

# Pathways: Community Climate Resilience



## Appendix 2: Evaluation Report



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## Background

### Youghal Town

Youghal is the most easterly town in Co. Cork, located on the estuary of the River Blackwater. It is one of the best examples of a Norman walled port in Ireland. It used to be a busy textile centre and, fronted by two long Blue Flag sandy beaches, remains a popular seaside resort. There are a number of historic buildings and monuments within the town's walls, and Youghal is among a small number of towns designated as an Irish Heritage Port.<sup>1</sup> The name originates from the Irish word for 'yew wood', *Eochaill*, after the yew forests which were once common in the area. Recent violent storms and tides have exposed evidence of a vast forest floor dating back thousands of years beneath Claycastle beach.<sup>2</sup> In the 2022 census the population was 8,564.

### Youghal Blue and Green Community Network

Youghal Blue and Green Community Network (YB&GCN) is a community-driven initiative that is working towards building a more sustainable future for Youghal. By promoting sustainability and protecting the town's natural and cultural heritage, the Network aims to create a cleaner, healthier, and better living environment for everyone in the area.<sup>3</sup>

Youghal Blue and Green Community Network is open to individuals and representatives of other organisations who wish to work together on blue and green actions. Currently the Network has 21 group representatives from diverse organisations such as Clean Coasts, Tidy Towns, Youghal Active Retirement Association. The goals are to work together in order to strengthen and support each other's work in relation to responding to climate change; enhancing biodiversity; ensuring clean beaches, healthy marine and coastal life while being sensitive and careful of our wildlife, woodlands and green environments. This is done through collaborating with each other and with agencies concerned with Youghal.<sup>4</sup>

### Reflective Learning and Co-Creation

This report is the culmination of a short reflective learning process led by Clare Watson<sup>5</sup> with the Pathways project management group (Maria, Hayley and Gráinne) and two artists (Veronica and Daniel), during October and November 2024. The written content has been co-created and reviewed by all five members of the team and drawn together in this report by Clare.

### Project Description

*Youghal Pathways: Building Community Resilience to Climate Change* was one of twenty-four projects selected nationally under the Spark Creative Climate Action Fund 2023 by the Creative Ireland Programme in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. It ran from November 2023 until November 2024 and involved a series of workshops and art workshops, and other creative events.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youghal>  
<https://www.cork-guide.ie/youghal.htm>  
<https://walmartleighhotel.com/things-to-do-in-youghal>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-30907533.html>

<sup>3</sup> Youghal Blue & Green website

<sup>4</sup> Revised proposal for Mall Arts Centre: 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024 [changed tense]

<sup>5</sup> [www.clarewatson.ie](http://www.clarewatson.ie)

## Aims and Objectives

The project aim<sup>6</sup> was:

- to increase community involvement in addressing rising sea levels and in coordinating responses to local flooding.

The project objectives were to engage the local Youghal community in:

- connecting to the biodiversity crisis: through shared learning, species and site identification, visual interpretation.
- understanding the changing climate: through identifying responses and exploring routes to change.
- creating a community response: through shared action and participation, informing a Community Resilience Plan for Youghal, in development with Youghal Blue & Green Community Network.

## Project Team

### **Maria Power, Chair of Blue and Green Community Network**

Maria is a social scientist and has been involved with the Blue & Green Community Network since its inception in 2020. Maria also offers consultancy services specifically related to community development, community engagement and community-based projects. This work can be with groups, academic institutions or state agencies.

Maria is passionate about climate action being community based and led, in order to ensure changes are appropriate to people's lives and sustainable, long into the future. Living in a coastal community facilitates local residents to engage, understand and protect nature, biodiversity and the coast.

### **Hayley Fox-Roberts, Project Manager**

Hayley is the Community Development Worker with Cumann na Daoine and an experienced Project Manager (Seeding the County 2019-, LGBT Diversity 2010-13, Northwest Pride 2006-16) and also a freelance consultant on strategic planning, rural development and minority inclusion. Her previous experience in community arts stretches back over many years, including the development of the Artist in the Community Scheme (CREATE). She has worked with the Blue & Green Community Network on a number of projects, reports and strategies which has enabled her to develop greater commitment to addressing climate change whilst her community development work enables links between this project and local community groups.

### **Gráinne Furey, Community Engagement Lead**

Gráinne joined Youghal Blue & Green Community Network at its inception as a volunteer Network member in January 2021, representing Youghal Clean Coasts group. The pandemic afforded her time to further connect her already deep relationship with nature, utilising social media platforms to demonstrate its beauty, importance and need for protection. Responses from community helped confirm that many in her community had similar concerns as well as the will to learn how best to do so. This inspired her to not only get more involved in Blue & Green projects but to change her career path as a holistic therapist and study a degree in Family Youth & Community Practice in NUI Galway. Gráinne was successful in gaining a position as Community Climate Action Worker for the Blue & Green Community Network in January 2023 and has enjoyed leading various environmental focused projects leaning on the core principles of community development for guidance.

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<sup>6</sup> Youghal Blue & Green website

**Veronica Santorum, lead artist**

Veronica Santorum is visual artist with a socially engaged practice, informed by a background in ecology. Her mission is to help people reconnect with the natural world, for healing and the wellbeing of both. She uses creative means with groups to *explore* current issues, open up alternative ways of thinking to *problem solve*, *build connection* and *capacity build*. She works in mixed media, favouring natural fibres, incorporating time outdoors, observing and in community conversation. Previous projects include: Decarbonising Together with Limerick City and County Council and Garryowen in 2022; in 2021, a place-making and biodiversity project in the Ballyhouras which led to an outdoor earth installation and biodiversity planning; Strawberry Days, a large-scale Citizen Science Pollination experiment in 2015; and the Limerick's Buzzing Project 2014-2015 which helped inform the development of the All-Ireland Pollinator Strategy and was a catalyst for many communities' engagement with bee conservation.

**Daniel Clancy, artist**

Daniel works as a creative practitioner primarily in the fields of audio, film and community arts. He collaborates with community groups and organisations to explore and develop the stories and conversations that are important to them. Through audio stories, films, workshops and events he helps amplify people's voices and bring them to a wider audience. Working as producer & video editor with the pioneering St. Brigid's Green Schools Committee on Green Shoots (2018, Cork Community TV) shone a light on the potential of community-led initiatives in addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Daniel has subsequently shifted focus to projects and collaborations that explore community-level participation in climate action and the natural world, including Decarbonising Together Garryowen (2022), Living Heritage (Good Day Cork 2024).

**Jackie Nevin, artist<sup>7</sup>**

Jackie is a sculptor living and working in West Cork. Following a career working with young people, she embarked on her career as an artist in 2017, with a particular interest in casting and exploring new sustainable materials. Inspired by environmental change, she is passionate about taking art out of the gallery and into a community setting, encouraging an engagement that is tactile and inclusive. The primary focus of her practice is to use art to awaken our inherent responses and connections to the natural world. She is the recipient of the Jane Anne Rothwell Award 2023. Unfortunately, Jackie withdrew from the project in June 2024.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.corkmidsummer.com/news/jackie-nevin-announced-as-recipient-of-jane-anne-rothwell-award-2023>

## What Happened

### The Creative Process

Veronica and Daniel see their role as seeds or catalysts for developing new understanding, relationships and change through a shared creative research process. Their work is socially engaged. They begin as 'outsiders' and aim over the first few months of a project to become embedded within the organisation and community. They work in a participatory way with a core group and, as understanding and capacity build, the project expands to a broader engagement with the wider community. The thematic space that they work in is determined by a combination of the core group's interests, Veronica's affinity for the 'more-than-human' and Daniel's deep empathy for people and interest in social dynamics. The process begins with a variety of creative exploratory engagements, often outdoors, utilising natural materials and tailored to place, people and problems. A mix of modalities such as spoken word, visual and land art and soundscapes are used. Audio recording is part of the iterative process, used as notetaking and for analysis and sharing these 'community conversations'. Reflection and adjustment are fundamental. Thus, ideas arising are revisited in the next round of investigations, giving a deeper understanding and an indication of its importance to the community. Veronica uses an 'analysis through making' approach in both her personal and participatory practice to examine and build on what is emerging from the project. Audio and images captured in earlier stages and other information found in the research process, serve as prompts or 'data' for the analysis phase. Simple, accessible textile art methods such as printing, stencilling, collaging are used, so that everyone can participate without feeling anxious about being 'artistic'. The aim is for the themes that have arisen, dynamics and social responses to be considered through textile art. Finally, this creative response is shared, often in an installation format, in an informal, outdoor setting. The use of non-traditional art venues is to encourage wider engagement with a more diverse audience and to emphasise the importance of place and the local environment.

### Project Process

Initially the artists spent time understanding the motivations, goals and context of the project with the Youghal Blue & Green Community Network, and how they could best serve those. Through a variety of creative exploratory activities and events they explored ideas around flooding, rising sea levels and climate action, first with the Network and then with the wider community. The 'analysis through making' stage was intended to be participatory but had to be adjusted towards more solo work and an 'artist response' to the themes that had emerged during the exploratory phase. At the project end it was evident that combining embedded artist and community development approaches worked well, albeit challenging at times. The project's penultimate action was a textile trail and outdoor audio exhibition installed temporarily at Claycastle beach. Threads that arose early in the process and wound through the project manifested in this audio and visual work. Walking the trail, people were invited to slow down, become aware of their environment as they engaged with the imagined words of a fossilised Yew tree buried on the beach. Time and urgency, coexistence with other life forms and the community's search for a map or pathway to deal with climate change are themes that Veronica explored with natural dyes, stitch and the written word. The audio element transported people from the timeframe of the tree through sound, back to the present day and challenges facing Youghal. It used Youghal's voices of all ages and attempted to reflect the variety of perspectives, sometimes contradictory, that make up such a 'community conversation'. The intention was to highlight the care and urgency already within Youghal to address climate issues and to evoke the power of co-operation and collective action. It is hoped that these opportunities for learning, reflection, connection-making and relationship building have supported the work of the Youghal Blue & Green Community Network in building a community resilient to the effects of climate change and rising sea levels.

## Project Activities

In January 2023, a “call” for artists was put out via YB&GCN and interested artists were interviewed and asked to compile proposals for the project which were then assessed and voted on by a Working Group of three Network members and the management team. A total of six artists submitted applications. Veronica Santorum, Daniel Clancy and Jackie Nevin were chosen as lead artists and the application for funding from Creative Ireland (in the Spark category) was compiled by the management team after many meetings to further explore climate action themes relevant to Youghal’s needs as a coastal community. The application was submitted in March 2023.

In July 2023, the Youghal Pathways project was chosen as one of Creative Ireland’s one-year creative climate action projects (Spark) and received a grant of €48,559.24.

Over the year, the project dedicated time to the issue of flooding and normalised conversations around rising sea levels and flooding. It provided new perspectives through external and creative inputs and provided the opportunity for members of the community to ask different questions, and to have different conversations with different people. It also gave the Youghal Blue & Green Community Network the scope to expand their reach within the local community.

On 12 November 2023, the first activity was held on Youghal Strand and brought Network members, representing different community organisations, together to introduce the project and consider flooding in Youghal and the community response. It involved a two-hour interactive experience, with a range of creative activities. The project was then officially launched by Councillor Mary Linehan-Foley at the Youghal Blue and Green Community Network’s Christmas party on 13 December.

Between January and November 2024, the project team facilitated or were involved in another twelve events - a second workshop, a public interview (with two Coast Guard members and a tour of Coastguard Station), an art workshop, two textile workshops (including a sandbag discussion), a stencilling workshop (with members of the migrant community), a sandbag filling workshop (using a prototype designed by the local Men’s Shed), a Sandcastle Challenge (involving c. 200 people), a Textile Trail and Soundscape (incorporating audio interviews gathered throughout the year) and the project had a presence at two local festivals (Moby Dick and Spirit of Youghal). On 14 November, the project culminated in a public Town Hall Event entitled: *Community Response: Planning for Future Flood Events*.

For more detail, please see the Activity Table and Media Table (Appendices 1 & 2)

## Community Feedback

Throughout the year the fourteen events engaged over 400 people in creative climate action, across the generations. Feedback was sought at all events, although it was not always given by all participants. However, from a review of the feedback received, a high proportion of participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the activities and events, climate literacy improved and there is certainly more discussion and awareness about rising sea levels and flooding. This is a high level of impact for a one-year project. More importantly, more people feel that the community can play a role in preparing for flood events, many of the participants are engaging in more climate actions, the Network has gained new members, and 32 people have signed up to continue the work of building community resilience in the coming year.

For more detail, please see Community Feedback Data: See Appendix 3

## Project Team Learnings

This section is the culmination of a process of reflective learning whereby each team member responded in writing to a number of questions around what they each thought had worked and hadn't worked in the project. These responses were then collated and synthesised by Clare and reviewed by the team.

### What Worked Well

#### **Art-based community research approach (group workshops/walkshops, meeting people, interviews and creative events)**

This approach helped to develop a stronger understanding of the issues regarding rising sea levels, flooding, climate change and loss of biodiversity in Youghal. It developed an understanding of what resilience planning involves and the role that community can take at different stages. It also developed an understanding of the role of different agencies and began creating connections (OPW, Local Authority, HSE, Coastguard, MaREI UCC).

The workshop/workshop structure (small groups) made conversation easy and, for the most part, the social and creative dimensions of these helped to reduce any conflict, fear and anger amongst participants and encouraged a sense of 'working together'.

Capturing and recording oral testimonies from local people, particularly those who had experienced flooding, was very effective. Local feedback at the Textile Trail and Soundscape on Claycastle beach focused heavily on the fact that local voices were used. People listened attentively to figure out who was featured. There was also feedback that it was powerful to hear 'non-experts', i.e. 'regular' local people, telling the story. As the project progressed, using audio captured earlier in the project worked well to bring new people up to speed with what the project was about.

The Sandcastle Challenge worked very well as a fun, educational event and communicated scientific information about the OPW's models of local flooding to a local, public audience. The enthusiasm and engagement on the day was captured very effectively in a short video.

The pop-up Textile Trail and Soundscape installation on Claycastle beach looked and sounded beautiful, was provocative and people had strong visceral responses to it. In both events the atmosphere was informal whilst focused.

The 'Town Hall' event was very successful in bringing scientific information and community experiences to the collective development of a pathway to planning for future flood events.

#### **Engagement approach**

The personal approach used by Network members and artists, speaking directly with people about issues, topics and project activities, rather than relying exclusively on online and social media methods was very effective. The Project Lead's local connections and her breadth of knowledge of Youghal and its people, and pre-existing familiarity and trust with them, was invaluable in identifying people to speak with, as well as offering artists a foot in the door. The Project Manager's other role as Local Community Development Worker also promoted the project at community level through local groups. This was in addition to postering, door to door leafleting and regular radio shows by the Network on CRYfm.

Refreshments were provided in a space (e.g. gazebo and community café) so people could gather and chat before, during and after events. This helped members and non-members to mix and talk more freely and it also helped ensure that participants felt valued.



### **Broad range of participants**

The 14 events engaged over 400 people throughout the programme, most of whom were local residents, which significantly exceeded targets. Most events were intergenerational, spanned a wide age range and brought a rich diversity of experience to the project overall. The inclusion of local refugee and asylum seeker communities was valuable both in promoting social inclusion and by bringing the participants' considerable experience of flooding into the project findings and future work. Many of those who engaged had not done so before and they continue to engage in Youghal Blue & Green Community Network events. Over the year, ten people signed up to join the Network.

### **Working with different groups**

The creative aspect of the project was initially designed so that the first four workshops would build capacity within the Youghal Blue & Green Community Network with a small group of people (10-12) so that participants had a firm understanding of resilience planning around flooding, the role of community within it, and the questions and discussions they wished to have with agencies and others involved in flood management. However, it was agreed at the outset that the Network uses a variety of approaches to reach and engage with a range of target groups in the community. Using different approaches, e.g. creative workshops, workshops, beach events, town hall and radio all contributed to reaching different cohorts of the community and widening the climate action taken across Youghal. This approach has been very effective for the Network over the past number of years.

### **Employing a flexible & adaptable approach**

Project activities and events were designed to be informed and shaped by what emerged from the research and initial public engagement stages. For instance, the themes and topics explored at the Coast Guard visit and discussion reflected the confusion around roles and responsibilities expressed by participants in Workshop 1 and Workshop 2. We recognised there was a strong desire for people to understand the mechanics of how the emergency services respond to a flooding event, which the Youghal Coast Guard members ably talked us through at the event.

The exhibition of project artwork was a major element that required adaptation. While the artistic output and its exhibition was important, it was secondary to the process and outcomes of engaging with the community, and not an end goal of the project. However, the exhibition of the artwork was still important and a valuable opportunity to reach a wider audience. As the project progressed the initial desired venue, The Mall Arts Centre, had to be discarded as an option. This required a re-evaluation of the project goals and in mid-summer of 2024 the project team met and agreed to host the exhibition outdoors at Claycastle beach, and to also incorporate an additional event - a Sandcastle Challenge. While the outdoor venues were not perfect and subject to accommodating weather conditions, they provided a unique and suitable public space that fitted better with the topics and themes of the project.

### **Finding the right talking points and messages to reach people**

It was important to keep messaging positive, despite the difficult topics. Talking points and prompts were provided to facilitate conversation at each event. The sandbags were a great conversation starter and piqued people's interest which was especially helpful when interviewing new people for the first time. Sand artist Sean Corcoran, was selected to lead on the Sandcastle Challenge focusing on the 477 homes & buildings in Youghal that are at risk of flooding. This concept especially resonated with people. Many of the participants came for the fun day out but most of the people spoken to on the day grasped the idea very quickly. This was an effective way of speaking about data and information that has been publicly available since 2018 but is not well known. Videographer, Peter Grogan, documented the event and produced a short video which was then showcased on YB&GCN social media pages, website and YouTube channel in order to disseminate the message further.

### **Adapting to allow more space for people to air the psychological impact of flooding**

The final activity for the second workshop was to be a summing up of what people learned on the day. Instead, people who had already been devastated by flooding explained in detail the impact flooding had had on their mental wellbeing and why it was so important to get things right in the future. It also became clear that most people had minimal or no professional counselling or psychological support in the aftermath. Obviously, the workshops didn't solve these deeper issues, but participants said it was at least cathartic to share their experiences.

### **Using the beach as a creative space**

While there were some downsides to using Claycastle beach as a venue, such as distance to the town, ease of access and visibility (and potential weather problems), it proved to be a fitting venue to exhibit the work, using an outdoor public space connected with the natural aspects of the town. With sea, drowned forest and town visible, it placed everything immediately in context. It is a space where people feel comfortable and can relax, and which is not owned by any group. It is used regularly for climate action events/activities. The audio installation of deck chairs kitted out with comfortable blankets and cushions was described as a "lovely outdoor cinema". Thankfully the weather was very clement.

### **A range of useful tools and approaches were developed**

The Emergency Services workshop was particularly powerful. This was run like an intimate podcast event with Coastguard volunteers speaking to a small audience about their experiences during flooding. This really moved participants, some of whom signed up to the Network that evening and remained involved with the project. The Coastguard was a new connection for the Network. The Resilience Mandala on the beach was effective at exploring and communicating a lot of information around resilience planning in a creative, non-confrontational way. Visual and audio materials were created for indoor use at the Town Hall meeting which added to the accessibility of information for participants.

Listening to the experiences of people who have been flooded was valuable for those not directly affected by flooding and evoked strong altruistic responses.

An improvisation exercise using social media quotes and creating a flooding soundscape worked very well at returning people in their minds to the experience of flooding. One of the problems that we encountered, and which our conversation with the OPW corroborated, is that people are intensely focused and wish to discuss solutions to flooding in the immediate aftermath of flooding but that this fades within weeks. This exercise was useful for returning people (safely) into that headspace (and will be used by the Network again).

The Sandcastle Challenge was an additional output that worked very well as a creative communication of scientific data about climate change and flooding – visualising the number of houses at risk as outlined in the OPW floodplan. It could be repeated in any coastal town at risk of flooding that has the data available.

The local Men's Shed built a Sandbag Filling Station. The trail created a prototype, which allows two people to fill six bags in five minutes and could be used in the future, and it showed how easy it would be for the community to help filling sandbags. It also identified important considerations like health and safety, space required, access issues, permissions, etc.

A range of other resources are also now available for use including: flood maps, video footage and photographs; audio recordings and oral testimonies; activity plans; the sandbag artwork; graphic harvesting and 'transitional' art piece; climate action stencils and other graphics.

Network staff and members were present at each event along with the artists and this created opportunities to chat with participants and passers-by about the project as well as promoting YB&GCN and its other projects.

### **First step has been taken in developing a community response/community resilience plan**

The theme is in the public eye and can be built on, the desire for action is evident and community members are now engaged in developing this response.

The discussion around community flooding resilience has expanded beyond just 'response' to include recovery after the flooding event, and prevention.

The relationship with Cork County Council improved in the last stage and can be developed further in the coming year. Some preliminary connections were established between the Network and staff in other agencies.

The emotional and mental health impacts of flooding were made apparent by conversations with the HSE and with flood survivors. This could be something that the Network will work to support in the aftermath of flooding.

Nature-based solutions were a popular discussion topic and were explored with MaREI and the OPW. The Network could facilitate work in these areas (e.g. raising awareness of the importance of Sustainable Urban Drainage and alternatives to paving gardens for parking, planting marram grass, etc.).

The Town Hall event was attended by approx. 55 members of the public. Scientific input was given by UCC, Met Eireann, OPW and community input was given by a local Councillor, Midleton Flood Forum and the Pathways artist. Following inputs, workshops were held around four key themes: Prevent, Prepare, Respond and Recover with approx. 13 people in each group. There were clear suggestions emanating from the four groups and these form the basis of a report: see Appendix 5. 32 people from the Town Hall event signed up to continue the work of developing a community resilience plan for Youghal in relation to future flood events, with the support of Cork County Council Environmental activist and artist Hazel Hurley was brought onboard to document the Town Hall event via 'graphic harvesting'. Additionally, the original 'Periwinkle Art Trail' was replaced as a 'legacy' piece by a 'transitional' art piece created by Hazel to map the 'Pathways' journey and the co-creation of a community resilience plan

### **The project has influenced future creative practice**

Veronica will continue to explore forests, and other habitats flooded by rising sea levels in the past, as a theme in future work exploring climate change.

Links have been established with additional artists who wish to work with the Network on future projects, including woodland and freshwater themes.

## **Challenges And Learning**

### **Lack of shared understanding around how embedded artists work within a community development network**

Youghal Blue & Green Community Network is a young organisation and is guided by community development principles. This was the first time the Network had run an embedded artist project. While the embedding of artists was discussed at the outset of the project, it was not fully explored, nor were community development approaches fully explored with the artists. How these processes were working was not regularly reviewed throughout the year. Misunderstandings inevitably arose, particularly around how the Network works, the level of involvement of Network members and the availability of volunteers to help at events. The co-creation element of the project could also have been explored in more depth.

### **Learning**

- It is important to fully explore the different approaches at the outset and for practitioners on both sides to understand each other's expectations and ways of working, and to find common ground even where approaches differ. Whether the initial discussions have achieved their full impact should be assessed through ongoing review.

- Additional time should also be allocated to helping the artist(s) embed within the community and understand the nature of community development and the culture of the organisation.

### **Resource priorities**

Most of the project budget went into the fees of the original three artists plus fees for an additional three artists (total 84 days/588 hours) and materials. A project manager was paid for one day per week. The project lead was allocated one day per week from the YB&GCN budget. There were significant time constraints on the project management side, so two other staff members (community climate action worker and strategic development manager) also provided significant time to the project.

### **Learning**

- Bearing in mind the amount of funding available for each one-year Spark project (c. 50K) it might be better to involve fewer artists. This would then allow more of the budget to be spent on project management, PR, administration and support.
- Events and activities could be condensed to within six months to allow time to build internal relationships and agree structures, processes, responsibilities and plans at the beginning, and to allow more time for reporting, reflective learning and evaluation at the end. However, the length of this project did enable the slower process of community development around climate change issues.

### **Lack of clarity around:**

- **Roles, responsibilities and time commitments**

There was not a full understanding of everyone's roles (artists, project lead, project manager) and each person's time allocation to the project. This sometimes resulted in over-communication and duplication of effort.

- **Expectations around decision making**

Although there were strong longer-term structures in place to ensure financial management and project reporting there were different expectations between YB&GCN staff and artists about how they should work and how week-to-week decisions were made.

- **Unaired frustrations**

Issues are likely to arise in any project, particularly if it involves people who are working on a limited, part-time basis, and on difficult issues such as climate change. While some concerns were adequately addressed in this project, others remained unaired and unresolved.

### **Learning**

- Initial workshops (not just meetings) should be held at the outset with the full project team (management and artists) to develop trust and relationships and to explore and agree roles, responsibilities and time commitments; where administrative responsibility lies, methods of internal communication and decision making (including regular meeting times); and ways of addressing concerns. This is particularly important when the roles are all part-time.
- These processes should be revisited, reviewed and refined periodically.

### **Securing Cork County Council support & use of The Mall Arts Centre in Youghal Town Hall**

It was not possible to obtain Cork County Council support and to secure the use of the Town Hall for the final art event/exhibition. This required a restructuring of some of the programme of work and, while the project continued to achieve its aims and objectives, the creative and logistical methodologies for some aspects had to change. The uncertainty and necessary changes caused stress and took up valuable time. However, ultimately, the alternative venue of Claycastle beach proved to be more appropriate and effective for the final installation and recent staff change over within the Council has opened up new avenues of communication.

## **LEARNING**

- Involving the Council in the development of the project at application stage may enable it to participate more fully in the project and to take a stronger position.
- Ideally, if a venue is required as an exhibition space, permission should be secured in advance of making the project funding application, or an alternative option should be found.
- It would be useful if Creative Ireland could provide advice and guidance to projects on how best to engage and involve key stakeholders like the Local Authorities/Councils.

## **PR and media coverage**

It proved difficult to maintain a high social media and general media presence, and to keep the project in the public eye for a year. There was limited sharing by Network members of prepared posts and data analysis was unavailable for some periods. This highlights challenges for community workers and volunteers across the board in terms of time and availability, and the need for increased funding for marketing and communications expertise/skills required to ensure effective messaging and promotion.

## **LEARNING**

- More of the budget should be allocated to ensure that staff has time to deliver and oversee media/social media coverage and promotions, and to make better use of media and materials gathered to promote the project (e.g., photos, clips of audio / video, written posts etc).

## **Gathering feedback**

Feedback was gathered from participants after every event and, while reviewing this feedback was very insightful and facilitated adjustments and improvements, gathering and administering it was time consuming and challenging, particularly at larger public events, and it required more administration time than anticipated by the team.

## **LEARNING**

- More time and resources are required to stay on top of data collection and analysis.
- The structure of feedback mechanisms should be reviewed at intervals during the project.

## **Engagement with Creative Ireland**

Creative Ireland has to be applauded for delivering such a ground-breaking programme for creative climate action, and for providing networking and support events, which we found very beneficial. However, the management team had underestimated the amount of time needed to work in partnership with the embedded artists and the administrative support offered by Creative Ireland was limited due to their own limited resources. Additionally, the early deadline for the final financial drawdown hindered an organic approach to final actions.

## **LEARNING**

- Guidance on the embedded artist process at application and contracting stages would be useful.
- The final drawdown stage should be moved closer to the grant end date.

# Evaluation Summary

## Project Achievements

- Greater engagement, awareness and reach into the community.
- Greater awareness of rising sea levels and reasons for flooding.
- Increased engagement and increased conversation around climate change issues.
- Cohesion between Network member organisations and other local community/NGO groups towards creating a sustainable response.
- Increased presence of community networks and climate-related actions.
- Community members' commitment to planning sustainable responses.
- Increased ease in talking about climate change, which continues to spread awareness through word of mouth.
- Greater engagement in climate action activities (numbers exceeded targets)
- Wider social media reach.
- Softened the ground for Blue & Green Community Network to do more actions – it is getting easier to engage community members.
- Opened ground for Community Resilience Plan.
- Raised awareness – more opportunities for engagement.
- Increased visibility of climate change.
- Better understanding of the causes of flooding.
- Deeper understanding and increase in capacity to identify community needs and responses, and how to engage effectively with diverse communities.