

# August 2025



# The People's Transition: Carndonagh





# The People's Transition

tasc 

**Published by:**

Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC)

28 Merrion Square North Dublin 2 Ireland

Tel: +353 1 616 9050

Email : [contact@tasc.ie](mailto:contact@tasc.ie)

Website: [www.tasc.ie](http://www.tasc.ie)

**In collaboration with:**



**With funding from:**

Supported by AIB:



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



TASC receives support under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) which is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Executive Summary	6
Key Terms	9
1. Introduction	10
2. Mapping: building a picture of Carndonagh	14
3. Community Engagement: what we heard from the community	28
4. Actions: co-creating sustainable pathways	52
5. Conclusion	70
6. References	74
Annexe 1: Donegal County Council 2025	81



---

# Acknowledgements

This report details the findings of the People's Transition as it was applied in Carndonagh from June 2024 until August 2025. This project has been led by the Think-tank for Action on Social Change, Inishowen Development Partnership and ECO Carn.

We are grateful to the people who gave up their time to be part of this project. First and foremost, that includes people across the community in Carndonagh who participated in workshops, focus group discussions and interviews, and completed our survey. A special thank you to ECO Carn members for their support throughout the project.

The People's Transition Carndonagh was only made possible through partnership with Inishowen Development Partnership and the dedicated work of Denise McCool, Rachel Grant and Aine McLaughlin.

We greatly appreciate the input of Donegal County Council as stakeholders in this project, in particular Lorraine Arbuckle and Suzanne Bogan.

Thank you to the financial support that TASC has received from AIB. This allows us to apply the People's Transition in communities across the island of Ireland.

Thank you to Becky Hatchett (<https://www.beckyhatchett.me/>) for creating the wonderful artwork included in this report, and to Molly Newell and Wenmin Sun who designed the report.

At TASC, thank you to Dr Shana Cohen, Róisín Greaney, Molly Newell, Wenmin Sun and formerly of TASC Kieran Harrahill and Matt York.

This People's Transition Carndonagh was managed by TASC's climate justice researcher Deirdre Carolan.

# Executive Summary

The People's Transition is a participative decision-making model for climate action. It views climate action as an enabler of local development, giving people and communities ownership of the transition to zero-carbon societies. The People's Transition seeks to deliver a bottom-up approach to transition that builds local wealth, enables local ownership of climate action and empowers local people.

The Carndonagh People's Transition began in June 2024. The intention of the project was to listen to and learn from the community's needs and abilities and then attempt to co-design a number of climate actions that would benefit the community and address development priorities.

The project had three phases. The first phase was the mapping phase which aimed to build a picture of the Carndonagh community, outlining a geographical scope for the project that represents the people who live there. The key was understanding how people within the community could be included by assessing who was at the greatest risk of being excluded. In addition to demographics and circumstances, the area was studied to understand the distribution of institutions and organisations, such as schools, churches, and community groups, that play a significant role in the locality. The mapping phase informed the rollout of the second phase – the community engagement phase. Key enabling factors for this phase were an active community and voluntary network in Carndonagh. TASC was conscious that this report tapped into the good will of the community and the deep interest of people in improving their area. This made the community engagement phase easier and is a strong base to take forward the project actions.

To gather information on community needs and priorities, participatory workshops were held with the wider community. Alongside this, focus group discussions were organised with groups across the community. Interviews were also held with stakeholders working in community development and climate action. Throughout the community engagement phase an online survey was promoted in the community to ensure that the emerging picture was correct.

Across consultations, common themes emerged. The importance of social connections and strong community links was apparent. People spoke of the vibrant and engaged community in Carndonagh, with active participation of people in local



initiatives. The innovation of community groups was raised regularly, with a variety of community groups seen as leading the way on sustainability activities.

Alongside the strength of community, the natural heritage was seen as what made Carndonagh unique, with rich natural habitats across the area. People highlighted that the wealth of these natural habitats generated a lot of positive will towards engaging in community actions to protect the environment. However, climate actions that focused on individual behaviour change that incurred high costs or policies that felt imposed from a national level, were seen less positively. Linked to this, turf cutting was a contentious issue. Some people expressed frustration at the imposition of bans on peat-cutting that didn't engage with realities of people's lives, while others felt that protecting Carndonagh's peatlands was important for overall climate action and biodiversity protection. Carndonagh's designation as a Decarbonising Zone was seen as a strong positive for the town and an example of community-led and government supported climate action.

Employment opportunities were a high priority in the area. People spoke of the frustration of young people needing to move away from the area for work or third level education and felt there should be more training opportunities locally. A lack of safe, affordable housing was an issue across consultations. This was described as reflecting a national problem but one made particularly acute in Inishowen due to the Defective Concrete Blocks (DCB)/mica crisis. People spoke of the anger and frustration across the community in how challenging it was to seek adequate redress for DCB/mica impacted homes. People also spoke of the frustration at services closing and a lack of medical services locally.

Based on these consultations, actions were co-created with members of the community at an action planning workshop, and with project stakeholders. The actions detailed in this report seek to address the priorities of the community to ensure that climate action provides tangible benefits, highlighting the positives of a just transition.

The first proposed action is to build a training and apprenticeship programme in key green skills in Carndonagh. Across the community consultations, the importance of locally available training opportunities was raised. Green jobs are seen as a major source of job growth in the future of work, with skills development programmes crucial to the achievement of a just transition. Ireland's National Climate Action Plan

states that people must be equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy (Government of Ireland, 2024 Chpt 7). On-the-job training is an important element of green skill building. Through the consultations and action-planning process, skills building in retrofitting, ecology and horticulture were recognised as important for the local area, and skills that could be supported through local apprenticeships.

The second action seeks to use public and common spaces across Carndonagh for community food growing as part of an edible neighbourhood approach. This action promotes sustainable approaches to food through the growing of edibles in public places. Community growing spaces can serve as multifunctional nature-based solutions to achieve climate and social benefits.

The third action, developed by members of ECO Carn would look at building education on the cultural heritage and biodiversity of Carndonagh's rivers and developing actions to support their protection. It would draw on the skills across ECO Carn members on heritage, waterways, and biodiversity. Learning both from nature and from diverse cultures will be a key component of this action, through sharing and exchange of river stories from new communities in Carndonagh.

These three actions, emerging from the People's Transition process also sit alongside Carndonagh's Decarbonising Zone plan (Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan, 2024). The People's Transition process and Decarbonising Zone plans were part of the same framework for "fostering a thriving community in Carndonagh that not only respects and preserves the natural beauty of their surroundings but actively engages in restoring and regenerating the environment, taking achievable and impactful steps towards a sustainable future" (Donegal County Council, 2024).

It is hoped that the process, as much as the proposed actions, provokes thought about how investment in climate action can address existing development needs rather than perpetuate them.



---

# Key Terms

## **Climate Action**

Political, collective and individual action on climate change can take many forms. Climate action means stepped-up efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced impacts, including climate-related hazards in all countries; integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning; and improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity with respect to climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning. There are other challenges that intersect climate action and environmental protection, such as enhancing biodiversity and improving water quality.

## **Community Wealth Building**

Community wealth building or local wealth building is a new people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. Community wealth building is a response to the contemporary challenges of austerity, financialisation and automation. It seeks to provide resilience where there is risk and local economic security where there is precarity.

## **Anchor Institution**

An anchor institution is one that, alongside its main function, plays a significant and recognised role in a locality by making a strategic contribution to the local economy. Anchor institutions generally have strong ties to the geographic area in which they are based through invested capital and relationships with customers and employees. These institutions tend to operate as not-for-profits. However, there are examples of for-profit organisations playing the role of an anchor institution.

## **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future for people and the planet. For sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonise three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected, and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies.

# Introduction





---

# 1. Introduction

Tackling climate change requires urgent and unprecedented action in communities all around the world. Given the interdependent nature of the crisis, if climate action is to be enduring, then it must be inclusive and equitable, with its burdens and benefits shared throughout society. While the importance of inclusive climate policy seems to be widely understood, there are few tried and tested frameworks for the co-creation of climate action in European communities.

The People's Transition (McCabe, 2020) attempts to address this. It is a participative decision-making model for climate action. It views climate action as an enabler of local development, giving people and communities ownership of the transition to zero-carbon societies. The model, which was developed through extensive consultation with communities and organisations around Ireland, seeks to deliver a bottom-up approach to transition that builds local wealth, enables local ownership of climate action and empowers local people. It aims to tackle inequality and raise living standards through the delivery of climate solutions, thus proactively building social approval and increased demand for climate action.

To transfer the People's Transition model into practice, a set of pilot projects were run in two communities in Ireland in 2021, one in Phibsborough in Dublin and the other in Ardara, a rural town in Donegal. Following the success of the pilot projects, TASC is continuing to bring the People's Transition model to life with communities throughout the island of Ireland over a three-year period from 2022 to 2025, and reports focused on Mountbellew in Galway, Enniscorthy in Wexford, and the farming community in Roscommon, Larchville and Lisduggan in Waterford and Crumlin in Dublin have been published and are available on the TASC website.

This report details the People's Transition process in Carndonagh, a town on the Inishowen peninsula in Donegal. The Carndonagh People's transition began in June 2024 and ran until August 2025. This People's Transition project was a collaborative effort delivered by TASC and Inishowen Development Partnership (IDP), one of the 49 not-for-profit Local Development Companies in Ireland taking a community-led approach to local development and service delivery. IDP works with communities across Inishowen to address environment and climate action challenges through supporting collective action, regenerative approaches, awareness raising and local action.

The project team worked closely with ECO Carn, a network of environmental, heritage and community development groups working in Carndonagh.

## **Carndonagh – An overview**

One of the largest towns located on the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal, Carndonagh is remarkable for the “rich natural and ancient habitats” on its doorstep (Carndonagh Biodiversity Action Plan). The Glenagannon and the Donagh rivers flow through the town, serving as biodiversity corridors for plants and animals and for aquatic diversity. Extensive blanket bog and heath habitats sit to the south and southeast of Carndonagh. Cnoc Na Coille Daire or Carndonagh Woods, situated at the southwestern edge of the town is one of Ireland's few remaining ancient woodlands and a proposed Natural Heritage Area. Numerous bays, beaches and inlets dot the surrounding coasts. One of these, Trawbreaga Bay, is a Special Preservation Area and Special Area of Conservation. Within the town, Barrack Hill Town Park was awarded the first of Donegal's Green Flags for Parks.

Across Carndonagh, sports clubs, youth groups, environmental groups, social groups and community development organisations contribute to an active community and voluntary network in the area. ECO Carn in particular brings together environmental, well-being, heritage and youth groups to lead on environmental actions in Carndonagh.

## **Carndonagh Decarbonising Zone**

A further example of IDP's work with communities on climate action is the designation of Carndonagh as a “Decarbonising Zone (DZ)” within Donegal County Council's inaugural Climate Action Plan (CAP) published in March 2024. IDP and ECO Carn led the campaign for Carndonagh to become one of Donegal's DZs, so that the local area could serve as a test bed for climate action projects, delivered through collaborative partnerships between community and local government, leveraging funding and supports where available. The DZ agenda, and Carndonagh's climate action opportunities are set out in Chapter 4 of the Donegal County Council's CAP (2024).

The People's Transition process in Carndonagh has enabled the development of these opportunities into tangible place-based DZ actions that can be pursued by the community in partnership with Donegal County Council. Community energy, water quality and flood risk management (integrated catchment management) are of particular interest within the context of this report.

## Carndonagh People's Transition

The Carndonagh People's Transition project had three phases, leading to the co-creation of climate actions and initiatives that seek to address the needs of the community. A mapping phase made use of existing geographical and census data to outline the groups of people that live in the community, giving particular attention to vulnerable groups. This information was used to design an in-depth community engagement phase to understand different groups' and individual needs and priorities.

In workshops, interviews and focus group discussions people were asked how they would like to see Carndonagh in 2050. Visual images of Carndonagh were created by artist Becky Hatchett based on this data. These images of Carndonagh in 2050 are used throughout this report and reflect the visions of local people for the future of their area. These visuals were presented at an action planning workshop, alongside wider data from the community engagement phase, to enable the co-creation of project actions with members of the community. The actions proposed include increasing green skills training and apprenticeship opportunities in Carndonagh through tailored trainings in retrofitting, horticulture and ecology, with trainings linked to local apprenticeships. The second action looks to expand edible green spaces across the town, through using common and public space to grow community food. The third action aims to document the heritage of Carndonagh's Donagh and Glenagannon rivers and the impacts of climate change and changes in biodiversity along the two rivers. Data and recordings will be used to increase awareness and engage the wider community in activities to support their protection.

The actions in this report build on opportunities currently existing within the community. These three actions are designed to merge community development with climate action, meeting community needs while ensuring sustainable actions are inclusive and available to all people across the community.

This report presents the findings of all three phases in a narrative that aims to take the reader through the People's Transition process to illustrate why it is important to consider climate action from a people, or community-centred approach.

# Mapping



---

## 2. Mapping

The mapping phase of the project aimed to build a picture of the Carndonagh community, outlining a geographical scope for the project that represents the people who live there. This included looking at the history and heritage of the area. It also involved examining anchor institutions, alongside local stakeholders working in community development and climate action. This allowed for the inclusion of these groups in the project and helped the TASC team to connect with the community and identify their key priorities.

Detailed secondary information was also gathered from the area using 2022 census data. This allowed for the assessment of potentially underrepresented groups to ensure more inclusive participation during the listening phase. The mapping phase also helped to identify both barriers and opportunities to participation in climate action, setting the foundation for a responsive and impactful community engagement phase.

### An Overview of Carndonagh

Carndonagh is one of the largest towns located on the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal. Situated in the northern half of the peninsula, it lies approximately 20 kilometres from Malin Head, the most northerly point of Ireland. It is also 35 kilometres from Derry, the second-largest city in Northern Ireland and the sixth-largest urban settlement on the island of Ireland.

The name Carndonagh comes from “Carn Domhnach”, meaning the cairn or mound of the church. Carndonagh was one of the main centres of the early church. It is recorded that St. Patrick established a church in the area, and recent research has shown that a monastic site was present in the area, which most likely dates to the 5th Century. The Donagh Cross, also known as St Patrick’s High Cross, is located on the grounds of a church founded by St. Patrick for the Bishop of Clogher’s brother. It is one of Ireland’s oldest freestanding stone crosses, dating back to the 7th Century (Visit Carndonagh, n.d.)

Carndonagh town is built around a central square, or Diamond, and remains the commercial heart of the town. Carndonagh developed as a major market and service town for an extensive rural hinterland during the 19th Century (Donegal County



Council, 2020). The Church of the Sacred Heart, built in 1945 sits above the town. Its proximity to Ireland's fourth largest city, Derry, mean people cross the border daily for social, economic and development purposes (IDP, 2021).

A new Area Plan for Carndonagh is being prepared for the period 2024 – 2030 under Donegal's County Development Plan. The Pre-Draft Public Consultation Report<sup>1</sup> recommends that the Plan aligns with the Town Centre First Policy supporting key regeneration projects, social inclusion and sustainable mobility, development of Carndonagh as a Tourism Hub as well as supporting a Riverwalk along Donagh River and the Inishowen Greenway. The Draft Plan will be available for public consultation in Autumn 2025.<sup>1</sup>

Tús Nua, a regeneration project for Carndonagh, aims to provide economic opportunities and support tourism-related infrastructure by redressing dereliction and vacancy, and preserving built heritage (Donegal County Council, 2020). The initiative is funded under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund. As part of this, Carndonagh's *Spraoi agus Spórt*, in partnership with Donegal County Council are re-developing derelict buildings into a multi purpose building with a space for teenagers and young people, a shared working space, performance areas, a digital lab and a creative hub.

## Natural Habitats in Carndonagh

Carndonagh's Biodiversity Action Plan states that "very few towns in Ireland can boast such a rich, natural and ancient habitat on their doorstep" (Kennedy & Murphy, 2021 p.19).

The **Glenagannon** and the **Donagh rivers** flow through the town from south to north. Both rivers and their catchments start in the upland bogs and flow through farmland, developed land and Carndonagh town, before flowing once more through farmland and then draining into Trawbreaga Bay. They serve as biodiversity corridors for plants and animals and for aquatic diversity. However, both rivers face pressure from agricultural activities and peat extraction, and suffer from urban wastewater discharges. The Glennagannon river has maintained a good status, under the Water Framework Directive, while the Donagh is classed as moderate but has alot of agricultural pressures to its waters (Catchments.ie, 2025).

---

<sup>1</sup> [Pre+Draft+Public+Consultion+Report+Proposed+Variation+No1+CDP+2024+09.05.25.pdf](#)

**Sliabh Sneacht**, or the mountain of the snow, is the only mountain in Inishowen and is 2019 feet above sea level. Extensive blanket bog and heath habitats sit to the south and southeast of Carndonagh. These habitats contribute to the biodiversity of the area. In their natural state, peatlands provide significant carbon sequestering and flood prevention potential for the local area. However, changes in their water table due to drainage, peat removal, burning and other human influences, leads to significant releases in greenhouse gases (Irish Peatland Conservation Council, 2025).

**Cnoc Na Coille Daire or Carndonagh Woods** is a proposed Natural Heritage Area. The woodland is one of Ireland's few remaining ancient woodlands with oak, birch, rowan, hazel, willow and holly. In 1867 it was documented as a "specimen of the primitive Irish forests" (Visit Carndonagh, n.d.). There is also written evidence that it was cut down in the early 1800's and the existing woodland was regrowth (Visit Carndonagh, n.d.).

**Trawbreaga Bay**, a Special Preservation Area and Special Area of Conservation sits approximately three kilometres to the north of Carndonagh. Part of the Bay is a wildfowl sanctuary which hosts Barnacle Geese, Whooper Swans and Bar-tailed Godwits alongside an internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Geese (Kennedy & Murphy, 2021). The Bay has become polluted in recent years due to oyster aquaculture (Irish Wildlife Trust, 2021).

## Rights of Nature

Throughout the People's Transition project, Carndonagh's rich natural environment and habitats were apparent. Protecting, restoring and passing this on to future generations was a concern across the area. In 2021, led by people from Inishowen and Carndonagh's Councillor Albert Doherty, Donegal County Council adopted the Rights of Nature motion. This motion was to explore what Rights of Nature means for the people and economies of the region and to investigate how they could be expressed in plans, objectives and strategic frameworks. The Rights of nature movement is based on nature's entitlement to "exist, flourish, regenerate, evolve and be restored" (Marrs, 2025). It is part of a growing movement that recognises that current standards of environmental protection are inadequate and new ways to protect the environment need to be explored (Killeen, 2024).

## Anchor Institutions

Community wealth building is a people-centred approach to economic development that seeks to harness the wealth being created at a local level. Under the community wealth building model, anchor institutions have an important role in the community due to being tied to a particular place (McAreavey, 2022). Anchor institutions are often large-scale employers who control large areas of land or assets or are a large purchaser of goods and services in the area (Jackson & McInroy, 2017). Examples include local authorities, libraries, education providers, large local businesses, social housing providers, hospitals or faith-based organisations (McAreavey, 2022). Research has also shown that the combined activities of the community and voluntary sector acts as an anchor institution in a community (Jackson & McInroy, 2017). In Carndonagh active citizens and vibrant community groups drive community development and climate action. Key anchor institutions in Carndonagh include:

- **Donegal County Council,**
- The Local Development Company for the area, **Inishowen Development Partnership,**
- Co-operatives such as **Inishowen Co-op** and **Inishowen Credit Union,**
- **Medical centres** such as James Connolly Hospital and Carndonagh Community Hospital,
- **Religious centres** such as the Sacred Heart Church, Church of Ireland Carndonagh, Carndonagh Methodist Church and Carndonagh Presbyterian Church,
- Educational anchor institutions including **schools** such as St. Patrick's Boys NS, St. Patrick's Girls NS, St. Brigid's NS, Craigtown NS, Donagh NS, Glentogher NS, Carndonagh Community School and Donegal Education and Training Board, which has a county-wide remit,
- **Sports clubs** such as Carndonagh GAA, Carndonagh Football Club, Inishowen Rugby Club, Carndonagh Boxing Club and Carndonagh Badminton Club,
- **Community and voluntary groups and networks** such as ECO Carn, Colgan Hall Community & Resource Centre, Colgan Heritage Committee, Spraoi agus Spórt, Carn Traders Association, Friends of Inishowen Hospice, Inishowen Rivers Trust, Barrack Hill Town Park Steering Committee, Barrack Hill Community Gardens, Carndonagh 8th Donegal Scouts, Men's Shed Carn, Carndonagh Active Retirement, Carndonagh Tidy Towns and Inishowen Environmental Group

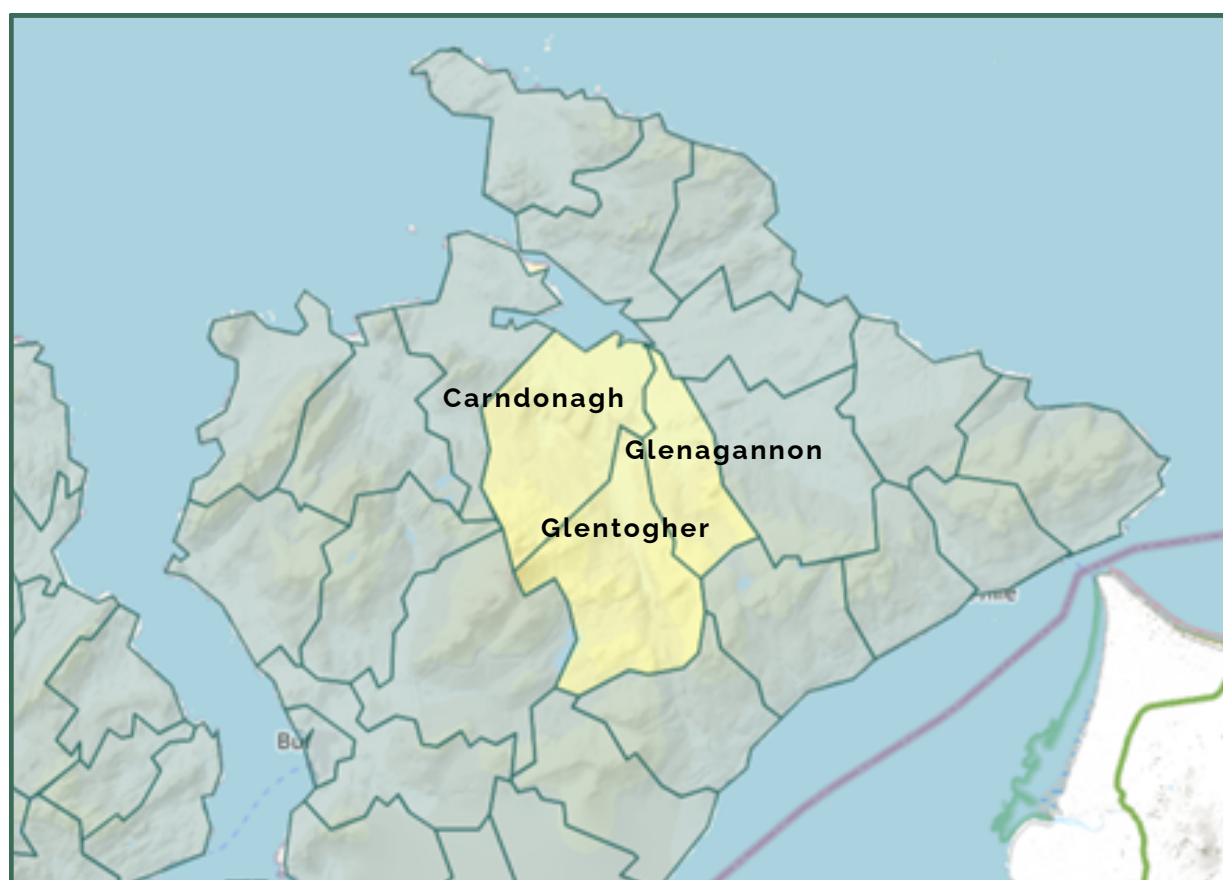
This information gave an idea of some of the groups and bodies that are active across the community, that could be key stakeholders in the project, alongside having the potential to act as a catalyst for project actions.

More detailed information was gathered from the area using census data. This allowed for an assessment of potentially underrepresented groups so that inequalities in participation could be better addressed during the community engagement phase.

## Community Data

Data from the 2022 census was used to build a picture of the area (CSO, 2023). Three electoral divisions were included; Carndonagh which consists of most of the town, Glentogher which covers the south of the town and Glenagannon, which covers the east of Carndonagh.

**Figure 1: Map of Carndonagh with Electoral Divisions**



## Population, Age and Ethnicity

On census night, a total of 4550 of people were living across the Carndonagh area comprising 51% female and 49% male.<sup>2</sup> Three out of ten of the population (30%) were 18 and under. 11% were between 19-29, 26% were between 30-49 while 16% were aged 50-64. 16% were over the age of 65.

In terms of ethnicity, 91% of people in the area identified as "white Irish", 4% identified as "other white", while 1% identified as "Asian or Asian Irish". 96% of people were resident at the same address five years ago.

## Homes, Housing, and Families

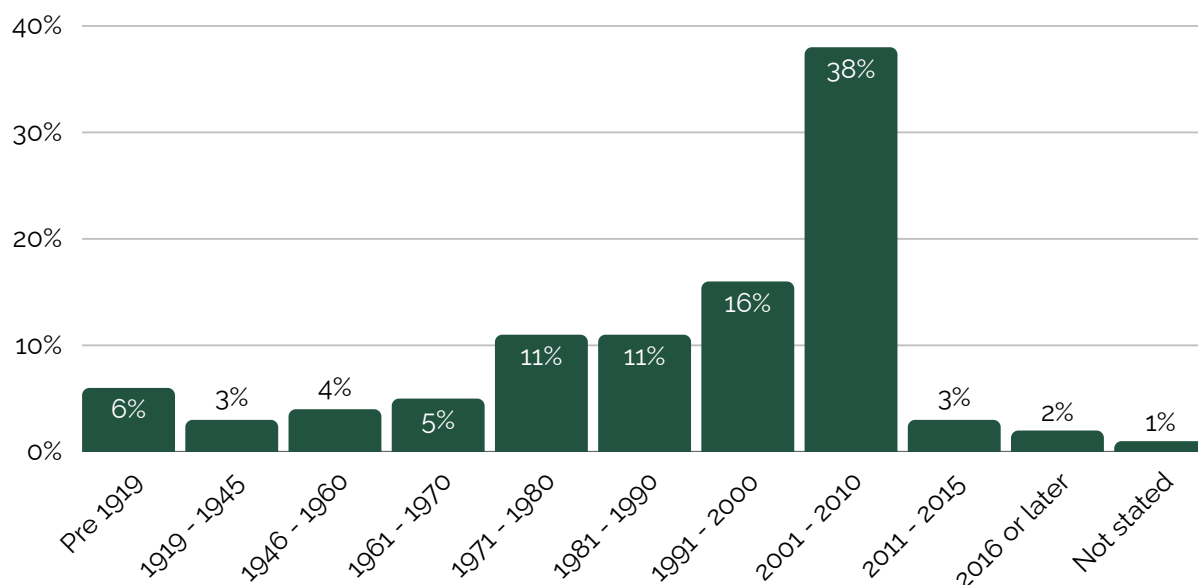
The majority of people were living in 2-person households (20%) and 4-person households (22%). One in every ten people (10%) were living alone. 23% of families were single parent mother families, compared to a Donegal County average of 22%. 3% were single parent father families, while 74% were couple families. Nationally, data shows that poverty rates are highest for people living in households comprised of one adult, aged less than 65 years, and persons living in one adult households with children (EAPN Ireland, 2024).

Carndonagh has seen a significant level of residential development over recent decades. The majority of housing in Carndonagh was built between 2001-2010 (38%). This is also the peak building period of houses with DCB/mica. Only 13% of housing was built before 1960, similar to a county average of 16%. Between 1970-2000, 37% of houses were built. 10% of houses were rented from the local authority compared to the national average of 8% and 8% also across Donegal County. 19% were owned with a mortgage or loan and 45% were owned outright. 18% were rented from a private landlord, compared to 14% across the county, while 2% were rented from a voluntary or co-operative housing body. 3% were occupied "free of rent."

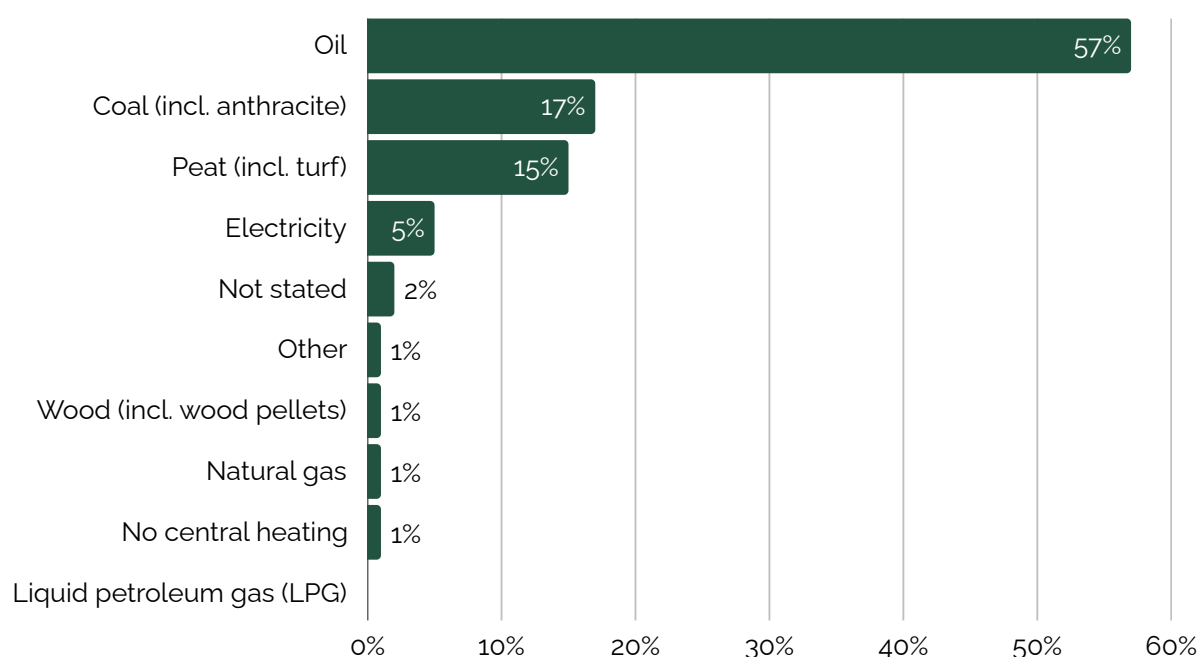
On census night, 77% of houses were occupied while 7% were unoccupied holiday homes and 13% were "other vacant dwellings."

---

<sup>2</sup> The 2022 Census offered only two options (male/female) to the question 'What is your sex'?

**Figure 2: Houses built by year**

Looking at energy use, fossil fuels were the main heating type across Carndonagh. Nine out of every ten households use fossil fuels (90%). This compares to a county average of 87% and a national average of 81%. Of these, oil was the most common, at 57%, 17% were using coal and 15% were using peat to heat their homes. This was far higher than the national average as just under 6% of houses across the country used peat as the main source of residential heating (SEAI, 2022). 5% were using electricity to heat their homes. 15% of households had a source of renewable energy, compared to county average of 20% and national average of 23%.

**Figure 3: Energy Use**



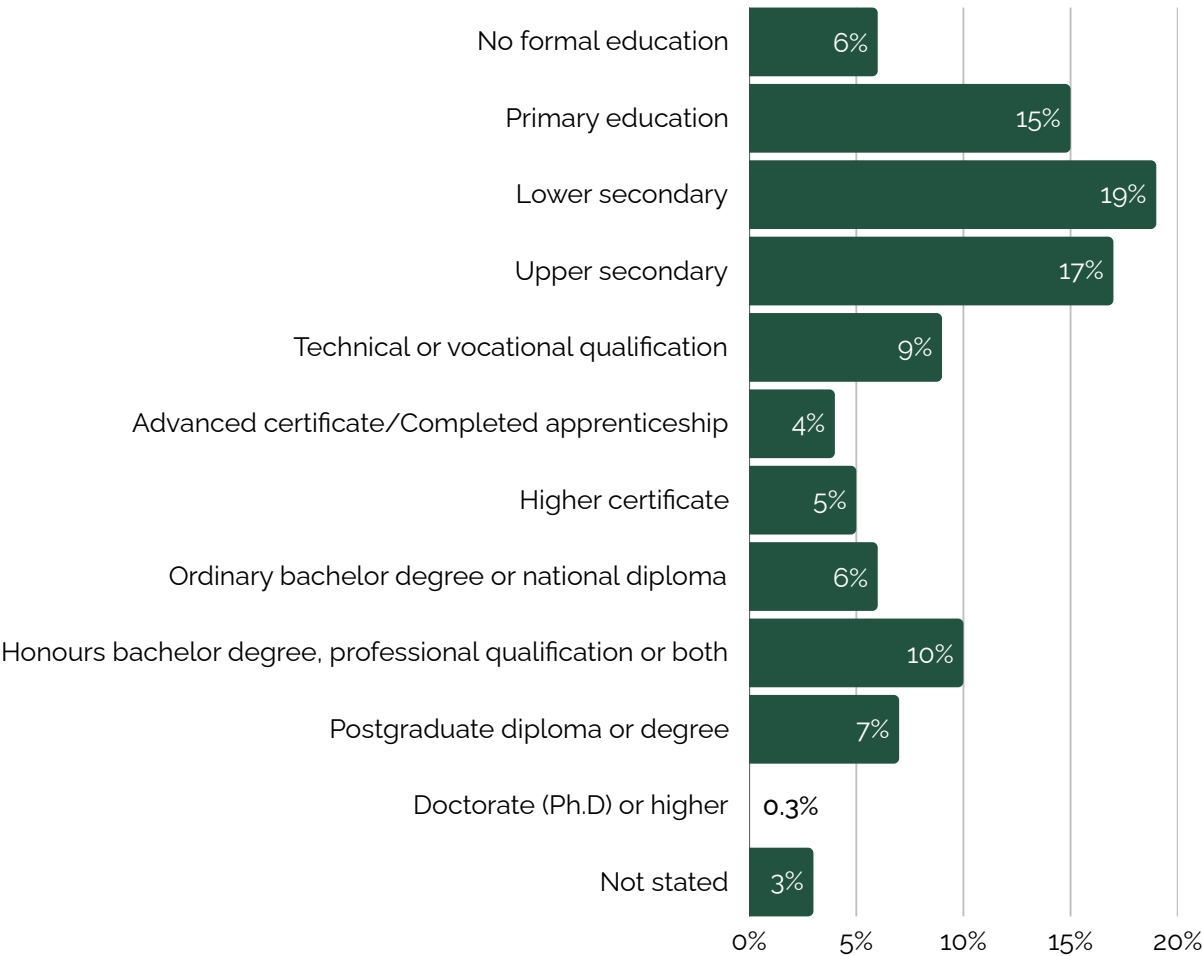
# Health

Across the Carndonagh area, 85% of people described themselves in “good or very good” health. This was higher than the national average of 83%. 24% of the population of Carndonagh described themselves as having a disability, defined as a “long lasting condition or difficulty to any extent” (CSO, 2023). Of these, 51% were women and 49% men. This is slightly higher than the Donegal County level of 23% and the national average of 22%. EAPN Ireland highlight that those most at risk of poverty in 2023 were unable to work due to long-standing health problems (2024).

# Education and Employment

Education levels were high across the area. Over one in five people (22%) had attained education to 3rd level, 17% had achieved up to upper secondary level and 13% had a technical qualification or apprenticeship. Carndonagh has a low rate of early school leavers, with only 6% of people reported having “no formal education”.

**Figure 4: Education levels of Carndonagh residents**



48% of the population were "at work." 51% of males and 45% of females were "at work". In terms of occupation, skilled trades occupations were the most common category, representing 24%. Nine out of ten people (90%) working in skilled trades were male. Professional occupations were the second most common category of occupation at 15%. Women were more predominant in this occupation at 63% followed by the category of "caring, leisure and other service occupations" at 12%, with 84% of people in this occupation, female.

In terms of industries, 28% of people worked in professional services, 18% worked in commerce and trade, 15% worked in building and construction and 7% worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Based on the 2022 census data, the rate of unemployment across Carndonagh was 13%. This is higher than the county average of 11% and the national average of 8%. One in five people (20%) who work, were working from home, all or some of the time.

18% of people were retired, 6% were unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability and 11% were students. 9% of the population were carers. The majority of carers were female, rather than male, with 90% of carers, female.

## Sustainable Travel

Car ownership was at 83% across Carndonagh. 14% of homes had no car, higher than the county average of 12%. However, almost three-quarters (73%) used cars or vans to commute to school or work, higher than the county average of 68%. 9% of people commute on foot to school or work, higher to a Donegal average of 7%, 0.4% commute via bicycle. 6% of people commute by bus, compared to 11% across the county.

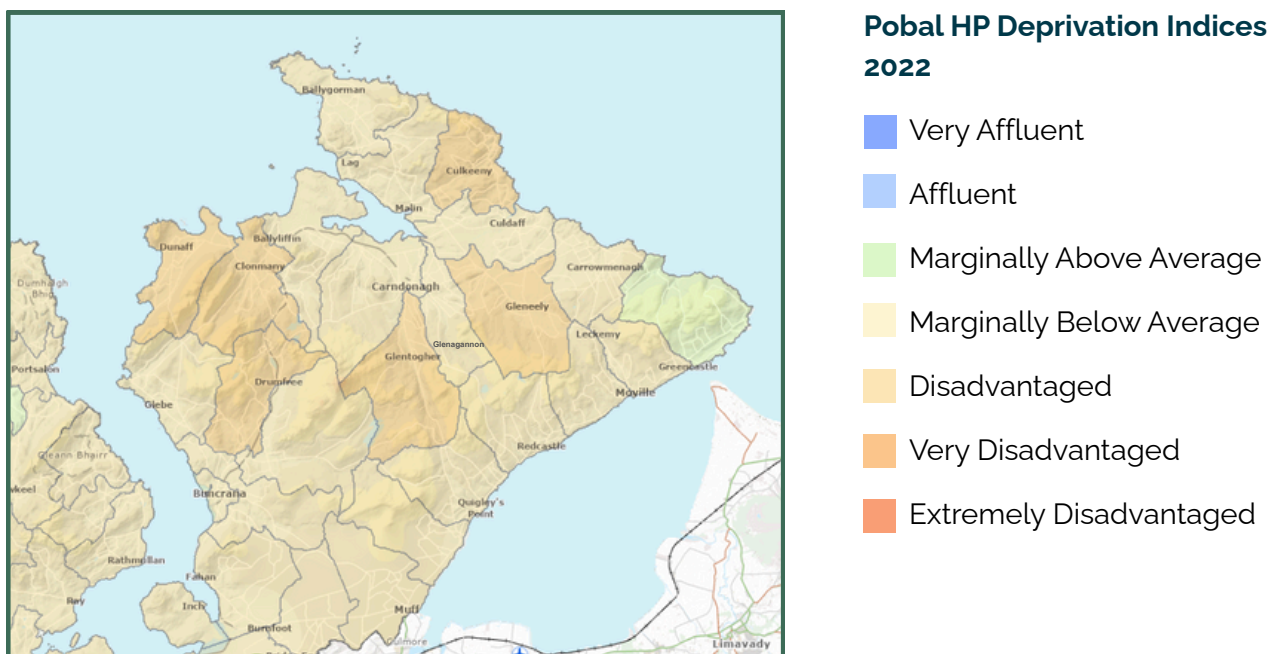


## Pobal HP Deprivation Index

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index provides a single indicator to show the overall affluence and deprivation of different areas. This is based on a combination of three dimensions: demographic profile, social class composition and labour market situation (Pobal, 2023). The 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Index highlights that nationwide there have been improvements in the majority of communities driven by measures such as employment and population growth, seeing Ireland return to 2006 levels. However, many disadvantaged communities have not seen the same level of improvements and the gap between Ireland's most disadvantaged areas and the national average, has increased (Pobal, 2023).

In the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (2022) the Carndonagh and Glenagannon Electoral divisions are defined as “marginally below average”. Glentogher is categorised as “disadvantaged”. At an Electoral Division level these have remained unchanged since the previous Index in 2016.

**Figure 5: Pobal HP Deprivation Index  
2022 at Electoral Division Level**



Looking at a small area level,<sup>3</sup> (Figure 6) two pockets of “very disadvantaged” areas are apparent. One of these “very disadvantaged” small area is within Glentogher and has remained unchanged from 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Small area level ranges from households of 50-200 in size:  
<https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2022/census2022smallareapopulationstatistics/>





ECO Carn led the development of the Biodiversity Action Plan for Carndonagh. The initial ambition of this project was to increase community awareness regarding the area's local habitats and encourage a collaborative approach to protecting these habitats. It notes that Carndonagh has considerable biodiversity potential with 18 different habitats identified. Key actions in the plan involve invasive species management, hedgerow maintenance and restoration, wetland and pond creation, "No Mow" periods, sensitive development of future trails and paths, and a coordinated programme of informing and involving the whole community (Kennedy and Murphy, 2021 p7).

Alongside membership in ECO Carn, a variety of groups are championing community-led climate action in Carndonagh:

- **Spraoi agus Spórt** is a social enterprise located in Carndonagh providing services and activities for families, children, young people, and adults that are inclusive of disability and autism. (Spraoi agus Spórt, 2022). In 2023, Spraoi agus Spórt opened Sioraí, a circular economy hub with retail spaces, keeping furniture, textiles, and goods in circulation and out of the waste stream. In 2024, they took over the Carndonagh Nursery and Garden Centre, which offers two acres of space to promote gardening for biodiversity, horticulture skills, and local food growing.
- **Carndonagh GAA**, a GAA Green Club, leads on sustainability actions, using its green spaces to support biodiversity through edges, verges and wild areas, alongside decarbonising actions, including using low emission LED lights for floodlights, solar panels, with more planned for rainwater harvesting and wetlands construction.
- **Barrack Hill Town Park** is located in the centre of Carndonagh on an elevated site. It comprises green spaces, wild areas, playgrounds, cycle and walk ways, public art, a vibrant community garden and a new outdoor community space, the Daisy. Its strong community group continually works to enhance the biodiversity of the park, managing it for nature and the wider community. They also work with local primary schools and the local secondary school, providing opportunities for students to learn and engage in biodiversity actions. In 2020 it was awarded the first of Donegal's Green Flags for Parks.
- **Colgan Heritage Group** work to gather, document and showcase the rich heritage across Carndonagh, including natural heritage. They have produced publications including *Everything to Help the Lambe Dog over the Ditch*, a book on Inishowen's lost words and sayings (Colgan Heritage Committee, 2023).
- **Carndonagh Tidy Town** group lead on clean-up, weeding, painting, planting across the town. Their range of work includes planting flowers and shrubs, weeding and mowing and painting walls and fences.

- **Inishowen Environmental Group** hold an annual tree sale of native hardwood trees and shrubs in Carndonagh. The group is committed to encouraging more people to plant trees and shrubs and supporting biodiversity locally. Their Facebook page contains up-to-date and practical advice for living more sustainably.
- **Forests of Carndonagh**, while no longer active, engage in the ECO Carn network and are involved in raising awareness of climate action in schools and tree planting activities.

## Carndonagh Decarbonising Zone

The actions taken by the Carndonagh community, through ECO Carn, to promote and enhance local biodiversity provide an example of how other rural towns and communities across Ireland could work together to enhance the local environment. A key evolution of this action is that Carndonagh has been selected to be one of two Decarbonising Zones (DZ) in Donegal. The Irish Government's Climate Action Plan for 2019 outlines the requirement for Local Authorities to identify and develop plans for one DZ (Climate Action Regional Office, 2020). A DZ "is an area spatially identified by the local authority, in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and action owners are identified to address local carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions and climate needs to contribute to national climate action targets" (Donegal County Council CAP 2024 p78).

It was clear that any suggested actions emerging from the People's Transition would need to complement rather than duplicate existing efforts in the area. TASC, IDP, ECO Carn and Donegal County Council worked together to ensure the People's Transition process and Decarbonising Zone plans were part of the same framework for "fostering a thriving community in Carndonagh that not only respects and preserves the natural beauty of their surroundings but actively engages in restoring and regenerating the environment, taking achievable and impactful steps towards a sustainable future" (Donegal County Council, 2024).

## From Mapping to Community Engagement

The initial mapping phase of the project highlighted information that was to form the foundation of the second or community engagement phase. Understanding community dynamics, underrepresented groups and demographic data allowed for the development of an inclusive engagement phase, built on existing community relations and an understanding of the social fabric of the area.



# Community Engagement



---

## 3. Community Engagement

The Community Engagement phase of the Carndonagh People's Transition was designed to identify community needs and priorities. This included community workshops, held in September 2024 that were advertised across the area and open to all, complemented by focus group discussions with groups across Carndonagh, interviews with stakeholders working in community development and climate action, and a workshop with young people. An online survey ran during the community engagement phase and received a total of 94 respondents. Overall, the community consultation phase engaged with just over 200 people across Carndonagh.

### Community

The community survey asked, "What one word would sum up the thing you currently value about Carndonagh?" The response was strongly "community". The importance of relationships with neighbours and people who live in the area was highlighted across consultations. "Friendly people who look out for each other [and a] diverse community" was seen as a strength of the area. The people were what made Carndonagh unique: "anybody who comes this far falls in love with it because of the people."

**Figure 7: Wordcloud results of Community Survey**



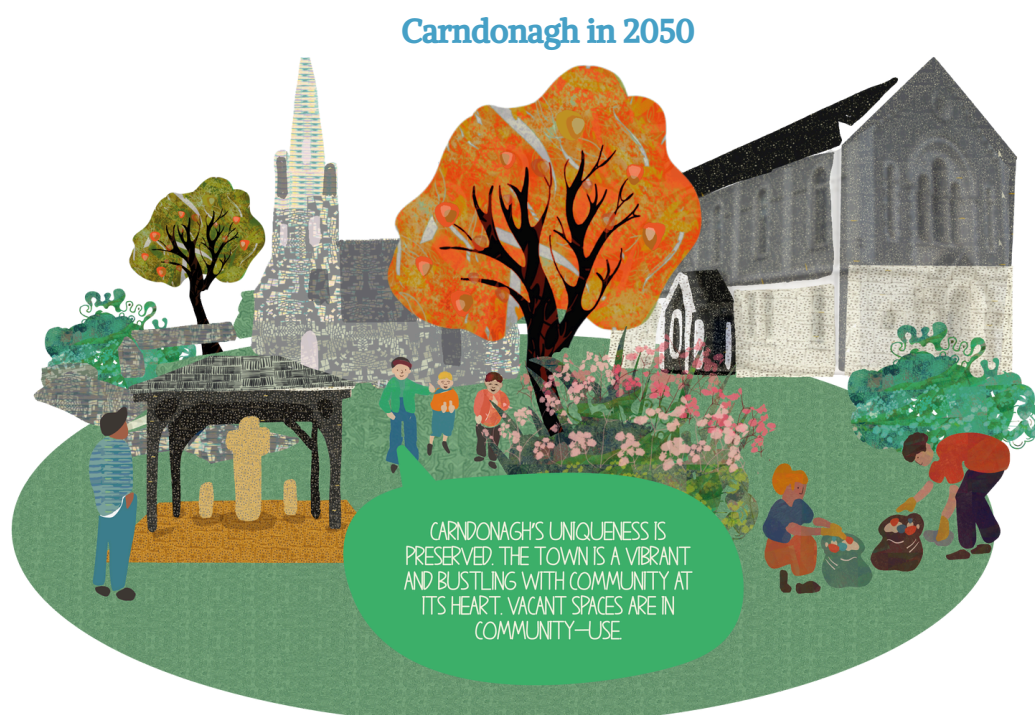
Participants reflected on the community spirit in Carndonagh, saying “there's massive community spirit here” and “community spirit, you'll never get it anywhere else what you get in Carn. No matter what has gone on, there's always somebody available to help.” People's willingness to be involved in initiatives was seen as “a great sign of community spirit.”

There was a sense of closeness across the community where “you can call into the neighbours whenever you want” and “you're actually living life here, rather than passing by.”

People who had previously moved away and then returned to Carndonagh reflected that “we knew we were always going to come back here” and “no matter where I would have been traveling over the years, we were going to come here.”

Across consultations, the heritage of Carndonagh town was noted. The “rich culture and heritage” was seen as a key strength of the area. People spoke of the importance of “preserving and restoring the Donagh cross” as it is “an extremely valuable heritage site.” The social heritage of the area was also seen as important to protect and share “to make people aware and tell those stories that would be lost to time, because they were never written down before.”

People also noted that Carndonagh's heritage sites provided an opportunity to increase visitors in the area, if they were developed for tourism.



## Mobility

In the community survey 94% of people agreed (71% strongly agreed and 23% agreed) that Carndonagh could be a strong, inclusive, sociable place if the area would be “made more accessible for people with disabilities.” A lack of pedestrian crossings in the town and high kerbs on footpaths made it difficult for people with mobility issues. People noted that “Footpaths and paving is inadequate here for wheelchair users.”

Increased “amenities for wheelchair users” were noted as important for the town. While Barrack Hill Town park was an “amazing park” it was challenging for people in wheelchairs or with mobility needs due to “hilly ground.”

## Active Citizenship

People talked about how there is “so much going on in the town, loads of innovative people and a real willingness of people to help out.” A variety of community groups were seen as leading the way on sustainability initiatives. People reflected that “there's a lot of good environmental stuff going on,” and people here are “really receptive to new ideas” with “a willingness to affect change.”

Volunteers were seen as central to that: “you actually need people. In this kind of a project, volunteers are really, really important.” The social benefits that come with taking part in groups was discussed “you can have fun as well, and you meet people in the community. You can have a chat” and “as I say about the community garden, you come for the vegetables, but you stay for the craic.”

Active community involvement has been shown to nurture a sense of belonging, and contribute to well-being in a community (McAreavey, 2022). In thinking about a just transition, the importance of social networks is key in building resilience to both adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change (Mascaro, 2024).

While community initiatives bring enormous benefit to Carndonagh, it was also reflected that it was challenging to find funding to pay staff, so volunteers take on a lot of work, “a lot of volunteer hours go into to making it happen.”

*“funding in terms of overhead, staff, premises, that kind of thing, the funding for that, it's impossible. It's absolutely impossible... you are more likely to get funding for a piece of equipment than you are for a brain.”*



Achieving that balance between volunteers freely giving their time and the work becoming a burden was reflected: “The thing is about grant money, it makes work for us” and the risk that you start to lose group members as “they think this group maybe isn't for me as I'm exhausted all the time from being in the group.”

Volunteerism is an important dynamic, bringing positive benefits to both volunteers and communities, and sparking grassroots initiatives. However, it is important to recognise that volunteering can range from a form of leisure to unpaid work. When all forms of volunteering are considered the same, this hides the fact that some forms of volunteerism are actually work (Overgaard, 2019) and as such, need to be adequately resourced.

Inadequately resourcing and investing in people can lead to fatigue in community groups, with members pulling out or reducing workloads. Given the expectation on community groups as part of Ireland's climate action planning, this is a serious challenge.



## Activities

For some, Carndonagh provides a variety of activities across music, sports, dance and drama. “Sporting facilities, boxing, rugby, GAA, Soccer, athletics” were noted as strong across the area. GAA was “central to the community” of Carndonagh. However, it was noted that “if you don't play sport, there's not a lot for young people in the town”. “Non-sport social activities [are] very limited.”

Participants reflected that there were no alternatives for a night economy. Young people highlighted the need for a “youth-led space” and a “youth centre” to enable them to socialise freely, outside of classes and clubs. They stated that there are “not enough activities for young people,” with “lots of drinking” and “drug-taking” a challenge for the area. A night-time café was suggested in consultations.



In the community survey, 96% of people agreed (69% strongly agreed and 27% agreed) that “more opportunities to come together (evening cafes, fair days, local festivals)” would make Carndonagh a strong, inclusive and sociable place.

Teenage girls’ sense of safety was an important dimension to social spaces. One participant noted that in previous conversations with teenage girls that:

*the girls, they wanted a centre which had an easy entrance and exit. They did not want a place where they could be trapped, they wanted to be able to meet their friends, but also, if they felt uncomfortable, that there was an exit out of there.”*



## Diversity

People spoke of how “becoming a more diverse community” was as a strength of Carndonagh. The contributions of volunteers from migrant groups were seen as valuable in community initiatives “He’s like a social media whiz. He makes a lot of videos for us, puts them up onto our Facebook page and everything. He’s become a very valued member of our team.”

Others felt that these positives weren't reflected across Carndonagh and there "could be more social aspects welcoming refugees and immigrants into the community" and more needed to be done to promote the positive aspect of new people coming in. People noted that new communities "bring new life and new ideas and should be cherished." People reflected on the "importance of promoting the positive impact of new people coming. Give them space to tell their story."

Commenting on anti-immigrant attitudes, participants said: "Some people are welcoming, and some aren't, you know. You just can't get all the people on board all the time."

People were also frustrated that people are "not complaining about our young people here migrating to Australia or America or the Middle East, where they've been made very welcome."

Housing and service provision was linked to some of these attitudes: "Unfortunately, a lot of people, are complaining about the lack of accommodation here for the general population, which is a barrier." "People see it that [asylum-seekers] are getting a lot, but they're not, they're on absolutely nothing."

Research from ESRI has highlighted that while attitudes in Ireland towards refugees and immigration remain largely positive, people concerned about access to housing and access to services are somewhat less positive towards immigration than people concerned about racism, climate change or poverty in Ireland (Laurence et al. 2024).

Community groups bridge integration gaps and were seen as key social supports for new communities "they organised a local group of volunteers, Irish volunteers, and they helped us with our first issues." People highlighted that Barrack Hill "helps integrate people into the community, and anyone's welcome to join" and they were the "most warm, welcoming and most supportive."

Some people reflected that new communities provide an opportunity for intercultural sharing "we want to hear about their heritage, and we want to tell them about ours."

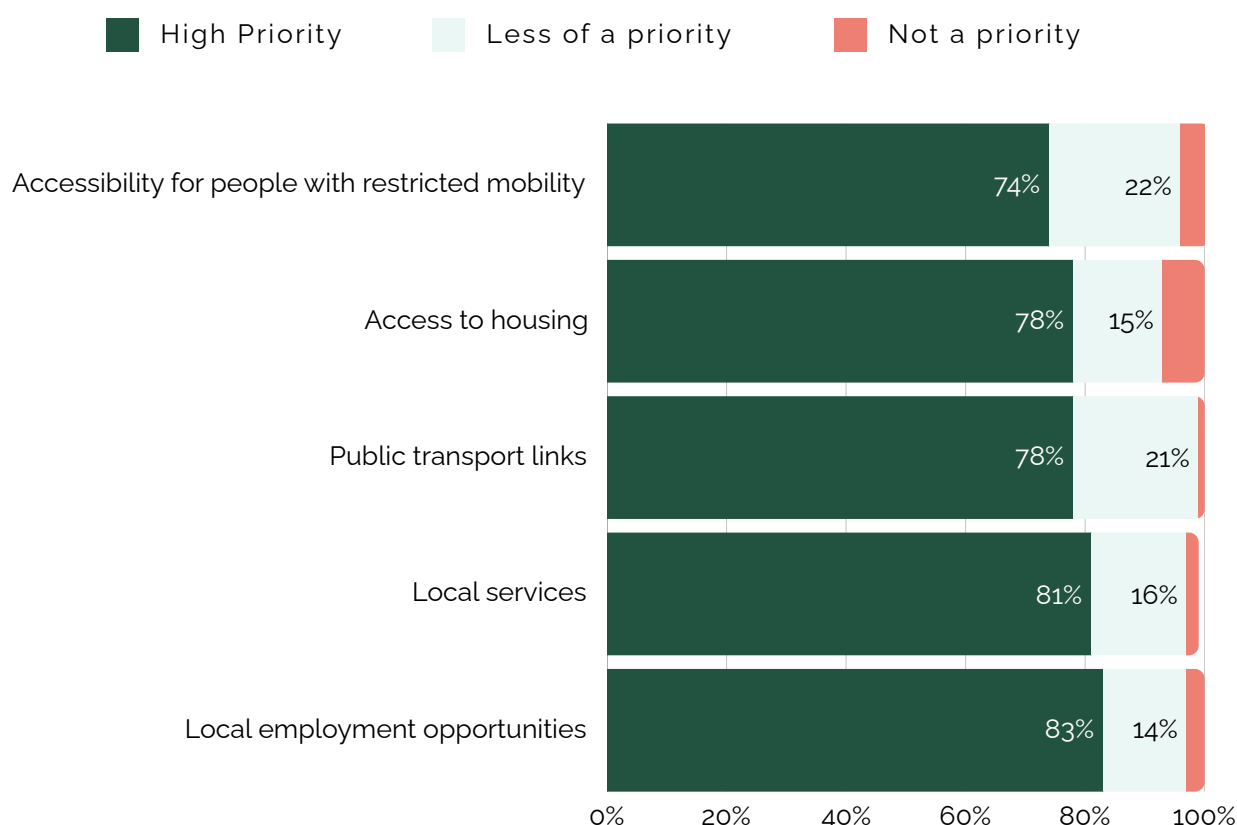
A key challenge for new groups in moving to Carndonagh was becoming familiar with the local and Irish context, alongside understanding local services. An "Introduction to Carn" pack was suggested, to support new people.

## Education and Employment

People reflected that “the lack of employment in our community would be a big thing”. “Minimum-wage jobs [are] available, but there’s not a lot of well-paying jobs or jobs for graduates” and “we could create more employment.”

In the community survey, when asked “In what areas are changes needed?” the highest priority, at 83% was “local employment opportunities.”

**Figure 8: In What Areas are Changes Needed?**



Young people highlighted that there was very little work for them in Carndonagh. This was echoed across consultations. People spoke of the frustration of young people needing to move away from the area for work or third level education: “We’re losing our young people, there needs to be something that we can offer them either to stay here or to come back here more often.” While it was commented that “young people want to go for a year or two, they want to come back, but they don’t see it as a viable.”

It was also highlighted that third level had become an expectation in Ireland, rather than a path that suits all young people “and it might not be what they wanted.”

*A lot of our youth coming up are all being driven in the one direction. They're all going for the same things. They're all doing teaching. There's no mechanics coming, there's no plumbers coming, there's no electricians coming.”*

In the past apprenticeships were an option as a career path “people took apprentices on, and you were paid like they paid your wages.” However “there is none of that now.”

It was also flagged that getting crafts or tradespeople for work was very hard. In particular, the skills gap to support demands for renewable energy, as discussed below, was described as “absolutely massive.”

In transitioning to a more environmentally friendly society, it was noted that “we need to be able to support young people, so they have the kind of skills and abilities for quite a changing world and quite an uncertain world...with a culture of care.” This links to the idea that a broad range of green skills are essential as part of a just transition, and include skills aimed at supporting collective action, coalition building and contributing to transforming unjust social and economic structures (Kwauk and Casey, 2022).

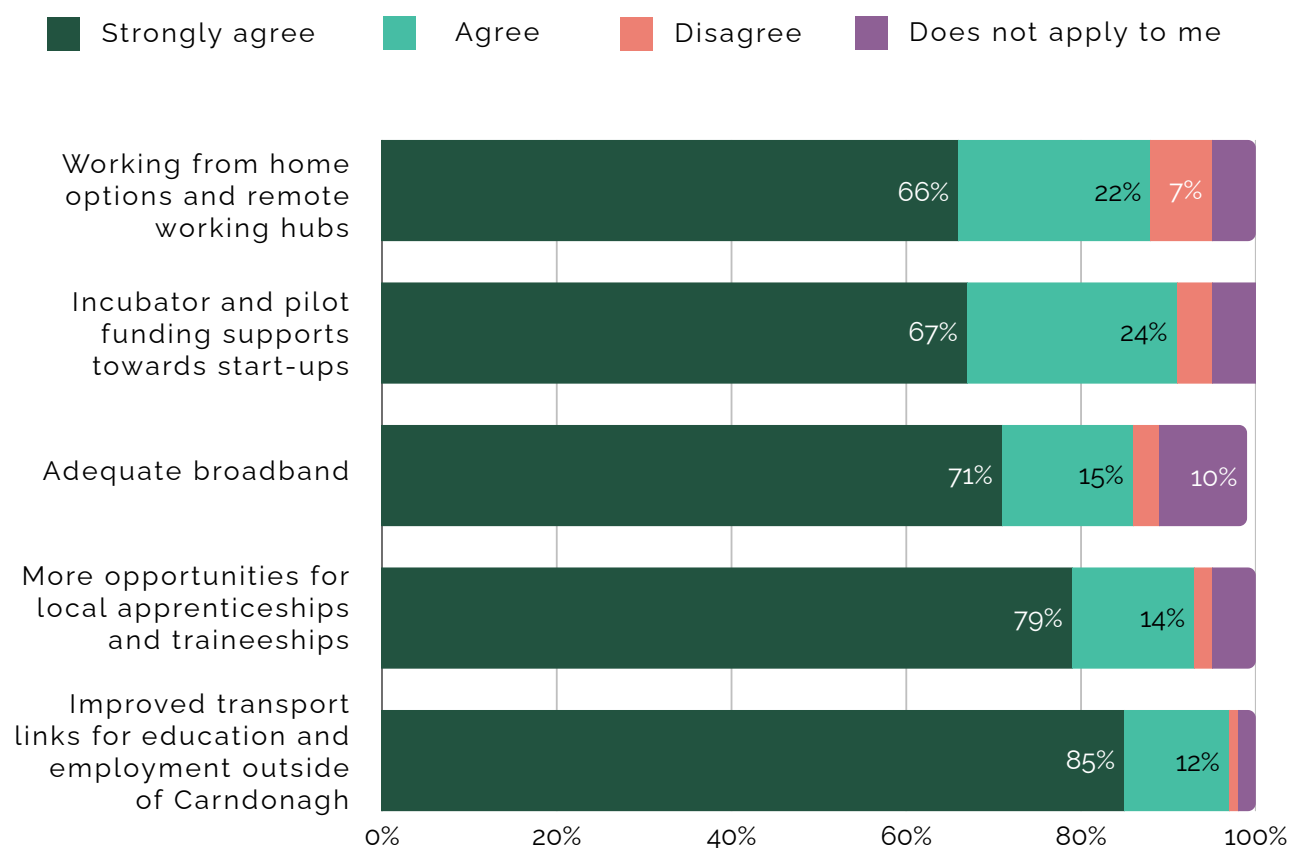


The community survey asked people “What needs to happen to have quality education opportunities and a strong local economy in Carndonagh?” 93% of people agreed (79% strongly agreed and 14% agreed) that more opportunities for local apprenticeships and traineeships were needed.

A lack of support for small businesses was also noted, and the need to protect business in Carndonagh “for businesses, there really is no help, and we see places closing.” This was linked to “costs of rent, rates, electricity, wages, and just the general cost of living” meaning that people were closing businesses and working from home, which further exacerbated the issue by “taking people away from the town.”

Among new communities, the need for increased language classes was highlighted, as current classes “weren’t very intensive, so it’s almost impossible to gain that level of English which will be enough for daily communication.” For some, discrimination in employment was an issue. Members of the Ukrainian community highlighted that some experienced “unpaid extra hours or work in really dangerous conditions or with bad treatment” and were “paid less than minimum wage off books.”

**Figure 9: What needs to happen to have quality educational opportunities and a strong local economy in Carndonagh?**





## Climate Action

People flagged that “there’s loads of environmental will here in Carndonagh”. This was linked to awareness of the surrounding natural environment “it’s important to protect the environment, because really that’s what this place is.”

In terms of engaging people in climate action, for some the challenge was “preaching to the converted,” “you think you’re reaching the ones, but like that, more often, you’re reaching people who know already.” People reflected that we need “more doing a little, rather than some doing a lot [or] nothing”. It was also noted that “everybody can’t do 100% of the things, you have to be able to live as well, but you can do most of the right things.”

Participants reflected on ways to reach wider groups: “there’s no point in asking somebody to do a big thing, it’s easier to do a little thing. And then if they do a little thing, they might do another little thing.” It was felt that engagement needed to “start with children in school.” Schools needed “expertise to support the transition.” However, it was flagged that not everyone will be in a position to engage on climate issues, “unless you deal with the social deprivation, you can’t deal with the environmental issues.”

While community groups were leading the way on climate action, it was noted that climate action needed to be “led from the top as well as the community.” Carndonagh being a “pilot town for decarbonisation” was seen as a strong positive for the town.

## Peat Extraction and Climate Justice

Across consultations, turf cutting was a contentious issue. Several people expressed a wish for less turf cutting and burning, saying “it’s actually bad for your health to burn turf, because the air pollution around here is just outrageous.” In a workshop with young people, the importance of ending turf cutting for climate action was highlighted, with participants saying “Don’t use turf” and we need to “stop using turf.”

The link between turf cutting and flooding was also raised:

*“There’s turf cutting happening, and basically it’s machine-cut turf, and it’s just devastating the hills from a peak perspective, they’re increasing the drainage in the hills, which means that there’s more water coming from the hills, and the holes don’t act as a sponge anymore because of this huge machinery up in the hills, just digging out the peat. So that’s one of the reasons why there’s so much flooding happening.”*

Others expressed frustration at climate action that they felt was top-down “you can't ask people to stop burning, [to] stop cutting turf and doing this and doing that, and offer them nothing as an alternative that they can actually afford.”

*“if you wanted to engage with environmental change in an area like this, you can't look at it from isolation...when you have a situation where people feel let down in some areas then it's going to be more difficult for them to engage with central government policies in another area, where it's going to mean difficulty for them. People have been cutting turf for generations...there has to be an understanding that it will take time for that to change. You just can't come in and say, from the first of January, you can't cut turf anymore, there has to be education”*

The importance of this being led by local people was underscored “this needs to be informed by local people, you can't parachute some person in to say, right this is what we need to do”.

Similarly, these concerns were expressed in relation to DCB/mica: “people do feel disenfranchised because of the whole mica and the way that the government has treated them...a just transition, it's making a fair community that is environmentally responsible.”

Recognising the impact of past harms and inequities plays a role in climate justice. This dimension of justice, also known as restorative justice, is important in engaging communities in fair climate action. As shown above, this needs to happen at a community level, with representation from all voices.

## Cost

Issues of cost and climate action came up across consultations “people aren't opposed to protecting the environment” but a lot is centred on cost. There “must be reasonable affordable alternatives.”

Some dimensions of climate action were seen as unaffordable, “it's an income issue” and “solar panels and EV cars are far out of reach” for some people. Similarly, fears over increased taxes were linked to climate action “the Green Party were going to bring in different taxes and anything like that scares people, because they think I'm just about existing as it is now.”

Greater “incentives or grants for individuals” were seen as a priority, “with regards to solar panels, it could be more affordable if there were government plans available.”

However, others reflected that climate action doesn't have to involve high costs "people know that you can be environmentally friendly without spending a lot of money, because I feel people in our area are pretty good, and people that I know are pretty good at recycling. And we live right here near the beach."

It was also highlighted that the environmental costs in "consumption and spending power" were not taken into account and people don't see the "hidden cost of things" "people don't see that cost, and also they're not charged really for that cost."

## Circular Economy

Across many consultations, there was a growing interest in reuse and repair skills. People reflected that these skills "were definitely coming back, and that is as much as anything about affordability."

People felt that repair and reuse skills were part of life for previous generations, or what they themselves grew up with, "we've done it as children" and "my mother and her mother, they were more environmentally friendly and sustainable and round robin, what you call the circular economy." Bringing back these skills and moving away from disposable items was important, "we're probably only the second generation who made things disposable. Our parents started it, and we fit it in quite nicely. So hopefully we're the ones now to reverse it also."

Given initiatives on reuse and repair across Carndonagh, the opportunity for the area to be a "destination' for circular economy" was seen as a real possibility that groups could work towards in the town.



## Natural Environment

The natural environment was seen as the biggest value of the area: “what we have in Inishowen is unique, it's a beautiful landscape”. The “lovely beaches”, “good ecology” and “woods” were all seen as a key strength of the area. People reflected that it’s “what we grew up with” but is “taken for granted” and “we should be doing more to protect it.”

The importance of care for the natural environment was noted “it needs to be nurtured and needs to be looked after.” This included recognising the value of biodiversity “we need to appreciate native flowers, even if they don't look as nice” and “I would like to see more public areas left to nature and that you only humanly tend to the areas that you actually need for safe movement along all of our roads,” and “we really need to stop degrading our soil.”

The importance of “not using pesticides” was raised. A balanced ecosystem that was common in the past, was needed:

*“I don't remember growing up that we had terrible problems with slugs and snails...we had chickens, and we had tadpoles and we had frogs and they controlled each other. They worked together, that balance we need to get back.”*

### Carndonagh in 2050



People spoke with frustration on pollution in the area. This included the intensive oyster farming at Trawbreaga Bay. People reflected that the oyster farm “It’s ruining the whole environment” “the beach is just a mess” and in terms of biodiversity, the area is a “dead zone.”

## Rivers

The centrality of the Donagh and Glenagannon rivers to Carndonagh for the social, environmental and heritage of the town was discussed.

People noted “the amount of insect life and birds, in the river and around the walk.” It was also described as “a great amenity for the town, it was a lovely walk.” Reflecting on flooding from 2017, “that walkway got destroyed from it. That’s a huge thing, not having that.” The heritage of the rivers was also noted “Over thousands of years, these two rivers have provided sources of food and water industry.”

Participants were concerned about the “poor and worsening water quality,” “the streams and the rivers, they’re not being very well taken care of” and “the County Council could do a lot more in terms of protecting rivers around Inishowen.” Young people highlighted “bad water in the river from farm sewage” as a concern.

It was noted that the rivers are “being impacted by farming and effluent.... So the water quality and the rivers aren’t great.”

People also reflected on the damage from roadworks due to cleaning out ditches: “there’s pesticide runoff going into the river, and there’s sediment going into the river as well...so it’s not an ideal breeding ground for fish.”

A need to increase the value of how people saw their local rivers was expressed “They’re not thought of as living things. They’re just there for convenience, and they’re a bit of a botheration when they flood.”

The concept that nature should be entitled to rights to “exist, flourish, regenerate, evolve and be restored” is part of a Rights of Nature approach (Marrs, 2025). While Donegal County Council in 2021 adopted a motion to explore what Rights of Nature means for the people and economies of the region and to investigate how they could be expressed in plans, objectives and strategic frameworks, people reflected that “nationally, maybe even internationally, it [Rights of Nature] was seen as a big thing but I get the impression that nothing has actually happened” and “technically, if the County Council adopted that, it should actually be implemented in some kind of fashion.”



## Food Production and Farming

People reflected that there was a need for “more awareness of how we grow and what we eat” and “incentives for locally grown produce.” For many, there was a need to highlight the “importance of locally sourced food” and of “growing your own food, buying locally and seasonally.” Young people expressed frustration that there was “not enough good food, too many fast-food takeaways” across Carndonagh.

The cost of healthy eating was noted, “It's more expensive to eat healthy than it is to eat rubbish” and “certainly organic foods and things like that are so expensive.”

Barrack Hill Community Garden was seen as a key strength of Carndonagh, providing locally grown, organic and nutritious food “they have lots of fruits and lots of vegetables” and “it's homegrown, organic, and locally sourced.” The community garden also provides an opportunity for “learning about plants and fruits and vegetables.”

A desire for “more community gardens for connecting [people] and composting” was highlighted in consultations.

### Farmers

Across consultations, members of the farming community emphasised a need for “more value on food production” and the “benefits of food produced locally.” It was noted:

*“we're cutting down the production of food in this country... but we're supporting Brazilian beef that has come in a big tanker across the Atlantic burning diesel. We're improving our climate, but we're not really improving the world climate”*

Organic farming was seen as a challenge where “the cost of organic farming is not worth it” and “it doesn't go hand in hand with a farmer that's trying to make his living solely farming.” Rather than a push for organic farming, farmers wished for more learnings and trainings, including peer-to-peer learning on how to support the environment, such as water management and wetlands development, without having to sign up fully for organic farming.

Farmers also felt frustration with the ongoing paperwork and legislation requirements that have resulted in “no satisfaction in farming”

*“You spent as much time writing paperwork, which nobody hardly ever looks at. It’s not farming anymore or producing food, if the thing goes too far, the food will get scarce, because farmers spend all their time on paperwork.”*

Farmers also spoke of being unfairly blamed, “there’s a lot of real good stuff going on... you have to reward those things.”

Several participants reflected on government policy, saying “we’re told what to do, whereas if we were left to do the things, we managed to do it for years and didn’t wreck the environment.”

*“they encouraged all the dairy farms to really expand, expand, expand. And they lost complete control of it, and now we’re trying to reel it back in again, but there’s farmers who invested massive, hundreds upon hundreds, up to millions... how will they be able to repay that?”*

It was also flagged that there was “no middle man to talk to” and it felt like “all national bureaucracy that’s coming down from Dublin.” Local supports for improved systems at an Inishowen or Donegal level, were mentioned as needed, so farmers voices are heard and represented, as current farming groups are “too broken up” with “their own agendas.”

### Carndonagh in 2050



## Energy

With increases in cost of living, participants reflected that energy costs have “quadrupled.” The rising costs of energy have an impact on people’s ability to meet their energy needs, with more people likely to experience energy poverty now than in the last thirty years (EAI, 2024). It was noted that “there’s a lot of older people that are not putting on their heating, that are sitting in the cold, and can’t manage it. No matter what type of fuel they have, because everything has just quadrupled.”

Participants saw renewable energy as positive but key barriers however, were costs: “[renewable energy] is not something I could afford.”

The process of applying for grants for renewable energy was noted as a challenge, alongside lengthy wait times for schemes such as the Warmer Homes Scheme. It was also reflected that people need to be supported through the process with “data sharing and signposting really important.” Word of mouth had a big impact on the uptake of renewable energy schemes, “if a neighbour gets it done, then that row will come in and ask.”

The opportunity of community-owned renewable energy was seen as a key opportunity for Carndonagh. “Community schemes for sustainable living e.g. wind turbines” were seen as a way to make climate action fairer. It was reflected that if “savings [were] invested back into the community, it could be a real catalyst project” for the area: “one of those has to go towards being run by a community and the benefit from it, and all the money from it go back into the community.”

The skills shortage for installing renewable energy was an issue, both across the country and in Carndonagh. This was described as “absolutely massive.” Not only did this contribute to long wait times but was discouraging people from applying for schemes.



## Government Services

Across almost all consultations, people expressed frustration at services in Carndonagh closing, “in the last 10 years, we’ve lost a lot of our services. Our courthouse was closed.” Many people were struggling with the closure of the day-centre: “the day centre was closed for COVID reasons, and people can’t understand why it isn’t coming back” and “there’s no place for older people to go and be taken care off.”<sup>4</sup>

These closures had a negative impact on town spirit, “those sorts of closures kind of deflated people in the town, when everybody was working to move forward”. The lack of information was noted “it’s just losing those services with no timeframe, or no information, or no talking to the people and telling them what’s happening.”

When asked in the community survey “Where are changes needed?” the second highest priority, was “local services”. When asked “What should there be more of?” 86% of people stated “access my medical, disability or similar services nearby.”



THE GARDAI STATION AND COURT HOUSE ARE OPEN AND FULLY FUNCTIONING. HEALTH SERVICES ARE CLOSE BY. INDEPENDENT LIVING AND RESPITE CARE IS AVAILABLE. THE DAY CENTRE IS THRIVING.

<sup>4</sup> Since the consultations, a day centre has been re-established through local community action



The lack of health services in particular was an issue felt by the majority of participants. Across the board, long journeys for serious treatments, alongside early morning appointments that didn't consider travel time, was hugely difficult. People reflected that "if you have to get any form of advanced medical treatments, you have to travel four and five hours" while for emergencies "people go to Letterkenny for A&E which is over an hour away."

The "lack of nursing homes in Carndonagh" was also noted. The need for a retirement village in Carndonagh was seen as a priority for the area.

Participants from the Ukrainian community described how impossible it was to access a doctor in Carndonagh, relying on out-of-hours Nowdoc services "the biggest issue, which faces almost all families, all Ukrainian families and local families as well, is no capacity in the local GPs."

Alongside services, a lack of infrastructure contributed to feelings of being marginalised at a national level. People reflected that "government funding and everything is just not evenly distributed," and "we pay the same amount of taxes" yet "there isn't a single motorway in Donegal" and "all the broadband infrastructure if you go outside towns, it's practically non-existent."

Others highlighted that "we're happy to be sitting grumbling about how we're the forgotten County. Do something about it. Shout a bit louder and do something more."

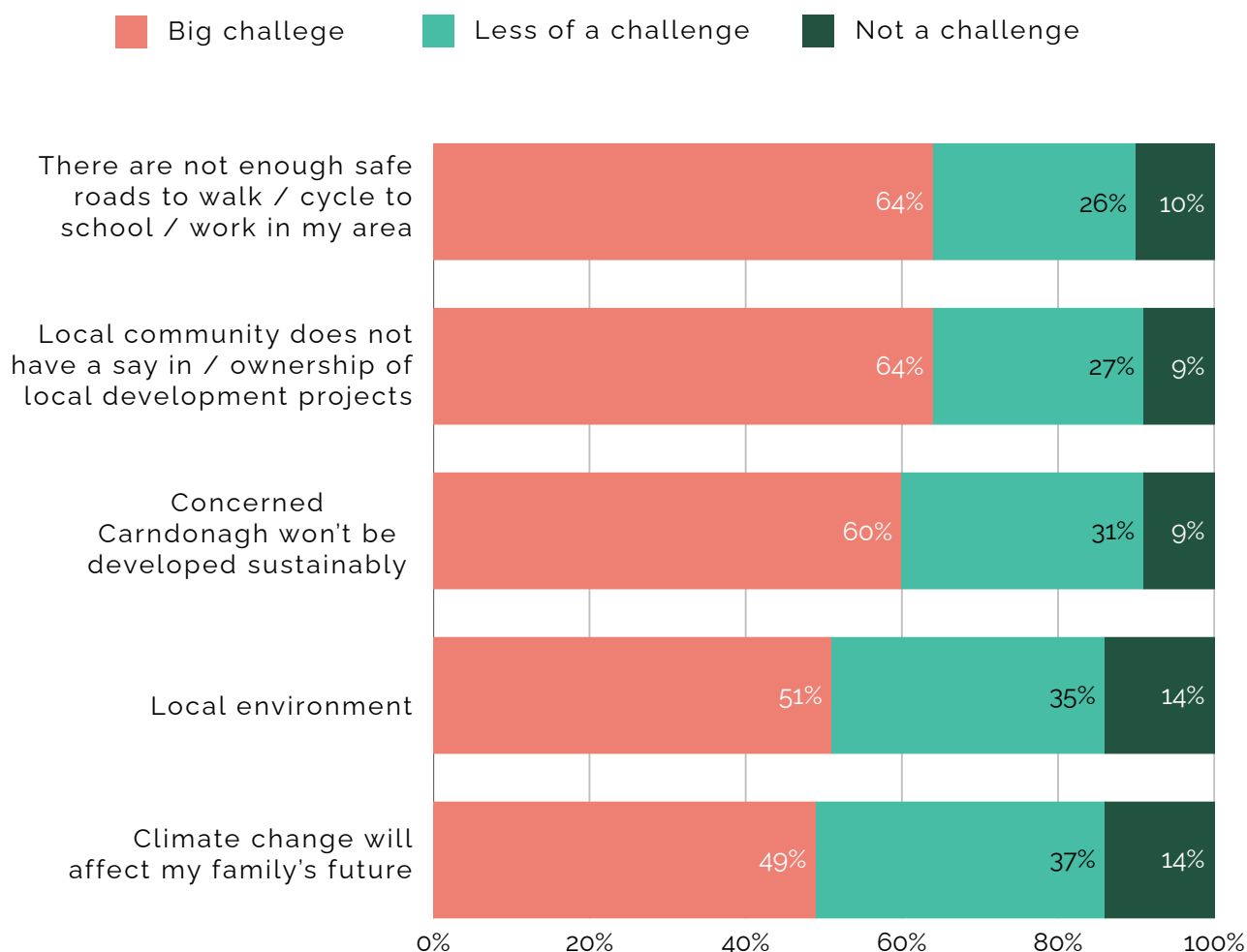




## Decision-making

In the community survey 64% of participants said that their biggest challenge was “that the local community does not have a say in, or ownership of local development projects.” People spoke of a lack of follow through of government promises “people become disillusioned when politicians and policy makers are not seen to follow through and deliver what they promise.”

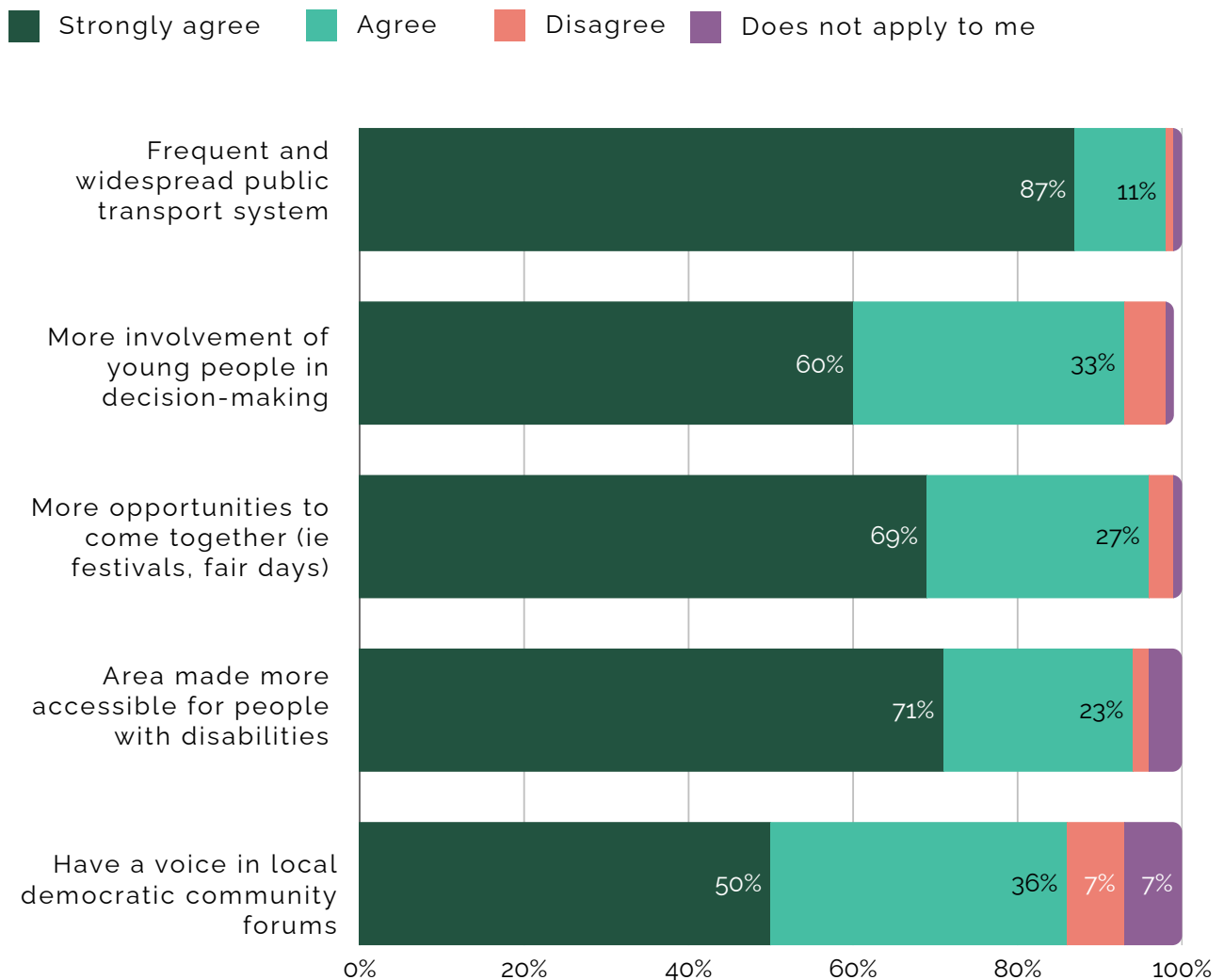
**Figure 10: What challenges do you face?**



In the community survey 93% of people agreed (60% strongly agreed and 33% agreed) that “more involvement of young people in decision-making” would make Carndonagh a strong, inclusive place. Young people also noted that “better planning [and] including youth voices” was a need for the area.

The importance of collaboration and consultation was discussed “people want to have a say and contribute to their own environment and their own community. But it’s a case where there has to be a collaboration.” Context was also really important “what works in Dublin doesn’t work in Donegal.”

**Figure 11: What would make Carndonagh a strong, inclusive, sociable place so that everyone can reach their full potential?**



## Housing

A lack of safe, affordable housing was an issue across consultations. The need for more housing to rent or buy was a priority for the area: "There are no houses really available to rent locally here, obviously there's no houses at all to rent at any kind of a rate". "People are finding it more and more difficult to even get rented properties here and in Inishowen the price of rented properties has gone up massively. There is nothing." This was described as a "national issue. But I think it's made worse because of mica."

People talked about the exhaustion and trauma of DCB/mica "having to fight every step of the way." This had a massive impact on both homeowners directly and the wider communities: "it has done a lot of harm, it's very, very sad. Some people have moved on, some houses are not going to be rebuilt."

More action was seen as needed by the government "the government should do more" to support people impacted by DCB/mica. Reflecting on the Defective Concrete Blocks Grant scheme, it was noted "I don't think the Redress Scheme is in any way fair", "it's very unjust" and "there's a lot there that it doesn't cover."

*"people are spending their own money, remortgaging their houses, cashing in their pension plans and things like that."*

It was also noted that rebuilding could have been an opportunity to improve energy efficiency "the government should have done more" to incentivise and link up schemes. As at present the "the mica grant is so tight for rebuilds, that if you didn't have the extra money, you're not going to accommodate the retrofit."

Participants from the Ukrainian community highlighted that finding decent accommodation was a huge challenge with families living in small, cramped spaces. While the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) is a €600 monthly payment towards landlords to accommodate Ukrainian refugees, the actual experience was that "nobody wants ARP, they want more money than that."

The need for more sustainable housing, alongside age-friendly houses was expressed by several participants.

## Transport

In the community survey, 87% of people strongly agreed that “a frequent and widespread public transport system” would make Carndonagh a strong, inclusive, sociable place. Improvements in public transport were seen as a key priority for the area. It was noted that “there’s a lack of public transport,” and “public transport isn’t good.”

People expressed a desire for public transport that was direct and could be used for commuting for work or college. More accessible and inclusive public transport was another priority. It was highlighted that wheelchair users were required to book their use of public transport in advance, rather than have it available automatically.

Public transport was seen as necessary in making transport more sustainable as the “move to electric cars, it’s not very practical.” Young people also highlighted that “driving less” is important as a climate action. Young people also noted that “reckless driving”, “bad drivers” and “car crashes” were a big challenge for the area.

Night-time transport and female only taxis were also noted as important for both young people socialising and female safety in Carndonagh.

People wished to increase cycle paths and walking trails. At present “cycling isn’t practical because there are no cycle paths, and it’s far too dangerous.” Some groups are working to develop this, such as Carndonagh’s GAA club so “kids will be able to walk and cycle out to practice, as well as providing a path for people to walk on the road.”



# Actions





---

## 4. Actions

### Action Planning Workshop

Following on from the community engagement phase, an action planning workshop was held with community members to co-create actions for the project. In focus group discussions, interviews and workshops, people were asked how they would like to see Carndonagh in 2050. A visual image of Carndonagh was created through working with artist Becky Hatchett. This information was presented at the action planning workshop, alongside an overview of data from the community consultations. Participants then worked in groups to identify pathways to achieve that vision.

While the community engagement phase of the project raised a number of key issues for Carndonagh, only a few of these priorities have been developed into actions, due to the resource constraints of the project. Other priorities raised in the process have been incorporated into the DZ plan for Carndonagh (see annexe one). It is hoped that with time other initiatives in the area may engage with some of the themes raised in this report.

Based on the action planning workshop and consultations with stakeholders, in this section we put forward three community-led actions for climate justice. Each action aims to accelerate climate action while responding to local priorities that emerged in the community engagement phase. These include 1) developing green skills training opportunities in Carndonagh, 2) increasing community growing and edible spaces, and 3) protecting the biodiversity and heritage of Carndonagh's Two Rivers.

These three actions complement each other and serve to further build social and environmental infrastructure across Carndonagh. These actions support connection and solidarity both with people and the natural world. The work of care and repair of neighbourhoods, communities and green spaces is essential for transitioning to sustainable futures (Carr, 2022).

## Action One: Green Skills

Across the community consultations, the importance of locally available training opportunities was raised. People expressed frustration that young people, and indeed anyone wanting to reskill, needed to travel outside of Inishowen. At the action-planning workshop, one group designed a plan to improve training and employment opportunities in Carndonagh. This was then developed into a proposed plan that would increase green skills opportunities locally. This action could engage with Donegal Education and Training Board, Atlantic Technological University or North West Regional College in terms of training, with organisations in Carndonagh providing apprenticeships.

### Skills for a just transition

Transitioning to a just and sustainable future requires new skills and competencies. These are termed green skills and are seen as a major source of job growth in the future of work. Green skills and green jobs are an important catalyst for the transition to a green economy (Wegenberger and Ponocny, 2025). While a green transition will create new jobs, it will also alter knowledge and skills needed in existing jobs.

Skills development programmes are crucial to the achievement of a just transition. Skills development can promote innovation, investment and competitiveness which in turn feed back into social development. Providing workers with the right set of skills will help the transition to sectors with employment growth and also to better jobs. In this, reskilling and upskilling are important.

### What are green skills?

**Green skills** are the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society (UNIDO, 2022). This includes the abilities, skills and training required for a sustainable, climate-friendly and resource-conserving future. These are essential for achieving decarbonisation, climate protection, and a circular economy. These also need to be supported by a more general cross-section of sustainability competencies (Wegenberger and Ponocny, 2025).



## Access

Addressing regional disparities is essential to ensure everyone has access to green skills development and job opportunities, as green skills trainings are not distributed evenly (Fuchs, 2024). At the same time, training must address underrepresentation from some groups in green jobs.

### What are green jobs?

**Green jobs** are decent jobs that reduce the consumption of energy and raw materials, limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimise waste and pollution, protect and restore ecosystems and enable enterprises and communities to adapt to climate change (UNEP, 2022).

Green jobs to date tend to be highly skilled, requiring third level education. Men are more affected by the disappearance of polluting jobs, which tend to medium skilled jobs with lower educational requirements. However, women tend to be underrepresented in green jobs. Achieving a greater balance, alongside supporting both men and women to access training and upskilling is essential to equip people with the right skills to participate in, and benefit from the green transition.

Reducing barriers for all learners is also about supporting and including those with disabilities, with literacy or numeracy difficulties and with limited English proficiency to access green skills training (SOLAS, 2024).

## Green skills development in Ireland

Ireland's Climate Action Plan states that people must be equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy (Government of Ireland CAP, 2024 Chp 7). Alongside this, the National Skills Strategy 2025, Skills for Zero Carbon, Building Future Skills 2020, Future Jobs Ireland 2019, the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025 and the National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024 all outline the importance of green skills for Ireland. Green Skills 2030- *The First National Further Education & Training (FET) Strategy for the Green Transition* sets out the Irish FET sector's response to emerging green skills needs.

On-the-job training is an important element of green skills building as some skills can only be developed on the job through practical experience (Fuchs, 2024). Apprenticeships are recognised as needing to be a much larger part of the education landscape in Ireland (The Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025).

Ireland's Climate Action Plan sees **Education and Training Boards** or Local Enterprise Offices as central in responding to training and re-training opportunities needed for green jobs. Education and Training Boards provide an opportunity to build skills and training locally. They play a vital role in addressing the shortage of green skills in Ireland. SOLAS's Green Skills for *Further Education and Training Roadmap 2021-2030* is the first national Further Education and Training (FET) strategy for a green transition (SOLAS, 2024). It aims to provide a blueprint matching demand for green skills with trainings, knowledge and competencies. Further, *Future FET: Transforming Learning the National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy (2020-2024)* highlights the requirements for ETBs to develop courses which can provide necessary skills to meet industry requirements in Ireland (SOLAS, 2020). It calls for FET providers to implement course offerings which build necessary skills in green energy, building retrofits and the wider environment.

## Green Skills development in Carndonagh

Through community consultations, the action-planning workshop and planning with stakeholders, several key skills have been identified. These include skills development opportunities in retrofitting, ecology and horticulture.

At the time of writing this report, a new PEACE PLUS programme, the Green Accelerator Skills programme (GRASP) was launched to address green skills shortages in the cross-border construction sector.

### Retrofitting

5

Residential buildings account for 9% of national emissions in 2022. Retrofitting refers to applying measures to buildings that reduce energy use, such as roof and wall insulation, low-energy lighting, photovoltaic solar panels, heat pumps and heating controls. Ireland has set out a target of a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030 (Government of Ireland, 2024). This includes a target of retrofitting the equivalent of 500,000 homes to a BER of B2/cost-optimal and installing 400,000 heat pumps in existing homes by the end of 2030 (Government of Ireland, 2024). A key challenge in meeting these retrofitting goals is a labour and skills gap, (EGFSN, 2021).

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.donegaletb.ie/2025/06/10/new-eg-8-million-grasp-project-launched-to-tackle-green-skills-shortage-in-cross-border-construction-sector/>

This gap is particularly acute in specialist areas such as plumbing and heat pump installation. While retrofitting tends to focus on energy efficiency within a home, there is also an opportunity to build skills in environmental conservation, to equip learners with a wide range of skills on sustainable construction. As noted by community stakeholders, this could include rainwater conservation, harvesting and drainage.

ETBs have already established retrofitting centres of excellence, known as Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) training centres at Laois and Offaly ETB, Waterford and Wexford ETB, and Limerick and Claire ETB. Two more are due to open in Dublin and in Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB (Eolas, 2023). IDP collaborates with the NZEB National Centre for Construction (Mount Lucas) mobile training unit and have delivered workshops for young people and the construction sector in Inishowen.

## Horticulture

Skilled workers are needed in Ireland's horticulture sector as this sector continues to face significant labour shortages (McIntosh, 2025). Horticulture skills are important as having the right mix of plant diversity can deliver ecosystem services and regulate environmental conditions (Gush et al., 2023).

Building training and upskilling for farmers, agriculture and horticulture workers in sustainable food production is identified as a key area (SOLAS, 2024). In assessing horticulture skills, Green Skills 2030 identifies the need to promote and enhance training and upskilling opportunities in sustainable agriculture, land management, nature-based solutions, circular economy and the bioeconomy (SOLAS, 2024). This also includes specific training and workshops on climate smart farming and growing vegetables at home.

Teagasc's leads on horticultural education and training in Ireland, with two colleges, one in Dublin and one in Kilkenny. Green Skills 2030 identifies the need to link in with Teagasc to enhance and expand the delivery of existing horticulture courses at FET Centres across the country.

## Ecology

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management notes a shortage in an ecologically skilled workforce, alongside an anticipated increase in the need for professionally trained ecologists due to a growing awareness of the biodiversity crisis across sectors (CIEEM, 2022).



Policy and legislative developments, such as the Climate Action Plan, 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and National Planning Framework, have heightened the focus on occupations and skills relating to nature restoration, water quality and biodiversity (SOLAS, 2024). A lack of practical skills and knowledge of new entrants is a workplace challenge, as university courses in ecology tend to focus on academic knowledge rather than practical field skills (CIEEM, 2022).

Specifically, key needs exist in raising awareness of biodiversity and environmental career opportunities at secondary school level; developing trainings for land management, biodiversity and sustainability; promoting career paths and work-based learning from NFQ 6-8; and creating alternative routes for upskilling such as part-time courses and placing value on community-based training schemes.

Skills gaps were identified for:

- Ecologists in wetland restoration, field work, river management, surveying and monitoring, species-specific ecologists and plant identification skills
- Environmental scientists in sustainability skills, such as circular economy and implementation of biodiversity targets, and technical skills, such as carbon appraisal
- Heritage officers for traditional construction skills to repair, maintain and retrofit historic buildings (SOLAS, 2024)

### **Case Study: Kerry ETB's Wind Turbine Apprenticeship**

Based on an identified need in the local area, Kerry Education and Training Board (ETB) launched a Wind Turbine Maintenance Technician three-year Apprenticeship programme. This provides learners with knowledge, skills and competence to become qualified maintenance technicians in Ireland's Renewable and Sustainable Energy sector. Apprentices undertake seven stages of training. Four of these take place at Kerry College Monavalley Campus in Tralee in their wind turbine training facility. The further three stages take place onsite with employers. Apprentices are paid by their employer for both on and off-the-job training as part of an "earn while you learn" model. Kerry ETB won the Talent & Skills Development Award for this apprenticeship at the Irish Wind Energy Awards in 2023 (Kerry ETB, n.d.).

## What could happen next

As the People's Transition process has shown, there is a demand for skills development and practical trainings locally. A first step would be to engage with educational bodies such as Donegal Education and Training Board, Atlantic Technological University or North West Regional College to scope out the possibility to build a tailored training and apprenticeship programme for delivery within Inishowen. The work-based component of the apprenticeship could take place with local community organisations, the county council and businesses in Carndonagh. Trainings could also build in opportunities for peer-to-peer learning amongst farmers on land management and biodiversity.

Building awareness of green job and green skills opportunities is an important first step. These career paths should be promoted as a valid and smart destination from the earliest stage in school (SOLAS 2020, p51). As noted in the community consultations, there is an over-emphasis on 3<sup>rd</sup> level education as a route to employment. The opportunities associated with acquiring a trade or working in construction are also not well promoted to young people and apprenticeships are often seen as not accessible to school leavers who do not have personal connections (SOLAS, 2024). While young people consulted in this process have demonstrated a strong awareness of green skills, it can often be parents that need to be engaged. The job security and longevity that comes with green jobs need to be better promoted. As long-term decarbonisation targets are set in law, these career choices can be steadier than traditional jobs (EGFSN, 2021).

It is also important to communicate the range of green jobs. Holding events such as career speed dating for young people in schools, as well as events for adult learners, as suggested by project stakeholders, could be a first step.

## Further learning

Once trainings are established, opportunities could be created to link with Higher Education Institutes (HEI) to create pathways from National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level 5 and 6 programmes to level 8 at HEI, if there is an interest and demand in this.

## Action Two: Community Food Growing

The importance of locally grown food came up across consultations. Thinking of the future of the area, people reflected that they would like to see:

*“Carndonagh as an incredible edible town with multiple local edible sites. Food would come from foraging, community gardens, household tunnels, orchards and local farmers. Intercultural sharing on a nature-led approach to food would be embraced.”*

At the action planning workshops, participants discussed the importance of a nature-based and local approach to food. People identified there was a real need for an increase in skills alongside attitude change on the importance of sustainable food production. Building on the community consultations, one group proposed using common areas, and spaces across town for food growing, with edible sites being developed across Carndonagh, creating an edible trail.

### A nature-based approach to food

Edible green infrastructure, such as community gardens, provide important ecosystem services in towns and cities. In addressing the climate crisis, these spaces also offer nature-based solutions to climate change, disaster-risk reduction and biodiversity loss (Raymond et al., 2017). Nature-based solutions are ways of using nature to solve the current and future challenges within our societies such as climate change, human health, food and water security, natural disasters and biodiversity loss. Nature-based solutions to food production shift a focus from maximising output to prioritising sustainable production. Community growing spaces can serve as multifunctional nature-based solutions to achieve climate and social benefits.

### Community food growing

Community food growing is people coming together to grow food as part of shared projects with and for local people (Community Gardens Ireland, 2021). The benefits of community growing are multiple, providing food, environment, health and social needs (Hou, 2017). Community growing spaces have important social and collective dimensions. They build social ties in a community. As inclusive spaces, they can foster cross-cultural learning and build connections. As restorative spaces, they contribute to individual community health and well-being.

They also provide a practical learning environment to educate people of all ages on how to grow food, and the benefits of locally grown food, alongside reconnecting people to the land and local environment (Kingsley et al., 2019). Through pollination and habitat provision, community growing spaces support biodiversity. Research has highlighted the benefits of gardening to improved mental well-being, increased physical activity and reduced social isolation (Howarth et al., 2020). Further, as part of a local approach to food, community growing reduces the food carbon footprint by avoiding long distance food transport.

## Edible neighbourhoods

An edible neighbourhood approach is about growing edible food in public places. It is part of an edible green infrastructure that includes any common spaces, natural or modified, that contain edible plants (Incredible Edible, n.d.). These spaces can be co-owned by its users and/or communities or freely accessible to passersby (Sardeshpande et al., 2020). Neighbourhood growing projects come in all shapes and sizes from window boxes to mobile planters to street orchards. Spaces can include disused communal spaces, wide, empty footpaths outside public buildings, laneways between or at the back of houses, mobile parklets, grass verges and neglected patches of green (Incredible Edible, 2018).

## Connecting across Community

The **Edible Streets: How-To Guide**, developed by Oxford Brookes University outlines steps for integrating edible plants into streets and common areas to enhance biodiversity, well-being and community connections (Crombie et al., 2024). One of the key suggestions in this guide is making connections across the community. Working with the wider community is central to ensuring the project will thrive. Through ECO Carn, there is already a strong network in Carndonagh for this. This initiative could build on this and reach wider groups, individuals and engage with schools through a series of learning events. This would also support building awareness and education around community growing and the benefits of locally grown food. Awareness events, workshops and talks would also help to build relationships and sustain collaboration, alongside boost participation. These can be used to celebrate diversity and share cross-cultural food growing knowledge.

One of the key challenges in growing food in public spaces is identifying spaces to grow (Crombie et al., 2024). This involves getting landowner permission, obtaining consent and a licence, where needed, from the County Council. Roadside spaces, footpaths, verges, empty corners etc. are typically owned and maintained by the council. A land registry search would identify owners of derelict spaces. This work may have been done already by other community groups in Carndonagh. Using community groups' own spaces, or spaces around the community centre is a simple way of getting started.

## Accessibility and inclusivity

Ensuring chosen sites are accessible and inclusive will enable all people to take part in growing activities and in maintaining spaces. Broken, uneven ground or hilly ground may impact those with limited mobility. Sites too close to a busy road would also impact safe use by children.

## Developing a Trail

Once several sites are up and running, creating an edible trail map would encourage people to use the sites as a walking trail, while supporting engagement with the project.





## Case Study: Incredible Edible Todmorden

The Incredible Edible movement was started by two women, Pam Warhurst and Mary Clear in Todmorden, Yorkshire, England. This uses food to reclaim, protect and improve green spaces. Unused land throughout the town was taken over for community growing. This included spaces by the police, fire and train station, the job centre, health centre, town hall and market.

These became beds producing fruit, vegetables and herbs, while also raising awareness around climate change, food sustainability and fostering community connections. Achieving broad community involvement was key to the success of the initiative, with members of the community involved in all stages. What started in Todmorden has grown to over 200 groups in the UK. This has also started a 'Right to Grow' movement (Incredible Edible, 2018). This sees that the use of public land, in particular under-utilised land such as verges and 'in-between spaces', are assets which can be harnessed for public good by the community. Right to Grow would oblige all local authorities to keep a register of land that could be used for growing and which people could apply to. Hull City Council in the UK adopted a "right to grow" motion, which makes Council-owned land available to community organisations for small-scale gardening of food, native plants, wildflower and fruit trees (2025).

In Ireland, many towns are looking to build their edible green infrastructure. Kinsale Edible Trail Group, as part of Transition Town Kinsale and Future Kinsale have developed an edible walk across the town (Transition Town Kinsale, 2020). Edible Bray in Wicklow have created a food trail around the town with apple orchards, fruit bushes, edible flowers and vegetables available freely. Their team of urban gardeners maintain a gardening rota and meet regularly to maintain and grow the spaces (Edible Bray n.d.).

## What could happen next

**Connecting with groups:** This action could link in with already existing initiatives in Carndonagh on community growing, (Barrack Hill Community Garden), maintenance and care of the town's green spaces (Tidy Towns), soil care (KPM Soils), the promotion of healthy local food (IDP's Slaintecare Healthy Communities Programme) and local food access and production (Carndonagh Nursery and Garden Centre, as part of *Spraoi agus Spórt*).

Peer learning provides opportunities to understand some of the challenges and successes of building edible infrastructure. Getting in touch with edible groups in Ireland and UK for shared learnings, alongside drawing on the experience of groups across Carndonagh, including those listed above and other ECO Carn members, such as Carndonagh GAA, Inishowen Environmental Group and the 8th Donegal Scouts, could be a good first step. Events such as fair days could engage wider groups and to include local farmers to jointly promote the importance of locally grown food.

**Education:** Building in an educational component right from the start would engage the wider community. A workshop with speakers from organisations such as Incredible Edible could draw a crowd. This could be supplemented with an action-planning component for getting the project off the ground. Building on from Barrack Hill Community Garden's engagement in schools, the edible trail could further support an experiential learning environment in sustainable food for school students. Including education in edible sites through labels, noticeboards or an edible trail map would keep people informed and supportive of the project, alongside potentially increasing project volunteers.

**Mapping spaces:** Mapping of possible growing sites could take place with participation from across the community, alongside stakeholders such as Donegal County Council and complementary initiatives such as IDP Slaintecare Healthy Communities Programme. This could also link with Transition Year students or Leaving Certificate Applied students who could engage in this action as part of a school project. Ensuring everyone's visions and plans for the future of food are championed would be an important component of this mapping (Fitzgerald and Davies 2022).

This action would initially rely on volunteer work. However, as identified in the community consultations, volunteers can be overburdened by the workload of community initiatives. Adequately supporting and paying for work is needed for the success of climate actions. One opportunity would be to link with action one on the development of green skills and include a paid apprenticeship to support the maintenance of the project, with mentorship and training provided by a project steering committee.

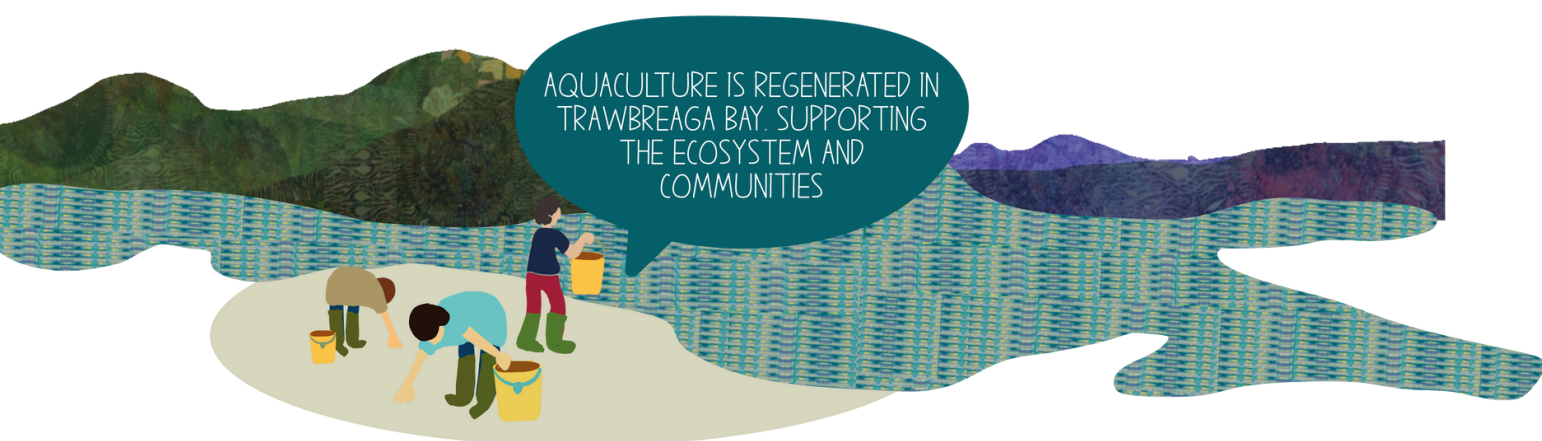
## Action Three: Two Rivers' Project

The Community Engagement phase highlighted the central role that rivers play in the historical, social and environmental life of the town. Throughout community consultations, people discussed the importance of the Donagh and the Glenagannon rivers to Carndonagh. These two rivers act as corridors for plants and animals along their banks and aquatic diversity in their waters. However, they also both face ongoing risks of pollution and biodiversity loss. The Inishowen Rivers Trust works to protect, restore and improve the rivers and natural waterbodies across Inishowen.

This action developed by members of ECO Carn would look at building education on the cultural heritage and biodiversity of Carndonagh's rivers and developing actions to support their protection. It would draw on the unique skills across ECO Carn members on heritage, waterways, and biodiversity. One of the key objectives of the project is to increase understanding of the place of rivers in the social life of Carndonagh. This involves researching and collecting stories of the importance of Carndonagh's rivers historically, providing water, food and energy for local settlements. This action would also involve recentring people's perception of their relationship to riverscapes and the natural world. Learning both from nature and from diverse cultures will be a key component of this action, through sharing and exchange of river stories with new communities in Carndonagh.

### Rivers and biodiversity

Freshwater harbours a disproportionate share of the planet's biodiversity, with over 126,000 species living in its ecosystem globally (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2014). The ecological status of rivers worldwide is decreasing much faster than most terrestrial ecosystems through human impacts. Between 1970-2014 84% of freshwater fauna has disappeared (UNESCO).



At a national level, Ireland's water quality is declining. Almost half (46%) of surface waters are in an unsatisfactory condition, an increase from previous assessments (EPA, 2024). Only half of rivers are in a high or good ecological status. Key pressures that impact Ireland's water quality are excess nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, coming from agriculture and urban wastewater discharges (DHLGH 2024). 58% of Irish rivers have satisfactory nitrate concentrations. Alongside this, damage from activities such as land drainage and urban development impact directly on the physical condition of water habitats. While it is tempting to blame farming communities, as Marrs notes, government policies promoted an intensification of farming practices (2025). In Carndonagh, the Glenagannon river has maintained a good status, however the Donagh is classified as moderate with a lot of agricultural pressures to its waters (Catchments.ie, 2025). Both rivers are challenged by invasive species and there is a fish barrier on the Donagh river at Bridge Street in Carndonagh, impacting the river's ecosystem.

## Rivers and communities

Rivers are a resource with multiple cultural, economic, environmental and social values (Wantzen, 2023). Across the world rivers mediate social relations through belief systems, cultural identity, institutions, knowledge and technology (Anderson, 2019). Riverscapes comprise the river and the landscape on and along a river. These have been valued, used and inhabited throughout human history and prehistory. Rivers and the communities that live beside them, coevolve and have long engagements over space and time. However, the relationships people have with their local rivers are often poorly understood (Krause and Strang, 2016).

What UNESCO terms river culture looks at the biological diversity, cultural linkages and historical human-river relationships (Wantzen, 2023). Through examining social and hydrological relationships and how these are interconnected, a much deeper understanding of the role of water, and social and cultural dimensions emerge (Wantzen, 2023). Building awareness of river culture and collecting information on nature-culture interactions in riverscapes is shown to improve the governance and management of rivers along sustainable pathways through fostering an approach of "care" for living nature (Anderson, 2019). This would also see that human wellbeing and the maintenance of biological and cultural diversity depend on the same factors: natural habitat dynamics, water quality and diverse ecosystem services (Wantzen, 2023). "Learning from the river" allows the development of technologies and management options that are targeted to maintain and improve ecosystem functions and diversity in more sustainable way (Krause and Strang, 2019).

## Rights of Nature

While fundamental human rights are recognised across the world, the concept that nature should also have rights is gaining traction. This would see that nature is not human property but possesses basic rights to “exist, flourish, regenerate, evolve and be restored” (Centre for Democratic and Environmental Rights n.d.). It gives nature legal standing, which means its rights can be defended in a court of law. It also creates duties for humans to act as guardians or stewards of the natural world. Donegal County Council adopted a Rights of Nature motion to further explore this in 2021 alongside Derry City and Strabane District Council, and the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. While local councils lack the ability to legally enforce Rights of Nature, without central government approval, the motions request councils to collaborate with civil society to explore what Rights of Nature mean for the people and economies of the region and to investigate how rights of nature could be expressed in community plans, corporate plans, improvement objectives and strategic frameworks (Killeen, Gilbert and Doran, 2024). The Irish Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss also recommended that the rights of nature be enshrined within Ireland's Constitution to protect biodiversity. In Donegal, Rights of Nature will be further considered in the forthcoming Donegal County Council Biodiversity Action Plan. A Rights of Nature framing could be developed to support the protection of the Donagh and Glenagannon rivers. IDP's ChangeMakers Donegal Programme has worked with local Rights of Nature campaigners and could provide further support and guidance in this regard.

### Case Study: Colombia River Stories

In 2017 Colombia's constitutional court awarded rights to the Atrato river in Chocó, located in a biodiversity hotspot of Colombia's north-western Pacific rainforest (Mount, 2017). The Atrato river provides transport, food and many other benefits to Chocó's communities, and is also woven into cultural identities and livelihoods.

However, the river suffers heavy pollution from large-scale mechanised mining and its local community experience regular displacement and threats of violence due to conflict in the area. The River Atrato was awarded biocultural rights for the river's “protection, conservation, maintenance and restoration.” This demands that the Colombian state ensures these rights are enforced and that local people are empowered to manage their river.



Translating the Atrato River's rights into effective action is a challenge, but one which has the potential to show how human and biocultural rights can deliver sustainable futures.

Out of this, the Colombia River Stories project a collaboration between the universities of Glasgow, Nottingham and Portsmouth in the UK, emerged. This project will co-produce a series of “river stories” with local communities, bringing together data from natural and social sciences, integrating perspectives of communities and the river itself (Mount, 2017). The stories will provide evidence to support the demands to enforce the river's rights. In a conflict-affected area, the telling and curation of testimony and stories also allow different actors to explain their actions to one-another.

## What could happen next

The Two Rivers' project would begin with information gathering from across community groups and the wider public in Carndonagh. Collecting information about the rivers within ECO Carn would be an initial starting point. This would then be widened to data collection across the Carndonagh community. From a heritage perspective, the importance of rivers historically would be examined. This includes their role in providing water, food and energy for settlements. Cultural aspects would be recorded, such as local folklore and the reverence towards rivers as a fundamental part of the community.

ECO Carn members would then look to engage the wider community in mapping the biodiversity of river catchments, alongside mapping of flood plains, changes in river morphology and projected climate effects. This could be carried out using a citizen science model and using arts and crafts projects with young people.

## Publications

Groups within ECO Carn would work together to develop publications based on the data collected in the information gathering sessions.

A series of events, including child-focused events, would be held to communicate findings and to launch publications. These could focus on:

- Telling the story of Carndonagh's changing landscape and the impact people have had on the rivers.
- From source to sea: linking Carndonagh to Trawbreaga Bay to encourage connection with the Bay.
- Sharing Stories: inviting people who have moved to Inishowen from other countries to tell their river-based culture and heritage stories and to learn about Inishowen's.
- Reviewing historical maps to trace changes to both rivers' morphology.

Hands-on events are important to engage the wider community. The project would also involve river walks. These river walks would include a focus on the cause of river health decline. As part of Science Festival in November, events would be held under the Two Rivers' Project, including a river walk and sharing water testing knowledge to promote healthy rivers.

The project could also explore what Rights of Nature means for Carndonagh's rivers.

### **Carndonagh People's Transition and DZ Plans**

These set of three actions look in-depth at some priorities identified throughout the mapping and community engagement phases of the People's Transition. These actions also sit as part of a wider framework on supporting climate action in Carndonagh through Donegal County Council Carndonagh Decarbonising Zone plans. For a full list of actions under this, please see Annexe One.

# Conclusion



---

# Conclusion

The model described in *The People's Transition: Community-led Development for Climate Justice* (2020) aims to systematically include people and communities in the design, implementation and ownership of climate action such that communities would begin to see the benefits of sustainable development in their lives and thus would support a rapid deep decarbonisation push towards zero emission societies. It also recognises that public investment in climate action, if directed towards community-led initiatives, could provide a boost for local development across Ireland and could address issues of inequality that exist on the island.

But theory is one thing and practice is another. Thanks to the support of AIB, TASC has been able to work with the community of Carndonagh for more than a year to bring the People's Transition to life.

Key enabling factors for the project were an active community and voluntary network in Carndonagh. TASC was conscious that this report tapped into the good will of the community and the deep interest of people in improving their area. This made the community consultation phase easier and is a strong base to take forward the project actions.

There are challenges too. In the mapping and community engagement phases several concerns were highlighted. As the Pobal Deprivation Index for Carndonagh showed, pockets of disadvantage exist across Carndonagh. Housing is a key concern across the community, with a lack of affordable accommodation to rent or buy. The DCB/mica crisis has severely impacted people across the community. Coupled with this, there is a deep frustration at a lack of adequate health and social services locally. Unemployment rates for the area, based on census data, are higher than county and national averages. In consultations people highlighted the need for employment and training opportunities across the area. Improvements in public transport was also seen as important. People wished to increase cycle paths and walking trails. Alongside this, the need for more supports for refugees and immigrants to the area was also raised. Community groups were noted as a great resource for this, but as came across in consultations, while volunteerism brings multiple benefits, paying for staffing, or staff in a coordinating role, is essential.

There was great positivity towards environmental actions. However, it was apparent that people struggled with climate actions that incurred increased costs or what was felt as "difficulties" to their lives. Climate actions that engaged local people collectively in community initiatives, and where they felt their needs and priorities



were heard, were welcomed positively. The Decarbonising Zone designation for Carndonagh presents an opportunity for climate action that is supported by government but based directly on place-based priorities.

The actions detailed in this report seek to address the needs of the community. They seek to ensure that climate action provides tangible benefits, highlighting the positives of a just transition.

Providing opportunities for green skill building is a priority for the area. As the People's Transition process has shown there is a demand for more skills development and practical trainings locally. A first step would be to engage with education providers to scope out the possibility to build a tailored training and apprenticeship programme. The work-based component of the apprenticeship could take place with local community organisations, the County Council and businesses in Carndonagh.

Building awareness of green jobs and green skills opportunities is an important first step. These career paths should be promoted as a valid and smart destination from the earliest stage in school (SOLAS 2020, p51).

The importance of a nature-based and local approach to food was raised across consultations. People identified there was a real need for an increase in skills alongside attitude change on the importance of sustainable food production. Using common and public spaces in Carndonagh town for community growing could provide multiple social and environmental benefits. This action could link with already existing initiatives in Carndonagh on community growing. To get started, peer learning would provide opportunities to understand some of the challenges and successes of building edible infrastructure. The Incredible Edible network in the UK, and growing initiatives in other Irish towns could be a strong source for shared learnings. Building in an educational aspect is an important component to the project to engage and garner support from the wider community.

The importance of natural habitats, in particular Carndonagh's two rivers was discussed in consultations. Promoting engagement and awareness of rivers to the social and environmental life of a community is shown to improve their overall protection. The third action looks to increase understanding of the place of the Donagh and Glenagannon rivers in the social life of Carndonagh, while engaging the wider community in their protection. This involves recentring people's perception of their relationship to riverscapes and the natural world.



The three actions support and complement each other. Creating apprenticeship opportunities in horticulture and ecology supports the delivery of action two and action three. However, across the board, these actions, alongside the diversity of existing climate and community initiatives in Carndonagh rely on volunteers or employees that are already overstretched. While funding supports exist for climate actions, funding for staff to work on projects is challenging. As identified throughout this report, collective climate action is a key means to engage people positively, as opposed to top-down initiatives that often incur costs or are challenging for people. Yet for the community sector to do this, ensuring remuneration for key staff is essential for the success of climate actions.

The People's Transition process and Decarbonising Zone plans were part of the same framework for "fostering a thriving community in Carndonagh that not only respects and preserves the natural beauty of their surroundings but actively engages in restoring and regenerating the environment, taking achievable and impactful steps towards a sustainable future" (Donegal County Council, 2024).

We hope that the actions outlined in this report act as a catalyst for community members and local stakeholders both in Carndonagh and for communities across Ireland to engage in community-led climate action and seek to build community wealth through responses to climate change.

### DZ Next Steps

The DZ actions are a collective responsibility of the community and Donegal County Council. At a national level, discussions are ongoing as to how the Government can best support the initiatives and climate ambitions of the DZs across the country, and the proactive communities and citizens that live and work there. In the meantime, the council and lead community partner ECO Carn, alongside IDP will continue to focus on the actions set out in Annex One, leveraging funding and support where possible to see them completed. At present, DCC are a partner on an Interreg funded project which will focus on implementing pilot climate action measures in Carndonagh, these pilots will be selected from the DZ Action Plan ensuring consistency with the actions identified through the People's Transition process. Potential candidate projects are community energy, energy poverty, integrated river catchment management and nature-based solutions.

## References

Addy, S. Susan Cooksley, Nikki Dodd, Kerry Waylen, Jenni Stockan, Anja Byg and Kirsty Holstead (2016) River Restoration and Biodiversity: Nature-based solutions for restoring rivers in the UK and Republic of Ireland. CREW reference: CRW2014/10

Anderson, E. et al (2019) Understanding rivers and their social relations: A critical step to advance environmental water management. WIREs Water 2019:6

Catchment.ie (2025) Rivers and lakes waterbody data, [https://www.catchments.ie/data/#/subcatchment/40/40\\_2?\\_k=suo3hk](https://www.catchments.ie/data/#/subcatchment/40/40_2?_k=suo3hk) (Accessed 25 July 2025)

Carr, C. (2022) Repair and Care: Locating the work of climate crisis. Dialogues in Human Geography. Vol. 13(2) 221–239

Central Statistics Office (2023) SAPMAP 2022. <https://data.cso.ie/> (Accessed: 22 November 2023)

Centre for Democratic and Environmental Rights  
<https://www.centerforenvironmentalrights.org/where-we-work/ireland-and-northern-ireland> (Accessed: 15 March 2025)

CIEEM (2022) Briefing document on the current capacity crisis and the need to provide supports to the professional ecological sector: <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Current-capacity-crisis-in-the-ecological-sector-CIEEM-Breifing-Paper-Final-1.pdf>

Citizens Assembly (2023) Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss: [https://citizensassembly.ie/wp-content/uploads/Report-on-Biodiversity-Loss\\_mid-res.pdf](https://citizensassembly.ie/wp-content/uploads/Report-on-Biodiversity-Loss_mid-res.pdf)

CLES (n.d) What is Community Wealth Building? <https://cles.org.uk/community-wealth-building/what-is-community-wealth-building/> (Accessed: 5 September 2024)

CLES (n.d.) What is an anchor institution? <https://cles.org.uk/what-is-community-wealth-building/what-is-an-anchor-institution/> (Accessed: 5 September 2024)

Colgan Heritage Committee (2023) Inishowen's Lost Words and Sayings- Everything to Help the Lambe Dog over the Ditch: The Forgotten Language of the Inishowen Peninsula, Co. Donegal

Colombia River Stories (n.d.) University of Glasgow:  
<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/socialpolitical/research/research-projects/colombiariverstories/> (Accessed: 14 May 2025)

Community Gardens Ireland (2021) Lets Get Growing: [https://cgireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Community-Gardens-Ireland\\_Lets-Get-Growing.pdf](https://cgireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Community-Gardens-Ireland_Lets-Get-Growing.pdf)  
 (Accessed: 6 May 2025)

Crombie et al. (2024) The Edible Streets: How-To Guide,  
[https://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/\\_files/ugd/abc50a\\_of772b35f4804a3b923c908c918da56f.pdf](https://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/_files/ugd/abc50a_of772b35f4804a3b923c908c918da56f.pdf)

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (2021)  
 The Action Plan for Apprenticeships (2021-2025).

DHLGH (2024). Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland.  
 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Donegal County Council (2020) Carndonagh Town Centre Regeneration Project.  
 Regeneration and Development Team, Donegal County Council

Donegal County Council (2024) Climate Action Plan: [climate-action-plan-english-web-version-v2-1.pdf](#)

Donegal County Council (2024) Carndonagh Decarbonising Event Report

EAPN Ireland (2024) Latest poverty figures show mixed bag but no room for complacency. <https://www.eapn.ie/news/latest-poverty-figures-show-mixed-bag-but-no-room-for-complacency/>

EAI (2024) Defining and Addressing Energy Poverty in Ireland.  
<https://www.eaireland.com/defining-and-addressing-energy-poverty-in-ireland/>

Edible Bray (n.d.) [https://www.commongroundbray.com/?page\\_id=566](https://www.commongroundbray.com/?page_id=566) (Accessed: 6 May 2025)

EOLAS (2023) Retrofitting the nation: <https://www.eolasmagazine.ie/retrofitting-the-nation/> (Accessed: 6 May 2025)

EPA (2024). Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024. EPA 2024

ETBI (n.d.) About ETBs: <https://www.etbi.ie/etbs> (Accessed: 10 May 2025)

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) (2021) Skills for Zero Carbon: <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/skills-for-zero-carbon.pdf>

Fitzgerald and Davies, A.R. (2022) Creating fairer futures for sustainability transition. *Geography Compass* 2022:16

Fuchs, M. (2024). "Green Skills for Sustainability Transitions." *Geography Compass* 18(10).

Further Education & Training (2025) NZEB: <https://www.thisisfet.ie/nzeb/> (Accessed: 10 May 2025)

Garcia-Moreno, J. et al. (2014). Sustaining Freshwater Biodiversity in the Anthropocene. In: Bhaduri, A., Bogardi, J., Leentvaar, J., Marx, S. (eds) *The Global Water System in the Anthropocene*. Springer Water. Springer, Cham.

Government of Ireland (2024) Climate Action Plan: <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/climate-action-plan-2024-8ccbde73-e288-4241-8b26-6b4922389f25.pdf>

Gush, M. B., T. Blanuša, L. S. Chalmin-Pui, A. Griffiths, E. K. Larsen, R. Prasad, M. Redmile-Gordon and C. Sutcliffe (2023). "Environmental horticulture for domestic and community gardens—An integrated and applied research approach." *Plants, People, Planet* 6(2): 254-270.

Hou, J. (2017) Urban Community Gardens as Multimodal Social Spaces in Yok Tan, P. & Yung Jim, C. *Greening Cities*

Howarth, M., Brettle, A., Hardman, M. and Maden, M. (2020) What is the evidence for the impact of gardens and gardening on health and well-being: a scoping review and evidence-based logic model to guide healthcare strategy decision making on the use of gardening approaches as a social prescription. *BMJ* Vol. 10, Issue 7.

Hull City Council (2025) Right to Grow: <https://www.hull.gov.uk/neighbourhoods-1/right-grow> (Accessed: 10 May 2025)

Incredible Edible (2018) The Right to Grow: <https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Right-To-Grow-Benefits-for-Local-Authorities-full-report-2.pdf>

Incredible Edible (n.d.) <https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/> (Accessed: 15 May 2025)

Inishowen Development Partnership (2021) Envision Inishowen Series IDP Summary Report 2021

Inishowen Sustainable Energy Community (2023) Inishowen Sustainable Energy Community Strategic Plan. Inishowen Development Partnership, Buncrana.

International Rivers, Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, Earth Law Center (2020) Rights of Rivers <https://www.internationalrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/86/2020/09/Right-of-Rivers-Report-V3-Digital-compressed.pdf>

Irish Peatland Conservation Council (2025) Climate Change and Irish Peatlands. <https://www.ipcc.ie/a-to-z-peatlands/irelands-peatland-conservation-action-plan/peatland-action-plan/climate-change-and-irish-peatlands/>

Irish Wildlife Trust (2021) [https://iwt.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Irish-Wildlife-Trust\\_102021\\_Trawbreaga-Bay-Aquaculture-Consultation-Response.pdf](https://iwt.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Irish-Wildlife-Trust_102021_Trawbreaga-Bay-Aquaculture-Consultation-Response.pdf)

Jackson, M., McInroy, N., (2017). Community Wealth Building through Anchor Institutions. Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Manchester, England.

Kennedy, A. & Murphy, T. (2021). A Biodiversity Action Plan for Carndonagh, Co. Donegal, 2021-2026.

Kerry ETB (n.d.) Wind Turbine Maintenance Technician Apprenticeship launch: <https://www.kerryetb.ie/wind-turbine-maintenance-technician-apprenticeship-launch/> (Accessed: 20 May 2025)

Killeen, R., J. Gilbert and P. Doran (2024). "Rights of Nature on the Island of Ireland: Origins, Drivers, and Implications for Future Rights of Nature Movements." *Transnational Environmental Law* 13(1): 35-60.

Kingsley, J., Foenander, E., & Bailey, A. (2019) "You feel like you're part of something bigger": exploring motivations for community garden participation in Melbourne, Australia. *BMC Public Health* Vol. 19, Article 745



Krause, F. and V. Strang (2016). "Thinking Relationships Through Water." *Society & Natural Resources* 29(6): 633-638.

Kwauk, C. T. and O. M. Casey (2022). "A green skills framework for climate action, gender empowerment, and climate justice." *Development Policy Review* 40(S2).

Laurence, J., McGinnity, F., and Murphy, K. (2024) Attitudes towards immigration and refugees in Ireland: Understanding recent trends and drivers. ESRI

Marrs, E. (2025) Saving Lough Neagh: The Contribution of the 'Rights of Nature.'  
<https://qpol.qub.ac.uk/saving-lough-neagh-the-contribution-of-the-rights-of-nature/>

Mascaro, R. (2024). Climate Resilience as Community Gathering Spaces. Climate Resilience Centre. <https://climateresilienceproject.org/strategies/community-gathering-spaces/>

McAreavey, R. (2022). "Finding rural community resilience: Understanding the role of anchor institutions." *Journal of Rural Studies* 96: 227-236.

McCabe, S. (2020). The People's Transition: Community-led Development for Climate Justice. FEPS-TASC. [https://www.tasc.ie/assets/files/pdf/feps-tasc\\_the\\_peoples\\_transition\\_-\\_2020f.pdf](https://www.tasc.ie/assets/files/pdf/feps-tasc_the_peoples_transition_-_2020f.pdf)

McIntosh, S. (2025) Horticulture sector needs 'more skilled workers'  
<https://www.farmersjournal.ie/careers/education/horticulture-sector-needs-more-skilled-workers-867588> (Accessed: 20 May 2025)

Mount, N. (2017) Can a river have legal rights? I visited the jungles of Colombia to find out. <https://theconversation.com/can-a-river-have-legal-rights-i-visited-the-jungles-of-colombia-to-find-out-84878> (Accessed: 17 May 2025)

Overgaard, Charlotte. (2019). Rethinking volunteering as form of unpaid work. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 48(1), 128-145. DOI: 10.1177/0899764018809419

Pobal (2023). Pobal HP Deprivation Index Launched. <https://www.pobal.ie/pobal-hp-deprivation-index/>

Pobal (2024) Disability and Deprivation: Investigating the Relationship between Health Inequalities and Geographic Disadvantage using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. [https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2024/09/Disability-and-Deprivation\\_Investigating-the-Relationship-between-Health-Inequalities-and-Geographic-Disadvantage-using-the-Pobal-HP-Deprivation-Index.pdf](https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2024/09/Disability-and-Deprivation_Investigating-the-Relationship-between-Health-Inequalities-and-Geographic-Disadvantage-using-the-Pobal-HP-Deprivation-Index.pdf)

Raymond, C.M., Frantzeskaki, N., Kabisch, N., Berry, P., Breil, M., Razvan Nita, M., Geneletti, D., & Calfapietra, C. (2017). A framework for assessing and implementing the co-benefits of nature-based solutions in urban areas, *Environmental Science & Policy*, Volume 77, Pages 15-24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2017.07.008>.

Sardeshpande, M., Rupprecht, C.D.D., and Russo, A. (2020) Edible urban commons for resilient neighbourhoods in light of the pandemic. *Cities* 109 (2)

SOLAS (2020) Future FET: Transforming Learning the National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy (2020-2024)  
[https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas\\_fet\\_strategy\\_web.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf)

SOLAS, (2024) Green Skills 2030 The 1st National Further Education & Training (FET) Strategy for the Green Transition <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/135eof3789/solas-green-skills-strategy-2030.pdf>

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (2022) Energy in Ireland 2022 Report:  
<https://www.seai.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2022.pdf>

Teagasc (2016) Stepping stones to a career in horticulture:  
<https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/about/research-and-innovation/Stepping-Stones-to-a-Career-in-Horticulture.pdf>

Transition Town Kinsale (2020) The Edible Walk Map 2020.  
<http://www.transitiontownkinsale.org/our-projects/edible-trail/>

UNEP (2019) Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented' Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating' <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/natures-dangerous-decline-unprecedented-species-extinction-rates>

UNIDO (2022) What are Green Skills: <https://www.unido.org/stories/what-are-green-skills> (Accessed: 2 May 2025)

United Nations Environment Programme (2022). Intergovernmental Consultations on Nature-Based Solutions. <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/intergovernmental-consultations-nbs>

Visit Carndonagh (n.d) Donagh Cross. Accessed 10 June 2024 from  
<https://visitcarndonagh.com/see-do/donagh-cross/>

Wantzen, K (2023) River culture: life as a dance to the rhythm of the waters, UNESCO: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382775>

Wantzen, K. M., A. Ballouche, I. Longuet, I. Bao, H. Bocoum, L. Cissé, M. Chauhan, P. Girard, B. Gopal, A. Kane, M. R. Marchese, P. Nautiyal, P. Teixeira and M. Zalewski (2016). "River Culture: an eco-social approach to mitigate the biological and cultural diversity crisis in riverscapes." *Ecohydrology & Hydrobiology* 16(1): 7-18.

Wegenberger, O. and I. Ponocny (2025). "Green Skills Are Not Enough: Three Levels of Competences from an Applied Perspective." *Sustainability* 17(1).

Western Development Commission (2019). Travel to Work and Labour Catchments in the Western Region – A Profile of the Carndonagh Labour Catchment

### PEOPLE'S TRANSITION COMMUNITY VOICES

### ENERGY

# 1



- ▶ **Support initiatives to improve,**
  - **energy efficiency,**
  - **retrofitting,**
  - **renewable energy technologies,**
  - **local community based renewable energy.**

### What we will do

- Explore setting up a Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) for Carndonagh DZ to add specific and recent data to the Inishowen SEC Energy Master Plan and serve as a springboard for future community energy projects.
- Provide bridging finance for the preparation of an Energy Master Plan (EMP).
- Work with Inishowen SEC to tailor the Carndonagh EMP to the ambitions already identified.
- Work with the local community to run pilot projects, building on TASC's People's Transition, the Inishowen SEC EMP, Strategic Plan and AD Feasibility Study.
- Explore community wind power possibilities through relevant funded projects e.g. Interreg Mindset.
- Advocate for DCB remediation scheme so that remediation is undertaken that will allow social housing retrofits to proceed.
- Promote local and national climate programmes within the DZ e.g. GAA Green Clubs.
- Coordinate local information events for businesses in Carndonagh in collaboration with the LEO and Inishowen SEC.

# Carndonagh 2050

## Decarbonising Zone Actions

### PEOPLE'S TRANSITION COMMUNITY VOICES



### WIDER COMMUNITY

- Support the development of the ECO Inishowen Network.

#### What we will do

- Participate in stakeholder engagement events in other areas in Inishowen e.g. Eco Buncrana co-creation sessions.
- Share the learnings from the Carndonagh DZ with other areas in Inishowen.

### CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- Support local & national sustainable resource & circular economy initiatives including;
  - reducing single use items,
  - water conservation,
  - food waste initiatives for home, businesses, public buildings and communities.

#### What we will do

- Organise local initiatives in conjunction with national campaigns.
- Support local circular economy projects and events and identify funding.
- Promote the use of the Food Waste Recycling bins among householders.
- Promote the use of the Carndonagh Recycling Centre.
- Support the activities of Spraoi agus Spórt Circular Hub.
- Support the GAA Green Clubs initiative and encourage other sports organisations to become more sustainable.

### PEOPLE'S TRANSITION COMMUNITY VOICES





# Carndonagh 2050

## Decarbonising Zone Actions

### SUSTAINABLE & REGENERATIVE INITIATIVES

- Support sustainable and regenerative initiatives.

#### What we will do

- Build upon the Local Green Deal "Grow, Eat, Compost, Repeat: Empowering Communities in Soil Regeneration" developed as part of the EU Intelligent Cities Challenge by increasing awareness and identifying potential new green deals.
- Develop links with the NW Bioeconomy Hub and identify opportunities for shared learning, collaborations and projects.
- Promote initiatives such as "Grow it Yourself", dispersed orchards, community gardens in conjunction with local communities.

4



### PEOPLE'S TRANSITION COMMUNITY VOICES

5



### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Continue working with ECO-Carn stakeholder group" to support climate action initiatives.
- Advocate for the establishment of regional, local and national DZ collaboration for all DZ communities.

#### What we will do

- Provide regular updates to the ECO Carn group.
- Advocate for the DZ's at a national level.
- Coordinate and facilitate both formal and informal connections between stakeholder group in Carndonagh and An Fálcarrach/ Gort an Choirce DZs.

# Carndonagh 2050

## Decarbonising Zone Actions

### FUNDING

- Identify and support the DZ in seeking funding for the implementation of the DZ Action Plan.

#### What we will do

- Continue to promote and administer the Community Climate Action Fund and provide information on other sources of climate funding available to communities. Identify collaboration opportunities on the Pathways 2 Resilience Programme with NW Bioeconomy Hub.
- Collaborate with other organisations and other DCC services on gaining external funding and delivering projects relating to Climate Action in the Carndonagh DZ.
- Collaborate with DCC Culture Division on Creative Ireland projects relating to Climate Action.
- Support applications from organisations within the DZ for climate related funding where appropriate.
- Take part in the EU Interreg Mindset project within the Carndonagh DZ to develop and implement pilot climate actions.

### PEOPLE'S TRANSITION COMMUNITY VOICES

6



### PEOPLE'S TRANSITION COMMUNITY VOICES



7

### BIODIVERSITY

- Support the implementation of and build on the ECO Carn Networks Biodiversity Action Plan.

#### What we will do

- Support the ECO Carn Biodiversity Action Plan action to explore nature based solutions for natural flood management and any future restoration projects.
- Work with local partners on new and existing community gardens on new opportunities, project plans and identifying funding.
- Work with local partners to use community gardens as educational hubs.



# Carndonagh 2050

## Decarbonising Zone Actions

### SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

### What we will do

- ▶ **Support the delivery of the enhanced public transport and transport infrastructure in rural areas including the projects listed for Donegal under the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan (Carndonagh to Buncrana).**
- ▶ **Support sustainable travel initiatives within the DZ.**

- Advocate for enhanced public transport in rural areas.
- Explore opportunities with local stakeholders on the identification of a suitable location within the Carndonagh DZ for Neighbourhood Charging Infrastructure.
- Support sustainable mobility measures as part of the forthcoming Carndonagh Area Plan and planned active travel projects.
- Continue to engage with the Greenway team on projects in the local area.

### PEOPLE'S TRANSITION COMMUNITY VOICES

8

EXTENSIVE PUBLIC  
TRANSPORT NETWORK  
ACROSS INISHOWEN

CYCLE LANES AND WALKING PATHS  
ARE SAFE AND USED FOR TRAVEL  
TO WORK, SCHOOL AND FOR  
LEISURE. PATHS CONNECT ACROSS  
THE PENINSULA

# The People's Transition tasc

Supported by



## IN COLLABORATION WITH



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



TASC receives support under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) which is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development.