

Transcript

Maeve: This series of public funded Climate connected podcasts where we talked to people involved in Community Climate action all around Ireland. Energy Cooperatives Ireland has worked with dozens of Irish sustainable communities and has established 5 fully operational energy cooperatives. Many of these communities have become innovators and promoters of the Carbon free society at the local level and in some cases at the national level. I'm speaking today to Carl Loftus, who is chair of the sustainable Energy community in Mulranny in West Mayo. So Carol is here to tell us about how their community has responded to the need to develop tourism in the area to bring in for more revenue and also to do it in a sustainable way. Is that right?

Carol: That's correct. Hello Maeve. How are you?

Maeve: You so all they started back in 2008, Carl and I think you spearheaded the whole project.

Carol: Yeah, well, it probably started with the process called Mulranny community futures. Mayo County Council brought in this initiative to Mayo to try and get communities to come up with a plan that they could develop themselves. The communities would develop it themselves so out of that plan we got a lot of new volunteers into the Community, including myself. And I got involved in setting up a tourism group. And, you know, Mulranny had been back in the in the 1890s up to the 1950s was really ahead of its time with tourism, there was a beautiful hotel there. We had an outdoor swimming pool. We'd electric light before rural electrification.

And then come the late 2000's. The hotel was in disrepair. There was trees going through it our beautiful Victorian walks were completely overgrown. So, the community decided that we weren't going to be sitting on our laurels when we joined Community futures and decided that we needed to try and regenerate the tourism in the village. So the hotel was regenerated in 2005 and then in 2010, the Great Western Greenway, Ireland's first Greenway was developed, which has been a fantastic asset to the community. So that's really how I got involved through that process by signing up to be part of Mulranny tourism.

Maeve: OK, fantastic. And you're all volunteers.

Carol: We're all volunteers, Maeve. Yeah. Yeah, it's brilliant.

Maeve: It's great, and people from the local area.

Carol: People from the local area who want to try and revitalise their area and could see that we needed to bring tours back in was kind of it's on the road to Achill Island and up

into North Mayo and it was being passed where people were driving by and there were no footpaths there. There was nowhere for people to stop. So we needed to actually do something to bring people back and to stop in the village.

Maeve: So the Stonewall Festival is something that you have initiated as part of the project.

Carol: Yes. Well, I suppose that really started because we're trying to use our own, you know, what we actually have in the area. There's so many things that don't even realise that are an asset to you. And in Mulranny, we have the most beautiful stone walls. And some of the walls actually were the old railway walls that were built when the old railway line, Great Western Railway, ran through the village and they had fallen into disrepair over 100 years. So we decided that, look, we maybe we needed to repair these walls because they're absolutely beautiful and they're really important for biodiversity and we decided that what we couldn't do it ourselves, we would invite people to come in to help us to do that. And we came up with an idea of having a Stonewall Festival. It's very small festival. The maximum amount of people we can have is 30. People can come in and they can actually get to work with the local community and get to know the local community....at night we have a gala dinner for them. They work really hard during the day, we work with them.

We're supported by the Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland and we have bring in experts stone to actually show people these ancient skills and, you know, these are skills that could be lost. So in this way, we're rebuilding our heritage we're bringing people in and these people stay in the village. Their accommodation: they're spending money and we get a lot of repeat visitors so it's something that people really like.

Maeve: Very original.

Carol: Yes. So, it's really working out brilliantly and people really like we're using something that was there [already]. Yes, you know, like those stone walls were falling down, and we said, how are we going to actually do something? We couldn't do it ourselves. And we just come up with the idea of having a festival and we got support from the Account Council Heritage Office to do this because obviously the Greenways are a really important asset for all of us. And to actually have these walls rebuilt and then people when they come back, they're leaving a legacy and the landscape behind them so they can come back and see the work they've done that that will be there in 100 years' time. They are part for heritage, you know. And Mulranny has a kind of a striped landscape. You know, years ago, people had small strips of land and they divided that by the stones.

Maeve: Amazing. Fantastic. They're part of our heritage.

Carol: These walls are really, really important. So it's lovely to have the stone walls being repaired and at the same time bringing people in to just to do it: and they love it. They really get so much satisfaction. And we have people reciting poetry at the end of the festivals, people sing songs and they really get a lot from it. And they absolutely love meeting the local community. We go to the pub with them, they get to meet all the locals and like, it's a really lovely, very nice festival to be at.

Maeve:

At wonderful and you could be replicated all along the West of Ireland.

Carol

Mentioned could be replicated all around the West Orange of the stone walls every. There and people want to do like people love working with their hands and they, you know, you know it's something.

Maeve

Really different. It is something different. Yes. Yeah, indeed.

Carol

Yeah, yeah.

Maeve

Yeah. And the Greenway. Now tell me what the Greenway has brought to the area. Who uses the Greenway?

Carol

Well, I suppose the locals use it, I suppose, which is probably the most important thing. Like, I think this kind of infrastructure should be built for the communities, and then if they're built for the communities, the tourists can use them. They come in, so it's really brought in a lot of extra tours into the area. It was the original Greenway.

We went from Mulranny into Newport and that was 18 kilometres. And then it was extended as far as Westport. So that was another 11 kilometres. And now it's been extended out to Achill Sound: I think that's another 10 or 8 kilometres. And they're actually bringing it out now into the island itself, so it's brought a lot of visitors to the area they come in and they see Mulranny is an actually beautiful place - the view from it is actually the best view on the Greenway, in my opinion, and a lot of other people's opinion is that the highest point of the Great Western Greenway where you're looking out over the Vista of Clew Bay and all the islands and across to Croke Patrick. And it's absolutely beautiful. So when people come into Mulranny, they come in and they spend money in the village and, you know, they might stay: booking for a night's accommodation. Access was really brought in a lot of visitors so it's fantastic.

Maeve: And people can people can walk or cycle the length of it.

Carol: They can walk, they can cycle the length of it. It's absolutely fantastic and it's all off road, all a flat surface. So it's and all ages can do it. So it's brilliant

Maeve: Fantastic, Wonderful community resource.

Carol: Absolutely. And we can use it ourselves if we want to go see into Newport to do a bit of shopping or you want to do. You want to meet somebody for lunch, you can use the Greenway yourself, which is brilliant. Kids going to school, so it's fantastic.

Maeve: Yes. And how have you managed to fund all these projects?

Carol: Oh, my God. Well, I said we're a voluntary group. So, I suppose at the height of the recession, we were very lucky that Mulranny didn't have any foot paths. That was one of the major things that we had big issues with in the village. The village actually, the N 59 actually goes right through. The centre of our village. So we managed to get a village design statement done with the support of the Heritage Council. In that village design statement they came up with a plan which was fantastic. They worked with the community, the people who were developing it, and the idea we came up was, that we actually needed foot paths through the village. Because we have a beautiful hotel there and you couldn't walk from the hotel actually into the village. There was, there was no footpaths, it was actually lethal. So the village design statement came up then with something that we thought we'd never actually have with putting in a promenade to take in the fantastic views of Mulranny. When people came into the village. So at the height of the recession, we managed to get €3,000,000 investment into the village from the Transport Infrastructure Ireland to put in our footpaths and to also build the Mulranny promenade so people can come in now and they can see the whole vista has been opened up, there's all benches for people to sit in, picnic benches, seats, we've bike parking, we've bicycle pumps, we've, you know, all these kind of things that people can come in and we can actually walk from one end of the village to the other now, safely. The children can walk to school. So it's been absolutely transformative, I'm sure. To the village. It really has. That's fantastic. Yes.

Maeve: So that was the beginning, really.

Carol: That was really the beginning of the transformation, really, of Mulranny. When we got in those footpaths, like the community coming together, you know, to actually develop these things that the community saw was needed and went looking for the funding for that.

It's like all voluntary.

Maeve: Yes. So a lot of people give...

Carol: Their time exactly. Yeah. But it's for free. Yes, but it's worth it.

When you, you see. The results you see the results exactly what's coming from it, so it's. Fantastic.

Maeve: Absolutely. So, the tourist office, then 2011?

Carol: Yeah, it was opened then. Yes, so there was, there was a vacant building actually. It's only a little small building belonging to Mayo County Council. So we approached them and asked them.

We used that building for a tourist office. We knew there was one badly needed with the Great Western Greenway and then the Wild Atlantic Way was coming along as well. And Mulranny is... actually the Great Western Greenway literally runs behind the village. Like, not even 20 or 30 yards. And the Wild Atlantic Way runs right through the village. So we really needed a tourist office where we could advertise our local bed and breakfasts. All the different facilities in the village. So in fairness to Mayo County Council, it was like a derelict building. They gave us that building and the local community came together, we got LEADER funding to buy the goods that we needed to do it up, and then the local tradesmen all gave their services for free. Wow, which was fantastic. So we renovated that building. We got it insulated, we got new windows, we got doors, all the inside was completed. And we opened a tourist office volunteer run tourist office, which has been fantastic.

And then we went a little step further. Then we decided that. We'd kind of green that tourist office and make it as green as we could, and that's probably the right word for, but we call it green: Climate Friendly. That's the word for that. And we put in and we got solar panels put in on the roof and we put in a battery storage and we have a TV screen there that people can see the energy and tour. Come in. They can actually see the energy being generated and what we're using...Wow. Yes. We stopped using any chemicals: we only use, you know, old fashioned ways of cleaning with lemon. And we're using biodegradable soap and all that kind of stuff for cleaning. And we put in Mayo's first water station outside on the wall for people to refill their water bottles. We put in only LED lighting. And as well we have battery recycling, we have light bulb recycling for the community. And we have a library book [exchange] where people can come in and just swap books if tourists, want to take a book or give us a book. They can just take a book for free.

So we've kind of made that really green. So when tourists come in, they can see they're that Mulranny is really trying to do something good here. You know that they can know. They can learn and they a lot of them actually really love the [display] screen for the for the solar panels, you know. So that's brilliant. And we actually put plugs outside as well so other people who are using E-bikes can charge up their E bikes for free on the outside of the tourist office from the solar panels.

Maeve: OK.

Carol: And we have *community E-bikes* inside: electric bikes that we got funding for. We applied for funding for that. So we have 3 E-bikes. We're the first community to have a community E-bike in the country. So we have 3 E bikes that we have in the tourist office there and the local community...now it's only for people in the community because we have a lot of bike hire companies, and we can't compete with them. Which wouldn't be fair. So, this is for just the local people if they want to go for a cycle or they want to do something on their E-bike, they ring into the tourist office and we book the bikes for them and they just come and collect them and take off on their cycle for the day and bring them back then. And we can charge them then in the tourist office overnight for the next people to collect them the next day.

Maeve: Absolutely. Yes. So, you've no energy bills there, really.

Carol: No. Well actually, maybe I'm sure some of the listeners to this podcast might be delighted to hear this: I would advise people to get their (PV) solar panels. I looked at the bill today just to check we're €768 in credit with the ESB. Because we've generated so much electricity. We have a little stove in the in the tourist office as well that we use to burn Rhododendron, which is an invasive species. So we cut some of that over the winter and we let it dry out. So we burn the invasive rhododendron and it gives off great heat. So we can use that as well.

Maeve: OK.

Carol: To heat and we have 2 little radiators as well, but our ESB bills are in credit now. OK, it takes a while to spend that.

Maeve: Absolutely yes. This is using the best of technology, isn't it really? That's absolutely available to everybody.

Carol: It is, yes, absolutely. It's available to everybody who can do this, you know anyone can, I mean, I mean our tourist office is quite small. We only have...there's like a bathroom, there's an area for tourists come in to with all our brochures and our solar TV and things like that. And then we have a little office. So, it's quite cheap to run. But I mean, so anybody can have some PV on their roof or on their business and they will definitely be saving money.

Maeve: They're saving money and they can get grants, I think, to do this as well.

Carol: You get grants to do that exactly from the SEAI. You just have to go onto the SEI website and you can find that all those grants that are available to you, you have to pay a certain amount of money yourself. There's definitely. Grant support there.

Maeve: Well, this is the future, isn't it? Really?

Carol: It has to be... but you need to get their building fabric upgraded first. Now, if you can, I mean, just start by putting solar panels on straight away. You're going to save money.

Maeve: For all of us. But if you can pump your walls and do your attic and things like that you'll make even bigger savings?

Carol: Yes, for sure. For sure.

Maeve: OK, so your tourist office now is a little hub in the village.

Carol: It's a little green hub in the village, exactly where people can come in and learn if they want to get solar PV in Mulranny they can come in and see how much energy has been generated there. We can show them the ESB bill, you know and they know. So we actually have a lot of people who are putting solar. PV on. So it's brilliant, yeah.

Maeve: Excellent, excellent. Tell me about the Old Irish goat centre.

Carol: OK, so this is another project using something that we actually have in Mulranny which is the Old Irish goat. I don't know if you've ever heard of the old Irish goat. Maybe I haven't: Well, here we are now. Back in 2009 an English historian called Raymond Werner wrote an article in a magazine called Heritage Outlook Magazine looking for the old Irish Goat. A local man spotted this article and thought this was something maybe that would be better right back to Ray because we have a wild goat herd in Mulranny that's been there for years that people like the old timers remember. And their people before them. And there is, in the national folklore collection some stories from Mulranny about goats and things like that.

So anyway, Raymond Werner, he's a goat expert, who studied ghosts for 57 years, came to Mulranny to look at the wild herd. And when he saw them, he said, 'My God, this is something I've been looking for all my life'. And he asked us to get them. But the community get together to put them into a breeding programme because he said that there were, you know, very few of them left in the country. He'd been looking for them for years. But obviously the herd in Mulranny had been isolated. So we managed to do that, The lunatics that we are!

And after about three years, we put them into a breeding programme, actually in the walled garden in Westport House. And I won't tell you the full story. You'll have to look on the website OldIrishgoat.ie for that. I'll be here all day talking about the OldIrishgoat.ie.

Maeve: Fair play.

Carol: We did a study, with the Genetic Institute in Trinity College and with other universities around Europe, and it turned out that the older goat only existed in Mulranny

and was really a rare breed. So they got native rare breed status from the Irish government back in June 2022 with the status of 'at risk'. So we have set up a visitor centre in Mulranny to tell people about the story of the heritage of the old Irish goat, how important they were during famine times. For Irish people it used to be called the 'poor man's cow' and they saved a lot of families from starvation because obviously the richer farmers could have cattle but the Irish peasants could only have a goat.

Maeve: and they have goats milk.

Carol: Yes, the goats milk. And the old Irish goat requires very low nutritional forage. They can survive on very little. They're not like other like dairy goats, anything like that. They're actually a really hardy animal, really suited to the Irish landscape. They came in with the Neolithic farmers 5000 years ago.

So we saw this is a fantastic opportunity for like I feel we're doing something really important for Mayo and for Ireland because we're trying to save this really rare animal and we invite people into the old Irish goat visitor centre to learn about them, to learn about their history and heritage. They have place names in Ireland that are related to. All these other names that are written in our history that shows where these goats were all around the island back in the 1800s. So the and the visitor centre has been really successful with a lot of visitors coming in. They love it, they love the story that a lot of them have never heard of...a lot of them are thrilled to find out about them.

We have two old Irish goats in the in the village with us, Dennis and Norman: two males . And people love to see them, and they can also be seen, now I don't know if you've heard about them - they're out on Howth Head in Dublin doing 'fire fighting': I think RTE called them 'the goats that fight fire'.

Maeve That's right, I've heard of these.

Carol: Yes. Those goats came from Mulranny. They're our goats. So they're in Howth, and they're now out on the South Side in Killiney also helping to create fire breaks out there. So these animals that we think, you know, maybe they don't have any use, they're actually really, really important, you know.

Maeve: OK. OK. So they're grazing actually creates the fire break.

Carol: They create the fire breaks and they're doing that now in Howth and in Killiney. And we also did some graveyards in East Mayo because the goats can go in and they can clear briars. Brambles. That kind of thing. And there's no need for glyphosate. There's no need for any chemicals. There's no need for machinery. So to do it? Absolutely brilliant.

Maeve: OK. Do the job the most natural way possible.

Carol: So that's another sustainable tourism initiative we have in Mulranny we're using what was already there in the village to bring tourists in, but also to tell a really important heritage story.

That's really, really important. Like, these animals have been with us for thousands of years and they have been cast aside.

Maeve: and their unique to that area.

Carol: Yes. Well, I mean, the only older goats that we know of are the goats that we have in our herd because they're all DNA tested. They're all old Irish with 141 animals now. But like, that's not enough for a sustainable population. We need to get to about 1000. But like that, we're a volunteer group. So, you know, there's a lot of challenges with that. But the visitor centre helps to let people know about them.

Maeve: Really.

Carol: And I think the word is getting out there, you know how important these animals are. It's another sustainable tourism product that's bringing people to the village, and we're getting a lot of people coming in and they want to see the wild herd as well. And, you know, look at them on the mountain and things like that.

Maeve: OK. So it's really a lovely project, wonderful, and the website shows the oldirishgoat.ie

Carol: Yes. Look us up.

Maeve: OK, right. So there's a whole litany of different things that have emerged out of the initial project and the group that came together.

Carol: Yes there is actually. There's a lot of the projects seem to have like a sustainable end of it or a green side, which is very, very important that all these projects are developing, but it's about using what you actually have. You might actually think that something in your community you can actually make a tourism product out of but like sometimes some things are actually staring us in the face.

Maeve: And it's so important.

Carol: And we don't see them and they can be actually really valuable. And other people really appreciate them, you know? We see them all the time. We kind of take them for granted, you know, like, like with another really, really rare habitat in Mulranny. It's Machair, Sand Plain. Machair, it's called. And that's a sand plane that would be behind the dune system. And, you know, we actually won an award for that back in 2007 for regenerating the dunes.

Maeve: Would we take them for granted? Maybe because we see them?

Carol: To protect the maker, it is really rare, with rare plants, really rare insects, bees and things like that. And like the really world of conservation, and they're only found on the northwestern side of Ireland and in Scotland and there's some beautiful Machair and we have we have a beautiful one in Mulranny. So like, we want to try and preserve that too. So we had to plant marram grass and things like that to try and protect that beautiful landscape and that biodiversity. And we did that.

Maeve: OK.

Carol: You know, so like in that dune system, you can see it working when there's a storm. The dune might get washed back now, like the fantastic dunes, but the dune is actually doing its work, and then it regenerates again then.

Carol: You know, so. And these all these things that are there in front of you, they're actually really valuable.

Maeve: Absolutely. There's a lot of expertise required in all these different projects, isn't there? Do you bring in expertise from outside?

Carol: Yes. Well, we do sometimes, but we do a lot of research ourselves. I have to say, we do spend a lot of time researching all of these things, but we do try to bring in people from outside and we actually had a lot of interest from universities and that who come to visit us and you know TUD have been down. We're obviously working on this Climate Connected project with the University of Galway. So, there is a lot of interest. In working with community, I think you actually the interest comes to you if you start to do things that are really important and you're trying to work with biodiversity and your nature, your landscapes in the best way possible, people will actually come.

Maeve: To you?

Carol: Yes, I'm sure. To find out how you're doing it. And can we learn from you and then we can go to other communities to see what they're doing. I learned from them.

Maeve: Yes, yes. Yeah. Well, all of these efforts are so important too for the individual, I think because we we're learning that isolation and loneliness is becoming a big problem in Ireland and partly to do with our technology. I think like that we can be isolated as a whole.

Carol: Yes, we can be.

Maeve:

Yeah. And forget that all these other you know, human connected kind of things are happening at the.

Carol: Same time exactly. I suppose you know that I didn't mention it, but the old Irish goat Centre we actually have at the back of the old Irish goat visitor centre, we have

another group called the **Gift of Hands** and they are a group of ladies who actually make fabulous rugs and teddies. Toys and all sorts of things from recycled off cuts from the Foxford Woollen Mills. And so the ladies are to meet, like with social isolation. So the people get to meet, you know, their neighbours. People come from Castlebar and Westport to it now and they meet and they work with their hands. It's called **the gift of hands**. So they're all doing it voluntarily. So anything they make in the process that they make from these recycled goods that they make beautiful goods, it goes back into community projects, environmental projects.

Maeve: OK.

Carol: So that's a great help. So local community groups can approach the gift of hands with an idea for a project: 'we want to do...whatever it is' and they will give some money to help with that. So that's been a fantastic asset as well. Yeah, it's a source of funding. So that's another fantastic initiative that's taking place.

Maeve: It's very good. Yeah, it's a source of funding then, really.

Carol: Yes. They make jeans. They use old jeans, and they make aprons out of old jeans and they do all sorts of things which recycle goes and, you know, lovely. They actually get old Aran sweaters, maybe that might be old and they might be, say, torn, but they'll pull that back and they'll reuse the wool and then make something else - another garment.

Maeve: So like they do everything.

Carol: Amazing stuff. Recycling. Yeah. Recycling everything. So it's fantastic. Yes.

Maeve: It's the polar opposite of fast fashion, which we know is, you know, destroying our Climate at so many different levels.

Carol: Absolutely, yes. For other communities now you're never going to make a lot of money from it because the amount of hours you have to put in to make one garment and it's voluntary run. So you're never going to be able to make a business out of it. But as a social enterprise.

Carol: It's fantastic. It's a really good way to make some money if people are happy to give that the gift of their hands. To their community.

Maeve: And every item is unique, then it's not a mass produced needs.

Carol: Every item is absolutely unique. You have beautiful rugs, tending to make all sorts of things lovely things. Yeah. Really, really important. Yeah.

Maeve: Very clever, very interesting. So in terms of bringing the community together, Carol, how did that start? How did you manage to bring your committee together in the first place?

Carol: Yeah, well, I suppose that started with that Mulranny Community Futures, and that was a process that was brought in by Mayo County Council into Mayo. It came from Scotland, where communities could get together and they were asked at the very beginning of the process.

Every community gets a questionnaire and they were asked 4 questions on that questionnaire and what do you like about Mulranny? What do you dislike about Mulranny? What would you like Mulaney to be in 10 years' time, and what priority projects would you identify?

So all of those surveys came back. Every household was surveyed. And from that, then we had what was called a 'Mulranny community futures open day' and all those ideas that every single person listed were on walls around our community centre and everyone got 15 dots. We called it 'the day of the dots', so everybody got 15, like little sticky dots. And they went around to every board and they could use their 15 dots in any way they wanted. So if somebody wanted footpaths, they could put their 15 dots on footpaths. If they wanted us to put in a wave pool, they put two dots on that, and if they want something, there's three and at the end of that. Then we either prioritise of everything that people wanted. So we come up with the Mulranny community futures plan and people on the day when they came to the day of the dots had to sign up to join the tourism group, or there was going to be newly formed an environmental group, they could join tidy towns. So a lot of new people signed up to get involved in these community groups and that's kind of really what kickstarted the whole thing that started in 2008. And then the plan. And we are on our third plan now.

Maeve: OK. That was a great idea.

Carol: The plan finishes in 2027, so there's another one next. We're now going to have to start work on the plan from 2028, for the next 5 year plan. So it's kind of a constant rolling thing. And like we won't get some of the things done you know because obviously people have different priorities but you know different groups can take on a certain role or you know somebody wanted to set up a youth club so they can go off and do that.

We have like a green, rolling traffic light system. We review the plan every year and we see what's green. Is there anything orange and red? We've nothing done with that and we're just kind of review it to see how we are. But if we don't get something done, it's because we either don't have the funding or we don't have the resources. And we can just ask the community again for the next plan. You know, what do you want for the next 5 years and keep rolling the plan over?

Maeve: OK, so there's an ongoing consultation process really.

Carol: And ongoing every time we do a new plan, we consult with the Community as to what, would they like to see happen in Mulranny over the next few years. Now,

sometimes, like it took us, I think we, on the very, very first plan, one of the top things was for us to have a playground with no playground in the village. But it took us, I think 8 years to get that playground because we had get land for it, which was the biggest hurdle. And then we had to get funding for it. But we, but we stuck at it, and we got it event and we now have our playground, but it took us 2 plans to actually get that.

Maeve: You have to be persistent. Which is true for all local projects, I think. Isn't it? Like there's going to be hurdles.

Carol: Yes It is. You have to be. There are hurdles. There's always hurdles. Was the biggest hurdle to everything is money. That's the biggest hurdle... I don't know: that's the biggest hurdle.

Maeve: Absolutely don't we know. But there are lots of different sources of funding, of course. I guess you go to different places, don't you? Looking.

Carol: Yeah, there is. Like the local development programmes, like to say in Mayo, now the likes of the LEADER programmes they would be, you know where a lot of communities would get their funding. But they wouldn't be all 100% funding, so you might have to come up with some funding yourself, 25% or 10% and that can be very difficult for communities to get that funding. Yeah, it is quite difficult, but you just have to persevere.

Maeve: I know. Have you done fundraising events then as well?

Carol: We do we, to be honest, we do some, but we don't do a lot because there there's a lot of community groups and you're asking the same people all the time, you know, to buy a raffle ticket or do whatever it is. So we don't try to do too much fundraising. You know, we might do maybe one event maybe. Here and keep it at that, but fair enough is it is difficult because were only a very small village and yet we still like if we have to pay like we've made it to where we are now.

Maeve: A CLG [a Company Limited by Guarantee].

Carol: Which is a like a limited company. OK, you know so because we want to get funding and things like that, you have to be a CLG and have all your correct documents.

Maeve: OK.

Carol: But yet then, because of that, you have to pay accountants fees. Exactly. So like that's another cost that you have to kind of factor in and how are you going to raise that money and things like that. So there's a lot of thought, but nothing is insurmountable. You can do it. Yes, say to people: where there's a will there's a way.

Maeve: Yeah, yeah. So it seems like there's a pretty good vibrant community spirit in the area.

Carol: Yes, there's, there is. I have to say, people are really going to so many different groups, you know, like with Scouts, with our Amenity Centre which is like a community centre with the old Irish Goats Society with the Tidy Towns Group. We have a Heritage group: like there's an awful lot of groups, but we, the Mulranny community futures, are like an umbrella group, so every one of these groups would have somebody on the steering committee of Mulranny Community Futures. So we try not to have everyone be doing the same thing. You know each group would have their own specialty, but we would all know kind of what each other are doing, which is very good. You know? And everyone can see them or, you know, saying at the time the application is going in, they ask them, they say, look, if anything, you want to put in it?

It's collaboration. Everyone is putting in something into the into the into the application. So it makes it a much better application.

Maeve: Of course, it's collaborative effort. OK. Yeah. Maybe tell us how we get to Mulranny, if we're from Dublin or anywhere else, what's your local transport like?

Carol: It's actually it's a lot better than it used to be because the at one stage and only had two buses going in and out of the village now. But we now have 8 a day, which is fantastic.

Maeve: 8 a day. Are they LocalLink?

Carol: Yeah, with local link. And we also have the TFI. Yes. So, it's absolutely brilliant. So that actually links us up now with Achill and down to the Mullet into Westport into Castlebar. So it's absolutely fantastic.

Plus we have the Greenway, you know, so the links are improving all the time.

Maeve: OK, where's the Local train station?

Carol: The local train station nearest to us is Westport. That'll be probably 25 minutes to get into the train station. So like, I'm just saying this morning that myself and Sean came up by train today. But we have to drive to the train station because there's no bus at the hour we want to get to the to the train station this morning. So there's a little bit of work to be done yet.

Maeve: OK, OK. Fair enough. Yes, what we're getting. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. It's come a long way. So, Carol, what would you say to anybody listening in their local community who thought they'd like to emulate what you guys have done? Like where for a start, where would they find the information online to? To start to initiate some projects like these?

Carol: I suppose one of the projects we're involved with now at the moment is ClimateConnected with the University Of Galway. They have a website Climateconnected.ie and there's some fantastic stories there from communities

around Ireland and individuals about what they're doing trying to make a small difference.

You know it can't be a bit overwhelming. Sometimes people you know, think 'Oh my God, I can't really do anything' they're, you know, worried about what's happening in the world and that. But if you can do something small, if everyone does. Think small will go a long way, you know, and I say to people get involved in your local community. Like it's really good to be a good citizen and to get involved because you actually get more out of it than you put into it. You might be frustrated at times with, you know, paperwork and the administration that goes into it. [You can] actually makes some really good friends. You're getting out of the house meeting people, you're doing something good.

Maeve: For sure.

Carol: And you can see the benefits to your community. So why wouldn't you do it? I'd say to people get involved.

Maeve: Absolutely.

Carol: Don't be afraid to approach local groups and say, look, listen, can I help with something small or I'd love to come to a meeting or, you know, people be delighted to have you come in. There's a lot of work to be done. And I think if we, the more people that get involved, the better, so don't be afraid. Don't be afraid and you don't have to have any special expertise or anything.

Everybody's welcome. Everyone's welcome. I'm only an ordinary housewife. I'm with a family, but I just want to do things. Get involved. So loads of people have a lot to offer

Maeve: Everybody has something to offer.

Carol: Absolutely no matter how small everyone has a lot to offer.

Maeve: Yes well, Mulranny sounds like a great blueprint for how things could develop in other parts of the country as well. And hopefully we'll get to visit you over in your tourist office and see those old goats.

Carol: Oh yeah, absolutely, Maeve.

Maeve: Over the summer, I'd love to. It sounds fantastic.

Carol: Yeah, you're more than welcome. The scenery is amazing. The people are fantastic. There's loads of facilities there and it's really a lovely place, so come visit us.

Maeve: Love to see you. So thanks so much. Carol Loftus, who's chair of the Sustainable Energy Committee in Mulranny in West Mayo. And these podcasts are public funded Climate connected podcasts available on [Climateconnected.ie](https://climateconnected.ie)