

Tralee Allotment Report

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1.Executive Summary

The report recommends that:

- the range of activities at the sites will be increased to attract more people to become involved.
- communication re - allotments be improved to include social media.
- the Allotment sites should be used as Education Hubs on issues such as growing Local Food, Climate Change, Food Preservation, Cooking and Good Diet & Nutrition.
- possibilities for Environmental Education at each location – such as Waste Management, Composting, Reducing Food Waste, Energy Conservation, Water Conservation be explored.
- The allotments be seen as ideal locations for education on the importance of Biodiversity and Habitat Creation and Protection.
- the sites be centres for intergenerational and cross-cultural activities.
- marginalised groups be invited to participate at the Allotment sites.
- the potential for these spaces to be used for issues related to health and wellbeing and nature connection be maximised or used to the full.
- local Primary, Secondary Schools and 3rd Level centres be invited to become more involved, have regular visits and be active at the allotment sites.
- a range of funding possibilities be examined from a variety of sources for example, LEADER, CLÁR programme, Community Enhancement Grants SICAP and Kerry County Council schemes.
- recommendations on the good management of the sites be examined below, with the involvement of the participants and various agencies involved.

These points and others are discussed in more detail in the wider report that follows.

2.Introduction

This report has been requested by The Community Section of Kerry County Council to outline a plan for the future use of the Tralee Allotment Sites. The allotments referred to in this report include:

- Moyderwell Allotments
- Ragoonane/Shanakill Allotments
- Marian Park Allotments

The report is based on consultations with all stakeholders to ensure that all opinions and suggestions were gathered and assessed for the future development of the sites.

The gathering of information involved a series of consultations with allotment plot holders and members of key agencies related to allotments in Tralee.

These included:

- **NEWKD staff across a range of programmes:** Deirdre Kearins, Ger Brosnan, Dave Fitzgibbon, Rob Carey, Seamus O'Hara, Tara Conway, Lorraine Bowler.
- **Community Members and Allotment Holders:** Peter Colleran, Frank Houlihan, Tommy Sweeney Bernard Keane, Gerry Conway, Brigid Murphy, Marian Moore, Rachel Budd, Mary Cahill.
- **County Council Staff:** Caroline Toal (Kerry PPN), Deirdre Hegarty, Liz O' Donnell, Anton Kelleher.
- **Family Resource Centres:** Maureen O'Sullivan (Hawley Park), Bernie O'Carroll (Shanakill).
- **HSE-Community Development Department:** Dolores Mc Elligott.
- **Transition Kerry Steering Committee:** Noreen White, Niamh Ní Dhúil, Seamus O'Hara.

It is the intention of Kerry County Council to hand responsibility of site management to NEWKD in the immediate future while still retaining a role on the Steering Committee, which will oversee all agreed developments.

This Report's Terms of Reference outlined the need to;

- Assess the level of activity and interest at each site.
- Assess the infrastructure and facilities at each site.
- Outline the strengths and weaknesses of management and coordination at each site.
- Provide a vision to broaden the use of the sites.
- Outline the supports required to implement the vision.

3.Location and Current Status of Allotments

The locations of the allotments sites in Tralee are:

1. Deans Lane, Moyderwell
2. Marian Park
3. Ragoonane/Shanakill

There is general agreement that the coordination and management of all three sites functioned well until Tralee Town Council was integrated into Kerry County Council in 2014. Although maintenance has continued under the Tralee Regeneration Scheme, the coordination of activities for all sites has not continued. Caroline Toal was an important figure in coordination and support, however when her role changed, the general organisation around the sites went into decline. There was an active steering group during the time that Caroline was in the coordinating role, with reps from the 3 sites which worked effectively. This became defunct without external support, as Caroline kept minutes and communication networks running smoothly, with support from Transition Kerry and Peter Colleran who had a volunteer caretaker role.

Many users who previously used the allotments said that they became untenable and less accessible, as there were no supports. There was a loss of cohesion amongst the sites/users.

It was not clear who was in charge, keys were not available, the sites became run down and dilapidated. The topsoil provided was of very poor quality.

It was also unclear as to how the community groups and private individuals could renew their Allotment Holder Agreement. This had been done with Caroline Toal (KCC) and a number of allotment volunteers on an annual basis. But without the support of Caroline, this also stopped.

It was unclear where the nominal fee was to be paid to or how the payment was to be made. Transition Kerry volunteers received a number of regular enquiries by email or phone as to how to renew the lease or apply for a bed/allotment..Transition Kerry directed these enquiries to KCC and Jean Foley (KCC) was of help at this time.

1.Moyderwell is the most developed of the three locations with infrastructure including toilets, glass house, geodesic dome, indoor space for storage and events, covered outdoor area, individual plots and community group plots. There is shared use of equipment and much of this is stored on site. The site is currently well managed by a committee elected by the allotment users. The site is secured by a perimeter fence and fronts onto a well-used local road making the site very visible and attractive to passers-by. Currently there is almost full occupancy of the site which is testament to the committee who run it. During the pandemic, Moyderwell was a very important resource to the users. The ongoing success of the model used at Moyderwell should be built on and developed for the other sites.



2.Marian Park site is located in a quiet residential estate. There are 19 beds/units for use, with currently 6 being utilised. The site has a perimeter fence, storage shed with toilets and some seating. There is running water on site and the plots are well defined with timber beams. The topsoil provided was of inferior quality and needs to be replaced with more suitable material. There is an openness to have people from outside the Estate using the plots.



3.Rahoonane/Shanakill: Currently there are 3 beds at this site out of the 20 plus being used by people from the Shanakill Community. From discussions with several stakeholders there is a great deal of negativity about the location. The site is enclosed with a perimeter fence and also has a shed on site, but it is in poor repair.

There is regular vandalism, and the shed has become a space for anti-social behaviour. Tools and equipment have been stolen and trust has been eroded. A number of those consulted saw no other option but to demolish the shed.

Houses are currently being built adjacent to the site which will mean that it is even more isolated. There is no physical connection between the Rahoonane community centre and the allotments. The pathway was blocked off some years ago due to anti-social behaviour.

There may be a strong case for relocating the allotment sites within the estate. This could be achieved perhaps by beginning with a smaller number of beds and building on small successes.

These allotments benefited from the presence and support of the Shanakill Rahoonane Community Organic Garden. Many local residents attended classes at the community garden and the worker supported the allotment holders with regular visits and assisted with composting/soil improvement. When the role of the Community Garden Worker finished, this support went into decline.

It is also worth noting that the Tralee Community Garden, located in Tralee Town Park, although not part of the current terms of reference, might have a role in linking in with the allotment sites.



4. Community, Climate Action and Global Context:

There is abundant research showing the physical, mental health and well-being benefits of gardening and community allotments. These benefits include increased physical activity, stress reduction, peace, connection with nature, social interaction, feelings of autonomy, a greater sense of social cohesion which creates a sense of belonging and ownership.

Recent reports commissioned by NEWKD on Ragoonane and Marian Park were obtained, which give some socio-economic and demographic details on the area. The information in these reports supports the need for green infrastructure and community space for the residents of these areas.

Social prescribing is often informally used by various health and wellbeing practitioners, and there are some pilot programmes taking place in Ireland. Well managed community allotments offer an ideal safe setting for people in need of social interaction and connection:

Source-Reference:<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/hl/selfmanagement/donegal/programmes-services/social-prescribing/>

Studies demonstrate that community allotment spaces are important sites, not only for food production. They are places where engagement around many significant environmental issues such as food waste, water conservation, biodiversity, regenerative practices, climate, energy and food security can take place. They are also an obvious place for community engagement connected to health, social capital, community resilience and leadership. They are places of community celebration, from the harvest days, apple pressing and local art events which have taken place in Moyderwell over the years.

Educational and cultural possibilities across a wide range of activities are possible including music, drama, art and craft activities with multi-cultural themes. Active citizenship is encouraged and anti-social behaviour is discouraged as communities embrace and participate across myriad activities and events including street feasts and, BBQ's

Many community allotments can help to alleviate food poverty as participants share food surpluses, learn how to prevent food waste by learning how to preserve foods and maximise the nutritional value of the food grown.

For people living in urban areas, it is often one of the only spaces in socially disconnected and isolated communities that a connection to nature and across the generations is possible.

There are now ambitious targets across all sectors and as the Government's Climate Action plan states **'Every home, every community, every workplace and every farm must be mobilised to get involved'**:

Source-Reference: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/55fde-climate-action-important-publications/#climate-action-plans>

Community allotments also help contribute towards many of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals/Global Goals**; specifically Goals 3, 11, 12, 13 and 17:

GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being

GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

GOAL 13: Climate Action

GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goals

Vision to broaden the use of the sites:

- Broaden the appeal of the sites with workshops on a wide variety of topics, being cognisant of the evidence that allotment spaces serve a myriad function as outlined in section four. These workshops/events/seminars could include composting, food preservation, basic gardening skills, herb gardening, medieval gardening, seed saving, compost teas, soil management, pruning and propagation. The sites should become a central education hub on environmental related issues in Tralee Town.
- Collaboration with the local FRC's with facilitation by experienced tutors from KETB, in the areas of food preservation, juicing, cider making, jams, chutneys, preserves could be taught.
- Promotion of Citizen Science and collaboration with the National Biodiversity Data Centre, in terms of training local people to monitor, record and submit sightings of wildlife and plants: Bumble bees, Butterflies, Bats, Frogs, Flowering Plants, etc. The records from these Community Citizen Science Initiatives feed into local and national Biodiversity Action Plans.
- Poetry, reading, drama, lectures, basket making and willow weaving in the GeoDome and/or when conditions permit outdoors.
- Regular coffee mornings, lunchtime talks/music to encourage community members and local organisations working in the vicinity to avail of the beautiful nature-based spaces and their benefits. These spaces are an oasis in urban settings.
- Link with Kerry County Library for storytelling mornings for Parents & Toddler groups, local after school groups, public events.
- Link with local art groups to hold their classes in the Geodesic dome space.
- Involve schools and other youth-based groups. As those consulted outlined, organisations are utilising beds in Moyderwell which address a range of social inclusion needs, while one bed in Rathanoone is being used by Kerry Youth Diocesan Service.
- It is an ideal space for schools as the allotments are within easy access. Many relevant current school curriculum and cross curriculum topics can be addressed in a safe outdoor setting: such as Growing Food, Living Things, Habitats, links to the Green Schools Programme, Practical Applied Skills, Science, Gaeilge, Food from

other Cultures, Water Conservation, Compositing, Art, Spending time Outdoors, Wellbeing and Mental Health.

- The sites are ideally placed to be centres of learning in areas such as climate change, biodiversity, hedge maintenance, waste management, recycling, energy conservation, water conservation as citizens embrace the green transition as outlined in the Government Climate Plan:

Source-Reference:

<https://www.lgma.ie/en/publications/local-authority-sector-reports/a-profile-of-local-government-climate-actions-in-ireland-final.pdf>

- The allotments have excellent potential to enable inter-generational and cross-cultural usage and to respond to the changing socio-economic needs of the areas (see reports).
- The allotments could provide an excellent resource for the NEWKD Social farming programme and its participants.
- Health and wellbeing events to be run at each site during Kerry Health and Wellbeing week in October each year.
- Nature based wellbeing programmes hosted in each site by NEWKD, HSE, TEAM project, KYDS, FRC's, Transition Kerry, Forest Connections, The Nature Hub.
- The Allotments can be a local hub of information, with notice boards and poster displays.
- Social prescribing potential to be explored with the many services working in the areas of mental health and wellbeing:

Source-Reference:<https://www.healthykerry.ie/index.php/social-prescribing/>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/hl/selfmanagement/donegal/programmes-services/social-prescribing/>

As the circular economy concept and actions are rolled out and embraced, reducing, reusing, recycling and up-cycling can be integrated into programmes run within the allotment settings. There are also possible synergies that can be explored with the men's sheds:

Source-Reference:<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/3fe6b-draft-national-strategy-for-ireland-to-transition-to-a-circular-economy-published/>

As numerous studies are indicating gardening and all the concomitant benefits from the involvement in community allotments in safe outdoor spaces will be key to health & wellbeing in building resilience and supporting communities in their recovery post covid:

Source-Reference:<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c4876-covid-19-resilience-and-recovery-2021-the-path-ahead/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/ThePathAhead/>

Linkage to Local Tidy Towns, Chamber of Commerce, Crann Chiarraí, Kerry PPN.

The Moyderwell Allotments is an example of a **Biodiversity Hotspot in the Tralee Urban Area**. It needs to be seen in a greater context as it enhances and connects some of the **Green Infrastructure** in and around the town. It can be promoted as being part of the **Ecological Corridors** that connect to other local places such as Tralee Bay Wetlands, Tralee Town Park, The Tralee To Fenit Greenway, Munster Technological University, out to the Canal and Blennerville and local urban woodlands like Nun's Wood/Collis Sandes and Ballyseedy Woods. There are examples of some Tidy Towns in other communities who have begun to map and connect these ecological corridors. There are examples of this from other communities, such as Ennis Tidy Town: <http://ennistidytowns.com/project/wildlife/>

5. Potential Sources of Funding

Grants

- LEADER Funding. There are no indications yet as to the start date for a new programme. Based on the existing programme, 75% funding up to a maximum €250,000 could be available for a community led project.
- Community Enhancement Funding and Community Support Funding– Small Grants scheme for capital renovation and refurbishment projects administered through Kerry County Council.
- SEAI Grants for energy efficiency projects – retrofits and insulation etc.. There may be potential here for Energy Education workshops.
- Community Foundation of Ireland – Various grant programmes for community projects.
- Clár programme:<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/986b0-2021-clar-programme/>
- Sports Capital Funding – Grants for sports facilities that encourage and increase participation in sport. – this may be optimistic!
- SICAP programme grants which address/support social inclusion issues could be accessed.
- Go for Life National Grant Scheme - The aim of the grants is to improve the health and wellbeing of older people across the country by providing them with opportunities to engage in physical activity and sport. This could be extended to include gardening.
- Maintenance Grants from The Regeneration Programme – this is due to be completed in 2023. There is a budget existing of up to 3K per annum for small maintenance works at the Marian Pk and Moyderwell allotments. Within KCC the sites will revert to the Municipal District Office once the Regeneration project is finished.
- Supports through various schemes in NEWKD, may provide labour/personnel to manage and maintain the sites as Tús/RSS/CE Workers, SICAP, etc.. along with other potential funding streams as they arise. POBAL funding- currently in Transition Kerry Allotment Workshops Account, as Tralee Allotment Project did not have the structures required to open an account.
- HSE funding for health promotion, mental wellbeing, social prescribing.

6. Recommendations

I Role of the agencies:

Overall, there needs to be an inter-agency approach to ensure that the potential of the allotment addresses all aspects of wellbeing – social, economic and environmental. Specifically, the roles and areas of responsibility should be agreed between KCC and NEWKD at the outset to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding at a later period. A memorandum of understanding is needed between these two organisations.

It is very important that once clear structures are put in place that each site and the allotment holders therein are given a good level of autonomy.

There is great potential as part of an inter-agency approach for non-statutory organisations and their users/clients to be involved. These include Family Resource Centres, Community Centres, Tralee International Resource Centre, Kerry Diocesan Youth Centre, St. John of God's, Mental Health Orgs, Drugs projects.

When the current regeneration project is completed (within two years), the sites will come under the offices of the Tralee Municipal District. There needs to be a working relationship between these offices and those of NEWKD to ensure the full use of the allotment sites to their maximum potential. The relationship could involve the development of the infrastructure at each site.

The sites should link in with the proposed formation of a Climate Change Section within the Local Authority and other relevant sections of Kerry County Council, including KCC Biodiversity Officer. These sites could aid any educational activities for the public in a wide range of related issues from food security, food waste, energy use, recycling, water harvesting and composting etc..

To date the insurance has been covered by KCC and going forward this needs to be clarified.

II Role of NEWKD

(It is envisaged that this will be a management, community development, maintenance, liaison and oversight role),

- Developing a strategic plan with the coordinating/ steering committee.
- Provision of staff... CE, TUS, RSS, Co-ordinator/ Development worker. Ideally there should be one point of contact in NEWKD, at development worker level to oversee the overall running of the sites. This role would work closely with the steering committee to form a strategy for the sites which would feed back to each allotment site committee.
- Liaise with the County Council re the provision of infrastructure and services.

III Role Of Kerry County Council

Kerry County Council as owners of the properties should help maintain the infrastructure at each site to ensure their viability. This would include the fencing, toilets, power & water, building/sheds, storage and security.

In their role on the steering committee, they should also advise on funding available within the local authority.

As the land is the property of the County Council the responsibility for insurance should lie with the local authority.

IV Role Of Transition Kerry.

- Advisory.
- Ensuring best practice in line with national and international standards.
- Transition Kerry has a network of experienced trainers and facilitators and can provide practical gardening skills, ecosystem restoration, biodiversity, climate change, community development and interpersonal skills.

V Role of HSE:

- The HSE has the potential to be a major user of allotments as these have an important role to play in promoting preventative health measures.
- Allotments and gardening has always been recognised as a productive means for achieving healthy exercise in the open air, and for getting and staying physically fit.
- HSE has also the potential to be a financial resource in developing the sustainability of the allotments.

7.Recommendations specific to Ragoonane

- Consider relocation of the Ragoonane site as the current location has a negative image and it may be more successful elsewhere on the estate. In line with best practice residents and users should be consulted and involved in the design and potential usage (a participatory process that will ensure ownership and buy-in from the community). In comparison, Moyderwell allotments are located centrally in the community, are attractive, and by virtue of their visibility encourage local participation and ownership.
- Remove shed from current location.
- Erect a covered in area that is visible and gives some shelter from the rain

- A polytunnel would be of huge value for organizations who work with socially excluded groups. This would enable them to interact with the allotments on a year-round basis and have a much longer growing season.

8.Supports required to implement the vision

- A coordinator for all three sites is essential, this could be a full time or part time position. Ideally a Development worker in NEWKD should be given responsibility for the running of the sites.
- A committee with terms of reference to be formed at each site and the appropriate supports and training provided.
- The coordinator/ development worker should work with a committee at each site and report to a steering group that is made up of participants from each allotment site, along with reps from NEWKD, KCC, HSE, Transition Kerry.
- The steering committee should be recruited and brought together by an external facilitator.e.g. Transition Kerry so that Terms of reference and a vision is agreed by all the parties involved.
- Workers on the ground to help maintain the sites would be essential. This could come through an RSS scheme or through community employment (CE scheme), TUS programme. There would also be excellent training possibilities for these workers.
- Transition Kerry should be contracted to provide mentoring, training and support to the coordinating agency and the staff servicing the allotments.
- County Council to work with the steering committee to develop, service and allocate allotments (minimum 200 metres square) so that there is a progression route for those who are interested in progressing to growing sufficient food for a family. This will ensure that issues of food poverty and food security can be addressed in line with government policies.
- A Geodome/ polytunnel in each allotment space. A polytunnel would be of huge value for organizations who work with socially excluded groups. This would enable them to interact with the allotments on a year-round basis and have a much longer growing season.

9.Administration/ Management

- The overall funding and budget of the sites will be managed by the Steering Committee. It will be necessary to clarify how each of the three sites is then funded.
- Each allotment committee should have its own bank account into which funding can be lodged as required. The control of the bank account should be with the working committee at each site and a ceiling placed on the spending - €2000. This is to facilitate the day to day needs of each site and give each committee autonomy. The steering committee will have an oversight role in relation to the management of the site accounts. E.g., at annual AGM.
- Applications for funding will be completed at the Steering committee level.

- There needs to be a realistic pricing structure at each site with clearly defined rules on what can and cannot be planted, weed control, terms of use, hours of opening /use, etc..
- Allotments not in use will be passed to those on a standby list.

10.Conclusion

There is a wonderful opportunity to broaden the scope and appeal of the Allotment sites in Tralee. Although the site at Ragoonane is problematic there is potential if the location were more central.

- The sites have potential to be a hub of activity within the urban area of Tralee.
- The sites provide opportunities for people old and young to work alongside and learn from each other. These sites could regenerate parts of urban Tralee and bring a vitality that would transform the lives of residents in the town. The timing is right to invest in these spaces. The challenges of lighting the spark that will have long term positive implications should be grasped and with sufficient help and support from the Agencies, real progress will be made.
- The Global pandemic has taught us all the value of the outdoors and using our time wisely. This is the opportunity to do so.
- The regeneration of the sites provides Kerry County Council with opportunities to link with communities in very positive ways.

“We might think we are nurturing our gardens but of course it is our garden that is really nurturing us”

Jenny Uglow