

The People's Transition Larchville and Lisduggan



June 2024



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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 Larchville and Lisduggan People's Transition began in April 2023. 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 communities of Larchville and Lisduggan, 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. Thanks to the dedication of local groups and with the support of Waterford Area Partnership, we were able to overcome several barriers to participation and meet with young people, lone parents, older community members, migrant community members, residents with disabilities, young people in probation services, young people in recovery, and volunteers, to gather inputs on community needs, priorities and strengths. As the community engagement phase came to an end, a survey developed by TASC, which was run and managed almost entirely by the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Association, was distributed in the locality to ensure that the emerging picture of the community was correct.



From the beginning of the community engagement phase, it became clear that Larchville and Lisduggan are undergoing a period of renewal thanks to the work of dedicated local volunteers. At the same time, the community stressed the need for sustainable pathways for young people away from crime, with a focus on further developing formal and informal education, training, and employment opportunities. Participants also spoke about the need for warmer homes and described how rising costs of living and mental health issues impact many across the community.

The need for fit-for-purpose meeting spaces, the value of local history and heritage, and a desire for intergenerational connection were also highlighted, with many in the community hoping to develop more ways for people to come together outside of their homes. Residents also spoke about the need for active travel infrastructure to be accessible to all and for direct public transport links to essential services such as the nearest hospital.

Based on the community engagement phase, TASC worked with Waterford Area Partnership to research viable climate solutions and set out local-level recommendations that would address local needs, build on local strengths and capabilities, and respond to the community's vision for the future. The first two solutions presented in this report are smaller in scale and focus on green space for mental health and establishing a repair café in the community. The first aims to respond to mental health challenges experienced in the community and seeks to address urban green space inequality, while the second links climate action to the need for intergenerational and informal skills development in a community setting.

The third area researched and developed in this report is a proposal for a 'whole of community' approach to retrofitting in Larchville and Lisduggan. This solution is rooted in the desire for warmer homes and takes into account the ageing housing stock in both estates as well as the higher-than-average concentration of local authority owned homes in the community. In terms of getting off the ground, we recommend the establishment of a multi-agency task force, which could be led by Waterford City and County Council and provide the collaboration and coordination necessary to undertake an area-based approach to retrofitting grounded in the principles of community wealth building, which are outlined on page 14 of this report. Such an approach has the potential to support the development of decent, well-paid employment and training opportunities, reduce the strain of energy costs in low-income households, and make progress towards the decarbonisation of Waterford's built environment.

These solutions should not be considered the only possible collective climate initiatives in which the communities of Larchville and Lisduggan could 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 about the future of Larchville and Lisduggan, the People's Transition seeks to enable the creation of solutions grounded in expanding the capabilities of local people. Given that the community members of Larchville and Lisduggan are the driving force behind the recent wave of community-led momentum, 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 Waterford.

Larchville and Lisduggan lie within the Waterford decarbonisation zone, an area that Waterford City and 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 Waterford City and County Council begin to undertake innovative approaches to climate action in the city.



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 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, 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 territories. 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 growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected, and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies.

1. Introduction

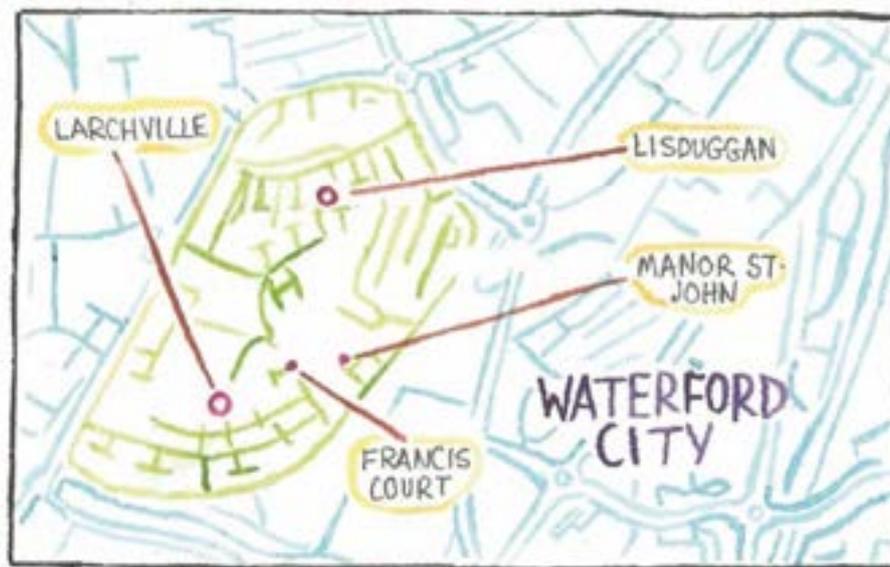
Tackling climate change requires urgent and unprecedented action in communities all around the world. Given the interdependent nature of the crisis, if climate action is to be enduring, then it must be inclusive and equitable, ensuring that its burdens and benefits are shared throughout society. While 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 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, have been published and are available on the TASC website.

This report attempts to capture the People's Transition process as it was applied in the communities of Larchville and Lisduggan, two residential neighbourhoods located approximately two kilometres southeast of Waterford City Centre. The small community of Francis Court, which is located in Larchville but has its own unique identity, was also included, and local residents there participated actively in this project. Francis Court is a housing scheme built specifically for people with disabilities and elderly residents.





The Larchville and Lisduggan People's Transition project began in April 2023 and ran until June 2024. TASC was fortunate to have the dedicated support, buy-in, and vision of the staff of Waterford Area Partnership during the entirety of this project. What began as an informal connection evolved to become a truly collaborative effort.

Larchville and Lisduggan are emblematic of many of the opportunities and challenges facing council-built housing estates in urban areas across Ireland. The community has a strong social fabric, and active residents' associations are laying the foundations for community-led local development initiatives. Anchor institutions, which have the potential to play a defining role in building community wealth, are also close by, including the South East Technological University, which borders Larchville, and Waterford City and County Council, situated in the city centre.

At the same time, there are challenges. The experience of deprivation is persistent in Larchville and Lisduggan, and both communities are classified as being 'very disadvantaged' by the Pobal Deprivation Index. There is a higher-than-average concentration of lone parents, residents with disabilities, and people with restricted mobility, factors which can prove to be barriers that can hinder engagement in community-based activities and local decision-making. Additional time and resources were dedicated to this project in an attempt to overcome these barriers to engagement and uncover the diverse lived experiences, needs, and priorities of the different groups and people living in the community.

The project had three phases, leading to the co-creation of climate solutions and local-level recommendations 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 Waterford Area Partnership and 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 and building on current activities at a local level with the aim of scaling up over time as community capacity develops. Further, these solutions aim to harness the potential of the local anchor institutions that are well-placed to work with the residents of Larchville and Lisduggan to deliver climate action for a Just Transition.

The solutions and pathways forward proposed in this report are the development of green spaces for mental health by and for the community, a repair café and Library of Things, and a 'whole of community' approach to retrofitting. The first two solutions aim to build the capacity to engage with, and benefit from, climate action at a local level, while the third seeks to create opportunities for employment and community wealth building while addressing energy poverty and persistent deprivation. These specific solutions are designed to meet the need for climate action whilst also being realistic and beneficial for the residents of Larchville and Lisduggan.



While the People's Transition model puts communities at the heart of the Just Transition, this report recognises the role of Waterford City and 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 fulfilling the 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). Echoing this, at a local level, the Waterford City and County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 underscores the role of the council, as a public body, in taking a leadership role in tackling climate change (Waterford City and County Council, 2023).

As well as aligning with national and local climate policy, Waterford City and County Council has particular influence over the future of Larchville and Lisduggan owing to the fact that the streets and green space are classified as publicly maintained land. Further, as council-built estates, a significant proportion of homes in the community are local authority-owned. It can be concluded that future community-led climate action in Larchville and Lisduggan will require significant collaboration between local residents and Waterford City and County Council. 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.



2. Mapping

MAPPING

The mapping phase aimed to build a picture of the communities of Larchville and Lisduggan, 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.

Part of something bigger

This People's Transition project was a collaborative effort delivered by TASC and Waterford Area Partnership, one of 49 not-for-profit Local Development Companies in Ireland taking a community-led approach to local development and service delivery. Waterford Area Partnership works directly with the residents of Larchville and Lisduggan as part of their Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and will continue to support the community in the long term. In the medium term, the Larchville and Lisduggan People's Transition sits within a specific three-year prioritisation of the community by Waterford Area Partnership, during which additional effort will be placed on advocating for the community, supporting increased access to funding and resources, and exploring the idea of community wealth building at a very local level.

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 large 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, local anchor institutions in Waterford City, such as the South East Technological University and Waterford City and County Council, are key stakeholders.

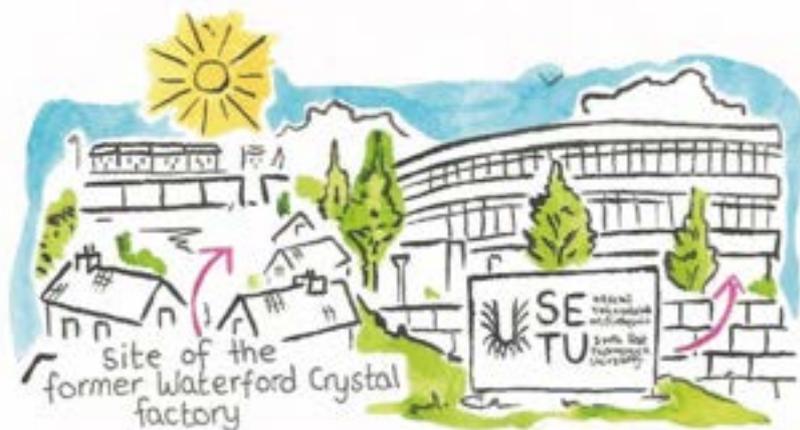
The Centre for Local Economic Strategies, who are pioneering the community wealth building movement across the United Kingdom, describe community wealth building as having five core principles:

1. Enhancing plural ownership of the local economy by developing and nurturing community-led organisations, cooperatives and public ownership models.
2. Making financial power work for local places by harnessing local wealth and enhancing investment into and not out of local communities.
3. 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.
4. The progressive procurement of goods and services using the power of anchor institutions to retain wealth locally.
5. The socially productive use of land and property by expanding democratic access to community and public sector land.

An overview of Larchville and Lisduggan

Located in the electoral area of Waterford City South, Larchville and Lisduggan are relatively recent developments, with Lisduggan being built in 1968, followed by Larchville in 1973 (Waterford History, no date). Conveniently located between the two estates, there are several local services and organisations, including the Lisduggan Shopping Centre, St. Paul's Catholic Church, St. Paul's National School, a Credit Union, a Bank of Ireland, a GAA club, a creche, a boxing club, a pub, a dedicated youth service, a community-based drugs initiative, and a youth diversion project which supports young people at risk of being involved in crime. Family support services are provided to residents of Larchville and Lisduggan by BRILL Family Resource Centre, located in the adjacent district of Ballybeg, and an AIB branch is located adjacent to the South East Technological University (SETU).

SETU, whose campus borders Larchville, is the largest anchor institution close to Larchville and Lisduggan. SETU provides employment for approximately 1,500 people, and with campuses dispersed throughout Waterford, Carlow, Wexford, Wicklow, and Kilkenny, the institution plays a defining role in the southeast region (SETU, 2022). Other anchor institutions close to the community include Waterford Football Club and the Waterford City Fire Station, approximately 1.3 kilometres away, and importantly, Waterford City and County Council has its offices in the city centre.



Located directly to the south of Larchville and Lisduggan and adjacent to the SETU campus is the 37-acre site of the former Waterford Crystal factory, which opened in the 1960s and closed when Waterford Crystal went into receivership during the 2008/2009 recession. Before closing in 2009, the factory was a significant local employer, providing work for hundreds of people (Dalton, 2022). In November 2023, 14 years after the closure of the factory, SETU purchased a large portion of the site with the goal of developing a 'University/Enterprise Quarter', which will see the integration of both academic and enterprise activities (SETU, 2023, para. 4).

Alongside local institutions, amenities, facilities, and businesses, community groups play an important role in the development and placemaking of Larchville and Lisduggan. To the forefront of this is the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Association, which, in November 2023, was awarded first place in the all-island IBP Pride of Place Awards—which recognise and celebrate community development across the island of Ireland—under the Urban Neighbourhood category (Kelleher, 2023). In the same month, the Residents Association was awarded Best Kept Residential Area at the Waterford Public Participation Network annual awards ceremony. Activities undertaken by the Residents Association are wide-ranging and include planting, greening, repairing, renovating, and managing a community facility in Francis Court.



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.

Community data

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

On census night in 2022, 2,004 people were living in the community, 1,008 in Larchville and 996 people in Lisduggan. The majority of residents are aged 20 to 64 (55%), 21% are under 19, and 24% are over 65. Compared to Waterford County as a whole, Larchville and Lisduggan have a larger share of residents over 65. Concerning ethnicity and/or cultural background, 79% of residents identified as 'white Irish', 6% identified as 'other white', 2.4% of people identified as 'Black or Black Irish', 1.5% of people identified as 'Asian or Asian Irish' and 0.7%, 13 people, identified as being a member of the Traveller community.

There is a higher-than-average proportion of lone-parent families in Larchville and Lisduggan, and 20% of homes, or one in five, are single-mother families, almost double the county average of 10.7%. There are more one-parent homes in Larchville and Lisduggan than households with two parents. There is also a relatively high percentage of households in the community with one person living in them at 33%, compared to 25% across the county.



Three in ten, or 31% of the population of Larchville and Lisduggan, described themselves as having a disability, which the Central Statistics Office defines as someone experiencing a 'long-lasting condition or difficulty to any extent'. This compares to the national average of 22%. Further, the percentage of people in Larchville and Lisduggan who describe themselves as in 'good or very good' health is 72%, which is substantially lower than the national average of 83%, highlighting a risk of poorer-than-average health outcomes.



Regarding economic status, which examines the labour force, 38% of people in Larchville and Lisduggan describe themselves as 'at work' compared to 54% of the population across Waterford County. This difference can be explained by a higher-than-average population in Larchville and Lisduggan who are retired, unemployed, looking after the home and/or family, or unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability.

An examination of housing recorded 859 homes in Larchville and Lisduggan, most of which, 78%, were built before 1981, indicating an ageing housing stock. Across Waterford, on average, just 38% of homes were built before 1981. There is also a relatively high reliance on fossil fuels for home heating in Larchville and Lisduggan, with at least 88% of homes using fossil fuels to keep their house warm, compared to 78% across the county. The most common form of central heating in the community is gas (61% of homes), followed by oil. The largest difference between the community and the county relates to the percentage of homes heated using electricity, which accounts for 11.8% of all homes in Waterford but just 4% of homes in Larchville and Lisduggan, suggesting that the electrification of home heating is underway at a slow pace in Larchville and Lisduggan.

There is also a higher-than-average concentration of local authority-owned housing in Larchville and Lisduggan, where 37% of homes were rented from the local authority compared to 8% nationally. Alongside council-owned housing, 45% of homes are privately owned and owner-occupied, and 10% are rented. The remaining 8% of homes are either unallocated or rented from a cooperative housing body.



Alongside housing, sustainable transport is essential to reaching Ireland's emissions reduction goals. Car ownership is low in the community; 41% of homes have no car, 44% have one car, and 13% have two cars. Unsurprisingly, private car use is significantly lower in Larchville and Lisduggan than in the county as a whole. 46% of the population over the age of 5 commute to education or work by private car compared to 65% across the county. While some of the differences between Larchville and Lisduggan and Waterford County as a whole could be explained by its urban location in comparison to the largely rural county of Waterford, research regarding the determinants of car ownership in the Irish context would suggest that household income, as well as the number people in the household who are in employment, also significantly influence car ownership (Nolan, 2010; Eakins, 2013).

Looking at active travel, 32% commute on foot, more than double the county average, while just 1.3% commute by bicycle, despite Larchville and Lisduggan being close to the city centre. Across Waterford County, 1.6% of people commute by bike.

The HP Pobal Deprivation Index establishes a single indicator of disadvantage and was developed to examine and understand social conditions in Ireland and provide resources to the areas where they are most needed. The Deprivation Index was the final parameter considered in the mapping phase. At the electoral division level, Larchville and Lisduggan are categorised as experiencing the highest levels of disadvantage in Waterford County and are classified as 'very disadvantaged'. While several other small areas across the city are classified as 'extremely disadvantaged' and 'very disadvantaged', there are no other electoral divisions classified as very or extremely disadvantaged in Waterford County. It is important to note that while the Pobal Deprivation Index analyses census data related to population, age, principal economic status, education, and home makeup (Pobal, 2023), it does not incorporate measures related to access to housing or examine how income, health, disability, ethnicity or geographic distance from services and access to transport impact or intersect with deprivation (McCabe, 2022).



While the statistics tell one story, it is important to give space to and celebrate the other story emerging simultaneously in Larchville and Lisduggan, which is one of unwavering community spirit. Discussions with community members very quickly highlighted a deep feeling of disconnect between the picture painted by the national statistics and the emerging sense of renewal and connection to place that is coming to the fore due to the efforts of local people on the ground in recent years.

The mapping phase highlighted information that became the foundation of the community engagement phase of the Larchville and Lisduggan 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.



3. Community engagement, capacity building and engaging with policy

ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement

Engagement began in the spring of 2023 with a focus group that brought together community representatives from the BRILL Family Resource Centre, Manor St. John Youth Service, the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Association, and the Francis Court Age Action Group.

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, Waterford Area Partnership engaged a local community facilitator, Nicola Kent, who took time to meet with and listen to families, residents, and community leaders and embed herself within the Larchville and Lisduggan communities during September and October 2023. 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, for example, or people who might have been reluctant to attend as they may have felt that they do not have anything to offer to such a process.

This work involved two community fun days organised by the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Association and Waterford Area Partnership, which, combined, had an attendance of more than 70 community members of all ages, from 8 months old to 80 years old. At the fun days and during the weeks following it, Nicola held 20 one-to-one interviews with young people, members of the Traveller community, migrant community members, lone parents, older community members, residents with disabilities, young people in probation services, young people in recovery, and volunteers.

To ensure that the project also took into account the voices of young people in the area, in November, an in-depth focus group was held with ten students at the Presentation Secondary School to create a space for young people to share their hopes for the future of Waterford City, and Larchville and Lisduggan.

Focus groups and gatherings of community leaders continued throughout the winter, and the following February, a community survey developed by TASC was distributed widely across the community. The purpose of the survey was twofold: first, to check the findings from ongoing community engagement about the key issues in the area and second, to reach those who might not be otherwise able to participate. To facilitate this, the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Association took time out of their busy schedules to hand-deliver the survey to as many houses as possible across both estates. Drop-off boxes were placed in community meeting places such as the Credit Union and the café in the Shopping Centre. The survey was also available online and was shared widely.



The final formal element of the engagement phase was a community visioning workshop held in March, where community members and local councillors came together to create a vision of the future of Larchville and Lisduggan developed by the community for the community. The aim was to set out shared goals for the future and build upon the current momentum within the community and emerging sense of place. Community visioning, as a process, offers both hope for the future as well as the possibility of fundamental change.

Since the development of the community vision in March, the original copy has been framed, and additional large-scale copies have been printed and will be displayed in the central meeting places in Larchville and Lisduggan.

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.

More than 140 people engaged with the People's Transition process in Larchville and Lisduggan. Seventy community members were involved through focus groups, individual interviews, and conversations, and a further 54 people generously took part in a community survey. As well as that, 20 local stakeholders, including representatives from the Family Resource Centre, the youth service, SETU, elected council members, representatives from Waterford City and County Council, the local priest, the community guard, and youth workers, generously gave their time to take part in interviews, focus groups, and discussions about the project.

Challenges experienced

From the outset, it quickly became apparent that a tailored approach and additional effort would be needed to overcome barriers to participation in Larchville and Lisduggan. According to community groups and leaders, bringing large groups of community members together to engage in community development has long been a challenge locally. There are likely multiple complex reasons for this, and we would expect that competing priorities, caring responsibilities, accessibility challenges, and long-term deprivation play a role.



What we heard from the community

‘Renewal’: An emerging sense of community pride

Larchville and Lisduggan residents overwhelmingly described the sense of community and the local people as their biggest strength. People talked about the friendliness of their neighbours, the ‘great community spirit’, and a feeling of ongoing ‘renewal’ at a local level. There was a strong perception that a growing sense of community spirit is creating a cycle of positive change.

‘Then other things starting up, for example, all these little groups. You have the men’s group, you know, all those little things that are starting up.’

Community pride and positive momentum within Larchville and Lisduggan has emerged mainly in recent years. Many community members spoke about how this has been spearheaded by the local residents’ group, which was established in response to national statistics and negative perceptions in the media about the two communities. A community member involved in establishing the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Committee described how they ‘took action to change that incorrect opinion’ of Larchville and Lisduggan. Echoing this sentiment, association volunteers underscored the importance of showcasing the good things happening locally and getting the word out that ‘this is a place where you can come and you are welcome’. Many people we spoke to expressed their appreciation for the changes underway:

‘The resident’s committee helped me to move to Francis Court due to my lack of mobility. My life has improved, and I’m no longer lonely or isolated’

‘The [Residents Association] have really endured that whole process and they’ve made themselves established. The amount of work that they’ve achieved cleaning up previously no-go areas. That was a huge thing. The whole committee have worked really hard.’

‘The community have taken back the green by planting trees, building pathways, planting flowers, putting in lights and now it is so beautiful and I feel safe.’

Participants also displayed trust in the community to bring about positive change from within. When asked who should be involved in identifying, developing and delivering local projects and activities, the majority of survey participants (88%) felt that the community’s residents should play an active role in local development. While residents were the most popular choice, 76% also identified organisations whose aim is to support communities in Waterford City, and 61% identified Waterford City and County Council as an important actor on the ground.

Community meeting spaces and gatherings

Active community members and local stakeholders, in particular, continuously highlighted their desire to have the roof of the community hall repaired. Residents felt that with the exception of the Parish Centre, there are very few, if any, other non-commercial meeting spaces where people can meet and gather in an informal setting. The community hall, which is owned by Waterford City and County Council and leased by Manor Saint John Youth Services, is a large community-focused space located between the two estates. Previously, the hall was used for sports events and community gatherings, but it has been out of use for several years because the roof has been deemed unsafe. One local active community member described how Manor Saint John, a local youth service, holds the lease on the hall but is struggling to access the funding needed to refurbish it.



While community meeting spaces were deemed necessary by the large majority of people who participated in this project, compared to other perhaps more immediate issues, such as the cost of living and challenges related to healthcare, fit-for-purpose community spaces did not rate as high of a priority. Having said that, when asked what there should be more of in Larchville and Lisduggan, the majority agreed that there should be more community spaces (e.g. meeting spaces, cafes, playgrounds, youth hubs, a cinema, green spaces, community gardens, etc.). In addition, 91% of community survey participants said that they agree there should be more ways of including people who are new to the community. It is evident that there are competing issues within the community, highlighting the need for community development in Larchville and Lisduggan to respond to both immediate individual priorities while also taking action to strengthen placemaking and community togetherness.

Placemaking and heritage

Despite there being few publications available which explore the history of Larchville and Lisduggan, conversations with community members quickly highlighted a rich local history dating back to the building of Manor Saint John in 1842 (National Built Heritage Service, no date) and more recently to the development of both the Larchville and Lisduggan housing estates approximately 50 years ago. Residents expressed a desire for the local history to be captured through creative means such as intergenerational and intercommunity storytelling projects. Related to history and heritage, a need for continued placemaking in the community was raised at several junctures. For example, people lamented the fact that Larchville has no street names. In neighbouring Lisduggan, home to a comparable population to Larchville, street names inspired by trees are in place. Examples include, 'Maple Terrace', 'Elm Terrace', and 'Oak Terrace'. The desire for Larchville to have street names was highlighted again by residents during the community visioning workshop.

In their research on the influence of placenames in connecting people and place, Jordan (2018) puts forward several vital roles that placenames play in placemaking, including: highlighting what is important to a community both historically and in present-day; providing a structure for a space wherein that space can be both described and shaped; and contributing to the development of a 'space-related identity' (p.2) for people and communities.

Local-level policy recommendation:

Community members highlighted their wish for the Larchville estate to have street names put in place. The development of community-led street names in Larchville offers an opportunity to build on the emerging sense of community pride and support a truly place-based approach to local development, where each space has an identity that the community is proud of and feels connected to.



We recommend that Waterford City and County Council work with the residents of Larchville and Lisduggan to explore, imagine, and scope out the feasibility of developing and implementing community-led street names in the Larchville estate.

'Everyone is struggling with the rising cost of living': High living costs and a desire for warmer homes

The impact of rising living costs arose during the majority of conversations with community members in Larchville and Lisduggan and was a prominent theme that emerged from the community survey, where 75% of survey respondents said that their heating and electricity bills are unaffordable. More than half of respondents cited not being able to afford childcare (57%) and being unable to afford to run a car (55%) as a big challenge. Just under half of the participants said they have difficulty accessing fresh, healthy food.

This sense that residents and families in Larchville and Lisduggan are experiencing deprivation was echoed in a focus group with community members and local stakeholders, where participants spoke about how 'everyone is struggling with the cost of living'.

Of all the potential issues facing the community included in the survey, the top three areas that people described as 'a big challenge for me' were: 1) my bills for heating and electricity are unaffordable, 2) I can't afford to retrofit my home, 3) I am worried about the mental health of people close to me.



While health will be discussed in the following section, it is evident that home energy upgrades represent an avenue through which poverty, deprivation and socio-economic exclusion could be reduced through climate action in Larchville and Lisduggan. Challenges related to energy poverty and poorly insulated homes are reflected in the 70% of participants who rated the statement 'I can't afford to retrofit my home' as a big challenge for them personally.

One participant shared their experience:

'As I own my own home, financially upgrading my home is a big financial problem, especially as I am over 65 and disabled.'

More than half (55%) described keeping their house warm as a significant challenge, and 54% felt that their home suffers from dampness. 43% said that mould at home was an issue. Difficulty keeping one's home warm was not limited to the community survey. Participants in focus groups spoke about how people in the community are struggling with the price of coal and gas and are restricting their heating as a result. Furthermore, a reliance on solid fuels as a way of managing one's spending is a challenge that has arisen across several TASC climate justice reports; here, one participant in Larchville and Lisduggan speaks about his reasoning for continuing to use solid fuels:

'I use the fire...I do that for financial reasons. I have a bit [of solid fuels] that I call the last resort in case I lose my job. I'd never give over the fire. It's a companion. I keep the fire for a very simple reason: if poverty comes back to me again, you can go out for a few sticks and keep it going.'

Referring to how these issues could be tackled when community members were asked, 'What should there be more of in Larchville and Lisduggan?' 96% said that they agreed or strongly agreed that there should be more warm, insulated homes. Furthermore, there was awareness of the economic benefit of an energy-efficient home and the opportunity that represents for residents of Larchville and Lisduggan, where 37% of the housing stock is Local Authority-owned. One participant described how:

'I would like to see the renovations of social housing. They are blocking up fireplaces and putting in gas. Can they not look at putting in solar panels, reduce the need for fossil fuels, and put a bit more money in people's pockets?'

'No one wakes up and thinks, ' I'm going to get up and commit a crime': Pathways for young people

The importance of developing safe and sustainable pathways for the young people of Larchville and Lisduggan today and into the future was highlighted many times and rooted mainly in a desire for the continued eradication of crime from the community. Community members spoke about how things have improved in recent years thanks to coordinated and locally-led approaches as well as existing local services. Still, it is evident that challenges remain and that there is a desire for change. The cost-of-living crisis was described as potentially exacerbating existing societal challenges in the community, such as crime. For example:

'You have the new poor now as well. There has always been that underbelly of families that have struggled. No one wakes up and thinks, ' I'm going to get up and commit a crime. ' They do it because they need the money, for the freedom, or because there aren't any other opportunities.'

While the issue of crime and its impact on health is complex in Waterford and beyond, community members identified areas where young people could be supported to achieve their full potential. People spoke about the potential for education and employment opportunities, such as apprenticeships that lead to long-term career pathways, as a significant opportunity for the future of the community. When asked if finding a good job locally was a significant challenge, just 19% said it was a challenge on a personal level, but 44% said it was a big challenge for a friend or family member. Further, 15 survey participants, or 34%, cited accessing local training and re-skilling as a big challenge for themselves personally. Overall, there was consensus among the 92% of survey participants who agreed that there should be more employment and training opportunities for young people specifically.



Participants also spoke about what these opportunities should look like. During focus group discussions, there was agreement that young people would benefit more from long-term employment and education opportunities rather than short-term schemes. As well as that, community members expressed the importance of providing options for both those who prefer on-the-job learning opportunities through apprenticeships and those who prefer classroom-based learning. Transition-year students at Presentation Secondary School echoed the benefits of practical learning. One female student spoke about how:

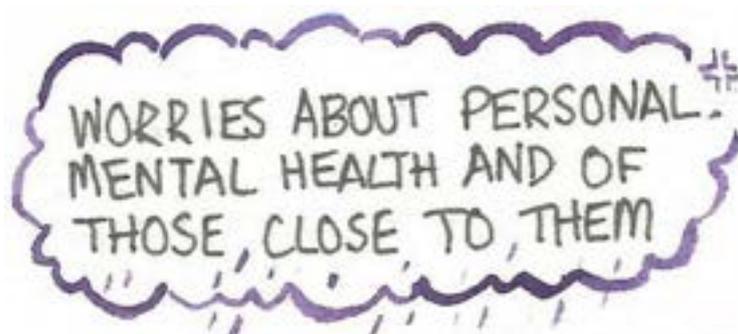
'A big thing is involvement. Like once you get involved in something, it helps you understand it so much better than just sitting down and someone telling you about it for 40 minutes. Like once you are actually out doing something practically, you will learn it so much quicker than just being in a classroom.'

Retrofitting emerged again as an opportunity during conversations about employment, and residents spoke about a vision for local people to be trained in delivering home energy upgrades and employed in delivering community-scale retrofit projects at a local level.

In addition to formal education opportunities, informal intergenerational learning and skills sharing were seen as something that could have long-lasting benefits for both young and old community members. Participants described it as a way of bringing people together, reducing isolation, and strengthening connections with one another. Building on this idea, residents put forward their wish for a community-owned and run multi-repair space where community members could come together to borrow tools, share resources and learn repair skills and carpentry skills.

Well-being, health, and mental health

Throughout the engagement phase, mental health emerged as something affecting many in the community. Almost half of the survey participants (47%) rated 'I worry about my own mental health' as a big challenge. That rose to 60%, or 29 participants, when they were asked if they worry about the mental health of people close to them.



Mental health challenges exist in every community, and the HSE estimates that one in every four people experience mental health challenges in their lifetime (HSE, 2015). In Larchville and Lisduggan, it appears that mental health issues may be compounded by, and interrelated to, other social issues, including the experience of living in poverty or deprivation, suffering from addiction, or being a victim of intimidation, for example. Describing the link between deprivation and mental health, one participant spoke about how they felt mental health issues can act as a barrier to engaging in the community:

'People don't know where you are until they need something. Which is fine because people are living in poverty and are emotionally drained.'

There was a specific concern for single mothers in the community:

'Intimidation [in relation to drugs] is the issue; they are targeting vulnerable families... it's always single mothers, vulnerable people. I come across families that are just eating boxes of Solpadine, trying to cope with it.'

One single mum described her situation:

'It is hard, the community are great, and there are good services when I need them.'

Another community member spoke about their journey with addiction:

'Once I engaged with the services for recovery from my addiction, I felt supported. We need to educate our young people about drugs, and I believe it is the people who know the problem, [and can] solve the problem.'

One resident spoke about the importance of self-confidence and trust:

'Belief in themselves is so important for the person's mental health.'

When asked what there should be more of in Larchville and Lisduggan, 92%, or 45 participants, agreed that there should be greater access to medical, disability, or similar services nearby. It is also important to stress that many participants also spoke about existing local services as being essential to the community.

Community-led initiatives focused on tackling isolation and mental health challenges are already underway in Larchville and Lisduggan. In recent years, there has been a focus on urban greening in the community to support people in spending more time outdoors and in nature. It is hoped that such activities will reduce loneliness and isolation by ensuring that shared community spaces and green spaces are safe for all to enjoy.

The Residents Committee have been actively planting trees, shrubs and flowers and is the driving force behind plans for the development of a memorial garden on the Central Avenue of Lisduggan to remember those who have passed. In addition, a small community garden has been developed within Francis Court, for the benefit of community members living with restricted mobility. When asked about their vision for the future, the Residents Association spoke about their desire to continue greening the community by developing an edible walking trail through both communities, with a goal that *'you wouldn't be able to miss Larchville and Lisduggan for all the flowers'*.

Accessibility for all

While transport and active travel were not discussed to the same extent as other priorities and needs that emerged, the issue of accessibility was raised by several community members who spoke about the need for active travel infrastructure and pathways within and around the community to be improved and developed with wheelchair users, and with community members living with disabilities, front of mind.

Almost half (44%) of survey participants said that accessibility due to a disability or long-term health condition is a big challenge, and one quarter said they have restricted mobility. Echoing the sentiment that the future of Larchville and Lisduggan should be universally accessible, 89% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there should be more safe road facilities such as footpaths, bike lanes and zebra crossings.



Capacity building

Alongside community engagement, capacity building for engaging with climate action was an important element of this project. Capacity building as a concept can have different interpretations in different contexts, but broadly, it can be understood as the ability of a community to identify and respond to its needs (Lovell, Gray and Boucher, 2015). Goodman et al., (1998) offer several dimensions that contribute to community capacity building, including local participation and leadership, skills, access to resources, social networks, a sense of community, community power, community values and critical reflection.

Local groups in Larchville and Lisduggan are pioneering community-led local development and consistently developing their own local capacity by bringing people together, advocating for the area, and leading community greening and renovation projects. Nonetheless, it appears there is a significant opportunity to build capacity among the wider community. As well as that, active community members highlighted a need for capacity building related to climate action and emphasised that they felt more comfortable being 'do-ers' rather than 'planners'.

During the course of this project, a number of small interventions were undertaken with the intention of contributing to community-level capacity building, including:

1. Developing the structures to manage community-led projects by formalising governance arrangements with Waterford Area Partnership as part of an application to the Waterford Community Climate Action Programme, which is described in more detail on page 36 of this report.
2. Attempting to enhance access to resources and social networks by facilitating the beginning of a relationship between the community and the climate action and active travel teams at Waterford City and County Council.
3. Promoting critical reflection by holding focus groups and a visioning session focused on deliberation and reflection regarding community needs, priorities, and aspirations for a sustainable and just future.

Engaging with policy

In recent years, the contribution of local residents and volunteers in Larchville and Lisduggan has been widely recognised as having a positive impact on both communities and contributing to placemaking as well as the social fabric of the area (Kelleher, 2023; The Munster Express 2022). While capacity building is an important ingredient for community-led local development, and the existence of volunteerism and goodwill is a crucial strength for the communities of Larchville and Lisduggan, the role of public investment in the transition to a zero-emissions society should not be forgotten and is, in itself, a key enabler of a fair transition (Mercier, 2020).

In December 2023, TASC and Waterford Area Partnership, in consultation with the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Committee, made a submission to the Waterford Council's first Climate Action Plan. Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act of 2021, each County Council is required to develop its own climate action plan, which should be updated every five years (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), 2023). Within the plan, Larchville and Lisduggan are situated inside the county decarbonisation zone.

The joint submission noted the absence of a definition of Just Transition, and it recommended that a stronger focus be placed on securing a Just Transition for vulnerable communities in Waterford. Our submission included an analysis of Census data related to housing and employment in Larchville and Lisduggan and outlined the potential for Waterford City and County Council to deliver transformative climate action by retrofitting its public housing stock while simultaneously maximising local employment opportunities. As the key local climate policy for the county, the joint submission further recommended that the Waterford Climate Action Plan, through its actions, seek to meaningfully engage with and protect the most vulnerable in Waterford in order to ensure that the benefits and burdens of climate mitigation and adaptation are shared equitably and fairly in line with the principles of climate justice.

Summary of local-level policy recommendations set out in this report:

As discussed in the introduction, this report makes three local-level policy recommendations to account for situations where collaboration with Waterford City and County Council will be a key enabler to advancing community-led climate action and delivering on the community's vision for the future. They are summarised in this section of the report for ease of reference.

1. We recommend that Waterford City and County Council take a leadership role in establishing a multi-agency task force focussed on delivering an area-based approach to retrofitting in Larchville and Lisduggan.
2. We recommend that Waterford City and County Council support the Board of Manor Saint John in exploring the potential to renovate and develop the community hall and bring it back into use. If, following review, it becomes clear that repairs to the roof are not feasible, an alternative site for a community facility should be secured in collaboration with local residents.
3. We recommend that Waterford City and County Council work with the residents of Larchville and Lisduggan to explore, imagine, and scope out the feasibility of developing and implementing community-led street names in the Larchville estate.

4. Bringing the vision to life

In this section, we put forward three community-led solutions for climate justice, ranging from small-scale community development projects to larger community wealth-building activities. Each solution aims to accelerate climate action while responding to local priorities. The need for informal and formal education, training, and employment opportunities for young people is addressed through proposals for a Repair Café and a 'whole of community' approach to retrofitting. The latter has significant potential to support families that are struggling with the cost of energy bills and living in poorly insulated homes. A green space for mental health solution aims to improve mental health outcomes in the community while providing more equal access to green space in the city.

The communities of Larchville and Lisduggan are undergoing a period of grassroots renewal led by several local volunteers. However, deprivation is a long-term phenomenon in the community and a long-term approach is needed in the actions that are taken to advance human rights and equality during the transition. The current wave of momentum should be nurtured and supported by community development organisations, service providers and local government—organisations identified by the community as having an important role to play in delivering local projects—but it is important that the goodwill of local people is not taken for granted or exhausted. The potential for consultation fatigue coupled with intersectional disadvantage suggests that adequate resources should be put in place to deliver on the vision put forward by the community.



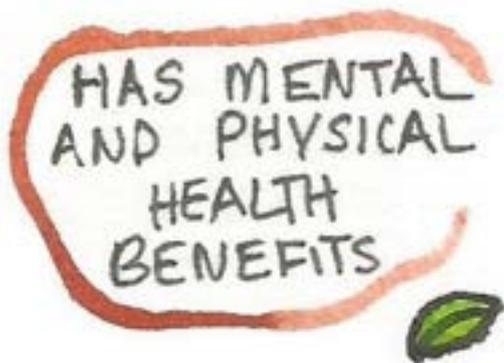
Small beginnings: Green spaces for mental health and a repair café

Green spaces for mental health

Access to green spaces, particularly in urban areas, is being increasingly recognised and understood as an environmental and climate justice issue (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014). This is because access to green space is often unequal, with less green space available to lower-income communities (European Environment Agency, 2023). Illustrating this concept, the Waterford City and County Council National Tree Map (2020) shows a deficit of tree cover in Larchville and Lisduggan when compared to more affluent areas of Waterford City, such as the southeastern suburbs.



In addition to providing environmental and climate benefits, green space in urban areas provides many mental and physical health benefits, particularly for structurally vulnerable groups (World Health Organisation, 2016). Research conducted by the World Health Organisation (2016) recommended that communities experiencing disadvantage should be prioritised in terms of green space provision and that access to green space should be universal. Echoing this sentiment, the Health Service Executive (2022) recommends that in the Irish context, safeguarding and developing urban green space in areas experiencing socio-economic disadvantage requires increased attention. Further, green space, because of its benefits for both climate and public health, can be understood as a vital tool for future planning at a local level.



Cognisant of the many benefits of greening, the Residents Association of Larchville and Lisduggan has been taking a community-led approach by undertaking small-scale greening initiatives and planting trees in recent years to support the health of the community and reduce loneliness. Previous activities, such as planting fruit trees in Francis Court, where anyone can come and pick apples, and putting in benches, have been described by local elderly residents as having reduced isolation and improved inclusion for those who are not very mobile.

In January 2024, as part of this project, the Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Association, the Francis Court Age Action Group, and the Knights Templar Graveyard committee, in partnership with Waterford Area Partnership and with the support of TASC, applied for funding through the Waterford Community Climate Action Programme to begin developing an edible orchard and expanding native tree planting in the community. Shortly before the publication of this report, in May 2024, it was announced that the application for funding was successful.

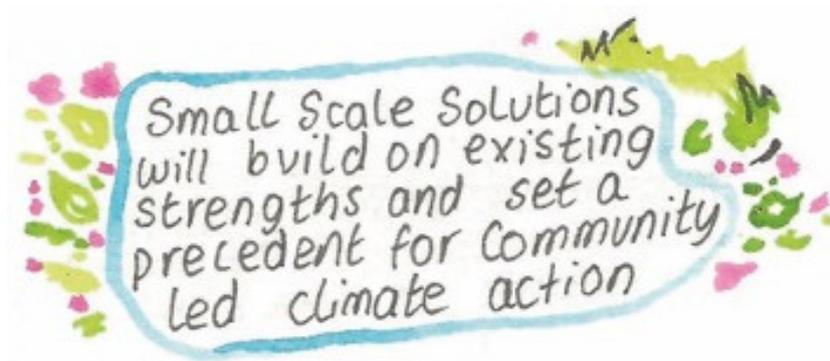
Community orchards can act as a site of community empowerment and social interaction where a group of people come together to cooperatively plant and care for fruit trees, fruit bushes, and nut trees for the benefit of the community (Barron, 2018). It is hoped that this small-scale solution will build on the existing strengths and capabilities of local people and establish a precedent for community-led climate action within Larchville and Lisduggan. The Larchville and Lisduggan Residents Association have successfully managed many smaller grants since their inception; however, to ensure the community is actively supported in managing a larger grant, Waterford Area Partnership has committed to helping residents manage the fund, providing guidance, and sitting on the project steering group.

Two urban orchards already exist in Ireland, but this will be the first with a dual focus on expanding green space and improving health and social outcomes in an area experiencing significant disadvantage.

Larchville and Lisduggan were developed 50 years ago as local authority-owned housing. As a result, all green spaces in Larchville and Lisduggan are classified as publicly maintained land. In undertaking this project, the residents' association will work with the council to ensure the chosen species and locations align with the local authority planting policy.



The communities of Larchville and Lisduggan, in collaboration with Waterford City and County Council, have significant potential to continue to play a leading role in shaping and increasing their access to green space and nature. Innovative initiatives being undertaken in other urban communities facing similar challenges could serve as inspiration and a blueprint to be adapted to the local context. Mapping Green Dublin, a programme established with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency, undertook a community co-creation approach to urban greening in the inner-city neighbourhood of Dublin 8, which suffers from a deficit of green space (Clavin, Moore-Cherry and Mills, 2021). The programme supported the establishment of a Local Greening Forum and saw community members, scientists, artists, and policymakers come together to imagine and develop alternative and inclusive approaches to the development of green space in Dublin 8.



A community-led space for repair and resource sharing

During a community visioning session held in March 2024, residents of Larchville and Lisduggan put forward a vision for a community-owned and run multi-repair space where local people could come together to borrow tools, share resources, and learn repair skills.



Circular economy and climate action

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 is a repair café?

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 cafes 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 café can bring a broken item from home or help someone else repair something they have brought (Repair Café, n.d). Repair cafes 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 cafes are often positioned as a space for mutual learning and informal skills development. A repair café in Larchville and Lisduggan could 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 café, 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 (Repair Café, n.d.). 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 café 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 repair in Larchville and Lisduggan and Waterford City

The concept of repair as an avenue through which to combine social and environmental benefits is not a new phenomenon in Waterford City. Renew is a repair-focused social enterprise located in the city that aims to support the realisation of the socio-economic rights of young people in Waterford experiencing exclusion from the labour market. This is achieved by creating full-time employment opportunities where young people can learn and develop new skills on the job. The team at Renew are skilled in repairing bicycles, wheelchairs, and small machines, in addition to providing an extensive upcycling service and repair and maintenance training courses.

The communities of Larchville and Lisduggan also engage in upcycling and repair, but on an ad hoc and informal basis. Several active residents have strong pre-existing relationships with Renew and their parent restorative justice organisation, Treo Port Lairge. A partnership approach to establishing a Repair Café in the community could benefit both groups and facilitate knowledge and skills transfer within Waterford City.



Getting up and running in Larchville and Lisduggan

Repair events are typically held in community spaces or public buildings. In Larchville and Lisduggan, the Parish Centre is currently the only fit-for-purpose accessible space in the community that can host more than twenty people. In the short term, permission could be sought to hold the repair café there on a monthly basis.

Repair cafés are generally low-cost and can be established on a voluntary basis. Thus, they would be well suited in Larchville and Lisduggan as a capacity-building exercise that builds on the community's strengths. Small-scale support is available for communities across Ireland that wish to set up their own repair cafes. Organisations such as ChangeX provide €2,000 in financing to community groups in Ireland to support project setup costs such as insurance fees, tools, and venue costs.

Scaling up over time: A Library of Things

Exploring all avenues to secure a more permanent community-managed space in Larchville and Lisduggan is a priority of Waterford Area Partnership over the coming years. If such a space is secured, for example, by repairing the roof on the existing community hall, there would be an opportunity for the community to find a permanent home for the repair cafe as well as 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 will be recruiting two employees during 2024, evidencing the success of the initiative (Community Northern Ireland, 2024).

In Larchville and Lisduggan, once a community space is secured, 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 in the community.

Local-level policy recommendation:

The residents of Larchville and Lisduggan deem a community-managed meeting space a local priority. Securing a fit-for-purpose and accessible space would not only benefit the development of the circular economy climate solutions developed in this report but also serve as a space for community capacity building and developing intergenerational and intercommunity connections.

As the community hall is managed by Manor St. John Youth Services under a lease with Waterford City & County Council, we recommend that Waterford City and County Council provide support to the Board of Manor Saint John in exploring the potential to renovate and develop the hall to bring it back into use. Several funding schemes may be suitable for this work, such as the Community Centres Investment Fund and the Sports Capital Grants Scheme. If, following review, it becomes clear that repairs to the roof are not feasible, an alternative site for a community facility should be secured in collaboration with local residents.

A 'whole of community' approach to retrofitting

Context

Ireland's residential buildings accounted for 9% of national emissions in 2022. Looking to 2030, under the Low Carbon and Climate Action Development Act, residential buildings have been set with an emissions reduction target of 40% by 2030 compared to 2018 levels, but nonetheless, Irish homes are still largely reliant on fossil fuels for home heating (Department of the Taoiseach, 2022; DECC, 2024). As highlighted in the mapping phase of the report, this is also the case in Larchville and Lisduggan, where at least 88% of homes use fossil fuels for home heating compared to 78% on average across Waterford County. The National Climate Action Plan outlines that as a result of new buildings being developed to have very high energy efficiency standards, the challenge, nationally, lies in retrofitting older and pre-existing dwellings. In Larchville and Lisduggan, the housing stock in the community is ageing, with the large majority built before the 1980s.



What is Retrofitting?

An expansion in home retrofit, namely a reduction in the use of fossil fuels and delivering improvements in energy efficiency, will underpin Ireland's emissions reduction strategy for the residential sector. As part of the National Retrofit Plan, Ireland has set a target to retrofit half a million homes by 2030. Retrofitting in practice, refers to applying measures to buildings that reduce the energy needed to live comfortably in the property, such as roof and wall insulation, low-energy lighting, photovoltaic solar panels (PV), heat pumps, and heating controls. In addition to contributing to our climate goals, retrofitting also provides positive social outcomes, including improved comfort, health and well-being, in addition to a reduction in the cost of energy bills, which were cited as a big challenge for 75% of the survey participants in this project.

Each retrofitting project should adopt different strategies to accommodate local needs, but all retrofit work will have similar technical aims. Heat loss in homes is experienced through draughts, the roof, the windows, walls and the floor. The reduction of air penetration through draught-proofing, installing insulation, heat controls and energy-efficient appliances, are all forms of 'shallow retrofitting'. A 'deep retrofit' involves making multiple energy upgrades to a home, such as the replacement of inefficient windows and doors, renewable heating systems such as an air-source heat pump, a good ventilation system to maintain air quality, and the introduction of renewable energy technologies such as solar panels. Before a retrofit takes place, an assessment is made by a qualified person to determine the BER rating of the house and recommend retrofitting options.

Public and private retrofit

In Larchville and Lisduggan, there is a higher-than-average concentration of social housing, with 37% of homes rented from a local authority against a county-wide average of 11%. Outside of local authority-owned housing, 44% of homes in Larchville and Lisduggan are privately owned, while just 10% are rented.

Residents living in social housing will eventually have their homes retrofitted by their local authority, and residents living in privately owned homes and in receipt of certain social welfare payments are eligible to have their homes retrofitted at no cost under the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Fully Funded Energy Upgrades scheme (Government of Ireland, 2021). For those living in private accommodation who are not eligible for the fully funded service, the SEAI provides government-funded financial support through individual grants and its One Stop Shop Service.

While supports exist, and momentum is increasing nationally, research on energy poverty in the Irish context has shown that the upfront investment required is still a significant barrier for lower-income households that are neither eligible for fully funded schemes nor are able to finance partially subsidised schemes available through the SEAI (O'Connor, Murphy, and Harvey, 2023). Recommendations put forward as part of the research conducted include broader access to the Fully Funded Home Energy Upgrade Service, enabling access to low-cost borrowing through zero-interest and low-cost loan schemes through the SEAI, as well as a 'street-by-street' scale approach to retrofitting, and the establishment of taskforces to support communities experiencing disproportionately high rates of energy poverty.

Area-based retrofitting

Street-by-street or area-based approaches to retrofitting refer to the undertaking of retrofit at scale in a local area, such as a housing estate. Often, an area-based approach would combine different forms of tenure, including local authority-owned housing and privately owned homes. Area-based approaches provide social co-benefits alongside economies of scale and cost savings for homeowners (SEAI, 2020). The Carbon Co-op, an energy services cooperative based in Manchester, has developed an approach to area-based retrofitting that brings together innovative finance options, local authority partners, local institutions, training opportunities, and community and resident engagement through the support of a trusted intermediary to create a 'closed loop' local retrofitting solution that benefits from one overarching design process and bulk procurement (Merrick, 2023).



Case Study

In the UK, Leeds City Council, using a 'Priority Neighbourhood Approach' undertook an area-based approach to retrofitting in Holbeck, a part of the city where deprivation has long been a challenge, as part of a scheme developed by bringing together funding from a variety of sources. The Priority Neighbourhood Approach is a local multi-agency housing regeneration process focused on home retrofit, tackling vacancy and dereliction, as well as providing debt advice to residents (UK 100, 2024).

Using this approach, Leeds City Council led an area-based retrofit programme of 180 homes and buildings in Holbeck, 70% of which were privately rented, 20% local authority owned, and 10% owner-occupied. Funding for the £4.5million programme was secured through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, direct council funding, the Local Growth Fund, and the Energy Company Obligation, a government-led energy efficiency scheme established to support people living in energy poverty (Cities Commission for Climate Investment, no date).

In 2016, the Council began by retrofitting 40 council-owned homes in order to garner support and prove the concept within the wider community. In addition, to build trust in the neighbourhood among landlords, tenants, and owner-occupiers, and to propel the motivation to retrofit across the wider community, the council established a local presence by converting a vacant building into a site office that doubled as a community hub. An evaluation of the remaining target buildings was undertaken to assess how much homeowners should pay for their renovation. For privately rented homes, it was established that the landlord would pay 25% of the cost, while owner-occupied homes were charged between 0-25% depending on their income and ability to pay. Once the retrofit of council-owned homes was complete, 90% of the privately-owned properties signed up to the programme within one month of it being announced.

Research conducted by Leeds Beckett University into the programme found that, on average, home temperatures increased from 12 to 18 degrees following retrofit and households saved on average £350 per year on their energy bills. Leeds City Council believes, from anecdotal community feedback, that the project has been transformative in terms of tackling multiple social challenges at once, providing a visible investment in the community, improving quality of life, and delivering wider social benefits beyond the home by restoring a sense of community pride (Local Government Association, 2022). Though this programme was implemented in a different context and policymaking landscape, the learnings still yield useful insights. Access to funding was described as the major barrier to be overcome in replicating such a project.

Closer to home, Fingal County Council has been piloting an area-based approach to retrofitting in the communities of Portmarnock and Strandhill, a mixed-tenure estate in North Dublin. While council-led retrofitting of social housing in the estate is underway, the aim is to reduce retrofit costs for privately owned homes through economies of scale by offering owner-occupied homes the same contractor rates as the council in order to increase retrofit take-up. While detailed information regarding the process and learnings from this pilot project are yet to be published, Fingal County Council has stated that there has been interest from other local authorities across the country in replicating this approach (Fingal County Council, 2024).

Need for a larger workforce

Achieving Ireland's retrofit targets will require an increased workforce in the green construction sector, and it is estimated that the retrofit programme alone will require 22,779 new entrants in order to bring 500,000 homes up to a Building Energy Rating of at least B2 by 2030. (Government of Ireland, 2022, p.5). To this end, a network of Retrofitting Centres of Excellence has been established by Education and Training Boards (ETBs) across the country to provide retrofit and green skills training to construction workers at a local and regional level.

Retrofit skills training and development are available locally through the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) in Waterford City on the Cork Road, just two kilometres from the centre of Larchville and Lisduggan, as well as in Enniscorthy in Wexford. Participants may be able to undertake these courses at no cost if eligible. Otherwise, there is a fee of €100 per day, and courses range from 1-4 days (WWETB, 2023).

While retrofit training opportunities are becoming more available, there is still a significant gender gap. Just under 10% of construction workers in Ireland are female, highlighting this imbalance as well as signifying an untapped opportunity to meet the increased workforce demand (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), 2023).



Research conducted on behalf of the National Working Group for the Promotion of Careers in the Construction Sector found that there is a lack of exposure to careers in construction during second-level education, particularly in all-girls schools. As well as that, there is a shortage of visible role models, and a lack of flexibility and understanding from the sector in responding to the requirements of new parents, particularly women (DFHERIS, 2023).

Retrofit skills training could address several needs and priorities identified by the community, including the need for sustainable long-term pathways for young people away from crime that offer opportunities for both informal and formal education environments.

Retrofit that builds community wealth

In their research report on the retrofit of local authority-owned housing in the South of Scotland, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies set out several recommendations to support anchor institutions in South Scotland to lay the groundwork for a retrofit approach that builds community wealth and harnesses investment for the benefit of local people, communities, and businesses (Jennings, Murphy, & Bentley, 2022). Among the recommendations is a proposal to maximise the potential for large retrofit suppliers to deliver broader and more enduring socio-economic benefits to the local economy by collaborating with universities and education centres to connect local people to education, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities within the work that's being done. The first step in this process would be to develop a memorandum of understanding between the supplier and the relevant stakeholders, creating an agreement around the focus on the community wealth-building model (Jennings, Murphy, & Bentley, 2022).

In addition, despite the broad appetite for retrofit at a local level, the authors outline a lack of coordination and suggest buy-in and cooperation at scale are required from local authorities, education providers, and other local stakeholders in order to deliver transformational outcomes. The report suggests that, in the case of South Scotland, this cooperation could be developed through a Centre of Excellence that aims to develop skills, scale up retrofit, and tackle potential funding deficiencies.



A multi-agency response in Waterford

In Waterford City and County, where Centres of Excellence for the skills training aspect of retrofit already exist, developing a multi-agency approach through a local Just Transition-focused retrofit task force could provide the collaboration and coordination required in the Irish context and would bring together local stakeholders such as Waterford City and County Council, the Education and Training Board, Waterford Area Partnership, the Credit Union, and the South East Technological University among others.

Waterford City and County Council would play a significant role in such a task force and — in alignment with national and local climate policy — would be well-placed to lead the way in delivering transformative and fair climate action by retrofitting its public housing stock in Larchville and Lisduggan, which lies within the county decarbonisation zone. A task force committed to the principles of community wealth building would seek to consider retrofitting holistically by reflecting on how this work could support the development of decent, well-paid employment opportunities for people living in low-income areas of Waterford City. In Larchville and Lisduggan, on census night 2022, 8% of residents were unemployed (short-term or long-term unemployed) versus a 4.6% average for Waterford County.

In undertaking a community wealth building approach to retrofitting, it is imperative that local people are supported to actively shape the decisions that are made and that any change that happens, happens with the community, and not to the community (Jennings, Murphy, & Bentley, 2022). Addressing inequality and deprivation in this way has the potential to build social support for the transition that is so urgently required (Moriarty et al., 2023).



Local-level policy recommendation:

During the engagement phase of this project, the need for warmer homes and cheaper energy bills emerged as a community development priority. In addition, the mapping phase highlighted that the housing stock in Larchville and Lisduggan is ageing and largely reliant on fossil fuels for home heating. A 'whole of community approach' to retrofitting responds to both the community needs identified during this project as well as the mixed housing tenure in Larchville and Lisduggan. At the same time, a community-wide approach represents an opportunity to develop sustainable employment opportunities at a local level.

We recommend that Waterford City and County Council take a leadership role in establishing a multi-agency task force that is grounded in the principles of Community Wealth Building and committed to undertaking an area-based approach to retrofitting in Larchville and Lisduggan. We envisage that this task force would bring together residents and community representatives, local agencies, and anchor institutions to identify, based on best practices in Ireland and overseas, what type of area-based approach is best suited to the local context and how such an approach might be funded, coordinated, and managed.





5. 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 AIB, TASC has been able to work with the communities of Larchville and Lisduggan for more than a 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, close collaboration and support from Waterford Area Partnership was central to the delivery of each phase of this 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.

There are challenges in bringing the broad diversity of the Larchville and Lisduggan communities together in one place at one time. To that end, the launch of this report and the dissemination of the findings from the project will take place over two events in June 2024. The first will take place during the Larchville and Lisduggan bi-annual community day. On this day, residents gather with their families, children and friends in an informal setting, often outdoors, and the young people of the community are the focus. Outputs from the project will be shared visually and through a short community panel discussion, which will also serve as a platform to celebrate and give thanks to the groups and community members who have been involved in the project.

A second launch 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 June 2024 marks the end of TASC's leading role in the Larchville and Lisduggan People's Transition, this is not the end of TASC's connection with the community. TASC researchers will continue to engage with community members, Waterford Area Partnership, and local stakeholders to advance and support the development of the solutions proposed in this report until at least June 2025. 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.

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 belief in looking to the future for all who reside in Larchville and Lisduggan.



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