

Tales of Care + Repair in a Midlands County

Repair Acts Ireland: Final Report

for: Creative Ireland

March 2023



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Setting the Scene



Executive Summary

REPAIR ACTS IRELAND: Tales of Care and Repair in a Midlands County, explored how the maintenance, fixing and mending of objects could be brought into the heart of a conversation about consumption in Ireland, with a focus on the midlands and in particular, County Westmeath.

Addressing the often-overlooked place of repair within waste cycles and hierarchies in Ireland, the project aimed to generate a novel and exciting set of complementary artistic works, research, community tools and data that holds potential to scale and contributes to environmental policy and applied artistic practices, regionally, nationally and internationally.

The project was led by artist Teresa Dillon and researcher Dr. Alma Clavin (UCD) in partnership with Westmeath County Council (Heritage Office; Public Participation Network; Environmental Awareness Officer).

The project's ambition was to pilot the work in Westmeath county with a focus on three locations: a) Kilbeggan and associated rural townlands; b) the town of Mullingar; c) the town of Athlone.

The focus of the project was to connect past stories of repair, with current practices and future potentials. This was to be achieved through an artistic-led, place-based approach, drawing on a mix of practice based, interdisciplinary artistic and applied research methodologies. These included: archival research; storytelling workshops; data visualisation; photography and illustration; video art; speculative design and performance; visual, online and mixed media; all culminating in the curation of a four-day festival held in Kilbeggan, Co Westmeath.



World premiere, 'Turning the Collar' (2022), Caring for Repairing, Exhibition and Féile, St James' Hall, Kilbeggan

The tools and techniques were employed across a series of interrelated and intergenerational events. Whilst the work drew on the existing Repair Acts (international) programme, this Creative Ireland funded project broke new ground by establishing the programme in Ireland, in a rural context.

The main outputs of the programme included: an expansive and extensive programme of workshops and events (40 events); the creation of a people's archive of everyday repair and Ireland's first repair declaration; extensive mapping of histories of repair businesses in Co. Westmeath 1938-2022; a series of new image and textile artworks; a four-day festival of repair with the title 'Caring for Repairing' in Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath. At the festival, the documentary film 'Turning the Collar' was premiered, which celebrated the work of 11-artisan, craft and heritage trades people in the county.

Across the project's active timeframe, it is estimated that over 1000 people have directly participated i.e., participation at events (workshops/activities/festivals), and/or uploading a story to the website. It is estimated that a further 10,000 people heard about the project through the information events, the flyers/posters/festival catalogues distributed, and a further 100,000+ via local and national media coverage.

The findings and evaluation show that repair can play a key, critical role in Ireland's transition to a just and circular economy. Repair was found to provide a hopeful narrative within the context of the current climate change debate in Ireland. It provides an accessible way through which people can locate themselves within climate discourses and discussions. People feel empowered through the changes and choices they make around repair.

Repair conversations are also accessible through memories, shared heritages and emotional connections people have for objects they have repaired, which again provides an opening through which to discuss climate action, particularly in relation to waste and planned obsolescence.

How to repair something can prevent landfill waste. Waste is easy for many to grasp but the systemic and systematic changes that are required to change manufacturing practices were often felt to be overwhelming or impossible. The Right to Repair is largely still an unknown right in Ireland, but there is a growing number of individuals and organizations joining the debate. Repair Acts provided a centre for exchange and awareness raising around the Right to Repair both on a national and local, county wide level.

Instances of repair in Co. Westmeath were found to have significant and unique local impact and character. These place-based instances of repair e.g., boat making, thatching and agricultural repair, has led to distinctive repair relations within the county.

The hybrid, interdisciplinary nature of the Repair Acts Ireland team was critical to delivering this multi-layered and ambitious project. The mutual place- and practice-based research approaches combined to create a fertile pathway to the co-production of exemplar working practices that could be further developed in other contexts. Novel use of mixed artistic practice, from storytelling to exhibition design, graphic approaches, image and documentary making, was received positively, with participants feeding back on the high quality of the work, across all mediums.

The combination of art and place-based research in partnership with a local authority was a very fruitful mode of working, which post this pilot phase, will continue to grow in strength. Much of the work that was developed and piloted in Westmeath, including the ambition to take forward the 'Repair Declaration' could be further developed in other counties and countries.

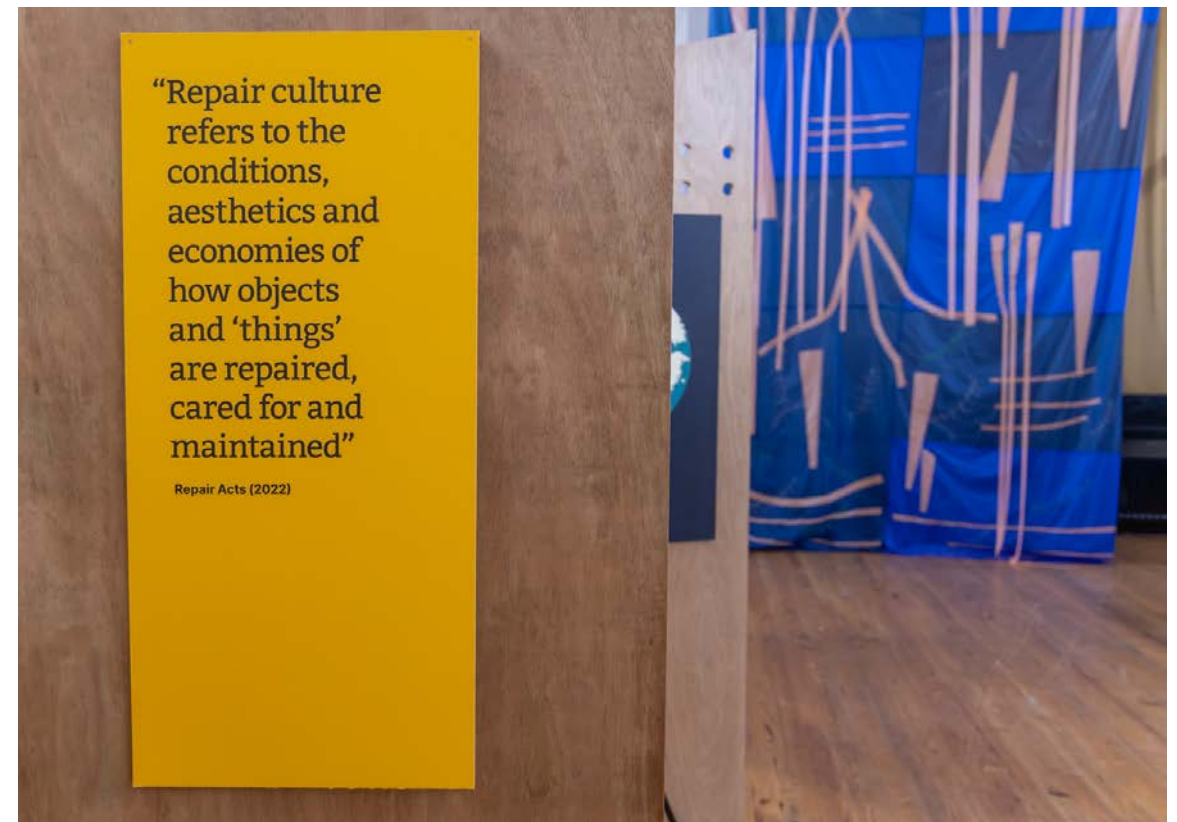
The intention is to now continue to build on this work, with Westmeath acting as the first rural hub in the Repair Acts network and main hub in Ireland. This initial period of support from Creative Ireland enabled this ambition to take root. In order to ensure that the programme of work has long-term and sustainable elements, plans are now underway to secure the next 2-5 years of funding, while simultaneously continuing to work on new art and place-based projects in Ireland.

Introduction + Background

Repair Acts Ireland addressed the Creative Climate Action theme on ‘Shopping and Recycling’, with the project focusing on the often-overlooked place of repair within waste cycles and hierarchies in Ireland. Considering repair as a radical act that transforms our relationship with our material world, the work also links the United Nations sustainability goal on Responsible Consumption and Production (Goal 12) and ultimately Climate Action (Goal 13).

The programme placed emphasis on collecting past and present ‘stories’ of repair within one's local area. In doing so, a complex set of dynamics is revealed that includes, for example, being ‘locked in’ to unsustainable behaviours, and in particular, issues relating to planned obsolescence, resource efficiencies, access to the circular economy, cradle-to-grave economics and the effect of waste pollution on earth systems. Such stories emphasise what we choose to repair in the first place - the value we put on objects, which is both cultural and situated in place.

The creative approach taken was expansive, imaginative and grounded in place. The eclectic and diverse nature of the work offers abundance. The associated tools, techniques and models for action may be used by other communities and counties.



‘Caring for Repairing’, Exhibition and Féile, St James’ Hall, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath

Project Team + Key Participants



Project Team + Key Participants

Project Team : Repair Acts Ireland

Repair Acts Ireland started out as Dr. Alma Clavin (UCD Geography); Teresa Dillon (artist) and Westmeath County Council (Heritage Officer; Environmental Awareness Officer; Public Participation Network (PPN)). In addition to this core team, a much wider net was cast in Westmeath, throughout Ireland and across Europe to seek out individuals to support the Repair Acts Ireland programme.

This list details the individuals and associated expertise involved in a range of activities: research; design; art; film; curatorial practices; photography; community development; repair practices and services; journalism; campaigning; social media; local government; heritage; and event support and planning.

Project Team Members	Role
Teresa Dillon (Artist) Alma Clavin (Research Lead, UCD)	Project Co-leads
Maya Vize- Schwartz (UCD) Robin Ferguson (UCD) Noelle Dunne (Kilbeggan) Sarah Jane Wall (Kilbeggan) Mary Murray (Mullingar) Men’s Shed (Kilbeggan) Alastair Ferrar (Kilbeggan)	Research + Production Support
Ana Filipovic (Exhibition Designer) New Graphic (Website + Repository Design)	Design Consultancy
Matt Boyd Paul Moore	Film + Photography
Eliza Chojnacka Graeme Hogg	Event Support
Men’s Shed Mullingar	Exhibition Build

Research Workshop Groups + Partners



Exhibition Builders Men’s Shed Mullingar with exhibition designer Ana Filipovic

Research Workshop Groups + Partners	
Irish Countrywomen’s Association (ICA), Ballinea	
ICA, Mullingar	
ICA, Horseleap/Streamstown	
Men’s Shed Kilbeggan	
Men’s Shed Moate	
Men’s Shed Mullingar	
Kilbeggan Active Retirement Group	
Castlepollard Library	
Mullingar Library	
Athlone Library	
Kilbeggan Library	
Mullingar Tidy Towns	
Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), Roscommon	
IWA, Athlone	
UCD, Dublin (Geography)	
NUIG (Geography)	
St Angela’s College, Sligo (Home Economics)	
Kilbeggan Secondary School	
Hill of Uisneach Fire Festival (Loughnavalley)	

Documentary Film Participants
‘Turning the Collar’ (2022)



World premiere, ‘Turning the Collar’ (2022), Caring for Repairing, Exhibition and Féile, St James’ Hall, Kilbeggan

- Meab O’Neill (Meab Enamels, Mulyfarnham)
David Corrigan and Neil O’Dwyer (O’Dwyers Masonry, Multyfarnham)
Declan Brown (RIP) and Olga Corrigan (Liturgical Book Restorers, Athlone)
John Conlon (Thatcher Glasson)
Leo Farrell (The Bike Shop, Mullingar)
Paul Dunne (Dunnes Joinery, Kilbeggan)
Molly Collins (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre)
John Joe Quigley (Inner Lakes Marina, Glasson)
Giedre Mostova, Mary Garvey (Partners Garment Care, Mullingar)
Claire Delabre (Handmade Design Studio)
Kiernan Veale, John Mangan, Peter Burrows, Danny Cole, Pat Begley (Men Shed Mullingar)
Steve Sherwood (Sherwood Technologies, Mullingar)
Gareth Anton Averill (Sound)

Participants:
‘Turning the Collar’
(2022)

Festival Participants

‘Caring for Repairing : Kilbeggan’ (2022)



Tok Tek music improvisation by Tom Verbruggen. Tom designs and deconstructs electronic instruments.

Men Shed Kilbeggan and local musicians, Live Performance, Opening Night, Caring for Repairing, Exhibition and Feile, St James’s Hall, Kilbeggan, 4th Nov, 2022

- Rediscovery Centre, Ireland
- Tom Verbruggen (Media and Sound Art, NL)
- Fiona Harrington (Lace Artist)
- O’Dwyers Masonry (Stonemasons)
- Anú Heritage (Conservation Consultant)
- Noelle Dunne (Producer and Community Artist)
- Ruth Illingworth (Historian)
- Jiminy Toys
- Jane Ni Dhulchaointigh, (Designer + Founder of Sugru)
- David Kitt (Musician)
- Neil Moran (Musician)
- Kenny’s Bike Repair
- Handmade Designs
- Native Woodland Trust

Participants:
‘Caring for Repairing
Festival’

Festival Participants

‘Caring for Repairing : Kilbeggan’ (2022)



Aran & Im (Manchán Magan), Closing Performance, ‘Caring for Repairing’ Exhibition and Féile, St James’s Hall, Kilbeggan, 6th Nov 2022

Kilbeggan Development and Preservation Agency	Participants: ‘Caring for Repairing Festival’
Pocket Forests	
Damian McManamon (Physiotherapist, Physical Education and Mental Health Advocate)	
Una Smyth (Physical and Somatic Educator)	
Mary Gardner (Yoga Teacher)	
Manchán Magan (Journalist, Writer and Performer)	
Michael Callaghan (Community Wetlands Forum)	
Jude Sherry (ANOIS)	
Martha McMahon (Westmeath Community Development)	
Tania Banotti (Creative Ireland)	
Pat Gallagher (Westmeath County Council)	
Mark Flood (Illustrator)	
Graham Hogg (Vintage Cinema Restorer)	

Project Advisory Group



Illustrating the Events (Mark Flood)

<p>Claire Downey (Research Director, Rediscovery Centre)</p> <p>Jude Sherry (Founder ANOIS)</p> <p>Prof. Frances Fahy (NUIG Geography)</p> <p>Helen Maguire (St. Angela’s College Sligo - Home Economics)</p> <p>Catherine Cleary (Journalist and Founder of Pocket Forests)</p>	<p>Project Advisory Group</p>
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Outputs



Outputs

The programme of workshops and events created a space for and opened up conversations about repair in Ireland. Disparate groups and organisations came together to talk about repair practices, the right to repair, and these conversations were situated within wider climate and circular economy discussions.

Specifically, the main outputs of the programme are as follows:

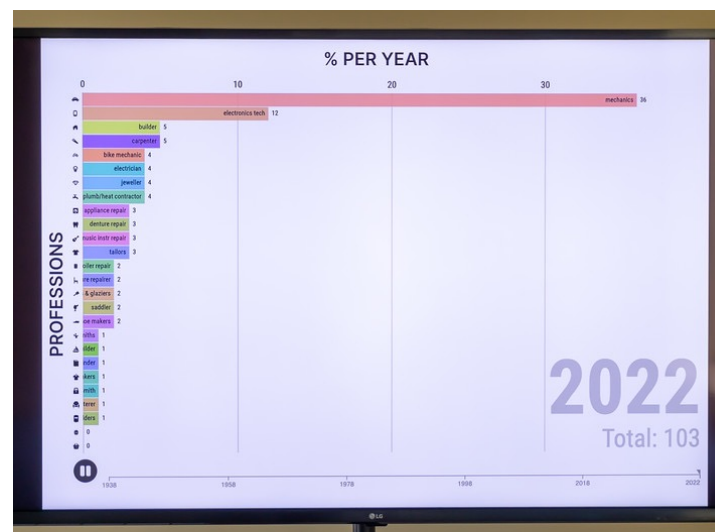
- **40-events** including online and face-to-face skilled based workshops; repair and mending demonstrations; information days about the project; face-to-face story-based workshops that took place across the course of the programme and festival. This extensive and expansive programme of workshops and events was critical in raising awareness about repair across the county.

- The creation of Ireland's first '**Repair Declaration**', which centres on how Westmeath can take forward ideas, actions and statements gathered through our workshop process. It details how to move towards more repair-centred futures, with functionality built into the website that allows for continued collections of such declaration statements. The 'Repair Declaration' was launched at the festival programme in Kilbeggan, with seven experts responding to its proposition. The debate was recorded and will inform forthcoming publications.

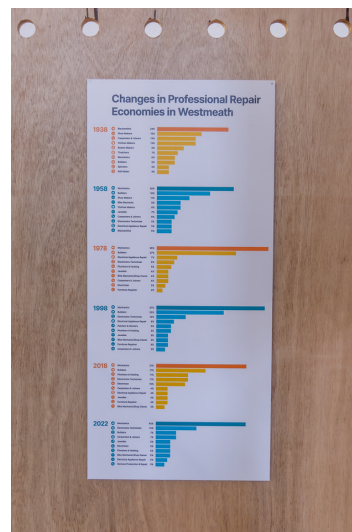


World premiere, 'Turning the Collar' (2022), 'Caring for Repairing', Exhibition and Féile, St James' Hall, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath

- **An extensive mapping of the histories of repair economies** in Westmeath from 1930s-2022, illustrated through an interactive graphic that visually demonstrates changes over time. This timeframe also became the narrative through which the exhibition programme emerged. This archival work also builds capacity for future Repair Acts research elsewhere. Mapping local repair economies in this manner is a unique aspect of the project that contributes to public understandings of the history and heritage of repair in different places.
- **A 4-day festival (Féile) and exhibition ‘Caring for Repairing’** was created, with associated print/ poster/ catalogue material. The first of its kind in Ireland, the festival showcased and brought together several national and international thought leaders, designers, artisans and skilled trade professionals working on repair and restorative cultures. Works associated with this festival, which highlighted skilled repair professions in Westmeath (Liturgical Book Restorers, Athlone), were also exhibited at Somerset House in London as part of the exhibition ‘Eternally Yours’ (16th June - 25th Sept, 2022).



Archival mapping and infographics



St James' Hall, Kilbeggan



Festival Flyer

- **Series of new image and textile artworks including:**
 - x4 artificial generated prints, which looked to futures and bias in repair professions
 - x4 photography prints that connected repair professions from across the world
 - x22 flags which were created from discarded industrial material that were remade and hung across Kilbeggan town during the exhibition period.
 - x1 large-scale (3x2m) tapestry that hung in the main exhibition space.



Between the Stones and the Reeds (2022), textile creations from discarded industrial fabrics

- **‘People’s Archive of Everyday Repair’** promoted locally and nationally, enabled people to upload an image of something they had repaired and tag it with information associated with the repair. This model drew on existing formats from the international programme of Repair Acts, with the Irish programme contributing to a growing archive and database of international stories. This further promotes the role of repair and points to manufacturing issues relating to planned obsolescence. The relational local-global ‘repair stories’ form an important aspect of the data needed to lobby for change in manufacturing practices. The archive constitutes a living, crowdsourced photo archive, which can spark public interest and debate. It not only celebrates everyday domestic repairs but also captures and highlights issues and barriers relating to everyday repair.

- The **Mid-length Short documentary (44 mins), 'Turning the Collar'** celebrated the work of 11-artisan craft and heritage trades people in Westmeath. Capturing their humour and pleasure in working with their hands, the documentary also outlined the issues they face with emphasis on the loss of skilled trades and crafts people and the lack of value now placed on repairing. The documentary closed with reflections on how we design technology, planned obsolescence and the Right to Repair from the perspective of computer repair professionals. The documentary's world premiere took place on November 4th 2022 as part of the 'Caring for Repairing' festival in Kilbeggan and has planned screenings for 2023.
- **2.7 min summary** animation which promoted initial awareness of the project on the Repair Acts website.
- **3-min summary** video which captures the project's process and key elements.
- Established **Repair Acts Ireland website and associated Instagram; Twitter and Facebook channels**



World premiere, 'Turning the Collar' (2022), Caring for Repairing, Exhibition and Féile, St James' Hall, Kilbeggan



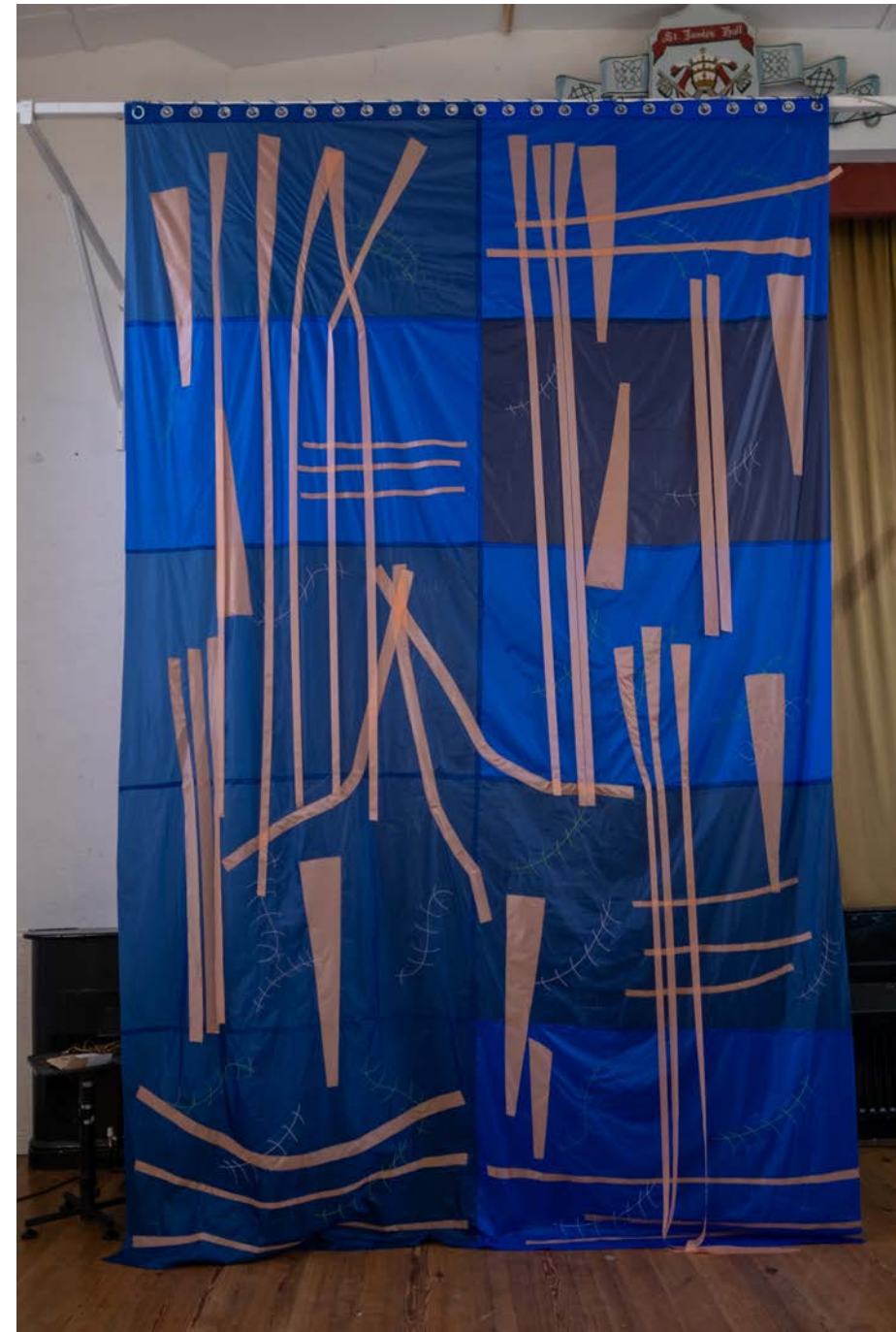
'Of Mortars and Stone Walls' with O'Dwyer Masonry, (Nov 2022)



'Lace Affair' with Fiona Harrington, Caring for Repairing Exhibition and Féile (Nov 2022)



Interpretations from the Machine, Teresa Dillon, Arthur Buxton and Minds Eye (Nov 2022)



'Between the Stones and the Reeds', Tapestry from discarded Industrial balloon fabric and digital embroidery, Teresa Dillon (2022)



Illustrations by Mark Flood, Caring for Repairing Exhibition and Féile (Nov 2022)

Outcomes + Impacts



Repair Declaration Launch, 'Caring for Repairing', Exhibition and Féile, 3-6 Nov 2022, St James's Hall, Kilbeggan

Outcomes + Impacts

Key project outcomes and impacts can be categorised as: value of the arts; value of repair; location; past/heritage; present/skills; futures.

Value of the Arts

- Arts-led, place-based approaches for repair provide fertile and novel ground through which to develop an expansive, socially engaged programme on repair cultures.
- Programmes with a high standard of aesthetic production, including approach to design, graphics, image-making and documentation are valued and appreciated.
- Creating ambitiously aesthetic programmes within local communities, where art is not often presented, is not only welcomed by the community but also considered as potentially transformational.
- There is an appetite for continuing to promote events (festival, workshops, talks) on the topic of repair. People welcome opportunities to listen to and learn from others and to gain practical repair and restoration skills.
- As this was a pilot programme, a number of creative methodologies were generated, tried and tested. The local storytelling workshops, festival format, exhibition narrative, hands-on workshops, documentary were considered as key creative elements, which the public responded to.
- Positive relations were established with all craft, art and skilled trade professions who worked on the project, with a commitment from many to continue to support the project in Westmeath.



Lace Affair Workshop, Fiona Harrington, 'Caring for Repairing' Exhibition and Féile

Value of Repair

- Repair provides a hopeful narrative within the context of climate change. It provides an accessible way through which people can locate themselves within climate discourses and feel empowered with the changes and choices they make. Repair is also accessible in relation to memories, heritages, and sentimentality that people have for objects they have repaired, which again provides an opening through which to discuss climate action, particularly in relation to waste and planned obsolescence.
- Repairing something can prevent landfill waste. Waste is easy for many to grasp but the systemic and systematic changes that are required for changing manufacturing practices were often felt to be overwhelming or impossible to achieve.
- The Right to Repair is largely still an unknown right in Ireland, but there is a growing number of individuals and organisations joining the debate. Repair Acts Ireland provides an important centre for exchange and awareness raising around the Right to Repair.
- In consumer rich societies, such as Ireland, there is a reluctance to share or upload stories of contemporary repair. Reasons for this are complex but relate to a mix of perceptions about how to repair and what it means to have to repair something. This reluctance may also be tied to an increase in disposable income.
- Repair plays a critical position for Ireland to transition to a just and circular economy.



Toy Repair Café, 'Caring for Repairing', Exhibition and Féile, 3-6 Nov 2022, Kilbeggan

Location

- Westmeath, and Kilbeggan in particular, was a suitable location to hold the caring for repairing festival. Kilbeggan has a central position in the county and in Ireland. It is easy-to-reach by road and bus and rail. This makes it an ideal location for setting up a centre that deals with repair, care, maintenance and healing cultures in Ireland.
- Employing, promoting and supporting local practitioners and enhancing opportunities for local communities is critical to creating viable conditions for change.

Past / Heritage

- Mapping local repair economies provided a vital way through which people could share family and local stories about repair and contribute to conversations about future repair, particularly in relation to how to build a 'Repair Declaration'.
- Artistic enactments of traditional skills and rural traditions has much value in bringing local knowledges to life. Such enactments provide pathways for reimagining local material resource relations and economies.

Present / Skills

- The variety and richness of repair-based hand and craft skills has reduced or is lacking, but the need for such skills remain. This was evident in part from our archival work and the repair declaration. It was also present in anecdotal evidence shared through the documentary of repair trades and professions and with art and design experts across the project.
- Hands-on practical learning opportunities for repair and restoration (including ecological restoration and building restoration) are really valued, with many emphasising interest and joy in having regular workshops, a hub or spaces for repair.
- Repeatedly, we heard from workshop participants and professional, skilled trades people, about the shortage of skilled repair people in their localities.
- There is much opportunity to imagine and connect to Higher Education (HE) and vocational educational formats regarding current and future repair-based professions.

Futures

- Future repair-mindsets are difficult to envisage or imagine without raising attention and awareness of repair and the Right to Repair and providing prolonged and consistent capacity building in the region.
- Ireland has a rich repair history, which has, by and large, disappeared, but is activated in multiple invisible ways. Bringing attention to this via art is necessary to cultivate future imaginaries and change.
- Potentials to look at repair-based artificial life (AI) and machine-based learning and repairability is a future direction that is worth exploring. Current scholarship and technological trends indicate that this will be a fruitful area to develop.



Closing Conversations, 'Caring for Repairing' Exhibition and Féile, Kilbeggan

Public Engagement



Public Engagement

Event Scheduling

Interaction Type	Location + Time	Number of Events	Number of Attendees
Discovery Workshops (online)	Via Zoom (Jan-March 2022)	3	11
Storytelling + Declaration Workshops	Kilbeggan, Mullingar, Athlone, Moate, Roscommon, Castlepollard (March-Oct 2022)	13	153
Information Stands (stands/tents)	Loughnavalley (Uisneach); Kilbeggan; Athlone; Mullingar; Castlepollard (March-Oct 2022)	5	Approx 200 (information leaflets/ information sharing)
Repair Workshops/ Demonstrations/ Performances incl. Rediscovery Centre (EPA series); Fleadh Cheoil; David Kitt, Manchán Magan	Kilbeggan Mullingar (March-Nov 2022)	14	Estimated total 1,600
Talks and Demonstrations on the Repair Repository at Educational Institutions	Dublin; Galway; Sligo; Kilbeggan (July-Nov 2022)	5	335 (NCAD; Kilbeggan Secondary School; UCD; NUIG; St. Angela's)
Talks at the Caring for Repairing Féile	Kilbeggan (Nov 2022)	9	Varied from 10-50; estimated total 270

Media Platforms + Coverage (01)

Media Platform	Details + New Members (growth from 0) and Unique Hits	Estimated Coverage (if applicable)
Facebook	143 followers	
Twitter	306 followers (April 2022-Feb 2023)	23,209 impressions (April 2022-Feb 2023)
Instagram	587 followers	
Vimeo	155 plays of introductory video	
Website (repairacts.ie)	4,200 users (April 2022-Feb 2023)	Ireland 3k; US 327; UK 328; Germany 255; Netherlands 33; Canada 29; Finland 25.
Local News	10 articles in print and digital format (7 in print format) in the Westmeath Examiner; Westmeath Independent.	Est readership Westmeath Examiner 29,719 (medialive.ie)
National News + Programming	Two articles featured in the Irish Times Magazine RTE Climate Heroes piece https://www.rte.ie/news/2022/0903/1319696-repair-acts-ireland/	Est Circulation of Irish Times Magazine 54,143 (medialive.ie) Climate Heroes piece: 7432 views on twitter (@rtenews)

Media Platforms + Coverage (02)

Media Platform	Details + New Members (growth from 0) and Unique Hits	Estimated Coverage (if applicable)
National Radio	The Ray D'Arcy Show	22,4000 (mcconikey.media)
Local Radio	Athlone Community Radio and Connemara Community Radio	13,000 (as estimated by Connemara Community radio)
Print Media	<p>1500 A5 flyers to launch the project plus details of the repository In April 2022.</p> <p>2500 A6 cards to promote the project during events and at information stands in May-Aug 2022.</p> <p>320 posters to promote open public events the Caring for Repairing festival.</p> <p>10,000 festival catalogues</p>	<p>320 posters were distributed across Westmeath to promote events (e.g. the Mullingar DIY with Dave event in July 2023) plus the November 2022 Caring for Repairing festival.</p> <p>7000 festival catalogues were delivered to homes across Westmeath (in the Kilbeggan area) via An Post mail delivery service, in advance of the Nov 2023 Caring for Repairing festival. A further 3000 catalogues were distributed through Kilbeggan Secondary School; local libraries and Westmeath County Council.</p>



Key Findings



Key Findings

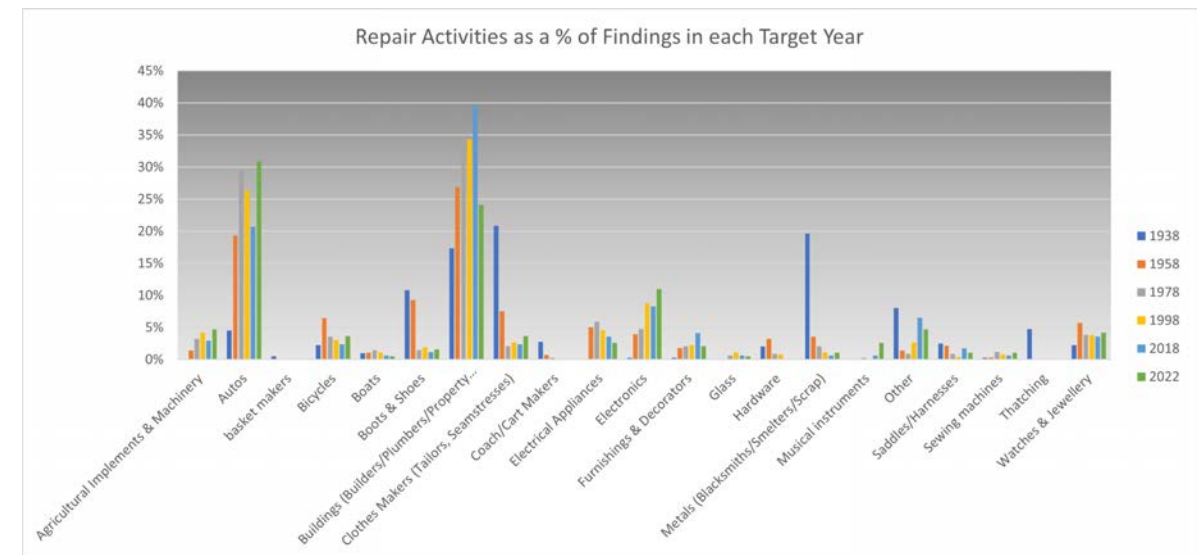
Archival Research - the History and Heritages of Repair in County Westmeath

The archival work took place in the local studies sections of Westmeath libraries. Sources such as Thoms and Slater's trade directories; yellow pages; newspaper archives (Westmeath Examiner; Westmeath Independent) were used to trace the number of repair businesses and associated practices from 1938-2022. The Dúchas Schools Collection was examined to understand the ubiquity of repair, how repair was ingrained in everyday life.

This work was presented at Mullingar Library as part of Heritage Week in July 2022 and is available using this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15fF_grws7Y.



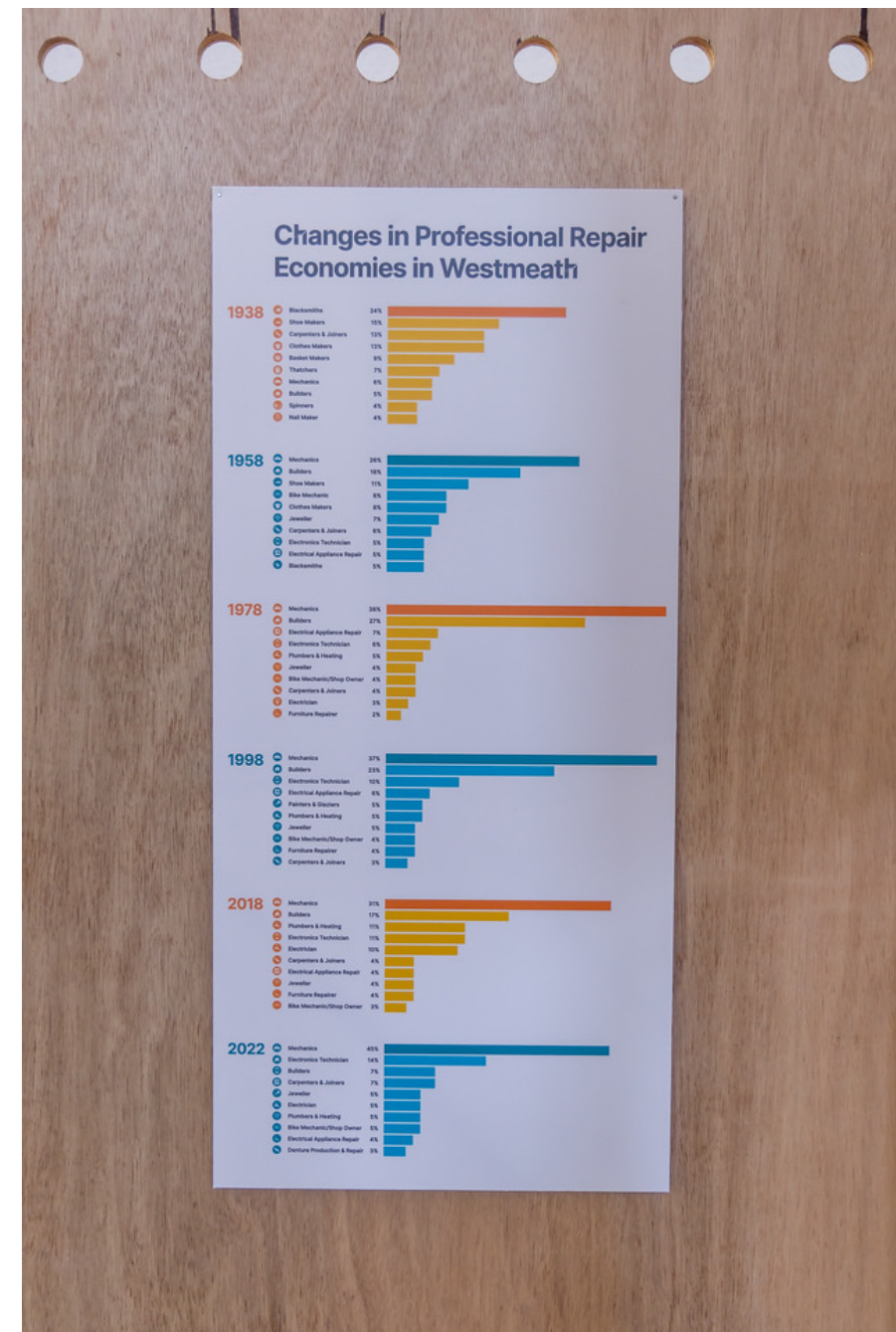
Repairing the Projector Room, Original Slides Displayed, St James' Hall, Kilbeggan



This graph depicts how the repair activities have changed through time (1938-2022). Repair services for buildings and property were widely available at a relatively constant level throughout our target timeframes. Other types of repair activities such as boot and shoe repair and clothing repair are still available as time goes on, but to a lesser degree. The availability of repair services for agricultural implements and blacksmithing in the earlier timeframe provides insight into everyday rural life.

Five Key Points from the Archival Work

1. The data is based on nearly 1000 trade records for County Westmeath 1938-2018/2022.
2. Overall, the total number of repair professions and associated repair activities has remained stable in the County 1938-2018/2022.
3. The data shows that building repair and agricultural repair have remained steady through time.
4. Through the decades, blacksmiths and clothing making/repair has declined and mechanic and electronic repair has increased.
5. The types of repair professions have changed through time with less breadth and diversity in different types of repair, but we see increased specialisation within categories such as mechanics and tech repairs.

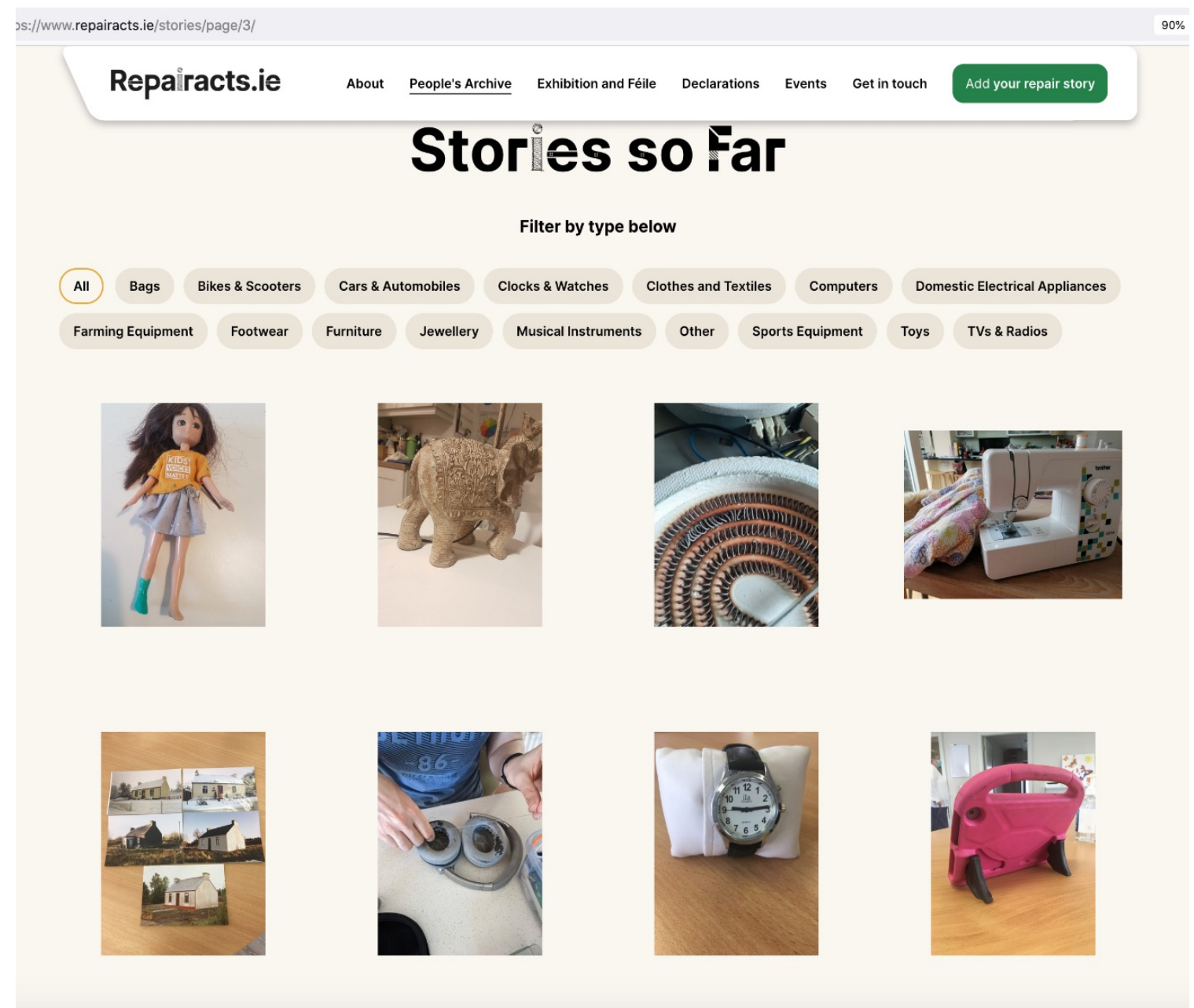


Summary of top ten repairs from 1938-2022

The People's Archive of Everyday Repair

An ambitious online photo gallery and archive was designed to enable people to upload an image of an object they have repaired and to tag it with details of the repair and their motivations for fixing it. This ongoing archive builds a picture of repair practices locally and across Ireland. The tool enables people to share their views about what should be included in a Repair Declaration for Ireland.

www.repairacts.ie/stories/add-your-repair-story/



The People's Archive of Everyday Repair - repairacts.ie

Key Findings: The People’s Archive of Everyday Repair

Our findings show that people were reluctant to share or upload stories. They may have felt repair was too ubiquitous or even trivial to place value or a spotlight on, or they simply did not want to share and upload an image. A similar archive developed as part of the wider repair international network (see: <https://tales.repairacts.net>) had more success in attracting story and image uploads.

Concluding thoughts on this are that when starting out, if the baseline for engagement is low, more significant capacity needs to be built with groups and wider communities around the topic of repair. A longer timeframe, plus consistent and continuous effort and engagement is required in order to have a significant increase in stories added. This is particularly relevant in considering what it means to create deep and lasting behaviour change using the online People’s Archive.

While this pilot project has been successful in raising awareness and engaging with Westmeath County Council and certain groups, further capacity building is needed over a prolonged period, in order to develop momentum with the People’s Archive of Everyday Repair.

Object	Number uploaded repairacts.ie*
Bags	1
Bikes + Scooters	6
Cars + Automobiles	1
Clocks + Watches	4
Clothes + Textiles	28
Computers	6
Domestic Electrical Appliances	15
Farming Equipment	2
Footwear	7
Furniture	13
Jewellery	7
Musical Instruments	1
Sports Equipment	34
Toys	8
Other (ornaments; buildings/ home renovation and repair; kitchen utensils; garden equipment; tents/ gazebos)	34

A breakdown of stories gathered to date (April 2023) - repairacts.ie

Key Findings from Workshops and the Formulation of a Repair Declaration

The Storytelling and Repair Declaration Workshops garnered rich data on people's memories of repair through the decades. Humour was evident in many stories about doing a 'botch job' when repairing something. There was an awareness across all age groups that some objects are not easy to fix and a recognition of the intentional shortening of the lifespan of objects (planned obsolescence).

People are proud of their repairs and frustrated by the lack of skilled and professional repair people, and the high cost of repair, especially washing machine repair. Each storytelling session included discussion about what could be contained in a repair declaration - a set of actions and statements that can be taken forward to further develop repair cultures in the County.

The points raised via The Repair Declaration are now forming the basis through which future art, design and other initiatives will be co-developed in Westmeath and will connect with the work of the Climate Officer for the county.

We the people of Westmeath:

CALL FOR

Repair to be more Visible and Present in our Towns and Villages

Support for Traditional Crafts and Repair Skill

Enhanced Repair skills Sharing

Curriculum Integration so that repair is present across all aspects of school, training and university curricula

County Repair Directories that detail trusted repairers, including an inventory of where materials can be purchased

Central County Repair Hubs that provide information on all forms of repair

Local Repair Workshops and Hubs in towns and villages, with trained people working collectively to provide advice

Linked Employment Schemes that support the development of more qualified tradespeople

Financially Supported Apprenticeships for artisan, craft and trades people

Better Leadership on repair and the circular economy

Repair Ambassadors at a national and local level national and local

Repair Logos for shops and business that show they support repair practices and stock mending materials

Mobile Repair Units that can travel to rural parts of the county

Encouraging, Empowering and Positive Language

around Repair and all its benefits

The Repair Declaration for Co. Westmeath

DEMAND

An End to Planned Obsolescence

Better Quality Products that are sustainable and durable

Better Information on the Materials and mineral used in products

Useable Alternatives to Plastic

Modular Design especially for frequently used objects, where parts are replaceable and easily obtained

Spare Parts Hubs where people can drop off and trade items free of charge

Reduced Tax Obligations for repair shops, so as to keep down end user costs

Affordable Insurance Rates for repair business

Documentation, Access and Tips from Manufacturers on how they repair their products

Manufacturer Transparency

on with how they repair their products

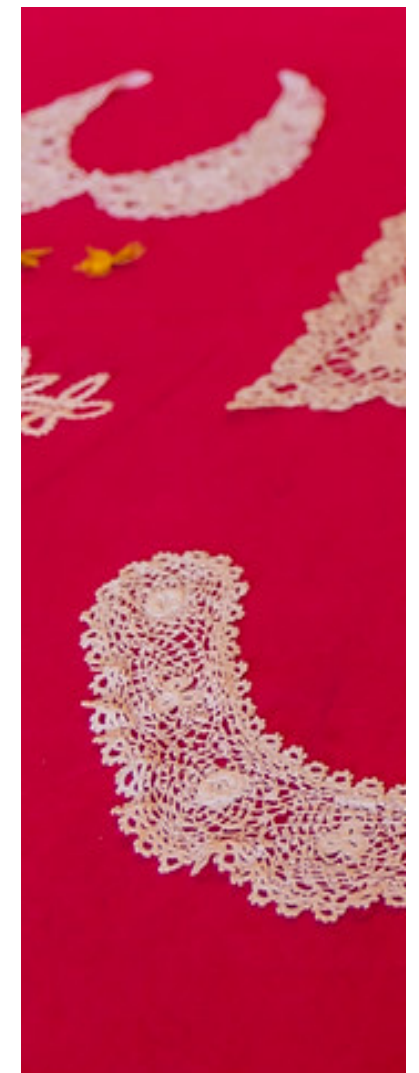
A Repair Declaration For Ireland v.1

Collated by the people of Westmeath, May–Oct 2022

repairacts.ie

In the workshops, it was acknowledged that in the past, repair has been ubiquitous in our culture. As repair is an everyday practice, many people and communities continue to mend and promote the benefits of repair. However, overall, the level of awareness of the Right to Repair and repairability as key aspects of the circular economy needs further promotion.

From evidence of press coverage, it seems clear that Repair Acts Ireland has brought more national attention to repair, particularly in the run-up to International Repair Day (15th Oct 2022). The project has contributed to the wider network of repair activities in Ireland, contributing to and supporting the excellent and ongoing work of groups and organisations such as repairmystuff.ie, the [Rediscovery Centre](#), [TOG Hackerspace](#), and [Circuleire](#).



Evaluation

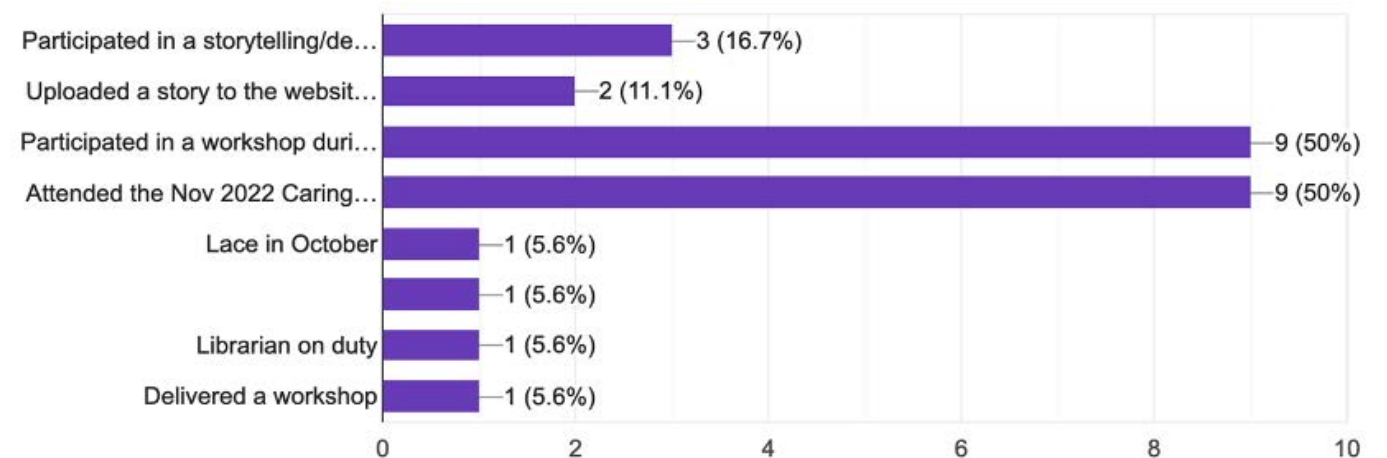


Evaluation

The Repair Acts Ireland internal evaluation specifically relates to the four day 'Caring for Repairing' exhibition, and there is a particular focus on the festival itself (N=19). A second evaluation was carried out by the MAREI centre in UCC, and this evaluation relates to the entire public engagement programme from April to November 2022 (N=73). The results of the internal evaluation are detailed in the following graphics.

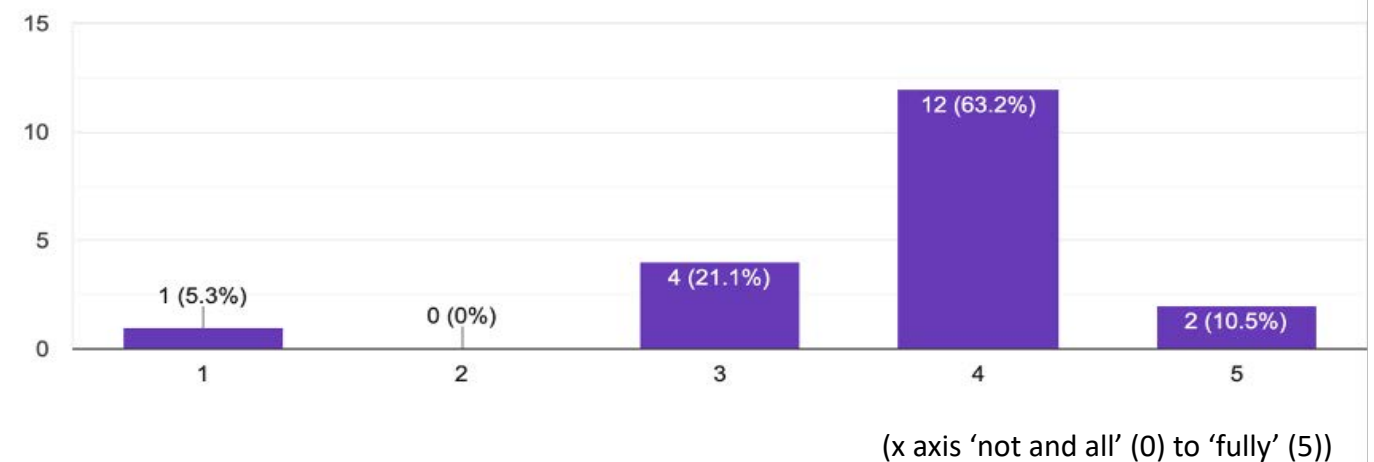
What aspect of the Repair Acts project did you engage with? (Please tick all boxes as relevant)

18 responses

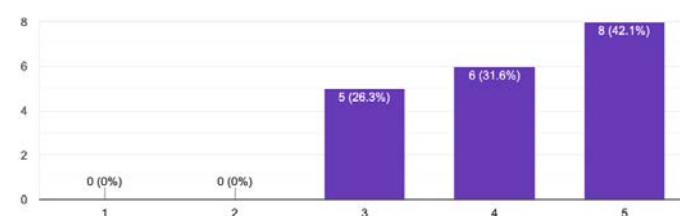


The following questions are about Climate Action... Following the event/activity, I am more informed about the environmental impacts of production and consumption of goods

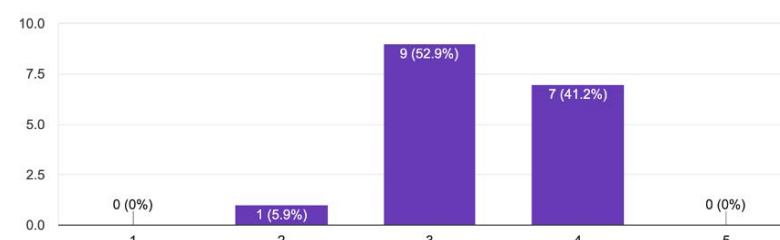
19 responses



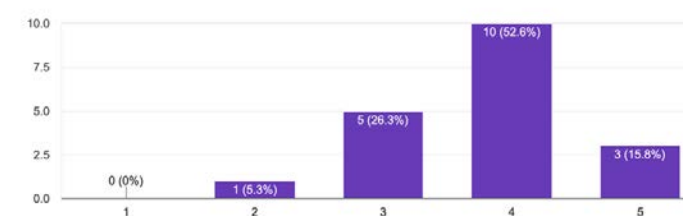
Following the event/activity, I am more informed about the Right to Repair and its relationship to climate change
19 responses



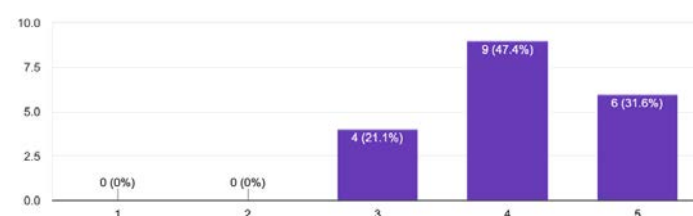
Following the event/activity, I am more informed about the circular economy
17 responses



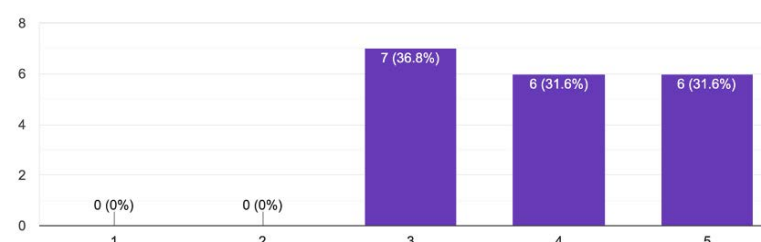
Following the event/activity, I am more likely to know how to repair/restore something or know how to get help to do so
19 responses



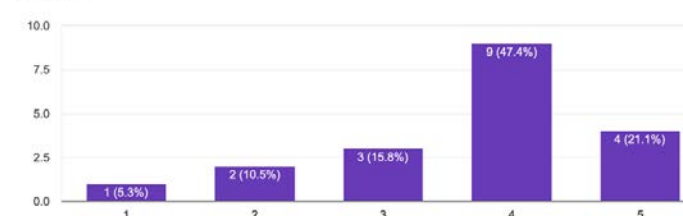
Following the event/activity, repairing, when possible, feels like something I could do to have a positive affect on the environment
19 responses

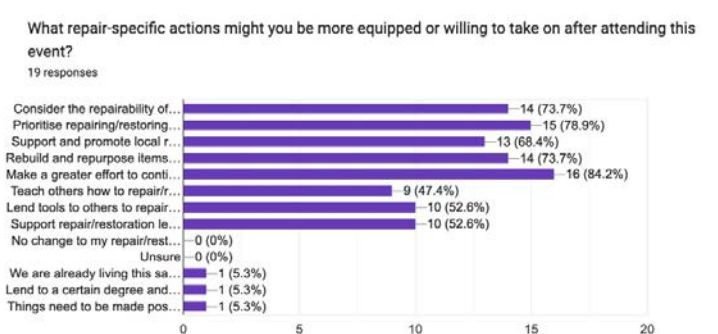
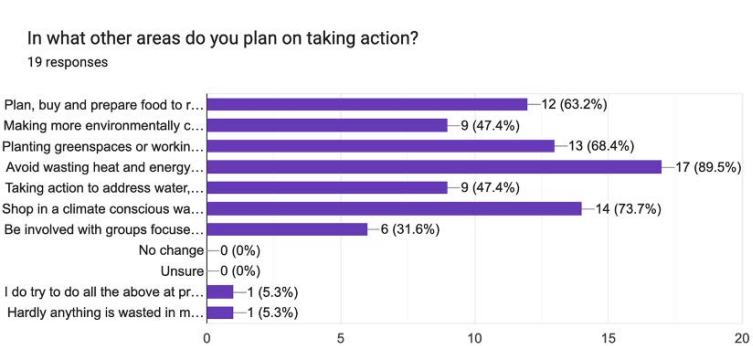
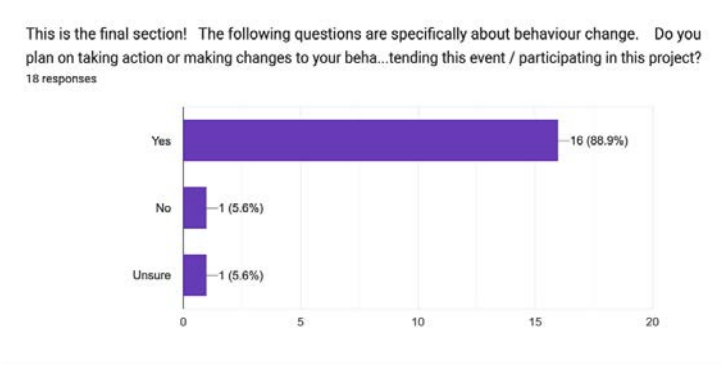
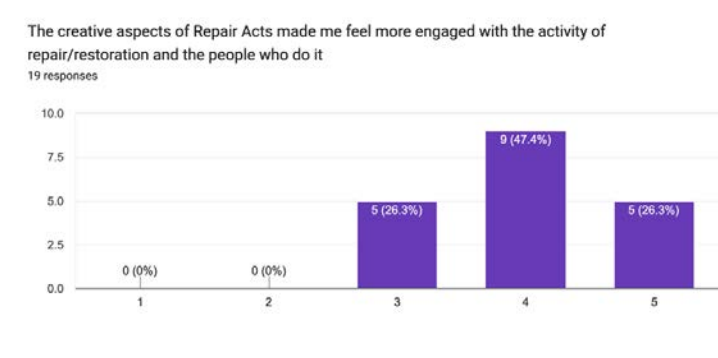
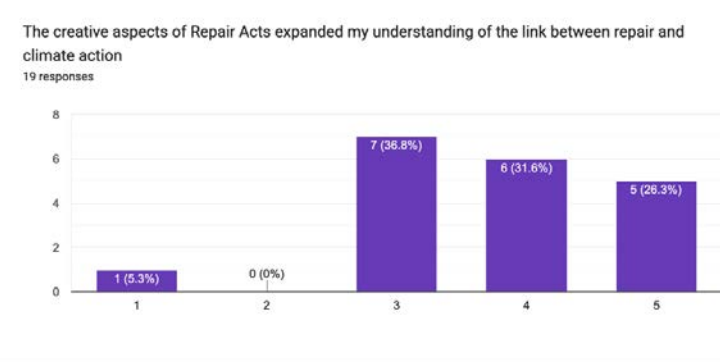
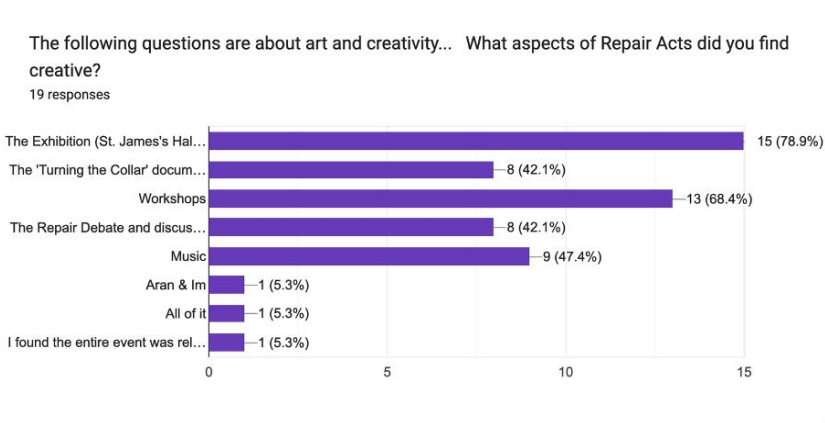


Following the event/activity, I feel more empowered to seek out repairs for my possessions than before the event
19 responses



Following the event/activity, I am more likely to be involved in a community project on the theme of repair/restoration
19 responses





Quotes from our Partners + Steering Group

- *Repair Acts Ireland has created a resurgence in the power of repair. (PS5)*
- *There are few projects like this combining the arts with repair ... Repair Acts has generated much interest at national level in the repair space (which is greatly underserved), through creative means. (PE3)*
- *This cross-pollination of repair cultures (that) accumulated in the Repair Festival in Kilbeggan was an astounding success because of this variety that is often missed by discussions on repair. The additional placemaking aspects of this festival should be used as a template for other communities that are looking to regenerate their historic town centre communities. (PE5)*
- *The emphasis on joy, the satisfaction and human need to care was brilliant in this project and shows people the hopeful actions they can take in their own lives as well as a larger policy picture. (PS4)*
- *The visual outputs from the project are stunning, from the website to the conference/workshop presentations and exhibition brochures. (PS6)*
- *The linking of our repair past to a future where repair becomes part of our lives again was very powerful. It is a tool to combat the "business as usual" argument about the lack of need for repair. Throwaway culture is new, (and) has trashed ecosystems both natural and social. (PS4)*
- *The project's ability to celebrate the skilled repairs as well as unskilled everyday repairs is essential to enable Irish society to transition to a Circular Economy and reduce our consumption related Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Putting Repair back on the map of sustainable lifestyle behaviour is an admiral achievement. (PS5)*

Conclusion





Celebrating fixing
and mending.
Gathering stories
of everyday
repair.

Repairacts.ie

Conclusion

In summary, Repair Acts Ireland has been a generative and rewarding project, with multiple deep lines of inquiry opened and all objectives as set out in the original proposal met. The project successfully brought the Right to Repair and the repair agenda to a local level in Westmeath and to a national level in Ireland.

As outlined in the original proposal, the ambition and objective of the project was to connect past stories of repair, with current practices and future potentials. This was to be achieved in all forms and in line with the initial goals through an arts and place-based approach. This approach drew on a mix of practice based, interdisciplinary artistic and applied research methodologies. These included archival research, storytelling workshops, data visualisation, photography and illustration, video art, speculative design and performance, visual, online and mixed media.

New directions included the festival and documentary, which proved to be highly valuable contributions in further raising awareness on the Right to Repair and expressing issues relating to repair barriers, skilled trades and local strengths and needs.

The work has broken new ground by establishing a Repair Acts programme in Ireland. Importantly, it created a pathway to link repair to current research and debates on waste, circular economy and environmental policy in Ireland. The goal is now to continue with the programme in Westmeath and beyond.



St James' Hall Projector Room, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath

All festival photos: Paul Moore Photography