

## BRILLIANT BALLYBUNION

### DID WE MEET OUR EXPECTATIONS?

| <b>INITIAL EXPECTATIONS</b><br>(Feedback from the project team at start of project in Nov 2023)        | <b>WERE THE EXPECTATIONS MET?</b><br>(Feedback from members of the project team in Oct 2025)   |
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| <b>This project will help future proof Ballybunion, enhance our town and develop a lasting legacy.</b> | <p>YES</p> <p>This project has built up a strong group of passionate advocates for nature and food in Ballybunion that will have a long-lasting impact.</p> <p>We have put climate change and biodiversity loss on the agenda in town, and we offered people opportunities to learn more through The North Kerry Sustainability Day, The Square Tomato exhibition and the Ballybunion Bean Festival.</p> <p>We have shown people that they can join others who have a dream to save a little bird, or grow their own food, or make a sustainable town, eat local, get back in touch with nature, etc. We have made climate action accessible, people can contribute according to their time availability, abilities and interests.</p> <p>Arising from the North Kerry Sustainability in February 2025, two new groups have been formed – the Ballybunion Nature Group (launched in March and carried out a very successful survey of the ringed plover. The group now has 67 members) and the Ballybunion SECI began in November 2025.</p> <p>We have built strong links with Ballybunion Tidy Towns (Rena is the chairperson and our collaborator, Karen, joined as administrator this year).</p> <p>PJ Shanahan, who brings a lot of creative ideas to town and has painted up a lot of the derelict sites, has become involved with both Tidy Towns and Brilliant Ballybunion.</p> |

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|   | <p>The town has been visually transformed in a significant way, e.g. the toy library on the beach and biodiversity signs around town (an amazing seedbank of wildflowers came to life when the grass around the community pool was left to go wild). The library and many private homes also got involved in the ‘No Mow’ push.</p> <p>Strong relations were developed with all elements of Kerry County Council, through Lisa’s Artist Residency, and Rena and Gráinne’s engagements with the roads, environment, biodiversity and tourism divisions.</p> <p>There is a real momentum in town now, with many more solar panels installed and eco-friendly homes being built.</p> <p>The project also provided a great way of helping The Barna Way to keep the gardens going and the woodland walk open. It was important to make it more accessible and do some work around the community kitchen and seating in the forest area. Everywhere looked so beautiful and magical for the Ballybunion Bean Festival and it felt like all the work paid off.</p> |
| <p><b>It will connect the past to the future – capture the pride of the past.</b></p> | <p>YES</p> <p>The connection to nature and food has brought people’s memories to life. The times where they were outside enjoying nature as children or staying with a grandparent on a farm.</p> <p>It was lovely to explore the legacy of Rena’s family on The Barna Way, particularly her grandmother, and to then connect with other growers in town.</p> <p>The RTE 1 Nationwide piece (in May 2024) really showcased the strong intergenerational connections people have with Ballybunion and the importance of nature, food and creativity today in the town.</p> <p>Our collaborator, Danny Houlihan was such a valuable contributor throughout the whole project, linking us constantly to the depth of history in the land. He kept reminding us that this area was full of huge oak trees (cut down to make boats) and red deer.</p>   |

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|  | <p>It was fun to link the former Ballybunion Gay Bachelor Festival with the Ballybunion Bean Festival, and it felt like everyone was very proud of the day.</p>   |
| <p><b>It will be a building block and bridge for our local community.<br/>We will bring the community together, like-minded people, but also lots of others.</b></p>   | <p>YES<br/>We surpassed our expectations here and involved so many people we just didn't know before.<br/>The Nature Group, the emerging SEC and the on-going involvement with Tidy Towns, will continue to develop and enhance these connections.</p> <p>We have a large mailing list of approx. 130 people.<br/>The Brilliant Ballybunion WhatsApp group includes all team members and collaborators (20 people).<br/>The Ballybunion Nature Group has 67 members, each involved in at least one of the eight groups within - Ringed Plover (32), Bean Festival (30), Carder Bee (14), Information and Links (28), General (17), Small Blue Butterfly (14). We have a steering group of eight people who run the events, planning and grant applications, including Brilliant Ballybunion team members Joanne, Rena and Grainne, collaborators Sean, George and Aine and two other members of the public.</p> |
| <p><b>We will develop more public awareness in Ballybunion of the greatest challenges that we're going to have in front of us as a community into the future – climate change, biodiversity loss and infrastructural developments. We will empower the community to do something in the sustainable and biodiversity fields. We will help build strength and resilience within the community to face</b></p> | <p>YES (to the first two)<br/>We have made a very good start on developing awareness locally and on empowering people to get more active (see above for details). However, we know that there now needs to be a lot more emphasis on community engagement and involving the wider community.</p> <p>The third expectation is a large one, which we contributed to, but cannot achieve without serious political backing and policy change.</p>  |

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| <p><b>future climate and environmental challenges.</b></p>  |   |
| <p><b>We will inspire a sense of positivity in the community.</b></p>   | <p>YES<br/> This has definitely happened. Everything was so positive, it's wonderful. It has brought out new voices that were previously quiet and given people confidence to join groups and get in touch with new people and to know that it will be social, fun and enjoyable.</p> <p>Our story reached over 2 million people with our PR and media work (see media report)</p>  |
| <p><b>We will build relationships between people and local groups and work together on a common vision for the future. Instead of working individually on individual projects there will be a quorum that will work on collective projects.</b></p> | <p>YES<br/> We have built a strong network of committed people who are already spreading their wings and getting involved in initiating or getting involved in other groups and projects.</p> <p>The Ballybunion Community Forum and the Tidy Towns have worked jointly on lots of projects through the connection with Brilliant Ballybunion. Karen, our collaborator, is now working with Tidy Towns.</p> <p>Daniel, our collaborator, has connected the local primary school where he teaches, to the Forum through the MOYA Festival and to the Tidy Towns through his school garden.</p> <p>We have developed relationships with the Maharees Conservation Association, through their Ignite project Neart na Machairí and with Kerry County Council, LAWPRO and Creative Ireland. Also, we now have connections to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Irish Wildlife Trust.</p> <p>While we have helped to kick-start better collaboration between different voluntary groups in Ballybunion we know a lot more needs to be done over the next few years, so that we are supporting each other rather than competing for people and resources.</p> |
| <p><b>It will be a learning journey for all - the collaborators, the local community, and also the project team.</b></p>  | <p>YES<br/> We learnt about:</p>  |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the land and growing and watching the seasons.</li> <li>● the ringed plover.</li> <li>● more about working together and including the public in decision making for the community.</li> <li>● more about our local biodiversity, through the Wild About Life programme.</li> <li>● the importance of using creativity in our work and how it brings out a different side to people and gives them more confidence to explore their feelings about the climate crisis. It also gives people more confidence to imagine what is possible and what they can do to help the environment and their community. The Bean Festival is a perfect example of using creativity through food, art, theatre, music to show what is happening beneath the soil and what can be done to help.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>It will be a really fun creative process that people will enjoy.</b></p> | <p>YES</p> <p>We have all had so much fun along the way. From our first year, with Fridays on the Farm, Imagine, and trips out together, to our second year, organising and opening the project up to more people, it has been great craic!</p> <p>The Bean Festival was just an amazing team effort and the gatherings we had in advance to co-create it were so much fun and so creative.</p>  |
| <p><b>We will enjoy engaging with other artists.</b></p>                       | <p>YES</p> <p>It was wonderful to work with Sailhymn and have them on residency at the Barna Way. The songs they co-created with the land were incredibly powerful.</p> <p>It was great to connect with other artists in IMMA at Earth Rising and to be one of only four selected projects.</p> <p>Jennie Moran brought a huge amount of learning to the project in terms of how creative food can be and the importance of radical hospitality.</p>   |

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|  | <p>Additionally, a workshop hosted in Siamsa Tire on International Women's Day (by Lisa, the three artists from our sister ignite project, Neart na Machairí, Zoë Uí Fhaoláin Green, Silke Michels and Emer Fallon, and Bernadette Kiely) was really powerful and provided great learning.</p> <p>Lily &amp; Steph were an inspiration with their creative locally produced cooking.</p> <p>Within the collaborator group, a number of the collaborators reconnected with their creativity. This came out during the project (see collaborator profiles)</p>   |
| <p><b>The collaborators will become Ambassadors, and they'll be able to initiate actions within the Ballybunion community.</b></p> | <p>YES.<br/>A lot of them have in different ways (see collaborator profiles in learning brief)</p>   |
| <p><b>We will help make Ballybunion more resilient in terms of food.</b></p>   | <p>This has been more difficult. We tried to inspire and develop capacity, and we have some new growers, but it will take a long time to bring this goal to fruition.</p> <p>Growing your own food is hard and takes time, interest and commitment, particularly when weather conditions are unfavourable, and industrially produced food is so cheap and marketed heavily. More policy support is required to ensure that both home-growing and commercial growing can flourish locally and in Ireland. Currently more growers are moving out of the industry than are joining.</p> <p>It worked really well to focus on beans (in advance of the Bean Festival), one food instead of all food. Some people took the seeds and tried their hand at growing them, with mixed success. People took it seriously and learned from this experience the challenge of growing even one or two plants when the indigenous knowledge is gone from local communities. In a way it highlighted how bad the situation is, but it was also hopeful in how people really tried. We also encouraged them to save a third of their seeds for next year's crop.</p> <p>We also certainly raised awareness of the need to buy and consume local and/or organic produce and this has led to important behavioural shifts within our collaborator group.</p> |

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| <p><b>We will have a core group of people within the community that, as citizen scientists, will be able to record and report on biodiversity and get active within initiatives and be able to contribute to national sighting or stranding schemes and this would also get others in the community interested and involved.</b></p> | <p>YES</p> <p>The commitment and interest in the Ballybunion Nature Group have been phenomenal both in the WhatsApp group and in the ringed plover surveying group.</p> <p>At a recent planning meeting, the following activities were agreed for the coming year: a series of winter lectures; completing Coastwatch survey; wetland bird surveying (assisting Sean O'Brien, NPWS); Whooper Swan surveying; New Years flower surveying (with Ger and Claire from Irish Wildlife Trust); helping to control invasive species, such as Himalayan Balsam; and working to support the small blue butterfly and the carder bee.</p> <p>A practical manifestation of how this interest and network can be mobilized in other ways was seen during the summer when a dolphin was stranded on the beach and so many families came out very quickly to help.</p>  |
| <p><b>There will be a lot of creative outputs.</b></p>   | <p><b>Journals</b> were important for people to record their experiences. Some collaborators really took to this.</p> <p><b>Films (9 in all)</b> were such an important source of storytelling, documentation and also a catalyst for change and engagement (Sean's little film really helped to explain the ring plover project).</p> <p><b>TV, Film and Radio</b> were so important in telling the story- RTE 1 <i>Nationwide</i> x 2, RTE 1 <i>Homegrown</i>, RTE Radio 1 <i>Morning Ireland</i>, Radio Kerry <i>Ours to Protect</i></p> <p><b>The Square Tomato</b> exhibition in Siamsa Tire, Tralee, was a great success in terms of the thousands of people who engaged. It was great that the Ballybunion National School art group got the Local Link bus into the exhibition and were so passionate about it (as well as lots of other schools through the Kerry Visual Artist programme).</p> <p>The exhibition gave an important focus for Lisa to finish and frame works, especially the two large drawings <i>Carnivorous Capitalism</i> and <i>What if the humpback came to talk?</i> which generated a lot of interest and conversation.</p> <p>Gráinne's poem <i>Every Loss Matters</i> which she read at the Opening of the exhibition was very moving.</p> |

