

Field Exchange



Field Exchange 2023-2025

Final Report to Creative Ireland

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme





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1. Executive Summary

Field Exchange (2023–2025) was a multi-year creative climate programme led by farmer and producer Ailbhe Gerrard at Brookfield Farm, Co. Tipperary. Funded primarily through Creative Ireland’s Creative Climate Action programme, the project brought together farmers, artists, scientists, craftspeople and communities to explore how agriculture can adapt to climate and biodiversity challenges through creative, place-based practice.

Building on an earlier pilot in 2022, this iteration deepened the work through an extended Community of Practice with eleven Creative Farming Ambassadors, long-term collaborations with internationally recognised artists, and two major public festivals on a working farm landscape. Technical partnerships with the Irish Agroforestry Forum and the Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland ensured that creative exploration was grounded in credible, transferable agricultural practice.

The programme delivered strong and measurable outcomes. Across 2024 and 2025, more than 650 people attended Field Exchange festivals, with additional deep engagement through workshops, symposiums and Exchange Days. Media coverage expanded significantly, with estimated lifetime views rising from c.43,900 in 2024 to c.100,000 in 2025, and social media reach approaching 150,000 across platforms. Evaluation evidence demonstrates statistically significant increases in participants’ knowledge, confidence and behaviour related to agroforestry, biodiversity action and climate-friendly farming, alongside a 22% increase in social, ecological and democratic engagement behaviours.

A defining achievement was the establishment of a durable Community of Practice. Creative Farming Ambassadors and participants remain connected beyond the funded period, sharing knowledge, visiting each other’s farms and collaborating on new initiatives. Evaluation findings highlight reduced isolation, increased confidence to act, and widespread agreement that creativity plays a powerful role in ecological repair and climate action.

Field Exchange also delivered broader public value. It brought world-class art, music and critical dialogue to a rural Midlands context, addressing cultural access gaps while reframing farming as a cultural, ecological and social practice. The project engaged strongly with women and rural families, amplified female leadership in agriculture and climate discourse, and demonstrated how creative approaches can unlock difficult conversations around land use, policy and change.

The programme has now reached proof-of-concept stage. Evidence shows that combining farming practice, creative facilitation and community gathering can support real behaviour change, knowledge transfer and resilience. The final phase includes the production of a major illustrated book (publication 2026) to preserve learning and support wider dissemination.

The evaluation concludes that Field Exchange offers a replicable model for rural climate action. With longer-term investment, it could be adapted to other farms, catchments and regions—across livestock, tillage, upland and mixed systems—supporting national objectives in climate action, biodiversity, rural development and cultural policy.

2. Introduction/background

This new iteration of Field Exchange deepens exchanges, advancing the conversation around climate change and agriculture through site-specific artworks and extended exchanges in the field.

Building on the success of previous Exchanges, we developed a series of creative farming interventions with two technical partners - the Irish Agroforestry Forum Ireland and the Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland - and selected Creative Farm Ambassadors. Presenting at two major festival gatherings, with artists, writers, musicians, craftspeople and farmers. Field Exchange is presented on Brookfield Farm, alongside the creative engagement of the farming community.

In addition, a book celebrating the work of Ailbhe Gerrard, Brookfield Farm and Field Exchange has been commissioned and is due for publication in 2026.

Field Exchange, led by Ailbhe Gerrard, worked to deliver an exciting two-year project with a meaningful impact on biodiversity and the farming community.



Ailbhe Gerrard and Field Exchange Festival participants in the woods on Brookfield Farm 2025 (Image Kerry Kissane)

3. Outline of team and key participants

Production Team

Ailbhe Gerrard - Brookfield Farm - Creative Director and Production
Eileen Flanagan - Co-production
Caroline Normington - Administration and Accounts
Davie Philip - Cultivate - Facilitation and Engagement
Sean Fletcher - Site Manager
Martha Kearns - StoryLab - Public Relations
Eilish Bul-Godley - Social Media
Ruth Carroll - Art Production
Tara McGivern - Evaluation (2025)
Naomi Murphy - Connect the Dots - Evaluation (2024)
Brendan Keogh - Videography
Emma Burke-Kennedy - Photography (2024)
Kerry Kissane - Photography (2025)
Siobhan Prendergast - Dingle Publishing - Book Production and Printing

Technical Partners

Ken Curran - Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland
Jim McAdam - Irish Agroforestry Forum
Maureen Kilgore - Irish Agroforestry Forum

Creative Farming Ambassadors

Maurice Deasy
Derry O Donnell
Katie Gleeson
Brendan Guinan
Janine Kennedy
Sean Fletcher
Kirsten Bayly-Parker
Margaret Edgill
Tom Starr
Declan Houlihan
Niall and Inez Heenan

Field Exchange

We're Looking For
**CREATIVE FARMING
 AMBASSADORS**

ARE YOU A FARMER?
 INTERESTED IN WORKING MORE
 SUSTAINABLY ON YOUR FARM?
 READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN
 YOUR COMMUNITY?

Join us as we facilitate creative
 exchange on topics around
 regenerative agriculture

Get in touch
 Ailbhe Gerrard
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Creative
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Clár Éire Ildánach
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 Programme
 2017-2022



Rialtas na hÉireann
 Government of Ireland



Tionscadal Éireann
 Project Ireland
 2040

Poster from 2023 looking for Creative Farming Ambassadors

Creative Practitioners/Artists



Ailbhe Gerrard with Dan Harvey, Michael J Ford, Ken Curran (DSWAI) and Gerardine Wisdom at the 2025 Field Exchange Festival (Image OSM Photography)

Dan Harvey and Heather Ackroyd - Artists. Ackroyd and Harvey contributed two artworks to the Field Exchange Project. In 2024 they took portrait photographs of the Creative Farming Ambassadors and turned two of those, and a study of an Oak Tree in winter, into large Photographic Photosynthesis images using grass as a medium. These living images were shown during the 2024 Field Exchange Festival. In 2025, in partnership with Limerick Civic Trust, they planted a circle of 7 Oak Trees on King's Island in Limerick City, after Beuys' Acorns.



Dan Harvey and Heather Ackroyd at the opening of their Photosynthesis Portraits at the Field Exchange Festival 2024 (Image Ailbhe Gerrard)

Esther Gerrard - Elements of Action, Designer. Esther designed two stone and moss installations on Brookfield Farm in close conjunction with Ken Curran of the Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland and the Creative Farming Ambassadors who constructed the benches during Field Exchange workshop days. In 2024 Esther's design for a water collecting stone bench, *Moss Station*, was built. In 2025 *Horseshoe Bench With 180 Degree View* was designed and built, further expanding the dry stone building skills of the Creative Farming Ambassadors.



Esther Gerrard (Elements of Action) and Ken Curran (DSWAI) Horseshoe Bench with 180 Degree View 2025 (Image OSM Photography)

Michael J Ford and Philip Dodd - Company of Trees - Musical Directors and Performers.

In 2024 the Company of Trees was devised for performance at the Field Exchange Festival. They curated a collection of music and spoken word exploring our relationship to trees and the natural world. Performances featuring a string quartet alongside actors and singers and projected visuals by Brendan Keogh. In 2025 the work was refined and performed at the 2025 Festival.



The Company of Trees performance at the Field EXchange Festival 2025 (Image Kerry Kissane)

Gerardine Wisdom - Artist. In 2025, Gerardine wove a life-sized *Dexter Bull* sculpture from rushes harvested on the shores of Lough Derg. The bull is in the herd of Creative Farming Ambassador Kirsten Bayly-Parker and the piece debuted at the Field Exchange Festival along with a selection of Gerardine's historical work.



Gerardine Wisdom and Kirsten Bayly-Parker with the Dexter Bull rushwork sculpture 2025
(Image Kerry Kissane)

4. Outputs and Outcomes

The actual outputs and outcomes from the Field Exchange Project are largely in line with those envisioned in the original application with only minor adjustments needing to be made in light of technical issues or availability of personnel. The quality of the delivery is largely due to lessons learned from the previous iteration of Field Exchange in 2022 and the quality and experience of the project management team.

Table 4.1 - Outputs

Original SLA	
Artists and partners meet up for project start on Brookfield Farm	The project was initiated in 2023 when all the relevant partners met
An open call will be made to appoint creative farming ambassadors	11 Creative Farming Ambassadors were selected
Project Launch - Tree planting with Irish Agroforestry Forum (IAF)	The original plan was to plant trees from the Beuys' Acorns, but they could not be imported due to disease restrictions. The launch took place in late 2023.
IAF will start forest garden design and livestock grazing in woodlands, and community engagement activities will be planned.	The Forest Garden Design was completed but not implemented. Livestock grazing in the woods was paused following ecology and continuous cover forestry learnings.
Creative Farming Ambassador programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Farmer engagement in eco-literacy ○ Agroforestry workshops to design food forest ○ Workshops on Silvopasture ○ Dry Stone wall 	The complete list of Exchange Days is listed in Appendix 1
Two Major Gatherings/Festival on Brookfield Farm in 2024 and 2025	The Field Exchange Festivals took place on August 31st - September 1st 2024 and 5th-7th September 2025, both on Brookfield Farm.
Site-Specific Installations and engagements - such as Ackroyd and Harvey, Uta Kögelsberger, Esther Gerrard (Elements of Action), Gerardine Williams Wisdom	Site specific engagements took place with Ackroyd and Harvey, Esther Gerrard (Elements of Action) and Gerardine Wisdom.

Short term Interventions with creative partners - such as The Company of Trees, Lisa Fingleton.	The Company of Trees devised and performed at both festivals in 2024 and 2025. Artist Hazel Hurley drew graphic art representations of the Festival in 2025
Community engagement activities throughout the festival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workshops ○ dry stone walls, ○ food forest demonstration ○ projects on agroforestry, (crops and livestock) ○ community engagement activities ○ artists' talks and exchanges ○ experts' talks and exchanges ○ craft demonstrations ○ local food production. 	See www.brookfield.farm/field-exchange-festival/ for details of the workshops, demonstrations and talks.
2024 SLA Extension	
Attendance and presentation at a one-day Creative Climate Action conference at the Aviva Stadium, Dublin on 21 October 2024	This event was attended by Ailbhe and Farming Ambassador Derry O'Donnell
Participate in the programme of events, training and networking opportunities provided by the Creative Ireland Programme	This event was attended by Ailbhe and Farming Ambassador Derry O'Donnell
2025 SLA Extension	
Collate, design and publish a book that represents the activities and learnings of the Field Exchange project.	This is in progress with 40,000 words and 200 images sent to the publisher, Dingle Publishing, in late 2025. The book is scheduled for publication in mid-2026.

Table 4.2 - Outcomes

Original SLA	
Engagement with site-specific artworks	In 2024, 356 people engaged with the Ackroyd and Harvey grass portraits and attended Company of Trees performances. In 2025, 298 people interacted with Gerardine Wisdom's <i>Dexter Bull</i> sculpture and 263

	attended Company of Trees performances
Agricultural and joyful creative gatherings to engage the public	Feedback from the festival attendees was very positive, for example: 'Uplifting and grounding at once!' 'Great community event, educational and fun.'
An active community - farmers and local people and interested public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Countering the biodiversity crisis by enabling participants to better understand eco-systems and climate change o Equipped with the tools to implement more sustainable agricultural practices. 	Many attendees reported that the exchanges fostered a sense of belonging and collaboration. Many of the Farming Ambassadors said that they enjoyed seeing each other and 'reconnecting' at each Field Exchange. As one participant noted, the Exchanges ' <i>highlighted the power of collective action in sustainable farming.</i> '
Ambassador programme outputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Applying Silvopasture as a practice on their own farms and Agroforestry. o Farmers have a greater appreciation of the value of trees o Plant trees into cropland o Technical knowledge of integrating Dry Stone Wall into regenerative farming practices 	Many participants started implementing agroforestry methods on their farms, planting native trees and creating ecological zones. Many participants had also started to use old stones to build dry-stone walls on their farms. Confidence in sustainable farming practices increased significantly, with one attendee remarking, ' <i>I feel more confident mapping out and planning agroforestry for my farm.</i> '
Participants and Farming Ambassadors consider and integrate climate-friendly agricultural practices.	Confidence in skill levels to take climate action at home, on the farm/garden and in the local community all rose, with the greatest increase being regarding the farm/garden.
Participants take action to improve biodiversity in their life and work	Project evaluation revealed attendees' concrete plans to apply their learning, showcasing a readiness to act: <i>'I plan to create a rest area on my farm using native stone and woodland diversity.'</i>

5. Public Engagement Outcomes

In-Person Attendance Figures

The Field Exchange Festivals in 2024 and 2025 were where members of the public were invited to experience the work of the Field Exchange project, engage with the partners and Creative

Farming Ambassadors and experience the artworks. We aimed for deep engagement over the two years with a smaller group of participants.

The proposed audience for engagement includes those already interested in regenerative/ nature friendly/ climate agricultural practices; and those not informed. These include: local residents, farmers and agri-related people practising locally and nationally, families and the generally interested public.

The Field Exchange Festival in **2024** took place over 2 days - Saturday August 31st and Sunday September 1st - with similar offerings on both days.

CELT held various workshops in traditional crafts, local food and drinks were served and local craftspeople sold their wares. There was a comprehensive series of talks and farm walks Compatible organisations publicised their work and the Technical Partners showcased their work on Brookfield Farm. Guest speakers included Sadhbh O'Neill, Ruth Hegarty and Ella Mc Sweeney. Both days ended with a performance by Company of Trees. Ackroyd and Harvey launched and showed their photosynthesis portrait artworks.

There was also a Celebration Dinner on Saturday Night showcasing local food and drinks.



Festival Attendees 2024 (Image Emma Burke Kennedy)

Table 5.1 - 2024 Field Exchange Festival Attendance Figures:

	Purchased Tickets	Guests, speakers, participants, staff, volunteers etc.	Total Attendees
Saturday 31st August	126	78	204
Sunday 1st September	88	64	152
Celebration Dinner	51	21	72

The festival in **2025** had a different format. Feedback from the 2024 festival indicated that there was a need for the talks and discussions to be accessible to those that work in relevant areas so the event was divided into three parts.

**Field Exchange Symposium - Fields of Possibility
Creative Farming and Local Food in a Changing Climate
Friday 5th September**

This one-day symposium opened the festival, bringing together farmers, artists, researchers, community food advocates, and policymakers to explore farming as a creative, cultural, and ecological act.

It highlighted the potential of agroecological practices, particularly agroforestry, and explored how art and craft—including dry stone walling and reed and moss-based works—can be meaningfully integrated into farm life. The event also shared inspiring stories from local food initiatives working to build thriving, resilient rural communities. Highlights include a keynote speech by Anya Murray and a panel discussion hosted by Trish Taylor-Thompson. The day concluded with a moving performance of Company of Trees.



Symposium participants at the Moss Station 2025 (Image Kerry Kissane)

**Field Exchange Festival - Brookfield Farm
Saturday 6th September 2025**

This year's festival had a largely similar format to 2024 with talks, walks, craft and food stalls, CELT craft workshops and demonstrations from the technical partners. Gerardine Wisdom displayed her specially commissioned artwork Dexter Bull along with several of her previous works. Poets from the Hive Poetry Journal launched their second edition and the Company of Trees was performed to great acclaim.



Ailbhe Gerrard opening the Field Exchange Festival 2025 (Image Kerry Kissane)

**Celebration Lunch with the Tipperary Food Producers' Network
Sunday 7th September 2025**

Tipperary Food Producers' Network teamed up with celebrity chef Valentine Warner and Field Exchange to create a menu from Tipperary food to showcase the quality produce available from the county.



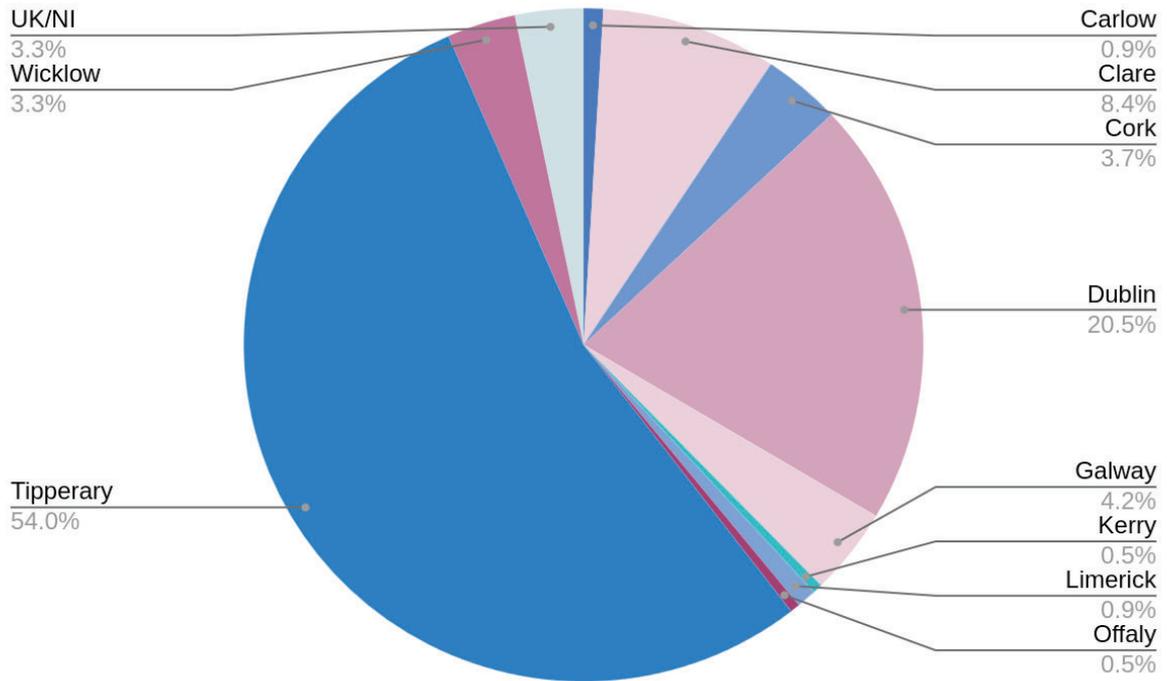
Chef Valentine Warner at the Celebration Lunch 2025 (Image OSM Photography)

Table 5.2 - 2025 Field Exchange Festival Attendance Figures:

	Purchased Tickets	Guests, speakers, participants, staff, volunteers etc.	Total Attendees
Friday 5th September	14	28	42
Saturday 6th September	139	82	221
Sunday 7th September	-	35	35

Attendees at the festival both years mostly came from the surrounding counties - Tipperary, Galway and Clare - and from Dublin.

Graph 5.1 - 2024/5 Field Exchange Festival - Attendance by Home Location



Media Coverage

StoryLab compiled media coverage for the Field Exchange events and the figures are summarised below.

Table 5.3 - Media Coverage

Item	2024	2025
Pieces of Coverage Total number of online, offline and social clips in this book	21	17
Estimated Views Prediction of lifetime views of coverage, based on audience reach & engagement rate on social media platforms	43,900	100,000
Audience Combined total of publication-wide audience figures for all outlets featuring coverage	42,200,000	5,660,000
Engagements Combined total of likes, comments and shares on social media platforms	31	107
Avg. Domain Authority A 0-100 measure of the authority of the site coverage appears on.	56	47

[Media Coverage Book for 2024](#)

[Media Coverage Book for 2025](#)

Social Media Metrics

Elish Bul-Godley developed the social media communication strategy on Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn (2025 only) to promote the project and encourage people to purchase festival tickets. (Aggregated analytics from X.com posts are not available as they are gated by a paywall.)

Facebook

Facebook ads were purchased from Meta which proved effective in driving engagement.

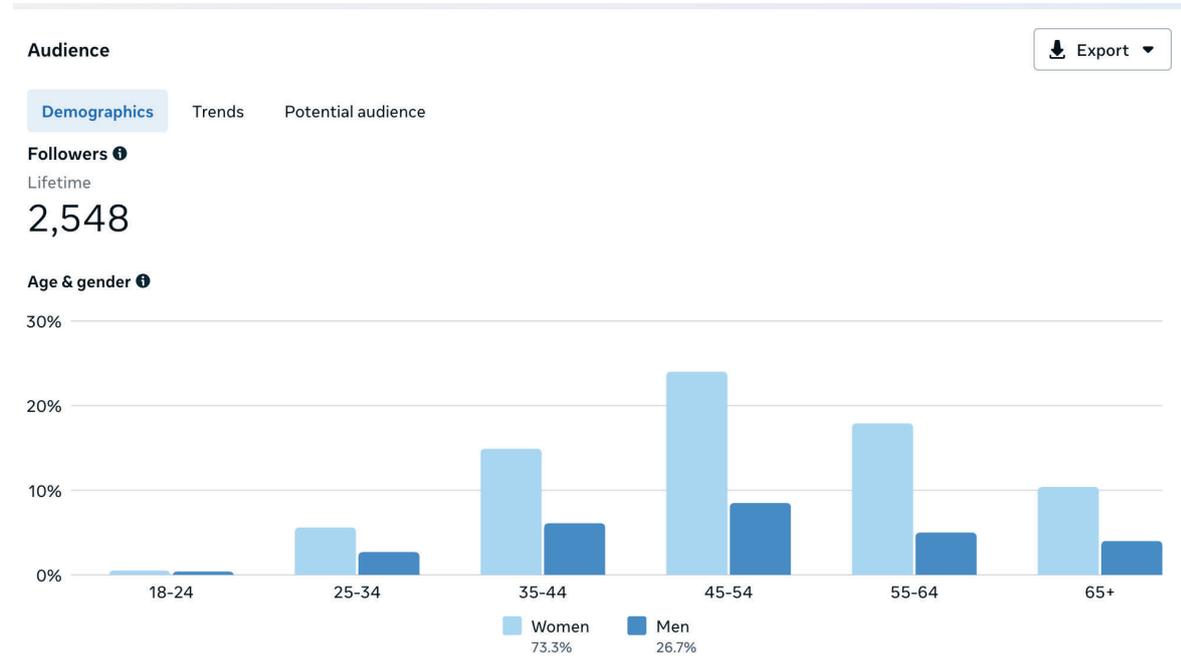
Table 5.4 - Facebook Metrics

Metric	2024	2025	Total
Reach	57,367	42,101	99,468
Views	Data not available	272,600	272,600
Content Interactions	1,300	992	2,292
Link Clicks	3,800	2,400	6,200
New Follows (campaign period)	124	80	204
Total Followers	2,405	2,548	-

Due to algorithmic changes within Meta, smaller audiences were reached despite a longer ad run and increased budget.

The demographics of facebook followers were similar over the two years and the breakdown shows significantly more women were followers than men.

Graph 5.2 - Facebook Followers' Demographics



Instagram

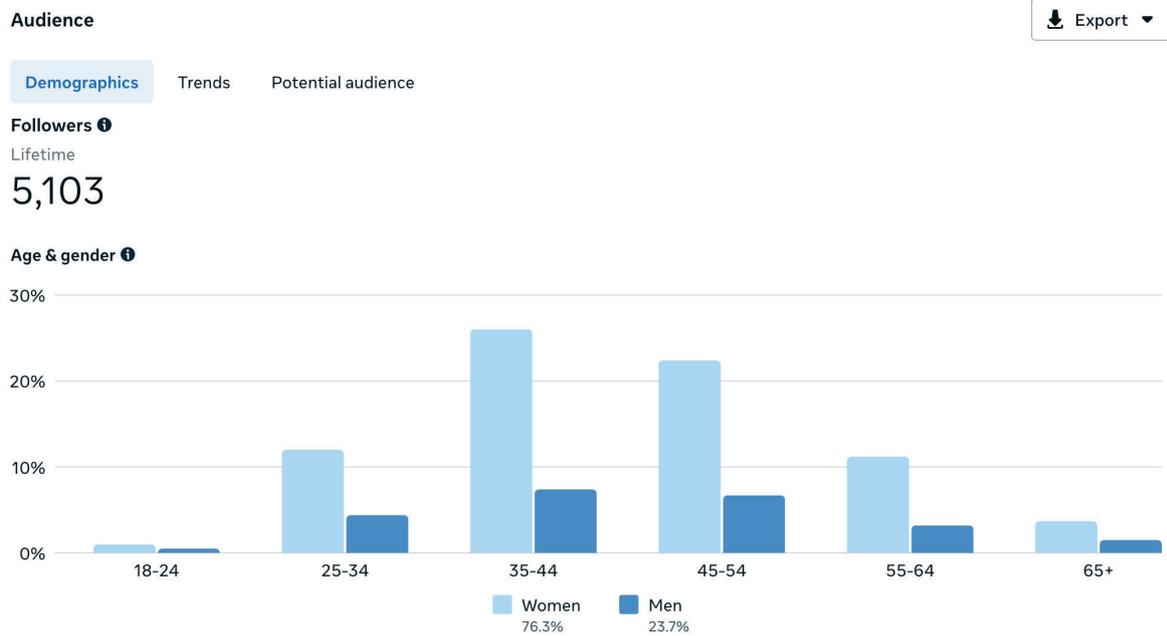
Engagement on Instagram fell slightly between 2024 and 2025, due to algorithmic changes within Meta.

Table 5.5 - Instagram Metrics

Metric	2024	2025	Total
Reach	25,338	20,500	45,838
Views	115,777	106,100	221,877
Content Interactions	2,400	2,000	4,400
Link Clicks	567	75	642
New Follows (campaign period)	372	329	701
Total Followers	4,517	5,103	-

The demographics of Instagram followers also showed a similar proportion of men to women as with Facebook but a younger age profile.

Graph 5.3 - Instagram Followers' Demographics



LinkedIn

Posting LinkedIn began for the first time in Summer 2025 when a company Page for the Brookfield Farm brand was created. No advertising spend was invested in this channel so all metrics are from organic posts.

Table 5.6 - LinkedIn Metrics

Metric	2025
Impressions	1,902
Reactions	108
Comments	6
Reposts	4

6. A Summary of the Project Evaluation

Evaluation of the project was carried out in 2024 by Naomi Murphy of Connect the Dots and in 2025, the work was continued by Tara McGivern who compiled the overall project evaluation report.

The Field Project evaluation data shows strong achievements across all the goals of the project:

- The sentiments' graph shows that, while participants are still worried and frustrated, they are now inspired and connected as well. Inspired people drive change, and people who work together as a group can achieve much, much more - *'highlighting the power of collective action in sustainable farming.'*
- The surveys and interviews show the new practices that the participants have been engaging with because of the project; dry wall construction and agroforestry were two that were mentioned a lot. The knowledge results from the survey supports that as well – knowledge of those two practices has grown from 'basic' to 'good'. And the surveys show that, not only are the participants engaging in 22% more social, democratic and ecologically positive behaviours, they are also now more likely to teach their peers about those practices as well. Confidence in their abilities has also grown - There were 'somewhat confident' individuals in 2024 but are now 'Confident' in 2025 because of the Field Exchange project.
- Establishing a Community of Practice (CoP) was a core objective of the project and that is best demonstrated by the fact that the participants remain in touch, are sharing updates on their practices, and are attending events together. The sentiments from the case studies of 'not feeling as alone', wanting to stay in touch and visit each other's farms, and 'connecting with people who have similar goals' are key indicators here. Brookfield Farm itself has seen a more prominent profile since the project started and additional networking strands resulting from that; speaking opportunities, more farm visits, agroecological partnerships and Failte Ireland/ Tipperary Tourism conversations.
- As a Creative Ireland project, it is important for the project to demonstrate the connection between creativity and climate action. All of the case study interviews support this, with participants talking about 'broadened perspectives' and 'opening up conversations'. The surveys also support this, with the majority of respondents agreeing/completely agreeing that 'Creativity has a Powerful Role to play in Ecological Repair'.

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

A file of suitable images have been provided directly to Creative Ireland.

8. Any relevant findings

The Community of Practice has been a stand-out feature of this project. The connections and mutual support between the Creative Farming Ambassadors continues organically beyond the project and has resulted in them collaborating on other projects, feeling much more optimistic about an uncertain future and the power of collective action going forward. (See the Field Exchange Evaluation Report for more details.)

Field Exchange strongly appealed to rural women, evidenced by social media metrics and attendance data. Prominent female voices in the creative and agriculture sphere, for example Anja Murray, Trish Taylor-Thompson, Sadhbh O'Neill, Ruth Hegarty, Ella McSweeney and Ailbhe Gerrard, featured heavily and gave voice to women's experiences and challenges in rural Ireland.

Field Exchange brought world-class art, music and intellectual experiences to the Irish Midlands - an underserved rural population - attempting to address this rural/urban cultural divide.

Rural life can be difficult - farmers have burdensome demands on their time and energy which can leave little room for connections and creativity. Remuneration for the Creative Farming Ambassadors to attend the exchanges encouraged regular attendance and full engagement with the programme.

Ailbhe assembled a competent project team and a high-calibre, varied group of artists and creative practitioners across the visual arts, craft, design, music and performance. The selected Creative Farming Ambassadors represented a broad range of skills and backgrounds. The combination of these people together made for deep exploration and well-organised, well received events.

Creativity is a catalyst to help change minds - opening minds and envisioning a more positive future.

9. Conclusion

Field Exchange met or exceeded all of the Creative Ireland outputs and outcomes. The programme ran over several years and involved hundreds of people. It combined farming, art, climate science, facilitation, evaluation and public engagement on a working farm.

When the funded phases ended, Brookfield remained a working farm with livestock, crops, but became more clearly a testing ground: a place where ideas about food systems, ecological repair and rural cultural life could be trialled against soil, business realities, and the limits of time.

What We Learned from Others

Farmers

Farmers brought practical concerns about viability, policy and weather alongside long memories about land and family. Evaluations showed measurable gains: knowledge in agroforestry and dry stone walling shifted from “basic” to “good”; confidence rose from “somewhat confident” in 2024 to “confident” in 2025; and participants increased their ecological, democratic and social behaviours by 22% over the period. Several ambassadors began implementing agroforestry or dry stone practices on their own farms, which moved the work beyond demonstration.

Experts

Technical partners translated climate, water and soil processes into practical farm decisions. Hydrology, grazing design and tree placement were discussed in the barn and in the field rather than at a distance. This reduced the gap between climate targets and daily farming decisions and was noted in evaluation interviews as a factor increasing confidence to act.

Artists

Artists changed how people looked and how they spoke about change. Their work made complex topics discussable and kept attention on detail. Evaluators found that nearly all participants agreed that creativity has a role in ecological repair and climate action by the end of the project. This matters because it reframed climate adaptation from technical compliance to cultural work.

Community of Practice

One aim of the project was to see whether a rural community of practice would form. Evaluators concluded that it did, and that it persists beyond the project. Ambassadors keep in touch, share resources, attend events and visit farms. Interviews repeatedly described feeling less isolated and more able to act. This outcome is rare and significant in rural settings where individualism and isolation can hinder adaptation.

Recognition and Public Value

Recognition came through coverage, speaking invitations and awards.

Media coverage reached an estimated **43,900 views in 2024** and **100,000 views in 2025**, with a total publication audience in the millions. Social media reached nearly **100,000 people on Facebook** and **45,000 on Instagram** across the programme period, with high engagement among rural women and a younger cohort online.

Public agencies supported the work - Creative Ireland, Failte Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, the Arts Council and Tipperary Food Producers. Funding matters, but endorsement matters too. It legitimises experimental work that might otherwise be dismissed as peripheral to “real” farming.

Legacy and Diffusion

Field Exchange demonstrated that rural climate action benefits from practical gatherings, creativity, peer learning and time. The evaluation suggests that confidence, knowledge and behaviour can shift in that environment. The concept has begun to diffuse beyond Brookfield - taken up by other organisations exploring farming as cultural, ecological and creative work.

A final point concerns continuity and scale. Field Exchange has now demonstrated proof of concept. The evaluations confirm outcomes in knowledge, confidence, behaviour, biodiversity actions and community of practice. The model is ready to run again, and to expand to other farms and regions. For that to happen, long-term funding is required. Short funding cycles are useful for pilots; they are less suited to climate adaptation, ecological recovery and cultural change, all of which operate on longer timelines.

From a policy perspective, if Ireland intends to build rural cultural and climate capacity, it will need to treat this kind of work as infrastructure rather than as a sequence of short-term projects. Investment in people, process and place is as important as investment in technology. The evaluation evidence indicates that cultural and agroecological approaches can support behaviour change, knowledge transfer and community resilience - all of which feature in national climate, biodiversity and rural development strategies, but are difficult to deliver through technical measures alone.

Geographically, the model is not unique to Brookfield. It can be adapted to different farming systems and landscapes - livestock systems, catchments, horticultural clusters, mixed farms, uplands and lowlands - and could operate at county or regional levels through networks of host farms. The combination of production agriculture, community engagement and cultural practice has relevance wherever climate and land-use questions are pressing, which is to say almost everywhere.

Praise for Field Exchange from participants

‘The dry-stone walling demonstration opened my eyes to combining functionality with natural beauty.’

‘Agroforestry as a holistic approach has transformed how I view farm planning.’

‘The Company of Trees was a revelation. The selection of music and words was exceptional; the delivery was moving and charming. This was the best hour I spent in a field in a long time.’

‘Heartened to meet so many like-minded individuals who care deeply about sustainability.’

‘I plan to create a rest area on my farm using native stone and woodland diversity.’

‘Integrating agroforestry into my farm layout is now a priority.’

‘I’m inspired to collaborate with local farmers to establish a community food network.’

‘This was our first time at the Field Exchange, and we were delighted to discover it was exactly what I hoped for - a wonderful combination of agriculture and the arts focused on making change for a positive future for people and nature.’

‘Uplifting and grounding at once!’

Appendix 1 - Exchange Days

Exchange Days took place at Brookfield Farm with 11 selected Farming Ambassadors and the Artists (Ackroyd and Harvey, Gerardine Wisdom), Designers (Esther Gerrard - Elements of Action) Technical Partners (Irish Agroforestry Association, Irish Dry Stone Wall Association). Facilitated by Ailbhe Gerrard (Brookfield Farm) and Davie Philip (Cultivate).

Tuesday April 16th 2024 - Welcome to Field Exchange!

Introductions, community wellbeing and resilience, Community of Practice, Irish Agroforestry - context of trees and climate, artist engagement - photo portraits of the farming ambassadors.

Tuesday May 14th 2024 - Agricultural Responses to the Ecological Crisis

Agroforestry solutions - woodland grazing, quadrat marking and initial surveys with ecologist, artist engagement, ecological limits.

Tuesday 11th June 2024 - Creative Imagination for Problem Solving

Creative climate resilience on the farm, benefits of narrative and storytelling, developing narratives using the Story Wheel, use of dry stone Walls and Moss - design concept, theory & ecological benefits, co-design of stone and moss installation.

Tuesday 24th July 2024 - Biodiversity, Moss and Dry Stone Walls Workshop

Dry stone wall building skills, building stone and moss bench with water catcher, further developing Story Wheel narratives.

Tuesday 1st October 2024 - Review and Next Steps

Review and feedback on the 2024 programme, plans and desires for 2025, development of the Community of Practice, creativity in action - Ambassador's farm visit.

Tuesday 10th June 2025 - Community of Practice, Creativity, Connection & Co-Design

Exercises for creativity, leadership and messaging. Stakeholders mapping for food, farming and climate. Farm Visioning and Agroforestry Design.

Tuesday 8th July 2025 - Farming as if Nature Matters

Water management, hedgerows, emissions & soil. Link with Farming for Nature (new book) Co-Design for dry stone wall installation with Esther. Rushwork workshop with Gerardine.

Tuesday 5th August 2025 - Dry Stone Wall Bench building

Advanced dry stone building techniques with Ken Curran DSWAI.

Friday 5th September 2025 - Field Exchange Symposium

Showcase of the Field Exchange project and in-depth discussions on creativity, agriculture and climate. Keynote speaker - Anya Murray.

Saturday 6th September 2025 - Field Exchange Festival

A fun-filled and educational day for all the family with talks, walks, art, crafts, local food and music.

Sunday 7th September 2025 - Field Exchange Celebration Lunch

Lunch cooked from local Tipperary produce by celebrity chef Valentine Warner in conjunction with the Tipperary Food Producer's network.