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The People's Transition: Mulranny



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The People's Transition

tasc 

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Acknowledgements

This report details the findings of the People's Transition process as facilitated by TASC – the Think-tank for Action on Social Change, in partnership with the community of Mulranny in County Mayo, from August 2024 to June 2025.

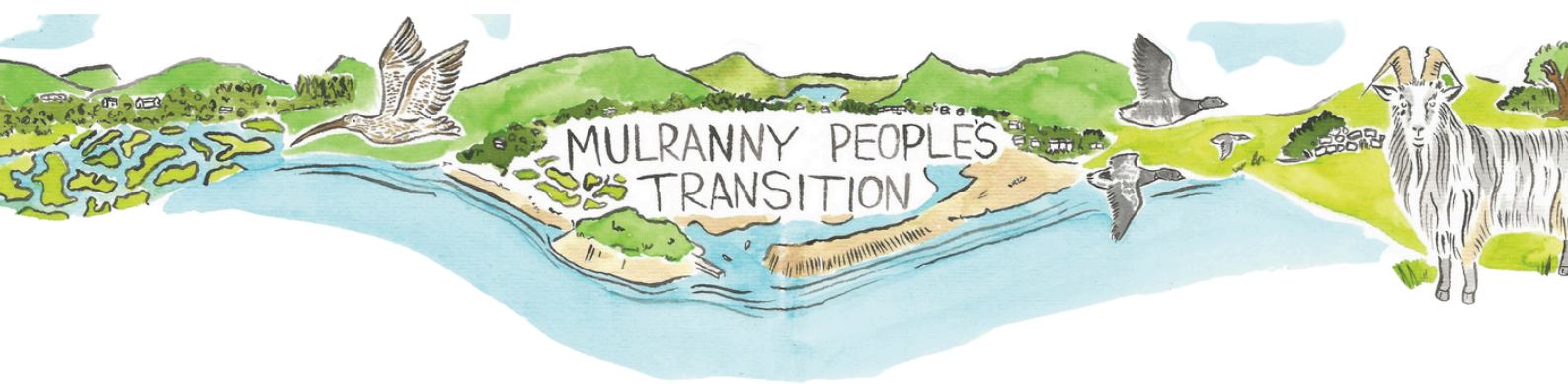
We are grateful to each person in Mulranny who generously took the time to participate in this project, with special thanks to community members Seán Carolan, Carol Loftus, Svitlana Beloshey, and David Carolan, whose energy, enthusiasm and organising skills really brought the project to life. Thanks also go to everyone at Mulranny Arts for providing such a perfect space for the community conversations to happen.

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The Mulranny People's Transition process was facilitated – and this report prepared by – TASC's senior researcher in climate justice, Dr. Matt York.



Executive Summary

The People's Transition describes a model for participative decision-making that is intended to enable a community to benefit from the transition to a zero-carbon society. It aims to design climate solutions that give local people and communities ownership of the assets and benefits of transition and enhance public support for climate action by tackling inequality and raising standards of living.

The Mulranny People's Transition began in August 2024. The intention of the project was to listen to and learn from the community's needs and abilities and then attempt to design a number of climate solutions that would benefit the community and address a number of the main local development priorities. The project had three phases: a mapping phase, a community engagement phase, and a solutions phase.

The mapping phase aimed to build a picture of the community of Mulranny, 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, services and community groups, that play a significant role in the locality.

This mapping phase informed the rollout of the second phase – the community engagement phase – which began in the autumn of 2024 with visits by the TASC researcher to the village to meet key local institutions and local community members. Following this, a broad survey of community members was undertaken, to both gain an initial understanding of local opinion and reach under-represented community members. Subsequently, in February 2025, the TASC researcher spent a week in Mulranny meeting locals, conducting interviews and holding two community conversations with groups of local residents. These sessions allowed the community to reflect on the challenges facing the village, and also their collective strengths.

The final formal element of the engagement phase was a collective visioning workshop held in April 2025, where community members once again came together to create a vision of the future developed by the community for the community. Through each of these community engagement methods, the scale of participation widened, and the representation of local people deepened, so that as true a reflection as possible of the community could be garnered. Thanks to the dedication of local community members and groups we were able to overcome several barriers to participation, including the use of an interpreter to include the Ukrainian community. This enabled us to meet with a wide cross-section of the local population to gather inputs on community needs, priorities and strengths.

From the beginning of the community engagement phase, it became clear that Mulranny has an extremely engaged and active community both socially and ecologically, with an impressive track record of community organising and sustaining local initiatives. At the same time, community members outlined a number of challenges they saw as facing Mulranny, including engaging 'younger' community members in activities; threats to natural assets (e.g. saltmarsh, machair, light pollution, invasive species); isolation; that the amenity/community centre could benefit from further development; lots of community-driven ideas but a perception of lack of follow up by authorities (e.g. causeway, pier, solar farm – surveys carried out but no capital investment); a lack of employment/opportunity – leading to a culture of emigration; a lack of affordable homes alongside a large amount of holiday homes in the area; a small population; and a lack of facilities for children and teenagers.

Based on the community engagement phase, TASC worked with the community to research viable climate solutions that would address local needs, build on local strengths and capabilities, and respond to the community's vision for the future. After a process of deliberation, the community distilled their list of ideas down to two community-led solutions for climate justice that they have chosen to move forward with:

- A 'Share, Care & Repair' Programme.
- Recognition of the wider area as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve.

The first (micro) solution aims to build the capacity to engage with, and benefit from, climate action at a local level in the short to medium term in order to maintain the momentum of the People's Transition process so far, while the second – more ambitious (macro) solution will act as a 'way-marker' towards which many of the other solutions co-envisioned during the collective visioning workshops will be realised over time.

These solutions should not be considered the only possible collective climate initiatives in which the community of Mulranny could/should participate. Others, looking at the same set of needs and priorities, may land on different climate solutions. However, it is hoped that the process, as much as the proposed solutions, provokes thought about how investment in climate action can address existing development needs rather than perpetuate them.

By adopting an intentionally inclusive approach and targeting groups that may not otherwise be disposed to engaging in such a dialogue, the People's Transition seeks to enable the creation of solutions that expand the capabilities of local people. Given that the community members are the driving force behind the recent wave of community-led momentum in Mulranny, it is hoped that the proposed solutions and recommendations can be advanced in a way that builds on local strengths and demonstrates the importance of people-centred climate action in Mayo.

Mulranny is the county's chosen decarbonisation zone, an area that Mayo County Council has designated a demonstrator site to illustrate the potential of climate action. We hope that the findings from this research contribute to shaping faster and fairer climate action that leaves no one behind as Mayo County Council continue to undertake innovative approaches to climate action in the area.

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

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.

Anchor Institution

An anchor institution might be social or economic in nature, and, alongside its main function, play 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, mission and relationship with customers and employees. These institutions tend to operate not-for-profit. It is much simpler for private businesses to move, so there is no guarantee they will continue serving the local community in the long term. However, there are examples of for-profit organisations playing the role of an anchor institution.

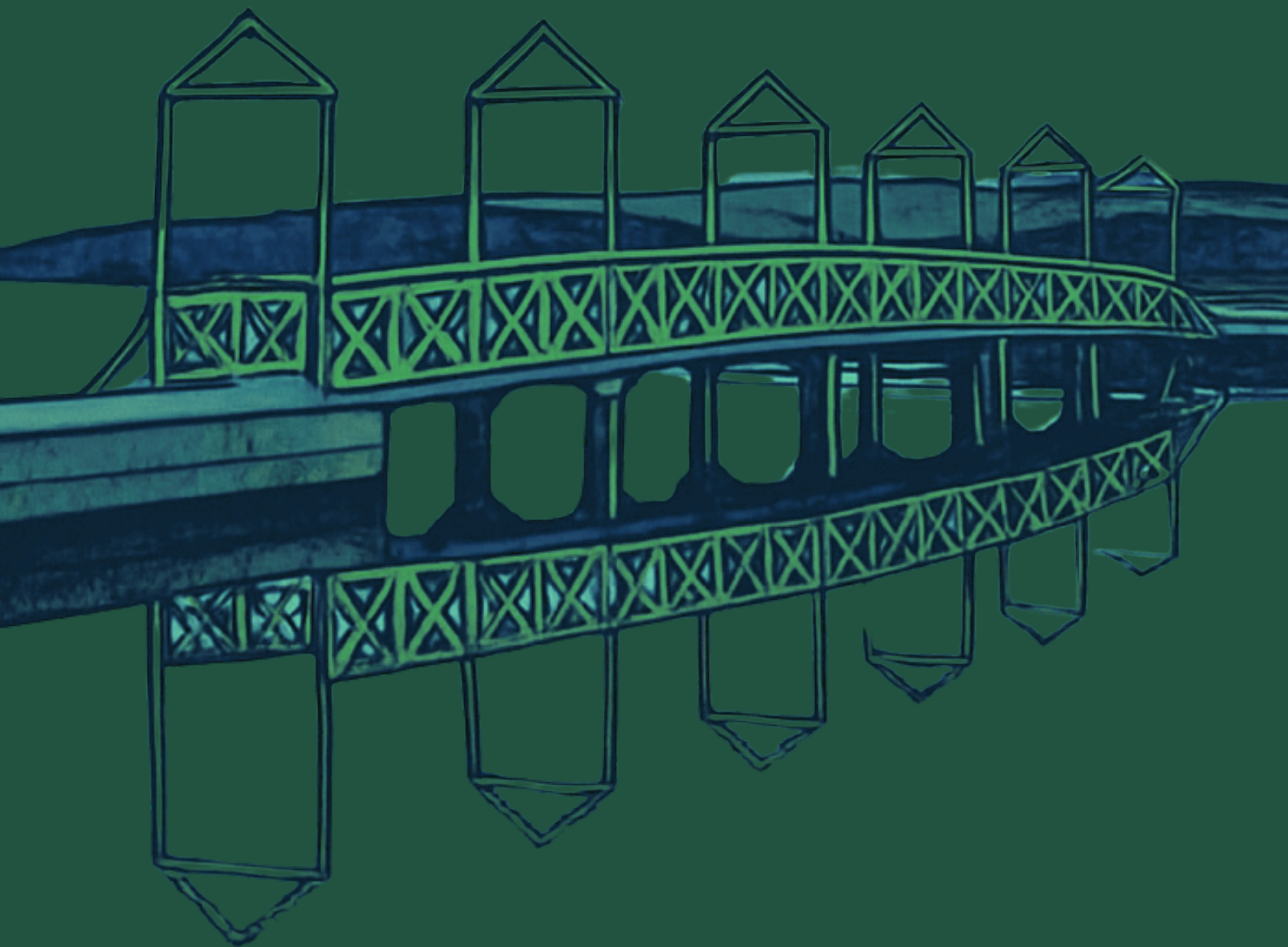
Local development

Local development is the identification and use of the resources and endogenous potentialities of a community, neighbourhood, city or equivalent. The local development approach considers the endogenous potentialities of townlands. Economic and non-economic factors influence local development processes. Among the non-economic factors, social, cultural, historical, institutional, and geographical aspects can be decisive in the process of local economic development.

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 planet. For sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonise three core elements: economic justice, social inclusion, and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected, and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies. From the People's Transition perspective, an essential component of successful long-term sustainable development is that it is community-led.

Introduction



1. Introduction

Tackling the climate crisis 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, ensuring that its burdens and benefits are 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 policy 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 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 continued 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, a farming community in Roscommon, the communities of Larchville and Lisduggan in Waterford, and Crumlin in Dublin, have been published and are available on the TASC website.

This report attempts to capture the People's Transition process as it was facilitated in the community of Mulranny, County Mayo, and the wider electoral division of Newport West that surrounds it. The Mulranny People's Transition project began in August 2024 and ran until June 2025. TASC was fortunate to have the dedicated support, buy-in, and vision of a number of wonderful community members, making the process a truly collaborative effort.

Mulranny is emblematic of many of the opportunities and challenges facing both rural and coastal areas across Ireland. The community has a strong social fabric, and active community groups have already been laying the foundations for community-led local development initiatives. Anchor institutions which have the potential to play a defining role in building community wealth include social anchors such as Saint Brendan's Village and Mulranny National School, economic anchors such as the Mulranny Park Hotel and Nevin's Newfield Inn, as well as the close-by South West Mayo Development Company – who have an office in nearby Newport, and both Mayo County Council and Atlantic Technological University – based in Castlebar. Farming is also a potential anchor institution for the area and merits further engagement with the farming community to explore further.

The project had three phases, leading to the co-creation of climate solutions and initiatives that seek to address the needs of local residents. First, 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 phase also included undertaking initial meetings with community leaders, policymakers, and local stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities for climate action. This information was used to design an in-depth community engagement phase, which saw TASC engage directly with the community over a period of six months.

The solutions outlined in the report are the result of a thorough analysis of community needs and priorities identified in the mapping and community engagement phases. A long-term approach will be required to build capacity in the locality and ensure the wider community has the ability and opportunity to engage in and shape community-led local development and the decision-making processes that affect their lives. To this end, the climate solutions presented in this report aim to respond to the local context by starting small, building on current activities at a local level (micro) with the aim of scaling up over time as community capacity develops (macro). Further, these solutions aim to harness the potential of local anchor institutions that are well-placed to work with the residents of Mulranny to deliver climate action for a Just Transition.

The solutions and pathways forward proposed in this report are the development of (1) a 'Share, Care & Repair' programme and (2) the recognition of the wider area as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve. The first (micro) solution aims to build the capacity to engage with, and benefit from,

climate action at a local level in the short to medium term in order to maintain the momentum of the People's Transition process so far, while the second– more ambitious (macro) solution will act as a 'way-marker' towards which many of the other solutions co-envisioned during the collective visioning workshops will be realised over time. These specific solutions are designed to meet the need for climate action whilst also being realistic and beneficial for the residents of Mulranny.

While the People's Transition model puts communities at the heart of the Just Transition, this report recognises the role of Mayo County Council in delivering fast and fair climate action. This sentiment aligns with local and national level climate policymaking, in particular, the mission of the Local authority sector strategy for delivering on the Climate Action Charter and Climate Action Plan to 'deliver transformative change and measurable climate action across our cities and counties and within our own organisations, through leadership, example, and mobilising action at a local level' (Climate Action Regional Offices, 2021, p.11). The report notes that great strides have already been taken since Mulranny was designated as Mayo's Initial Decarbonising Zone in 2021, not least due to the inspirational community spirit. To this end, where areas of community-led climate action outlined in this report require significant collaboration with local government, local-level policy recommendations are put forward.

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 and community-centred perspective. By listening first and ensuring that all voices are heard, it is hoped that climate action will benefit from greater social approval and thus be in higher demand.

1.1 Mapping

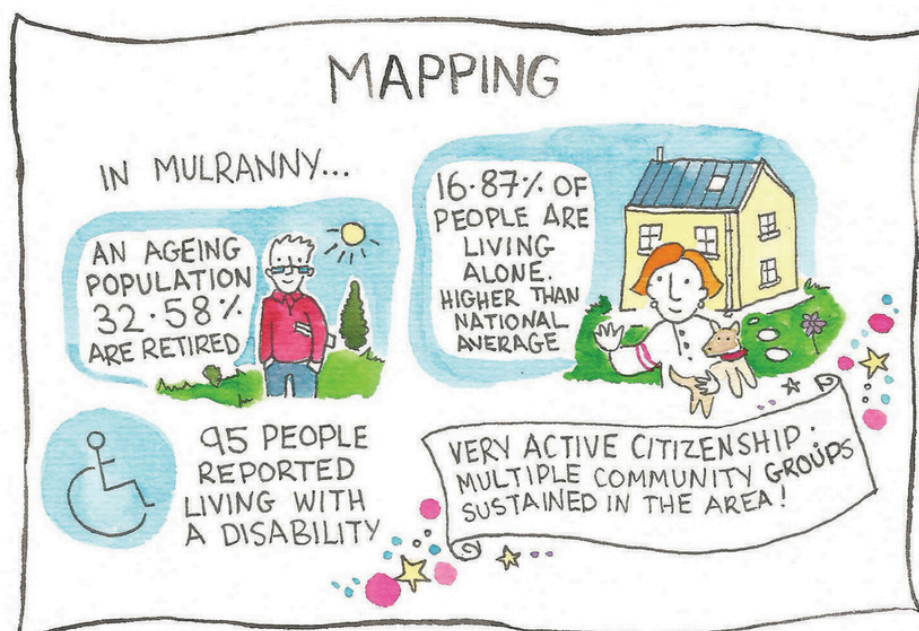
The mapping phase aimed to build a picture of the community of Mulranny, outlining a geographical scope for the project that represents the people who live there. An area was mapped to include the organisations, services, and institutions that play a significant role in the locality. These institutions are important because they make a strategic contribution to the local economy and society on a long-term basis (McCabe, 2020). Identifying key actors and community leaders in various fields allowed for the inclusion of the groups associated with them in the project, helping the TASC team to connect with the community and identify their needs and priorities.

Community wealth building is a people-centred approach to economic development that seeks to harness the wealth being created at a local level. By giving people and communities a stronger say in and ownership over local development, it aims to address the root causes of inequality and create a more equitable and democratic economy. Under the community wealth building model, anchor institutions play an essential role in local economic development and can be understood as organisations that are rooted in place and have a significant influence over the local economy through procurement, employment, and the ownership of assets and land (CLES, no date). As such, social anchors such as Saint Brendan's Village and Mulranny National School, economic anchors such as the Mulranny Park Hotel and Nevin's Newfield Inn, as well as the close-by Southwest Mayo Development Company – who have an office in nearby Newport, and both Mayo County Council and Atlantic Technological University – based in Castlebar, are key stakeholders.

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies, who is pioneering the community wealth building movement across the United Kingdom, describe community wealth building as having five core principles:

- Enhancing plural ownership of the local economy by developing and nurturing community-led organisations, cooperatives and public ownership models.
- Making financial power work for local places by harnessing local wealth and enhancing investment into and not out of local communities.
- Creating fair employment and just labour markets by focusing on recruitment from low-income areas, and ensuring work is decent and pays the living wage.

- The progressive procurement of goods and services using the power of anchor institutions to retain wealth locally.
- The socially productive use of land and property by expanding democratic access to community and public sector land.



1.2 An overview of Mulranny

Mulranny (Irish: An Mhala Raithní, meaning 'the hill-brow of the ferns') is a coastal village on the isthmus between Clew Bay and Blacksod Bay in County Mayo, Ireland. Mulranny, located at the foot of the Nephin Beg Mountain Range, has a blue flag beach, saltmarsh and a coastal machair system - a unique and rare system of habitats found only in Ireland and Scotland. The Corraun Peninsula, which contains three mountain peaks, is situated to the west.



The community lies on the 42 km Great Western Greenway which runs between Westport and Achill. It was the 2011 winner of a 'European Destinations of Excellence' award. Mulranny has received bronze and silver medals in the national Tidy Towns competition, and silver medal in the 2019 Entente Florale Competition. There are several local services and organisations, including a pre-school, Mulranny National School, local GP services, Saint Brendan's Community Village project- offering residential care. the HSE ambulance base, the Mulranny Park Hotel, Nevin's Newfield Inn, local amenity/community centre, the Old Irish Goat Centre and the Mulranny Arts Centre.

Alongside these local institutions, a number of community groups and social enterprises play a central role in the development and placemaking of Mulranny. At the forefront of this has been the work – led by Mayo Community Futures – to engage in community action planning processes.

The People's Transition process in Mulranny has aimed to complement this work as well as re-energise the community energy required to sustain such plans. Local groups include Mulranny Scouts, Tidy Towns group, Men's Shed, Mulranny Pipe Band, active retirement association, and disabled cycling society. Additionally, Mulranny has been selected by the County Council as Mayo's Initial Decarbonisation Zone, and has also been successful in securing significant LEADER funding over the past decade. This has supported the development of multiple initiatives including the 'Gift of Hands' centre – run by a local women's collective – which upcycles wool offcuts into a wide range of quality craftworks with profits used to fund local development initiatives; the Old Irish Goats Society which has an information centre located in the village; participatory democracy network; Mulranny E Bikes – Ireland's first community e-bike scheme; green schools group; community energy working group; and recently established farmer's forum.

These organisations give us an idea of some of the places where the community is already meeting, as well as highlighting the institutions that might be involved in a plan for community-led climate action.

1.3 Community Data

During the mapping phase, recently published census data was analysed to begin building an understanding of the population of Mulranny. This allowed us to identify potentially underrepresented residents and groups so that inequalities in participation could be better addressed in advance of community engagement.

Like many small villages in the west of Ireland, Mulranny in Co. Mayo faces a number of unique challenges and opportunities within its local economy. Understanding these conditions is essential for promoting equitable and sustainable development within the community. The proceeding paragraphs aim to leverage small area population data from Irish census records to map the socioeconomic landscape of Mulranny, Co. Mayo. By examining key indicators such as employment rates, education levels, housing quality, and access to essential services, this process offers valuable insights into the current state of the community. Such insights will be considered within the context of both climate justice and community wealth building principles to ensure that development is based on fairness, inclusivity, and community enhancement in the shift towards a more sustainable economy and society.

Mulranny Village and Newport West Electoral Division

In building a picture of the socioeconomic landscape of Mulranny, it is important to consider both the village itself and its broader hinterlands. As such, in analysing the census data, this section will focus on Mulranny village as characterised by the 'small areas' category of available small area population census data and the wider electoral division, Newport West. The total population of Mulranny village on census night in 2022 was 315 while the wider Newport West division recorded a total population of 799. The National Planning Framework classifies District Electoral Divisions which do not have any population centres with 1,500 people or more as rural. As such, Newport West as a whole is categorised as rural with Mulranny village subsequently falling within this threshold also.

As of 2022, Newport West is defined as 'marginally below average' by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, however, Mulranny village itself is defined as 'marginally above average'. The boundaries outlined in considering indicators of deprivation from census data changed between 2016 and 2022 thereby making comparisons between the two periods difficult. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the distribution of

disadvantaged conditions seems to have shifted within the local area between the two census years. While 2022 data indicates that living conditions within Mulranny village are 'marginally above average', 2016 data (though mapping the area slightly differently) indicates that Mulranny was disadvantaged at the time. This positive progression of conditions within the village is indeed a welcome finding. However, it is important to note that the hinterlands of the village within Newport West ED saw a decline in its social conditions as what is now classified as 'marginally below average' had been identified as 'marginally above average' in 2016. As caveated above, this may be attributed to the change in boundary lines. Boundaries at the Electoral Division level did not change during this period. Newport West in its entirety was found to be 'marginally below average' in 2016 as well as in 2022.

Mulranny Village

To begin mapping the local area more closely, this section of the project will focus on census data relating to Mulranny Village specifically before considering Newport West ED in similar detail.

Employment and socioeconomic class

Of the 264 people over the age of 15 stating their principle economic status on census night in 2022, 46.97% noted that they are in employment while just 1.14% face short- and long-term unemployment. The national unemployment rate on census night was 4.26%. 32.58% of people in Mulranny are retired compared to 15.90% of the national population, indicating an aging population within the village. Signs of an aging workforce are also evident when analysing the age profile of the village as just 15.15% of people are between the ages of 20-34 compared to 21.59% and 20.45% of people being within the age groups 35-49 and 50-64 respectively. 4.92% of people living in Mulranny stated that their principle economic status is looking after the home and family while 5.3% were unable to work due to a permanent illness or disability. A further 7.58% of people recorded being students. In considering the type of employment being undertaken in Mulranny, 29.21% of the population classified themselves as 'managerial and technical workers' while 4.44% stated that they were 'professional workers' in 2022. A further 17.14% recorded having employment in 'non-manual' roles while 17.78% and 13.33% noted engaging 'skilled manual' and 'semi-skilled' labour respectively. 4.76% of the village population worked in 'unskilled' positions. These roles span across a range of industries. Notably, 29.03% of the Mulranny population is employed within the realm of professional services.

12.09% of the population are employed in commerce and trade while 8.87% work in building and construction and manufacturing industries respectively (i.e. 8.87% in building and construction and 8.87% in manufacturing industries). 7.26% work in public administration, 5.65% in transport and communication, and 3.23% in agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors. The remaining 25% of the population are employed in 'other' industries.

Education

Given that education is an important stepping stone in attaining and maintaining employment, it is useful to consider the various levels of education the adult population in Mulranny has received. While a large proportion of the population of the village over the age of 15 remained in formal education until the age of 21 or older (28.76%), 7.08% ceased education before the age of 15. Notably, 3.98% of Mulranny people reported receiving no formal education in the 2022 census compared to just 2% of the larger Irish population. 6.64% received an education as far as the primary school level which is much more in line with the national average of approximately 7% than those receiving none. While the rate of those reporting that lower secondary was the highest level of education they had received in Mulranny (9.29%) was lower than the national average (13%), the rate of adults having achieved as far as an upper secondary level of education in Mulranny was 20.80% compared to 18% across Ireland.

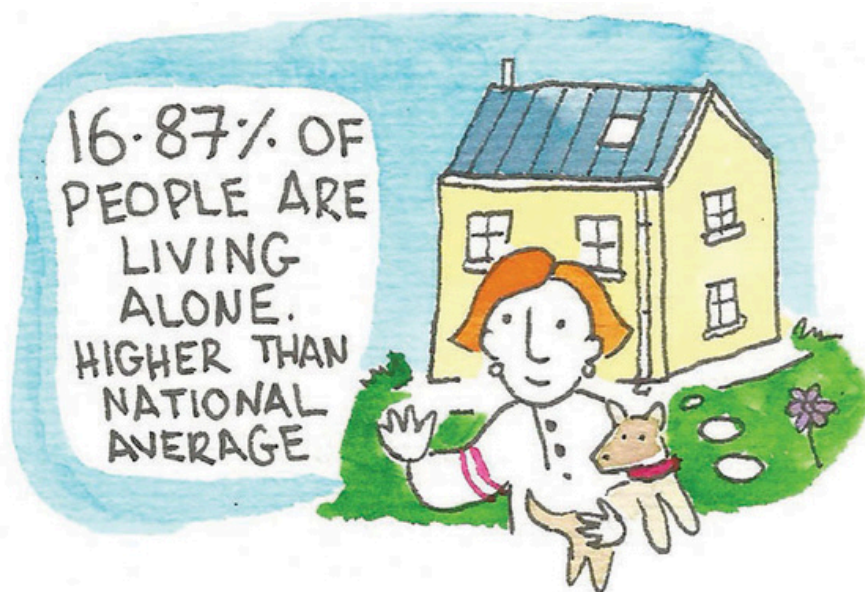
The percentage of those having continued onto further education through various routes after secondary school in total in Mulranny (46.92%) is relatively reflective of the Irish population more broadly (45%). However, there are some differences with regard to the rate at which different avenues were taken. For instance, while both the village and the wider national population recorded achieving 'technical or vocational qualifications' at rates of 8.41% and 8% respectively, 4.43% of adults in Mulranny recorded attaining 'advanced certificates/competed apprenticeships' compared to 6% or the national population. These percentage rates hold true for each respective population group with regard to rates of attaining 'higher certificates.'

With regard to an 'ordinary bachelor degree or national diploma', 10.62% of people over the age of 15 in Mulranny recorded receiving this level of education which is 2.62% more than the national average of 8%. Notably however, the rates of those attaining an 'honours bachelor degree, professional qualification or both', a 'postgraduate diploma or degree', or a 'doctorate (Ph.D) or higher' across Ireland are

higher than those found in Mulranny. 11.95% of the Murlanny population received an 'honours bachelor degree or professional qualification' compared to 13% of Ireland as a whole. A more significant difference is found in the rate of those receiving a 'postgraduate diploma or degree' as 7.08% of people in Mulranny attained such educational levels compared to 11% of the total Irish population.

Household Compositions

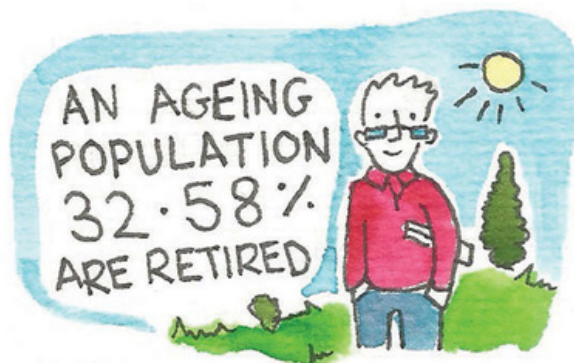
Of the 105 households in Mulranny village completing the census in 2022, 39.10% were one person households. As such, 16.87% of the population of the village lived alone in 2022. 17.41% of households were made up of married couples living together while 19.05% were made up of married couples with children. 5.71% of households consisted of cohabiting couples and 0.95% consisted of cohabiting couples with children. While no households within the village were headed by a lone father, 9 were headed by a lone mother. This amounted to 8.57%. Additionally, no households consisted of two or more-family units sharing a home.



This is lower than the national average of 16.31%. In saying this, 10.70% of people in Mulranny live in households comprised of 6 people which is significantly higher than the rate across Ireland of 6.64%. However, this appears to be accounted for (at least on a statistical level) in terms of the number of bedrooms included in different homes across the village. Furthermore, the rate of those living in households with 7 people in Mulranny is much more in with the national average as figures were found to be 2.88% and 2.03% respectively. No one in the village lives in a household of 8 or more people.

Health

In terms of health, the percentage rate of people in Mulranny declaring their health status to be 'very good' is 45.08%. This is significantly lower than the national average of 53.23% in 2022. 35.56% of people in Mulranny reported having 'good' health on census night while 13.33% stated that their health status was 'fair'. Once again, there is further indication that the quality of health experienced by people in Mulranny is worse than across Ireland on average as 2.22% of people in the village



reported having 'bad' health compared to 1.41% of the nation. Similarly, percentage rates of those experiencing 'very bad' health in the village are marginally higher than the national average as 0.64% of people in Mulranny recorded this health status compared to 0.33% of the wider population.



The percentage of those living with a long-term disability within Mulranny village is also higher than Ireland as a whole. Of the 315 people living in Mulranny village who completed the section of the census relating to health

and well-being, 95 reported having a disability. This amounts to 30.16% of people in the village. In comparison, 21.55% of the total population reported having a disability in the 2022 census. However, these higher-than-average figures might be accounted for by Saint Brendan's Village care facility enabling a larger percentage of older people who may have developed age-related disabilities to remain living within the community than would otherwise have been the case.

Race and Ethnicity

86.74% of the population of Mulranny village held Irish citizenship on the night of the 2022 census. This differs slightly from the national average of 84.24%. While 11.91% of the local population in the village were born in the UK, just 3.74% held UK citizenship. 2.38% and 1.70% were Polish citizens and citizens of other EU Member States

respectively while 2.04% held Indian citizenship. In terms of ethnicity, 86.60% of the Mulranny population identified as white Irish, however, 0% identified as white Irish Traveller. 8.84% identified as 'other white' while 2.04% noted their ethnicity as 'Asian and Asian Irish'. 0% of the local population recorded their ethnicity as 'Black or Black Irish' while 0.68% recorded their cultural background as being 'Other'. Not reflected in this census data are a small community of Ukrainians fleeing the invasion by Russia in recent years. The community live in private rented accommodation in the village and many have little English. Consequently, an interpreter was employed during the engagement phase in order to assist these community members in responding to the survey undertaken at that point.

While census data does not capture outward migration from the village, or indeed other small areas and electoral divisions, it is useful to consider inward migration. 91.10% of the Mulranny population reported living in the same address on census night 2022 as they had lived in 1 year prior. 3.77% moved into the village from elsewhere in Co. Mayo and 1.40% moved from elsewhere in the country. 3.77% had been residing outside of Ireland a year prior.

Housing

Housing has important implications for Climate Justice concerns both in relation to energy efficiency and sustainability, and in relation to the fulfilment of basic rights across society in terms of shelter and comfort. In this sense, it is useful to consider the year in which homes across the Mulranny community were built and their practical characteristics. Notably, of the 105 households in Mulranny village 104 reside in either a house or a bungalow with just 1 household classifying their home as a 'flat/apartment' in 2022. While over a third (36.19%) of homes within the village were built between the years 1991-2000, 22.85% are at least 50 years old with 7.62% being over 100 years old. This raises a number of concerns relating to the energy efficiency of such properties and the extent to which residents can remain adequately warm and healthy in their home environment.

Reflective of the variance in age across the homes built within Mulranny village, a variety of central heating methods were also recorded during the 2022 census. It is important to note that 2.86% of households claimed to have no central heating within their home. This differs to the state average of 1.16% and may be a cause of concern, particularly during the colder months. Almost half of the homes (49.52%) rely on oil to

heat their homes which is significantly above national figures of 38.88%. In contrast, while just 2.86% of households in Mulranny heat their homes through the use of natural gas, 32.74% of Irish households more broadly rely on such methods. Mulranny continues to remain distinct from national figures in both its use of comparatively efficient, and definitively inefficient, energy resources. In terms of the use of electricity as a means of central heating which (depending on how said electricity is generated) can be very efficient and environmentally friendly, 23.81% of households in Mulranny utilise this source which is considerably higher than the national average of 11.76%. On the other hand, 6.67% of Mulranny homes still rely on coal which is almost double the national average of 3.45%. Furthermore, the use of peat (which again is comparatively inefficient and damaging to the environment) remains high in the village at 11.43% while across the country the use of peat is just 3.70%. Overall, while 4.76% of households did not state their level of access to renewable energy in the 2022 census, 72.38% of households recorded not having using any renewable energy sources to heat their homes while 22.86% had at least 1 renewable energy source.

In seeking to improve the energy efficiency ratings and comfort levels of homes, tenure is an important consideration. 20.00% of homes in Mulranny were owned with a mortgage or a loan while 36.19% were owned outright. Interestingly, 23.81% rented their homes from a private landlord while just 0.95% of homes were rented from the local authority. However, 13.33% were rented from a 'voluntary/co-operative housing body' which indicates that there are some options for 'affordable' housing. A further 5.71% of homes were occupied free of rent.

Commuting and Car Ownership

Finally, an understanding of the accessibility levels these households experience in relation to work, school, and childcare places is important for enhancing day-to-day experiences within the community in addition to potentially informing projects aimed at reducing emissions during commutes. Of those taking the journey to work, school, or childcare each day, 12.92% travel by foot while just 1.69% cycle. 14.61% avail of bus, minibus, or coach services. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the high levels of car dependency across rural Ireland, 33.15% of the working and student population in Mulranny drive to their respective destinations. A further 14.61% travel as passengers in private cars while 10.11% rely on vans as their primary mode of transport. In terms of the length of such commutes, 31.58% travel for 15 minutes or less to their place of work, care, or school while 21.05% travel for more than 15 but less than 30 minutes.

It is useful to note that the mode length of time each journey takes is not broken down by mode of transport. As such, it is unclear if such journeys are a 15-30 minute walk or drive. Nonetheless, 26.32% commute between 30-45 minutes, 7.89% commute between 60-90 minutes, and 1.32% commute for over 90 minutes each day.

In terms of car ownership, 19.80% of households in the village did not have access to a private car, thus relying on public or active modes of transport. 42.57% of households had 1 car while 31.68% had 2 cars. A further 4.95% and 0.99% of households had 3 and 4 cars respectively. As more jobs offer remote working conditions in a post-pandemic society, access to internet can be just as influential in one's economic opportunities as access to reliable transport. In fact, when asked about their primary mode of transport for commuting to work, school, or childcare services, 10.11% stated that they mostly work from home. As such, broadband is an important tool in engaging in remote working environments. Data from the 2022 census found that 65.71% of households had access to broadband in Mulranny. This is comparatively lower than the national average of 79.37%.

The mapping phase highlighted information that became the foundation of the community engagement phase of the Mulranny People's Transition. Understanding community dynamics, underrepresented groups, the places where the community is already meeting, and the institutions that might be involved in a plan for community-led climate action allowed for the development of an inclusive engagement phase built on existing community relations and social fabric.



Community Engagement



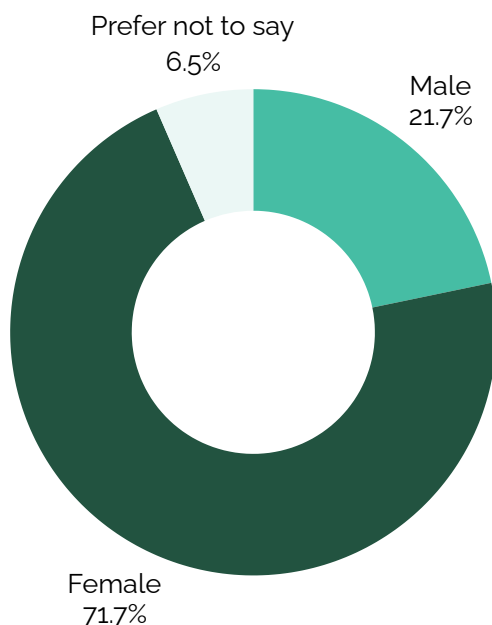
2. Community Engagement

Engagement began in the autumn of 2024 with a visit by the TASC researcher to the village to meet key local institutions and local community members. Truly valuing the opinions of local people is a central tenet of the People's Transition, so it was decided that further investment in relationship-building was needed to reach under-represented community members. To facilitate this work, a survey of community members was undertaken. Hard copies were made available at community level and an online version was shared via all relevant local social media/WhatsApp groups. This approach also allowed us to hear from some of the people who may not be in a position to attend gatherings due to care responsibilities, and people who might have been reluctant to attend for a variety of other reasons. An interpreter was also hired to ensure members of the Ukrainian community living in the village could participate.

51 community members completed the survey. 72% of respondents were female, and 78% were over 35 years of age. 75% felt either 'connected' or 'very connected' to their community, with 39% thinking change 'was needed' in Mulranny, 57% thinking change 'may be needed', and only 4% thinking 'no change' was needed (see charts below):

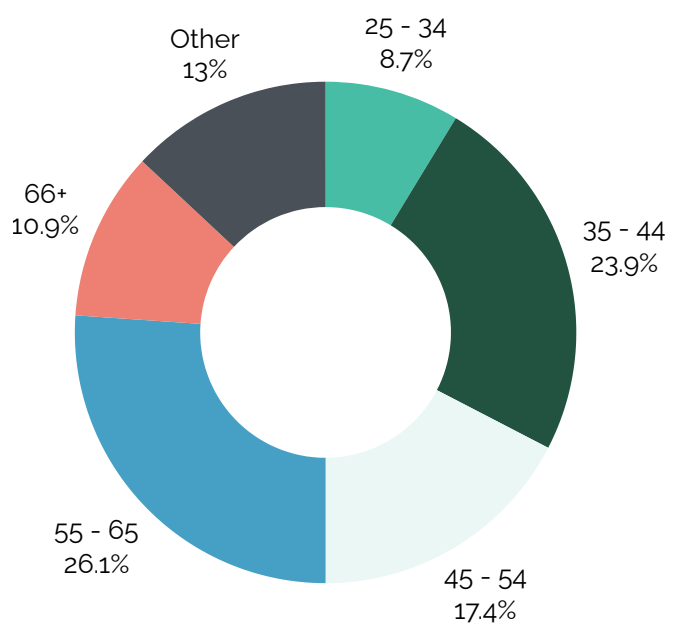
What is your gender?

46 Responses



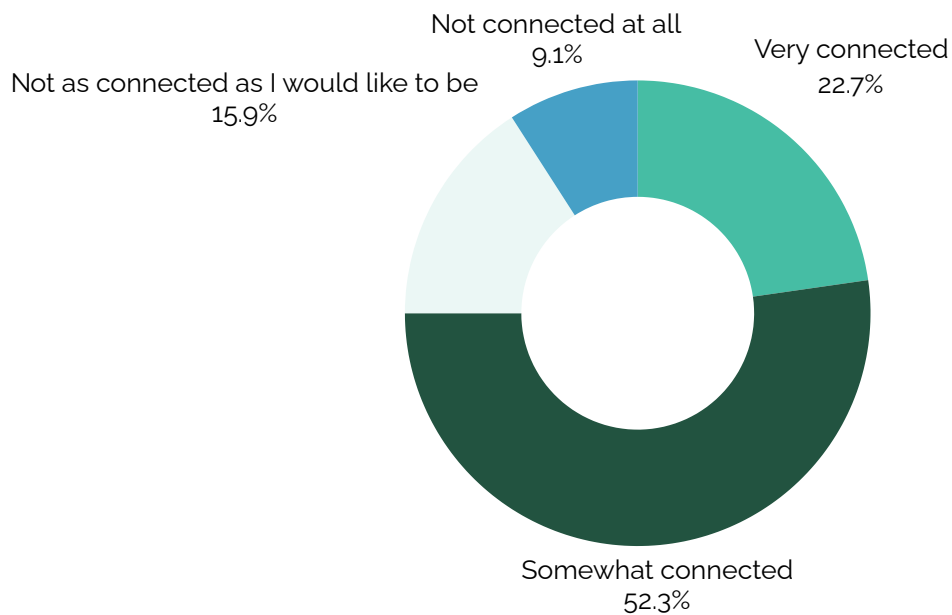
What is your age range?

46 Responses



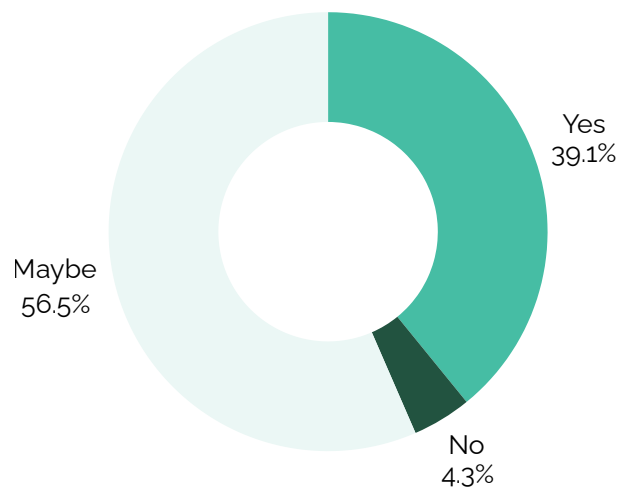
Do you feel connected to your local community?

46 Responses



Do you think change is needed in your area?

46 Responses



Preliminary findings from the survey found that what concerned the community most was access to quality housing, employment opportunities, social options for young people, and transport options. The survey found that the community would like to see more changes to housing (retrofits/upgrades), local employment opportunities, local education and training options, access to nature/green spaces, access to locally grown and affordable food, community food growing spaces, community spaces (meeting space, drop-in social spaces), frequent and affordable public transport, and social opportunities for young people. Using these survey findings as a starting point,

in February 2025, we made a start on the Community Engagement phase, with the TASC researcher spending a week in Mulranny meeting locals, conducting interviews and holding two community conversations with groups of local residents. These sessions allowed the community to reflect on the challenges facing the village, and also their collective strengths. The community conversations were organised in collaboration with the local Wilderland climate action project and took place at Mulranny Arts – a really warm and inviting space for the community to meet.

The final formal element of the engagement phase was a collective visioning workshop held in April 2025, where community members once again came together to create a vision of the future developed by the community for the community. The aim was to first ensure that the TASC researcher had interpreted the dialogues in previous sessions correctly, and then to co-imagine a set of shared goals that responded to some of the challenges identified in the community conversations, leveraging their collective strength to co-design solutions to these challenges that simultaneously provide a transition pathway to a more environmentally and ecologically sustainable Mulranny.

Through each of these community engagement methods, the scale of participation widened, and the representation of local people deepened, so that as true a reflection as possible of the community could be garnered.

2.1 Challenges

From the outset, it quickly became apparent that a tailored approach and additional effort would be needed to overcome barriers to participation in Mulranny. According to community groups and leaders, although there has been a small but energetic core group of community activists in the village, encouraging new community members to engage in community development has long been a challenge locally. With this in mind, a specific effort was made by the TASC researcher to engage with members of the farming community, members of the Ukrainian community, and local youth. There are likely multiple complex reasons for such barriers to engagement, and we would expect that competing priorities, caring responsibilities, accessibility challenges, and generational splits all play a role.

2.2 Community Conversations

Working through a series of prompting questions, over the course of the community engagement phase the community members reflected on what they loved about the village, what are the challenges they face, where they would like to see Mulranny in 10 years' time, and what solutions might solve these challenges AND help the community become more environmentally and ecologically friendly? The following reflects the outcomes of these conversations:

What do you love about Mulranny? What are the strengths of the community?

- **Landscape:** Sea, blue flag beach, mountains, woodland, tidal zone, saltmarsh, beautiful un-spoilt scenery, peaceful, sand dunes, peatlands.
- **Community spirit:** Visionary people, welcoming, open to change, coordinated efforts, community support.
- **Activities:** Sea swimming, walking (loop walks, greenway, pier, causeway), golf, art classes, Comhra Irish conversation/classes, bike rental/electric bike scheme, scouts, church, Dark Skies, Stone Wall festival, Wild Nephin national park, beach.
- **Community groups:** Scouts, tidy towns, men's shed, Gift of Hands, pipe band, active retirement association, environmental group, community futures, DZ group, disabled cycling society, green schools.
- **Community facilities:** Mulranny Arts, St Brendan's care hospital, SAFE home, hotel, amenity centre, playground, local transport, restaurants/pubs, pre-school, national school.
- **Irish native breeds:** Old Irish goat, Curlew, Brent Geese.



What are some of the challenges facing Mulranny as a community?

- Volunteer burnout and need to engage 'younger' community members (16-45).
- Threats to natural assets (e.g. Saltmarsh, machair, light pollution, invasive species).
- Isolation.
- Amenity centre could benefit from further development.
- Lots of ideas but a perception of lack of follow-up by authorities (e.g. Causeway, pier, solar farm – surveys carried out but no capital investment).
- Lack of employment/opportunity – leading to culture of emigration.
- Lack of affordable homes – large amount of holiday homes in area.
- Small population.
- Lack of facilities for children and teenagers.
- Traffic – speed of cars on N59 through village – no enforcement of speed limits.
- Deer, goats, sheep – wandering on road.
- Lack of bins/rubbish dumping.



Where would you like to see Mulranny in 10 years' time?

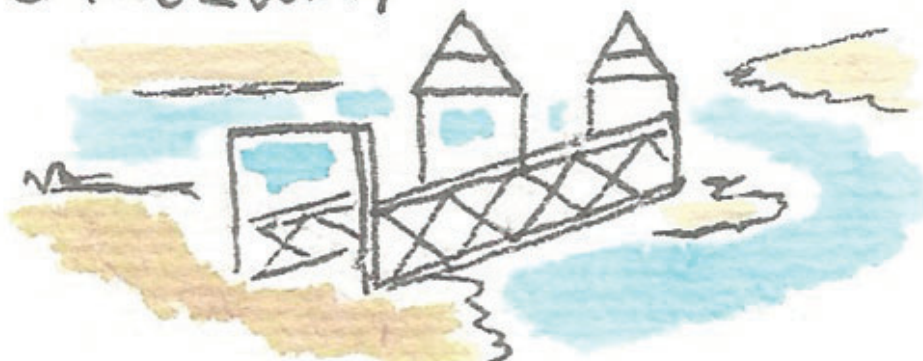
- Carbon neutral/surplus.
- More respect for natural landscape.
- Control of invasive species.
- Saltmarsh decline reversed and restored to peak beauty and function.
- Light pollution reversed – dark sky friendly.
- A thriving biosphere.
- Machair preserved.
- Infrastructure repaired (e.g. Pier, causeway etc).
- Inclusive access to beach.
- Circular economy.
- Increased ecological consciousness.
- Younger age profile – with increased community involvement.
- Year-round employment.
- Growing vegetables locally – selling locally – community garden(s).
- Mulranny 'Gold' overall winners of Tidy Village.
- Mulranny as a model of best practice for socio-ecological development.
- Sea sport activities up and running.
- Safer roads for everybody – less congestion in village.
- Affordable housing for locals – less holiday homes.
- EV charging station(s).
- Mulranny will host a 'rural development thinktank.'



Are there solutions that would solve these challenges AND help the community become more environmentally and ecologically friendly?

- Saltmarsh and machair restoration projects.
- Community clean energy projects (solar, wind, wave).
- Circular economy project – with tool share (library of things)/skill share – involving all generations/workshops.
- Upgrading of amenity/community centre.
- Traffic calming design project.
- Community bicycle repair hub.
- Develop new cycling routes – connecting townlands.
- Establish a remote working hub.
- A 'greenway revolution' – increasing biodiversity and food infrastructure along the greenway.
- House retrofitting projects, affordable housing schemes (young people could be trained in retrofitting/building skills) – insulation of all properties in the area.
- Community garden project(s).
- Securing paid community development staff to sustain momentum of transition.
- Work to achieve UNESCO Biosphere status.
- Source expert assistance for project research and development.
- Access support/funding from local and national government.

REPAIR THE PIER &
CAUSEWAY



A Collective Vision



3. A Collective Vision

Working closely with the local community via a deep participatory process of community conversations and collective visioning, we co-imagined a number of climate solutions that would benefit the community and address some of the main local development priorities. Each solution aims to accelerate climate action while responding to local priorities. Consequently, we envisioned the following solutions that would solve the challenges discussed in the community conversations and help the community become more environmentally and ecologically friendly:

- Saltmarsh and machair restoration projects.
- Community clean energy projects (solar, wind, wave).
- 'Share, Care and Repair' programme – with tool share (library of things)/skill share – involving all generations/workshops.
- Upgrading of amenity centre.
- Traffic calming design project.
- Develop new cycling routes – connecting townlands.
- Establish a remote working hub.
- A 'greenway revolution' – increasing biodiversity and food infrastructure along the greenway.
- House retrofitting projects, affordable housing schemes (young people could be trained in retrofitting/building skills) – insulation of all properties in the area.
- Community garden project(s).
- Securing paid community development staff to sustain momentum of transition.
- Work to achieve UNESCO Biosphere status.
- Source expert assistance for project research and development.
- Access support/funding from local and national government.

After a process of deliberation, the community then distilled this list down to two community-led solutions for climate justice that they have chosen to move forward with:

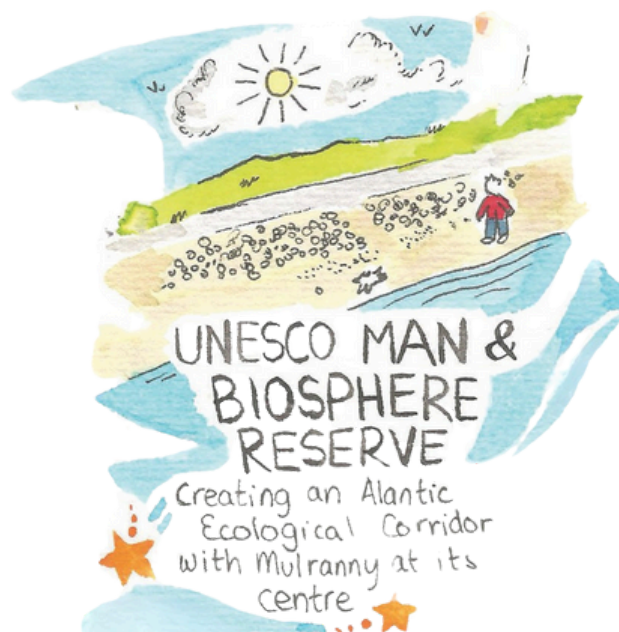
- A 'Share, Care & Repair' Programme.
- Recognition of the wider area as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve.

After a process of deliberation, the community then distilled this list down to two community-led solutions for climate justice that they have chosen to move forward with:

A 'Share, Care & Repair' Programme



Recognition of the wider area as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve



The first (micro) solution aims to build the capacity to engage with, and benefit from, climate action at a local level in the short to medium term in order to maintain the momentum of the People's Transition process so far, while the second – more ambitious (macro) solution will act as a 'way-marker' towards which many of the other solutions co-envisioned during the collective visioning workshops will be realised over time.

The community of Mulranny have proved themselves to be remarkably socially and ecologically active – with numerous impressive achievements which evidence this to date. However, this current wave of momentum should now be nurtured and supported by local development organisations, service providers and local government – organisations identified by the community as having an important role to play in delivering local projects. It is essential that the goodwill of local people is not taken for granted or exhausted. The potential for consultation fatigue, coupled with a lack of funding to actualise their ideas, suggests that adequate resources should be put in place as rapidly as possible to deliver on the vision put forward by the community.

3.1 Share, Care, and Repair Programme

Circular economy and climate action

During their community collective visioning process, residents of Mulranny shared a vision for a community-owned and run Share, Care, and Repair Programme where local people could come together to both share and learn repair/upcycling skills, share resources, and borrow basic tools and equipment.

The transition to a circular economy is a key element of Ireland's decarbonisation strategy. The current 'take-make-waste' model of economic development is not sustainable and contributes to both biodiversity loss and climate change (DECC, 2024). It is estimated that 50% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions come from the extraction and processing of resources. A circular economy aims to reduce new resource use and extraction at the same time as extending the life of existing products and materials.



What will a Share, Care, and Repair Programme look like?

Extending the life of existing products and materials through repair can be undertaken by several groups in society, including by the company that created the product, by for-profit and not-for-profit organisations, and by communities and community groups (Bradley and Persson, 2022). In recent years, the 'right to repair' movement, which argues that the products we use should last longer and be simple, affordable, and convenient to repair, has gained recognition and traction. Bradley and Persson (2022) argue that because repair work can be difficult for someone without significant prior experience in repair or technical expertise, collective learning, in addition to the appropriate infrastructure, is required.

Alongside the growth of the 'right-to-repair' movement, repair cafés and hubs, where people can come together to share skills, time, and tools, have become an increasingly popular phenomenon. RepairCafe.org records that there are more than 3,000 repair cafes worldwide (Repair Café, n.d). In recent years, there has been an emerging perspective within academic literature that repair cafés are not only about repairing items and products but are also about developing and building community ties as well as serving as a space for empowerment (Bradley and Persson, 2022).

Repair hubs are often community-led and non-commercial. They are meeting places where people come together to repair all manner of things, usually small household items, such as furniture, clothes, electrical items, and bicycles. People who come to the repair hub can bring a broken item from home or help someone else repair something they have brought. Repair hubs differ from traditional repair environments in that the person with the broken items will stay with the repairer during the process to watch and learn new skills.

In a community setting, repair hubs are often positioned as a space for mutual learning and informal skills development. A core challenge identified in the community conversations was that of engaging younger community members. A repair programme in Mulranny could therefore have an intergenerational focus, bringing younger and older residents together to share skills and connect with each other in an informal setting. In advance of setting up a repair programme, local repair experts would offer to volunteer their time there. These 'experts' are usually community members who are comfortable working with textiles, small appliances, wood, or

bicycles, for example. They would not need any formal qualifications to act as a repair expert; they would just need to be handy at getting broken items up and running again. As well as repair experts, one or several community members may wish to take on the role of the host, helping new participants and providing tea/coffee and refreshments to the group.



The potential of a repair programme has been illustrated by Repair Café Belfast. Established by local volunteers in 2017, Repair Café Belfast holds monthly pop-up repair events in community spaces across Belfast City, where children are also welcomed. The community events run on a pay-as-you-feel basis in order to cover the costs of hosting events, but there is no official charge for repairs. Community repairers at the Belfast Repair Café have a range of skills including working with leather and woodwork, engineering, sewing, and upholstery (Repair Café Belfast, 2020). By 2019, the Belfast group recorded that more than 1,000 items had been brought to Belfast Repair Café events, and approximately 600 of those had been fixed and given new life.

A culture of recycling and repair in Mulranny

The concept of repair as an avenue through which to combine social and environmental benefits is not a new phenomenon in Mulranny. Gift of Hands, for instance, is a local voluntary group whose ethos is 'Learn, Share and Contribute.'



They are a group of creative women who give their time and skills to make beautiful craft items, largely made from cut offs and end pieces from Foxford Woolen Mill and other local sources. Many tons of this material, formerly sent to landfill, has been repurposed to produce hand crafted rugs, cushions, fibre art pictures, soft toys and much more. Additionally, Mulranny Men's Shed is also very active at the

heart of the community. With a growing membership, the members have a range of carpentry and woodturning skills and expertise in furniture restoration and reupholstery. Both Gift of Hands and Mulranny Men's Shed have indicated they would be very supportive of a Care, Share and Repair Programme taking shape in the village.



Getting things up and running

Repair events are typically held in community spaces or public buildings. Another challenge raised during the community conversations was that the local amenity/community centre could benefit from further development. Basing the hub in the centre could therefore both meet this challenge and provide a long-term stable home for the project. The board of the centre has indicated an interest in acting as a base for the hub pending the resources and community interest necessary to sustain it.

Repair cafés are generally low-cost and can be established on a voluntary basis. Thus, they would be well suited in Mulranny as a capacity-building exercise that builds on the community's strengths. Given the considerable interest in circular economy approaches in Ireland at present, small to medium scale support is available to communities across the island, including multiple charitable and corporate grant schemes and occasional funding drives from government departments such as DECC. Organisations such as ChangeX, for instance, provide €2,000 in financing to community groups in Ireland to support project setup costs such as insurance fees, tools, and venue costs. Other grant schemes can offer significantly more.



Scaling up over time: Library of Things

By utilising the amenity/community centre space, securing some modest start-up costs, and generating adequate interest from community members, there would be an opportunity to launch and sustain the repair hub as well as then delve deeper into the opportunities that the circular economy presents by establishing a 'Library of Things.'



A Library of Things differs from a conventional library in that instead of books, you can borrow popular but occasionally used items such as house and garden tools, sports equipment, games, children's toys, and small appliances. The idea behind the concept is that a community member would come to the Library of Things to borrow something that they need for a specific short-term task. In return for borrowing, instead of buying the item, they would pay a small charge.

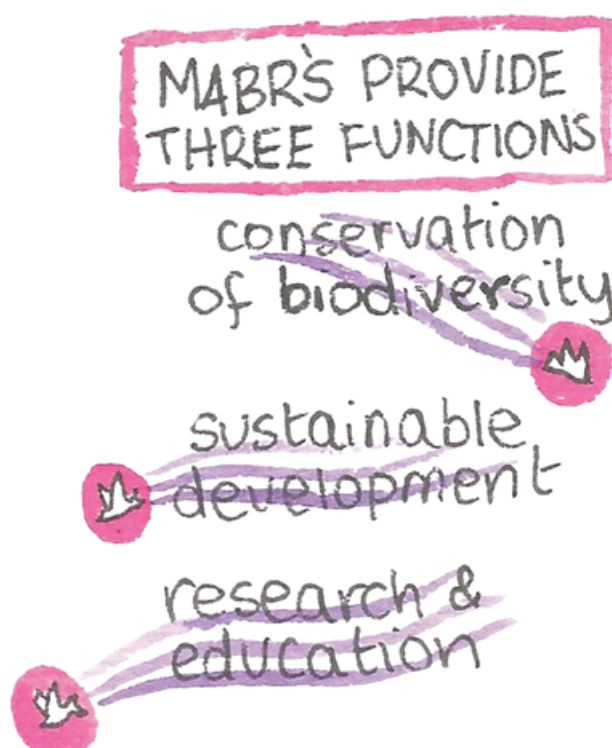
Belfast Tool Library is an example of a community-led Library of Things on the island of Ireland. Members join by paying a suggested membership fee of £30 per year to support running costs and can then borrow tools for up to a week at a time at no further cost. To ensure the library is accessible to everyone, members are free to contribute less or more depending on their ability to pay. The Belfast Tool Library have a physical library and workshop space in West Belfast. The initiative was established in 2019 and run by a team of volunteers with support from the National Lottery Community Fund. With more than 300 members and continued financial support from the Dormant Account Fund Northern Ireland, Belfast Tool Library recruited two employees in 2024, evidencing the success of the initiative (Community Northern Ireland, 2024).

In Mulranny, once the programme is up and running, funding streams such as the Community Climate Action Fund would be a suitable programme through which to cover the initial costs of establishing a Library of Things for the community. Furthermore, enhancing the amenity/community centre in the village would not only benefit the development of the circular economy climate solutions developed in this report but also sustain a space for community capacity building and developing intergenerational and intercommunity connections. Several funding schemes may be suitable for this work, such as the Community Centres Investment Fund and the Sports Capital Grants Scheme.



3.2 Unesco Man & Biosphere Reserve

The second solution identified by the community during the collective visioning process was to work towards recognition of the wider area as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve, and specifically to position Mulranny – as Mayo's designated decarbonisation zone – as a lead community and model of best practice in relation to this endeavour. Complementing and expanding the Share, Care and Repair Programme idea, this more ambitious (macro) solution will act as a 'way-marker' towards which many of the other solutions co-envisioned during the collective visioning workshops will consequently be realised over time.



What is the concept?

The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme was created in 1971. It is UNESCO's leading initiative in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, defined as an intergovernmental scientific programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments. Its overarching purpose is one of connecting people and nature to inspire a positive future. The programme is implemented through and based on a dynamic and interactive network of designated areas that work on the ground, and collaborate to promote synergies between human societies and natural ecosystems. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves consists of 748 Reserves across 134 countries, with 23 of these areas being transboundary in scope. This network is further organised by themes and by global regions.

Biosphere Reserves are regarded as learning places for sustainable development. They are considered to be places that:

- Strive to be sites of excellence, testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity (UNESCO, 2017).
- Act as extraordinary testing grounds to put into practice a revolutionary approach to managing our ecosystems sustainably for future generations (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2020).
- Provide local and regional solutions to global challenges (UNESCO, 2017).
- Experiment with strategies for sustainability (that) predominantly use soft law approaches to inspire collaborative action and participatory governance (Reed & Price, 2020).

They are areas of land and marine ecosystems, or a combination of both, that are nominated by the state and designated under the intergovernmental MAB programme by the Director-General of UNESCO, following the decisions of the MAB International Coordinating Council. As such, they remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of their own national state, and are not subject to new regulations or standards as a result of designation. Since the launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves have become well positioned to address these Goals and to advance sustainability locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

The MAB Vision:

A world where people are conscious of their common future and interaction with our planet, and act collectively and responsibly to build thriving societies in harmony within the biosphere.

MAB Strategic Objectives:

- Conserve biodiversity, restore and enhance ecosystem services, and foster the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Contribute to building sustainable, healthy and equitable societies, economies and thriving human settlements in harmony with the biosphere.
- Facilitate biodiversity and sustainability science, education for sustainable development and capacity building.
- Support mitigation and adaptation to climate change and other aspects of global environmental change.



The criteria for qualification as a UNESCO Man & Biosphere Reserve are as follows:

- It should encompass a mosaic of ecological systems representative of major biogeographic regions, including a gradation of human interventions.
- It should be of significance for biological diversity conservation.
- It should provide an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale.
- It should have an appropriate size to serve the three functions of biosphere reserves, as set out in Article 3 (conservation, development, and logistic support).
- It should include these functions, through appropriate zonation, recognizing:
 - A legally constituted core area or areas devoted to long-term protection, according to the conservation objectives of the biosphere reserve, and of sufficient size to meet these objectives;
 - A buffer zone or zones clearly identified and surrounding or contiguous to the core area or areas, where only activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place;
 - An outer transition area where sustainable resource management practices are promoted and developed.
- Organisational arrangements should be provided for the involvement and participation of a suitable range of inter alia public authorities, local communities and private interests in the design and carrying out the functions of a biosphere reserve.
- In addition, provisions should be made for:
 - Mechanisms to manage human use and activities in the buffer zone or zones;
 - A management policy or plan for the area as a biosphere reserve;
 - A designated authority or mechanism to implement this policy or plan;
 - Programmes for research, monitoring, education and training.

Potential for the Designation of a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve in the Mayo region

There are currently two UNESCO biosphere reserves in Ireland. Dublin Bay Biosphere Reserve covers 16,211 hectares and includes 651 hectares of high natural value ecosystems within the core, 5,171 hectares in the buffer zone; and 10,388 hectares within the transition zone. Kerry Biosphere Reserve covers 65,000 hectares with the core having 10,260 hectares, the buffer zone 531 hectares, and the remaining 54,210 hectares are zoned as the transition area. Additionally, Lough Ree & Environs has also been proposed as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve – first officially expressed in 2018. The proposed boundary aligns with sub-catchments developed by the Environmental Protection Agency under the Water Framework Directive, with Lough Ree at the centre of the area.

In a recent preliminary scoping/feasibility study of the potential for a Mayo MAB (South West Mayo Development Company, 2024), significant benefits were highlighted around pursuing such a project. Operationalising the biosphere reserve concept will create the opportunity to connect stakeholders across Mayo in dialogue and action. The model has the capacity to bring governments, statutory agencies, farmers and landowners, community organisations and residents, scientific and academic communities, and the creative sector together to look at issues and to discuss solutions from a sustainability perspective. Biosphere reserve practices are demonstrating the potential to break silos and to connect stakeholders vertically and horizontally – establishing new synergies and providing a more holistic context for dialogue. Increasingly, biosphere reserves are proving that they have the potential to become strategic incubators that inspire systemic change (Ibid).

Given this strong potential to mainstream the conservation of biodiversity, a biosphere reserve within the Mayo region would accelerate progress on the implementation of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, and the underlying global and EU related policies that the Plan supports. As the Plan highlights, there is a wide array of national programmes already in place, many of which are present in Co. Mayo. The biosphere reserve initiative as proposed in the preliminary scoping/feasibility study undertaken by South West Mayo Development Company does not seek to duplicate what is happening, but to bring a level of coordination, collaboration, and knowledge sharing that will add value to existing implementation and monitoring efforts.

The five objectives within the National Biodiversity Action Plan can all be advanced through this biosphere reserve initiative:

- **Objective 1:** Adopt a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to biodiversity;
- **Objective 2:** Meet urgent conservation and restoration needs;
- **Objective 3:** Secure nature's contribution to people;
- **Objective 4:** Enhance the evidence base for action on biodiversity;
- **Objective 5:** Strengthen Ireland's contribution to international biodiversity initiatives.

As pointed out in the feasibility study, the absence of any reference to the MAB programme within the Action Plan, underlines the need to bring this programme to the fore as an international biodiversity initiative that needs further recognition and support.

Mulranny's role in the Man and the Biosphere Reserve for Mayo

The recently launched Mayo County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 demonstrates strong linkages between national and international climate policy and the delivery of effective climate action at local and community levels through place-based climate action. As the initial Decarbonising Zone, the actions for the Mulranny DZ have prominence in the County Council Climate Action Plan. A key action that sits within the Mulranny plan and is included in the county plan is to explore the development of a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve and promote a Biosphere Reserve as a climate resilience measure. In this context, moving forward with this MAB initiative will directly facilitate the implementation of the County Council plan.

A biosphere reserve has three functions that support and underly the zonation of the geographic area: CONSERVATION – contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation; DEVELOPMENT – foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable; and LOGISTIC SUPPORT – underpinning all activities through research, monitoring, education and training. During the collective visioning process, community members suggested that Castlebar – with both the county council and university based there – would be ideally placed as a centre for logistic support, and Westport might be ideally placed as a centre for conservation – being ideally located next to

the Wild Nephin National Park, central to the Dark Skies project, and the Great Western Greenway. The groups taking part in the collective visioning process also envisioned that as part of the Biosphere idea Mulranny could develop itself as an education and training centre for ecology and climate research, fostering ties with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and local/national educational/research institutions to develop the idea.



Significant time and thought has already been given to this. Accordingly, this report proposes that an exciting opportunity for Mulranny to contribute to a Mayo MAB would be via a rural regenerative project reimagining Mulranny Village and the regenerative capacity of the Great Western Greenway. Such a project would connect the village to Wild Nephin National Park, regenerate natural and built heritage, and develop the 28km Mulranny Way and nature corridor network, to accelerate regenerative rural tourism and advance Ireland's restoration and climate goals.

The project would design the integration of Wild Nephin National Park and Natura 2000 sites via a trail and nature corridor network, and access the extensive village amenities. Community and government stewardship would be unified under the United Nations objective of Inclusive Wealth and the UNESCO Man & Biosphere global network, driving community-based restoration of biodiversity and heritage, resonating regenerative investment inward and outward regionally, nationally and internationally (Carolan, 2025).



In order to undertake a deep community consultation, and undertake a comprehensive scoping/feasibility study, the preparation of a series of proposals to the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) is recommended.

An RRDF Category 2 proposal could focus on the planning and design of regenerative infrastructures. This includes developing detailed designs for:

- Wild Nephin National Park strategic integration with Mulranny Village amenities for biodiversity restoration, carbon sequestration and regenerative tourism.
- Active travel routes to promote low-carbon transport and connect local attractions, with consideration for accessibility and environmental impact.
- Eco-tourism routes that will elevate Mulranny's position on the Wild Atlantic Way and Great Western Greenway as a gateway to Wild Nephin National Park.
- Design UNESCO Man & Biosphere governance and management model to advance the whole of government – whole of society approach to nature restoration.
- Develop pilot Biodiversity Net Gain designs that create nature corridors for wildlife and functionally connect SACs and SPAs.
- Develop built heritage restoration plans to protect and preserve key structures.

The Category 2 proposal would detail the continuous community engagement strategy for the project, modelled on TASC's People's Transition methodology, including participation of local stakeholders and environmental groups, in designing a clear roadmap for project implementation.

Consequently, the outcome of the Category 2 proposal would be a Category 1 proposal, which would describe the procurement, and execution phases of the project. It would include:

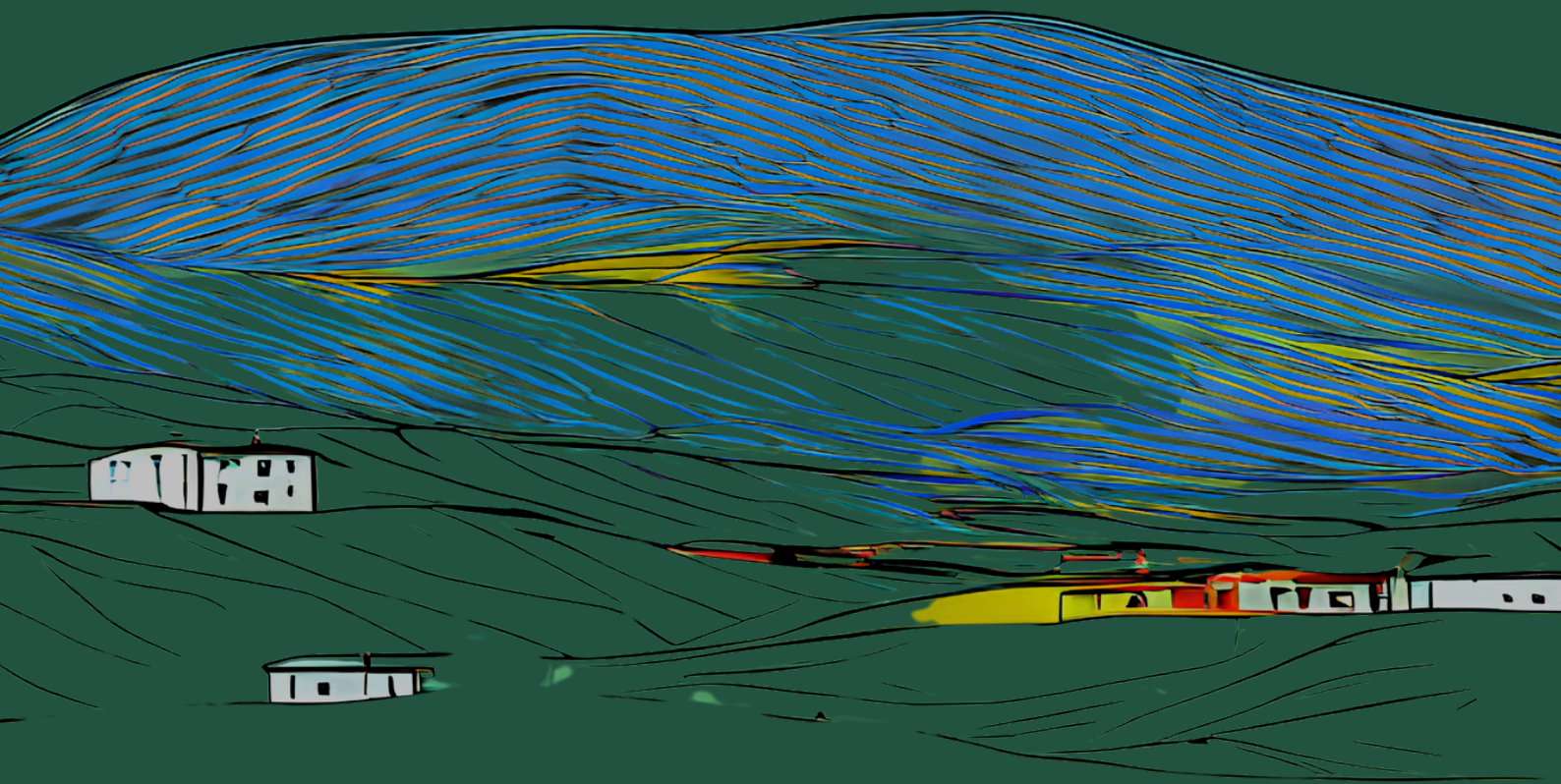
- Finalised cost estimates for trail development, infrastructure installation, habitat restoration, and public amenities.
- A phased timeline for stage completion, with specific goals for eco-tourism, sustainable infrastructure, and community involvement.
- Detailed budgeting for implementation, including staffing, materials, design costs, and consultation fees.

As mentioned, this (macro) climate solution is by far the more ambitious of the two. The Category 2 proposal development cost is expected to be in the region of €1m, covering design work, consultation, and feasibility studies. The Category 1 proposal (including construction, procurement, and implementation) is estimated to be in the region of €4m. This includes all infrastructure development, ecological restoration efforts, public amenities, and stakeholder engagement.

Exemplifying Town Centre First Principles the project would recognise and integrate value from a cascade of regional, national, European and international restoration and regenerative initiatives that converge on Mulranny Village; Mayo's 45km² Decarbonising Zone, the Great Western Greenway, the Wild Atlantic Way, the Wild Nephin National Park, Mayo Dark Sky Park, three EU Natura 2000 sites, the Clew Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Corraun Plateau SAC and Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Protection Area (SPA) within an aspiring UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve Region.

In summary, the project would recognise a confluence of strategic social, human, natural and built assets in Mulranny. It would build on the regenerative template of the Great Western Greenway, which sparked a regenerative wave of greenway construction across Ireland. This project would design and develop the next generation green way. It would produce a replicable design, that is capital investment ready and resonates one of Ireland's most successful rural regeneration initiatives, the Great Western Greenway into an inclusive, holistic, regenerative model.

Conclusion



4. Conclusion

The model described in The People's Transition – Community-led Development for Climate Justice – 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 Wilderland, TASC has been able to work with the community of Mulranny over the past year to bring the People's Transition to life. There were, and still are, barriers to engagement to be overcome, but there were also several key enabling factors, including a particularly active and dedicated group of local actors who have provided guidance and support and have helped this People's Transition project to find roots. In addition, advice from Wilderland, Mayo County Council, and South West Mayo Local Development Company in the mapping stages was crucial for the delivery of the project. Finally, the willingness of local and national stakeholders to lend their support to this work has provided a boost of energy that we hope will spur the advancement of the community-led climate solutions outlined in this report.

A launch, planned for the summer of 2025, will bring together community members, relevant local stakeholders, and agencies to disseminate the findings from this People's Transition project and garner support for, and commitment toward, the development of the solutions and recommendations outlined in this report. We hope that this research generates solution-focused action as well as discussion and debate about how a Just Transition and a community wealth-building approach could tackle persistent inequality in Ireland and create a more egalitarian society than the one we have now.

While this will mark the end of TASC's leading role in the Mulranny People's Transition, this is not the end of TASC's connection with the community. TASC researchers will thus continue to engage with community members, Mayo County Council, South West Mayo Local Development Company, and local stakeholders to advance and

support the development of the solutions proposed in this report over the short to medium term.

This includes identifying funding sources and acting as a convener to connect community members and local organisations with other organisations focused on community-led local development for climate justice in Ireland. We hope the Mulranny community will also consider becoming part of TASC's latest initiative – the People's Transition 'Community of Communities' – which will bring together all of the communities who have conducted their own People's Transitions in order to scale these processes, expanding the participatory processes to national level. Over the next two years TASC will facilitate eight online network meetings and two in-person assemblies. As well as providing opportunities for mutual support and shared learning, the process will also focus on the co-production of Just Transition policy recommendations.

Finally, it is hoped that the experience of engaging with the project will have been a valuable one for participants. TASC is aware from the outset that asking a community to believe in, and engage with, a participative process is not necessarily an easy request. However, to date, this work has been met with enthusiasm and a genuine passion for positive social and ecological transformation for all who reside in Mulranny. The Climate Justice team at TASC remain humbled, grateful, and excited for the future.

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