the Pobal application, the National Federation of Group Water Schemes will need to ensure the plans align with LECs for all relevant counties and gain buy-in from the relevant county councils (Offaly, Roscommon, Tipperary, Galway, Laois) → Buy-in of communities within the membership



Action plan for National Federation of Group Water Schemes

Project 2: Pobal's Renewable Energy Funding

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 36 group water schemes selected to test a support model to roll out to broader membership → A number of these schemes are exploring the development of renewable energy sources at their sites e.g. installation of solar, grid balancing through battery storage → Pobal funding for the development of renewables requires a minimum of €200,000-potential to package the group of water schemes together under one funding pot
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Utilise Pobal funding → Support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clareen GWS (Offaly) • Killeigh GWS (Offaly) • Rath GWS (Offaly) • Corracreigh GWS (Roscommon) • Mid Roscommon GWS (Roscommon) • Oran Ballintubber GWS (Roscommon) • Polecat Springs GWS (Roscommon) • Ardcroney GWS (Tipperary) • Ashill GWS (Tipperary) • Moyne GWS (Tipperary) • Glinsk Creggs GWS (Galway) • Milltown Community GWS (Galway) • Ballacolla GWS (Laois) • Cullahill GWS (Laois) • The Heath GWS (Laois)



Action plan for National Federation of Group Water Schemes

Project 2: Pobal’s Renewable Energy Funding

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Consideration of what stage communities are at in terms of designing/installing renewables projects and develop a project plan for each community (including costs, governance structures, etc.)→ Ensure alignment with all county councils/LECPs→ Submitting an EU JTF application for funding from Pobal
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Use of EU JTF for project development in each community to be completed by 2026
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Increased sustainability of community group water schemes→ Reduced costs related to the electricity required for water treatment and broader progress towards EU JTF goals

PORTARLINGTON



Image source: <http://portarlington.ie/gallery/>

Context

Portarlington is a town which sits on the border of County Laois and County Offaly. Portarlington is an active community, developing a number of projects. While the community is all working to the common goal of diversifying and developing Portarlington, the groups are not particularly cohesive or aware of each other's work. Additionally, the community faces challenges in understanding what support they are eligible for due to their location on the county border, which seemed to be a slight point of tension.

Support received

In total, Urban Foresight had 5 meetings with Portarlington community. Initially, only one member of the community connected with the EMERGE programme, and felt the Derrynounce Bog project was the most relevant to progress using EU JTF. However, this community member was not connected with Portarlington Community Development Association (PCDA) – the organisation driving the development of the bog. Through the various calls, Urban Foresight became connected with relevant members of the PCDA and gained additional details of the project's nuances, enabling the development of an action plan.

Project outline

Part of our role in Portarlinton was connecting actors, and developing a common awareness of both EMERGE and each other. EMERGE also focused on progressing the Derryounce bog project, which sought to realise the value of the rewetted peatlands.

At present, Bord na Móna, Coillte and PCDA own the land and an entrance to the site has been established. PCDA now seek funding to begin to develop enabling infrastructure such as car parking, toilet and welfare facilities, improved accessibility, continued maintenance work, and crucially improved interpretation for the site.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

PCDA needs to establish key stakeholders for the project and consider synergies with similar attractions being developed within a short distance (such as Umeras bog project and Lough Boora). The accessibility angle for this project is a clear unique selling point, although the team also needs to consider whether the site is designed for locals or to attract tourists.

The team is awaiting the release of their 10 year consultation plan, projected to be released in December 2023. This will provide a basis for the development of Expressions of Interest for a number of categories under the Fáilte Ireland Grant Aid Scheme.

However, in the near term the group would like to submit an EOI for Category 4 – Digital Transformation, which has a deadline of the 30th of November. An action plan was developed to support the community with this process and support them to think through outstanding gaps in understanding.

The representatives of PCDA have been connected with the representative of Laois County Council who was to become the Just Transition Tourism Activator in Laois. As the town sits on the Laois/Offaly border, there is also a significant requirement for support from both Offaly County Council and the respective Offaly Just Transition Activator. Further strategic support for the project and EOI completion should be provided by the activators and councils more broadly.



Action plan for Portarlinton

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Problem		
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Creating a site of interest using existing local assets → Realising the value of rewetted peatlands in terms of biodiversity → Increased diversification of the town of Portarlinton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Amenities for community → Tourism / Employment for the benefit of the people in Portarlinton and surrounds → The continuation of the Barrow Blue Way from Monastereven → The provision of a cycle trail commencing in Derryounce out to Mount Lucas and across country
Inputs		
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 10 year consultation plan to be released in December 2023 → Requires additional funding – lack of funding or plan to establish funding. Which JTF funding to target (30th November deadline for digital transformation strand) → Continued voluntary contribution → Lease with BnM and Coillte → Support of Just Transition activator in the new year need to decide if supported by Offaly or Laois probably Offaly 	
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Portarlinton Community Development Association is driving the development of Derryounce bog 	Derryounce Lake & Trails
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure connections with other community groups are established → Gathering stakeholder feedback 	



Action plan for Portarlinton

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Outputs – Activities		
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Car parking facilities → Toilet and welfare facilities → Continued maintenance work → Improve accessibility for visitors → Improved interpretation of the site for visitors 	<p>Provision of sporting, leisure, wellness and educational facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → May not be suitable for EU JTF funding → Needs to be tourism related, business related or education focused → Think about a phased approach, short term and longer-term projects → Trail development not eligible for funding under EU JTF. Could be framed in a different way to hit funding criteria
Outputs – Participation		
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Team to consider- is this designed for the local community, with a view to attract tourists as the offer expands? → Team to consider what other local activities the project will link in with → Team to consider synergies with Umeras bog project and Lough Boora, although the accessibility trail work in the town is a clear USP → Through this accessibility angle, the project could link in with Laois and Offaly sports partnership → Tying in with similar local work (e.g. Umeras focused on arts and culture) 	



Action plan for Portarlinton

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Outcomes		
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Obtaining funding→ Developing additional amenities to create a destination for locals and tourists- e.g. toilets, welfare, parking→ Phasing activities into the short and medium term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Digital accessibility – for all
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Increased tourism offer to attract local, regional, national and international visitors to the town	
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Supporting the economy of Portarlinton, boosting the economic impact of tourism→ Creation of both direct and indirect employment→ Biodiversity and conservation benefits	

PORTARLINTON

SHANNONBRIDGE



Image source: <https://redroute5.wordpress.com/shannonbridge/>

Context

Shannonbridge is a village located in County Offaly on the River Shannon. Shannonbridge was home to a significant ESB-owned power station, which closed alongside the cessation of peat cutting. This had a significant impact on the town and in West Offaly more broadly, and over the years Shannonbridge has received a significant amount of funding to create a new vision for its development.

Support received

Shannonbridge received two mentoring meetings in total. The mentoring was guided by a particularly active leader from Shannonbridge Action Group, who had a strong vision for the town's development. The first session enabled the group to prioritise the project to pursue under EU JTF funding, while the second session facilitated a deeper discussion around the particular project of choice to enable the development of an action plan. The action plan was circulated with the community following this meeting and outlined key resources and next steps.

Project outline

Shannonbridge have a range of active projects which are supporting the community to reimagine itself following the significant impact of the ESB closure. For example, the Destination Shannonbridge project aims to make Shannonbridge more attractive to tourists, and has synergies with the development of the Shannon Blueway. Additionally, a future look study is in the process of being completed for a building the community was given by ESB.

The project Shannonbridge Action Group hoped to progress using EU JTF related to the development of an old school building. The older part of the building (constructed in the 1940s) will be converted into an events centre. The newer section of the building will be replaced with an accommodation block, a café, a space for remote working and a small crafts shop. A study is currently being completed by architects, but the group needs to consider how they will operationalise the development in further detail and gain planning permission.

Current thinking is that the accommodation block and services will be leased out independently, while the events space would be run by the community. In terms of resourcing, the community recognises that recruitment of personnel to operate and market the site is required, and predict that the first 2 years of operations will be focused on awareness raising.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

In the short term Shannonbridge Action Group need to:

- Confirm costings for the site
- Appoint a project manager
- Raise awareness of the project
- Gain planning permission

Support should be provided by Offaly County Council to provide guidance regarding obtaining planning permission.

The project was suited to Fáilte Ireland's Grant Aid Scheme under Category 2 "Development of Sustainable/ Low Carbon Tourist Accommodation". The group would like to complete an EOI, but first must consider the issue around planning permission and building ownership. Additional support in completing an EOI should be provided by Offaly's Just Transition Activator.



Action plan for Shannonbridge

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Problem	
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The broader mission of transforming Shannonbridge into a destination following the closure of the power station (synergies with Destination Shannonbridge project and the Shannon Masterplan for Shannonbridge) → Preventing the old school building from entering dilapidation → Taking advantage of the momentum in reimagining Shannonbridge alongside other regeneration projects
Inputs	
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Planning permission to be obtained (being launched imminently) → Use of a future look study/ feasibility study (currently being progressed) and an economic assessment of the building → EU Just Transition Funding → Is there scope to get resources for external support? → Consider costs around marketing, fitting out the school, revenue costs
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Initially set up by Shannonbridge Action Group, with a view to transition from the delivery group to the steering group → Accommodation will be leased to the private sector → Appoint a PM and consider the associated development phase costs.
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Offaly County Council – particularly those leading the rural regeneration fund. → Permission from the Catholic Trust to apply for planning → Local Authorities, state agencies



Action plan for Shannonbridge

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘
Outputs – Activities	
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Renovation of old school building through a phased approach → 1980s (newer) section of the building to be replaced with an accommodation block (with capacity for approximately 30-45 people) → 1940s (older) classroom element to become an events centre for summer schools, events, wellness centre, etc. → Creation of a café/restaurant (to include space for remote working) and small crafts shop → Solidify costings for the site → Appoint a project manager → Completion of EOI around regenerative tourism → Awareness raising
Outputs – Participation	
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Opening up Shannonbridge to the tourist market (e.g. American Universities in winter) → Provision of amenities (café/restaurant) for tourists and locals alike → Operationalising the café/restaurant and accommodation piece – hiring someone to operate and market
Outcomes	
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Raising awareness of the site → Securing funding (either through EU JTF or other means)
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Stimulating additional tourism in Shannonbridge/ opening up Shannonbridge to the tourist market → Providing a space for people to stay overnight
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Support the broader ambition to make Shannonbridge a tourism destination → Support the town's diversification

UMERAS



Image source: <https://cathalberry.com/2021/11/15/umeras-peatlands/>

Context

Umeras bog is located in County Kildare, approximately 5.8km from Monasterevin. Following the cessation of industrial peat production at Umeras Bog, the site has been undergoing a process of re-wetting and rehabilitation since 2020.

Support received

Umeras had been awaiting some positive feedback from Bord na Móna concerning their lease of the Umeras bog before they engaged in the mentoring process. However, the group received a first mentoring discussion, which was used to outline the project and its potential avenues for development. Urban Foresight then completed an action plan, before a further meeting was organised to discuss next steps and funding opportunities in more detail.

Project outline

Umeras Community Development CLG is a not-for-profit group formed by local residents to re-design and promote the Umeras Peatlands. Most recently, the group have negotiated a lease agreement with Bord na Móna for 100 hectares of the bog and a large industrial shed.

The group recently commissioned the development of three studies to re-imagine the bog, namely the Umeras Peatlands Strategic Plan, and a design study and a biodiversity plan (which are both yet to be finalised).

Through this work, the group has determined that the project will consist of 3 strands:

1. Arts and heritage

The creation of a ‘Sculpture Park’ at the site and display of heritage peat machinery within the industrial shed.

2. Amenity

The creation of a 2.5km walkway to the west side of the bog with a raised platform and bird hide.

3. Conservation, biodiversity and carbon

Highlighting the sustainability story at the site by protecting fragments of raised bog and highlighting the regeneration of the bog.

Recommendations and next steps ↘

To further the development of their project, Umeras Community Development CLG is seeking support to develop a high-level strategic and business case for the Sculpture Park element of the project, which draws upon the existing stakeholder consultations, market research evaluations of similar parklands. This pre-feasibility study will support the development of a pitch-deck targeted at potential funders, and will also be used to complete an Expression of Interest for the elements of the EU Just Transition Fund.

At present, two streams of the Fáilte Ireland Grant Aid Scheme were most relevant for the group, who expect to submit EOIs following the delivery of the pre-feasibility report:

- **Category 1:** Development or Enhancement of Sustainable Visitor Experiences
- **Category 5:** Accessibility enhancements to provide a more inclusive visitor experience

Additionally, Urban Foresight recommended that Umeras Community Development CLG look into the EU JTF Intervention under Action 2.1, delivered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to “support the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands”.

Moving forward, Umeras Community Development CLG should seek support from the Just Transition Tourism Activator for Offaly, who can provide continued guidance beyond the life of EMERGE.

The project is strategically important for Kildare, Offaly and Laois County Councils, meaning there is a role for all three councils to input on the strategic fit of the project and support its development.



Action plan for Umeras

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Problem		
What issue are you seeking to resolve in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Education on bogs, biodiversity and conservation → Realising the value of rewetted peatlands in terms of both biodiversity and tourism → Expanding visitor attraction and creating a tourism cluster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → We are seeking to develop an international standard peatlands nature project which will provide amenity, heritage & arts, and conservation experiences → The project is a core pillar of a new Monasterevin-Rathangan tourism cluster which will provide a destination for tourists and also for education and environmental awareness-raising
Inputs		
What resources will you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Negotiating lease of 100 hectares of bog and large industrial shed with BnM, who have committed to providing a heads of agreement for a commercial lease → Biodiversity and strategic planning studies completed, and design study soon to be finalised → Just Transition funding extension until June 2024 → Raised walkway, platform and bird hide needs to be costed up → Need a brochure for the project which provides a snapshot which summarizes where project fits and why it makes sense to fund it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → BnM has provided a 'Heads of terms' and we are in negotiations. Proposed area is fully in Kildare but we are requesting part of Offaly to meet JTF area → Yes. Critical issue to clarify is requirements for planning. Can we submit grant application for infrastructure that might not require planning permission? → We need more justification for a national-level sculpture park → Need raised walkway to be both designed and costed-up → This is urgent. We need to study JTF guidelines and frame brochure accordingly. Note project will be predominantly in non-JTF MD so offaly part of lease will be critical. We need to scope JTF guidelines and look at a phased approach to funding. What can we apply for in phase 1?



Action plan for Umeras

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Inputs		
How will the project be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → An established legal entity, Umeras Community Development CLG was formed by residents to promote Umeras Peatlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The early phases will be managed by UCDCLG but if the project develops into a full international-standard project with a sculpture park then it will be managed by a professional concessionaire
Do you need the support of other organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Coillte – provided letter of support → Some objections locally but no material grounds for challenge-communicate benefits and secure buy in → Church of Oak Distillery could offer match funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Church of Oak Distillery could offer some partnership – we could discuss level of support depending on what funding we are seeking



Action plan for Umeras

UMERAS

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Outputs – Activities		
What do you hope to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Establish the area as a nature based destination by 2030 through a phased approach→ Provide access to rehabilitated peatlands via a raised walkway, platform and bird hide→ Enable people to better understand conservation and biodiversity→ Walking and cycling trails (including a 2.5km walkway)→ Explore arts and heritage through the introduction of sculptures and heritage assets→ Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ See page 138 of strategic plan for Action Plan. JTF requires all funded projects in phase 1 to be completed by 2026. We need to look at what infrastructure we could get in place by 2026. We could realistically get walkways and basic infrastructure to receive visitors in place by 2026 if funding secured in 2024 depending on planning requirements. We could start gradually to receive visitors from 2026→ We hope to develop the project in three phases: 0-3, 3-5 and 5-10 years along the themes of amenity/tourism, heritage/arts and conservation→ We intend to have the following features:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walkway platform/bird hide – 2.5km circular walk and extended walk into Coillte forest• Car parking, toilets, café, seating, signage• Sculpture workshop – sculpture park• Heritage machinery display• Conservation display and signage



Action plan for Umeras

Guide ▾	Urban Foresight thoughts ▾	Community response ▾
Outputs – Participation		
Who will your project reach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Designed for the local community, with a view to attract tourists as the offer expands → The project will link in with Barrow Blueway, activity in Mónasterevin and Rathangan, Church of Oak, Kildare town tourism hub and outlet → Synergies with Lough Boora to expand, not duplicate, local tourism offering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ultimately the project will reach both the local community and international tourists → Project will be a pillar in the new Monasterevin-Rathangan tourism hub with Blueway and Church of Oak linking to Kildare Town Tourism Hub and Kildare Village Outlet → The Monasterevin-Rathangan tourism hub will be an attractive destination for tourists on the Blueway and by train/bus/car from Dublin with station in Monasterevin and access to M7 → Synergies with Lullymore Heritage Park but careful to differentiate offering so as not to duplicate. Lough Boora more than one hours drive so not direct competition



Action plan for Umeras

Guide ↘	Urban Foresight thoughts ↘	Community response ↘
Outcomes		
Short term results 0–3 by 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Nature conservation measures – supporting biodiversity → Site of interest with amenities for locals → Enhancing local offering in addition to the Barrow Blueway, Monasterevin and Rathangan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Conservation of heritage machinery → Development of sculpture workshop in partnership with Church of Oak → Conservation enhancement activities → Initial access to locals and tourists
Medium term results 3–5 by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increased tourism offer to attract local, regional, national, and international visitors to the town → Growth in activity providers and early-stage development of a tourism cluster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Incremental development of facilities → Increased tourism offer to attract local, regional, national, and international visitors to the town → Growth in activity providers and early-stage development of a tourism cluster
Ultimate impacts 5–10 by 2034	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Phased development of a unique attraction and a leading nature-based soft activity destination by 2030 → Growing economic impact of tourism → To boost the tourism sector and create both direct and indirect employment → Enhancing overall appeal of the Umeras/Mónasterevin/Rathangan area as a destination → Biodiversity benefits → Stimulating increased awareness and education around bogs → Cluster development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Development of visitor facility/exhibition space → All of the points in the UF box



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