

Case Study

GreenPlan Mulranny

2015–2025

From small wins to big change: Mulranny's community-led green hub for decarbonization.



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Status

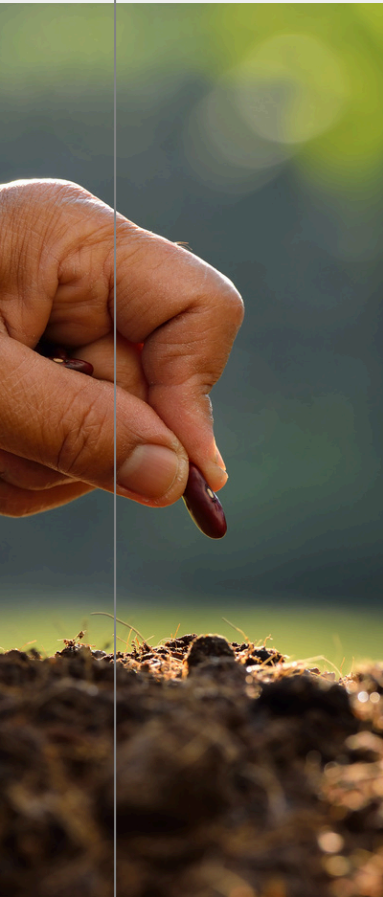
Active / Ongoing (2015–present).

GreenPlan Mulranny turned a small, volunteer-run tourist office into a public “green hub” for the whole village—swapping bulbs, cutting bills, refilling water bottles, charging e-bikes from solar, and showing live energy on a screen. From those visible wins, the team built a community energy project pipeline and helped set the stage for Mulranny’s Decarbonising Zone.

Overview (Key Info)

- **Start:** 2015 (first GreenPlan village in Ireland).
- **Lead:** Mulranny GreenPlan Group (Chair: Carol Loftus).
- **Where:** Mulranny, Co. Mayo (Tourist Office = GreenPlan HQ).
- **Focus:** Energy, Water, Waste, Biodiversity, Transport, Procurement, Society (7 GreenPlan themes).
- **Headline results:** ~75% CO₂ cut at the Tourist Office (year 1); 2,237 plastic bottles avoided by May 2022; Ireland’s first community e-bike scheme (solar-charged).
- **Pipeline:** Joined SEAI’s Sustainable Energy Community Network, completed an Energy Master Plan, ran 15 BER assessments, and built a register of opportunities.
- **Policy link:** Locally cited as a key step toward Mulranny becoming Mayo’s Decarbonising Zone.





Origins & Rationale

- **Where GreenPlan** comes from. The GreenPlan is a behavioural-change method developed by firefighter Neil McCabe at Kilbarrack Fire Station in Dublin—known as the world’s first carbon-neutral fire station. It is structured around seven key themes: Energy, Water, Waste, Biodiversity, Transport, Procurement, and Society, and focuses on low-cost, measurable actions within each.
- **Why Mulranny picked it.** Mulranny adopted the GreenPlan in 2015, inspired both by this model and a study visit to Germany, where community-led energy initiatives and practical solutions like biomass left a strong impression on local leaders. The Tourist Office became the GreenPlan HQ, and the community began with simple, visible actions—like organising Ireland’s first community low-energy lightbulb swap (150 bulbs), designed to get people thinking about energy use in their daily lives.

Implementation Process (what was done)

- **Set-up (2015):** community letter, open invite, GreenPlan HQ at the Tourist Office; action list per theme.
- **Quick wins in public:** Low-energy lights, insulation, water butts/aerators, WEEE & battery collections, book reuse, insect hotel/nest boxes, rhododendron biofuel, Food Drop Box, free minibus to Ballycroy.
- **Community learning:** Greener Energy Showcase Day with Mayo County Council & suppliers (practical retrofit tips, grants, demo unit).
- **From demos to pipeline:** Sustainable Energy Community onboarding → **Energy Master Plan** → **15 Building Energy Ratings** → **register of opportunities** (fabric-first → renewables).
- **Visible low-carbon services:** Mayo’s **first water bottle-refill station** (with live bottle-savings) and **Ireland’s first community e-bike scheme** (solar-charged; free e-bike charging on the Greenway).

Key actions & interventions (by theme)

- **Energy:** Insulation (walls/attic), full **low-energy light** conversion; later **solar panels + battery** with lobby screen showing live generation/usage.
- **Water:** **Water butts & aerators** at HQ; county's **first water bottle refill station** with an app that counts bottles avoided.
- **Waste & circularity:** **Battery & WEEE** collections, **composting**, **book reuse**; “Cleaning Naturally” non-toxic products.
- **Biodiversity:** **Insect hotel**, **nest boxes**, and **rhododendron as biofuel** (heat without coal).
- **Transport:** **Free minibus** to Ballycroy National Park (shared trips); later **community e-bike scheme** (solar-charged; free e-bike sockets).
- **Society:** **Food Drop Box** (from holiday homes → to food charities); letter inviting visitors to join.
- **Procurement:** Recycled paper, eco-cleaners, bulk-buy where possible; “think green” for all purchases.

Results & impact

- **HQ decarbonised fast:** ~**70–75%** footprint reduction at the Tourist Office in year 1 (low-energy lighting and invasive Rhododendron wood for biofuel).
- **Refill habits normalised:** **2,237 plastic** bottles avoided by **May 2022** at Mayo's first water bottle refill station..
- **Mobility shift, visibly local:** **First** community e-bike scheme in Ireland (3 bikes, solar-charged; free public e-bike sockets).
- **From demos to pipeline:** Sustainable Energy Community support, **Energy Master Plan**, **15 BERs**, and a sequenced **register of opportunities** (fabric first → renewables).
- **Reputation & policy knock-on:** Cited locally as a stepping-stone to **Mulranny's Decarbonising Zone** designation.



“When tourists come in, they can actually see the energy being generated.”

Early Value & What Worked

- **Small, graspable actions** in a public hub (swap 150 low-energy bulbs; water bottle refill station with live counter; WEEE/book swaps) created fast buy-in.
- **A visible “service layer”** (water bottle refill station, solar e-bike charging) turned decarbonisation into something residents and visitors actually use.

Where it stalled / challenges

- **Volunteer capacity & funding cycles** across years;



Restart/scale conditions

- **Retrofit delivery:** SEAI clinics/one-stop for home upgrades; **solar meitheals;** simple Request For Proposal packs for works (all flagged in the Decarbonising Zone action set).
- **Keep the hub “alive”:** with live solar display, e-bike booking/availability, recurring retrofit & mobility events.

Insights & lessons

- **Visible hubs change behaviour.** Put quick wins where people already come (water bottle refill station, low-energy lighting bulb swaps, e-bike charging) and a **live energy generation display**.
- **Sequence the energy journey.** SEC → EMP → BERs → **opportunity register beats** random acts and unlocks grants.
- **Use local problems as resources.** Rhododendron as **biofuel** is low-cost and place-based.
- **Blend social + climate benefits.** The **Food Drop Box** ties waste reduction to community care.

“You don’t have to build a wind farm to start. Do small things —and go for it.”

Link to climate action & Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)s

SDG 13 (Climate Action): rapid operational decarbonisation; DZ stepping-stone.

SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption): water bottle refill station, swaps, WEEE/battery collections, green procurement.

SDG 11 (Sustainable Communities): e-bikes, minibus to NP, walk/cycle messaging.

SDG 15 (Life on Land): insect hotel, nest boxes; invasive rhododendron managed as fuel.

SDG 17 (Partnerships): SEAI mentors, Mayo County Council, LEADER support.



THE GLOBAL GOALS

Replication notes (what another community would need)

- **Pick a public hub** (library/community centre/tourist office) and concentrate on quick wins there (low energy lighting, water bottle refill station with counter, WEEE/battery/book swaps, e-bike sockets).
- **Start your pipeline:** form **Sustainable Energy Community**, commission an **Energy Master Plan**, do **10–20 Building Energy Ratings**, build a **register of opportunities** (fabric-first → solar panels/heat pumps).
- **Add one signature mobility win** (community e-bike or a shared shuttle).
- **Tell a simple story** people can repeat (why this hub, these actions, how to join).

Endnotes

[1] Community launch materials and public invite.

[2] SEAI – 180 Degrees Podcast, S2 Ep5: Becoming a Sustainable Energy Community, seai.ie/podcast/season-2

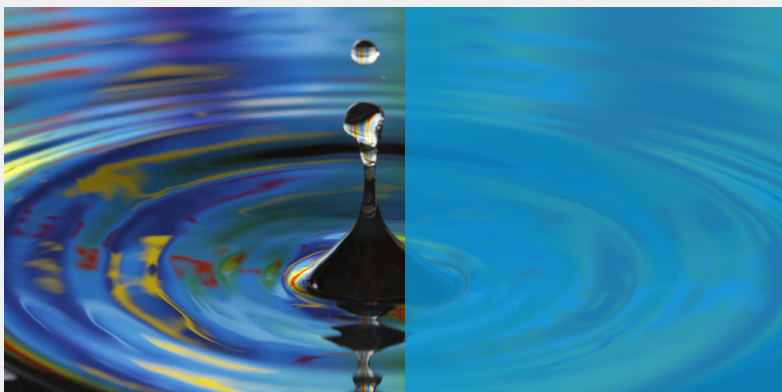
[3] SEAI Blog – Making a difference in Mulranny, seai.ie/blog/a-difference-in-mulranny

[4] Mayo County Council – Mayo’s Decarbonising Zone, mayo.ie/.../mayo-s-decarbonising-zone

[5] Mulranny Towards 2030 – DZ Huddle Report (20 Feb 2025)

Photo credits:

Promenade view © Ruth Merkli; Tourist Information point © Buddila Wijeyesekera.





Get Involved. Take action.

If you're inspired to contribute to this initiative—or to start something similar—use the contacts below to get started:



Mulranny Community Futures - Mulranny, Co. Mayo



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This case study, highlighting Irish community-driven solutions to environmental challenges, was developed through Connected—a project funded by the **Community Climate Action Programme: Climate Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing** (CCAP – Strand 2), supported by the Government of Ireland through the **Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications**, and coordinated by the **University of Galway**.

For more details, visit climateconnected.ie or contact a.alexandrov1@universityofgalway.ie