

BLUEPRINT

CREATIVE CLIMATE ACTION FUND SPARK PROJECT

BluePrint Report

Guiding climate risk communication through an artistic co-creation approach



Lydia Cumiskey and Denise McCullagh, MaREI Centre, University College Cork
Paula Larkin and Kevin Murphy, The PlayHouse
Cathy Burns, Derry City and Strabane District Council
Laura Dixon and Lorna Dennehy, Mayo County Council
Sara Walmsley, BluePrint project artist

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Executive Summary

As climatic hazards become increasingly more commonplace and widespread, it is essential that scientists, authorities and citizens find a way to **effectively communicate risk and engage with all of society**. Artistic and creative methods offer opportunities to bridge this gap, helping to build connections on an emotional level, support collaboration and foster community resilience.

BluePrint is one of the Spark Projects funded under the Creative Climate Action Fund, an initiative of Creative Ireland. The BluePrint project is led by MaREI, the Research Ireland Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine, at University College Cork, with partners The Playhouse, Derry City and Strabane District Council, and Mayo County Council.

The BluePrint project artist Dr. Sara Walmsley worked creatively with flood-affected communities from villages Eglinton, Co. Derry-Londonderry and Newtownstewart, Co. Tyrone, in a **co-creation process** to share and exchange their lived-experiences around flooding and climate adaptation.

Experiences from the co-creation process in Derry-Londonderry and Tyrone were shared in Mayo through an All-Island two-way learning exchange, bringing together communities and other artists, government actors and scientific partners working on, or interested in, artistic co-creation processes for engaging communities around climate adaptation and resilience.

The **creative risk communication outputs** included a sound and light installation, a Choral Piece and a Poetry Piece capturing experiences of flooding in Eglinton and Newtownstewart and their call to strengthen climate resilience. Listeners recognised the power of the outputs in provoking empathy, sharing real human voices and lived experiences in an inclusive way.

The project demonstrated how creative and artistic processes and outputs can be used for stimulating and amplifying **new channels for dialogue** between local and regional authorities and communities, building the momentum and relationships for managing climate risk and fostering resilience locally. The meaningful engagement process created space to share and exchange lived experiences, work through trauma around flood impacts and help realise community capacities to leverage change locally. The learning exchange with Mayo highlighted how other communities across the island would benefit from such a creative process to support **wellbeing and resilience**.

The outputs created with these communities will continue to be used to **increase risk awareness** and support actions towards community resilience within the Derry City and Strabane District Council Area, but also more widely across the island of Ireland, especially with those who have limited or no experience of such impacts but need to prepare and adapt for the future.

Research and evaluation activities during the co-creation process in Derry-Londonderry and the learning exchange with Mayo resulted in an **artistic co-creation toolkit** (to be published in 2025) targeting local governments and other professionals working with communities adapting to climate change across Ireland.



Recommendations (relevant findings/ key messages)

1. **Flexible and adaptive creative process:** Socially engaged art must adapt to the needs and concerns of communities to help establish trust and unlock their creative capacities.
2. **Trauma-informed approach:** The arts/creative practice can be a gentle way to work with climate/flood-affected communities who have experienced traumatic events but external experts with skills in working with trauma should be consulted, to ensure that participants and project teams have the support and skills necessary to work with the complexity of the issues and lived experiences.
3. **Connecting communities works:** Building networks and connections between flood-affected communities supported sharing knowledge/experiences around current and future actions towards climate resilience, while helping to build trust in the creative process.
4. **Art, science and government partnership:** The BluePrint transdisciplinary team, with partners and skills from science/research, the arts, and government, allowed for a diverse range of perspectives to inform the approach taken. It also enabled more opportunities to share the creative outputs with people in positions of power and to support wider uptake, application and scaling.
5. **Lived experiences connect with people:** Climate data is not enough to communicate climate risk. The co-created outputs produced by BluePrint demonstrate the power of sharing lived experiences of those directly affected to evoke emotion, empathy and care towards communities facing difficult challenges.
6. **Amplifying the human component:** Using creative processes and outputs like song and poetry for climate risk communication offers a non-confrontational way to support dialogue and exchange between policymakers/elected officials and communities, enabling an environment where individuals are more inclined to collaborate and supporting pathways to climate resilience.
7. **Connection takes time:** Building relationships with communities impacted by flooding is not an easy or quick task, it requires significant time and engagement from the project team to build a level of trust.
8. **Towards climate resilience:** It is essential that communities feel that they are gaining something from the process rather than just being mined for information. To ensure that community participants are valued, significant effort is needed among partners to enable the process to go beyond talking and support action at different levels to strengthen climate resilience on the ground.

Introduction & background

According to the World Meteorological Organisation, 2024 was the warmest year on record, with global average temperature reaching more than 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, causing more extreme climate and weather events and subsequent negative social, economic and environmental impacts.

As a result, Ireland's climate is changing, with impacts already being felt especially in coastal towns and cities. These impacts are expected to continue and intensify and areas such as those in Derry-Londonderry, Tyrone and Mayo, which are vulnerable to coastal and riverine floods, will continue to be negatively impacted. Floods and their catchments don't abide by administrative, geographical or political boundaries, as such, knowledge exchange and learning between flood-affected communities and other government, scientific and policy actors is crucial across the island of Ireland.

Meaningful two-way engagement and risk communication between local authorities and at-risk communities is crucial to prepare for and adapt to the future climate at the local level. The arts and creative sectors offer different tools and methods to explore this challenge.

BluePrint addressed this need and opportunity using an artistic co-creation process in the Derry City and Strabane District Council area, an All-Island learning exchange with Mayo and an artistic co-creation toolkit to support actors working with communities on climate adaptation and flood resilience across the island of Ireland.

The expected outcomes of BluePrint were:

- New risk communication outputs and toolkit to support future engagement between the arts, research bodies and local/regional authorities.
- Increase in knowledge and capacity among at-risk communities involved in the creative process, supporting improved collaboration with authorities and dissemination/outreach of risk communication outputs locally.
- Increase in knowledge and capacity among project partners (local authorities, research/science and the arts) through All-Island learning exchange and toolkit, around the value of the arts/creative sector for improving risk communication and willingness to collaborate and integrate learning into future projects.

Project team and key participants

Partners and collaborators

The BluePrint project is led by MaREI, the Research Ireland Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine, coordinated by the Environmental Research Institute (ERI) hosted by University College Cork. BluePrint project partners were The Playhouse, an arts organisation and theatre based in Derry City, and local authorities Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC), and Mayo County Council (MCC).

- Dr. Lydia Cumiskey is the BluePrint project investigator at MaREI, UCC and is leading the research and evaluation of the co-creation process, learning exchange activities and toolkit development together with Dr. Denise McCullagh, with additional evaluation and communication support from Catriona Reid and Aoife Deane.
- Paula Larkin, Climate Action Officer: Community Relations at The Playhouse is the BluePrint community engagement lead, coordinating activities for the co-creation process with our socially-engaged artist and community participants in Eglinton and Newtownstewart, with support from Kevin Murphy, CEO of The Playhouse.
- Cathy Burns is the Green Infrastructure Lead - Climate and Biodiversity, at Derry City and Strabane District Council, bridging connections with local flood-affected communities and supporting the co-creation process and further application of outputs.
- Laura Dixon is the Climate Action Coordinator at Mayo County Council and is facilitating the All-Island learning exchange on artistic co-creation for climate adaptation and resilience with Mayo, with support from Lorna Dennehy, Community Climate Action Officer.

To formalise the BluePrint partnership, a Collaboration Agreement between University College Cork, The Playhouse, Derry City and Strabane District Council, and Mayo County Council was prepared and signed on 13/02/2024.

Collaboration support for BluePrint was also received from the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) Atlantic Seaboard North, Crossmolina Community Council and Northern Ireland Environment Link/Climate Northern Ireland Programme.



Selection of BluePrint artist – Dr. Sara Walmsley

The Playhouse led in preparing and disseminating an Open Call for a BluePrint project artist, including managing the selection and contracting process.

The [Artists Brief](#) was published on 8/11/2023 for three weeks, calling on artists and creative practitioners working in any discipline to apply to become an artist within the BluePrint project team.

Six applications were received, including a mix of artistic practices from contemporary visual art to sound and performance art.

All applicants were interviewed in December 2023 by a panel including The Playhouse, UCC and DCSDC representatives and scored against the following criteria:

- Understanding of how to support communication of risk of flooding through the artistic outcome.
- Understanding of and ability to contribute meaningfully to creation of toolkit.
- Experience of working with communities.
- Approach to supporting individuals through complex issues.
- Understanding of collaborative and socially engaged art practice
- Understanding/examples of creative processes and methodologies used to engage with communities

Socially-engaged sound and performance artist Dr. Sara Walmsley scored highest and joined the BluePrint team in January 2024.

Supporting creative practitioners

To support in documenting the co-creation process a videographer was recruited through a competitive tender process led by The Playhouse. Six applications were received with two interviewed in April 2024. R&D media were selected. Their role included videography/photography at three co-creation workshops and the final showcase event, capturing the process and reflections from participants to support documentation for the toolkit and communication of the project's outputs.

Consultant Sara Cook was involved in bilateral discussions to provide guidance and support on engaging with communities dealing with trauma from past flood events. This was followed by a trauma informed reflective session with the project team to ensure the project could adapt to the needs of the community and project team.

Flood-affected communities

Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) chose the two communities who would participate in the BluePrint project. These were selected due to their lived experiences of climate impacts, their active community participation, and in the case of Eglinton, their involvement in the Community Resilience Pilot. DCSDC and The Playhouse connected with the communities at the start of the project and during the artist selection process, with activities beginning at community level in March 2024.

Eglinton is a village north-east of Derry City, close to the City of Derry Airport, which is exposed to fluvial flooding from the Castle and Muff rivers, tidal flooding from Lough Foyle and surface water flooding. The village experienced severe flooding in August 2017 where over 100 homes were damaged as well as critical infrastructure, with a similar area flooded again in July 2022. Participants in BluePrint include representatives from the Eglinton Community Resilience Group, a community-driven initiative formed in response to the devastating floods. Based in Eglinton Community Hall, the group plays a pivotal role in fostering a strong and supportive network, providing essential resources and coordinating efforts during and after flood events.

Newtownstewart is a village south of Strabane in County Tyrone, with the Strule River flowing through it. The village experienced severe flooding in 2017 impacting the church hall, local community infrastructure and many homes. Despite the risk of continued flooding, flood protection infrastructure was deemed financially inviable and a focus on properly level resilience measures prevails. Participants in BluePrint included community members active in the Newtownstewart Heritage Group, which was established in 2020 to celebrate the natural, built, ecclesiastical and cultural history of the town. There has been a particular focus on preserving and preparing this heritage in the face of recent and future flood events. The river environment is notably different in each village. In Eglinton, the Castle and Muff Rivers are primarily culverted due to housing development with limited recreational access, whereas in Newtownstewart, the River Strule is central to the identity of the town playing a key role in recreation and leisure.

UCC prepared a Data Protection Notice with The Playhouse to ensure protection and security of personal data of communities. Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the UCC Social Research and Ethics Committee. Community participants actively engaged in the project were asked to complete the following forms: 1) BluePrint project participation consent form, 2) Optional additional information form on equity, diversity and inclusion, 3) Consent form for photography/ filming, and 4) Research consent form.



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Derry, City & Strabane
District Council



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Artistic co-creation process (Derry City and Strabane District)

A series of co-creation workshops and activities took place between March and October 2024, led by socially-engaged artist Sara Walmsley, with the flood-affected communities in Eglinton and Newtownstewart, and supported by project partners. The process involved a playful and reflective approach using music, theatre and poetry to support participants in reaching a creative expression of their shared experiences. Different tasks enabled discussion and exchange around climate change, adaptation and resilience. This process was inclusive, organic and highly creative, supporting all voices and abilities within the group.

The process involved the following components which evolved during the project (see Table 1 for dates and participants in each activity):

- Initial workshop at The Playhouse in Derry-Londonderry with both communities to introduce the project, the artist and creative approach.
- Site visits and ethnographic interviews with each community to capture lived experiences from a broad group within the community.
- Sound walks hosted by each community, allowing participants from both localities to share the realities of flooding as they have experienced it, through sound-based exercises.
- All-Island learning exchange with a flood-affected community in Crossmolina, Mayo, and a dialogue opportunity with Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Hilary Benn.
- Creative workshops collaborating with St Eugene's Church (Glenock) choir in Newtownstewart and Eglinton community representatives to co-create song and poetry performance pieces based on lived experiences of flooding and the need for climate resilience.

Sara Walmsley also worked with researchers in UCC on the sonification of observed and projected rainfall data provided by Met Éireann/ [Translate project](#) and the UK Met Office.

These activities developed material to inform the final co-created performances and sound installation showcased in Derry-Londonderry in October 2024.



UCC/MaREI researcher(s) were present at 10 activities, Derry City and Strabane and District Council representative at 10, The Playhouse representative at 13 activities and Mayo County Council representative at 2 events.

Table 1 Overview of BluePrint activities with Eglinton and Newtownstewart community participants

Date	Co-creation activity	Num. community participants
09/03/2024	Kick off meeting at The Playhouse	9
11/04/2024	Site visit and meeting with Newtownstewart and artist	2
30/04/2024	Preparation meeting for creative activities with Newtownstewart and Eglinton (separately)	3
17/05/2024	Preparation meeting with Eglinton	4
25/05/2024	Newtownstewart interviews	8
29/05/2024	Eglinton interviews	5
08/06/2024	Newtownstewart interviews (continued)	4
	Newtownstewart chapel sound creative session	12
28/06/2024	Newtownstewart sound walk	10
05/07/2024	Mayo Learning and Exchange workshop	2
18/07/2024	Secretary of State visit to The Playhouse	3
05/08/2024	Creative writing session Eglinton	3
13/08/2024	Meeting with St. Eogenes choir and DCSDC in Newtownstewart	9
17/08/2024	Sound walk Eglinton	9
09/09/2024	Creative writing recording Eglinton	3
14/09/2024	Preparation/ recording for showcase with St. Eogenes Choir Newtownstewart	8
17/10/2024	Derry and Strabane Climate and Sustainability Commission performance	2
19/10/2024	BluePrint Showcase at The Playhouse	~40
26/11/2024	Evaluation and road mapping workshop Newtownstewart	9
27/11/2024	Evaluation and road mapping workshop Eglinton	3

Creative risk communication outputs

BluePrint project artist, Sara Walmsley, in collaboration with community participants and project partners co-created multiple creative outputs to amplify climate risk communication with decision-makers and communities at risk.

A sound and light Installation entitled “In at Midnight and Away by Morning: The Uninvited Guest” (17mins, 2024) weaves together the voices and sounds that tell the stories of two devastating flood events that affected the people and places of Eglinton and Newtownstewart in 2017 and 2022. This piece combines poetic reflection, the polyphonic harmonies of St. Eugene’s Church choir, and the sonification of historic and predicted rainfall data. It captures the lived experience of two communities who, in having to deal with the realities of flooding, are already learning to live with the impacts of climate change and the need for climate resilience. The following artistic outputs to support risk communication are available online:

- **Sound installation:** A 3-minute extract of the sound installation <https://zenodo.org/records/14036832>.
- **Song:** The full song co-created through engagement with flood-affected members of the Newtownstewart community and sang by St. EUGENES Choir <https://zenodo.org/records/14020085>.
- **Poetry:** A recording of the poetry performance by Eglinton community representatives at the Guildhall in Derry-Londonderry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRkHMWPbmfA>.
- **Video:** An in-depth video (11 mins 25secs) capturing the co-creation process, outputs and reflections from participants https://youtu.be/_M6GQ_2Z-WA.

These outputs have been made openly accessible under Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) licence to encourage sharing and use for wider climate risk communication and engagement. Additional outputs that are available upon request include:

- Technical guidance specifications for staging the sound and light installation to guide others wanting to use the installation.
- Climate data sonification extracts from the sound installation to inspire data scientists to consider the use of the arts for communicating risk.

Furthermore, 100 notebooks including a QR code to the BluePrint website were designed to disseminate the project outputs within each community and among wider stakeholders.



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All-Island learning exchange & toolkit

The BluePrint project held an [All-Island Learning and Exchange Workshop](#) at the Enterprise Centre in Crossmolina, Co. Mayo on the 5th of July 2024 with 15 participants across communities, government, research and the arts, to share experiences on artistic co-creation with communities, supporting climate adaptation and resilience. Community participants involved in the BluePrint project highlighted the value of the ongoing creative engagement process for sharing lived experiences and the potential power of the resulting output to support wider climate risk communication with communities and decision-makers. This was the first time the initial creative outputs from working with the choir in Newtownstewart were shared within the project team and with wider stakeholders.

Participants reflected on how the event helped to demonstrate the value of building connections, integrating local knowledge and supporting diverse and transdisciplinary engagement to address flooding and climate challenges, as well as the importance of remaining positive and hopeful towards finding solutions that build community resilience – see more [here](#).

“That’s my first-time hearing that and it’s powerful. For me it’s the local accent, it’s real people singing in their words. I’m struggling to get people to listen at other levels in government. I keep saying we need to put the heart and soul back into conversations. It’s not just about finance and stats. And that does it for me – it’s amazing.” Cathy Burns, Derry City and Strabane District Council

The feedback from the evaluation (N=8 excluding project team members) demonstrated that the event supported increased knowledge on local climate adaptation/resilience, the arts and creative sector and the importance of meaningful co-creation to engage communities around climate resilience. The most beneficial aspects of the day shared by participants included “building connections between communities”, “listening to others” and “connecting with people and nature through art” as well as the diversity of participants and collaborative thinking for transformative change.

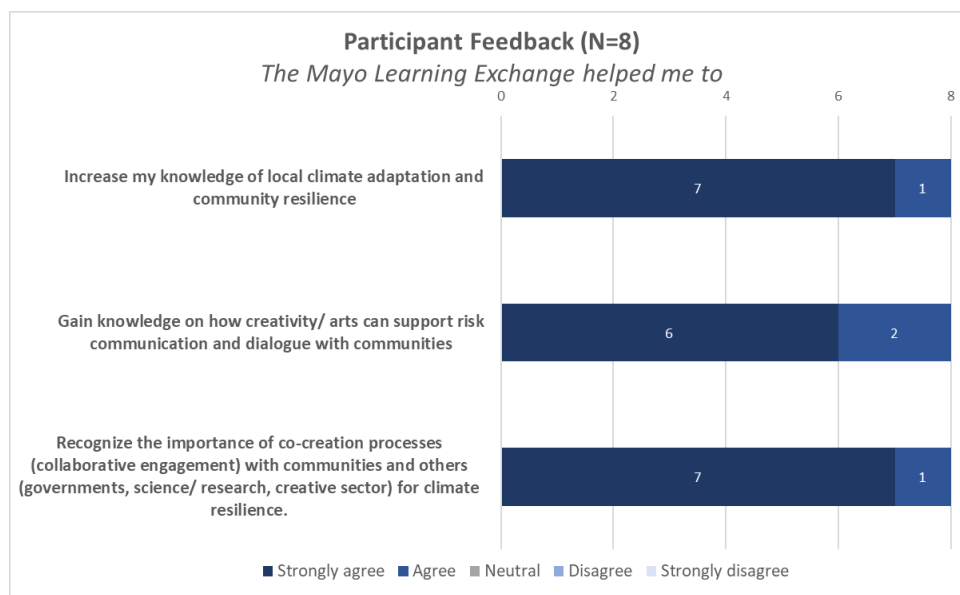


Figure 1 - Participant feedback from Learning Exchange in Mayo (N= 8 participants)

The All-Island learning and exchange continued in Derry-Londonderry with participation from Cllr. Michael Loftus (Cathaoirleach Ballina MD), Laura Dixon (Mayo County Council) and Crossmolina Community Council, during the BluePrint showcase events in October 2024.

“It’s important we are sharing stories and listening to each other and sharing what works. We had communities here in Eglinton and Newtownstewart who travelled to Crossmolina who came away with ideas and knowledge about how to respond to future flood events based on what they learnt from Mayo. Equally we had people from Mayo here in the room tonight who walked away with a greater understanding of some of the measures and adaptations that have been put in place here in Derry-Londonderry. It’s really important that we are sharing and talking to each other and learning from each other.” Paula Larkin, The Playhouse, at the BluePrint Showcase

“That [soundscape] is really humans, it is the ordinary people that are out there, and that is way more significant ... it would inspire you and go back and do something.”
Representative from Crossmolina Community Council at the BluePrint Showcase

“Taking part in this project, the big learning is that the communities could relate to each other [Crossmolina, Eglinton and Newtownstewart], they have both been impacted, and to talk about that trauma and give a voice to it is valuable, and what comes across strongly from the performance is that the locals are the experts.” Laura Dixon, Mayo County Council at the BluePrint Showcase

“It’s amazing what music and poetry has done for different areas and what can be done if we bring that to areas like ours [Crossmolina] ... if we had that facility after the flooding it would have brought the community together in a way that we would never have imagined.”
Cllr. Michael Loftus, at the Derry and Strabane Climate Commission Launch

The learning captured from the artistic co-creation process in Derry-Londonderry and the learning exchange with Mayo will inform the artistic co-creation toolkit, targeting local governments and other actors working with communities adapting to climate change across Ireland.

The toolkit will be launched at The Alley Theatre, Strabane in May 2025.

(Public) engagement outcomes

Throughout BluePrint the project team engaged in events and meetings with a focus on the process and learning exchange:

- [Urban Resilience Forum](#) (June, 2024, Valencia), Dr. Denise McCullagh networking activity that led to an invitation to submit BluePrint outputs to the EU Adaptation Mission Story.
- European Geosciences Union, [risk communication short course](#) inclusion of BluePrint as an example (April, 2024, Vienna) Dr. Lydia Cumiskey
- [Changing Worlds Risk Conference](#), knowledge co-production session inclusion as an example of co-creation through the arts (June, 2024, Amsterdam) Dr. Denise McCullagh
- Sara Walmsley attended Creative Ireland artists exchange day, Dublin, April 2024 and the Immersion project event (incl. delivering a presentation and workshop) 18-19 July 2024.
- Paula Larkin (The Playhouse) organised attendance from three BluePrint community participants at the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Hillary Benn's visit to The Playhouse 18 July 2024.

BluePrint utilised the key showcase events to share the co-created outputs with the communities involved, government representatives, elected members, and the public.

- BluePrint choir (recorded) and poetry (live) performances by community representatives at the [Derry and Strabane Climate and Sustainability Commission Launch](#) in the Guild Hall with attendance from Cllr. Michael Loftus, continuing the All-Island Learning Exchange with Mayo (17/10/2024) - 120 attendees
- [BluePrint Showcase Event](#) with live poetry and choir performances, panel session, keynote address by the DCSDC Mayor Cllr Lilian Seenoi Barr and launch of co-created sound and light installation at The Playhouse including attendance from Mayo County Council and Crossmolina Community Council (19/10/2024) – 50 attendees
- Public opening of sound and light installation 'In at Midnight and Away by Morning: The Uninvited Guest' at The Playhouse (24/10/2024) - 25 attendees (*approx.*) including NI's Finance Minister, Arts Council and the Board of The Playhouse.



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The project team are disseminating the projects' creative outputs at various events to reach audiences across science, policy and the arts:

Policy/ government

- [Regional Community Resilience Group newsletter](#) (December 2024).
- Climate Ireland Adaptation Network Newsletter (February, 2025).
- [EU Adaptation Mission Story](#) (being reviewed).
- Scotland's Regional Climate Adaptation Partnerships Forum (February, 2025) disseminated to 75 practitioners and policy-makers.
- Presentation of BluePrint at the European Climate Pact National Conference, Dublin (March 2025) – 40 attendees from government, NGOs, and Climate Pact Ambassadors.

Arts and creative sector

- Sara Walmsley BluePrint panellist at The Gathering, showcasing and celebrating Creative Climate Action Fund II projects, hosted by Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media at the Aviva in Dublin (October, 2024).
- Uillin Dance Season, [The Hope Project Masterclass](#), using BluePrint creative outputs with UCC/MaREI researcher Lydia Cumiskey, West Cork (October, 2024) – 12 attendees.
- Artist Sally Walmsley, presenting BluePrint in the [Bearing Witness to Ecological Signs of the Times](#) - The Art of the Wellbeing Economy (February 2025) – 120 attendees.
- Artist Sally Walmsley, panellist, at the [International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance Conference DCU](#) speaking about BluePrint supporting a move from artistic citizenship to active citizenship (March 2025) – 25 attendees.

Research science

- [Translate 2](#) Project Steering Committee presentation focusing on sonification of climate data, including representatives from Met Eireann, Environmental Protection Agency and Irish Centre for High-End Computing.
- [Science at the Marina](#), BluePrint Talk by UCC/MaREI researchers as part of Science Week, Cork (November, 2024) – 50+ attendees.
- [Tech Central post](#) highlighting the BluePrint project (January 2025).
- University of Malmo, Sweden, integration of BluePrint choir piece into Module on Social work and Disasters (January 2025) – 60 students from across Europe.
- European Environment Agency ClimateADAPT platform as a part of the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change - Adaptation Stories showcasing good practise (March 2025).
- [European Geosciences Union General Assembly 2025](#) (Vienna) Lydia Cumiskey panellist in session “Engaging Communities in Hazard Risk and Disaster Management (May 2025).
- Creative Climate Action River Projects Meetup (March 2025).



Additional planned dissemination with a focus on the toolkit and upscaling and outreach at the community level, will include:

- Toolkit Launch at Alley Theatre Strabane (8th and 9th May 2025) led by DCSDC and online webinar targeting local government led by UCC.
- Exhibition at the Ulster American Folk Park, part of National Museums Northern Ireland, to support a wider discussion on climate change in Northern Ireland (expected Spring 2026).
- Exploring opportunities for sharing creative outputs at Stormont, Northern Ireland Parliament Buildings via DCSDC.
- Dissemination of toolkit in Ireland (newsletter, agenda items in meetings)
 - Northern Ireland: Local Government Climate Action Network, Regional Community Resilience Group.
 - Republic of Ireland: Climate Action Regional Organisations, climate action coordinators meetings and Climate Ireland Adaptation Network.
- Submission of BluePrint creative outputs for inclusion in [Sounds for Sustainability](#) interdisciplinary gathering in Dublin (June, 2025).
- Submission of BluePrint creative outputs for inclusion in [Mary Robinson Climate and Nature Conference 2025](#), Ballina (May, 2025).



Evaluation (Outcomes and Impact)

The BluePrint project took an embedded approach to evaluation to support the flexible and adaptative nature of the creative process. This involved UCC/ MaREI researchers attending and observing during the majority of the creative activities, rounds of feedback at the end of workshops and short reflection interviews captured by videographers after selected workshops and the final showcase event. Two focus group discussions were carried out with communities on the 21st and 27th of November 2024 to collect feedback and reflections on their participation in the project. An impact planning workshop took place in March between the project team partners and collaborators. Post-project reflections and evaluation took place within the team to support learning exchange and the toolkit development (8th and 9th January 2025). These workshops also provided an opportunity to roadmap next steps for the community to take towards disseminating the creative outputs and building resilience, with support from partners and wider actors. The results from the feedback workshops and direct quotes captured during the project are presented. The [final video](#) prepared also captures filmed feedback from the community participants and project team.

Impact on communities

Overall, the BluePrint project successfully built awareness, knowledge and capacity among the community participants. Data collected during the evaluation workshops shows that all 12 participants who attended either strongly agreed or agreed that BluePrint increased knowledge and awareness of flood/climate adaptation and resilience. While 11 out of 12 participants that joined the evaluation workshops either agreed or strongly agreed that BluePrint empowered them, and built capacity to communicate the outputs, and strengthened collaboration within their communities to work towards climate resilience locally (see Figure 2). Participants strongly agreed (2) and agreed (6) that the project helped to build collaboration with authorities, the impact of which is likely to deepen and grow in the future. Furthermore, 75% strongly agreed and 25% agreed, that they would recommend other flood/climate affected communities to engage with an artistic/creative process to support climate risk communication and resilience.

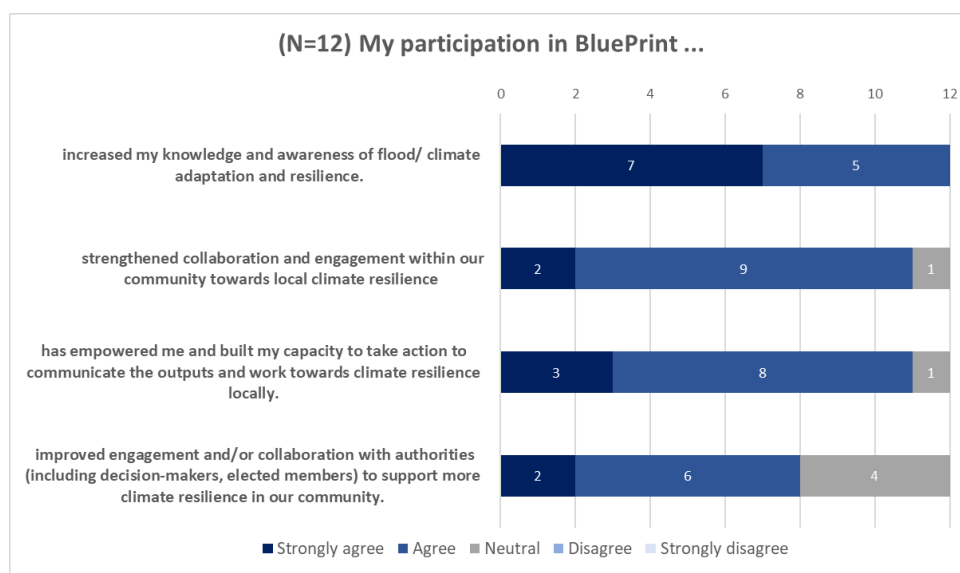


Figure 2 – Evaluation results 12 community participants Eglinton and Newtownstewart.

Increased awareness, knowledge and capacity on climate change

The creative element of BluePrint activities allowed participants to remember the flooding events that had occurred and to consider how they had been impacted, through a much more positive medium. The project helped to build awareness around flood risk and climate change in Newtownstewart among people who were not directly flooded but want to support the future resilience of the village. The process also built awareness among young people involved in the choir.

“We’re in a flood community and we didn’t really think about that. You are aware of it, but you don’t deeply think about it until somebody says it. So yeah, that’s right. We need to do something about this.” Newtownstewart participant reflection

“I thought it was mesmerising just to listen and the words and to bring it all to life and bring it back into all our consciousness. You forget. It reminded us of how important it is for us to care for our rivers because natural disasters are going to happen. It’s a lovely way to reflect it. For us to have people in the community to bring it to life through song is incredible.” Newtownstewart participant reflection

“They are going to have to recognise it [climate change] at some point, because it is the biggest long-term issue that we have as society.” Youth from Newtownstewart speaking at the BluePrint showcase

Learning about how climate change affects people in loads of different ways was interesting. Young member of the St. Eugeanes Choir, Newtownstewart

Power of the creative process – positive perspective and appreciation of the arts

The project helped to realise creative capacities within communities, enabling them to communicate their voices and key messages in a new and different way that they never thought possible. Being part of the creative process and the resulting outputs helped community offered a gentle way to work with climate/flood-affected communities who have experienced traumatic events, offering a new perspective, more positive outlook and renewed sense of commitment to address the problem. As demonstrated in the in the All-island learning exchange, the interaction with Crossmolina in Mayo highlighted how other communities could benefit from this approach to support their mental wellbeing.

“Now I have to say that I was the biggest sceptic at the start. [...] I was like, what have we signed up to here. I didn't realise that using a creative medium would actually make it more impactful.”

Community participant from Newtownstewart

“Shows how you can channel your emotions into a different way or perspective and turning that negative into a positive. It was very powerful and moving for people that were involved.” Community member from Eglinton at the BluePrint showcase

“For me I initially took the opportunity because I knew it was an opportunity to speak about flooding in a different language and to be able to articulate that from the start to the end, without the same aggression, without the same trauma. I knew that is bound to have some impact. It was a powerful experience on the whole and tonight was the proper pinnacle to end that process.” Eglinton community representative speaking at the BluePrint showcase

“The true and long-term impacts of this project have yet to be fully revealed, but even now it is clear that this project has had a profound positive impact on me, the audience, policymakers and community we represent. It has been a positive part of this horrible thing [flooding].” Community participant from Eglinton, at the reflection workshop.

Amplifying local voices – building connections with policy

The project and its powerful communication outputs helped to bridge connections between authorities and the communities, facilitating dialogue towards action on climate adaptation and resilience. The outputs helped to communicate lived experiences in a powerful way, producing an output capable of connecting with people who have not been directly impacted, increasing their awareness of the effect that flooding can have on individuals and communities, and mobilising their capacity to act.

The connections made through the showcase events in October resulted in increased opportunities for the participating communities to amplify their lived experiences and need for resilience and adaptation. This included Eglinton community representatives' engagement with policymakers and politicians after their performance at the launch of the Derry and Strabane Climate Commission, which resulted in a visit from the leader of the Social Democrat and Labour Party to Eglinton (17/10/2024). Attendance of the Derry City and Strabane Mayor at the showcase event along with other local councillors (19/10/24), resulted in a follow-on visit from the Mayor to Newtownstewart (25/11/2024). The Newtownstewart community has since developed a Community Resilience Plan with support from DCSDC, as a result of interactions during the reflection and road mapping workshop (January, 2025).

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Coláiste na hOileáirí Corcaigh

MaREI
Energy Climate Marine

THE PLAYHOUSE

Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Cathair na hEirí agus
Cathair an tSiobhán Bliad
Derry, Cill na nIníon
Derry/Londonderry



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



“The Blueprint Project is a call to action. We must respond to this climate emergency with everything we’ve got. The fight against climate change requires all of us to play our part, the simple changes we make in our everyday life can have a collective impact. It’s time for us all to step up.” Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District, Lilian Seenoi-Barr at the Showcase event

“We as a community are very aware of flooding, but you always feel that isolation that other people don’t understand how scary it is. That message came across in the soundscape” Community representative, Newtownstewart

Project team

Value of the arts for risk communication/ engagement

Engagement with communities on climate resilience through the arts in the BluePrint project was a new activity for Derry City and Strabane District Council and Mayo County Council. MCC shared concerns ahead of the learning exchange with Mayo around using the arts for engagement, given their lack of experience utilising these methods. The experience through BluePrint has helped them to build confidence and understanding of how to facilitate engagement with communities impacted by climate extremes in a supportive and meaningful way.

By accessing new materials to communicate lived experiences around flooding and climate impacts, local authorities can help to encourage more action by decision-makers. The creative partners in the project also benefited from engagement with research and government partners to validate and deepen their knowledge on using the arts for climate risk communication and engagement, especially in bridging connections with policymakers and climate scientists.

“Previous to the Blueprint project I had not directly engaged with communities using creativity and the arts - this project has enabled me to understand the hugely important role of the arts in community engagement, climate risk communication and providing a voice to local communities in order to influence policy and decision making.” Cathy Burns, DCSDC

“Working so closely with climate researchers and local authorities on this project has definitely cemented my belief in the valuable role that the arts can play in climate risk communication, it's given me renewed energy for this work and reinforced just how important the arts can be in helping communities to communicate and build relationships with policy-makers.” Paula Larkin, The Playhouse

“This project has given me a new perspective for my work. I now as an artist see unlimited possibilities in using my sound art practice for communicating climate risk. Especially at this junction of art/science where the ethnographic approach I take to eliciting accounts of lived experience can be enriched by linking this with climate data.”
Sara Walmsley, BluePrint project artist

“I now have a better understanding of how Arts can break down barriers which can be difficult to do with facts. It allows for more emotional connection and conversation and become a more inclusive space for discussing climate impacts and resilience.” Laura Dixon,
Mayo County Council

Towards scaling and embedding learning

Project partners are committed to transferring the learning from BluePrint to current and future initiatives and collaborations, with the aim to support scaling up, scaling out and scaling deep towards societal and systems change within community, policy, practice and research settings.

The launch of the toolkit at Alley Theatre Strabane (May 2025) will provide an opportunity to re-engage with government agencies locally and regionally as well as communities and schools, to support and inspire activities and mobilise future projects.

The outputs will continue to be used to influence local adaptation and resilience policy in Derry & Strabane and across Northern Ireland. In particular the project toolkit will be used to support the work of The Playhouse’s [Artitude: Climate, Culture & Circularity creative project](#) across Derry & Strabane.

With support from BluePrint government partners and collaborators including the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) Atlantic Seaboard North and Northern Ireland Environment Link/Climate Northern Ireland Programme, the toolkit will reach stakeholders working on climate adaptation and flooding across the island of Ireland. Furthermore, the toolkit will be included in the [TaIX Climate Adaptation Partnerships Framework](#) and inspire partnership activities in the Environment Protection Agency funded [TaIX2 project](#) which includes Mayo County Council and Northern Ireland Environment Link.

From the European research perspective, UCC/ MaREI researchers are facilitating connections with the [DIRECTED European Horizon project](#) to inspire arts engagement activities in their multi-stakeholder Real World Labs focusing on disaster resilience.

Conclusions

BluePrint successfully engaged flood-affected communities in Eglinton and Newtownstewart in a creative process and learning exchange with Mayo, resulting in multiple co-created outputs on climate risk communication for dissemination with the wider public and decision-makers.

The ever-growing need for scientists and governments to raise awareness and stimulate action around the risks of increasingly severe climate impacts, necessitates connecting with communities on a deeper level. The creative process and resulting co-created risk communication outputs facilitated this. The co-creation approach allowed communities to have a sense of ownership of the outputs and empowers them to continue to use these materials beyond the legacy of the project.

All BluePrint team members were highly committed to effective delivery, continuous learning and enabling wider impact beyond the project. The flexibility of artist Sara Walmsley resulted in a dynamic and continually evolving journey of creativity with the communities, that supported and integrated their interests, needs and priorities. Our team, bridging science, art and government, required us to be open to working in ways we were unaccustomed to, while putting our responsibility and care for communities at the heart of our work.

To ensure that the relationships and momentum developed through the BluePrint project are maintained, subsequent work should focus on community priorities, especially stimulating more tangible action on the ground to build climate resilience.

The upcoming Toolkit will specifically target local authorities across the Island of Ireland, by capturing the nuanced insights and learning from the process, and helping to practically guide and inspire new ways to engage with communities around climate action and resilience.



Project gallery



Flooding in Eglinton in 2017 (Credit: Derry City and Strabane District Council)



Castle River, Eglinton (right) and Strule River, Newtownstewart (left) captured during sound walks

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Sound walk in Newtownstewart near the Strule River 28th June 2024



Sound walk preparation in Newtownstewart 28th June 2024



Creative Workshop with St. Euges Choir Newtownstewart on 8th of July 2024



Creative Workshop with St. Euges Choir Newtownstewart on 8th of July 2024



All-Island learning and exchange workshop in Crossmolina, Co. Mayo on 5th July 2024



Exchange with Northern Ireland Secretary Hillary Benn at The Playhouse with participants from Eglinton and Newtownstewart on the 18th July 2024



Eglinton poetry performance at the Guild Hall on 17th October 2024



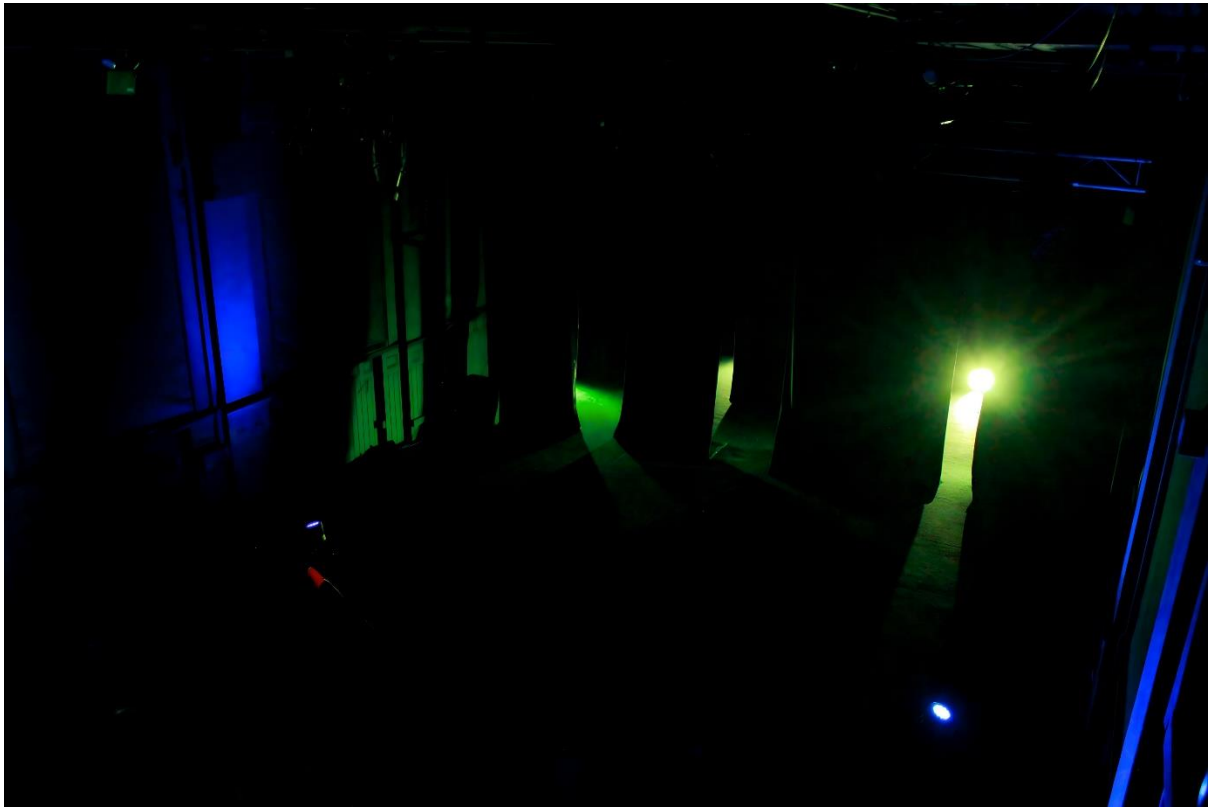
Eglinton poetry performance at the Guild Hall on 17th October 2024



Interactions between Eglinton community and Cllr. Michael Loftus, Cathaoirleach Ballina MD, Mayo 17th October 2024



St. Eugenes Choir performance at The Playhouse on 19th October 2024



Impression of the sound and light installation at The Playhouse



Interactions with the Mayor for Derry City and Strabane District Cllr Lilian Seenoi Barr on 19th October 2024

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