

Stakeholder Consultation on the National Hub Strategy

Dingle Hub Submission

1. Employment

In contemplating your submissions under this theme, please consider the following:

1.1 The importance of corporate engagement and remote workers to the hub sector

1.2 Considering the changes in the world of work what might

(a) the employee be looking for and how do hubs fit into that picture

(b) the employer be looking for and how do hubs fit into that picture

By way of background, the [Dingle Hub](http://www.dinglehub.com/)¹, is part of the Connected Hubs Network and its missions is:

“to build a creative, liveable, sustainable and inclusive community, fostering a vibrant and diverse ecosystem of stakeholders to facilitate the creation and maintenance of well-paid, year-round incomes on the Dingle Peninsula.” In addition to the standard functions carried out by most hubs, Dingle Hub has a specific initiative called [Corca Dhuibhne 2030](http://www.corcadhuibhne2030.com)², with the aim of *“creating a more sustainable future for the Dingle Peninsula, both environmentally and economically, and to transition our beautiful peninsula into a low-carbon society.”*

The population of the Dingle Peninsula is 13,000. Approximately 15% of those working on the Peninsula are Farm/Agri related workers (vs 5% nationally). The largest employment category is “Other” (at 26%) and this includes pluriactivity (i.e people having multiple income streams).



Fig. 1 Rural Community Innovation and Transition

¹ <http://www.dinglehub.com/>

² <http://www.corcadhuibhne2030.com>

If the hubs are defined simply as places for people (employees) to work (for employers), we consider that some huge opportunities are being lost for systematically addressing the sustainable development of rural Ireland, in the context of the Government's (and EU's) twin approaches, which are based upon Digitalisation and Climate Change/Sustainability, both of which will have significant impacts on rural Ireland.

Our approach is covered in Figs. 2 and 3.

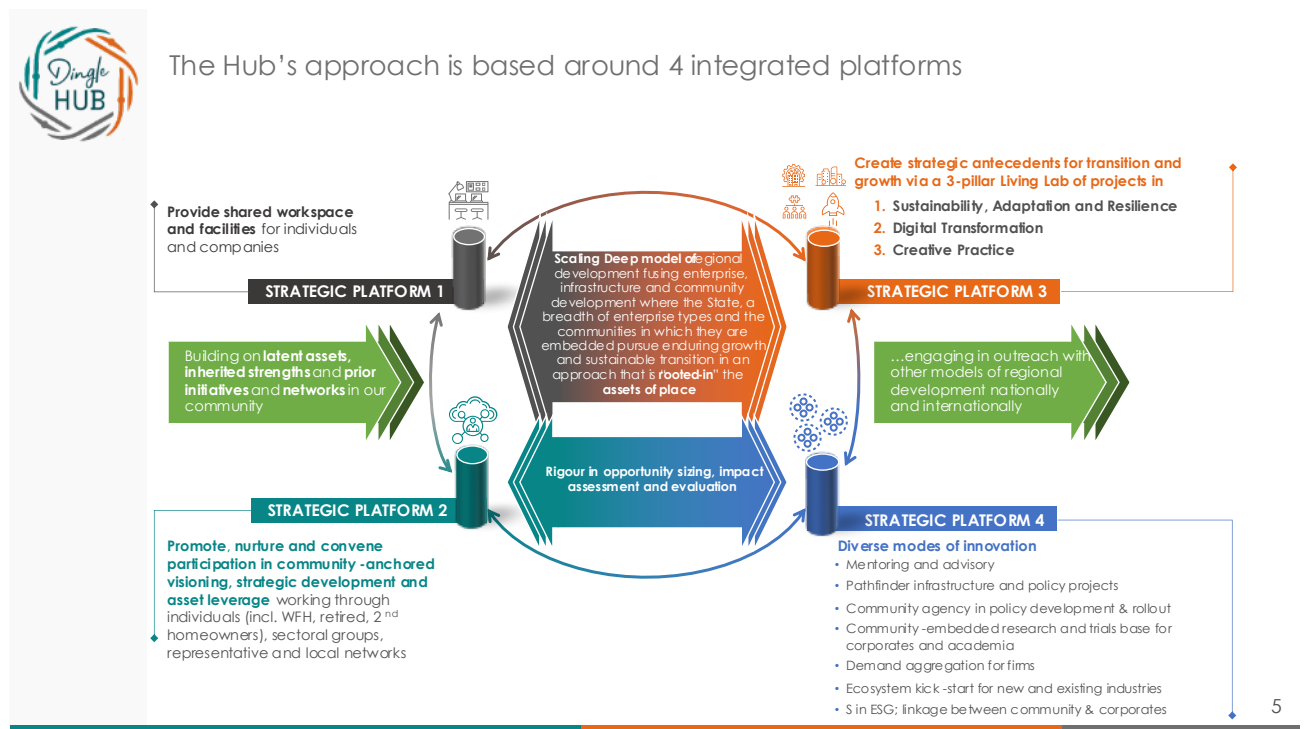


Fig. 2 The Dingle Hub's Approach based on four integrated platforms

The four integrated platforms are:

- (i) Shared Workspace and facilities for individuals and corporates
- (ii) Promote, nurture and convene participation in community-anchored visioning, strategic development and asset leverage working through individuals (incl. Working from Home, Retired, Second Homeowners), sectoral groups, representative and local networks
- (iii) Create strategic antecedents for transition and growth via a 3-pillar Living Lab of projects in (a) Sustainability, Adaptation and Resilience; (b) Digital Transformation and (c) Creative Practice
- (iv) Diverse modes of innovation - mentoring and advisory; pathfinder infrastructure and policy projects; community agency in policy development and rollout; community-embedded research and trials base for corporates and academia; demand aggregation for firms; ecosystem kick-start for new and existing industries; 'Sustainability' in Environment, Sustainability and Governance (ESG); and linkage between community and corporates.



To date, we have delivered outputs across all the strategic platforms in our model. Our outputs span the areas of network building, capacity building, project delivery to new business development and income creation

Strategic platform 1	Strategic platform 2	Strategic platform 3			Strategic platform 4
Shared workspace	Connected (home) working	Pillar 1: Sustainability, Adaptation and Resilience	Pillar 2: Digitalisation	Pillar 3: Creative Industries	Innovation Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimal utilisation of now-expanded space in Cúilín Enhanced facilities including VC, Podcast room in Cúilín Delivery of Údaráis na Gaeltachta shared workspace g-teleic at their offices in Milltown in Dingle Support to other groups developing new hub facilities on the peninsula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coffee road trips Local chapter of Grow Remote Skill training delivery New VC facilities Film Network Creative Networking Platform Provision of workshops Ever-growing networks of relationships with home-based workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy MasterPlan for peninsula Feasibility Study for Anaerobic Digestion Hosted ESB Networks Grid of the Future project on new renewable technologies. Trial participants continue to engage as retrofit and EV Ambassadors. Hosted EU Stornet Solar PV and Battery storage project exploring Virtual Power Plant options Hosted SFI Activating the Energy Citizen project on engaging communities in transition. Resulted in establishment of West Kerry Dairy Farmers' SEC. Hosted Teagasc EU SKIN short supply chain project on Farm 2 Fork, Agri - Tourism. Now morphed into EU Ploutos project Re-designed public transport routes with new alignment between Bus Éireann, NTA and Local Link Kerry. Electric buses. Significant increase in connectivity and passenger #s. Benefits for community and visitors. Project developed and funding being secured for modal shift to Sustainable Mobility. Designated as a national pathfinder project by Dept of Transport Secured designation for peninsula as Kerry Decarbonisation Zone Suite of projects in development across Agriculture, Tourism & Hospitality, Renewables, Biodiversity, Climate Adaptation Establishment of Tourism & Hospitality SEC Development of new links between Farming, Hospitality and Branded Food Producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU Ploutos trialling on-farm sensor-based technology and decision-making on 30 farms Delivered Dingle Adapts series on Facebook and Instagram Live detailing stories of local businesses in transition Planning for Industry 5.0. Structuring digital skills development in schools around sustainable development principles Delivered annual Coder Dojo and Techspace series Participation in TechFéile IoT Farm Ambassador project IoT Water Monitoring Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Agri farming group exploring income diversification options Facilitated annual Principles of Film Workshops leading to establishment of local film networks Facilitated annual Creative Writing Workshops Facilitated annual animation Workshops linking creative skills to increasing knowledge of local transition Unlocked collaboration and funding opportunities and new Businesses start-ups TG4 Creative Company participant Facilitated Creative Business Workshops Facilitated The Great Story Philosophy course Participated with UCC on Engaged Research with Walking Conversation weekends Support to Dingle Festivals across Animation, Film and Literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New businesses and business activity: Solar Beo DC Six Technologies Eask Media Skyscraper.ie Dingle Global Education The BIG Idea Productions.ie Farm to fork supply chain development Digital content production projects Film production, online performances Existing businesses and corporates leveraging hub services Net Feasa My Ireland Box Visualyse ESB Networks

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Fig. 3 The Strategic Platforms - Shared Workspaces; Connected (home); Local Pillars (i) Sustainability, Adaptation, Resilience; (ii) Digitalisation; (iii) Creative Industries; Innovation

We would suggest that the use of the terms 'employee' and 'employer' may limit the aspirations of the hubs to mainly providing desk space for people working for others and may not be perceived as supporting entrepreneurs. The emphasis on filling desk spaces with 'employees' in the short term may work but they are highly likely to fail to leverage the uniqueness and potential of the Hubs, as places that can encourage a sustainable stream of start-ups and other forms of entrepreneurship in a local community context. They also fail to develop the capacity and capability of local communities to become innovative and creative, which will be essential for long term sustainability of these communities. [488]

2. Enterprise

In contemplating your submissions under this theme please consider the following:

- 1.1. How can enterprise hubs attract and retain entrepreneurs, start-ups, micros, etc.
- 1.2. How can enterprise hubs collaborate better.
- 1.3. How can enterprise hubs achieve better sustainability models
- 1.4. What challenges are enterprise hubs currently facing. How can enterprise hubs better align themselves to Government and Agency strategies

From the Dingle Hub experience, the Hub is not just a place that offers desks and office space. It is a community meeting place, not just for entrepreneurs and workers but for all the community and it is through this engagement that people meet and solve problems together. The hub acts as a catalyst, a convenor and a channel for the local community to engage with others (e.g businesses, academia, researchers, State bodies and agencies) and it supports knowledge sharing and the development of innovation capacity in the local community.

We have developed a model which we describe as ‘scaling deep’. It is a process of regional development, fusing enterprise, infrastructure and community development where the State, through its various agencies/bodies, together with a breadth of enterprise types (from micro, domestic enterprise, to high potential start-ups to large corporates) and the communities in which they are embedded, pursue enduring growth and sustainable transition in an approach that is “rooted-in” (i.e drawing from and contributing to) the assets of place.

This approach changes the emphasis from encouraging companies to scale up quickly (usually using external investment or borrowing) and often having to depart the local community in rural Ireland, to encouraging companies to build on the entrepreneurial bricolage of the local community, solving local problems and then scaling more gradually, while maintaining and expanding a strong local presence, which is mutually beneficial to the company and the local community.

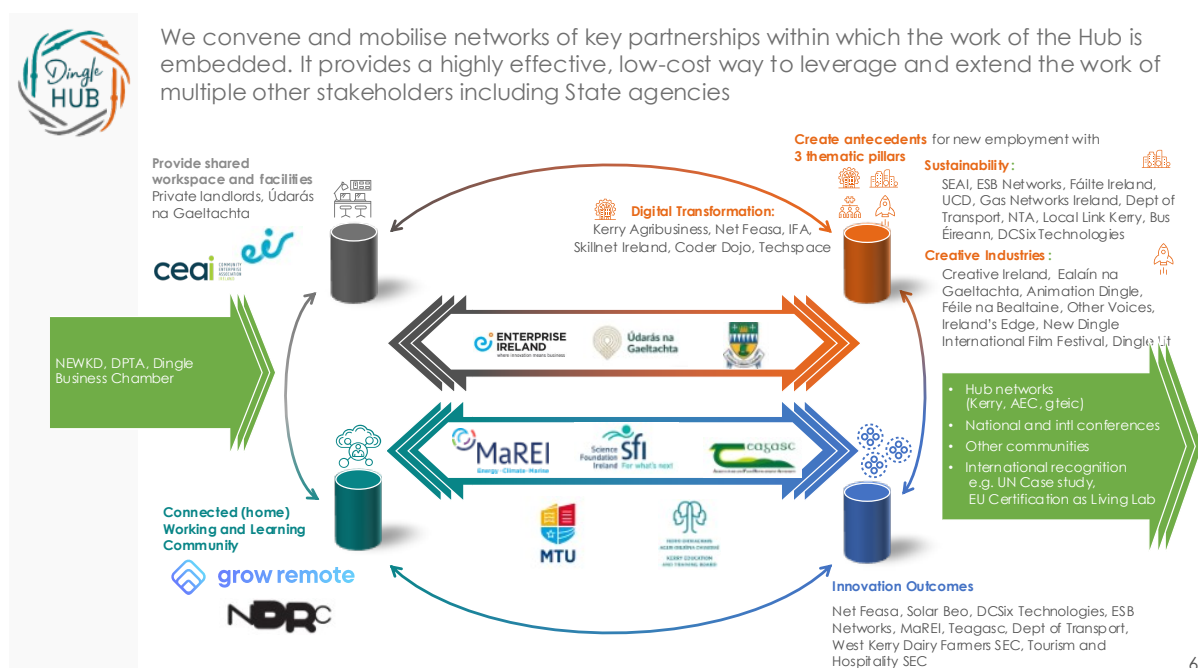


Fig. 4 Convening networks and partnerships

Critical to the sustainability of hubs is to have a suitable funding model that recognises the important role that hubs play (and can play) in local communities, not just in providing desk spaces and facilities but in acting as the trusted link to the local community that is also capable of activating a significant number of local volunteers to engage in community and business related activities that can support the long-term sustainable development of the local community. The hubs can also act as the local applicants for Government and EU funding (of which there is a significant amount but it requires expertise to be successful in applying).

In the absence of any effective sub-county structure, the hubs can fill that gap and add real value, as we have seen working very well in the Dingle Hub. It can also provide services to other State bodies (e.g Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Department of Transport) that require local community engagement).

The long-term funding of hubs is very important so that the State's previous investment is not wasted and the hubs can continue to expand their contribution to the sustainable development of rural Ireland.

In the case of the Dingle Hub (and probably others as well) the model for funding looks like this:



Fig. 5 Dingle Hub's Current Model

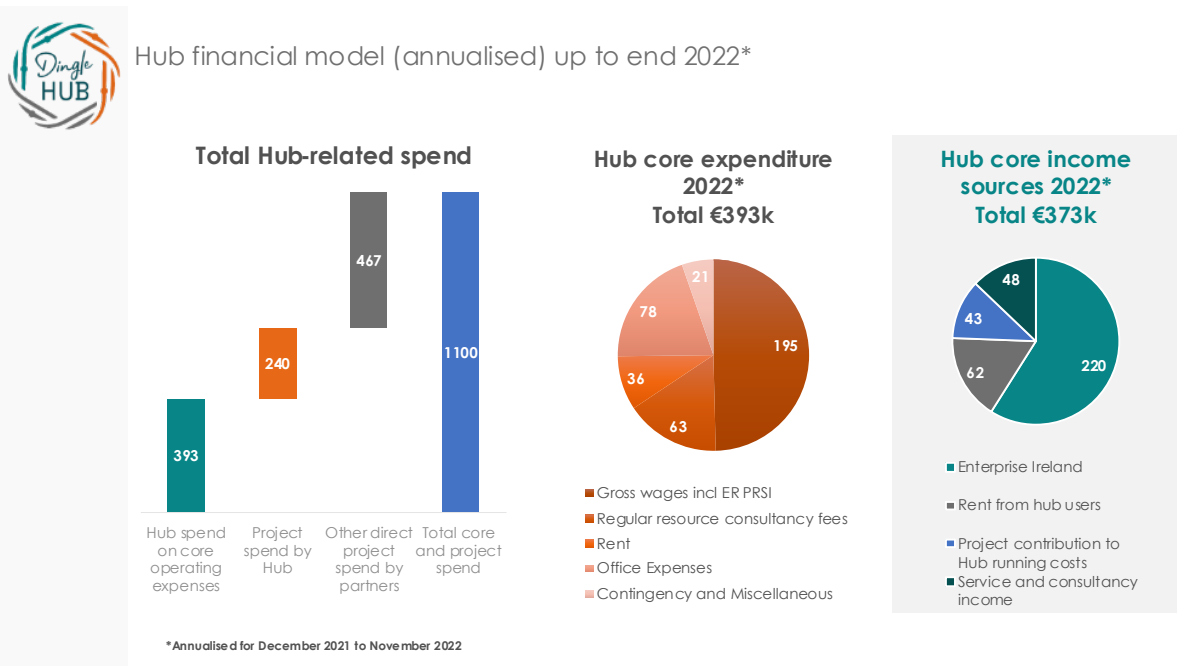


Fig. 6 The Dingle Hub's Financial Model

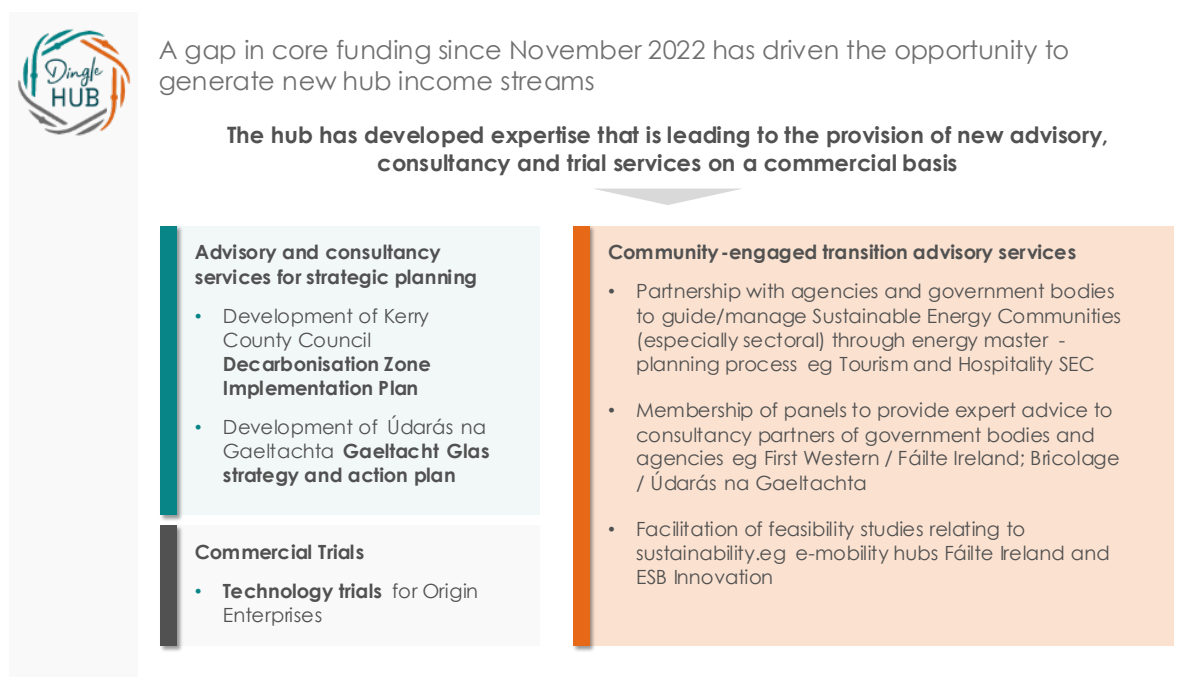


Fig 7 Generating New Income Streams



A different approach is warranted

What is required

- Scale ambition that engages with the interdependence and multi-dimensional nature of the problems and assets at hand
- Right partners at the table
- Long-term funding of appropriate characteristics
- Conditions for the team of the right calibre and commitment
- Explicitly plan-rooted approach with intentional design for scalability and replicability in other contexts

Features

- Community-anchored
- State money as a catalyst
- Access to commercial monies
- Return for the State and the local community
- Private and public good benefits harnessed and harvested

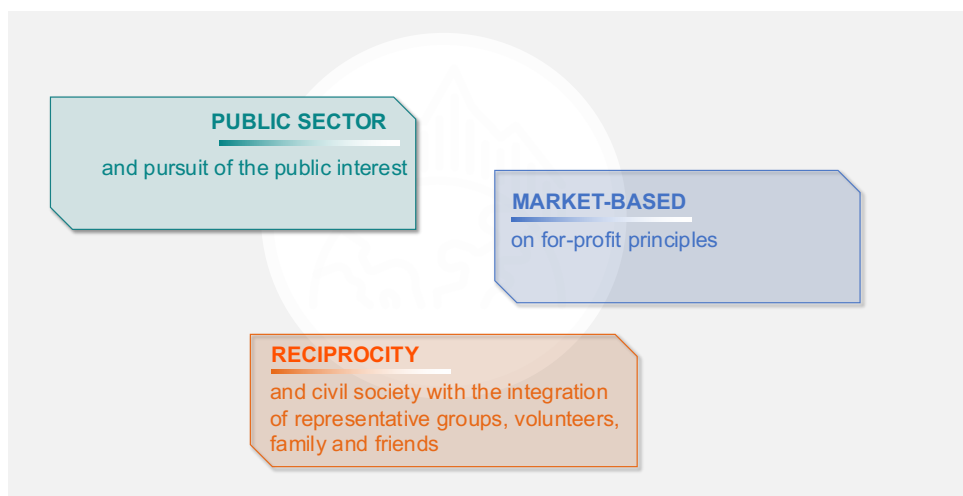
To build a creative, liveable, sustainable community, fostering a vibrant and diverse ecosystem of stakeholders to facilitate the creation and maintenance of well-paid, year-round incomes on the Dingle Peninsula

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Fig. 8 A new approach is necessary



Our model engages with three types of economic integration

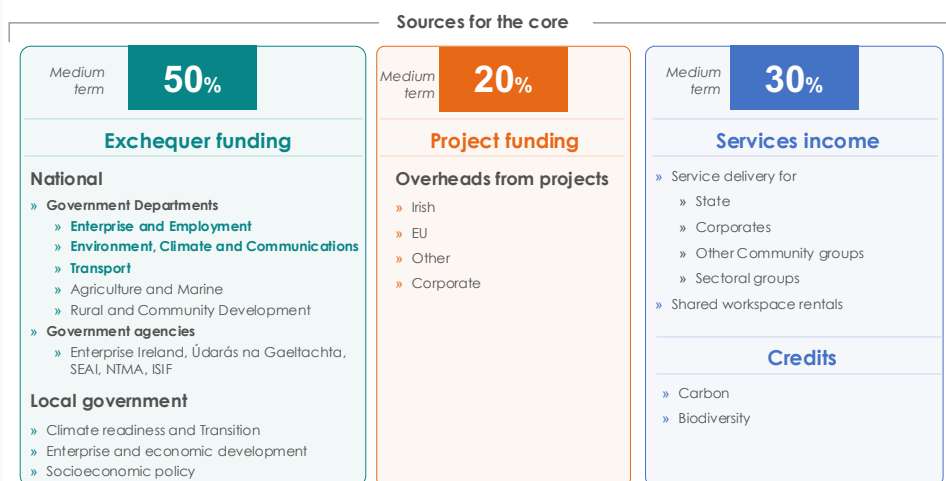


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Fig 9 Our Model engages with three types of economic integration



What a sustained and sustainable funding approach would look like in the medium-term for this model



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Fig. 10 What a Sustainable Funding Model might look like

The model is not hugely dissimilar from the future funding of Science Foundation Ireland Research Centres.

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3. Community

In contemplating your submissions under this theme please consider the following:

- 1.5. The importance of structured/consistent/flexible opening hours.
- 1.6. Suggestions/ideas for community engagement initiatives to increase hub activity
- 1.7. The importance of corporate engagement and remote workers to the hub sector.

Corca Dhuibhne (The Dingle Peninsula) covers an area of 583 sq. km. It has a resident population of 12,958, with 1,650 living in Dingle Town, but sees visitors in excess of 1 million annually.

Second (or holiday) homes account for c. 26% of all houses on the Peninsula and tourism accounts for c. 30% of the local economy (with the national average at c. 10%). Much of the tourism product is low value. Farm-to-fork is underdeveloped and much of the agriculture product is not retained locally.

The Dingle Hub has a significant programme of engagement with the [local community \(including the farming community\)](#) and this includes not only [agriculture](#)³, but also [sustainability](#)⁴, [digital transformation](#)⁵ (including using connected sensors on farms, as part of an [EU Ploutos project](#))⁶, [energy](#)⁷ (including [bioenergy](#)⁸), [rural transport/sustainable mobility](#)⁹, [sustainable tourism](#)¹⁰, Farm-to-Fork, and [Creative Climate Action](#)¹¹ (an initiative involving 10 farm families addressing climate change on the farms, through a creative process, working with an embedded artist).

The Dingle Hub acts as a focal point in the community, helping to sponsor and support various initiatives and bringing together people from various sectors across the community. It has enabled the farming community to engage with technology and energy companies and has led to the establishment of the [West Kerry Dairy Farmers Sustainable Energy Community](#)¹² involving the 120 dairy farms of the peninsula. Also, working with Failte Ireland, Kerry County Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Dingle Peninsula Tourism Alliance, the Hub has established a [Sustainable Energy Community for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector](#)¹³, that already has over 130 members. The issues being addressed include energy efficiency and sustainable/regenerative tourism, along with linkages to the local farming community.

Encouraging and supporting communities (through the hubs) to engage with the [European Innovation Partnerships](#)¹⁴ has the potential to be transformative for local communities and ensuring that the structures and processes that are put in place for the projects can continue to be supported after the

³ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/agriculture/>

⁴ <https://dinglehub.com/sustainability/>

⁵ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/agriculture/euploutos/>

⁶ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/agriculture/euploutos/>

⁷ <https://dinglehub.com/projects/sustainability/#energy>

⁸ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/energy/bioenergy/>

⁹ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/transport/sustainable-travel/>

¹⁰ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/tourism/sustainable-tourism/>

¹¹ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/creativeclimateactionproject/>

¹² <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/projects/agriculture/westkerrysec/>

¹³ <https://dinglehub.com/corca-dhuibhne-tourism-hospitality-sec/>

¹⁴ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/past-research-and-innovation-policy-goals/open-innovation-resources/european-innovation-partnerships-eips_en

project ends, would be critical, or the huge efforts put into the projects could be seen to have been in vain.

The Hub has developed a strong record of [engaged research](#)¹⁵ and it has published a large number of [Learning Briefs](#),¹⁶ helping to diffuse the learning experiences from the Dingle Peninsula, while also raising the capacity and capability for innovation within the local community, which engaged research does really well.

A few ideas that have worked well with Dingle Hub include the following:

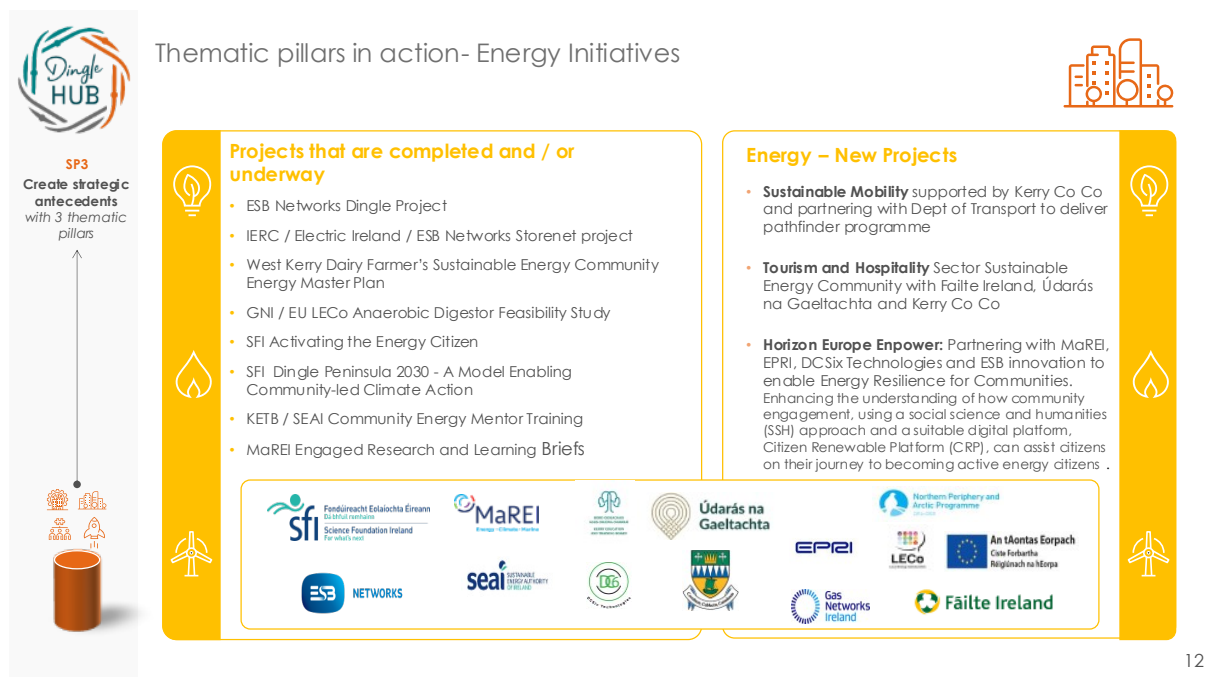


Fig. 11 Energy Initiatives

¹⁵ Engaged Research describes a wide range of rigorous research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement with the community. It aims to improve, understand, or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges. Engaged research is advanced with community partners rather than for them.

<https://www.campusengage.ie/our-work/making-an-impact/engaged-research/>

¹⁶ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/learningsandreports/>

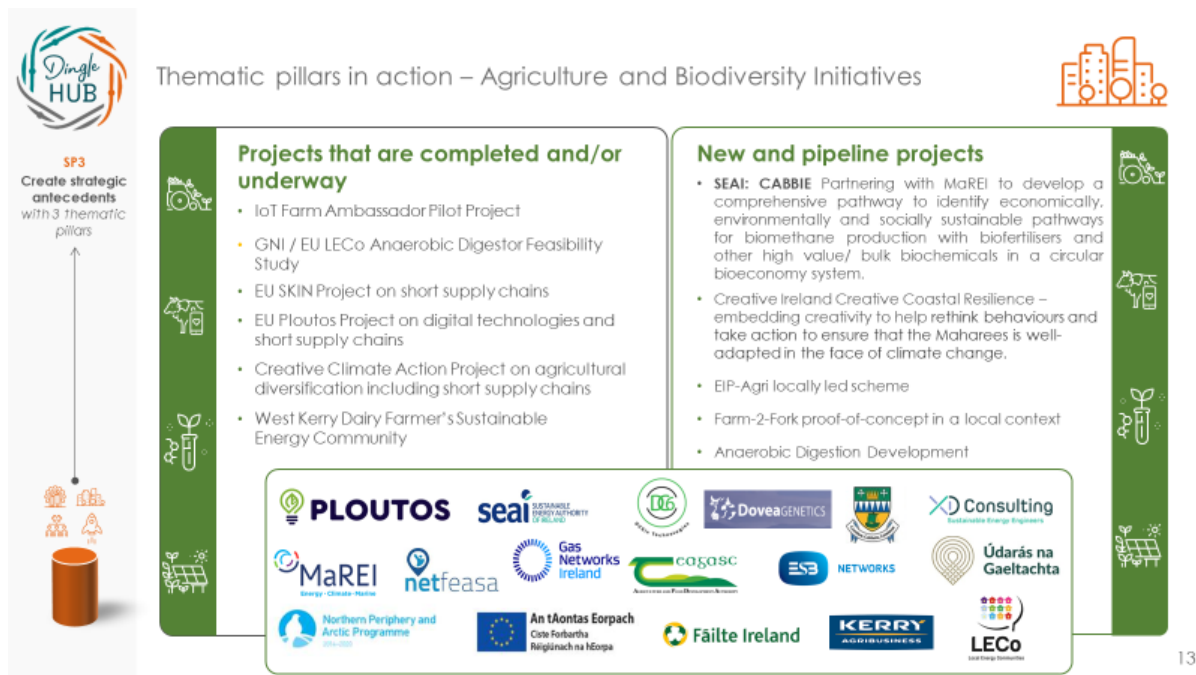


Fig 12 Agriculture and Biodiversity Initiatives



Fig. 13 Integrated Community-based Sustainable Mobility

These initiatives are ones that have worked for the Dingle Hub, but each hub would need to evaluate what is likely to be important for their own community and then leverage the hub to help deliver it.

4. Climate contribution & Sustainability

In contemplating your submissions under this theme please consider the following:

4.1 Suggestions/ideas for climate action initiatives for the hub sector

From recent reports of the Environmental Protection Agency that monitor Ireland's compliance with its national and international emission reduction requirements, Ireland does not appear to be on target to meet its national and international targets for the period 2021- 2030. Agriculture (38.4%) and Transport (19.1%) are the largest contributors and both of these sectors and both are hugely important in rural areas.

From published Government reports and projected achievements (which may change), the failure to achieve the results could cost the State in excess of €8 billion by 2030 and recurring costs annually afterwards.

Dingle Hub would be pleased to share its experiences and its many publications (and videos) with other local communities/hubs that are interested. We have also produced Learning Briefs that may provide helpful insights.

The main sources of information on what has been happening on the Dingle Peninsula are on the [Dingle Peninsula website](#)¹⁷ and [Corca Dhuibhne 2030 website](#)¹⁸. There is also information on the [MAREI website](#).¹⁹

Some specific material that may be relevant is included in the following:

[Learning Briefs](#)²⁰

[Lessons Learnt and Recommendations for Policy and Practice \(November 2021\)](#)²¹

[Evidence-based Community Planning on Corca Dhuibhne \(June 2021\)](#)²²

[Challenges and Proposed Solutions \(April 2023\)](#)²³

[The Community Energy Mentor Training Course \(May 2021\)](#)²⁴

[Reflections on the Engaged Research Approach in a Regional Sustainability Transition: Dingle Peninsula 2030 \(April 2023\)](#)²⁵

¹⁷ <http://www.dinglehub.com/>

¹⁸ <http://www.corcadhuibhne2030.com>

¹⁹ <https://www.marei.ie/project/dingle-peninsula-2030/>

²⁰ <https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/learningsandreports/learningbriefs/>

²¹ https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lessons-Learnt-and-Recommendations-for-Policy-and-Practice_Final.pdf

²² https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Dingle-Peninsula-2030_Evidence-based-planning-Corca-Dhuibhne.pdf

²³ https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Challenges-and-Proposed-Solutions_Final.pdf

²⁴ https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/The-Community-Energy-Mentor-Training-Course_Final-2.pdf

²⁵ https://dinglepeninsula2030.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Dingle-Peninsula-2030_Reflections-on-the-engaged-research-approach_2023_Final.pdf

Another very helpful document/toolkit for communities undertaking an initiative on [imagining the future](#)²⁶ is UCC's [Deliberative Future Toolkit](#)²⁷.

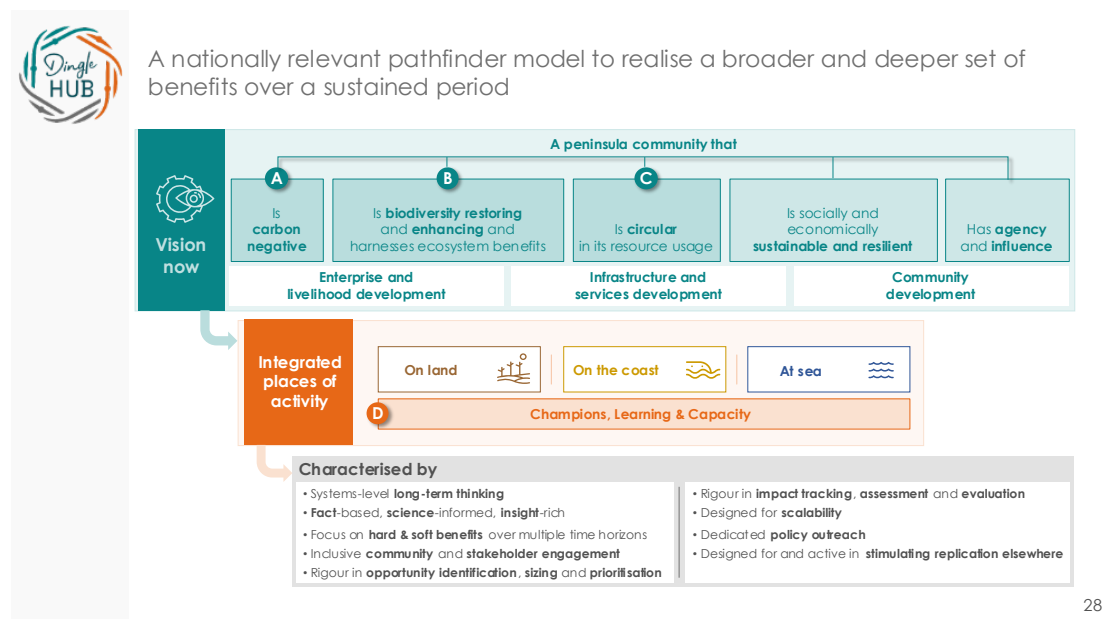


Fig. 14 A Nationally Relevant Pathfinder

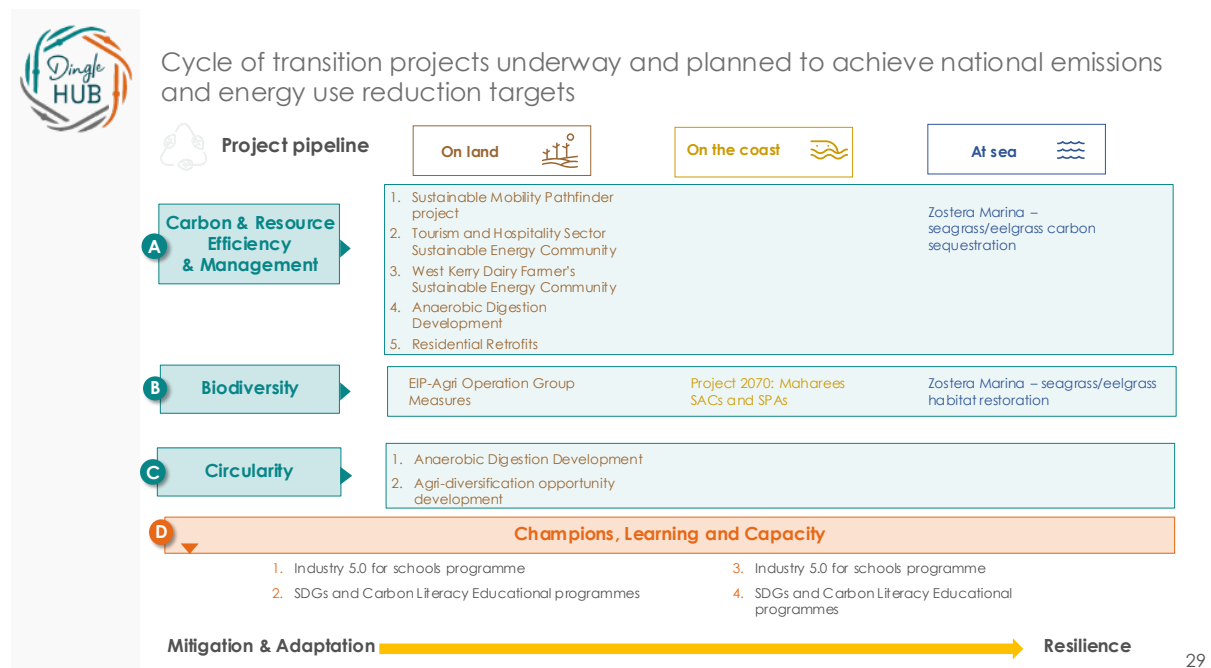


Fig 15 Cycle of Transition Projects underway and planned

²⁶ Imagining 2050 <https://www.ucc.ie/en/imagining2050/>

²⁷ <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/projectsandcentres/imagining2050/Imagining2050Toolkit.pdf>



The sustainability pillar in action



West Kerry Dairy Farmers SEC

- 130 Members
- Watttix energy monitoring system installed on 9 farms
- Tendering process underway for 60+ Solar PVs

Energy Master Plan: Key findings

- In 2019, this farming community used energy of over 10,000 MWh (generating 2,900 tonnes of CO₂) and costing circa €1 million
- Agricultural diesel is the single biggest energy consumer (52%) and costing circa €750,000. If biomethane could be substituted for diesel, there is a substantial market opportunity.
- Technology such as PV panels will reduce energy costs where the meter between the dairy parlour and the domestic dwelling is shared.
- Retrofitting of farm dwelling houses to B2 could reduce energy usage by 1,400 MWh and 360 tonnes of CO₂.
- Opportunities to make simple operational changes and make instant savings i.e scraper frequency, improve insulation on pipework.



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Fig. 16 West Kerry Dairy Farmers' Sustainable Energy Community



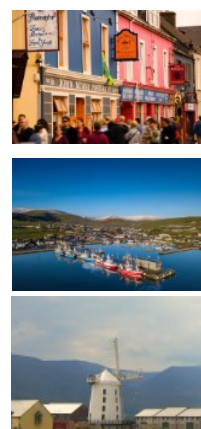
The sustainability pillar in action



Tourism and Hospitality SEC

Leveraging learnings from an agricultural sector SEC, this project will

- Develop an EMP specifically for the tourism industry here that will provide guidance to the sector on reducing their carbon emissions through implementing changes.
- Monitor the implementation of these recommendations across the sector and measure their impact on carbon reductions.
- Promote Dingle Peninsula / Corca Dhuibhne as a sustainable tourist destination while also acting as an exemplar for other regions.
- Consider transport options for our visitors and actions on this will align with the Sustainable Mobility Pathfinder Project and the Dingle Peninsula Destination Experience Development Plan eg Action 62: Dingle – An Clochán trail
- Provide initial study to enable four additional energy plans across the 4 Fáilte Ireland Brands – Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Dublin
- Launch 09.03.2023
- 120 Members signed up to date including 5 large energy users
- Monitoring group of 30 carefully selected to represent businesses on the peninsula but also that would be relatable to other tourist towns across Ireland
- Energy monitoring units installed in 12 businesses and energy audits in progress.



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Fig. 17 Tourism and Hospitality Sustainable Energy Community



Fig 18 Enabling Energy Resilience for Communities



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We would suggest that it is important to have a sub-county presence in local communities (through the hubs) to help the local communities to work together in addressing the significant changes that are required to be undertaken, not least due to decarbonisation/climate change and the digital transformation. If this is done successfully, it will then be possible to exploit the opportunities from these two sectors, utilising the same hub structure.

The challenge is about building capacity and capability in the local community (including among the farming community) and helping with lifelong and lifewide education across the community,²⁸ upskilling certain groups within the community and building innovation into the day-to-day activities of all sectors. The hubs can provide the local focal point, bringing the various parts of the community into contact with each other.

The hubs could also provide a channel for communicating with the local communities (including the farming and fishing communities), so that they can understand the challenges and become sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled to address them, not just individually but collectively as a community.

The EU and Irish Government have both recognised, in the [Economic Recovery Plan \(2021\)](#)²⁹, that a twin track approach is required to address the challenges facing the Irish economy. The twin challenges of climate change/decarbonisation and digitalisation transition (and associated behavioural changes) will significantly alter the economy and it is critical that all communities are prepared and supported to address these challenges.

We consider that the experiences and lessons we have learned may be of particular interest as part of the process of developing a new National Hub Strategy.

²⁸ The lifelong dimension indicates that the individual learns throughout a lifespan. The lifewide dimension recognises formal, non-formal and informal learning.

²⁹ <https://assets.gov.ie/136523/03f31f12-10eb-4912-86b2-5b9af6aed667.pdf>

Appendix 1

National Hub Strategy - Submission Cover Sheet

1. Your Name:
2. Organisation:
3. Email:
4. Date:

5. Pillar/s your submission relates to (select all that apply and provide views in the text box of relevant area sections below) –

1. Employment:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Enterprise:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Community:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Climate Contribution & Sustainability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>