



## Final Report

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*Creative*  
Climate Action



Clár Éire Ildánach  
Creative Ireland  
Programme



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# 1. Executive Summary:

## Art as a pathway to hope and agency

**Ballymun is Brilliant was an innovative creative arts project connecting people and communities to climate, place and ultimately their own agency.**

Funded by Creative Ireland, and delivered through a partnership led by Global Action Plan in partnership with the Rediscovery Centre and Axis Theatre Ballymun, the programme objectively delivered on its priority outcomes of increasing participants' confidence and willingness to take climate actions. But, as this report shows, the impact of the programme has gone far beyond these measurements.

Key decisions in the design and roll out of the programme have been documented over the course of its progress which we believe contributed significantly to its success. Among these were embedding an artist in the programme from the outset, appointing 'Community Weavers' from the area as outreach workers to compliment the existing GAP staff, recognizing from early on that the community in Ballymun have been consistently over consulted and under resourced, investing time in trauma informed training prioritizing taking time to build trust through conversations and low key outreach, investing in the onboarding of established artists, taking counsel from an advisory panel of community leaders, and creating specific mechanisms to encourage and showcase local artists.

The themes of interest raised by the community engagement informed the curatorial decisions and resulted in five diverse professional artists creating activities, artworks and artefacts that have longevity beyond the lifetime of the project.

The reach of the engagement is impressive with over 30 local groups, 14 local artists, over 200 activities and over 2000 individual engagements in the programme. While the long term impact will only be known later, we believe it has set in motion a generative cycle of reflection and action. The stories told and work created, trace the journey from the global challenge of climate change, to the local specificities of the Ballymun community to the micro of the ecosystem right on people's doorsteps and deep down into people's own sense of their personal agency. Throughout this report we document projects and people set in motion by the programme, and so the cycle continues.

Ballymun is Brilliant was ultimately a project of hope and agency and it is hoped that the seeds that it has planted will continue to flourish in the rich soil of this vibrant community.

*"This project has rehabilitated me back into my creative practice, by paying attention to what I had ignored" (Ciara Hession, Special commission artist 2025)*

## 2. Introduction/background;

Ballymun is Brilliant (often called BIB in this document) is a community driven creative arts project that focuses on community readiness and activation for climate action.

Funded by **Creative Ireland's 'Creative Climate Action Fund, II'**, it is built on a partnership between three organisations: Axis Ballymun, Global Action Plan and the Rediscovery Centre.

Creative Ireland invested €264,904.38 in the project with a further €31,032.00 invested by the project partners

The project commenced in September 2023 and ran until the end of 2025.

### Ballymun as a designated Decarbonised Zone

Dublin City Council chose Ballymun as a Decarbonising Zone (DZ). This means that the Council is trying to make Ballymun a model for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and creating a healthier, more sustainable community.

Local authorities all over Ireland have set up similar DZs to tackle climate change.

As part of the DZ planning in Ballymun, Dublin City Council asked Codema to find out how people in Ballymun use energy, and what the strengths, concerns and hopes of the community are. After a series of meetings with organisations and groups in Ballymun, Codema produced a report with what they had heard, including a summary of ideas for the future, as set out below.



The report suggests that the Ballymun community has a clear, hopeful vision for 2050. However, there is currently no funded, targeted plan from Dublin City Council to follow up on the ideas. As a result, many people in Ballymun feel that the consultation process was problematic, and part of a long series of similar disappointing experiences with officialdom: people invest time and energy in a process that lacks any tangible results.

In contrast, [a 2023 report](#) on five Decarbonisation Zones in Dublin made specific recommendations for engagement with communities on ‘net zero’. These included: co-creating solutions to address local barriers, leveraging existing trusted intermediaries and meeting people where they are at, making engagement accessible and relevant to local communities. And it is these recommendations that the *Ballymun Is Brilliant* project is using to bring people together, and explore the past, present and future of Ballymun.

## “Overconsulted and under resourced”

Some people in Ballymun describe the community as “over-consulted” because of the many engagement processes carried out by authorities over the years, and the sense that past consultations did not lead to real change or that local structures were sidelined. The [Sustaining Regeneration: A Social Plan for Ballymun](#), for instance, details extensive outreach, including door-to-door surveys, web questionnaires, open days and youth focus groups. Critics, including the filmmakers of [The 4th Act](#), argue that regeneration projects undermined local solidarity and [imposed external visions](#) on the community.

[Codema’s 2023 consultation for the Ballymun Decarbonisation Zone](#) was described by Codema as “best-practice”, involving extensive outreach and a community conference. While the consultation was well-regarded, there has been limited visible follow-up, which has contributed to a perception that community input does not always result in immediately apparent outcomes..

In 2025, residents criticised housing consultations for lacking transparency, ignoring local concerns about scale and amenities, and failing to meaningfully incorporate community input. One resident said she only discovered plans to demolish her home when [she saw a planning notice](#), not through any prior consultation or direct engagement.

There are, however, examples where public consultation did influence outcomes, such as the creation of a local health forum and sports forum, and the priorities of the Ballymun Social Regeneration Fund (health, youth, art, placemaking, etc) which reflect community input. Yet feelings of ineffective consultation persist, partly because major promised facilities were never delivered and because long delays, such as the 2021 Ballymun Plaza consultation leading to a 2025 delivery, weakened trust.

At the same time, there is evidence to support the statement that Ballymun is “under-resourced”. Many vital community programmes rely on the [Ballymun Social Regeneration Fund](#), which provides funding for local organisations, but with a limited

budget and with an ever dimming prospect for future funding. Ballymun has a high proportion of vulnerable families, but there is a lack of specialised services (therapeutic and social care) and a very low level of local shops and services.

## A web of community support

The project was co-created and implemented by 3 partners, GAP, Axis Ballymun and Rediscovery Center, who have a long history of community engagement in the Ballymun community. Each of these partners also had strong relationships with a web of community groups, organisations and individuals in the Ballymun community.

**Global Action Plan (GAP)** has been active in Ballymun since its establishment in 1995, and is widely recognised for its sustained work in environmental education, community development and climate action. Over three decades, GAP has built strong partnerships with local schools, youth groups, residents and grassroots initiatives.

**Axis Ballymun**, the local arts centre, is embedded in the cultural life of the community. Its long-running programmes in theatre, visual arts, youth arts and community creativity have established Axis as a trusted space where local people can express themselves, gather, learn and create.

**The Rediscovery Centre**, Ireland's National Centre for the Circular Economy, has an equally strong presence in Ballymun through its innovative programmes in reuse, repair, environmental education and community engagement. Its hands-on workshops and circular economy initiatives are well-known and well-regarded locally.

Together, these partners brought a foundation of trust, familiarity and credibility that meant the project did not have to start from scratch. Instead, it was able to build on existing relationships and tap into established networks such as the Tidy Towns group, the Biodiversity Action Group, youth centres, family resource centres and many more community organisations that had previously collaborated with one or more of the partners. This web of relationships was essential to reaching people where they were, opening doors, and ensuring the project felt genuinely rooted in the community from the outset.

## Project Methodology and approach

During the initial design stages, the partners discussed their observations of the visibility of climate action in Ballymun. Apart from a few visible actors and groups, aside from the partners in this project, the discourse and movement for climate action didn't seem a priority at a community level. The team wished to approach this observation with a curious "why?" and explore the willingness and readiness of the community to take climate action.

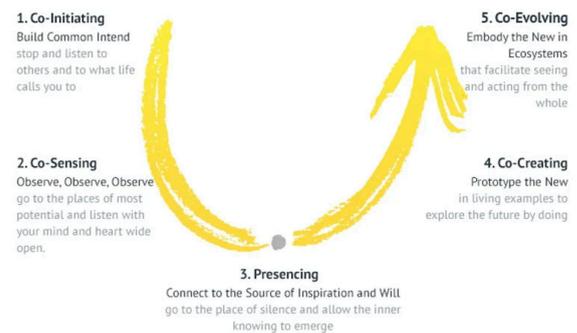
To structure our journey, we sought out methodologies that would guide us on the process. In selecting methodologies, we were guided by those that felt right for the work we were about to undertake over what logically can guide us, knowing that we also had to sense our way through the project and go with what felt right over what

the journey of these (or any) methodology prescribed. Below are the two guiding methodologies that we wove together to guide our journey with the community.

## Theory U

One of the methodologies we consulted and designed our processes on was Theory U, a framework developed by Otto Scharmer for transformational change.

Theory U describes a “U-shaped” journey in which participants first *co-initiate* and *co-sense* the current reality, then *pre-sense* (letting go of old assumptions to allow new insights to emerge) and finally *co-create* and *prototype* innovative solutions. The approach emphasises deep listening to oneself, others and the surrounding environment, creating the conditions for meaningful and lasting change.



## Applying Theory U in the project

This journey guided us into the **co-initiating** and **co-sensing** process from the outset and investing heavily in this process. This involved recruitment of our Community Weaver Nadia Mohamed, and later in the project, Jen Harrington. Meetings with hundreds of people, 30+ community groups and sitting with community members in their informal group settings allowed us to sense the pulse of the community vis-a-vis climate action and guide us on our next steps through the journey. Moving to the **presencing** stage, we engaged artists to explore through different ways underlying models that influence the way the community responds in Ballymun and co-sense and co-create prototype solutions. Artists and facilitators supported the community in reflecting on shared challenges, envisioning hopeful futures and experimenting with small, tangible actions. By integrating Theory U, the project moved beyond traditional consultation, promoting a space where local voices are heard and recognised, trust is built, and residents can explore their community's future.

Not all engaged groups and organisations moved through the journey of the project, i.e. not all were ready to engage, challenge underlying assumptions and models and explore new ways of doing and being.

Leveraging this process of co-sensing with the community allowed us to be flexible and move and respond with the community who engaged with us. It allowed us also to move with **what was emerging** and provide support in these spaces and to be constantly surprised.

One of the strongest enablers of the project was the decision to combine an open brief with a structured support process. Instead of prescribing themes or fixed methods, the brief invited artists to respond to the community with flexibility and

curiosity. This openness was matched with practical scaffolding — one-to-one meetings, feedback opportunities and early contact with the Community Weaver — so that artists could adapt their ideas as new insights emerged. This balance prevented projects from becoming overly rigid or extractive and allowed artists to respond authentically to local rhythms, needs and stories. It also ensured that the creative work remained rooted in lived experience rather than in preconceived outcomes.

## The Work that Reconnects

A process that GAP has been integrating into its community programme is called the spiral of the Work that Reconnects. This process has been demonstrated to support deepening engagement and resilience of people and communities working on complex social issues. The Work That Reconnects guides you on a Spiral journey through four stages:

- Coming from Gratitude
- Honoring Our Pain for the World
- Seeing with New/Ancient Eyes
- Going Forth



In practice, each of these stages flows naturally to the next. We depict the process as an open spiral, because every journey through the process changes us. We return to Gratitude with a fresh perspective to engage with the spiral again and again.

## Applying Work that Reconnects in the project

We layered the process of the Work that Reconnects onto Theory U to give us a multilayered methodology and thus, flexibility to explore with what was emerging.

During the co-ination phase, it was clear to us that approaching this phase from a “**what is going wrong?**” perspective would meet resistance as this often the common narrative about Ballymun from those looking in. Instead it felt deeply natural to move into this phase coming from a place of celebration and gratitude, “**what is brilliant about Ballymun?**”.

This shift in perspective, starting from *Gratitude*, inspired us to change the project name from Ballymun Adapts (as one local said to us.. *adapt from what?*) to Ballymun is Brilliant. This message and brand was one that all people from Ballymun deeply identified and tapped into the beauty of the community spirit that is present all around Ballymun.

This approach informed our co-sensing approach by meeting the community with two questions and seeing what came up in conversation. These questions were:

- **What makes Ballymun Brilliant?**
- **And What could make Ballymun shine brighter?**

These two guiding questions allowed us to co-sense what was alive in the community. Coming from a place of gratitude about what was brilliant in Ballymun also helped the project team to build up trust with members of the community who would not normally engage in any projects or initiatives that were connected to climate action.

## Trauma informed practice

During a community meeting with a parent's group in a local school, Project manager Niamh had a very uncomfortable experience, involving racism and inappropriate sexual behaviour and conversation. This incident was formally reported to GAP leadership and it was ultimately decided that both Niamh and Community Weaver Nadia should receive Trauma Informed Training.

The training was completed with Quality Matters and was very helpful to the team in planning future engagements with a trauma informed approach, with a greater understanding of trauma related stigma, trauma responses and triggers in the community.

## 3. Outline of team and key participants

### Project Team formation

The project started out with four partners;

- Global Action Plan Ireland - Lead partner
- Innovative Communities
- Axis Ballymun
- Rediscovery Centre

The initial project design had GAP and Innovate Communities (IC) as co-leads for implementation in the project with the budget and roles distributed accordingly. In the initial weeks of the project, IC had considerable organisational changes which included the two points of contact to the project departing from IC. It was recognised at that stage that IC could no longer effectively contribute to the project. The remaining partners, GAP, Axis Ballymun and RDC then reassessed what options they could take and made some key decisions to address the capacity gaps.

This included transferring the community engagement function from IC over to GAP. The transfer of budget also identified capacity to support an embedded artist for the project. This was recommended during early project formation meetings with the remaining project partners; GAP, Axis and Rediscovery Center. This approach was recommended by Axis given GAPs limited capacity in engaging artists in community

development and engagement. A call out to fill this role was put out through the Axis Green Arts team and an embedded artist for the project was selected.

## Core project Team

The project is managed by Global Action Plan who made up the majority of the core team.

The Project lead was Keith Magee, Development Manager for Global Action Plan. His role was to provide strategic steer for the project, engage with key stakeholders and partners, engage with Creative Ireland throughout the project and ensure reporting was on time and accurate.

Niamh Ní Iceadha from GAP was the project manager of Ballymun is Brilliant. Her role included outreach activities, community engagement, artist liaison, social media creation, workshop creation and facilitation, exhibition curation, administration and day to day project management.

Nadia Mohamed was employed on a part time basis by GAP as the Community Engagement Coordinator (or Community Weaver). Throughout 2024 and 2025, Niamh and Nadia act as the interface between community groups and individuals and the project.

Jen Harrington joined the community engagement team as a Community Weaver in early 2025 to support the project team. She focused on engagement of community groups and connecting artists with the appropriate groups and individuals as the artists projects came to life in early/mid 2025. Jen was also selected as a Ballymun is Brilliant Bursary artist prior to her joining the GAP team. Her work will be discussed further in this section.

Hans Zomer, CEO of GAP, while not tasked with project delivery, played a significant leadership role in all the critical junctures of the project and supported in engagement in the Advisory Board journey.

Abi Igohodaro was the embedded artist for the project, and leads the artistic projects which arise including managing call outs, providing feedback and stewarding the selected creative projects throughout the project duration. She also supported the curation of the community art exhibitions.

Sorcha Keane is the lead for Axis Ballymun, which is the physical host and creative partner for events and activities as well as offering strategic support and advice on community and artist engagement .

Sarah Zimmermann represents the Rediscovery Centre, she will add a specific impact research lens to the second half of the project. The Rediscovery Centre also provided a Repair Station at the 'Thanks Hun' Ballymun Swap Shops.

## Key Consultants



To help the project team get going at the outset in late 2023, two consultants, Fiona Descateaux (previously from Innovate Communities) and Sinead Maloney were contracted to support.

Both consultants had significant expertise in community development and engagement and were very familiar to Ballymun and to the project. They were both engaged in the initial months to help us map out the Ballymun is Brilliant journey and define its values and ethos. This helped the project team focus on the initial steps to initiating the project and identifying our first community engagement opportunities.

Noeleen Hartigan is a consultant working at the intersection of arts and human rights. With over 25 years experience in the not for profit sector in Ireland and with international organisations, her focus is to build the understanding and confidence of people involved in social change.

## Project Artists

Below are the project artists, with links to their web page on the Ballymun is Brilliant website. Their webpage contains more information about the artist and their art project:

- [Niamh O'Beirne](#)
- [The Walls Project \(Gabriel McGuinness and Magda Karol\)](#)
- [Cabbage & Kraut \(Maria Canavan and Sarah Quinn\)](#)
- [Adam Mohammed](#)
- [Sophie Carroll-Hunt](#)

## Bursary Artists

- [Jen Harrington](#)
- [Brendan Shanahan](#)

## Special commission artist 2025

- [Ciara Hession](#)

## Artists for Community Exhibitions

The Ballymun local artists that exhibited at the 2024 Community Art Exhibition were:

- Steve O'Toole
- Hana Bohacova
- Moya Finnegan
- Natalie Scullion
- Lorraine Collins
- Enda Heneghan
- Dominique Montagnon
- Brian Noland
- June Perkins
- Niamh Ní Itheadha
- Abi Ighodaro

For the 2025 Community Exhibition, three pieces were selected. The artists for these pieces were:

- Ciara Hession
- Jen Harrington and the Sillogue Neighborhood Center
- Róisín Dexter and 18 members from Ballymun community:
  - Wateen Elammari
  - Sofiane Elammari
  - Zaid Elammari
  - Larisa Gogols
  - Ionela Mindirigiu
  - Antonia Mindirigiu
  - Cal Gaffney
  - Kelly Emma Keely
  - Lisa Gaffney-Duignan
  - Amelia-Lily Clyne
  - Elijah-Kol Clyne
  - Aarya Agarwal
  - Kalpana Agarwal
  - James Calnan
  - James Calnan Jr
  - Kate Calnan

More details about the Community Art Exhibition process are discussed in the Outputs section.

## Documentary team

In January 2025, the project team approached Cracking Light Productions to create a short documentary piece, telling the story of the project. Maeve Stone and Alex Gill spent the next few months interviewing artists, project participants and project team members about their experiences with BIB.

## Project Advisory Board

The Ballymun Is Brilliant Advisory Group acted as the project's key community sounding board. Its invited members brought lived experience from across Ballymun, including local education, healthcare, local government and community organisations.

Members included Ann Devoy Kelly (Dublin Northwest Partnership), Caroline Conroy (Ballymun Tidy Towns), Robert Murphy (Business Owner and board member on multiple Ballymun organisations), Kelly Hickey (Dublin City Arts Office), and Tanya Ray (Easy Street).

## 4. Outputs and outcomes

(as per Sections 4 and 5 of SLA);

### 4.1 Summary

Four high level outputs and four hoped-for outcomes were agreed with the donor at the start of the project. As the project progressed these were refined, with changes reported to and agreed with the donor. This involved reducing the outcomes reported from four to two. This is documented later in this report.

The outputs include Community mapping, Community readiness analysis, Community Engagements and Creative Reflection of Community sentiments by six core and two bursary artists.

Almost thirty different organisations were engaged directly during the community mapping phase, with many being met on multiple occasions. This engagement through meetings and coupled with desk research and stakeholder engagement formed the basis of readiness analysis.

Community Engagements by the project team included the Better Ballymun Day Project Launch, two Live Murals, two community murals, one with Virgin Mary Boy's School and one with Our Lady's Nursery, the Ballymun is Brilliant Community Exhibition and launch event, five Swap Shops, six community art workshops, three creative coffee mornings for local artists and creatives, 90 artists led workshops and a final Ballymun is Brilliant Celebration event.

Behind the scenes the project team invested significantly in developing clear briefs for artists, supporting artists in their applications, devising specific mechanisms to enable local artists to participate and selecting arts projects that reflected the interest of the community, as established in the engagement and mapping phases. The project supported community engagement by project artists throughout the second year of the project. This cumulated in 2161 participant engagements and 231 events in the form of public events, workshops and meetings.

The artistic outputs from the project and bursary artists included a permanent mural, a discovery trail focusing on community spaces and food, a 'spirit map' of Ballymun and zine of the same, printmaking workshops creating upcycled pieces, a song for Ballymun, a crochet Installation and a collection of short stories, poetry and illustrations co-created with community members.

The two outcomes tested through both quantitative and qualitative analysis were: Participants report an increase in confidence to share their stories of climate action in their community and participants report and demonstrate a change in willingness to take small-scale climate actions in their community.

Quantitative analysis was undertaken using a survey format. The vast majority of survey respondents reported an increased confidence to share climate action stories and, similarly, a willingness to take small scale climate actions within their communities following engagement with the BIB workshops.

Qualitative analysis was undertaken through semi structured interviews with seven project participants selected from a large number who volunteered to be interviewed.

The major themes emerging were the importance of local connection, the encouragement received as part of the project and how that led to greater confidence, and people's articulation of their willingness to take action. For further detail see Section 6 Summary of the Project Evaluation below.

## 4.2 Progression of original outputs and outcomes reflecting the knowledge generated over the course of the project.

### Original Outputs

1. Community Mapping completed, indicating participant's understanding of existing community resources, strengths, initiatives and key actors;
2. Community Readiness Analysis completed, providing pointers for the development of support mechanisms to increase the awareness for local climate action
3. Community engagements and events organised and documented using a range of different creative methods, guided by artists and a community weaver, to reflect current attitudes, imagine alternatives and inspire new ways of thinking about climate action.
4. Creative reflection of community sentiments and readiness to undertake small scale projects and initiatives that trial local approaches to fair and equitable climate action.

While the outputs are in a logical order of map, analyse, engage and reflect - as is the nature of any project keen to respond at a systemic level - all four activities have an element of overlap and repetition over the lifecycle of the project. Some activities, such as the community murals act across all spheres of map, analyse, engage and reflect.

As documented in the mid term report in December 2024,<sup>1</sup> the 'community readiness analysis' was not conducted in the formal sense as originally conceived, as the methodology presupposed a defined 'community' and had assessment criteria that used overly technical language.

### 'Hoped for' Outcomes

1. Participants report an increase in awareness of local initiatives, and where they and their community are at in terms of readiness for climate action;
2. Participants report an increased sense of what fair and equitable climate action would look like in their lives, their community and their context;
3. Participants report an increase in confidence to share their stories of climate

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<sup>1</sup> Ballymun is Brilliant - Mid point Review December 2024

- action in their community;
4. Participants report and demonstrate a change in willingness to take small-scale climate actions in their community.

A deep reflection on the 'hoped for outcomes' emerged through the quarterly formative evaluation sessions. In March of 2025 a new outcomes framework was submitted to Creative Ireland.<sup>2</sup> In this we noted that this type of linear progression from information, to awareness, to confidence, to change is valid for a project with a set number of participants participating in an education or empowerment type activity.

This project, with creative engagement as its core methodology, is more systemic in nature. Outcome 1 was removed as it was clear that information provision on local initiatives had already been undertaken by others, and was not part of the core brief of the artists.

Outcome 2 was removed based on very clear feedback from the project advisory team that it could be perceived as paternalistic given that the community had a very clear sense of what would be fair and equitable, i.e. if answers come from the community then they are ones the community believe to be fair. Additionally various engagement processes have taken place directly relating to carbon change, and a challenge remains that there is no clear 'duty bearer' who will be accountable for delivering the changes the community wants to see enacted. Outcome 3 and 4 were agreed as the priority outcomes for the project. However, while 'confidence and action' are agreed as the outcomes, the words themselves do not reflect the sentiment or methodology of the programme. Hope and Agency were the terms used to brief Artists and underpin the methodology.

## 4.3 Project Outputs

### Community Mapping

**Output 1: Community Mapping completed, indicating participant's understanding of existing community resources, strengths, initiatives and key actors;**

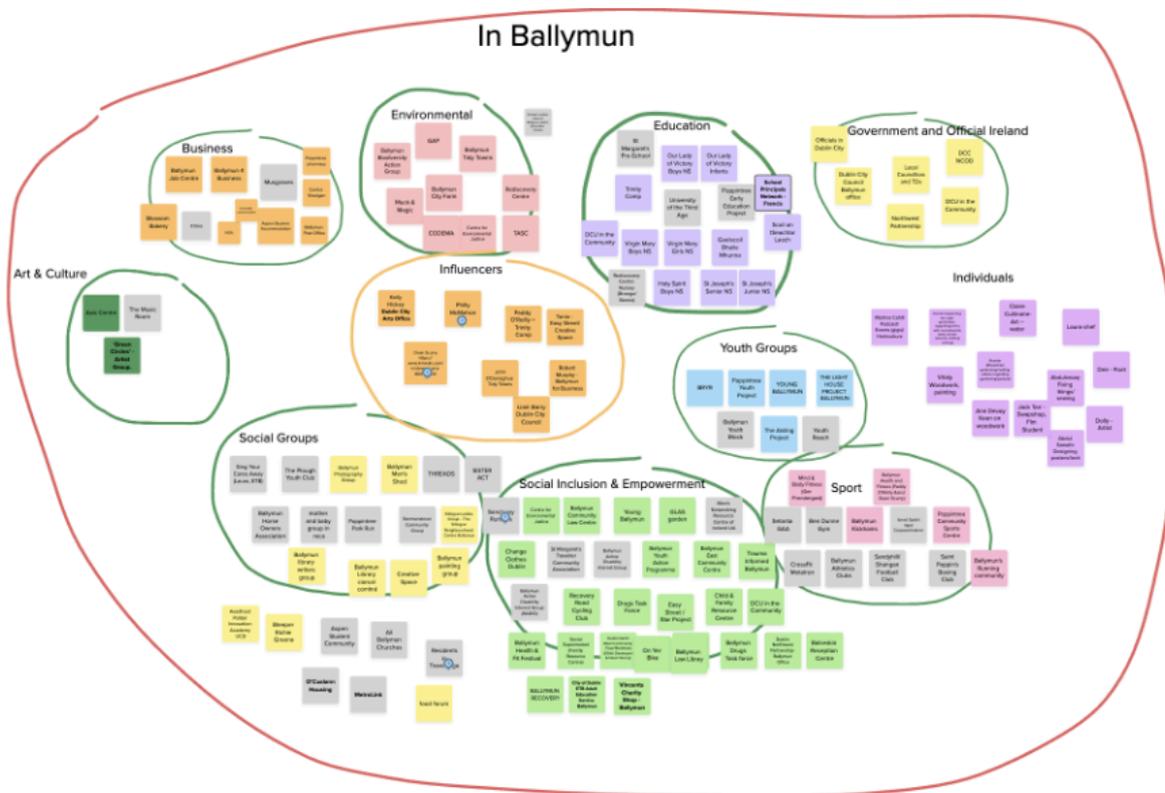
In 2024 we held meetings with 29 community groups across Ballymun. During these meetings we explored what climate action initiatives were going on in these groups, what opportunities and challenges they were facing and what were their own group priorities.

During these meetings we introduced the project and how we would like to explore climate and sustainability through creative arts and we highlighted that we wanted to be guided by the community. These cups of tea and chats helped us to identify the pulse of the groups and the overall pulse of what is alive in the community vis-a-vis climate action. It helped to build visibility and trust with the groups as we intended to

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<sup>2</sup> Ballymun is Brilliant, Revised Outcomes for Final Year of Project and proposed methodology March 2025

reconnect with groups over the duration of the project. Below is a visual that we grew through the project.



**Figure 1: Visual Map done on Mural with project staff**

This exercise of mapping and listening helped us to guide our approach for exploring community readiness.

## Community Readiness Analysis

### Output 2: Community Readiness Analysis completed, providing pointers for the development of support mechanisms to increase the awareness for local climate action

As reported in the mid term report, the methodology around assessing and analysing community readiness, as proposed by Innovate Communities<sup>3</sup>, was evaluated at the project commencement and deemed overly complex and not suitable to the emerging nature of this project. We had identified that the community had been consulted extensively in the months leading up to the start of this project in terms of the climate action priorities in the community. Therefore it felt inappropriate to probe further into community readiness. We decided to leverage the existing work of Codema during the consultation process for the decarbonised zone plans in

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<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Collective%20Impact/Tools/Assessing%20Readiness%20Tool%20April%202017.pdf?hsCtaTracking=980ebb47-53cb-49c4-8223-c96b6ce9d133%7C81ee3e3b-1f52-40a3-b230-2bbac2707e2d>

Ballymun<sup>4</sup> as a basis for understanding community readiness. GAP and Axis Center participated in the Decarbonising Zone team throughout the process from July 2023 to January 2024 including the Green Ballymun Community conference in November 2023. This overlapped with the start of this project, helping to inform what direct the project would take.



**Figure 2: Graphic harvesting design by Hazel Hurley summarising the discussion and presentations at the Green Ballymun Community Conference in November 2023 - from [Ballymun Decarbonising Zone - Summary Report](#)**

In early 2024, our team undertook the review of the comprehensive report and draft plan for Ballymun. The [Summary report](#) and [Draft Decarbonised Zone plans](#) suggest that the Ballymun community has a clear, hopeful vision for 2050. However, there is currently no funded, targeted plan from Dublin City Council to follow up on the ideas. As of December 2025, Both the summary and plans are not yet publicly available via DCC or Codemas website. As a result, many people in Ballymun feel that the consultation process was problematic, and part of a long series of similar disappointing experiences with officialdom: people invest time and energy in a process that lacks any tangible results. This was verified during many of our conversations and cups of tea with stakeholders who were consulted during the decarbonised zone process.

In summary, we identified an appetite and readiness for climate action in Ballymun across the community, though to meet the ambition, these actions needed commitment, funding and engagement with the community to make it happen.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.codema.ie/our-work/ballymun-decarbonising-zone/>

We integrated these learnings into our approach with the community, by creating a set of values we shared via our website and with groups we engaged with. These were

1. Value the community's input
2. Share what we learn each step of the way
3. Be clear about what we can do together and what is outside our project remit
4. Have fun together as we vibrantly and creatively celebrate all that is brilliant in Ballymun.

Point 2 and 3 was particularly relevant where we kept to our commitment with each person and group to be clear about what we can do together , share our learnings and not over commit or promise. This underlined our approach of building trust and connection with the community.

To deliver against point 2, in the later months of the project, we visited each community group we connected with in the first year and updated them on the project journey. We shared with them a [summary Zine](#)<sup>5</sup> of the project which was left with each group. This was particularly relevant for groups who we consulted and listened to in the first year and didn't continue participating in the second year.

The learnings from the review of this report and development of these 4 core commitments also formed the basis for the development of the project Advisory Board.

## Community engagements and events

**Output 3: Community engagements and events organised and documented using a range of different creative methods, guided by artists and a community weaver, to reflect current attitudes, imagine alternatives and inspire new ways of thinking about climate action.**

Over the duration of the project we supported 2161 individual engagements and 231 engagements in the form of public events, workshops and meetings. In addition we met with 29 local community organisations throughout the journey. Below is the breakdown of the types of engagements throughout the whole project:

Event Type	Number of Engagements	# people engaged
Event	15	1036
Artists Workshop	90	558
Meeting	85	484
Individual Meeting	34	34
Workshop	7	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>2161</b>

<sup>5</sup> <https://ballymunisbrilliant.ie/ballymun-is-brilliant-zine/>

**Table 1: Overall Project Engagements**

In 2024 our focus was on connecting with the local community. This was done predominantly through in person meetings. We also ran a number of project events and workshops to support the Community Exhibition and Mural creation. Below is the high level summary of the engagements:

Engagement Type	Number of Engagements	# people engaged
Event	10	437
Individual Meeting	34	34
Meeting	65	426
Workshop	7	49
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>946</b>

**Table 2: 2024 Project Engagements**

We ran 10 Ballymun is Brilliant public events as part of the project including:

- 3 x Creative Coffee mornings for local artists
- 2 x Thanks Hun Ballymun Swapshops
- 2 x Live mural sessions
- 1 x Community Exhibition launch
- 2 x Artists Information webinars

We also attended 8 public events run by community stakeholders in Ballymun such as The Ballymun Bike Library Launch and the Codema Decarbonised Zone event. While we met many people on those days, our project was not the focus of our attendance, therefore we did not count any engagement numbers for these days.

We hosted 7 workshops for community members to support their engagement with the Community Exhibition.

In addition, and unreported in the mid term report due to oversight, We delivered the artist engagement sessions in the form of 2 x webinars and 26 one-2-one sessions that were undertaken during the artists callout phase for both the main callout and the bursary callout.

This brought a total of engagements/events to 116 in 2026 and supported 946 participant engagements in 2024.

In 2025 our output focus was on artist workshops and engagements. Below is a breakdown of the engagements and number of people engaged during these engagements.

Event Type	Number of Engagements	# people engaged
Artist Workshop	90	558
Event	5	599
Meeting	20	58

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>1215</b>
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**Table 3: 2025 Project Engagements**

We supported 90 artist led workshops with the community which highlights our focus on community co-created art.

We hosted 5 project events including:

- 3 x Thanks Hun Ballymun Swapshops
- 1 x Book Launch for Adam Mohamed
- 1 x Project Celebration Event

In addition, we facilitated 20 meetings with community groups. This predominantly was during the later part of the project where we re-engaged with all the community groups we connected with in 2024, and particularly those who did not engage with the artistic element of the project. This was to close the loop of engagement and come back to the community groups and say “we listened to what you had to say, and as a result this is what has happened”.

## Creative reflection of community sentiments

**Output 4: Creative reflection of community sentiments and readiness to undertake small scale projects and initiatives that trial local approaches to fair and equitable climate action.**

Below is a summary of the key artistic outputs of the project. More specific details of each artistic project and the outputs can be found via the dedicated page for each artist on the Ballymun is Brilliant website.

## Ballymun is Brilliant Artists

### Artist Call out and Selection

A key part of the selection process was the deliberate choice to create multiple early touchpoints between the project team and prospective artists. Two open online information sessions were held to introduce the ethos of Ballymun is Brilliant, answer questions and emphasise the importance of community-centred practice. These were followed by one-to-one meetings, offered to every interested artist, where ideas could be shaped in conversation and adapted to the realities of local engagement. Twenty one artists for the main strand and five for the bursary strand availed of these sessions, using them to refine their concepts, adjust scope and consider which community groups they might meaningfully collaborate with. 24 applications were received for the general callout and 8 for the Ballymun bursary callout.

This early relational work was essential: all five successful project artists had participated in these one-to-ones, and their proposals reflected the deep listening and responsiveness encouraged throughout. These sessions also acted as an informal compatibility check, helping the team understand each artist’s working style, flexibility and readiness for co-creation — a key learning for future projects.

## **Niamh O'Beirne**

Niamh O' Beirne's "Ballymun Spirit Map" explored the community's relationship with nature and the 'more than human' elements of Ballymun through foraging workshops, cyanotype making, wild garden parties and community mapping. She also created a zine handbook providing a guide on how to follow the map - indicating sections to reference in specific locations such as stories, poems, local native flora, memory shrines, recipes, things that are no longer there such as the Wad River and more. The zine invites readers to share in the experiences of contributors contained within, and to create their own map of the land and their place in it.

## **The Walls Project**

Magda Karol from The Walls Project co-created a vibrant mural reflecting Ballymun's vision for climate justice and climate action, designed by community members and school children from Virgin Mary Girl's School and painted by Magda and a group of community members.

## **Cabbage & Kraut**

Cabbage & Kraut's *Ballymunch* Trail celebrated Ballymun's grassroots food culture, leading to a community-created Ballymun Food Map which was launched at the Harvest Festival in Muck and Magic Garden in September. The Map is on the back of a beautiful zine, showcasing recipes, quotes, a poem by local writer Dee Keating, and suggestions of ways to engage in local food initiatives. They also created a series of postcards and stickers featuring iconic Ballymun imagery that were given out to the community.

## **Adam Mohamed**

Writer and poet Adam Mohamed worked with residents to create a book of poetry, interviews, conversations and insights, '*A Ballymun Blend*', illustrated by local artist Aaron Sunderland Carey, which launched in the Axis Theatre with live performances and a special message from President Michael D. Higgins. The book has been a great success and has sold over 160 copies to date, with a number of copies gifted to project participants.

## **Sophie Carroll-Hunt**

Sophie Carroll-Hunt led upcycling and printmaking workshops, including a live printing event at one of the hugely successful 'Thanks Hun, Ballymun' swap shops, transforming old textiles and sparking fresh conversations about fashion and sustainability. These workshops engaged adults and a group of teenagers from Poppintree Youth Project.

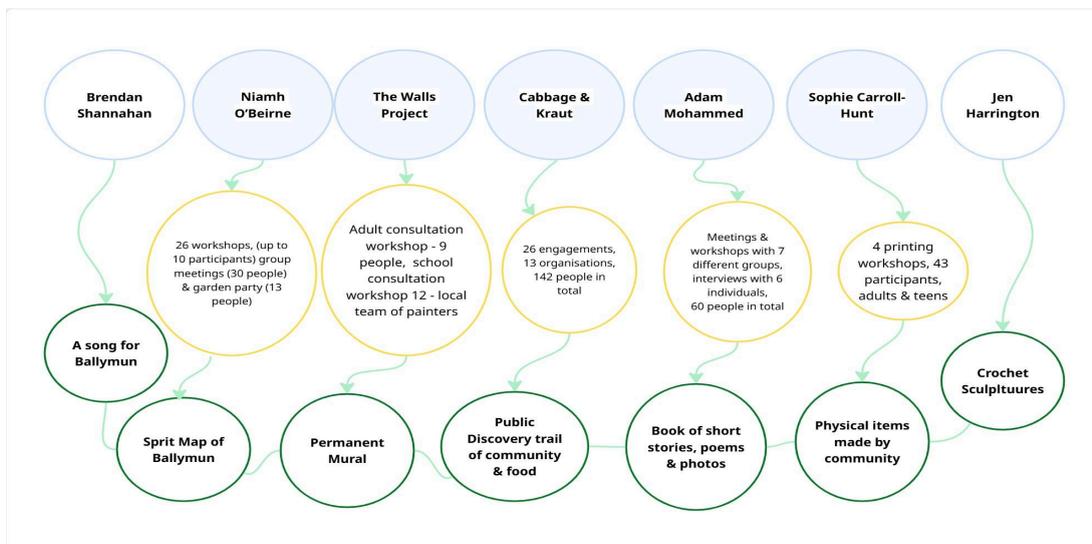
## **Jen Harrington**

Bursary artist Jen Harrington's project *Sábhaile Munna* featured crochet sculptures expressing both protection and grief, and captured local feelings around climate

justice and the preciousness of biodiversity. They were displayed at an exhibition in Axis, along with beautiful photos of the works placed on specific sites around Ballymun. At the exhibition launch, Jen invited attendees to contribute chain stitches under her guidance to a larger Irish crochet lace piece representing oak trees in Poppintree Park.

## Brendan Shanahan

Bursary artist Brendan Shanahan composed *A Song for Ballymun*, which he performed at the opening of the Ballymun Seven Heroes Square, the launch of the IFI Ballymun Community Films Archive in Axis Ballymun, and other local events. The song has also been shared on Youtube.



**Figure 2, Artists, engagement methodology and artistic output**

## Learnings from Artist Engagement

The Ballymun is Brilliant project team had to deselect one project artist who was commissioned to undertake a piece of work. This came about due to a growing awareness of the incompatibility between the artist approaches to community engagement and what the project team felt was required for meaningful engagement within the Ballymun community. This included unwillingness to adapt project processes to meet community needs as suggested by the project team; fragmented and siloed communication with the project team creating confusion and; an unwillingness to meet and discuss with the project team when concerns were raised. This culminated in the project leadership team meeting to evaluate the feasibility of the artist work being delivered inline with the ethos of the project of trust building, emergence and gratitude.

The discussion between the project team and artist led to the deselecting of the artist from the project.

The project team sat down to evaluate what we could have done better, both for the artist and for the project team. We realised that the artist in question, while their proposal was quality and their resume of high quality, did not engage in any of the

artist engagements activities. Simply, our team never met the artist on any of the pre-call engagements (Webinar, one-to-one meetings or interviews) before they were contracted, thus didn't have the opportunity to foster a relationship and get a sense of the artists compatibility with the project.

A key learning from this process is that when working within a sensitive community, meeting the artist in advance in a way that gives you a good sense of their approach to community engaged art is key.

A second learning from the selection phase was the value of early relational engagement as a predictor of successful project delivery. Artists who participated in the information sessions, one-to-ones and the January onboarding day consistently demonstrated openness, adaptability and respect for the community context. Their proposals reflected the feedback and conversations held during these early stages, and this alignment became visible throughout their delivery. In contrast, the artist who ultimately withdrew had not attended any of the pre-call sessions, meaning the team had no opportunity to understand his approach or build trust. This experience highlighted that socially engaged projects require artists whose working style is visible early on, and that meaningful pre-selection engagement should be considered essential rather than optional.

*"I felt that by being given the opportunity of participating in the painting, I felt, that could be replicated with other community mural projects, you know, that it's a tool that we could use and especially with the whole area of climate change and biodiversity loss that it's a way of expressing it in an artistic fashion."- Participant*

*"For people passing by and looking at the mural, they see aspects of it that's related to climate change, heavy rainfall, and the need for more trees. There are some insects in it, wild insects. I suppose that brings up the whole issue of biodiversity loss" - Participant*

## Community Exhibitions 2024 and 2025

We chose this approach to the Community Exhibitions in 2024 and 2025 because the focus of Ballymun is Brilliant was not simply to present finished artworks, but to create platforms where community members could share their creative experience with confidence and agency. The exhibitions were intentionally designed as gentle, supportive spaces that prioritised participation over polish. Many community members had little prior experience exhibiting work and needed practical encouragement, informal making opportunities, and clear framing that their contributions were valued. By foregrounding process, co-creation and low-barrier participation, the exhibitions became moments of collective ownership rather than showcases of individual achievement. This approach also reflected the project's core ethos: that creative work grows best when people feel safe, seen and invited, and that confidence develops through supported exposure rather than pressure. The exhibitions therefore functioned not only as outcomes, but as extensions of the relational, community-led approach that shaped the entire project.

## **Call out for 2024 Community Exhibition**

In late Autumn 2024 a call out was put out for pieces to be displayed in our Community Exhibition, held on the 13th of November in the Axis. This was shared on social media and posters put all round the community and spread by word of mouth through meetings and community chats had by Niamh and Nadia. There were also 2 visual arts workshops to support the community in creating pieces for the exhibition, and 2 workshops completed with the Ballymun Library Writers Group to guide them through the questions and help them to prepare pieces for performance at the exhibition.

The callout process revealed that community members often need more support, encouragement and direct engagement than expected in order to share their creative work. Initial uptake to participate was not very high, and we discovered that people lacked confidence to submit their work. We put on a series of free workshops in the Axis and invited people to come, be inspired and make art. The majority of pieces displayed in the final exhibition were created during these workshops, showing the importance of supporting and scaffolding the community. This outcome also inspired the curation of our 2025 exhibition, launched as part of the Ballymun is Brilliant Celebration Event, which featured a selection of pieces made directly with the community we had engaged with, rather than an open callout.

The 2024 callout asked people to create a piece based on one or more of the 3 project questions:

1. What do you think makes Ballymun Brilliant?
2. What do you think could make Ballymun shine brighter?
3. How do you feel Ballymun will be like for future generations?

The emphasis was on asking for responses to three questions that were designed to explore what is alive in the community, what changes people would like to see and what imagined future does the community have for Ballymun.

We also shared 3 support videos, on our social media and website, breaking down the questions further and providing inspiration.

In total we received 34 responses to our community exhibition callout.

- 16 visual arts
- 8 spoken word/writers responses
- 5 poems
- 5 Songs
- 1 presentation on health and fitness in the community

## **The 2024 Community Exhibition**

The launch of the Community Exhibition was held on the evening of the 13th of November 2024 in the Axis Ballymun Cafe and Theatre. In total 86 people signed up to the event, with over 45 in attendance on the night. The event was a celebration of the brilliance of Ballymun's creativity and community spirit. Performing on the night

was The Lighthouse Choir, Ballymun Health and Fitness, Ballymun Library Writers' Group and Creative Space, a Ballymun open mic performance group.

The Ballymun is Brilliant Project artists were announced to the community at the launch event. The event allowed the BIB artists to meet some of the community and get a sense into the creative work completed so far as part of the project.

The exhibition included a range of visual art pieces, spoken word, song and poetry performances created in response to the project's 3 questions, as previously mentioned. These questions, inspired by the Work that Reconnects spiral journey, have underpinned the work of the project so far, and have guided many of the engagements.

The Two live murals created by Niamh and Abi on the Ballymun is Brilliant team were also added to the community exhibition. A third live mural, answering question 3 in collaboration with the community, was also created during the event. This mural stayed up in the Axis lobby for the months following the exhibition, with the community welcome to contribute to it.

The exhibition ran in the Axis Ballymun Cafe between 13th November 2024 and early January 2025. The cafe is a very visible space with daily footfall making it very accessible to the community.

### ***Learning from 2024 callout***

Many participants felt unsure whether their pieces were "good enough," and confidence grew only when the team created dedicated making support spaces, offered guidance and framed the exhibition as a celebration rather than a competition. This highlights an important learning for future projects: open calls alone rarely reach those with something to say; thoughtful scaffolding and relational encouragement are what allow quieter or less confident voices to participate fully.

## **Curation of the 2025 Exhibition**

Learning from the callout process for the 2024 Community Exhibition, as outlined above, the team decided to engage in a more curated approach for the 2025 exhibition, to be displayed as part of the 2025 Celebration. The team reflected on the level of support needed by participants to engage, and ultimately decided to curate 3 pieces for the final exhibition, drawing on community expertise, and working with specific cohorts.

Ultimately 2 pieces were finished and displayed as part of the Celebration Exhibition.

## **Community Exhibitions - Summary of Projects**

One of these projects was 'Faces by Numbers' by Ballymun local artist Ciara Hession - a photographic project about memory, past and future within the lives of Ballymun residents connected to the artist.

The other was 'Power With', a collaborative piece of mixed-media art created in an intergenerational workshop facilitated by Róisín Dexter, a creative consultant and climate coach, in Ballymun Library.

A third project was underway leading up to the community exhibition, in August and September, but it didn't come to fruition. This project, led by Jen Harrington, was a collaboration between Ballymun is Brilliant and the Sillogue Neighbourhood Centre. A crochet hobby group meets regularly there, generally consisting of women from the local era of ages 40 to 80+.

## ***Faces by Numbers***

Faces by Numbers had its inception in one of the 2024 BiB artist coffee mornings which Ciara attended. She discussed her idea of using face painting, a medium bound by temporality and momentary joy, to externalise the experiences of residents of Ballymun on their own bodies, and to document this through photography.

Encouraged by Ballymun is Brilliant Project Leader Niamh Ní Itheadha, Ciara was enthusiastic about applying for the artist bursary, but unfortunately, due to extended hospitalisation, was unable to do so. When she recovered, Ciara continued to attend BIB events, including Project artist Sophie Carroll Hunt's printmaking workshop and all of the Thanks Hun, Ballymun Swap Shops.

In 2025, when discussing the possibility of a community exhibition element to the celebration, Niamh brought up the idea of including Ciara's project and team members Jen Harrington, Keith Magee and Abi Ighodaro enthusiastically agreed with the idea.

Niamh and Jen worked with Ciara to prompt a work plan that would ensure Ciara would be paying herself adequately for her time and to keep the scale of the project in mind while planning. Jen Harrington agreed to be the photographer for the project, and scheduled days with Ciara to take photos. What followed was a beautiful series of face painting sessions which explored the connection between the artist and the person being painted and the greater connection to the past and present of these Ballymun community members.

Jen met with Ciara and each subject and photographed them, with their faces painted, in specific, meaningful places around Ballymun. The final output was 10 sets of photographs (1 A4 and 1 A5 per participant), plus a group photo of the artist and family members, which were printed professionally and installed in the Axis Café space for the exhibition duration. The photos, and stories behind them, were also shared on the Ballymun is Brilliant Instagram, so Ciara's work could reach a wider audience.

Ciara gave a beautiful [speech](#) at the Celebration, which described what the project had meant to her as an artist with a chronic illness, and which left many of the audience members in tears! She also shared her story with RTE's Nationwide for a feature that will air in 2026.

Quotes from Ciara:

*"I felt BIB created a wonderful space for artists to explore their craft and highlight environmental issues through it."*

*'Attending this coffee morning inspired me to ask myself more questions: as a girl with chronic illness, where do I fit into the world? What message do I create through my art? And what difference could I make to the environment? These questions led me to think of our past, our childhood and the resources we had that brought us joy. With body art being a passion of mine, and face-painting being a beautiful core memory of my childhood, Conversations about it with Niamh birthed the body art idea we call Faces by Numbers.'*

More information on her project can be found on the Ballymun is Brilliant website - <https://ballymunisbrilliant.ie/creative/ciara-hession/>

## **Power With**

The 'Power With' collaborative art piece was created by workshop attendees, guided by Róisín Dexter. The session began with a discussion of what it takes to create a difference in other people's lives. The group split up into their family units and each family member told the others a story about when they helped someone else. The group came together then to brainstorm about what feelings cause people to make change, and discussed the idea of "power with" as opposed to "power over things in the world". The hands-on creative portion of the workshop began then with activities such as rowan beading, willow branch bending and decorating, and leaf print-making available. The created pieces were sewn to the greater piece of fabric backing, and the names of all the contributors were noted.

The session facilitated discussion between parents and their children about their power in the world, what emotions it takes to drive change, and collectively created an artefact of this learning in the communal piece made of nature-based art activities which invited curiosity and play.

18 members from Ballymun community created the art piece, supported and curated by Róisín Dexter. Photos of the event and art piece can be viewed here - <https://ballymunisbrilliant.ie/creative/roisin-dexter/>

## **Silloque Neighbourhood Centre- Unfinished Final Project**

In early 2025, Jen began collaborating with a group in the Silloque Neighbourhood Centre to explore the possibility of creating a community-based crochet artwork with participants at the local Centre. Initial visits were met with enthusiasm. The group engaged warmly with Jen's crochet practice, shared their own work, and expressed interest in experimenting with Irish crochet lace motifs as part of a potential contribution to the final community exhibition.

Over several weeks, the group explored various patterns and techniques. While participants enjoyed aspects of trying new skills, the fine hooks, thinner yarn, and complexity of traditional lacework proved challenging for many. Fluctuating attendance—both among participants and Jen due to health or scheduling constraints—made it difficult to maintain continuity. Despite positive engagement and

relationship-building, the project did not ultimately result in a finished exhibition piece.

The experience offered valuable learning for future community craft collaborations. Jen identified the need for clearer facilitation structures, more realistic project scopes, and craft techniques better suited to varied skill levels and irregular attendance. She also recognized the emotional labour involved in holding space for participants' life challenges and the importance of trauma-informed practice. While the outcome was different than first imagined, the process strengthened relationships, generated meaningful conversations, and highlighted key considerations for future creative community engagements

## Ballymun is Brilliant Documentary

The Ballymun is Brilliant - An Scéal Mór - documentary created by Cracking Light was first screened at the launch of the BIB Celebration event in October 2025. The documentary interviewed all the main project artists plus participants and helped to visualise the overall impact and sentiment of the project.

The Documentary can be viewed on youtube: [▶ Ballymun Is Brilliant - An Scéal Mór](#)

The documentary has been well received by the artists, participants and community. While extremely happy with the output, on reflection we would have approached the filming process differently. Instead of saving the filming to the end of the project, we would capture video of the project as it develops, and have more video footage of the amazing community participants, so that the finished piece told the story of the development, events and learnings of the project, rather than just the finished project.

## 4.4 Project Outcomes

As noted above we had two primary outcomes for the project:

- Participants report an increase in confidence to share their stories of climate action in their community and
- Participants report and demonstrate a change in willingness to take small-scale climate actions in their community.

We tested these through both quantitative and qualitative methodology and found a high level of positive change for participants.

This is set out in detail in Section 6. Summary of the Project Evaluation.

### 4.4.3 Unintended Outcomes

In addition to the focused outcomes for participants, there were also positive unintended outcomes of the work for every person on the project team who reported, through the formative evaluation sessions, changes in their own learning, practice and confidence. The importance of the 'Community Weaver' role for the project was highlighted in our mid term report, and the stories of our two weavers offer insights into the type of positive outcomes experienced by the project team itself.

## **Nadia's Story**

*"The Ballymun is Brilliant project was incredibly nurturing for me and made me fall back in love with Ballymun. I was brought up in Ballymun, in the flats, and moved away. This job as "community weaver" was like coming home. Before the project started, I didn't think the community spirit was there, but I discovered it's always been there and is still as strong as ever. Having never done community work before, I found this role so fulfilling, and I loved going out to different community centres and groups, just having cups of tea and letting the chats flow naturally. The project taught me that I'm really good at putting myself in somebody else's shoes, which is something I want to take forward with everything I do. Events like the swap shop and the community exhibitions really highlight for me the power and passion of the community here in Ballymun."*

*This project opened up a completely new career path for me. I got sick during the project, and coming back to it really helped my recovery - my creative brain had felt gone, but it came back because I was so supported here. The community work experience I gained allowed me to get a new job that's quite similar to Ballymun is Brilliant, involving filming, documentaries, and community engagement. I wouldn't have been able to get this job without the work I did here, and when I did my first workshop with teenagers in my new role, it went really well because of everything I learned from this project. The project has led me down this new path that I want to keep pursuing."*

## **Jen's Story**

*"My experience as part of the Ballymun is Brilliant team began tentatively, with some nervousness on my part about re-engaging with a place I had grown up in and had experienced trauma through. Even though I had spent half my life in the 7-storey flats on Shangan Road, I felt alienated from this now-changed Ballymun, and unsure of how to balance between "community weaver" and former resident.*

*After acquainting myself with the many community organisations and projects going on in Ballymun, I began working with our project artists to determine how to get local community members and groups involved in their projects. This was done by directly visiting groups where they were based such as the Ballymun Library Writer's Group, contacting by email and arranging with facilitators in Poppintree Youth Project and BRACE, and designing open calls for workshops. I felt welcomed and ingrained in the community, untangling the knot of apprehension I had initially felt.*

*The projects began to unfold and were met with enthusiasm and overwhelming creative energy from community participants. I engaged with projects as a BiB staff member helping to facilitate and as part of the support structure, both logistically and creatively, for numerous swap shops, workshops and events.*

*Through the Ballymun is Brilliant project, I have gained so much confidence in my ability to facilitate communication and creativity between artists and community groups; I have been able to use my own creative and design skills to help design outputs of projects including the book design for Adam Mohamed's 'A Ballymun Blend', Niamh O'Beirne's Ballymun Spirit map & zine design, photography for Ciara Hession's project amongst others; I've provided videographic and photographic documentation for many events and workshops; and contributed creatively to the administrative side of the overall Ballymun is Brilliant project.*

*This role has been a wonderful way to reconnect to Ballymun in the capacity of community arts work, particularly in supporting arts projects that have had an impact on so many people."*

Among the other unintended positive outcomes we have been able to document are:

- The story of the swap shops and their carbon impact - Appendix I
- A model for how to engage with and support artists - Appendix II
- Steve O'Toole's story - Appendix III

## 5. Public Engagement outcomes,

e.g., levels of audience engagement and participation (if appropriate), media coverage, social media analytics, etc.;

Public engagement for this project took two forms. Firstly the engagements in the forms of workshops, events and meetings. This has been documented in Section 4.2 - Project Outputs under the output focusing on Community Engagement.

Below is an overview table of all the engagement activities that took place during the project:

Event Type	Number of Engagements	# people engaged
Event	15	1036
Artists Workshop	90	558
Meeting	85	484
Individual Meeting	34	34
Workshop	7	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>2161</b>

**Table 4: Overall Project Engagements**

In addition to the events that the project team ran, below are additional engagements as a result of project activities that we can report on:

- [Adam Mohamed's book, A Ballymun Blend](#), printed 200 copies for its first run. 40 of these were gifted to project participants, with copies saved for the library and the project partners to share with the community. The other 160 copies completely sold out, proving the book to be a great success.
- Mural visibility - The mural is the only permanent art piece created as part of the project. The Wall's Project mural is on a very busy street and surrounded by community amenities which bring a high level of footfall to the area, including Centra, a pharmacy, two takeaways, the Axis Centre, nearby student accommodation, An Post, a barber and a beautician. It is painted on the wall of Virgin Mary Girls' School and is passed by to get to Virgin Mary Boys' School.
- The Ballymun is Brilliant Celebration event was sold out, with 189 tickets sold and the further seats taken by those performing in the celebration event.
- We met with 29 local community organisations throughout the journey.
- Social Media Engagement - over 555 followers

### 5.1. Media and Social Media Analytics

Throughout the project, social media played an important role in keeping the community connected to the work of *Ballymun is Brilliant*. We used social media to share creative outputs, celebrate local initiatives and achievements and tell the

project story. While not a core objective of the project, the online presence became a valuable extension of our community engagement.

Instagram, the project's primary social platform, was used first and foremost to highlight the BIB project's own work. Its audience grew steadily and organically, reaching 558 followers by the end of 2025.

In 2025 alone, the Instagram page achieved:

- 108.4K views
- 33.1K reach
- 2.3K content interactions

On Facebook, which functioned primarily as a community-facing noticeboard and event-sharing platform, the *Ballymun is Brilliant* page built a more modest but engaged following, with 73 followers on the main page and additional participation through the project's Facebook Group, which gathered 210 members by the end of 2025.

In 2025, the Facebook page recorded:

- 12.9K views
- 2.7K reach
- 345 content interactions

These figures reflect the consistent interest in project updates, event notices, artist activities, and creative outputs shared throughout the year.

## Media coverage

Although the project was designed first and foremost for and with the Ballymun community, the learning, stories and creative approaches emerging from *Ballymun is Brilliant* resonated far beyond the local area.

As the work progressed, the team identified opportunities to share insights with wider audiences, particularly around community-led climate action, arts-based engagement, and fair transitions.

The project attracted interest from journalists across Ireland, resulting in 17 pieces of media coverage over its lifespan – 4 in 2024 and 13 in 2025. The project will also be featured in a story on RTE Nationwide about community spirit in Ballymun in early 2026. Coverage appeared across both local and national outlets, helping to highlight the creativity, leadership and experience within Ballymun, and offering a counter-narrative to the often deficit-focused stories told about the area.

This visibility not only celebrated the achievements of project participants, but also helped position Ballymun as an active contributor to national conversations on climate justice, community development and the transformative potential of the arts.

A list of links to media engagements are found in Appendix IV

## 6. A summary of the Project evaluation

### 6.1. Formative Evaluation

Early in the project's set up phase the team commissioned an independent consultant to work with them to deliver a formative evaluation over the course of the project.

In brief, the methodology was quarterly meetings with the project team based on four key reflections for the period just passed:

- What did we do, and with whom?
- What did we learn and how?
- What do we still need to understand better?
- What have we decided as a result?

This process allowed team members to regroup and reflect, and critical to capture nuanced information about the project as knowledge emerged during the consultations.

Outputs from the formative evaluation were the mid point review and recommendations to the project team, and also the revised evaluation framework. The final learnings gathered during the formative evaluation are reflected in Section 8 - Any Relevant Findings.

### 6.2. Summative Evaluation

In the final year of the project a revised evaluation framework was devised and submitted to the donor and the Rediscovery Centre were tasked with analysing data against the two core outcomes. A detailed evaluation report is available [here](#).

As noted above, two outcomes were agreed over the course of the project as priorities:

- Participants report an increase in confidence to share their stories of climate action in their community and
- Participants report and demonstrate a change in willingness to take small-scale climate actions in their community.

A specific survey tool was designed to measure these outcomes, and this survey was made available to all participants in all five artists' workshops. The vast majority of respondents to the survey reported an increased confidence to both share climate action stories and a willingness to take small scale climate actions with their communities following engagement with the Ballymun is Brilliant workshops.

Additionally seven semi structured interviews were conducted with a cross section of project participants. These included a cross section of men and women, long term residents and new ones, and people who had deep roots across various community organisations. The interviews were undertaken by Jen Harrington (Community

Weaver, BiB), transcribed and thematically analysed by Sarah Zimmerman (Rediscovery Centre).

### 6.2.3 Quantitative Analysis

Most workshop participants completed the outcome measurement tool, which received 38 responses overall including 2 incomplete responses. The majority of participants were aged between 26 and 65, with significantly more female participants than male.

**Confidence:** In response to the question ‘ I feel more confident to share my climate action stories within the community since taking part in this workshop’ 32 respondents either ‘slightly’ or ‘strongly’ agreed.

**Willingness:** In response to the question ‘I am more willing to take small- scale actions in my community since taking part in these workshops’ 33 respondents either ‘slightly’ or ‘strongly’ agreed.

The six art projects were deliberately diverse and used different engagement methodologies, thus a direct comparison of respondents relative weighting of their answers across workshops is not comparing like with like. However it is worth noting that in four of the five projects more participants ‘strongly agreed’ with both outcomes, than ‘slightly agreed’. Further, in two of the projects there were no ‘neither agree nor disagree’ answers. No participant answered ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘slightly disagree’ for either outcome.

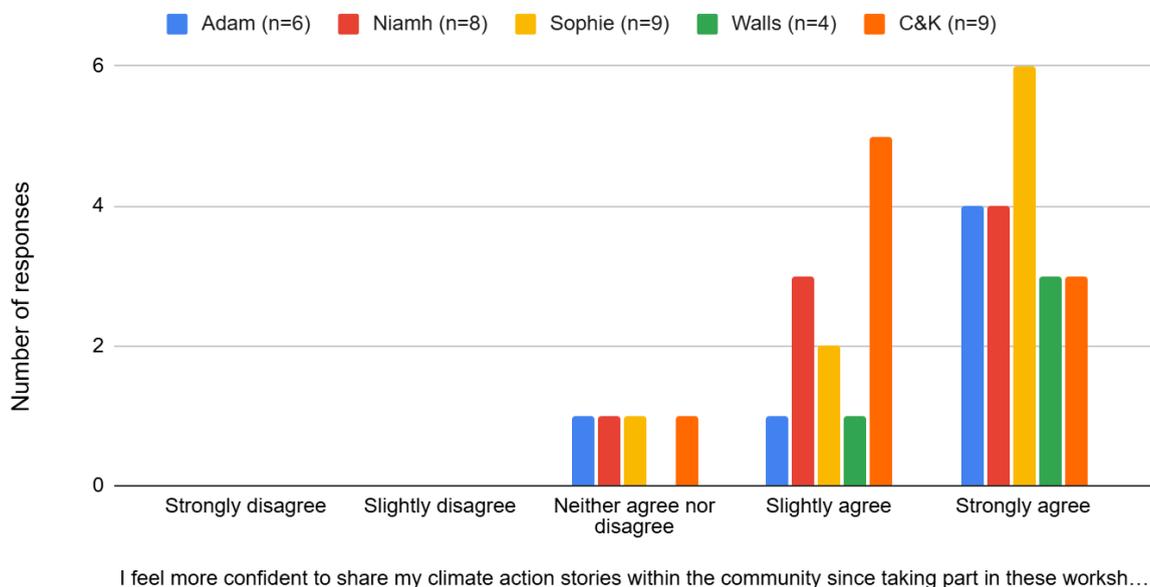


Figure 1. Workshop participant responses Outcome 1 “I am more willing to take small-scale actions in my community since taking part in these workshops”.

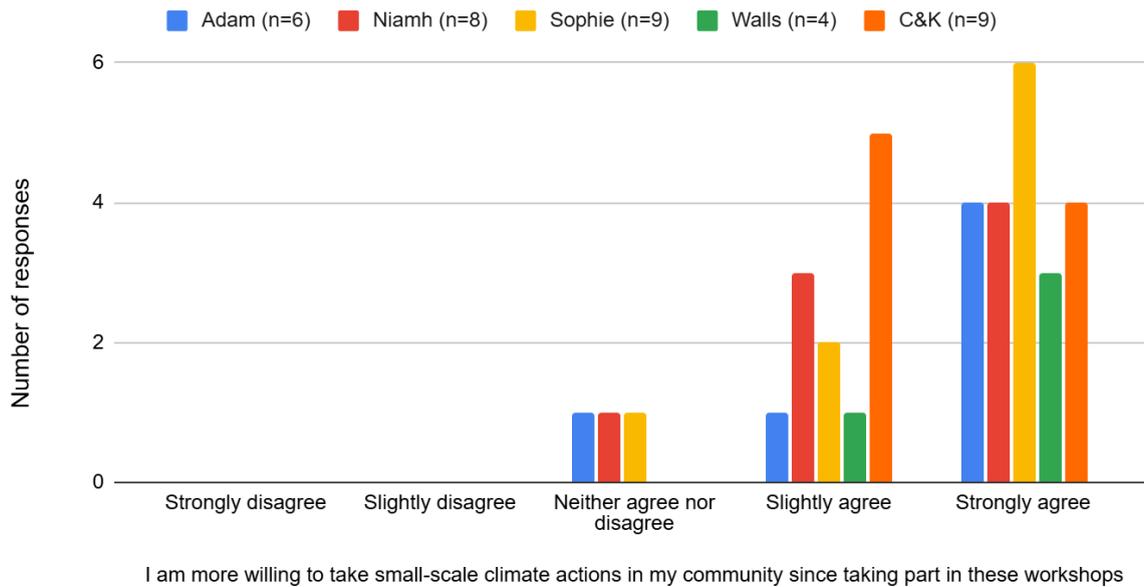


Figure 2. Workshop participant responses Outcome 2 “*I am more willing to take small-scale actions in my community since taking part in these workshops*”.

## 6.2.4 Qualitative Analysis

Twenty four workshop participants expressed an interest in sharing their workshop experience with project weaver Jen Harrington. In-person, recorded semi-structured interviews were ultimately conducted with six workshop participants following further engagement. Feedback from another workshop participant was gleaned from the BIB documentary produced by Cracking Light. Informed consent was verbally obtained from each interviewee at the start of each interview.

Braun and Clarke’s six-phase thematic analysis framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was applied to the interview scripts. In addition, a recent comprehensive overview of the framework, including a 16 item checklist, was used as a guidance document (Ahmed et al., 2025).

In total eight different themes emerged, with three being dominant; Local connection, which was referenced ten times, Encouragement and Confidence which was referenced 8 times, and Willness to take action, which was also referenced 8. The other themes identified were Climate impact awareness and Learning, (3 each), and Diversity, Sharing stories, and Scaling up Action (1 each).

In terms of ‘Local Connection’ participants there was a clear sense of connectivity between broad climate concerns and the local community, the wider societal issues the community faces and the very micro level of the local eco system.

*“They demolished Ballymun, they got rid of the towers, they got rid of the shopping centre. They’re promising this, they’re promising that, they’re promising the other. We’re still looking at a green field [Site of the old shopping centre and the promised new one]. All the promises for Ballymun have always been broken. And yet the one thing that hasn’t been broken is the community”*

*‘It’s just like, hey, look my local areas if filled with all sorts of things that you can forage and eat, the stuff you just kind of look at as a weed on the ground’*

*‘There was talk about the flats, the pocket forest, the local peregrine falcon and the horse statue’*

*‘ We look at local wildlife and nature a bit more now, looking at different plants and stuff.*

*‘In recent years, it’s come to the fore how much these wild plants, some people call weeds, play an important part in our areas’ ecology, which ornamental plants don’t do. In that they provide a habitat for our pollinators and other forms of wildlife, and they’re not only a food source but a source of habitat.’*

The theme of encouragement and confidence was evident over various spheres of the project, including the informal coffee mornings at the start, the encouragement from artists which put people at ease. There was a sense that The feeling of confidence gained through the practical artistic experience is related to confidence to share stories of climate action and to take action.

*‘It gave me an opportunity to keep busy and experience new stuff. This gives us an opportunity to do these kinds of things. We find out what your actual inner ambitions are about.’*

*‘...Especially in art, because there’s no rules, it’s all about the process. So I think the process of learning it and all was fun and that made you confident, the artists wanted you to do it, she’s great.’*

*‘I felt the support from the start. Which is what’s always made me want to come back. When these people see me, they see the artist in me, not just the person. There’s some potential in there.’*

In terms of willingness to take action, participation in the projects identified the climate actions people are already taking and which encouraged further action.

*If I hadn't gone I wouldn't be a part of the men's shed. I wouldn't be a part of tidy towns. So it all links up, you meet different people and you explore new things.*

*I wanted to learn stuff to help us with our own garnering so that way we can bring stuff from the garden and to the garden. We learnt about the value of mugwort, elderberries and nettles.... We are all about environmental and eco-friendly gardening.*

*Small steps - just one thing, one idea a week can make a difference like sharing kids toys.*

*Upcycling it, bettering it, instead of going backward, we go forwards.*

## 6.2.5 Evaluation Conclusion

From the formal evaluation undertaken we can assume that Ballymun Is Brilliant clearly had a positive impact on workshop participants and the hoped for outcomes were largely achieved. The broad range of creative project types engaged a spectrum of the Ballymun community and helped to build collective capacity and momentum around the project. The results reinforce previous research findings that “targeted creative community events can significantly support climate policy efforts by fostering high-quality citizen engagement” (Mac Mahon et al., 2025). In terms of outcome responses, there was no clear difference among the different projects and future similar initiatives should consider including a broad range of creative project types in order to engage people with different interests. The projects stimulated conversations around many local issues and the encouragement and support of the lead artist was identified as vital for building confidence among workshop participants to engage in the creative process and climate justice themes.

## 7. Provide a selection of high-quality images and/or digital video content

(Please see Section 21 regarding Data Protection) for promotional purposes by the Department, inclusive of all relevant credits;

- [Link to Photos](#)
- [Link to Credits](#)

## 8. Any relevant findings

We documented three main findings at the midpoint in the project

- Real engagement, not just another consultation

As noted elsewhere in this report,, the community of Ballymun has been historically over consulted and underresourced. It was vital to the success of this project that

team members were sensitive to that history and engaging at a meaningful level with individuals and community groups.

- Don't start with climate

Through careful planning and active listening the team consciously did not start this project solely through a climate lens. The team met individuals and community groups in terms of their interests and concerns, and a positive mindset in terms of 'what makes Ballymun Brilliant' and 'what could enable Ballymun to shine brighter' created the entry points to the project for people that might have been turned off or tuned out from starting with a didactic climate crisis perspective.

- Storytelling - a natural asset

It was obvious to the 'community weavers' that there was a predisposition for storytelling within the community. Everyone encouraged had a story, and local history, including the positive and negatives were mediated through stories. The team leaned into this as the project progressed, including the decision to make a documentary of the project as part of the evaluation. Story telling came through strongly in the artistic outputs of both the original artists - like Adam Mohammed's collection - and in the bursary artist's work.

Through our process of formative evaluation, with quarterly team wide reviews we also identified the following factors as key to the project's success:

- 'Community Weavers' from the area as outreach workers to compliment the existing community engagement of the partners and support for the artist engagement
- Embedding an artist in the programme from the outset, and investing time and resources in supporting the commissioned and bursary
- Investing time in trauma informed training
- Investing in the onboarding of established artists
- Taking counsel from an advisory panel of community leaders
- Creating specific mechanisms to encourage and showcase local artists

Finally, it was challenging to maintain clarity while responding to generative knowledge throughout the project. This experience is not unique to this project, and is a very welcome 'problem' in that it reflects complexity and interconnectedness of the issues being addressed. Flexibility from the donor to refine the outcomes based on new knowledge generated and on the input of the Advisory Group was critical. In future projects a data visualizer or systems designer could helpfully be employed from the outset as part of the formative evaluation to map the connections and knowledge generation as it happen

## 9. Conclusion

For Axis Ballymun, Global Action Plan and the Rediscovery Centre, the partnership has allowed each organisation to deepen its engagement with the community, collaborate on innovative workshops and strengthen their collective climate and creative leadership in Ballymun.

Each partner brings unique expertise, making the initiative a showcase for multi-sector cooperation and capacity building.

Among the lessons learned, that are likely to be repeated by project partners, and hopefully of benefit to others who are also working to enable climate engagement through creative practices are:

- Meet the community where they are at, literally and figuratively. The community needs to lead the conversation. To do this well requires both flexibility and regular checks in on the clarity and direction of the work.
- Embed artistic practice from the start of the project, and invest time in communicating with and supporting artists to do their best work.
- Recognize that real change is not linear, but circular. The most compelling stories generated during this project were ones of individuals not merely reconnecting in a new way with their own locality, but connecting with something deep within themselves that they could then share with others.

GAP has capacity and willingness to continue in this vein and will be proactively seeking donor investment to continue.

*“So many people have found their spark or their seeds and they’ve worked on it and formed all these beautiful cross-pollinating relationships that I think needs to continue. I think we’ve only really scratched the surface of the seemingly unlimited potential and talent that’s here” (Jen Harrington)*

## Appendix I - Case Study - Thanks Hun, Ballymun Swap Shop

### **A community story with real heart**

Our Swapshop began because Ballymun lost something important. With no shopping centre and only one charity shop left, people were finding it harder and harder to access affordable clothes. There was a gap, a feeling that something was missing. But instead of waiting for someone else to fix it, a small group of volunteers came together and decided to try something new for the community.

It started with simple hope. We set up tables and rails in the Axis, shared the word through WhatsApp groups, put posters on lampposts and spread the message to friends and neighbours. A DJ played music that lifted the whole room. The kit from Change Clothes made everything look polished, almost like we had been doing this for years. The volunteers were excited, full of ideas and ready to make something happen.

We didn't know what the day would bring. Then people walked in carrying bags of clothes that had been sitting in wardrobes and hot presses for years. Someone said, "It was almost impossible to count the clothes. Bags were being dropped in constantly and the rails were always being topped up." Piece by piece, the room filled with colour, texture and stories. Items went home with new owners. People laughed with strangers. Volunteers worked together like they had always known each other. It felt like something special had arrived in Ballymun.

The next Swapshop brought a Halloween theme. One volunteer said, "The energy was electric. Costumes everywhere and such a buzz." It felt joyful and familiar. People were getting used to it, asking about it, telling others to come along the next time.

By the time the following Swapshops came around, the whole thing had settled into a rhythm. Volunteers said they finally felt confident and knew exactly what they were doing. The model worked. The flow made sense. The community understood what the Swapshop was and what it offered. There was a sense of ownership now, something we had built together.

New energy arrived when students from Trinity Comp joined the volunteer team. They brought ideas, enthusiasm and a different kind of spark that lifted the whole day. It showed how the Swapshop could keep growing and evolving with every event.

When we held the coat swap in Ballymun Library, it was a leap into the unknown. We wondered if people would take to a specialised swap. But the moment the library filled with voices and warm coats changing hands, we knew we didn't have to worry. Someone said the library "was filled with the happy chatter of neighbours swapping stories along with their coats." It was community in its simplest and truest form.

Across every Swapshop, one feeling has stayed the same. People arrive with clothes they no longer need, hoping someone else can use them. Someone else goes home with something that makes their day easier. Volunteers work with pride. And nearly everyone asks the same question as they leave: "When is the next one?"

This project has never just been about clothes. It has been about connection, resourcefulness and a community finding its confidence again, one swap at a time.

Here is a breakdown of the impact so far:

Event	Visitors	Items Swapped	Carbon Savings
1st Swapshop (Summer)	113	304 items	4.6 tonnes CO2e
2nd Swapshop (Halloween)	95	282 items	959 kg CO2e
3rd Swapshop (May)	98	288 items	979 kg CO2e
4th Swapshop (September)	127	317 items	1,078 kg CO2e
5th Swapshop (Coat Swap – Library)	50	66 coats	224 kg CO2e

## Participant Voices

*The Swapshops have become more than a place to exchange clothes. They've become a space where people talk, share ideas and feel inspired to do more. Over time, we've heard so many reflections from people who come along, each one showing how much the Swapshop means to them.*

*"When is the next one? These should be on every month. I haven't had to buy clothes in a year because of the Swapshops."*

*"Where can I learn more about upcycling and sustainability? I want to keep this going at home."*

*"I never knew anything about sustainability before this. Now I want to learn how to mend, fix and reuse more."*

*"These events made me realise how much I can do myself. I want to learn more about upcycling and fast fashion."*

*These voices show the real impact of the project. Not just the clothes saved or the carbon reduced, but the spark it lights in people. A feeling that they can do something, learn something new, and take small steps that make a big difference.*

## Appendix II - Investing in Artists and the Importance of an Embedded Artist

### Investing in Bursary Artists, project artists, *in culture of openness*

The investment in bursary artists through the open call process was a crucially important part of the project. From initial artist coffee mornings, to the call out announcement at the 2024 Community Exhibition in Axis and the one-to-one sessions application support with Abi Ighadaro, the process was tailored to encourage applicants to propose work that would have local impact.

Cultivating local “seed” artists who may not have had financial support from an arts body, as was the case with the two bursary artists that were ultimately selected, was a key step for stimulating creative action in Ballymun, about Ballymun, by people who have strong connections to the area.

Supporting the two bursary artists in their creative process, both financially and holistically, resulted in not only high-quality creative outputs, but afforded the artists time and resources for experimentation within their processes, exploration of themes of climate action and identity within their community, reflection on their practices, and a reported increase in their feeling of legitimacy as artists.

*“Over a long, long period this was the first bursary that I ever got and psychologically that changed an awful lot of things for me. It sort of meant yes, there is some recognition now that you are actually a singer-songwriter, and what’s more, we are giving you a bursary as a result of that, and psychologically that meant a huge difference for me, because now I know that I’m good at what I do. I always felt I could do, and I felt I was good at what I did, but now other people are saying ‘yes you are’ so I thought it was great!” (Brendan Shanahan, Bursary Artist)*

### Investing in Project Artists

Investing in artists from the outset created a culture of openness that shaped every stage of Ballymun is Brilliant. First, the project treated artists as collaborators rather than service-providers, which meant building real relational space — through one-to-one sessions, open information meetings, and ongoing artistic support — so artists could refine ideas, adapt methods and feel genuinely held.

Second, the team invested in process, not just outputs: artists were supported to work slowly, listen deeply and respond to what emerged in the community, rather than being pushed toward pre-defined deliverables.

Third, the project recognised local artists as part of the community ecosystem, offering bursaries, flexible application formats, and tailored feedback that boosted confidence and created new creative pathways.

Finally, the culture of openness extended to honesty about challenges: where approaches didn't work, they were openly discussed, and processes were adjusted without blame. This ethos — transparency, flexibility, relational investment — proved essential to the project's trust-building and is a core learning for future initiatives.

A key decision that shaped the success of the project was the commitment to supporting artists not only creatively but structurally. This included encouraging realistic scopes of work, guiding artists to protect their own fees and time, and helping them determine an appropriate balance between workshops, informal engagement and production. This emphasis on sustainable practice had a ripple effect: artists felt respected and empowered, and their projects remained grounded in community needs rather than in pressures to over-deliver. For future initiatives, investing in the wellbeing, clarity and pacing of artists should be seen not as an "extra," but as central to high-quality community outcomes.

## Why did we employ the embedded artist at the outset and directly

The project employed Abi Ighodaro as the embedded project artist from its earliest development phases. This decision was crucial to guide the project team and ensure the project was shaped with artistic integrity, community sensitivity and creative flexibility.

When time came to create the callout for project and bursary artists, having Abi's input and experience as an artist was key to developing the open and supportive callout process that was an important part of choosing the right artists for the community. She helped the team understand the practical realities of socially engaged work: the need for loose structures, relational time, and early trust-building with artists.

Abi encouraged the team to support the artists at each stage of the process, from development to delivery. She hosted one-on-one planning sessions with potential applicants, along with multiple online information and question sessions. The one-on-one sessions allowed applicants to talk through their ideas and get immediate, project-specific feedback and ultimately, all the successful artists engaged in these one-on-one sessions with Abi.

She also suggested a flexible response option- allowing artists to respond to the callout in a way they were comfortable with. We were happy to see that this flexibility was appreciated when we received an audio submission from one creative.

Abi also provided a feedback call to any applicant who requested it, to help with their future applications.

Her expert knowledge and artistic support was noted by both project and bursary artists, as an important part of their project experience. She helped the project artists align their practice with the needs and interests of the project participants, leading to

deeper and more meaningful work being created. She created an artist pack to support each artist, which included background information about the project and the Ballymun community.

Having an artist onboard from the planning phase of a project was crucial for the success of BIB. For organisations wishing to replicate this work, employing an embedded artist at the outset is one of the strongest structural decisions they can make.

## Appendix III - Case Study - Steve O'Toole

Steve O'Toole's journey with Ballymun is Brilliant began with the 2024 BIB exhibition callout. He created a piece of graphic art "*The Moon On His Back*" which was tribute and remembrance to his old friend Pat Tierney. According to Steve, Pat was 'A Poet, Storyteller, Playwright, Street Bard, Ballad Singer, Winner of the European City of Culture Award 1991, founder of Seven Towers Publishing and Ceant Towers Rhyming Club. He was a Community Activist, a member of Save Santry Woods and an immensely proud Ballymun Resident.'



Steve's piece was featured in the 2024 exhibition, and he gave a short speech about his work at the launch event in November 2024.



At the launch night, Steve met Adam Mohamed, one of the newly announced BIB artists. He also arranged a future meeting with Ballymun poet Dee Keating after being impressed by her poetry recitation performance that evening. Steve went on to create a curated performance night event called 'The Write Stuff' featuring different poets, writers and musicians in venues around Dublin including Chapters bookstore and The Hendrick Smithfield. Adam, Dee, Ballymun singer Eddie Winston and another Ballymun poet who goes by the name The Vagabond Queen have all been part of 'The Write Stuff' performance evenings.

When BIB project artist Adam Mohamed was developing his book '*A Ballymun Blend*' he asked Steve to contribute, having heard his poetry about Pat Tierney. Steve's poem 'Winter, Spring, Summer & The Fall - Remembering Ballymun's Bard Pat Tierney' is featured in the sold out '*A Ballymun Blend*'. At the launch of the book, Steve performed this poem and spoke further about Pat Tierney's role as a poet and community worker in Ballymun before his death in 1996.

Another role model, and friend, of Steve's, was the late poet Pat Ingoldsby. Steve became involved in the project to publish a book of Ingoldsby's unpublished poems and photos taken while selling books on Westmoreland Street and other locations in Dublin City Centre. Steve also organised and hosted the book launch event which featured readings and performances from a wide range of artists, singers, designers and friends of Ingoldsby's.

As well as continuing his own written work and hosting The Write Stuff each month, Steve is currently working with Axis Ballymun to create a play based on responses by poets and writers to Pat Tierney's book '*The Moon On My Back*'.

Steve has credited the Ballymun is Brilliant project as a catalyst for the productivity and networking he has found success in this last year, and his is just one story of the impact and profound individual change that has been sparked by the project.

## Appendix IV - Media Links

Month	Media Outlet
2024	
15th March	2FM
19 March	<a href="#">Dublin Gazette</a>
26th September	<a href="#">Dublin People</a>
12th November	Near FM
2025	
10th January	<a href="#">Near FM</a>
19th February	<a href="#">Dublin Gazette</a>
11th March	<a href="#">Irish Independent</a>
11th July	<a href="#">Near FM</a>
15th July	<a href="#">Dublin Gazette</a>
28th July	<a href="#">Dublin City FM</a>
15th August	<a href="#">Hotpress</a>
1st September	<a href="#">RTE Mooney Goes Wild</a>
14th October	<a href="#">Dublin Gazette</a>
18th October	<a href="#">Dublin City FM</a>
21st October	Near FM
18th November	Raidió na Life