

# Eco- Buncrana

A strategy for working together to make  
Buncrana a thriving place for all





This ECO Buncrana consultation process and strategy is funded by Inishowen Development Partnership under the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

Community engagement, strategy development and design by Amicitia



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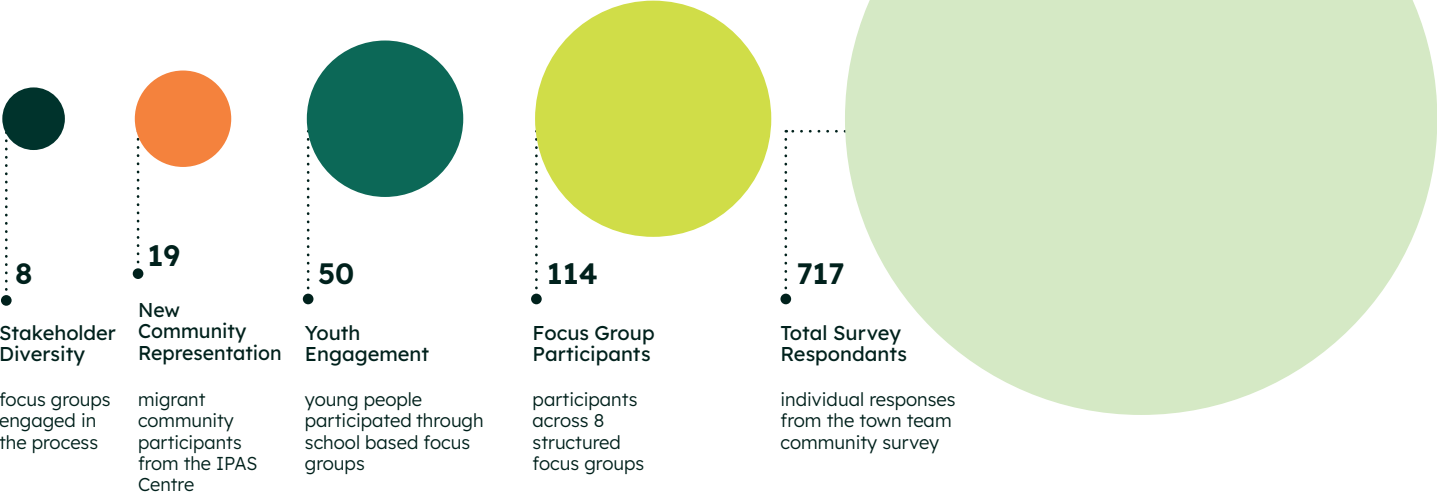
# Our vision for Buncrana

Co-created by the community

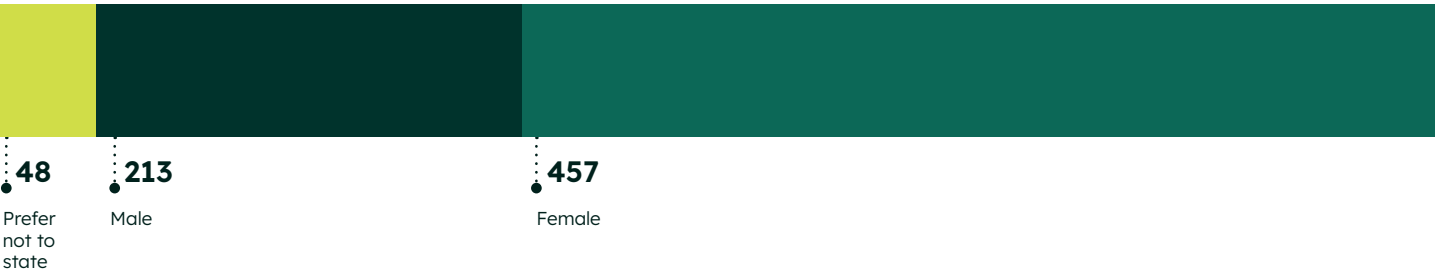
Over the past months, we've been listening to what people across Buncrana want for the town's future. From teenagers at Crana College and Scoil Mhuire to community activists and Tidy Towns volunteers to families at the IPAS Centre and Town Team members, over 100 people shared their ideas, frustrations, and practical solutions with us.



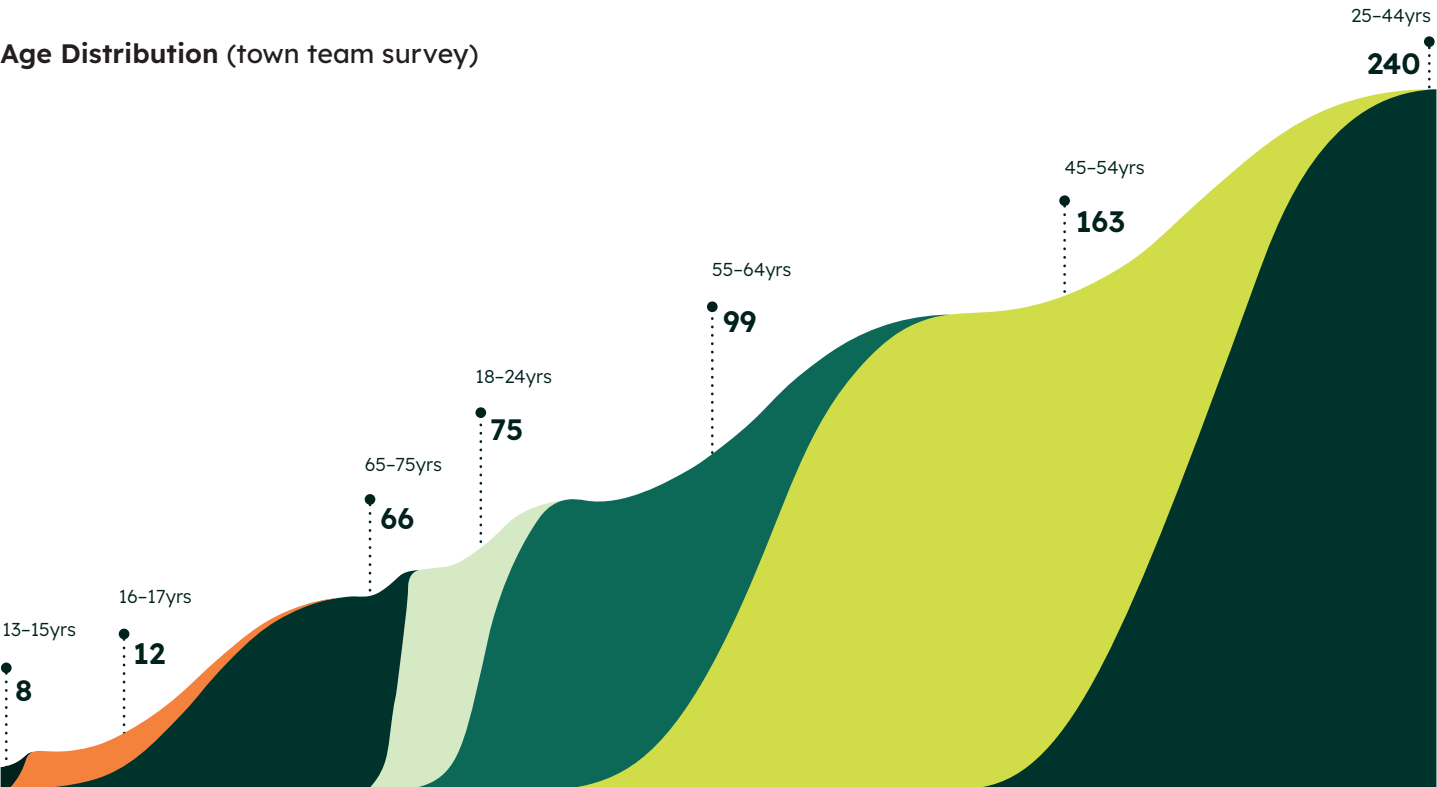
# Key Data from the ECO Buncrana Engagement Process



## Gender Balance (town team survey)



## Age Distribution (town team survey)





# Building on what we have

The conversations revealed that the town already has so much to build on. Swan Park brings joy to people every day. Our community gardener, Tidy Towns and environmental action groups demonstrate the value in working together to protect the environment. The Exchange serves as a vital community hub, demonstrating how resources can be shared and connections made across different backgrounds. Our schools are advancing environmental education through Green Schools programmes, and the recently formed Town Team is working to identify new initiatives.

We have natural gifts - beaches, coastline, and waterways that are the envy of many communities. We have creative energy flowing through arts and cultural events. We have people bringing diverse skills, knowledge, and perspectives from different places. We have sports clubs, volunteer groups, and neighbours who understand the importance of working together.

But we also heard about genuine frustrations: young people who love this place but can't find places to hang out or see how to build a future here; families struggling with housing pressures; volunteers feeling stretched thin; newcomers wanting to contribute but unsure how to connect.

## But, what if Buncrana became a place where...?

- **People choose to stay and thrive:** with access to good homes, meaningful work, and the kind of community connections that make life rich.
- **Our environment is everyone's priority:** where clean water, thriving wildlife, and green spaces aren't luxuries but shared responsibilities we take seriously.
- **Nothing valuable gets wasted:** where we've learned to share resources, repair what's broken, and turn apparent waste into something useful.
- **Getting around works for everyone:** whether you're 8 or 80, whether you walk, cycle, drive, or take the bus, you can move safely through your community and connect to other towns.



- **Every voice shapes decisions:** especially those often left out: young people, newcomers, and anyone who's been told their ideas don't matter.
- **We support each other through everything:** economic pressures, family challenges, climate impacts, and all the changes ahead.

This document outlines how we can work together on practical projects that start immediately and build momentum, while developing the community capacity needed to influence the bigger decisions that shape our future.

## Thinking local and global

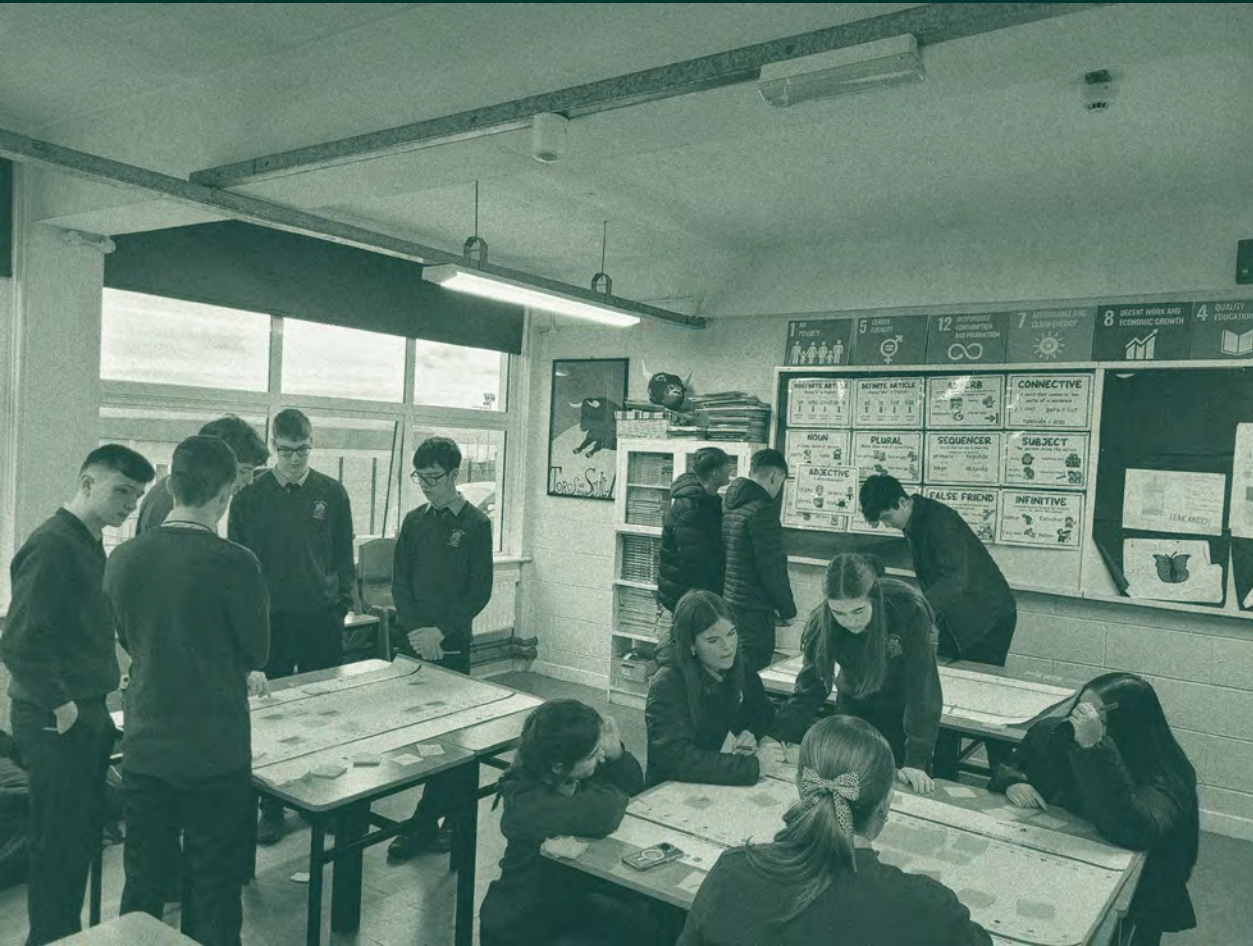
This document is informed by the Doughnut Economics framework developed by economist Kate Raworth, which helped shape our community conversations. The model envisions a space where communities can thrive between meeting everyone's basic needs (the social foundation) and staying within environmental limits (the ecological ceiling).

During our consultations, we explored how this applies to Buncrana through four key questions:

- How can everyone in our town have a good life?
- How can we help nature thrive here?
- How can Buncrana contribute to wellbeing globally?
- How can we help protect the whole planet?

This approach ensures our projects address both immediate local concerns and our responsibility to the wider world.



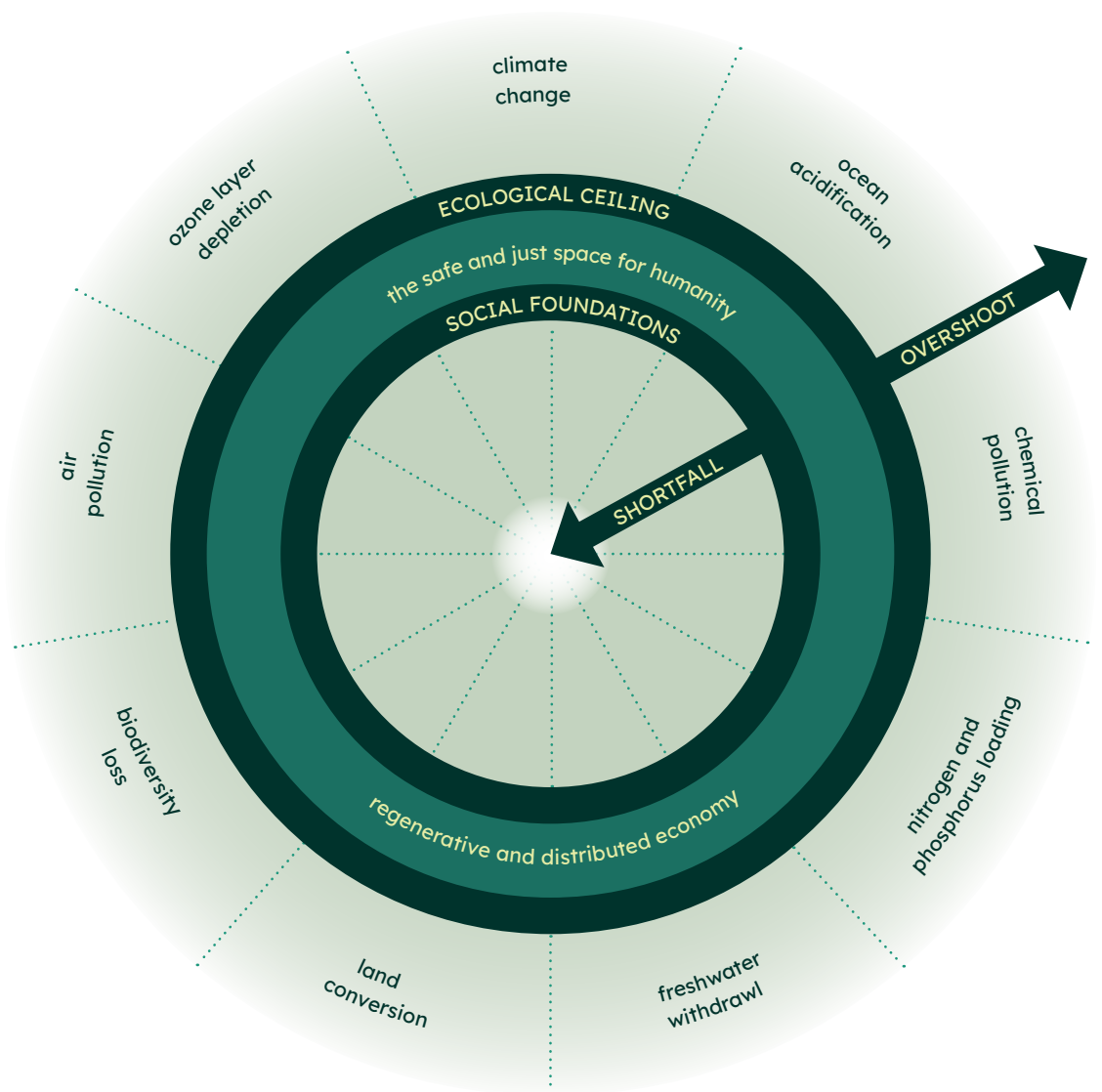






# Doughnut in action

The Doughnut Economics framework, meeting everyone's needs within planetary boundaries, is being adapted by cities and towns worldwide. These projects aim to move beyond policy to spark practical examples that show what regenerative economies look like.





# Tomelilla, Sweden: An Example of a Doughnut Municipality

This small Swedish municipality (population 13,000 ) became the first in Sweden to embed Doughnut Economics into all municipal operations. They're building the world's first Doughnut-designed school, running local food platforms, transforming public spaces, and engaging young people as sustainability leaders.

Practical projects in action:

- **Mylla Mat** (Local Food Partnership): Utilising a digital platform that connects local food producers directly with municipal kitchens, schools, and elderly care facilities. Small producers set their own prices and maintain brand ownership, cutting out intermediaries. The platform keeps money circulating locally while providing fresher, more sustainable food.
- **Future School Project (Kastanjeskolan)**: The world's first school designed entirely using Doughnut principles. Master planning includes the school, swimming pool, stormwater solutions, and arable land which were all assessed for social and ecological impacts. Architects Jenny Grettve and team are proving major infrastructure can embed regenerative principles from day one.
- **Youth Leadership**: A fourth-grader's proposal for a sports field became reality, a multi-arena for football, basketball, and bandy. Students run sustainability councils focusing on gender equality, health, and climate action. In Tomelilla young people's voices matter in shaping their community.
- **Biodiversity Test Beds**: The Streets and Parks department created meadow areas on municipal land with some left wild, some sown with native seeds. Successful areas provide seeds to expand the program. Simple, low-cost nature restoration with multiple benefits: pollinators, water absorption, beauty.
- **Art Reuse Project**: Large outdoor art installation transformed into painted pumpkins created by preschool children and distributed throughout the town by youth from the leisure centre. Creative reuse engaging multiple generations.

Why it matters: Tomelilla proves small towns can lead. They're not waiting for perfect conditions or massive budgets and they're using existing assets creatively to involve everyone from preschoolers to elders.

What they learned: Integrate Doughnut thinking into everything, not as separate "sustainability projects." Empower young people as leaders, not just future beneficiaries. Local food systems strengthen community resilience. Simple nature-based solutions deliver multiple benefits. Document progress annually so everyone can see change.

# What we are working on together

Six action areas with community-identified projects

## What people told us

The conversations we had across our community revealed dozens of practical ideas for making Buncrana more sustainable and connected. We've arranged these community-identified projects into six action areas that work together to strengthen the town.

When we brought these projects to Buncrana Library for wider community input, people used dot-voting to tell us which initiatives they saw as quick wins that could demonstrate early progress, and which would have the biggest positive impact.

## How we organise together

These aren't just project lists, they are organising opportunities. Each action area includes ways for neighbours to form working groups, share resources, and coordinate efforts. Some projects need one-off volunteers, some need ongoing coordination, and others require sustained campaigns to change policies or secure resources.

Our approach:

- **Start where you are:** use your skills, interests, and networks
- **Connect with others:** most projects work better with at least 2-3 people rather than alone
- **Take on what's manageable:** better to do one thing well than many things poorly
- **Share what you learn:** successful approaches help other projects
- **Think bigger over time:** small successes create opportunities for larger change



## Multiple ways to participate

Each action area offers activities that flow with the seasons - spring planning and planting, summer building and events, autumn harvesting and learning, winter reflection and repair. Whether you have an hour a week or a day a month, whether you're passionate about gardening or good with spreadsheets, whether you're 8 or 80 there's a place for your contribution. Some projects can start this month with a few neighbours meeting over coffee. Others require building broader coalitions and sustained campaigns over months or years. All offer ways to develop practical skills while working on issues you collectively care about.

## How projects connect

These projects connect and reinforce each other in powerful ways. Community gardens support local food systems while building friendships. Repair cafés reduce waste while sharing skills between generations. Safe cycling routes improve transport while creating healthier air for everyone.

More importantly, working together on concrete projects builds our collective capacity to tackle bigger challenges. The organising skills we develop through community gardens transfer to housing advocacy, while cycling campaigns teach us how to engage authorities and build public support for change.

## Building from what exists

We're not starting from scratch. Many brilliant initiatives already exist in Buncrana and this strategy helps connect them, support them, and build from their success. The Eco-Buncrana Strategy is designed to complement other plans for the town, such as the work of the Town Team, by weaving sustainability considerations through all future developments. Information sharing is key to making this work by ensuring the community knows what's already happening and where collaboration opportunities exist. Resources like the local library can serve as information points, helping people discover projects and connect with others. Where you see projects that excite you, that's your invitation to get involved. Where you see gaps that matter to you, that's your invitation to help fill them.

## From small actions to big change

The goal isn't to do everything perfectly but it's necessary to start doing things together and learn as we go. Small actions create momentum. Momentum builds confidence. Confidence enables bigger changes.

This approach values experimentation and learning by doing. We try things, see what works, adapt what doesn't, and share our discoveries with others. Whether it's testing a new composting system or piloting a youth space, we learn more through practical experience than endless planning. This experiential learning helps us develop solutions that actually work for our community while building the skills and relationships needed for larger transformations.

Each action area includes immediate next steps you can take, ways to connect with others already working on projects, and paths toward bigger impact. All of them strengthen the fabric of our community while making Buncrana more sustainable and democratic.



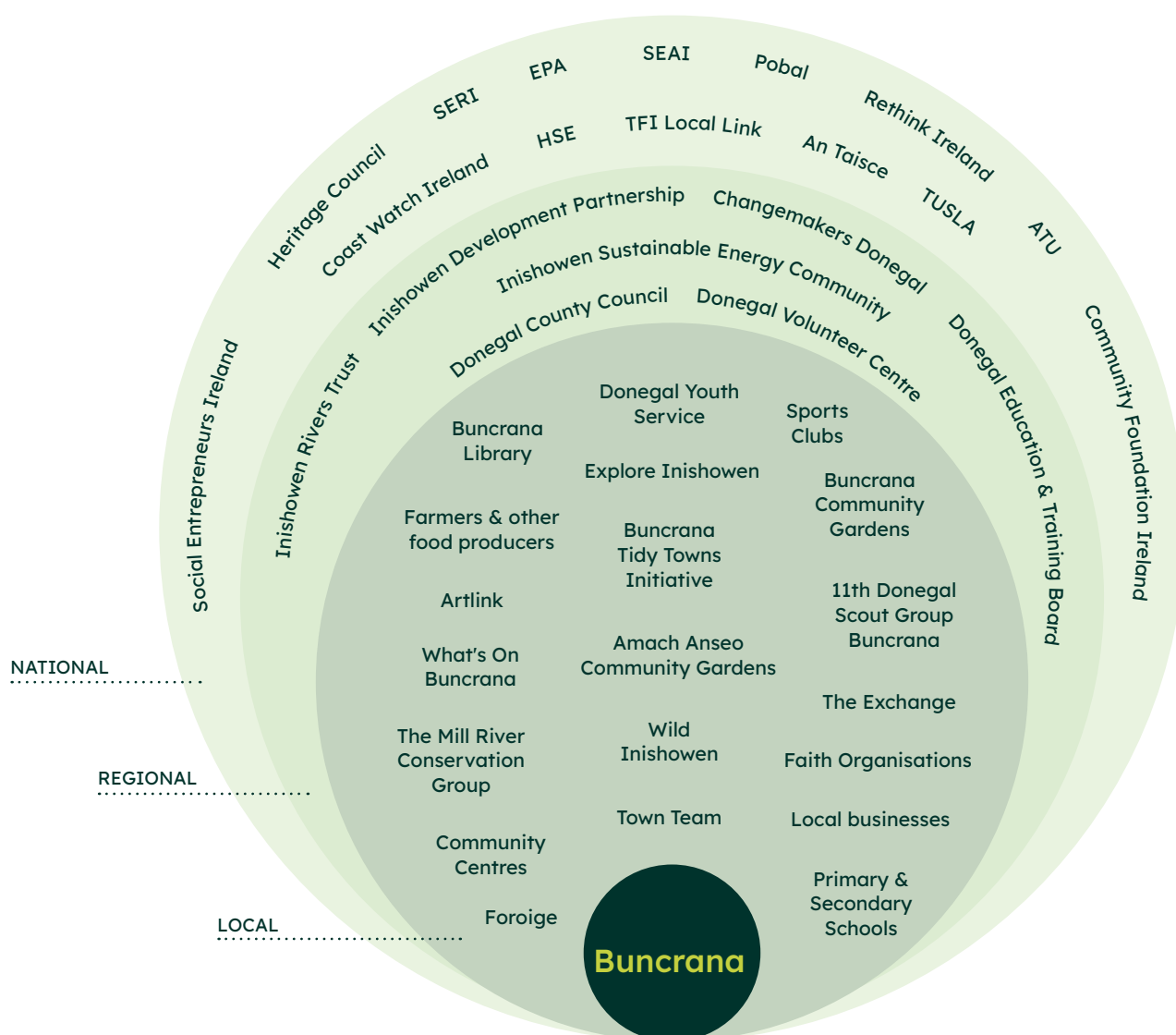


## Stakeholder map

This map offers a snapshot of key partners working across local, regional, and national levels on various projects connected to Eco-Buncrana. It's not exhaustive. Many more individuals, groups, and organisations contribute to making our community thrive, but it highlights some important connections at this moment in time.

Effective stakeholder mapping is essential for implementing this strategy successfully. We recommend making this a priority action: conduct a more complete stakeholder mapping exercise and make it visible to the entire community. Understanding who's working on what, where collaboration opportunities exist, and how to connect with the right people strengthens all our efforts.

For now, Inishowen Development Partnership holds this strategy and serves as the main point of contact. As progress unfolds, this will evolve, like the document itself. You'll find more information about these groups and organisations throughout the strategy.





# Thriving Places

Making Buncrana  
beautiful for everyone

The community has identified many ideas for making Buncrana more beautiful, welcoming, and alive.

These projects range from immediate improvements like wildlife gardens and environmental lighting, to longer-term campaigns for major facilities like reopening the swimming pool. All focus on ensuring everyone, regardless of age, background, or ability, has access to spaces where they can gather, play, create, and feel a sense of belonging.



## More Wildlife and Plants

Increasing biodiversity supports climate resilience, improves air quality, and creates beautiful spaces that enhance mental health. Community planting projects build connections between neighbours while contributing to environmental restoration and demonstrating how local action contributes to ecological recovery.

### Getting started:

- Identify neglected public spaces suitable for wildlife gardens
- Organise community planting events connecting neighbours around shared projects
- Establish plant and seed sharing network to reduce costs
- Map and create wildlife corridors linking existing green spaces and community gardens
- Partner with schools for educational opportunities
- Commission a biodiversity audit to inform the protection and enhancement of existing habitat and wildlife

### Skills needed:

Gardening experience, event coordination, environmental knowledge, partnership building, educational programme design

## Better Public Toilets

Clean, accessible public facilities make community spaces welcoming for everyone, especially families, elderly people, and those with disabilities. Improving existing facilities demonstrates community pride and supports local businesses by encouraging people to spend more time in the town. Facilities can incorporate water-saving technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable materials, demonstrating how essential infrastructure can minimise environmental impact.

### Getting started:

- Audit current facilities documenting both accessibility and environmental efficiency
- Coordinate with Donegal County Council to review any plans that may already be in place for current facilities
- Research best practice examples and cost estimates for improvements
- Engage with council on maintenance responsibilities and improvement plans
- Explore community management or sponsorship models
- Organise volunteer clean-up and minor improvement efforts

### Skills needed:

Documentation and photography, accessibility assessment, negotiation with authorities, project coordination, maintenance skills

## Light Pollution and Solutions

Safe evening access to our outdoor spaces extends community use while supporting local businesses, but lighting must be designed to protect wildlife and reduce light pollution. Buncrana has an opportunity to lead on environmentally responsible lighting that enhances safety without harming nocturnal wildlife or contributing to skyglow.

### Getting started:

- Research best practice wildlife-friendly lighting including Dark Sky movement principles
- Identify priority routes where lighting would improve safety most effectively
- Explore solar-powered, motion-activated, and amber-spectrum lighting options
- Consult with environmental groups on lighting design that protects wildlife corridors
- Pilot environmentally responsible lighting solution on one route to demonstrate approach
- Connect with Dark Sky Ireland to explore potential certification opportunities

### Skills needed:

Research and analysis, environmental knowledge, liaison with authorities, project coordination, wildlife protection expertise

## Arts and Music Spaces

Creative spaces celebrate local talent while building culture around environmental themes. Arts activities can explore climate change, celebrate local ecology, and inspire community action, making environmental awareness part of Buncrana's cultural identity rather than separate from it.

### Getting started:

- Connect existing artists, makers and musicians to assess interest and needs
- Identify suitable venues (indoors and outdoors) for regular creative activities and performances
- Organise trial events to demonstrate community interest
- Develop partnerships with schools and existing cultural organisations
- Create equipment sharing and repair systems that demonstrate circular economy principles while reducing costs for artists.

### Skills needed:

Background in arts/music/making, event organisation, venue management, partnership development, equipment management



## Bring Back Our Swimming Pool

A community swimming pool provides year-round recreation and brings people together, while reducing travel to distant facilities and associated carbon emissions. Community-owned pools can pioneer sustainable technologies like solar heating, rainwater harvesting, and natural filtration systems, demonstrating how community facilities can work with rather than against natural systems.

### Getting started:

- Research current plans and status to identify if there are opportunities to influence proposals
- Visit community-owned pools including those using sustainable technologies to learn from their experience
- Research eco-friendly pool systems including natural pools, solar heating, and greywater systems
- Commission feasibility study incorporating environmental design and renewable energy
- Form Swimming Pool Working Group including input from the Inishowen SEC
- Build campaign highlighting both community and environmental benefits

### Skills needed:

Project management, research and analysis, environmental technology knowledge, grant writing, community organising, sustainable design

## New Life for Empty Buildings

Transforming empty buildings prevents demolition waste, reduces demand for new construction, and creates opportunities for retrofitting. These spaces can demonstrate circular economy principles through reuse of materials and become showcases for renewable energy, insulation, and sustainable building practices.

### Getting started:

- Map all significant empty buildings and research ownership/availability
- Identify priority buildings based on location, condition, and community potential
- Connect with property owners and local authorities explore partnerships
- Develop proposals for community use that benefit the community and the environment
- Research successful examples of building transformation and new ownership models such as community land trusts

### Skills needed:

Property research, negotiation, project planning, architectural/design input, legal advice, fundraising

## Places for Young People

Young people need spaces to develop independence, build friendships, and feel ownership in their community. Creating these spaces can help retain young people long-term, ensuring they have a voice in shaping Buncrana's future and skills and passion needed for ecological transition.

### Getting started:

- Organise youth consultation sessions to identify what spaces they want and where
- Connect with DCC night-time economy officer to collaborate on this initiative
- Trial pop-up youth spaces in existing buildings to test ideas
- Research youth-led models from other towns and what makes them successful
- Identify potential permanent locations and negotiate access
- Develop youth-led management model to ensure sustainability of projects

### Skills needed:

Youth work experience, event organisation, space design, partnership building, program development





# Civic Square, Birmingham: Neighbourhood Scale Transformation

In Ladywood, Birmingham, Civic Square demonstrates how Doughnut Economics can guide practical neighbourhood transformation. Their work offers particularly relevant lessons for Buncrana, especially around retrofit, community ownership, and bringing global frameworks down to street level. In 2022, Civic Square created the world's first Neighbourhood Doughnut Portrait, adapting Kate Raworth's framework to their streets. They combined local data on housing quality, health, and nature access with residents' stories about what matters most in daily life. The portrait now guides all their work, showing clearly where people are thriving and where support is needed. This approach proves that powerful frameworks work best when grounded in local reality.

## Street-by-Street Retrofit

Rather than retrofitting one house at a time, Civic Square pilots whole-street approaches on Link Road. Residents lead the process, not just get consulted. The programme combines deep energy retrofit with air quality improvements, biodiversity enhancement, skill building, and collective governance. It demonstrates that retrofitting isn't purely technical work but about strengthening social fabric while improving homes.

## Materials and Housing Festival (Retrofit Reimagined)

Annual festivals across UK cities bring communities together to explore sustainable building materials and retrofitting approaches. Events include hands-on workshops (clay work, hemp, timber), tours of zero-carbon homes, panel discussions, co-builds, and shared meals. They make retrofitting tangible, celebratory, and accessible rather than technical and intimidating.

## Community Land Ownership

In December 2024, Civic Square acquired former industrial buildings (Tubeworks), placing them under permanent community stewardship with a Doughnut Economics covenant ensuring they serve social and ecological purposes indefinitely. The buildings will house a microfactory, community kitchens, materials lab, and trade school spaces, all owned and governed by the neighbourhood.

## Why It Matters for Buncrana

Civic Square proves that neighbourhood-scale work can be both deeply local and globally significant. Their systematic approach to retrofitting, emphasis on community ownership, and commitment to making sustainability accessible offer practical models for Buncrana's own transformation journey.



# Circular Buncrana

Waste less,  
share more

In a circular economy, nothing is wasted, everything has value and finds an alternative use. Our community is already showing what this looks like through charity shops, The Exchange's food sharing programme, and neighbours helping neighbours. These projects build on that spirit, creating systems where resources flow between people instead of ending up in landfill.



## Second-Hand Markets

Regular markets help families find what they need affordably while keeping good items in circulation. Building on existing charity shops, these events create social opportunities while demonstrating that reuse can be convenient and enjoyable.

### Getting started:

- Identify suitable venues and organise first monthly market
- Connect with existing charity shops and second-hand sellers
- Create simple system for stallholders and promote to families
- Trial different formats (clothing swaps, sports equipment, general markets, themed events)
- Build regular schedule and community awareness

### Skills needed:

Event organisation, venue coordination, promotion, volunteer management, logistics

## Community Compost Scheme

Turning food waste into garden soil reduces household waste while creating a valuable growing medium for community gardens. This practical demonstration of circular principles connects waste reduction with local food growing.

### Getting started:

- Research community composting models incl. (micro models eg. biodigester) and regulations, and identify suitable location(s)
- Organise workshops on home and community composting techniques
- Set up pilot composting system with regular maintenance schedule
- Connect with community gardens and allotment holders and DCC
- Create educational materials on what can and cannot be composted

### Skills needed:

Composting knowledge, site management, workshop facilitation, coordination with gardens, educational material creation

## Share Skills Between Generations

Connecting people across age groups builds community relationships while preserving traditional knowledge and sharing new skills. These exchanges strengthen social connections while ensuring valuable skills don't disappear.

### Getting started:

- Survey community to identify skills people can teach and want to learn
- Organise initial skill-sharing sessions pairing teachers/mentors and learners
- Create regular schedule for different skill areas (traditional crafts, technology, gardening, language)
- Connect with schools and community groups for intergenerational programs
- Document and share successful skill exchanges to inspire others

### Skills needed:

Program coordination, matching people with complementary skills, workshop facilitation, liaison with schools and groups

## Care and Repair Cafe

Regular gatherings where people learn to repair items build practical skills while reducing waste and saving money. These social events demonstrate that fixing things can be enjoyable and creates opportunities for knowledge sharing.

### Getting started:

- Identify venue and basic tools needed for repair activities
- Connect with people skilled in different repair areas (textiles, furniture, electronics, bicycles, small appliances)
- Organise first repair cafe with simple items and experienced helpers
- Create safety guidelines and basic tool collection
- Create a regular schedule and promote to community

### Skills needed:

Repair expertise in various areas, workshop organisation, tool management, safety coordination, volunteer coordination



## Cut Down on Waste

Simple local solutions help reduce waste while building awareness of consumption patterns. Community initiatives can make sustainable choices more convenient and affordable while supporting local businesses.

### Getting started:

- Organise bulk buying groups for eco-friendly household items
- Create information campaigns about local recycling and waste reduction
- Work with local businesses on packaging reduction initiatives
- Set up reusable container systems for local shopping
- Share practical tips for reducing household waste

**Skills needed:** Research and communication, business liaison, bulk buying coordination, campaign development, practical waste reduction knowledge.

## Library of Things

Sharing occasionally-used tools, equipment, games or instruments saves money and storage space while building community connections. This practical demonstration of sharing economy principles makes useful items accessible to everyone.

### Getting started:

- Survey community to identify things people would lend or borrow
- Set up simple lending system with basic tools in accessible location
- Create lending agreements and maintenance schedules
- Connect with local hardware stores, the local library and tool owners willing to participate
- Promote system and track usage to demonstrate community benefit

### Skills needed:

System organisation, tool maintenance, record keeping, promotion, partnership development with local businesses

## Build Better After Defective Concrete Block Crisis

As families face DCB/MICA remediation, this creates an opportunity to support rebuilding with more comfortable, affordable homes while building on existing campaigning efforts. By demonstrating positive solutions through sustainable materials and circular building practices, Buncrana could become a leader in innovative construction, turning a community crisis into a model for others.

### Getting started:

- Organise information sessions on sustainable building options and energy efficiency with the Inishowen SEC
- Connect affected families with experienced green building professionals
- Research grant opportunities and advocate for support that includes sustainable rebuilding
- Create peer support network for families going through remediation process
- Document and share successful sustainable rebuilding examples as demonstration projects
- Link sustainable rebuilding advocacy with existing DCB/MICA campaign efforts
- Research options for re-using waste building material across the peninsula e.g. for landscaping

### Skills needed:

Building knowledge, research and advocacy, event organisation, peer support facilitation, grant application support

## Clean Water Project

Our waterways are precious community assets where children play, families walk, aquatic life flourishes, and visitors experience Buncrana's natural beauty. Community-led monitoring helps us understand water quality issues and take action to protect these vital spaces while building local environmental knowledge.

### Getting started:

- Train volunteers in simple water quality testing techniques
- Establish regular monitoring schedule for key waterways and beaches including Lough Swilly SAC SPA
- Create system for recording and sharing water quality data
- Connect with environmental agencies and research institutions for support including the Inishowen's Rivers Trust
- Organise community clean-up events linked to monitoring activities
- Connect with DCC to determine status of upgrade to Buncrana's water treatment plant

### Skills needed:

Environmental monitoring, data recording, volunteer coordination, liaison with agencies, event organisation



# Repair & Share Foyle: A Model for Circular Economy in Action

Repair & Share Foyle is a Community Interest Company based in Derry, operating as the home of Repair Café Foyle and the city's first tool and equipment library, 'Library of Things Foyle'. Their mission centres on reducing waste 'one fix at a time' and promoting the circular economy through innovative community-led initiatives.

## The Model

The organisation operates two monthly Repair Cafés across the Derry and Strabane areas, offering free repairs on small household electricals, textiles, bikes, toys, woodwork, and more. Volunteers fix items while visitors enjoy tea and conversation, embodying the community repair ethos of connection and skill-sharing. Initially incubated under Zero Waste North West charity, the project has evolved into an independent community interest company with a dedicated team of volunteer fixers.

## Scale and Impact

The organisation secured £188,094 from the National Lottery Community Fund to support three flagship projects: Tech Connect, RePaint, and the Fixing Factory. The Fixing Factory, launched in September 2024, provides drop-off repair services for those unable to attend busy Repair Cafés, extending accessibility. Additionally, Material Focus provided £71,000 to expand repair services, particularly in rural Strabane, as part of over 40 UK-funded projects.

## Partnership Approach

Repair & Share Foyle works in partnership with Derry City and Strabane District Council and is a member of the Northern Ireland Resources Network, promoting sustainable reuse and repair across Northern Ireland. Their mobile model brings services to various community venues, ensuring accessibility across diverse locations.

## Relevance to Buncrana

Given Buncrana's proximity to Derry (approximately 26km), Repair & Share Foyle presents significant collaboration opportunities. Their proven Community Interest Company model, successful funding track record, and established volunteer framework could inform similar initiatives in Buncrana. The organisation's experience in rural outreach, particularly their Strabane expansion, offers valuable insights for developing community repair infrastructure on the Inishowen Peninsula.











# Local Food Systems

Healthy food  
for everyone

Food connects us all - to our health, our cultures, our land, and each other. Buncrana already has the beginnings of a vibrant local food system through The Exchange's Food Pantry, community gardens, and the diverse food cultures of our residents. These projects build on those foundations, creating ways for everyone to access healthy, affordable food while celebrating the rich culinary traditions that make our community special.



## Community Gardens/Allotments

Building on existing community gardens like Amach Anseo, a broader network of vegetable gardens in different parts of town creates opportunities for neighbours to meet over shared work, children to learn where food comes from, and everyone to access fresh produce regardless of income. These spaces build community connections while providing practical food growing experience.

### Getting started:

- Map potential garden/allotment sites across different neighbourhoods and assess soil/access.
- Review food insecurity research
- Connect with existing gardeners and identify people interested in starting new plots
- Organise community meetings in different areas to gauge interest and identify coordinators
- Research successful community garden networks and access to tools/seeds
- Start with new pilot gardens in 2-3 locations with committed local coordinators

### Skills needed:

Gardening experience, site assessment, community organising, coordination between sites, tool and resource management

## Weekly Country Market

Regular markets where local growers and food makers sell directly to residents keep money in our local economy while providing access to fresh food. Markets also create weekly gathering points where the whole community comes together.

### Getting started:

- Identify local growers, bakers, and food producers interested in selling at market
- Collate existing data on food production in the region
- Research suitable venues and licensing requirements for regular food markets
- Connect with successful farmers' markets in similar towns to learn best practices
- Organise trial markets to test community interest and vendor participation
- Develop sustainable schedule and vendor support system

### Skills needed:

Market organisation, vendor recruitment, licensing and legal requirements, event coordination, promotion and marketing

## School Food Connection

Linking local food growers with school meals providers encourages fresh, healthy options for children while supporting local producers. This helps young people learn about local food systems and ensures they access nutritious meals. With new hot meals for schools currently in development, planning ahead now can ensure sustainable sourcing and effective food waste systems are built in from the start.

### Getting started:

- Connect with school meal coordinators to understand current systems and opportunities
- Research successful school-local food programs and regulatory requirements
- Identify local growers who could supply school meal providers and assess production capacity
- Pilot small-scale supply relationship between one grower and one school meal provider
- Develop systems for regular supply, quality standards, and educational connections

### Skills needed:

Liaison with schools and food services, agricultural knowledge, logistics coordination, regulatory understanding, educational program development

## Food From Around the World

Celebrating different food cultures enriches our community while creating income opportunities and helping newcomers share their traditions. This builds connections between different cultural groups while expanding local food options.

### Getting started:

- Connect with people from different cultural backgrounds interested in sharing their food traditions
- Research mobile food van options and licensing requirements for multicultural ingredients not currently available in Buncrana
- Organise multicultural food events to test community interest and vendor participation e.g. a pop-up cafe or food event
- Explore partnerships with existing events and festivals for cultural food offerings
- Develop support system for people wanting to start food businesses

### Skills needed:

Cultural liaison and relationship building, food service licensing knowledge, event organisation, business development support, mobile food service logistics



## Grow Foods From Different Cultures

Growing ingredients from different cultural traditions helps people maintain connections to their heritage while introducing new flavours to the broader community. This demonstrates how diversity strengthens local food systems.

### Getting started:

- Survey community to identify cultural foods people want to grow but cannot easily find
- Research growing requirements for different cultural vegetables and herbs
- Consult with experts for biosecurity considerations
- Designate specific areas in community gardens for cultural food plots
- Connect experienced growers with people wanting to learn about unfamiliar plants
- Organise seed and knowledge sharing sessions between different cultural groups

### Skills needed:

Gardening knowledge across different cultural traditions, community garden coordination, cultural liaison, seed sourcing and saving, educational workshop facilitation

## Expand the Food Pantry

Building on The Exchange's successful food sharing program increases food security while reducing waste. Expansion can include more collection points, fresh produce options, and connections with local growing projects.

### Getting started:

- Assess current Food Pantry operations and identify opportunities for expansion
- Research additional collection points and storage options throughout town
- Connect Food Pantry with local growers to include fresh produce options
- Develop volunteer system for expanded collection and distribution
- Create partnerships with local businesses for surplus food recovery

### Skills needed:

Food safety and storage knowledge, volunteer coordination, logistics and transport, partnership development with businesses, fresh food handling

## Learn to Preserve Food

Workshops on food preservation help families reduce waste, save money, and maintain food security. Traditional skills like pickling, dehydrating, fermenting, jarring and proper storage connect people with practical knowledge while building community relationships.

### Getting started:

- Identify people with food preservation skills willing to teach others
- Research safe food preservation techniques and organise basic equipment
- Schedule seasonal workshops aligned with harvest times for different foods
- Connect preservation workshops with community gardens and local growers
- Create resource library of preservation guides and equipment lending

### Skills needed:

Food preservation expertise, workshop facilitation, food safety knowledge, seasonal planning coordination, equipment management

## Keep Money in Buncrana

A local voucher system supports local businesses while encouraging community members to spend locally. When money circulates locally multiple times, it supports jobs and strengthens the local economy.

### Getting started:

- Research previous gift card/voucher system to determine any barriers/risks and learnings for future
- Connect with local businesses to assess interest in participating in voucher system
- Develop simple voucher system with participating businesses and clear usage guidelines
- Pilot voucher system with small group of businesses and community members
- Create promotion system that highlights benefits for both businesses and residents

### Skills needed:

Local business liaison, system design and administration, promotion and marketing, financial record keeping, partnership development



# The Urban Co-op: Democratising Access to Sustainable Food

The Urban Co-op is a consumer cooperative that began with origins in Meitheal Mid West's attempts to address unemployment challenges in Limerick. Taking inspiration from the successful Mondragon Corporation, the collective turned their attention to 'something more practical...something more achievable', a community grocery.

## Evolution and Growth

Launched in July 2013 as a buying club selling fruit, vegetables, bread and eggs, the Urban Co-op has evolved into a full-service retail grocery store and Community Wellness Hub with over 2,500 members. The organisation now operates from 600 square metre premises in Eastway Business Park, open seven days a week with a full range of wholesome organic and local foods.

## The Cooperative Model

The co-op has grown from 19 founding members to over 2,700 members, supported by more than 350 suppliers, eight staff members and numerous volunteers operating seven days per week. Managing Director Anne Maher notes that as the co-op focused on organic and good-quality foods, it naturally attracted people interested in wellness, evolving into both a community wellness hub and grocery.

## Local Food Systems and Sustainability

Supporting local suppliers is central to the business model, with strong commitment to reduced packaging and zero waste culture. The cooperative provides an extensive selection of organic products, with particular focus on supporting local, small producers. The co-op provides a viable economic model for local food and craft suppliers to bring quality produce to the community while providing meaningful employment and volunteer opportunities.

## Relevance to Buncrana

The Urban Co-op is moving towards a multi-stakeholder cooperative model to achieve community ownership, as originally envisaged by the founders. Their decade-long evolution from informal buying club to thriving social enterprise demonstrates how community-led food initiatives can address food security, support local producers, and build sustainable local economies. This model offers valuable insights for developing community-owned food infrastructure in Buncrana, particularly regarding cooperative governance, member engagement, and creating economically viable alternatives to conventional retail while prioritising local, organic produce.



# Sustainable Mobility

Getting around  
better

Getting around Buncrana and nearby towns should be easy, affordable, and safe for everyone, whether you're 8 or 80, whether you drive, cycle, walk, or use public transport. Our community has clear ideas about what would make the biggest difference: safe places to cycle, better bus services, and transport that works for people with disabilities. These projects are about creating real alternatives that save money, improve health, and reduce our environmental impact.



## Safe Cycling Routes

Protected cycling infrastructure makes it safe for families to cycle to school, people to cycle to work, and everyone to enjoy our beautiful surroundings without worrying about traffic. Safe routes encourage more people to try cycling while reducing car dependency and improving air quality.

### Getting started:

- Map existing cycling infrastructure and identify priority routes needing protection
- Research successful cycling infrastructure models from similar towns
- Engage with local authorities on cycling infrastructure plans and funding opportunities
- Organise or join community rides/cycle and walking buses to demonstrate demand and identify safety issues
- Connect with schools and employers to understand commuting cycling needs

### Skills needed:

Advocacy and campaigning, research on cycling infrastructure, liaison with authorities, event organisation, safety assessment

## Walking Buses for Schools

Organised groups walking children safely to school reduce car traffic around schools while giving children exercise, independence, and social time. These regular groups demonstrate that walking to school can be safe and enjoyable.

### Getting started:

- Connect with schools to assess interest and identify safe walking routes
- Recruit parent volunteers willing to coordinate regular walking groups
- Organise trial walking bus sessions to test routes and volunteer commitment
- Create safety guidelines and regular schedule for walking bus operations
- Promote walking buses to families and track participation and benefits

### Skills needed:

Volunteer coordination, route planning and safety assessment, liaison with schools, child safety knowledge

## Fix Traffic Problem Spots

Addressing areas where traffic regularly backs up improves air quality and makes streets more pleasant for everyone. Small changes like better traffic light timing, clearer signage, or improved pedestrian crossings can make significant differences.

### Getting started:

- Identify and document specific traffic problem areas and their impacts
- Research simple traffic management solutions and successful examples
- Engage with local authorities on traffic management improvements
- Organise community input on priority problem areas and potential solutions
- Monitor and document improvements after changes are implemented

### Skills needed:

Documentation and observation, traffic management knowledge, liaison with authorities, community consultation organisation

## Better Bus Service

More frequent buses, evening service, and better rural connections provide freedom and independence, especially for young people and those who cannot drive. Improved public transport reduces car dependency while connecting people to jobs, education, and social opportunities.

### Getting started:

- Document current bus service gaps and gather community experiences of transport needs
- Research public transport advocacy strategies and successful service improvements
- Build coalition of users including young people, elderly residents, and rural communities
- Engage with bus operators and transport authorities on service improvements
- Organise campaign demonstrating community demand for better services

### Skills needed:

Research and documentation, coalition building, advocacy and campaigning, public speaking, coordination with transport operators



## Greenway Path

Safe, traffic-free walking and cycling paths connecting Buncrana to nearby towns provide opportunities for exercise, commuting, and tourism while demonstrating sustainable transport options. These routes connect our community to the wider region without car dependency.

### Getting started:

- Research existing greenway plans and identify opportunities to connect to/and support development
- Connect with cycling and walking groups advocating for greenway completion
- Document community support for greenway development and economic benefits
- Engage with relevant authorities and funding bodies supporting greenway projects
- Organise community walks/cycles on proposed routes to demonstrate potential

### Skills needed:

Research on infrastructure planning, advocacy with multiple authorities, documentation of community benefits, event organisation

## Transport for Everyone

Ensuring people with disabilities can get around town easily and independently requires accessible bus stops, proper footpath maintenance, and transport options that work for different mobility needs. Accessible transport benefits everyone in the community.

### Getting started:

- Audit existing transport accessibility and identify barriers to independent mobility
- Connect with disability advocacy groups and people with lived experience of transport barriers
- Research accessibility requirements and best practice accessible transport solutions
- Engage with transport operators and authorities on accessibility improvements
- Develop action plan prioritising most impactful accessibility improvements

### Skills needed:

Accessibility assessment, liaison with disability advocates, knowledge of accessibility requirements, advocacy with service providers

## One-Stop Transport Info

Easy access to information about all transport options helps people make informed choices about getting around. A simple information system showing bus times, safe routes, and carpool opportunities makes sustainable transport more convenient.

### Getting started:

- Research existing transport information sources and identify gaps
- Create simple system for sharing transport information (website, app, or physical boards)
- Connect with transport operators to ensure accurate and up-to-date information
- Include carpool matching and ride-sharing opportunities in information system
- Promote information system and gather feedback on usefulness

### Skills needed:

Information system design, liaison with transport operators, web/app development or design skills, promotion and marketing

## Electric Car Chargers

Convenient charging options support the transition to electric vehicles while benefiting local businesses where charging points are located. Accessible charging infrastructure makes sustainable transport choices more practical for residents.

### Getting started:

- Research electric vehicle charging installation options and funding opportunities
- Connect with local businesses interested in hosting charging points
- Assess electrical infrastructure requirements for charging point installation
- Explore community ownership or shared electric vehicle options
- Coordinate with authorities on public charging point development

### Skills needed:

Research on electric vehicle infrastructure, business partnership development, technical assessment of electrical requirements, coordination with authorities



# Rural Mobility Solutions Through TFI Local Link

Rural communities across Ireland face significant transport challenges, particularly affecting older people and marginalised groups. Two pioneering initiatives demonstrate how flexible, community-focused transport models can address these barriers while supporting climate goals.

## **Fingal Community Car Programme**

Launched in 2019, Fingal's Community Car scheme was the first of its kind implemented by a local authority in Ireland. Operating initially in Howth and Skerries, the service has since expanded to Donabate, Portrane, Rush and Lusk. The scheme relies on Garda-vetted volunteer drivers who provide door-to-door transport for people struggling to access public transport, supporting hospital visits, health services, shopping, banking and pension collection. The service uses electric vehicles provided through partnership with GoCar, demonstrating commitment to climate action.

The model's strength lies in its accessibility: passengers simply phone Local Link to book trips, with volunteers handling the rest. With 20 volunteers already involved, the service provides a vital lifeline to older persons and those with mobility limitations.

## **TFI Anseo: Smart Demand-Responsive Transport**

Building on Local Link's success, TFI Anseo represents Ireland's first Smart Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) pilot, launched in Achill (July 2025) and Killarney (August 2025) as part of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan. Unlike conventional fixed-route services, passengers use the TFI Anseo app to request pick-ups and drop-offs within designated zones, combining rideshare convenience with public transport reliability and affordability.

Operating seven days weekly year-round, with distance-based fares where most trips cost €3 or less, the service improves first and last mile connectivity while reducing car dependency. The 12-month pilot is funded through the Government's Climate Action Fund, supporting innovative transport solutions contributing to Ireland's climate goals.

## **Relevance to Buncrana**

These models offer practical frameworks for addressing Buncrana's identified transport challenges, particularly for migrant communities accessing essential services in Letterkenny and older residents requiring local mobility support.











# Just Transition

Fair changes  
for all

As Buncrana becomes more sustainable, it's essential that everyone benefits from the positive changes and no one is left behind. A just transition means ensuring that new opportunities are accessible to all, that costs don't fall unfairly on those who can least afford them, and that everyone has a voice in shaping our town's future. These projects focus on equity, inclusion, and making sure our transition to sustainability strengthens our community bonds.



## Green Jobs Training

Helping people develop skills for environmental careers - from renewable energy installation to sustainable construction, from environmental monitoring to sustainable food production, builds local capacity while creating employment opportunities in growing sectors.

### Getting started:

- Research training opportunities in renewable energy, sustainable construction, environmental work and sustainable food production
- Connect with training providers and identify funding for skills development programs
- Survey community interest in different types of green skills training
- Organise introductory workshops on green career paths and required skills
- Develop partnerships with employers who hire people with green skills

### Skills needed:

Training program development, liaison with training providers, career guidance, funding research and applications

## Welcome New Neighbours

Creating opportunities for different cultural groups to meet and learn from each other builds community connections while celebrating diversity. These activities help newcomers feel welcome while enriching the broader community.

### Getting started:

- Connect with people from different cultural backgrounds interested in sharing practices and traditions and learning from others
- Organise multicultural events including shared meals, festivals, and cultural exchanges
- Develop language exchange programs pairing people wanting to practice different languages
- Create collaborative projects that bring together people's versatile skills and cultural knowledge
- Support existing cultural groups and help them connect with the broader community

### Skills needed:

Event organisation, cultural liaison and relationship building, language coordination, partnership development between groups

## Get Everyone Online

Helping people develop internet access and computer skills ensures everyone can participate in digital services, job opportunities, and community initiatives. Digital inclusion prevents people from being excluded from increasingly online services and opportunities.

### Getting started:

- Assess community digital access needs and identify people wanting computer skills support
- Research funding for devices and internet access for people who cannot afford them
- Organise basic computer skills workshops for people new to digital technology
- Connect with organisations providing digital inclusion support and training
- Develop peer support system where confident computer users help others learn

### Skills needed:

Computer skills training, digital inclusion knowledge, workshop facilitation, funding research and applications

## Help with Energy Bills

Supporting households struggling with energy costs through efficiency improvements, information about available supports, and community-led solutions helps ensure everyone can afford to heat their homes while reducing overall energy consumption.

### Getting started:

- Research available energy support schemes and create simple information guide
- Organise bulk buying groups for heating oil, solar equipment, or energy-efficient appliances
- Connect households with energy efficiency grant programs and support with applications
- Develop home energy efficiency workshops showing practical improvements people can make
- Create peer support network for sharing energy-saving tips and bulk buying opportunities

### Skills needed:

Research on energy supports and efficiency, bulk buying coordination, grant application support, workshop facilitation



## Housing Solutions

Addressing housing challenges including the defective concrete block crisis, affordability, and holiday home impacts requires collective advocacy and innovative local solutions. While major policy happens nationally, communities can support affected families and explore models like cooperatives and community land trusts that keep housing affordable while also putting pressure on policy makers.

### Getting started:

- Research community land trust models and other community-led housing solutions
- Build coalition advocating for housing policy changes that benefit local residents
- Document housing challenges and advocate collectively with local and national representatives
- Connect with other communities facing similar housing pressures to share strategies

### Skills needed:

Community organising and advocacy, research on housing models, support group facilitation, policy analysis, coalition building

## Buildings Everyone Can Use

Ensuring new community facilities work for people with all abilities means consulting with people with disabilities from the design stage rather than retrofitting accessibility as an afterthought. This creates spaces that welcome everyone and sets higher standards for inclusive design.

### Getting started:

- Connect with local disability advocates and people with lived experience of accessibility barriers
- Research universal design principles and accessibility requirements for community buildings
- Develop consultation process ensuring disabled people's voices shape facility design
- Create accessibility checklist for all new community projects and building improvements
- Advocate for accessibility standards that exceed minimum legal requirements

### Skills needed:

Accessibility knowledge, consultation and facilitation skills, liaison with disability advocates, design and planning knowledge

## Community-Owned Projects

Developing ways for residents to own shares in local projects like renewable energy installations keeps benefits in the community while giving people a stake in sustainability initiatives. Community ownership builds local wealth and democratic control over resources.

### Getting started:

- Research successful community ownership models including renewable energy cooperatives
- Identify potential projects suitable for community ownership (solar installations, community facilities)
- Connect with organisations supporting community ownership development including the Inishowen SEC
- Organise information sessions on community ownership benefits and models
- Develop pilot community ownership project with interested residents

### Skills needed:

Research on cooperative and community ownership models, financial planning, legal knowledge of ownership structures, project development

## Jobs for Young People

Connecting young people with opportunities in growing green businesses helps them develop careers while building local capacity in sustainability sectors. This ensures young people can build futures in Buncrana while contributing to environmental transition.

### Getting started:

- Map existing green businesses and organisations that could offer youth employment or training
- Connect with young people to understand their career interests and skill development needs
- Develop relationships with employers in renewable energy, environmental restoration, and sustainable construction
- Create mentorship programs linking young people with experienced workers in green sectors
- Organise career events showcasing green job opportunities

### Skills needed:

Youth work and mentorship, liaison with employers, career guidance knowledge, program coordination



# Inishowen Sustainable Energy Community: Community-Owned Energy Transition

On our doorstep, Inishowen Sustainable Energy Community (ISEC) demonstrates how communities can lead their own energy transition while building local wealth and resilience. Established in 2019 through collaboration between Inishowen Development Partnership, Inishowen Co-Op, Donegal County Council, and local stakeholders, ISEC offers directly applicable lessons for Buncrana's ECO strategy, particularly around community ownership, renewable energy, and a Just Transition.

ISEC engaged residents through workshops and information sessions to develop a Community Charter and Energy Master Plan, launched in 2021. The plan provides a comprehensive picture of energy use across the peninsula, identifying opportunities for renewable generation, retrofit, and transport transformation.

## Community-Owned Renewable Energy

Rather than watching energy profits flow elsewhere, ISEC pursues community ownership of renewable assets. In 2023, they submitted four successful applications to the Community Owned Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) and completed feasibility studies for a community-led biogas plant. Under the new Small-Scale Renewable Energy Support Scheme (SRESS), communities can access fixed tariffs for solar and wind projects between 50kW to 6MW without competitive auction, making community ownership more achievable.

## Tangible Benefits and Wealth Distribution

ISEC's work delivers direct financial benefits for example a community crèche can save €2,500-€3,000 annually through geothermal heating; a family farm can cut energy costs by 50% with solar panels; Ireland's most northerly home upgraded from G to A-rating. The SEC coordinates access to grants, distributes funding for community building upgrades, and supports warmer homes applications for older residents. These aren't abstract targets but real money staying in local pockets.

## Why It Matters for Buncrana

ISEC proves that Just Transition isn't theoretical but it's happening in our region through practical community leadership. Their multi-stakeholder partnership model, emphasis on community ownership over corporate extraction, and systematic approach to energy democracy offer an immediately accessible pathway for Buncrana.



# Connected Community

Working better  
together

The strongest communities are those where different groups support each other, where everyone's voice is heard, and where collaboration makes things possible that no single organisation could achieve alone.

Buncrana already has incredible community spirit, from Tidy Towns to sports clubs, from Artlink to the Town Team and IDP. These projects focus on strengthening those connections and creating new ways for people to work together effectively.



## Join Forces

Helping different community groups work together instead of competing creates stronger impact and reduces duplication of effort. Collaboration can mean shared funding applications, coordinated events, or regular connections that help groups learn from each other and find partnership opportunities.

### Getting started:

- Map existing community groups and identify areas of overlap or potential collaboration
- Organise quarterly inter-group meetings where organisations can share current projects and challenges
- Create shared calendar system so groups can coordinate events and avoid scheduling conflicts
- Develop joint funding applications where multiple groups can benefit from larger grants
- Establish working groups on shared challenges like volunteer recruitment or venue access

### Skills needed:

Meeting facilitation, relationship building between organisations, grant writing, coordination and communication, conflict resolution

## Grow New Leaders

Training and supporting new people to lead community projects builds capacity while preventing volunteer burnout. Leadership skills can be learned, and communities are stronger when more people feel confident taking initiative and coordinating collaborative work.

### Getting started:

- Identify people interested in developing leadership skills within existing community groups
- Organise leadership development workshops covering meeting facilitation, project planning, and team coordination
- Create mentorship programs pairing experienced community leaders with newcomers
- Develop role-sharing systems so leadership responsibilities are distributed rather than concentrated
- Provide ongoing support and resources for people taking on new leadership roles

### Skills needed:

Training and workshop facilitation, mentorship coordination, leadership development knowledge, succession planning

## Listen to Young Voices

Creating meaningful ways for young people to participate in decision-making ensures their perspectives shape community development. This means giving young people genuine power to influence projects and priorities rather than just consulting them after decisions are made.

### Getting started:

- Establish youth representation on key community planning groups and decision-making bodies
- Organise regular youth forums where young people can raise issues and propose solutions
- Create youth-led project funding where young people decide how to allocate resources for their priorities
- Train adults in meaningful youth participation and shared decision-making approaches
- Connect youth voices with local government and community planning processes

### Skills needed:

Youth engagement and facilitation, shared decision-making processes, liaison with local government, democratic participation methods

## Share What Works

Regular opportunities for different groups to share successful approaches prevents reinventing the wheel while spreading effective practices across the community. Knowledge sharing builds collective capacity and strengthens relationships between organisations.

### Getting started:

- Schedule quarterly community learning sessions where groups present successful projects and lessons learned
- Create simple system for documenting and sharing effective approaches between organisations
- Organise themed sharing sessions focusing on specific challenges like fundraising or volunteer recruitment
- Develop peer-to-peer learning partnerships between groups working on similar issues
- Create resource library of successful project templates and approaches

### Skills needed:

Event organisation, documentation and knowledge management, presentation facilitation, peer learning coordination



## Track Our Progress

Simple documentation of community achievements helps celebrate successes, learn from challenges, and demonstrate impact to funders and supporters. It is important to make progress visible and accessible to everyone while capturing both measureable changes and community stories.

### Getting started:

- Use the Doughnut Economics tools and methods to help track impact
- Develop simple system for community groups to document their activities and impacts
- Create shared annual community report highlighting collective achievements across all groups
- Organise annual community celebration showcasing progress and recognising contributions
- Document community stories and changes that numbers alone cannot capture
- Use progress documentation to identify successful approaches and areas needing additional support

### Skills needed:

Documentation and reporting, storytelling and narrative development, celebration event organisation, impact measurement

## Support Our Volunteers

Preventing volunteer burnout by sharing workloads and providing support creates more sustainable community organisations. This means recognising contributions, providing training, and creating systems that don't depend entirely on individual dedication.

### Getting started:

- Organise volunteer appreciation events and recognition systems across community groups
- Create shared training opportunities on useful skills like grant writing, event organisation, and meeting facilitation
- Develop volunteer matching system connecting people's skills and interests with appropriate opportunities
- Establish support networks where experienced volunteers mentor newcomers
- Design role-sharing systems that distribute responsibilities and prevent over-reliance on individuals

### Skills needed:

Volunteer coordination and support, training program development, recognition and appreciation systems, mentorship coordination

## Find Funding Together

Collaborative funding applications are often stronger while sharing research and writing workload makes the process less overwhelming for individual groups. Working together can access larger grants and build stronger cases for community support.

### Getting started:

- Create shared funding calendar identifying grant opportunities relevant to multiple groups
- Organise collaborative grant-writing workshops where groups learn together and share expertise
- Develop joint funding applications where multiple organisations benefit from single large grants
- Create funding research team that identifies opportunities and shares information across groups
- Establish peer review system where groups help each other strengthen funding applications

### Skills needed:

Grant writing and research, collaboration facilitation, financial planning, application review and feedback

## Information for Everyone

Ensuring community information reaches everyone regardless of technology access or language requires multiple communication channels and inclusive approaches. Good information sharing strengthens participation and helps people access opportunities and services.

### Getting started:

- Assess community communication needs and identify gaps in current information sharing
- Develop multi-channel communication system using both digital and non-digital methods
- Create community ambassador network helping information reach people who might otherwise miss it
- Organise translation support for community information in relevant languages
- Establish simple, regular communication schedule shared across community groups

### Skills needed:

Communication strategy development, multilingual communication, community outreach, accessible information design



# ChangeMakers Donegal: Connecting Global Justice to Local Action

Across County Donegal, ChangeMakers builds community capacity to tackle sustainability challenges by connecting global issues to local action. A partnership between Inishowen Development Partnership, Donegal ETB, Self Help Africa, Trócaire and Concern Worldwide, funded by Irish Aid, ChangeMakers demonstrates how Global Citizenship education transforms awareness into meaningful community change. ChangeMakers' vision is for adults in Donegal to be actively engaged in understanding and taking action on local and global issues for a fair and just world.

## **Seeds of Change: Small Grants, Big Impact**

The Seeds of Change initiative offers community and voluntary groups grants to carry out projects that address local issues with global themes through local action that links to global justice. Recent Seeds of Change projects include Wild Inishowen Club and Inishowen Beekeepers Association collaborating on garden ponds for wildlife, attracting local people to learn about biodiversity. Dunfanaghy Family Resource Centre ran 'Ethical April' with ethical fashion shows and ethical egg production.

## **Sustainability Passport Programme**

The Sustainability Passport Programme offers a guide to more sustainable living specific to Donegal, open to individuals, community groups, social enterprises and businesses. Buncrana Tidy Town Committee piloted the passport by focusing on reusing and recycling through community gardening. The programme provides practical steps participants can take across water, energy, food, waste, and transport, with access to resource libraries and ongoing support.

## **Building Knowledge Through Education**

ChangeMakers delivers QQI accredited Development Education related modules at Levels 4, 5 and 6, alongside workshops with community organisations on themes including human rights, climate justice, migration, consumerism, food security and waste, gender equality, water and environmental sustainability. This formal and informal learning builds collective understanding of interconnected global challenges while developing skills for local action.

## **Why It Matters for Buncrana**

ChangeMakers proves that sustainability education can be achieved through small grants, accessible learning, and celebration of local action, they've created infrastructure for community led change. Their emphasis on connecting local and global, their established facilitator network, and their track record of supporting local projects make them essential partners for ECO Buncrana's ambitions around community engagement and capacity building.











# A day in Buncrana, 2032

Let's imagine a possible future where some of the actions are achieved

I wake to Curlews calling from Lough Swilly. Through my window, the dark sky-friendly lights in our estate dim with dawn, their amber glow protecting the bats and bees thriving in our rewilded corners. My home, rebuilt after the mica crisis using hempcrete and local timber, barely needs heating this misty October morning.

Walking my daughter to school through Swan Park, we pass the community gardens spreading from Amach Anseo's original plots. Neighbours harvest Jerusalem artichokes that Fatima from the former IPAS Centre introduced three years back. The variety has proven remarkably suited to our Atlantic climate. The communal apple press already has families queuing with the last of the orchard windfalls, sweet fruit scent mixing with salt air.

At Castle Bridge, we join the walking bus with twenty-six children today, up from five when we started in 2026. Tom, who regularly coordinates our Tuesday groups since the council adopted the flexible working week, mentions the success of the invasive species eradication along the Mill River. The river runs clear enough these days to see brown trout in places where algae bloomed five years ago.

I collect a shared cargo bike from the communal bike storage station. It's the handiest way to get from A to B and pick up what we need for the week on route. I head towards a buzzing Market Square with the weekly market underway. The popular fresh bakery stall sits alongside the Tidy Towns volunteers seasonal seed exchange stall. Transition Year students run the refill station while John displays furniture, skilfully restored at the Repair Cafe.

Lunch at The Exchange showcases its evolution beyond the original food pantry. Today's meal of school-grown cavolo nero and potato soup with yesterday's market bread, which would have been considered waste not too long ago, makes the most delicious croutons. A jam-packed pickling workshop is underway and Susan is busy repairing laptops with co-op parts. A community noticeboard notification pops up on my phone. Success: our water monitoring has shown dramatic improvement since the treatment plant upgrade.



I see the library is hosting the Housing Assembly working group this Thursday, collectively designing community land trust homes based on the successful factory conversion. Youth council representatives, given real decision-making power since 2030, will push for more workshop spaces. Their presentation shows how sharing reduces costs while building connections. I must make a note of that in my calendar, not to be missed!

Early evening brings me down Lower Main Street, transformed by the night-time economy changes. The youth cafe, foods of the world teaching kitchen, artist studios and community owned spaces have replaced empty units.

Back home preparing dinner with community garden vegetables, communal henhouse eggs and goods from today's market, I watch neighbours gather in our pocket park where dereliction once stood. Children play in traffic-calmed streets while adults share stories on benches made from locally recycled materials. A reintroduced red squirrel scampers through hazels we planted together.

After dinner, we walk along the shorefront towards the town, I hear barnacle geese settling in for the night and further along spot the now familiar bobbing heads of otters. The town's transformation wasn't instant, it's ongoing, we've had failures and difficult conversations but also some amazing successes and celebrations. Project by project, we've created something remarkable: a place where people and nature thrive, where teenagers design solutions that pensioners implement and our deeper connection to nature signals our own collective recovery.

# Making it happen

## How we'll work together

The Eco-Buncrana Strategy belongs to everyone who wants to see our community thrive. We'll work through an Eco-Buncrana Community of Practice, a network of people from different organisations and backgrounds who meet regularly to coordinate projects, share resources, and support each other's efforts. This Community of Practice aims to make collaboration more effective and build our collective capacity to influence decisions that affect our town.

Our organising principles:

- **Start where we are:** building on existing strengths and relationships
- **Take practical action:** focusing on projects that create visible improvements while developing organising skills
- **Share power and responsibility:** ensuring leadership is distributed and sustainable
- **Learn through action:** adapting our approach based on what works in practice
- **Build for the long term:** celebrating quick wins while working toward systemic change

Bi-monthly/quarterly coordination meetings bring together anyone involved in Eco-Buncrana projects. These rotating gatherings serve as project coordination sessions, skill-sharing workshops, strategy discussions, and opportunities for social connection. They should deliberately move between community centres, project sites, and informal spaces to keep meetings accessible and engaging. The rhythm of our work follows the seasons, spring brings planning and planting with a focus on outdoor projects, summer emphasises building and major events, autumn centres on skill-sharing and evaluation, while winter provides time for reflection, training, and relationship building.



## Building community power

Eco-Buncrana isn't just about individual projects, it's about building our collective capacity to shape Buncrana's future. As we work together on practical initiatives, we naturally develop skills in project organising, coalition building, community research, public engagement, and advocacy. These abilities transfer between projects, so people who organise a successful community garden learn coordination and fundraising skills that later help with housing advocacy, while those who campaign for better bus services develop research and coalition-building abilities useful for other community priorities.

This approach recognises that community power grows through practice. Each project becomes a training ground for the skills we need to tackle bigger challenges. When we successfully organise around immediate needs, we build the confidence and capacity required for longer-term systemic change.

## Connecting with existing groups

Buncrana already has strong community organisations, and Eco-Buncrana works best when it strengthens rather than competes with existing efforts. We recommend partnering with the Town Team on long-term development priorities, ensuring sustainability perspectives are integrated into planning discussions. Developing an ECO Buncrana network with ongoing support from Inishowen Development Partnership will help in the co-ordination of the actions within this plan.

An ECO Buncrana network ensures collaboration, co-ordination, listening and learning from each other, providing synergy across the community to lead on projects and ensures everyone's voice is included.

## Multiple ways to get involved

There's a place for everyone in Eco-Buncrana, regardless of experience, time availability, or specific skills. Your participation matters regardless of your starting point, and the best community organising happens when people bring different experiences, perspectives, and skills to shared work.

### **If you have occasional time available:**

- Monthly community meetings to stay informed and contribute to decision-making
- Seasonal action days like tree planting, clean-ups, or skill-sharing events
- Campaign activities such as petition drives or public meetings

### **If you can commit a few hours monthly:**

- Join working groups focused on specific project areas
- Help coordinate events or research opportunities
- Serve as liaison between different organisations

### **If you're ready for ongoing leadership:**

- Coordinate specific initiatives while building team capacity
- Help develop long-term strategy and adapt approaches
- Support fundraising, administration, or coalition building

### **Essential skills we need:**

- **Meeting facilitation and group coordination:** helping diverse groups work together effectively
- **Research and communication:** investigating best practices and connecting with different parts of our community
- **Campaign organising and project management:** building public support and turning ideas into reality

Whether you're drawn to hands-on environmental projects, interested in policy advocacy, skilled in event coordination, or simply want to connect with neighbours around shared concerns, there's a meaningful role for your contribution.



# Get started

Ready to be part of making Buncrana more sustainable and connected? You can start exactly where you are, with whatever time and skills you have available.

## Join what's already happening:

- **Community gardening:** Help grow food locally in one of the local community gardens
- **Pollinator gardens:** Plant flowers for bees in public spaces
- **Skills sharing:** Teach something you know or learn something new
- **Second-hand markets:** Organise regular swaps and sales
- **Walking groups:** Start a neighbourhood walking bus for schools

## Or start something small in your own area:

Simple conversations with neighbours can spark meaningful change. Create a WhatsApp group for your street to share resources and coordinate help when people need it. Begin a garden, even if it's just a few pots of herbs on a windowsill. Small growing projects often inspire neighbours to start their own and can grow into shared community gardens.

Work with people nearby to bulk buy eco-friendly alternatives, making sustainable choices more affordable for everyone. Start informal tool lending between households on your street, why should every home need its own pressure washer or strimmer when neighbours can easily share?

## Getting connected:

Attend the bi-monthly gatherings of the **Eco-Buncrana Community of Practice** or connect with existing groups doing work you care about. Check with IDP for meeting details or reach out directly using the project contacts listed throughout this strategy.









Working together  
to make Buncrana a  
thriving place for all





This ECO Buncrana consultation process and strategy is funded by Inishowen Development Partnership under the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP)



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag  
an Aontas Eorpach

Co-Funded by the  
European Union



The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is co-funded by the Irish Government, through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and the European Social Fund Plus under the Employment, Inclusion, Skills, and Training (EIST) Programme 2021-2027



An Roinn Forbartha Tuisle agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht



Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall  
Donegal County Council



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development  
Europe investing in rural areas



INISHOWEN  
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