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Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs

Evaluation Report Appendix



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1. Introduction

This document is an appendix to the Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs Evaluation Report that was released in October 2018. It provides a summary for each of the 9 Hubs that were a part of the evaluation process. The purpose of this document is to provide the Sport Ireland Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) network with an opportunity to cross learn and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes that are common to a lot of the Hubs. Further, this document is a consolidation of all learnings from the evaluation and will serve as a reference for future investment, design and delivery of the Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs Project.



2. Ballyhaunis, Mayo

The Sports Hub in Mayo is based in Ballyhaunis, a town with 40 different nationalities. The Hub is a cricket practice area built as a result of local leaders approaching the Sports Partnership, in keeping with the needs of the International community. As stated by the Hub Coordinator, the objective of the Hub is to “provide inclusive participation opportunities for all in a multicultural community.” The cricket practice run area was built inside a housing estate, the Maples.

Model of Delivery

The cricket practice area has been built next to a multi-use games area and playground which is constructed and run by Mayo County Council. The practice area is managed by the Local Authority. The target group for this Hub is the local community of Ballyhaunis, with a special focus on integrating the Muslim population into the community through sport. It is the remit of the Ballyhaunis Sports Network, led by the Ballyhaunis Chamber of Commerce, to get all Nationalities in the region to take part in sport and physical activity. Ballyhaunis Sports Hub is a part of this network.

Providing a Pathway

A needs analysis was undertaken through the Ballyhaunis Sports Network. This group identified the needs of the community on the basis of which the application was made. There was a need for a cricket practice area as practice was happening on an ad-hoc basis in unsafe areas. Thus, the Hub was able to provide structure and organisation to the sport.

“By the hub engaging with Cricket Ireland for organised cricket coaching in the newly developed cricket practice area at the Maples it has developed a pathway for involvement in the sport.”

- Hub Coordinator

When asked about the current opportunities that exist to take part in sport and physical activity, it was evident that there were plenty. However, the focus group discussions brought up the need for a centralised communal facility. With reference to the cricket practice area, a need for a larger cricket ground was brought up.

“There are loads of opportunities. Depends on the sport you want to participate in and if there are facilities available.”

- Hub Coordinator

"Cricket club doesn't have a ground here. If we had this, we would have a lot of people watching it. The interest we see is massive but with a ground, more would come."

- FGD Participant

"Facility and venues are a problem. There are so many opportunities in such a small town."

- FGD Participant

It was evident that while the Cricket practice area is used for summer camps and other practice sessions, integration between the international and local community using this area, as was originally intended, has been limited. It was also noted that the cricket practice is perceived by some members of the community as being unsafe.

"It's got a tag that it is not a sports place"

- FGD Participant

"The Mugah isn't safe, there are no lights"

- FGD Participant

One of the reasons for this could be the fact that some members of the community are confused about who the area belongs to. In other words, there is confusion around whether the practice area belongs to the estate or the wider community. Further, that the practice area is located deep in the estate, with cases of anti-social behaviour in the area in the past, has acted as a deterrent to increased participation.

Strong Organisations

The Hub has also provided support in setting up a new table tennis club in the area. As with a lot of other Hubs Ballyhaunis faces the challenge of a missing community link. It would be imperative to develop this link and identify potential areas for local capacity building to build leadership and ownership in the community. This is true especially in light of the multicultural nature of the community, where the need for champions and advocates is larger.

It was clear from the evaluation that while there is some amount of club networking in Ballyhaunis, the community are feeling the need for a far more integrated networking system. The Ballyhaunis sports network currently meets infrequently and, on an ad-hoc basis and a more strategic approach to this would benefit the club network. This is, thus, an area of focus for the Hub. It was clear that for the clubs if there was one thing the Hub could do differently it would be to create a stronger networking platform.

"There's some amount of integration but there could be a lot more between clubs".

- FGD Participant

"More of a presence and meetings to discuss what is being done for the community."

- FGD Participant

Quality Facilities

It was evident from the focus group that the community is feeling a severe need for a centralised facility that could be associated with sport. It is noted that this is outside the remit of the Sports Hub but this sentiment is inclusive of the Cricket practice run area. As such, the cricket club are in talks with the soccer club in the area to develop a shared pitch.

"Lack of a communal sports facility- they're all individual places at the minute."

- FGD Participant

"Lack of a set place where people can go for sport- children will associate this with a safe and healthy space."

- FGD Participant

The quote above is indicative of the consistency that participants usually look for when deciding to engage with a sport. This lack of a consistent, and communal space is a barrier for participation in the community.

Impact & Sustainability

It was difficult to ascertain the impact of the cricket practice area separate from all the other sports related activities that happen in Ballyhaunis. The practice area is used by the cricket club for their own practice and for summer camps but more work would have to be done to understand the dynamics of community integration in the area.

The Ballyhaunis Hub needs to move away from direct delivery of activity to ensure sustainability. There is potential to build capacity within community groups and deliver activities in partnership with these groups. For example, the Hub coordinator currently brings children from the Ballyhaunis direct provision centre for summer camps into the multi-use games area. To ensure sustainability the Hub Coordinator could build a relationship with the Direct Provision centre to train leaders who could take ownership of the project and empower groups in the centre to engage directly with children and other participants.



3. Carrickphierish, Waterford


The Community Sports Hub in Carrickphierish, Waterford is a multipurpose sports hall that is utilised by two schools during the day and is rented from the Council by various clubs and organisations, including Waterford Sports Partnership (WSP) during evenings, weekends and on school holidays. The sports hall is adjoined to a state-of-the-art library that is meant for use by the school and local communities. The Hub is surrounded by two large local authority housing estates and one local authority housing complex. At the time of the review, there were no amenities such as a local shop, café or pub in the area. As stated by the Hub Coordinator, the mission of the Carrickphierish Community Campus, which includes the Sports Hub, is "to work together, to develop the Carrickphierish Community Campus Steering Group as a welcoming and inclusive place that supports the engagement and holistic development of the community maximising the benefits for everyone."

Model of Delivery

WSP has funded and delivered a wide variety of programmes and activities in the Sports Hub such as basketball, GAA training, breakfast clubs, dance and fitness classes and indoor soccer. The target groups for these activities have been varied. The Hub is also home to a disability club called Deise Dragons. The Hub Coordinator leads on the Carrickphierish Community Campus Steering Group, which provides strategic guidance to the Campus activities, including the Sports Hub and Library. The steering group comprises representatives from WSP, Gaelscoil na nDeise, Waterford Educate Together School, the Library, Waterford City and County Council, Northern Suburbs Community Youth Project, St. Brigid's Family Resource centre and Waterford Area Partnership.

Providing a Pathway

A needs analysis was not undertaken before the establishment of the hub. This is mainly due to the fact that the links to the community were virtually non-existent at the time of the initial establishment of the Hub. This is a relatively newly established but very disadvantaged community which has had very little opportunity to come together. Further, it has had limited community development support and has not developed its own identity. As a result, and because the needs of the community were obvious the approach taken by WSP was to first build relationships and trust through encouraging people to engage with the campus for activity and sport. While there are ongoing informal consultations that take place with relevant partners and agencies for the development and programming needs of target groups, there have been challenges from the start in engaging with the target groups directly. As an example, a public meeting to engage with the community in late 2016 had only one person from the community attend.



The evaluation found that now the time is right to increase buy-in from the local community. It was found through the focus groups that residents of the Carrickphierish area feel that the area struggles with not having a sense of community. However, the Sports Hub has clearly been working towards building a strong relationship with the local community and this, coupled with efforts to increase buy-in from the local community will pave way for local ownership of the Hub.

“You need a community before you put in a community sports hub. There’s no pub, shops, petrol station or anything.”

- FGD Participant

It is evident from the evaluation that no opportunities and indeed, pathways, existed for sport and physical activity in the area prior to the hub.

“The housing estates had nothing before this. You needed to have your own equipment”.

- FGD Participant

The sports hall has created a number of opportunities and has provided an avenue for people to be active and play sport. However, some activities more than others have attracted a higher proportion of people from the targeted local community. For example, participants in the Breakfast club, after school club and drop in soccer are predominately from the local areas. Some clubs, like the GAA and Basketball club are taking time to attract members from the local community and that could be a potential area of focus for the Hub in the future.

One of the reasons for this is the perceived inaccessibility of the building and perhaps more importantly, the missing link between the sports hub and the community, something that has also been acknowledged by the LSP and Hub Coordinator.

“While the hub is eager to help people and establish a connection with members of the local community, it has been difficult to date without the presence of a Community Development Officer.”

- Hub Coordinator

“There’s a lot of opportunities being made available in the hall but I’m not sure how many use it.”

- FGD Participant

“There’s a perception that this place is only used by clubs for training.”

- FGD Participant

“We use the facility here to train in the winter for Hurling but we bring our own kids. Haven’t added any additional members from the Carrickphierish side.”

- FGD Participant

The quote above best summarises the biggest challenge that faces the hub. There is no doubt, however, that the facilities and equipment offered by the Hub are of the highest quality. It was evident that the Hub has allowed for clubs to be set up that might not have the opportunities otherwise. For example, the disability club- Deise Dragons- would have had no venue to operate from if it wasn’t for the Hub. With the sports hall, the club now meets once a week. Further, the access that the hub provides to equipment for all its users is a big bonus.

“Deise Dragons wouldn’t have been able to function without the hall. It is a fantastic facility. It meets our needs.”

- FGD Participant

“This is a fine place. Cannot fault the facility. The maintenance is top notch”.

- FGD Participant

Well Trained People

Training has been provided by the Hub in the form of Balance Bike Training, Sports Hall Athletics Teacher Training along with disability awareness and training for Volunteers for the various clubs and activities. However, in order to develop community leadership, perhaps there is a need for training with a different type of focus- one that builds local capacity and ownership. It is pertinent that the Hub establish a relationship with the local community to build trust and then identify potential local leaders to train up. Local capacity building could then be undertaken by these leaders, through a train the trainer system. The North Suburbs Community Youth Project is an example of an organisation that the hub could work with to identify potential leaders from the community.

Strong Organisations

The Hub has been able to successfully link in with partner organisations and take their strategic plans into account when developing programmes, leading to a collaborative approach of working. Some of the partners include the St. Brigids Family Resource Centre, Waterford Area Partnership and Principals from the neighbouring schools.

It is evident from the positive responses on the Key Informant Surveys that working with the Hub has benefitted the local clubs/organisations. Specifically, the Carrickphierish Sports Hub has given an opportunity to clubs and organisations to engage with people in the area that may not have happened otherwise. The challenge now is to increase the level of participation from the original target group of the Hub in certain activities such as links into GAA clubs and the resident basketball club. Now that relationships have been established and trust has started to increase this is more likely to be successful.

A majority of the partners feel like the Hub has equipped them to continue to deliver quality services to the community.

The Hub helped us to engage with groups that we would not normally. Gave us opportunities to get involved in active programmes which wouldn't normally exist in a library service.

- Key Informant, Carrickphierish Library Service

It has allowed us to get more active in local communities and in particular in disability sports.

- Key Informant, Waterford GAA

An important element of what creates a strong organisation, is the genuine community engagement and leadership that it allows. This engagement and leadership can be built through Governance structures such as committees and by way of using terms of references and constitutions. Community engagement is often indicated by the ownership that community members feel towards a facility and this is an area of improvement for the Carrickphierish Hub.

Quality Facilities

The Sports Hub has provided access to opportunities at reduced costs, allowing those that wouldn't have been able to afford it the chance to do so.

"It has provided opportunities for young people that they otherwise may not have access to. It has provided us with bigger space for activities at an affordable cost for young people."

- Key Informant, North Suburbs Community Youth Project

"It has provided recreational and sports opportunities in an area with not many services and it can become the focal point of the community going forward if it is continued to be developed."

- Key Informant, Waterford GAA

Indeed, when asked why people return to the Hub, a participant in the Focus Group commented that it was a top class facility, to which there was unanimous agreement. That the hall is always booked out is a testament to its quality and affordability. However, the psychological barrier to access that many local community members have, in that, they believe it to be a facility only meant for the schools, needs to be addressed.

Impact & Sustainability

The impact of the Carrickphierish sports Hub is best summarised by the quote below-

"I believe it has increased the activity levels of people who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do so."

- Key Informant, Private Instructor

In order to sustain this impact and ensure that the original target group of the hub, the local community, are able to benefit from the facility, the CSH will have to-

- Build a relationship with the immediate community and generate trust
- Establish structures that will foster develop and support community leadership, ensuring the sustainability of this project.

"The vision is to take this hub and go beyond the physical remit of the building, creating an active community and active zone. The gap exists in community development and community outreach."

- LSP Coordinator



4. Clarisford Park, Clare

The Sports Hub in Clare operates through Clarisford Park, an all-inclusive community sports facility set in 10ha of open grassland and mature woodland on the banks of the River Shannon in Killaloe, Co. Clare. The Hub was set up in order to create a facility which is open to all sport, competitive and non-competitive, and that is accessible regardless of ability. Clarsiford Park was developed and managed by the Ballina Killaloe Sports & Recreational Facilities Development Ltd. The setting provides the backdrop for a range of sport and community facilities including a full-size soccer and rugby pitch, 3G all-weather pitch, sand based all-weather pitch, scouts paddock, training areas, multipurpose sports pavilion, 1km running/walking trail, open space and parking facilities. As stated in their application, the development of a Community Sports and Physical Activity Hub in Clarisford Park was a natural progression from the existing work that was already being undertaken in the park to promote sports, physical activity and health in the area. The funding provided through the hub for Clarisford Park is to target non-participation and drop-off rates in sport and physical activity in order to facilitate an intergenerational sports facility.

Model of Delivery

Sports Hub funding in Clare has been used to deliver on a wide range of actions- hiring a CSH Coordinator, launching a community bike scheme, installing outdoor gym equipment and accessible ramps and railings. Funding is also used to subsidise programmes delivered to the community. Further, the hub coordinator works with clubs and organisations in the area to deliver a range of programmes and activities to the community. The park is home to a Soccer club, Rugby Club, GAA, Athletics Club and a Scouts Group. The Sports Hub in Clare can be envisaged as a stream of funding that has allowed for activities to be delivered through Clarsiford Park rather than a single facility where all activities are centred.

Providing a Pathway

A fully-fledged needs analysis was carried out prior to the establishment of the hub. This was done in the form of an asset mapping exercise to see what opportunities existed for sport and physical activity and what was being used. As stated by the Hub Coordinator, there was very little organised sport in the area before Clarisford Park was established. Since its establishment, the community has turned into a hive of activity, a sentiment echoed in the focus groups and key informant surveys.

“There’s loads on offer for children. The age group between 6-26 have loads to do.”

- FGD Participant



"Opportunities are such that there's something for the whole family to do. Couch to 5k for adults, fit for teens for the kids and junior Rugby."

- FGD Participant

"There was no recreational/sport facility in Killaloe/Ballina freely available to the public before Clarisford. We now have a place to walk, run, hold classes and meetings and our scout group has a camping ground."

- Key Informant

It is clear from the evaluation that the community now has a facility to engage in various types of sports and physical activity. In other words, a pathway into sport has been successfully created. However, it is difficult to ascertain how much of this is directly attributable to the Sports Hub, separate from the larger entity that is Clarisford Park. The evaluation found that the community is aware of Clarisford Park but there is a perception that it is only meant for those that are actively involved in sport, creating a barrier to participation.

"There's a sense that Clarisford isn't for me. It is very sporty."

- FGD participant

"People don't come if they feel like they don't fit in. They feel unfit. It's a mental thing. They feel like they're being watched."

- FGD participant

"There's a perception that you need to be super fit looking."

- FGD participant

Battling this type of awareness challenge is an area that needs work.

Well Trained People

Similar to some other Hubs, no specific training is directly provided by the Sports Hub. Some training is provided by NGBs and while the LSP provides training in areas of safeguarding and first aid, this is separate from the hub. As such, leadership development in the hub has been organic.

"The community champions happened very organically. These are people who just wanted good for their community. It's about finding the person who has the time. Its identification and then giving them rewards if possible. Some people are great at word of mouth, some would be good at bringing people in, you cannot teach people that. It is identifying those skills and building them."

- Hub Coordinator

It must be noted that Clarisford park is surrounded by both affluent and disadvantaged communities. Similar to a lot of the other Hubs, it is unclear whether Hub participants come in from the affluent areas, the disadvantaged areas or both. It would be important to capture this data in order to provide training that is best suited to the community.

Strong Organisations

All key informants stated in the survey that working with the Hub has not only benefitted their organisation but has also facilitated positive relationships with other clubs/organisations in the community. Indeed, the Hub's strongest area of impact has been on building a network of clubs and organisations (working in the space of Physical Activity) in the community. The Hub has been successful in creating a platform for the organisations to network, leading to creation of synergy.

"As I was only starting out as a Fitness Instructor it enabled me to get set up & develop my fitness classes"

- Key Informant

"Other clubs are more aware of TFX Fitness and what we do, and vice versa. Other clubs/organisations know who we are individually also. They are aware of our skills and strengths"

- Key Informant

Quality Facilities

It is clear from the use that Clarisford Park gets that the community perceives the facilities to be of good quality. The park is seen to be physically accessible, considered safe to use and has generated a sense of ownership within the community.

"Not everybody is fighting over the same pitch".

- Hub Coordinator

"The children feel as if this is theirs".

- FGD Participant

The Hub subsidises programmes offered by clubs and private instructors which have made them more affordable.

Impact & Sustainability

There is no doubt that Clarisford Park has made people in the community of Killaloe-Ballina a lot more active than they would have been. However, it is hard to determine the specific impact of the Sports Hub funding, especially on the community rather than on clubs in the area. The strongest impact of the Hub has been in the space of being able to deliver programmes but this raises the question of sustainability. In other words, it would be of huge importance for the Hub to consider how the programmes will continue running once the funding stops. If it would have no impact on the programmes then it would be worth thinking about redirecting funding towards other areas. A potential area could be a project that could track where participants are coming from to ensure that needs of target communities as per Dormant Accounts guidelines are being met.



5. Croom, Limerick

The Sports Hub in Croom is the Croom Sports Complex. Limerick Sports Partnership in conjunction with Croom Development Association (CCDA) applied for funding to develop the old community centre as a Hub. The Sports Complex is surrounded by 10 neighbouring housing estates, who are the target group for the Hub's activities. The Hub has since grown to encompass an outdoor gym in the park and additional activities in the Croom Civic Centre.

Model of Delivery

As stated in their application, the LSP and the CCDA are working together to deliver an active and sustainable Sports Hub within the community of Croom. Both organisations work alongside each other to deliver activities for the community.

Providing a Pathway

It is clear from the FGDs that opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity were minimal in Croom before the establishment of the Sports Hub. The Hub Coordinator interview confirms this. Activities used to be limited to walking but the hub has opened up a range of opportunities including Yoga and Pilates, climbing wall and gym-based fitness classes.

"Very good opportunities. It is consistent. We're happy with that."

- FGD Participant

"There's a great type of classes, something for everyone."

- FGD Participant

"Before this facility our only exercise was walking."

- FGD Participant

"The exercises are fun and not over the top. Better than a walk in the park."

- FGD Participant

"This was limited and mainly focused on walking. Now there is a greater variety in physical activity opportunities".

- FGD Participant



It is clear that the Hub has given the Croom community various opportunities. The Sports Hall in the Sports Complex is used by the neighbouring schools for PE classes as well as local clubs for training. It could be worth noting for the Hub that there is a willingness for the community to engage in more structured sport with a coach. Indeed, the Sports Complex allows for this.

"Female sport in Croom is lacking."

- FGD Participant

"For sport, we need a team to start. We need someone to tell us what to do."

- FGD Participant

Lack of awareness came up in both focus groups as being a barrier to participation in Croom. Community members wanted to see more promotion of the schedule for fitness classes. Further, it was found that word of mouth is the most effective way to get people to participate in Croom, bringing back the idea of trust.

"Spoke to a friend and she told me about it. For me, it was a gym but Joanna gave me feedback."

- FGD Participant

"People don't know about this. We need social media. The gym needs a Facebook page."

- FGD Participant

"Could do a lot more with promotion."

- FGD Participant

Well Trained People

Training provided by the Hub has been in the space of climbing wall and TRX certifications. In other words, this training has created a pathway for progression. The LSP often times uses the Sports Complex to deliver training including community coaching, but this is delivered separately from the Hub. There is potential for the Hub to further use training to develop and build on local capacity and leadership. The importance of transferring ownership of projects to the hands of the community is paramount.

"The Hub is 2 years in existence and a number of successful programmes are maintaining good participation numbers. We would like more participation from residents and surrounding communities."

- Hub Coordinator

"Leaders and volunteers aren't around. There's no coaches."

- FGD Participant

It was stated by a representative of CCDA during the site visit that one of the key challenges faced by the Hub is community engagement. Another challenge mentioned was community participation in activities that aren't led. Both these challenges are indicative of low levels of community readiness. Identifying potential community leaders who are trained and then fed back into the community to bring the community together could increase levels of community readiness.

Strong Organisations

Only two surveys were returned from partner organisations and so it is difficult to draw general conclusion on the hub's relationship with clubs and other organisations in the community.

The Hub is home to Foroige, a youth group that works alongside the Hub to deliver activities such as indoor wall climbing, lunchtime fitness, thump boxing, couch to 5k and gym sessions. It was evident that the organisation found its relationship with the hub to be beneficial-

"Provides access for young people to quality sports instruction and facilities"

- Key Informant, Foroige

The local school, while stating that the hub has benefitted them by providing a venue for Sportshall athletics, stated that it would like to see more activities involving the school.

"Yes, more activities involving the school apart from the annual Sports day."

- Key Informant, Local School

Further, when asked what the school would like to see the hub do differently, it was stated that there was a need for "more links, activities and promotion".

Quality Facilities

It was found through the focus groups that community members feel a sense of ownership building towards the facilities that the Hub has to offer. Further, the flexible pay as you go scheme has reduced barriers for people to participate along with the fact that travel is now reduced to a minimum. It is clear that community members find the facilities to be safe and welcoming.

"You can come in here on your own. I feel welcome."

- FGD Participant

"Yes, it is affordable. You can make the payments for what you want."

- FGD Participant

"What is massive for Croom is consistent classes. Structure is brilliant."

- FGD Participant

"We're proud of it. People are walking in the park that have never walked before."

- FGD Participant

"3 years ago, there was nothing in place. The gym is well used because they don't have to travel."

- FGD Participant

Impact & Sustainability

It is clear that the Sports Hub in Croom has had a positive impact on the community, opening up a range of opportunities for the community to participate in sport and physical activity that didn't exist before. However, the Hub could do more in the area of promotion of activities to break down lack of awareness. The Fitness Instructor is seen as the face of the Hub and has had an important role to play in getting participants to engage. This then raises the question of succession planning so that activities do not come to a standstill if there is staff turnover or as funding reduces over the coming years.

"It has brought people together"

- FGD Participant

"There's a lot more positivity now."

- FGD Participant

"Bringing positive lifestyle changes to the community, travel has always been a barrier but since the hub has been in Croom this is no longer the case."

- Key Informant



6. Maghery Coastal Adventures, Donegal

Maghery Coastal Adventures, Donegal's Sports Hub, is based out of Maghery's community centre - Maghery la cheile. The objective of the Hub, is to increase participation in adventure sports among all age groups in the area along with training local people to become instructors to ensure sustainability in the future. The sports offered by the Hub are kayaking, stand up paddling, hill walking, surfing, snorkelling and cycling.

Model of Delivery

Maghery Coastal Adventures is run as a community enterprise. All income generated from provision of activities is used to pay the instructors and is invested back into the enterprise. The Hub is run by a steering committee which reports to the Maghery community group. The big difference between a commercial entity and a community enterprise in outdoor sport is that the former may not provide opportunities for progression but the latter definitely does and Maghery Coastal Adventures is an example of such a Hub.

Providing a Pathway

The Hub has been able to reach its target population with users coming from Maghery, the general Rosses area of west Donegal as well as other parts of the country. A comprehensive needs analysis was undertaken in the form of a survey sent out to the community, 2 focus groups with young people and one-to-one interviews. When we met with the community groups, it was evident that they felt unanimously that they had an input in the design of the Hub and continue to do so.

"A questionnaire was sent out and people picked specific sports and there is still scope for input."
- FGD Participant

"You need to engage the people from the word go. We appreciate that we were surveyed and asked."
- FGD Participant

The Hub coordinator stated that prior to the establishment of the Hub, there was no scope for community participation in the type of activities that the Hub provides. Indeed, there was no scope for progression in these activities either, given that there were no instructors trained up.

Not only has the establishment of the Hub opened up opportunities for the locals to take part in such activities, it has allowed for them to become proficient in a sport of their choosing and progress to the stage of instructors.

Positively, community members that may have never tried the sport before the Hub have been able to engage in these adventure sports, train to instructor level and have become role models for other local community members. This reflects genuine community engagement and leadership.

"There's something in it nearly for everybody."

- FGD Participant

"There are a lot more people confident in the water."

- FGD Participant

"All instructors are local. We admire them but the children see them as leaders."

- FGD Participant

"It's only because of coastal adventures that any training at all has happened including First aid and child safety training."

- Local Instructor

The Hub has been successful in providing a space that is perceived as being welcoming and safe to participants. It is very clear from the focus groups that the provision of a safe space is key to bringing people through the door and to keeping their engagement consistent.

"Going down to the pier would have been a lonely spot. Now, instructors make it so safe. Security is offered to the parents."

- FGD Participant

Well Trained People

The training that has been provided by Maghera Coastal Adventures so far is in the space of qualifications and training for safety. This has been based on best practice policy guidelines created by awarding bodies such as Mountaineering Ireland, Surfing Ireland, Association of Surf Instructors, etc. Two local community members that were on the snorkelling course offered by the hub have gone on to join the Rosses Snorkelling club as guides. This is a good example of a pathway created not only for progression but is also indicative of an avenue to use their training.

"We have held a number of proficiency awards in kayaking and developed our volunteer base to become qualified instructors."

- Hub Coordinator

The hub has been successful in recruiting local people to not just participate but also progress and climb the coaching ladder to become trained instructors. This has led to an increase in local participation figures because people see local instructors as being safe, familiar and trust worthy. Further, all the repeat customers are from the local community.

"Instructors must be local- locals can be trusted, you know it is safe. We'd be a lot more embarrassed if it were a stranger."

- FGD Participant

Strong Organisations

That the Sports Hub is situated within the Maghera community centre has helped in generating community buy-in and in fully embedding the hub into the fabric of the community. The Hub has built off of what was already a strong feeling of oneness in the community. The community centre is home to a shop, a café, a cinema room and a space for groups to meet up and be social with a game of bridge etc. Therefore, the community sees the Hub as being a part of this structure and not separate from it. A level of community readiness existed and the Hub has successfully used it to its advantage.

"We're proud of it. It is centred around the community centre. It is a part of it and not a separate entity."

- FGD Participant

"The fact that it has been built on an existing community centre is positive. Wouldn't have been so successful had this been elsewhere."

- FGD Participant

"A virtual focal point is hard to communicate."

- FGD Participant

The Hub's interaction with other clubs in the area is limited because there are no other clubs in the area that offer the activities that are offered by the Hub, with the exception of Snorkelling.

Quality Facilities

That the Hub's repeat participants are all local residents is indicative of the fact that the community finds the opportunities to be of good quality.

"For us to have access to equipment is huge."

- FGD Participant

While the community do not see cost as a barrier to participation, they alluded to the fact that it could be expensive if the entire family had to consistently engage.

"No, it is affordable. We can see where the money is going."

- FGD Participant

"Cost may be a barrier for the whole family to take part. They are affordable but if I had to do it with my daughter, I'd have to think about it."

- FGD Participant

Impact & Sustainability

Consistent with responses from all other focus groups, community members echoed that the biggest impact of the Hub has been that it has brought people together in the community. There was also the feeling that it gave a lot of people that wouldn't have been active earlier a chance to take up different types of opportunities.

"They are proud to say that they do water sport."

- FGD Participant

"It has brought young people together."

- FGD Participant

The Hub Coordinator sums it up in the following words -

"Maghery is situated in a very beautiful area with the sea on two sides and a mountain on the other. Three years ago, there was very little use made of the surrounding landscape. Today that has changed completely and these sports look like they are now firmly established in the area".

The current Hub Coordinator is seen as the face of the sports hub. His passion, commitment and contribution to the project is very visible. However, this raises the question of succession planning and calls for a deeper look into what management structures exist to ensure that the Hub continues to remain up and running, even if there are potential changes to staff in the future.



7. Riverchapel, Wexford

The Sports Hub in Wexford is the Riverchapel Community Complex, which encompasses a BMX track, 2 pitches for Soccer and GAA and a walking track. The objective of the Hub is to provide facilities for the community to play sports.

Model of Delivery

The Riverchapel Community Complex Limited is run by a voluntary management group. The group consists of representatives from Courtown HIBS FC, Ballygarrett GAA Club, Courtown Community Council, Wexford County Council, Riverchapel National School and a representative of the BMX group. Each club pays a licence membership fee to the complex. The Wexford Sports Partnership supported the complex in its first 2 years of establishment after which funding ceased in 2017.

Providing a Pathway

No needs analysis was undertaken with the community before the complex was built. However, it was clear from the focus groups that the Hub has been able to centralise opportunities for people to access sport and physical activity in the area.

“Couldn’t do much earlier. It was limited to walking.”

- FGD Participant

“Before the establishment of the hub, the community had to pursue activities through their relevant clubs.”

- FGD Participant

“There’s very few community spaces in Riverchapel and Courtown and the complex would be at the heart of it.”

- FGD Participant

“This place used to be very anti-social. Not anymore. It has given people that weren’t physically active before a chance to be physically active.”

- FGD Participant

“It is positive in the area as young people are using it and clubs are using it every day.”

- Key Informant

On being asked if the community is making full use of the centre, a participant's response to which there was unanimous agreement was-

"We don't know about full use, but there is a lot of use."

The BMX club has given the community a chance to try the niche sport without having to bring in their own equipment or worry about safety as there is always a representative from the club on site. While the BMX club is purely participation focused giving as many children and even adults as possible a chance to try the sport, there is a pathway in place for those that want to move from participation into competition.

Well-trained people

Training is provided by Cycling Ireland with support from the Wexford Sports Partnership for development of the BMX club. Volunteers of the club have been provided with BMX specific training as well as safeguarding etc. No separate training has been provided by the Hub for the other clubs or community members. However, a community coaching course is going to be running out of the complex with the vision of feeding some participants of the programme back into the Hub. The Riverchapel Community Complex is the strongest example of a Hub that is led by strong community groups and there is potential for the Hub to build on this further by linking in with community members from the local authority housing estates.

"The management committee helped in social capacity building"

- Member of the BMX club

"If you don't trust your community, your community won't trust you."

- Key Informant

Strong organisations

The management committee of the complex has taken on the role of providing strategic direction to the local clubs. Despite cessation of LSP support in 2017, the hub has continued to thrive because of the self-governance structures that were put in place that allowed for activities to be delivered. In many ways, the Riverchapel Hub is an example of a self-sufficient, self-governed and sustainable initiative. However, this was only possible because of the structures and ownership that community members have brought to the hub. For example, the BMX club is currently led by a couple whose children are active participants in the club. If the couple were to leave the club tomorrow it would be a significant blow to its functioning but there are enough structures in place that would allow some other member to take on the role of leadership.

The community complex has also helped local clubs like the Soccer club in giving them a venue to operate out of. The Soccer club has since seen an increase in membership by hosting events like the Mini World Cup in the community complex.

Quality Facilities

It was evident from the focus groups that community members perceive the facilities offered by the complex to be of good quality. That the facility is safe and has seen next to no anti-social behaviour in the last few years came up a number of times in the discussion. It is clear that the community feel a sense of ownership towards the complex in an area that otherwise has limited facilities.

"It is a hub because it is in the centre of the village. There are no anti-social elements in the complex. It is respected and well looked after."

- FGD Participant

"It is safe. Walking path is lit. The facility is being used and there are people around."

- FGD Participant

"The facility is getting a lot more use now. Never heard anything negative about it. We have very strong community people leading it."

- FGD Participant

Facilities such as a large parking space and toilets have acted as an added incentive to get community members to participate.

Impact & Sustainability

The data points out that the strongest perceived impact of the community complex has been its ability to bring the community together.

"For an area that's trying to find its identity, this is huge."

- FGD Participant

"People are coming together, meeting and doing good for the community"

- FGD Participant

"It's got me out and I get to talk to other people!"

- FGD Participant

The sustainability of the Hub is evidenced in the fact that it has continued to function and then thrive after the Wexford LSP funding ceased. This brought the management committee and different groups together and gave the complex a strategic direction. Although unplanned, this is an ideal result and shows a way forward for all other Sports Hubs.



8. River Suir Community Sports Hub, South Tipperary

This is a water-based Sports Hub providing opportunities to the community to kayak and canoe on River Suir, from Cahir to Carrick-on-Suir with a special focus on Clonmel. As stated by the LSP coordinator, the objective of this Hub is to “link with the community to provide opportunities for participants to experience and engage in water sports and become proficient in water skills, along with reconnecting the community with The River Suir.”

Model of Delivery

The Sports Hub functions through a 3 way partnership between Tipperary County Council, Tipperary Sports Partnership and Canoeing Ireland. The Hub works with 2 local clubs- Clonmel Canoe Club and Ardfinnan Canoe Club to provide opportunities for participation in the sport as well as for training and development. The Hub has worked with schools, the National Learning Network and youth organisations to deliver kayaking and canoeing opportunities. The Slalom course was designed in partnership with Canoeing Ireland and also sees engagement from the National Slalom team for training.

Providing a Pathway

It was found that while there was no lack of opportunities for sport and physical activity in Clonmel, there certainly wasn't a culture of people on the water. The River Suir has been associated with anti-social behaviour and cases of suicides in the past and therefore wasn't perceived as a resource that could add value to the town.

The relationship of the community with the River Suir was practically non-existent

- LSP Coordinator

The Hub is attempting to change the community's attitude towards the river, as-

“People now look at the river as something positive rather than something negative.”

- FGD Participant

The Hub has provided people in the community with an alternative option for sport. Those who had disengaged from more traditional sport because of their rigid structures or competitive element now have a choice.

"There are many sports clubs in Clonmel but many kids have dropped out of mainstream sports clubs and have disengaged. Kids now have a choice."

- FGD Participant

"A lot of kids wouldn't be sporty. Canoeing has opened up a range of opportunity."

- FGD Participant

The Hub has tied in with Youth Services and Clonmel Resource Centre to deliver kayaking and canoeing activities to communities in Rapid areas, usually in the form of 1-day workshops. Much like with the example of swimming in the Sligo East City Hub, the engagement for participants from these communities ends at the end of the workshop. The practicalities of cost and transport then kick in and it is worth considering the role of a Sports Hub in addressing this.

There is no doubt that the River Suir Community Sports Hub has created significant opportunity for the community to try a new sport, making optimum use of their natural resource. Pathways in such a sport are linked closely with training opportunities and will be discussed in the next section.

"The Majority of young people in Clonmel have kayaked. There's a lot of access."

- FGD Participant

Well Trained People

Training provided by the Sports Hub has been in the space of Level 1, 2 & 3 Skills Training, Level 2 & 3 Skills Assessments, River Safety & Rescue 1, Instructor 1 & 2 Training & Assessment, REC2 First Aid, Safeguarding, and Slalom Training. There are currently 4 qualified level 1 instructors with 9 more booked in for level 2. Apart from this, the Hub hires a few freelance tutors, both from the local area and outside, to come in to deliver programmes when demand is high. Like with Maghery Coastal Adventures, it is positive to see that all qualified instructors have come from the local community, indicative of capacity and leadership building happening on the ground.

For a Hub like this one, a majority of the training provided is invariably linked to provision of a pathway for participants to progress their skills. This is made available through Canoeing Ireland Coaching Syllabus 1, 2 & 3. Further, there exist pathways to work within the Hub providing instruction at different events and programmes run by Tipperary Sports Partnership. The Hub has also seen 2 individuals from the community coaching initiative become involved-one with club development and another with instructor qualification.

The challenge that the Hub faces is the amount of time it takes to train adults up to bring people out on the water. This has meant that many community members have tried the sport either through a camp or a course and now want to join a club to continue pursuing it. However, the clubs cannot take in anymore members till they have more people trained up and qualified. This bottleneck has led to an incomplete pathway, something the LSP and Hub Coordinator are aware of and hope to address with a new instructor Level 2 course.

"There's a lot of access, progression is the next thing".

- FGD Participant

Strong Organisations

The organisations that the hub works with most closely are – Tipperary County Council, Clonmel Canoe Club, Ardfinnan Canoe Club and Canoeing Ireland. It is clear from the data that the partners find the Hub to be beneficial to their organisation as well as in establishing a positive relationship with other organisations in the area.

"Increased participation and exposure to the sport of kayaking and it has given CI a place of residency among the community and local clubs."

- Key Informant, Canoeing Ireland

"Improved facilities available and made river safer for kayaking"

- Key Informant, Clonmel Canoe Club

"Has allowed us to link in with other community groups along the river and work with them to build their capacity to set up other kayak clubs"

- KKey Informant, Tipperary County Council

The Sports Hub has also succeeded in developing local leadership as all participants that have trained as instructors are local. Through the training provided by the Hub and the pathway enabled by the Hub, kayaking and canoeing can now continue even when a few instructors aren't available. In other words, dependency on only a small number of individuals has reduced.

However, the capacity of the clubs has to continue to be built with a strong focus on shifting ownership of the slalom course from the Hub into the community.

Quality Facilities

The slalom course was built in the first year of funding and was officially opened in April 2016. However, the slalom course has been a catalyst for Suir Island being developed as the Green Heart of Clonmel. The Slalom course being constructed has also led to a walkway being developed along the River Suir and activities are delivered along this walkway. The change in the community's relationship with the river is indicative of the quality of facilities that the river now offers access to. The vision for the Hub is to now develop a kayak academy on Suir Island. While there is no doubt that the Hub has made great progress in building facilities vis-à-vis what existed on the river before, the community are feeling the need for more. For example, the lack of changing room facilities is seen as a barrier to participation, especially for teenage girls. Similarly, the need for a permanent building on the river to be used as a focal point was noted. The practicalities of cost for a sport like kayaking was seen as a barrier to participation.

"It's all about the commitment. Parents do not want to spend a grand on equipment and then have the children drop out of it."

- FGD Participant

"It's a lot of money. Transport, roof rack and other practicalities."

- FGD Participant

A big reason that cost didn't come up as an issue at the focus groups in Donegal was the fact that community members do not have to buy their own equipment if they wanted to go out into the water. In contrast, most members in the clubs in Clonmel have to purchase their own equipment. This is because TSP currently face challenges with respect to storage and management of equipment. The equipment that currently exists is used by the Hub Co-ordinator to deliver summer camps and training and education courses. This challenge is recognised by the partnership and is being addressed by way of drafting an agreement with one of the Canoe Clubs for equipment to be used by new participants to help them overcome the initial outlays. Further, the Master plan for the development of Suir Island is going to address the issue of storage of equipment. This coupled with the professional development of adults in the community through training & education will go a long way in addressing the issue of cost and equipment.

Impact & Sustainability

The strongest impact area of the Hub has been that it has opened up a range of opportunity for the community. It has also maximised the use of a local resource that was neglected before. While awareness is still an issue, the Hub has built local capacity and leadership by training local community members into instructors. There is also a sense of ownership that is building towards the hub, overturning the negative legacy of the river.

"I would never have had the confidence or interest in sport before this".

- FGD Participant

"Enabled lots of groups and individuals who otherwise would not be active to become active"

- Key Informant, Tipperary County Council

We are very proud of it. The more visible we are, the wider we'll spread."

- FGD Participant

The positive relationship between partner organisations is evident and indeed, has embedded a factor of sustainability into the project. 4 different groups with the same vision came together. Subject to the Hub being able to train more adults, sustainability is ensured.

"Secret of success here is partnership- knowing what your partners can or cannot do."

- LSP Coordinator



9. Sligo East City Community Sports Hub, Sligo

As defined in their original application, the “East City Community Sports Hub represents a collective of progressive community organisations, sports clubs and agencies working together to develop a model of delivery which leads to increased participation in sport and recreation in the disadvantaged area of the Sligo East Ward with support from SSRP.” (Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership).

As such, the Hub Coordinator stated the objective of this hub as being the maintenance and further development of opportunities for participation in regular physical activity for all members of the community. It is clear from this evaluation that the role of the Sligo Sport and Recreational Partnership in the East city Community Sports Hub is one of strategic guidance and support rather than one of direct delivery- an approach that works well.

Model of Delivery

The East City Community Sports Hub built on the already existing SSRP Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative. The Hub widened the reach of the initiative from just Cranmore to the wider East City region. This has happened as per the larger Sligo County Council/Cranmore Regeneration Master plan. What makes this Sports Hub unique in its approach is the clarity on the part of the LSP and Hub coordinator that between programme delivery and programme coordination the work of the SSRP sits in the latter. The SSRP work with the Cranmore Regeneration Office and the Community Development Forum to enter into partnerships with other community organisations and sports clubs to increase rates of participation in the area. It must be noted that the Hub Coordinator has been involved with the Cranmore project from 2006 and has gone on to build invaluable relationships with members from this community, characterized by mutual trust and respect.

Providing a Pathway

A formal needs analysis was undertaken as a part of the Cranmore Regeneration Master plan with community organisations and residents. Further, the Cranmore Development Forum, sports clubs in Cranmore and in the wider East City area were also consulted. Following the focus groups, there is no doubt that the Hub Coordinator is seen as the face of the sports hub in the community.

“With the hub, there’s a much better focus and Diane is very visible on the ground.”
- FGD Participant

Without Diane, we wouldn't have a bowling green. We knew nothing about setting up a club. "

- FGD Participant

As stated by the Hub Coordinator, opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity prior to the establishment of the hub existed in the form of short term programmes delivered with support from SSRP only in the Cranmore Estate. Today, however, there are plenty of opportunities for people in the East City Area to make use of. These exist in the form of the Sligo Lawn Bowls Club, the Boxing Club, the Walking Group and the Outdoor Gym Facility/classes to name a few. It is also clear that these sports have brought different community groups together.

"The number of opportunities this community has been given is incredible."

- FGD Participant

Included in the East City Area is Globe House, an accommodation centre for asylum seekers. The SSRP, through the Sports Hub, provides funding to Resource House to subsidise a 6-week summer camp in the local council pool for children from the direct provision centre and the estate. If the Hub funding didn't subsidise the camp, the children wouldn't have accessed the camp owing to the distance (Resource House provides a bus to transport the children) and cost. On the opportunities provided by the Hub, a member of Resource House in Cranmore who works with children from Globe House says -

"It has opened up opportunities for children that otherwise wouldn't happen."

However, the kids' interaction with the swimming pool ends at the end of the 6 weeks. Should some wish to continue engaging in the sport, they would have to find ways of managing both the cost and transport. While not just unique to the East City Hub, this is an example of the presence of opportunities but not necessarily a long-term pathway and it may be worthwhile to consider the role of a Sports Hub or even the larger sports partnership in addressing this transition gap.

Of all things, perhaps the strongest aspect of the East City Sports Hub is its high-level, strategic approach, which allows for networking and collaboration to take place between the communities and the clubs. The SSRP enters into formal partnership agreements with all the community groups and clubs for delivery for specific activities. The agreements detail the scope of work of both organisations involved.

"The Sligo Hub is a combination of local knowledge and professional expertise."

- FGD Participant

The SSRP use a live coach database, which contains details of coaches that have completed all relevant training and can be booked in for delivering a range of activities. In most cases, it falls under the remit of the SSRP to book and pay for coaches to deliver the activity but it is only along with partner organisations that the activities are run. A consolidated schedule of all activities available in the East city area along with details on age groups, time and venues is available for people to access on the website and Facebook page of the Partnership. Further, hard copies are available to all community organisations and are shared by these organisations through their social media.

The approach that the East city Hub has taken to ensure that people feel safe and welcome is to ensure that it is community organisations that deliver activities directly to the community, with support from SSRP. As with Maghery, it may be that having local and familiar faces work with you provides the required emotional and physical security. When asked what brings them back into the Hub, a participant said-

"You have the support. You feel safe".

Well-trained People

Over the last year 50 people have undergone training in the space of mentor training, active leadership, first aid and safeguarding courses. Training has also been given for governance support and volunteer capacity building. The setup of the Sligo Lawn Bowls club has seen interested local people in the community come together to set up the club. The club is now managed by a voluntary committee, with SSRP providing support for club development. A committee mentor training programme was set up for these members. The walking club is another example of how the Hub has provided support in a strategic capacity.

"The Walking Group was initially led by SSRP with a 5 week Walking Series, 6 week follow on programme and a further mentor programme to support group leaders. The group are now led weekly on a rota basis with group members."

- Hub Coordinator

Strong Organisations

An analysis of the survey data shows that partner organisations feel that the East City Hub has not only benefitted their club/organisation in some way but has also facilitated positive relationships with other organisations in the community. Support to other organisations has been provided by way of club development and providing access to facilities at reduced costs.

This is a disadvantaged area and without their financial support in subsidising these programmes we would not be able to offer the variety of programmes that we do at a reduced rate.

- Key Informant

Because of it we now have a Lawn Bowls Club, which they have shadowed, guided, monitored and assisted in every way possible.

- Key Informant

SSRP had undertaken an external evaluation of model of delivery of the Hub as well as a participant impact evaluation that have both gone on to influence programmes delivered.

Quality Facilities

All key informants responded positively when asked if the Hub had enabled their organisations to deliver quality facilities in the community. It was also clear from the focus groups that community members were happy with the quality of facilities on offer but the need for more facilities was brought up. Indeed, the subsidised rates at which host organisations deliver programmes for the community was recognised and appreciated.

"A lot of barriers here to participation are financial and this is where the Sports Partnership comes in".

- FGD Member

Impact & Sustainability

All key informants stated that the impact of the Hub had been either positive or strongly positive in the community. Broadly speaking, the strongest impact felt by the key informants has been in the space of the Hub allowing for access to sports that would have otherwise been nearly impossible.

"Children and young people have had the chance to test and participate in sports that generally would not be easily accessible such as surfing."

- Key Informant

"There is an increase in involvement and activity of the community"

- Key Informant

"All types of sport have been supported in the area by the sports hub and there has been huge investment in the area which is visible."

- Key Informant

The idea that the Hub has worked towards bringing the community together came out very strongly in the focus groups.

"It keeps everybody connected."

- FGD Participant

"When it comes to sports, it is about your ability and not your address."

- FGD Participant

The balance that has been struck between providing short term opportunities (fitness programmes, swimming camps etc) and developing longer term opportunities (Sligo City Boxing Club, Sligo Lawn Bowls Club etc) has been a big driver of success for the Hub.

While the impact that the Hub has had on the community is clear, issues of sustainability are still present. If funding that is used to subsidise programmes ceases, the question of affordability of opportunities arises and needs to be addressed. However, one cannot ignore that the structure of strategic coordination rather direct delivery of activities has accrued a number of benefits to the Hub with respect to its sustainability.



10. West Cork Islands, West Cork

The West Cork Islands Sports Hub is established across a collective of 6 islands-Sherkin, Cape Clear, Bere, Long, Whiddy and Heir. As stated by the Coordinator, the objective of this Hub is to create a culture of sport, exercise and physical activity for members of the community.

Model of Delivery

The West Cork Islands are a part of an inter-agency working group, who have their own strategy, aims and objectives. The Hub coordinator works with 3 organisations that are representatives of the islands on this working group to deliver activities that are closely linked with this strategy. It is the inactive, sedentary adults and young people living on the Islands of West Cork that are the target group for the Hub. Activities delivered by the Hub include kayaking, inter-island soccer, taekwondo, sailing initiatives and general physical activity/gym-based programmes.

Providing a Pathway

The only needs analysis performed was an ad-hoc, informal analysis on one of the islands. It is the role of the 3 representatives of the islands to link in with the Hub coordinator on the needs of the communities in order to enable the Hub to cater for the different needs of the islanders.

According to the Hub Coordinator, minimal opportunities existed for people to participate in structured sport with the exception of 3 clubs prior to the establishment of the Hub. This view was confirmed by participants in the focus groups. Specifically, the Hub has brought in structure and organisation for sport on the islands. Further, the Hub Coordinator is seen as the point of contact for everything sport related by the representatives.

"We didn't have anything organised before."

- Cape Clear representative

"Now, the steering group (Island Development Workers) know where to go if they need anything sports wise. The Hub has created a culture. "

- Hub Coordinator

"Huge improvement in sports opportunities after the Hub."

- FGD Participant



“You will find a majority of the people are doing something. They’ve all tried something.”

- FGD Participant

Well Trained People

Training provided by the Hub has been in the space of kayaking proficiency skills, powerboat courses and safeguarding. No specific training was put in place to develop local community leadership as this was seen to be developing organically. As stated by the Hub Coordinator,

“The hub through its activities and initiatives has organically created a number of leaders locally. Local community leaders took on roles when organising activities and events.”

Parkrun on Bere Island is a good example of this type of organic community leadership and ownership.

“Numbers for Parkrun have been solid. It survived through the winter and all credit goes to the volunteers.”

- FGD Participant

While some activities like Parkrun have been tremendously successful in creating and sustaining community leadership, there is potential for the Hub to strategically influence leadership development on the other islands. It is also important to note that the success of Park Run has built off a feeling of community readiness, a key factor in community leadership development and something that not all islands necessarily have. Once again, this brings to light the need for clarity on what a ‘well-trained’ individual looks like.

Strong Organisations

Given the isolation and small numbers living on the islands, there are very few organised clubs. The nature of these islands is such that there are large pockets of age groups that are missing (teenagers and people in their 20s) which limits the range of activities that can be offered. However, it was evident that the Hub Coordinator engaged effectively with the informal structure of clubs on the islands. Further, the data shows that these informal clubs feel supported by the Hub Coordinator and have benefitted from the Hub.

“Our Club is better equipped and we can handle larger groups with a big increase in activity this year.”

- Key Informant, Comharchumann Chléire Teo

“Yes, the hub not only supports and promotes those already existing Clubs and Initiatives, it has also supported the establishment of a parkrun, Beara AC, Islands Soccer Tournament, Heir Island 5k, Bantry Bay Adventure Race and Bere Island Taekwondo Club. The hub has also tried to establish sustainable physical activity initiatives with local groups and communities such as Walking, School Sports, Summer Camps, Kayaking, Sailing Initiatives, General PA/Gym Activities, promotional campaigns such as Operation Transformation, Get Cork Walking etc.”

- Hub Coordinator

It was very evident from the site visit that the Hub Coordinator’s relationship with the communities is strong and has been pivotal in engaging the different islands. Despite the fact that the Coordinator works with representatives of the islands and not with the communities directly, there was great recognition of her work and the enthusiasm that she brings to the table. While this structure works successfully at the moment, it once again points to softer skills, such as personality of the Coordinator that greatly influence engagement rates and participation levels in communities.

“The current management of the Hub understands and works well with the informal networks on the Islands and it would be very detrimental if the management became too formalised as I feel it is currently very effective.”

- Key Informant, Comharchumann Chléire Teo

Quality Facilities

There is great appreciation for the facilities currently in place that allow the islanders to be active.

“The things we have here may seem minor but our gym and pitch here is as important as a Dublin Stadium.”

- FGD Participant

“The equipment is priceless.”

- FGD Participant

In general, cost being a barrier to participation did not come up in the focus groups. Many activities on the islands are subsidised by the Hub. For example, the Hub has hired a coach to conduct fitness classes on Cape Clear Island. The price of these classes is subsidised by the Hub, allowing people to afford them. However, this coach comes in on the Ferry to the island from the mainland which means that classes are heavily dependent on weather and ferry timings.

Impact & Sustainability

It is clear from the evaluation that the Sports Hub has created a culture of physical activity on the islands. That the Hub has worked alongside the ‘Active Islands’ brand, developed by LSP, has been of huge benefit. The ‘Active Islands’ brand has created a sense of oneness across all the island communities and has brought people together for inter-island events such as a soccer tournament and runs. The strongest impact of the Sports Hub has been that it helps in making the otherwise isolated islands a vibrant community. It has provided people a chance to socialise with one another while also getting fit.

“The Sports Hub is one of the pieces of the jigsaw that helps keep the islands vibrant.”

- FGD Participant

“It’s people’s lifestyle now. Improved physical and mental health. Everybody has come together.”

- FGD Participant

Sustainability of the Hub is very much dependent on the relationship that the LSP and Hub Coordinator have with the representative development organisations. As discussed before, the current Hub Coordinator shares a positive relationship with these partners and thus has been able to successfully engage with communities. There is a governance structure in place that allows for these partnerships to be nurtured but the success of it depends hugely on people involved. It would be critical to continue to have someone in place with positive relationships with the organisations as well as communities to ensure sustainability.





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