

# 2030

**CORCA DHUIBHNE**  
**DINGLE PENINSULA**

## Evidence-based Community Planning on Corca Dhuibhne

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NETWORKS



## Background and Context

The idea of undertaking a Demographic and Socio-Economic study of the Dingle Peninsula arose from Social Inclusion and Community Activation (SICAP) focused work and ongoing discussions within NEWKD's Corca Dhuibhne's Local Area Advisory Committee (LAAC) in 2019. The Corca Dhuibhne LAAC is a voluntary committee and comprises 14 geographic and "issue based" representatives who live on the peninsula, and who are actively involved in contributing to the development of their community. The LAAC is well-stewarded by Chairperson Máire Uí Léime and is supported in its work by the Area Manager Séamus O'Hara and colleagues based in the Dingle office. A LEADER grant was secured for this study, and Breandán Ó Caoimh was contracted to undertake the work.

MaREI was involved in the collaboration with NEWKD throughout these meetings. Whilst Breandán presented the demographic facts, history, and socio-economic blueprint of each local area, Connor McGookin, MaREI researcher, presented the energy facts and was interested in better understanding what the transition to a low carbon future would mean for the community, and exploring people's opinions of the required changes to our energy system.

## Aim and Objectives

The MaREI-NEWKD collaboration sought to engage civil society's representative organisations and citizens from Corca Dhuibhne in developing pathways for a sustainable future, within the context of the peninsula's overall development across social, economic, and environmental concerns. This was to be achieved by:

- Providing communities with information on the key social, economic and environmental challenges facing them
- Listening to what each community and organisation across the peninsula thinks and knows about the social, economic and environmental challenges facing them
- Feeding into an evidence-based plan for a sustainable and resilient future
- Supporting the emergence of working groups across the peninsula around specific projects or topics

## Corca Dhuibhne

Located in the south west of Ireland, the Dingle Peninsula is defined by the territory to the west of a line connecting Blennerville to Castlemaine and with an area of 583 sq km and extending 48 km into the Atlantic. It has a resident population of around 12,500, with 2,500 living in Dingle Town (CSO, Census, 2016). Second (or holiday) homes account for c. 26% of all houses on the Peninsula and tourism accounts for c. 30% of the local economy.





There were two elements to this study:

- i. Desk-based research on relevant baseline indicators
- ii. Community consultations: a survey and 15 public meetings

The desk-based research drew together information on the demographic and socio-economic profile of the area, and the analysis undertaken to inform the Dingle Peninsula Energy Masterplan. Together, these research strands provided a quantitative description of the peninsula in respect of such variables as population numbers, household and family types, age of houses and energy efficiency, gender, age, nationality/ethnicity, use of Irish language, heating fuels used and associated cost/CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and occupations, among other human geography features. This information was prepared for each of the 8 geographic communities.

In addition to desk research, community consultations took place through 15 public meetings in late 2019 and early 2020, in the 8 geographic communities throughout the peninsula. Approximately 400 people attended these meetings, some of which were ably facilitated in Irish by Breandán and Máire. Members of the community were given a brief presentation on the findings of the desk-research, and they were then invited to give feedback on the implications for their locality, the strengths and challenges of their community and what could be done. The overarching theme for discussion was: What strategies and actions need to be put in place to enable the community to grow and develop in a way that is economically feasible, socially progressive, and sustainable for each community? All of the material and recorded notes have been made available on NEWKD's website (under the heading 'West Kerry'). For details, please see; <http://nekd.net/socio-economic-survey-of-the-dingle-peninsula/about/>



## Caring for Young and Old

- Offer mixed / sheltered accommodation in town centres for the aging population, vulnerable people and young families
- Provide shared community spaces accommodating initiatives such as: pop-up Gaeltacht, youth café, meals-on-wheels, music, dancing, childminding services and after-school/ breakfast clubs
- Develop green spaces and outside meeting areas such as: walkways, vegetable co-operatives, native woodlands, garden and composting allotments

## Housing

- Renovate vacant homes to top energy standard
- Prioritise development for residents that will be available year-round
- Address difficulties in planning, particularly around sewage / water treatment and building houses for family members on farmland

## Language and Culture

- Develop communal art spaces, workshops with machinery, social areas for idea exchange and pop-up galleries
- Provide Irish language / linguistic / ethnolinguistic tours
- Expand the Gaeltacht area to include Castlegregory, or even the whole peninsula
- Cater to different levels of Irish language: mentoring, Gaeilge ridesharing, Gael chara project

## Infrastructure and Services

- Improve public transport and interconnectedness: expand Local Link bus service to all areas, offering evening and night-time services and ridesharing
- Secure decent internet access throughout the peninsula
- Develop remote working spaces / hubs

## Sustainable Development Opportunities

- Strengthen the relationships between local farmers/fishers and hospitality/catering, so that local food products are more universally available and promoted
- Support farmers to be custodians of the land and to diversify their income with renewable energy projects
- Roll out a scheme for the retrofitting of buildings, whereby providing local job opportunities and addressing poor quality housing
- Retrofit the many vacant houses
- Prioritise local community-based energy projects over large-scale / industrial approaches
- Develop cultural and eco-tourism initiatives, incorporating the arts, culture, and heritage unique to the area

## Projects of Common Interest Across Corca Dhuibhne

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### Cherishing the Natural Beauty of the Area

- Attain Blue Flag status on beaches
- Provide public amenities in key areas such as beaches or along hiking / cycling trails
- Fix sewage treatment and protect water quality
- Develop native woodlands and community green spaces

### Improved Local Democracy

- Reduce bureaucracy and improve communication between planning authorities and the public
- Ensure more grass roots/ community inclusion at government decision-making level
- Develop a long-term (25 and 50 years) strategy for West Kerry

## Common Challenges Facing Corca Dhuibhne Communities

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### Housing

- Limited access to long-term renting and difficulty building new homes
- Significant number of holiday homes, in some communities as high as 40% of the housing stock

### Energy and climate

- Poor quality of housing stock, heavy reliance on solid fuel, large number of old poorly insulated homes and highly dispersed settlement pattern locking in private car use
- Severe sea-level risks in several areas
- Heavy reliance on imported fossil fuels - 86% of energy supplied by oil

### Livelihoods

- Overreliance on tourism development has created an unsustainable living situation
- High number of people leaving the area for work - only 55% of jobs based on the peninsula
- Difficulty maintaining small town centres, not enough business year-round to keep shops and restaurants open

### The Tralee to Dingle Development Line

- Communities not on the N86 line from Tralee to Dingle have been forgotten about
- Extremely limited public transport service to certain areas

### Community wellbeing

- Aging population in the majority of areas, with large share over 65, and key young family demographic missing
- Significant portion of people living alone, as high as 30% in some areas
- Limited social opportunities for young people, in particular teenagers
- Some areas don't have a community centre or shared meeting space

## Reflections on the Process

Subsequent to the community consultations MaREI had opportunities to engage with NEWKD and with the Corca Dhuibhne Local Area Advisory Council (LAAC) to review the process. In their feedback, representatives from NEWKD:

- Welcomed the evidence-based approach to community consultations. They noted that the inputs from MaREI and Breandán added value to local knowledge capital
- Appreciated the drilling down to community level in the collation and presentation of data and the benchmarking of local data against county and national levels
- Acknowledged the team's inclusive approach by using the Irish language as much as possible
- Underscored the importance of providing information that is accessible and presented in user-friendly language and visuals

## Lessons and Recommendations

Meet people where they are at:

- NEWKD was encouraged to undertake this study by its LAAC members and the broader community. Having 5 previous years of working with and supporting local groups provided credibility to engage successfully with communities throughout the peninsula
- Work in a truly developmental process, which reflects the diversity and wisdom of local communities, acknowledging that they hold answers to address issues within their community
- Develop a collaborative approach. NEWKD worked with local community representatives to host events in locations and at times which were convenient for residents to attend
- Use local contacts. NEWKD was able to use its contacts in local media to publicise these community meetings, and thereafter to give updates on outcomes at meetings
- Tailor the language and material to the audience. The understanding of a sustainable community must be broadened beyond climate imperatives. For rural communities, a sustainable future means long-term social, economic, and environmental resilience

Be open and transparent:

- All of the material and outputs should be made available online
- Have multiple options for participating, such as allowing for written submissions if people can't attend the meetings, and surveys, as well as in-person meetings
- Allow time for less formal discussions to take place during tea / coffee breaks

The planning of climate action and community development are inseparable, particularly in rural areas. We will not have a transition to a low carbon energy system if we do not have healthy, vibrant communities. Firstly, being able to worry about climate change is a privilege, and one that is not afforded to rural communities facing grave socio-economic challenges. Secondly, current social, economic, and environmental issues are exacerbated if or when regional, county and indeed local development plans do not adequately reflect the concerns of the community.

Flexible funding mechanisms are needed to support this kind of work. A meaningful engagement takes significant time and commitment to get people into the room. However, most of this preparatory work often goes unacknowledged. With a growing emphasis being placed on community engagement/participation within scientific research and climate policy, it is important that these activities are carried out in a truly consultative manner, and are therefore adequately funded.



## Lessons and Recommendations

Efforts to engage communities in climate action should tap into existing networks and organisations. Local Development Companies (LDCs) such as NEWKD may provide a valuable link into communities as they already have a long-standing relationship and, as a result, credibility within the community. Moreover, they offer valuable community development and engagement expertise.

More meaningful engagement must take place during development of spatial plans. It is clear from our analysis and community meetings that the Government's Regional, County, and Local Area Plans have had a significant impact on the communities. Therefore, it is crucial that more meaningful engagements are carried out by the arms of local Government, during the formulation of these plans so that they better reflect the priorities and concerns of the people living there. Planning and place making are most effective when bottom-up and top-down work together.

## Outcomes

- In addition to the actual analysis undertaken as part of the study, communities received very easy-to-access information about their area
- Community issues, needs and projects were identified
- Copies of the report (in both Irish / English) have been distributed to the seven communities
- The communities utilised the outcomes to inform their submissions to Kerry County Council as part of the process of devising the An Daingean Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2020-2026.
- NEWKD also made a submission to Kerry County Council that reflected the inputs from the various community meetings
- An application was made on behalf of the Corca Dhuibhne communities to the EU Smart Village network, and Corca Dhuibhne was subsequently chosen to represent Ireland as its Smart Village ambassador. A working group is meeting regularly to develop this project

The Corca Dhuibhne 2030 co-ordinating team would like to acknowledge and thank all the people who have so generously given of their time and support, both on the Dingle Peninsula and further afield. Thank you to the community members who gave of their time and participated in the meetings in November 2019 / February 2020, which made this work possible. This series of learning briefs is co-funded by MaREI, the SFI Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine, the Dingle Creativity and Innovation Hub (Mol Teic), ESB Networks and North East West Kerry Development (NEWKD).

