

2030

CORCA DHUIBHNE DINGLE PENINSULA

Making It Happen

(Jan 2018 - Dec 2021)

April 2022

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Claire McElligott, Fergal Egan; ESB Networks
Séamus O'Hara; North East West Kerry Development (NEWKD)



18

Projects



35

Key Events



55

Presentations



102

Meetings with Govt
Depts/Public Bodies



26

Visits by Public
Rep. / Public Bodies



29

Meetings with
Community Groups



81

Media Appearances



34

Outputs (1 Brochure, 16
Videos, 13 Learning Briefs
and 4 Journal Papers)



€626,800

Grant Funding from
Competitive Calls



Key Learnings

1. Transition to Low Carbon will not happen without communities being fully engaged, supportive and empowered but the current system does not yet appear to fully accept that the community engagement element also needs to be properly resourced and that community engagement capacity needs to be built to do this.
2. When communities are piloting projects, they may require additional funding for the pilot project itself and also for evaluation, reflective learning and the development of Learning and Policy Briefs. Effective evaluation and co-produced learning takes time and is resource intensive.
3. As in our case, groups can benefit from strategically identifying and recruiting former senior executives into their structures, and utilising their skillsets and contacts to help promote community-based best practices to key policy and decision makers.
4. This was a multiple-objective pilot and a 'ground-breaking' initiative that utilised existing partners, structures, and funding mechanisms in a way that has demonstrated early and sustained impact. Inevitably with such novel undertakings, additional costs arise from the experimental 'trial and error' nature of the work. However, we hope that our learnings should help to reduce costs for other communities and subsequent sustainable transition projects.
5. There is no doubt that some of our resources were spent trying to work within systems and mechanisms that were not designed for effective community participation.

Key Recommendations For Policy

1. The funding mechanisms supporting communities (e.g. Regional Development Funds, 'Our Rural Future', etc.) need to be amended to enable and facilitate engagement by the Connected Hubs, Local Development Agencies and other community bodies in addressing climate change and transition.
2. Easy-to-access start-up or feasibility grants need to be provided which do not require long detailed applications within highly competitive calls. Allowing for follow-on, multi-year funding would be very helpful to both the local community and, indeed, the funding bodies.
3. Funding calls need to have reasonable application timelines, taking into account that community groups are not usually staffed with full-time people and many applicants are volunteers who have other demands on their time. Calls also need to be straightforward, relatively simple and short, as many volunteers have limited experience of making funding applications.
4. Funding bodies should endeavour to reduce the time it takes to notify successful (and unsuccessful) applicants. It is very difficult for cash-strapped groups to plan ahead if they do not know whether they have acquired funding or not.

ESB Networks developed a series of energy trials (including solar photovoltaic (PV) and electric vehicle (EV) and an Ambassador Programme to help understand the impact on the electricity network of low carbon energy transition by citizens, and to help inform the design of a network to support a low carbon society. They invested in technology, in network upgrading and in research, and shared the project learnings locally, nationally and internationally.

NEWKD provided a community development perspective and insights into working respectfully with communities. Their local standing and proven track record brought credibility within the community, farming, statutory, business, and public authority sectors. Their ongoing working relationship with communities facilitated introductions and the opening of doors.

MaREI provided engagement, energy and climate research expertise and an engaged research team committed to working with the local community. They provided a link between research literature, knowledge and practical action, the credibility of association with a research institute and university, and access to a wider national and international audience. They also acted as a funding partner in research calls and provided funding for outreach and engagement activities.

ESB Networks concluded its *Dingle Project* at the end of 2021, while MaREI continues to work on a number of specific projects. Work on the ground is developing and expanding through a number of themed projects across such areas as Energy, Agriculture, Marine, Sustainable Travel and Tourism/Hospitality. However, the structure and focus of any collaborative activity is constantly evolving.

Between 2018 and 2021 the Coordinating Group was comprised of the following:

Deirdre de Bhailís, Manager, Dingle Hub; Brendan Tuohy, Board Member, Dingle Hub; Claire McElligott, Community Engagement Manager, ESB Networks Dingle Project; Séamus O'Hara, Area Manager, NEWKD; Aoife Deane, Communications and Public Engagement Manager, MaREI; Clare Watson, Engaged Research Support Officer, MaREI; Evan Boyle, (PhD student, now Post Doc Researcher), Sociology, MaREI; and Connor McGookin (PhD student, now Post Doc Researcher), Energy Engineering, MaREI

What Happened

The following tables document the projects, activities, engagements and achievements of Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Peninsula 2030 over the four years between January 2018 and December 2021. During the first two years, practically all engagements were held in person but, following the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2019 and the associated lockdowns, most activities migrated on-line for the second two years.

18 PROJECTS were developed, some of which were completed during the timeframe and others continued - [Link to table](#)

35 KEY EVENTS were organized - [Link to table](#)

55 PRESENTATIONS and contributions were made at **conferences, workshops, webinars** and panels organized by other groups and agencies - [Link to table](#)

102 MEETINGS were held with representatives of Government Departments and public bodies (not including Ministers' visits and routine meetings with officials from Kerry County Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta).

22 meetings in 2018; 34 in 2019; 19 in 2020; 27 in 2021 - [Link to table](#)

26 MEETINGS and site visits were held on the Dingle Peninsula with public representatives and representatives of public bodies. Because of Covid restrictions there were no visits between March 2020 and July 2021 - [Link to table](#)

29 MEETINGS were held with community groups

9 meetings in 2020; 20 in 2021 - [Link to table](#)

7 MEETINGS were held with businesses

2 meetings in 2018; 1 in 2019; 1 in 2020; 3 in 2021 - [Link to table](#)

We participated in **10 FESTIVALS AND PUBLIC EVENTS** in 2018 and 2019, prior to COVID-19 restrictions - [Link to table](#)

ESB Networks sponsored **7 LOCAL FESTIVALS AND EVENTS** - [Link to table](#)

We were represented on 5 advisory panels/boards and networks - [Link to table](#)

Recognition was achieved through **AWARDS** - [Link to table](#)

We were **COVERED IN THE MEDIA** at least 81 times - [Link to table](#)

We produced 34 outputs:

1 BROCHURE - [Link to table](#)

16 VIDEOS AND VIDEO CLIPS - [Link to table](#)

13 CO-CREATED LEARNING BRIEFS - [Link to table](#)

4 JOURNAL PAPERS - [Link to table](#)

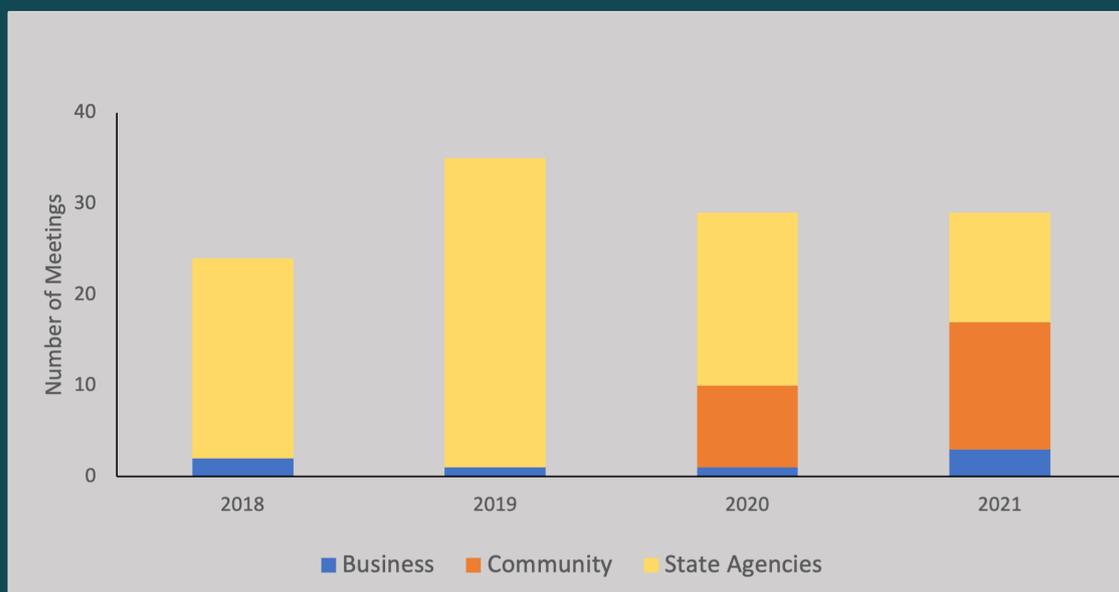


FIGURE 1. The nature of the meetings that took place over the course of the project

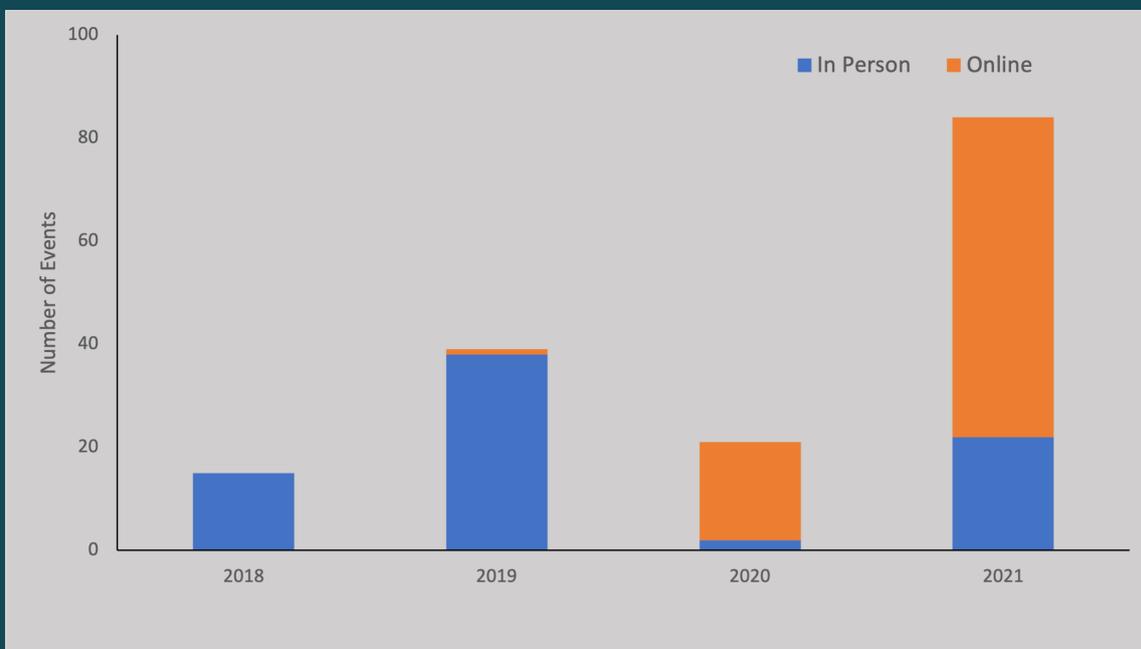


FIGURE 2. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic - online versus in-person events (includes key events, outside events and visits)

Resources Provided

Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Peninsula 2030 was essentially launched as an experiment in 2018. The extent of the vision, the focus on such a specific geographical location, and the involvement of the four partner organisations - Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Creativity and Innovation Hub; ESB Networks; North East West Kerry Development (NEWKD); and MaREI - was novel and unique. It was in many respects a 'living lab', where we endeavoured to learn from a series of pilot projects and practical experience on the ground.

This would not have been possible without resources and people. During the four years, we were very fortunate in being able to draw on the time and expertise of staff members, researchers and volunteers from within the four partner organisations. The allocation of person hours was roughly similar to having five full-time equivalent positions available over the period, with people giving additional discretionary 'out-of-hours' time as required by the nature of the work and the importance of engaging effectively with the local community.

We also benefitted immensely from having a former civil servant in our midst who was able to make introductions, facilitate engagement, build upon contacts in local and national Government and the public service, and help to break down barriers to engagement with senior people in the public service and private sector.

The work was immeasurably enhanced by the voluntary participation of members of the local community, who contributed to the development of projects, participated in trials, completed the Community Energy Mentor Course, supported and attended events, and contributed to the local conversation.

Enterprise Ireland funded the core staff in the Dingle Hub for the four years. While their funding mechanisms were not fully designed to cover all aspects of the work, they clearly recognized that an economically sustainable future is inextricably linked to an environmentally sustainable one.

Additionally, a number of other key State agencies offered valuable support, both in practical and financial terms and also by joining steering boards and inviting us to explain our vision, focus, experiences and recommendations at meetings and conferences.

The partners in Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Peninsula 2030 contributed financial resources to the initiative, most notably ESB Networks who spent approx. €4.5 million on the *Dingle Project* and MaREI who contributed €0.6 million. We are very aware that this was a pilot project and the investment may not be replicable in other communities across the country. But maybe replication is not what is required at this stage. We believe it would be more effective to continue to monitor the lessons from the Dingle Peninsula as people begin their journeys in the low carbon transition with-out continuing financial and other support from ESB Networks. This will provide a very useful insight into the expected behaviour of people around the country.

We also received much appreciated funds from open funding calls but it is important to note that, because of the core support of our partners and the resources already available to us, we were in a better position than other communities to dedicate time to fill out the long and detailed funding applications and to take the chance that these may not be successful.

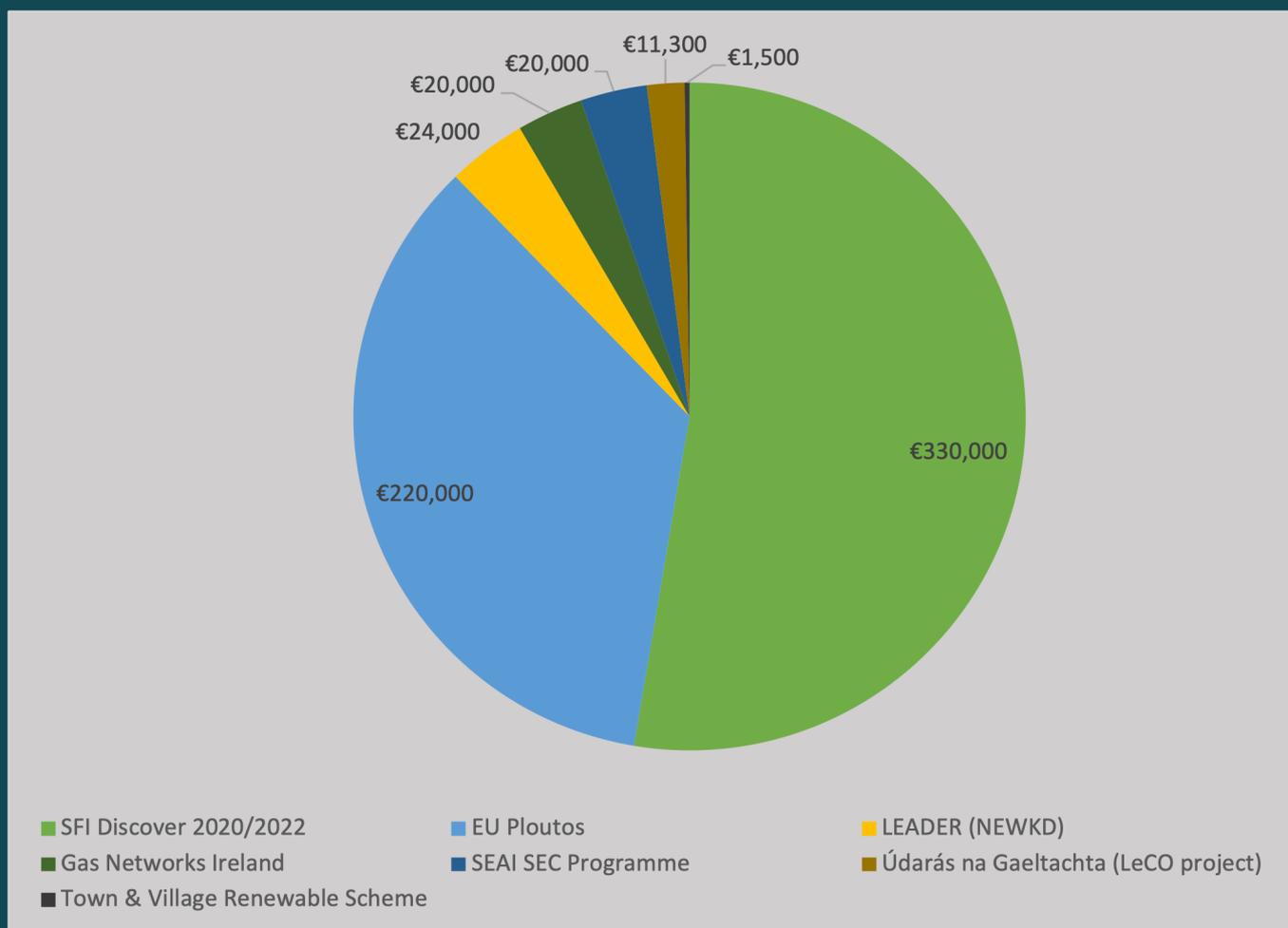


FIGURE 3. Breakdown of total funds applied for and received via grant applications and funding calls during the course of the project (Total: €626,800).

2018

Town & Village Renewable Scheme: €1,500 for the organization of the Farmers' Forum on Anaerobic Digestion

SEAI Sustainable Energy Community (SEC): €20,000 for the Energy Master Plan consultancy costs

2019

Gas Networks Ireland: €20,000 for the Anaerobic Digestion Feasibility Study

Údarás na Gaeltachta: €11,300 for the Anaerobic Digestion Feasibility Study and Video Clip

LEADER (NEWKD): €24,000 for the Socio-Economic Planning Study and Workshops –

2020

SFI Discover: €50,000 for the 'Activating the Energy Citizen' initiative

EU Ploutos: €220,000 for a Sustainable Innovation Pilot to Test a Smart Farm Strategy

2021

SFI Discover: €280,000 for the development of 'A Model Enabling Community-led Climate Action'

In-kind contributions were also received from:

ESB Networks, towards the running of community engagement events and other activities throughout the four years

Kerry Education and Training Board (to the value of €16,000), for the running and marketing of the part-time 12-week Community Energy Mentor (CEM) Course

SEAI, for the provision of services and presenters on the CEM Course

Learnings

1. It is accepted by all that Transition to Low Carbon will not happen without communities being fully engaged, supportive and empowered but the current system does not yet appear to fully accept that the community engagement element and associated co-ordination also needs to be properly resourced and that community engagement capacity needs to be built to do this. The same level of resources will not be available for every community and so, if Transition is to be realised, the funding and resourcing systems and mechanisms must be re-designed to allow better community access to resources that can be focused on local co-ordination, action and impacts. From the experience of Corca Dhuibhne 2030, the local 'Connected Hub' (which is also a Sustainable Energy Community) may be an effective mechanism through which to channel this funding.

2. When communities are piloting projects, they may require additional funding for the pilot project itself and also for evaluation, reflective learning and the development of Learning and Policy Briefs. It needs to be acknowledged that effective evaluation and co-produced learning takes time and is resource intensive.

3. As in our case, groups can benefit from strategically identifying and recruiting former senior executives into their structures, and utilising their skillsets and contacts to help promote community-based best practices to key policy and decision makers.

4. This was a multiple-objective pilot and a 'ground-breaking' initiative that utilised existing partners, structures, and funding mechanisms (with some flexibility by Enterprise Ireland and others) in a way that has demonstrated early and sustained impact. It sought to find a way to fund and resource the pilot projects through these current structures and mechanisms, while recognising their limitations.

Inevitably with such novel undertakings, additional costs arise from the experimental ‘trial and error’ nature of the work. However, we hope that the learnings that we have captured and disseminated should help to reduce costs for other communities and subsequent sustainable transition projects.

5. There is no doubt that some of our resources were spent trying to work within systems and mechanisms that were not designed for effective community participation. The system often did not provide funding for engaging with the local community and enabling participation, or for even minimal coordination of community activities, even though there was recognition by the funding authorities that this was a critical part of what was required to be done.

Recommendations For Policy

1. The funding mechanisms supporting communities (e.g. Regional Development Funds, ‘Our Rural Future’, etc.) need to be amended to enable and facilitate engagement by the Connected Hubs, Local Development Agencies and other community bodies in addressing climate change and transition, as they already have local community structures and organisations in place that can be leveraged to support climate action as well.

2. Resources and time commitments are required to apply for and then get the funding in the first place. This can be very demanding of local communities. This needs to be improved through the provision of easy-to-access start-up or feasibility grants which do not require long detailed applications within highly competitive calls. Allowing for follow-on, multi-year funding, which will cover co-ordination and administrative costs, would be very helpful to both the local community and, indeed, the funding bodies.

3. Funding calls need to have reasonable application timelines, taking into account that community groups are not usually staffed with full-time people and many applicants are volunteers and so have other demands on their time. Calls need to be straightforward, simple and as short as is feasibly practicable, as many volunteers have limited experience of making funding applications. They should also avoid holiday periods, such as the summer months of July and August, Christmas and New Year (times which have often been preferred by State bodies).

4. Funding bodies should endeavour to reduce the time it takes to notify successful (and unsuccessful) applicants. It is very difficult for cash-strapped groups to plan ahead if they do not know whether they have acquired funding or not. In addition, many funding bodies give approval for projects but allow a very short timeline for the projects to be delivered and the funding drawn down (often at the end of the financial year), making it very challenging for the local community bodies to plan and execute the application that was successfully made.

5. Different funding bodies should co-ordinate with each other so as to avoid overlap and there should be a facility for applying for community engagement funding in and across all funding streams.

6. The Climate Action Plan 2021 is a whole-of-Government plan for addressing climate change and it would be very helpful if there was specific recognition given in this Plan to the necessity for all of the State and public bodies to support local communities wishing to engage (in an effective manner) with addressing climate change. The various Government funding (and resourcing streams) should be aligned with this aspiration and should support in a tangible manner, mechanisms for developing strong and impactful local community engagement and participation. Some of this could mean simply broadening the criteria to give specific acknowledgement to addressing climate change and engaging the community in that process, but it should be focused on delivering outputs, outcomes and impact and not just inputs.

The Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Peninsula 2030 Coordinating Group would like to acknowledge and thank all the people who have so generously given their time and support, both on the Dingle Peninsula and further afield.

This series of learning briefs is co-funded by MaREI, the SFI Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine, the Dingle Creativity and Innovation Hub (Mol Teic), ESB Networks and North East West Kerry Development (NEWKD).

Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Peninsula 2030

- <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/>

Learnings and Reports

- <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/learningsandreports/>

Dingle Hub You Tube Channel

- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxvZmQLWJlbfm1D3QUnoeiw>

MaREI Corca Dhuibhne/Dingle Peninsula 2030 Page

- <https://www.marei.ie/project/dingle-peninsula-2030/>

ESB Networks Dingle Project

- <https://www.esbnetworks.ie/who-we-are/innovation/esb-networks'-dingle-project>

