Waterford Area Partnership CLG

Feasibility Study

Proposed Development

of a

Multi-Use Community Facility in

Dungarvan, Co. Waterford

September 2025

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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"Tá an Clár um Chuimsiú Sóisialta agus Gníomhachtú Pobail (SICAP) cómhaoinithe ag Rialtas na hÉireann, tríd an Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta, agus Ciste Sóisialta na hEorpa Plus faoin gClár Fostaíochta, Cuimsiú, Scileanna agus Oiliúna (EIST) 2021 - 2027."

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Context

Waterford Area Partnership is delighted to present this Feasibility Study in collaboration with the Dungarvan Community Centre Steering Group. Over the past three years local community organisations have highlighted the ongoing challenges they are encountering in accessing community facilities. With our staff Catherine Power and Jacinta Carroll, we have facilitated a number of meetings with community organisations and service providers during this time, the outcome of which was to assess the need in Dungarvan for community facilities that are not presently, or adequately, met.

This study, commissioned by Waterford Area Partnership through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, explores the feasibility of delivering a purpose-built or repurposed multi-use community facility in Dungarvan.

Through detailed needs analysis, community engagement, site assessment, and business modelling, the study concludes that investment in such a facility is both viable and essential. The report maps out a clear pathway that will support Dungarvan's community groups and service providers in advancing this project to the next stage, while also identifying potential stakeholders, funding opportunities and additional supports required to help achieve these goals.

On behalf of Waterford Area Partnership, I wish to thank everyone who engaged with and contributed to this report. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the strength of community engagement in Dungarvan, which has supported this process over the past number of years. Special thanks are due to Consultants Susan Heffernan and Hugh Trayer, who undertook the feasibility study with such enthusiasm and have produced a substantial report that will support our endeavours in making the Dungarvan Community Centre a reality.

Liam Quinn, CEO of Waterford Area Partnership

Executive Summary

Dungarvan is a town with a vibrant civic life, remarkably strong community spirit, and a diverse population. However, this feasibility study confirms a consistent and pressing challenge facing local groups, services, and residents: a lack of accessible, inclusive, and affordable community facility. The absence of such a facility currently limits service provision, hinders collaboration, and constrains the potential for social innovation and inclusion.

This study, commissioned by Waterford Area Partnership under its Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, explores the feasibility of delivering a purpose-built or repurposed multi-use community facility in Dungarvan. Through detailed needs analysis, community engagement, site assessment, and business modelling, the study concludes that investment in such a facility is both viable and essential.

The study engaged over 120 stakeholders through consultations, workshops, and surveys. These conversations revealed a strong consensus:

- 93% of survey respondents report difficulty accessing suitable venues.
- Organisations struggle with high rental costs, poor accessibility, limited availability during evenings/weekends, and inadequate storage.
- A strong demand for facilities including meeting rooms, event spaces, office/hot desk capacity, kitchens, sensory rooms, storage and youth-friendly zones.

The facility is envisioned as a central hub - welcoming, inclusive, and flexible. It should reflect Dungarvan's values and identity, offer universal accessibility, and enable multi-generational, intercultural, and cross-sectoral programming.

The proposed development aligns with strategic priorities across multiple statutory plans, including:

- Waterford County Development Plan 2022–2028, which includes a specific objective (DGD011) to develop a community facility in Dungarvan.
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), recognising Dungarvan's role as a key service town.
- Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023–2029, which prioritises inclusion, quality of life, and access to services.
- Dungarvan and Ballinroad Pre-Draft Local Area Plan (LAP) 2023–2029, which will guide future development of community infrastructure.

Two governance and management models are presented:

1. **Community-Led Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG)** – Offering strong community ownership and flexibility, with shared leadership via a voluntary board.
2. **Lead Organisation/Agency with Community Partnership** – Ensuring early-stage stability, funding access, and embedded public service alignment.

Both models are viable, providing strong governance. Financial sustainability is supported through a mixed-use income model combining long-term tenancy, community bookings, and commercial hire. A proposed tiered pricing system balances affordability for community groups with income generation through use by other services.

Six sites were evaluated, with varying potential. All present trade-offs in terms of cost, location, access, and development potential. No single site currently meets all identified needs, particularly for outdoor amenities (e.g. swimming pool or multi-use games area (MUGA). Therefore, the next phase of this project must engage Waterford City & County Council (WC&CC) and include a comprehensive technical and strategic site appraisal, integrated with broader town development plans.

This report outlines seven strategic recommendation areas (covering design, governance, operations, funding, and partnerships), offering a roadmap for delivery. Key recommendations include:

- Establish a fully independent Board of Directors or a partnership approach with a lead organisation/agency.
- Prioritise universal design and inclusion in all aspects of planning.
- Secure core staffing through the Pobal Community Services Programme or equivalent.
- Embed shared operational supports and admin coordination.
- Engage early with funding bodies, anchor tenants, and statutory partners.
- Evaluate commercial partnerships carefully to protect the facility's core social mission.

Please Note: the Feasibility Study was initiated to identify the need for a Dungarvan Community Centre. Through the responses received from online surveys and focus groups a number of other facilities and amenities were highlighted, the main one being a swimming pool. While we acknowledge the ongoing work of local representatives based on the need already identified, it is not within the remit of this proposal to include a swimming pool or MUGA facilities. We hope that those advocating for these facilities will use this report, highlighting the needs identified to support their endeavours.

‘Do nothing’ or ‘Do something’

Dungarvan is a town with a vibrant community, highly engaged, connected and active. The outcome of this feasibility study has strongly demonstrated the critical need for additional community facilities to compliment the current availability. Dungarvan has numerous facilities to support community organisations and services however this is limited and/or costly for many to avail of.

If no action is taken, the community of Dungarvan will continue to face serious barriers to accessing suitable, affordable spaces. Existing challenges – such as limited venue availability, high rental costs, and facilities unsuitable for sensitive or specialised services – will persist. Groups providing critical supports (from youth activities to therapeutic services) will remain hindered by lack of privacy, secure storage, and appropriate venues. The absence of a central hub would deepen fragmentation, with groups continuing to work in silos, limiting collaboration and resource-sharing. Overall, a "do nothing" approach risks significant stagnation in community development, social cohesion, and local wellbeing.

Developing a multi-use community facility responds directly to the clear and urgent needs identified. A purpose-built or repurposed space - accessible, inclusive and multi-functional - would immediately address pressing issues. By providing a mix of private, bookable, and secure spaces - such as meeting rooms, offices, storage, kitchen facilities, and sensory-friendly environments - the centre would enable a wide range of activities and services across all age groups and needs.

Anchor tenants would ensure consistent usage and financial stability, while flexible spaces would cater to both daily operational needs and occasional large events. A modest, fair payment model would maintain affordability while supporting sustainability. Importantly, the facility would support evening and weekend access, with some 24/7 provisions, recognising the changing patterns of community engagement.

In the longer term, this hub could be a thriving engine for collaboration, capacity building, and social enterprise incubation. The vision outlined - of a welcoming, innovative, and sustainable centre - would materialise, underpinning Dungarvan’s future as a vibrant, connected, and resilient community.

Community and stakeholder consultation has played an important role in developing this plan. The authors consulted with the key stakeholders with a wide range of community and agency voices engaging, along with conducting a community survey to capture and consider local input. "Doing something" is an investment in Dungarvan’s people, future, and social fabric. "Doing nothing" is effectively a choice to let opportunity pass by, with the loss of community vibrancy, potential and wellbeing.

Section 1: Introduction

This study is driven by a need in the Dungarvan area for a multi-use community facility identified through consultations undertaken with local community groups and organisations, service providers and state agencies within the wider Dungarvan area, where it emerged that the area lacked suitable and available community resources. The need identifies a facility that complements and enhances the existing facility offering rather than duplicating existing facilities.

Dungarvan is a community with strong civic engagement, a rich community infrastructure, and is a vibrant town with thriving retail, industry, enterprise and business sectors servicing the community in the wider West Waterford and An Rinn areas.

This study explores the feasibility of developing a community multi-purpose facility that can serve as a hub for the local community, supporting existing and emerging community groups and projects, adding to the existing community infrastructure in Dungarvan. Using an evidence-based, consultative process, the study considers the financial sustainability of such an initiative, along with the governance, management and stakeholder models such a facility may require.

Notably, Waterford City & County Council has identified the development of a Community Centre in Dungarvan within the pre-draft Dungarvan & Ballinroad Town Plan and as a specific objective (DGD011) in the County Development Plan 2022-2028. The feasibility study also considers other relevant strategies and plans, ensuring all proposals align with local and regional strategic planning.

Commissioned by Waterford Area Partnership under the SICAP Programme, the authors' work and this study have been guided and informed by a Steering Group and a Working Sub-group, facilitated by Waterford Area Partnership. The consultants, Susan and Hugh have had numerous opportunities to engage with the Steering Group throughout the study, and the group's input, guidance and perspectives have made a valuable contribution to the study.

1.1 Timeline of Project to Date

In 2023, Waterford Area Partnership held a number of meetings with SICAP registered local community groups who expressed challenges in accessing facilities.

These groups made a presentation at SICAP Making the Link event in Dungarvan in October 2023. Survey carried out at this event to identify other interested organisations.

Held a meeting with 15 interested organisations in June 2024 to focus on supporting the Community to identify actions required in progressing a proposal for a Community Centre. This group became the Steering Group for the project.

Working Sub-Group established after this meeting with 4 meetings held including a study visit to Ballymacarbry & Cappoquin Community Centres.

Presentation made with updates at Making the Link event in November 2024 and further groups were invited to join the Steering Group following this meeting.

Feasability Study agreed as next step by the Working Sub-Group and presented to the Steering Group. SICAP agreed to fund the report and an invitation to tender was published in December 2024. Consultants began work in February.

Section 2: Dungarvan Area Profile

2.1 Dungarvan Town Profile (Census 2022)

Dungarvan's population was approximately 10,100 in April 2022, a growth of c. 9% since 2016, slightly outpacing national growth of 8%. Since the 2022 Census, the CSO has recorded estimated annual population increases of 4% in 2023 and 2% in 2024, driven by natural population increase with immigration from Ukraine and other countries. This trend is also evident in Dungarvan, and it is important to note in the context of considering Dungarvan's population and their demographics. The town's expansion reflects its role as a regional hub, but its demographics and socio-economic indicators reveal important challenges and opportunities.

Demographics

Dungarvan's population is an aging one. About 23% are under 18, but 18% are aged over 65, higher than the national average (15%). The town's average age reflects the county's trend toward an older profile. While most residents are Irish, about 20% were born outside Ireland, showing a modest but meaningful multicultural presence, especially from EU states like Poland.

The majority of households speak English, with limited daily use of Irish outside of the Gaeltacht areas of An Rinn and an Sean Phobal. Other languages, particularly Polish and Eastern European languages, are increasingly part of the town's linguistic landscape.

Dungarvan na Gaeilge

Six miles west of Dungarvan lies the small coastal Gaeltacht area of Waterford and the Irish College Coláiste na Rinne which was established in 1905 and officially recognised in 1907 as an Irish language summer school. Since then, the college has grown and as a result there is now a thriving Irish speaking community in this Gaeltacht region.

Dungarvan is designated as a Gaeltacht Service Town, meaning it plays a vital role in supporting the surrounding Gaeltacht area, and plays a significant role in promoting and preserving the Irish language and culture in the region.

Housing

Homeownership remains strong in Dungarvan, with about two-thirds of households owning their homes (similar to the national average). One-third are renters, encompassing both private rentals and social housing tenants.

The housing vacancy rate is moderate, close to the national average (7-8%). However, affordable housing remains an issue, particularly for younger families and lower-income groups.

Disadvantage and education

Dungarvan scores as marginally disadvantaged on the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. While the town has seen significant improvements since the post-recession years, areas of significant disadvantage persist. Unemployment stands at around 9%, slightly above the national average.

Education levels are lower than national figures. Roughly 25% of adults have third-level qualifications, compared to a national figure of about 33%. Many older residents completed education at secondary level only, reflecting historic educational patterns. Education gaps continue to impact employment opportunities and income levels.

Health indicators

The town's general health profile is good. Around four in five residents report good or very good health, in line with national trends. However, given the older population, Dungarvan sees slightly fewer residents rating their health as "very good" compared to younger urban centres.

The disability rate is slightly higher than the national average, with approximately one in five residents living with a disability or long-term condition. Access to healthcare is fair but relies heavily on travelling to University Hospitals in Waterford and Cork for specialist and emergency services. Local healthcare includes Dungarvan Community Hospital, GPs, and a Primary Care Centre.

Family structures

Dungarvan's households are diverse. About 25–30% are one-person households, mainly elderly residents. Families are the backbone of the community, with many two-parent families raising children, but lone-parent families account for 15–20% of families with children, slightly above the national average.

The average household size is modest at around 2.6–2.7 people, reflecting Ireland's broader trend toward smaller family units and aging households.

Labour force and economy

Labour force participation in Dungarvan is slightly below the national average, at around 58–59%. Employment levels are high, with approximately 90% of the labour force at work. However, the town's aging population naturally lowers overall participation rates compared to younger cities.

Dungarvan’s economy is diverse but leans towards traditional sectors:

- Manufacturing is the largest employer (e.g., Tirlán dairy processing)
- Healthcare and social work are significant, reflecting the town’s demographic needs.
- Retail and wholesale trade support the town’s function as a market and service centre.

There is a growing presence in tourism and hospitality, although high-value sectors like IT and finance remain underdeveloped. Most workers are in full-time employment, but part-time jobs are also common, especially in retail and services. Commuting patterns are largely local, with many working within Dungarvan or nearby areas; a smaller cohort commutes to Waterford city.

2.2 Statutory Context

Dungarvan is identified as a key town in the Southern Regional Assembly’s Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), recognising its strategic location and role as an economic driver and a Gaeltacht Service Town, and anticipates significant growth for the town. The RSES supports strengthening Dungarvan's role and leveraging its assets, including community facilities.

Chapter 7 of the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 focuses on Housing and Sustainable Communities, with Policy SC 13 explicitly stating the intention to seek to provide appropriate community facilities across communities and provide a community hall/hub in Dungarvan town. This chapter also contains other relevant policies concerning community facilities in general, facilities for younger and older residents, sports facilities, and the importance of accessibility and social inclusion. Chapter 8 on Placemaking also provides a relevant context, aiming to create attractive, high-quality places accessible to all and promoting a mix of uses. Policies Place 26 and 27 focus on developing "10-minute neighbourhoods," where essential services and amenities are within a short walking distance.

Building upon the Development Plan, the Dungarvan and Ballinroad Local Area Plan (LAP) 2023 – 2029 is being prepared and will provide a spatial framework to guide future development, including social and community infrastructure/amenities in Dungarvan. The pre-draft consultation process, as outlined in the "Pre Draft Issues Paper," specifically seeks input on the key issues to be addressed in the LAP regarding the future development of Dungarvan and Ballinroad, including the need for community facilities and their potential locations. The LAP will provide locally tailored and site-specific objectives and actions in response to the town's unique needs.

The Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023 - 2029 also plays a significant role. High-Level Goal 5 of the LECP aims for "Liveability & Quality of Life" through inclusive and sustainable development, emphasising high-quality social, cultural, educational, and employment opportunities. Objective 5.3 under this goal includes the development and enhancement of amenities. High-Level Goal 7 focuses on "Inclusion and Accessibility,"

ensuring access to a full range of supports and resources for all demographics, ages, and abilities. The LECP also highlights the importance of implementing the Public Participation Network's (PPN) Vision for Community Wellbeing, which involves the provision of community facilities.

In summary, the development of a community multi-use facility in Dungarvan has strong statutory support, identifying the need for such a facility and reinforcing the importance of enhancing liveability, quality of life, and accessibility through community infrastructure.

Section 3: Study Findings

3.1 Needs Analysis

The research phase of this study included two phases -

1. Consultations

The project Steering Group, together with Waterford Area Partnership identified a list of key community stakeholders and voices for consultation as part of this study.

Consultations were typically 1 hour long, held either in person or online, depending on the representative's availability to meet. The consultation explored the needs and challenges facing agencies and community groups in Dungarvan and considered how the service or group might be able to operate in more suitable facilities.

A total of 30 consultations took place from March to June 2025. A full list of those consulted can be found in Appendix A.

2. Survey

To allow for broad reach and engagement in the Dungarvan area, the study also included an online survey. This survey was live from the end of April to mid-May, and advertised through Waterford Area Partnership social media channels, via the Waterford PPN and through advertisements in the Dungarvan Leader and Dungarvan Observer (included in Appendix B). This survey was conducted to better understand the needs of community groups, organisations, and services in Dungarvan regarding the use and accessibility of local facilities. A total of 90 responses were received.

The consultation and survey questionnaires with responses are included in Appendix C.

3.2 Findings

2.2.1 Local Community Facilities in Dungarvan

At present, community groups in Dungarvan are operating out of various community, commercial and private spaces. The consultation findings have identified community needs that can be met by enhancing and adding to existing community spaces, rather than duplicating those facilities that already exist.

Demand outweighs capacity and is impacting on service delivery. From the consultations and survey undertaken, in addition to informal research in Dungarvan, the spaces identified by participants included:

- Barnardos Family Support Project
- Carriglea Cairde Services
- Causeway Tennis & Bowls Club, Dungarvan
- Deise College Sports Hall
- Dungarvan Community Youth Centre
- Dungarvan Enterprise Centre
- Dungarvan Library
- Dungarvan Men's Shed
- Dungarvan Rugby Club
- Dungarvan Sailing Club
- Dungarvan Sports Centre
- Dungarvan Town Hall Theatre
- Hive Education Hub
- Lawlor's Hotel
- Local coffee shops and pubs
- Merrys Pub
- Presentation Community Development Centre
- Primary school halls
- Private homes
- Private office spaces
- Rehearsal hub
- The Fusion Centre
- The Old Boro Café, Dungarvan United
- The Old Market House Arts Centre
- The Park Hotel Dungarvan
- Waterford City & County Council community houses e.g. Shandon Estate
- Waterford County Museum
- WWETB Dungarvan

Respondents also indicated that they are using other spaces outside of Dungarvan to meet the needs of their community groups.

While some community organisations are accessing spaces at present, many cited the challenge of limited availability (e.g. evenings only, not during school holidays, etc) and often prohibitive costs when hiring spaces. These issues have a combined impact in limiting organisations' ability to meet and operate.

3.3.2 Individual Consultations

Several strong, consistent themes emerged in the stakeholder consultation process, pointing to both shared challenges and a collective desire for a future multi-use community facility.

The core challenges facing community groups and agencies operating in Dungarvan that arose in this research were:

- Budgets for programme delivery limited by cost of venue hire.
- Lack of access to storage for materials, equipment, etc.
- Duplication of effort in administration/support without shared services.
- Lack of service availability and continuity due to the fragmentation of facilities on offer.

Their responses highlighted key themes and issues, including:

Overwhelming demand for accessible, affordable space

Virtually every group who engaged with the consultation currently struggles with limited access to suitable venues. Many are dependent on borrowed or shared spaces, which are often unsuitable, overbooked, or expensive (e.g., €40- €80 per session). The lack of evening and weekend access is a recurring constraint, particularly affecting youth services, voluntary groups, and working adults.

Universal need for storage

Nearly all groups identified a need for secure, accessible storage - ranging from cupboards for craft supplies and files to room-scale storage for equipment and community event materials. Some groups noted that shared but compartmentalised storage could work, e.g., key-coded lockers or dedicated cupboards.

Shared spaces but own-door identity

Groups are enthusiastic about a shared community facility. Some stressed the importance of retaining autonomy and identity, especially through own-door access or clearly designated areas.

This was seen as vital by groups and organisations like:

- Deise Women's Shed
- Dún Garbhán le Gaeilge
- West Waterford Family Support Hub
- SOLAS Cancer Support Centre

Kitchen facilities as core infrastructure

A kitchen is seen as essential, not optional, especially for:

- Cooking activities with children and adults
- Social prescribing and autism-friendly activities
- Supporting events and meetings with refreshments

Some envisage catering-standard kitchens for training, catering and fundraising.

Dedicated youth & family-oriented spaces

There is strong and repeated emphasis on child- and youth-friendly environments, particularly for:

- Supervised family access
- Non-sporting spaces for 12–16-year-olds (e.g., crafts, relaxation, music)
- Inclusive and sensory friendly areas for neurodiverse individuals

Support infrastructure beyond space

Groups expressed need for administrative, technical and training support, such as:

- Help with grant applications, events, and volunteer coordination
- Computer room for training courses
- IT and AV facilities for training/workshops
- Reception and drop-in information support (especially for family support services)
- Community creche

Strong appetite for collaboration, anchored by governance

The vision from multiple groups includes the following options:

- An anchor tenant such as a Community Childcare/Creche, Family Resource Centre (FRC), Wexford Waterford Educational Training Board (WWETB) or Waterford Area Partnership (WAP), Gaeltacht office as examples.
- Multi-agency, cross-sectoral collaboration within a central hub model.
- Governance being independent from any one group if Company Limited by Guarantee established, ideally set up with skilled local board members, but not dominated by existing service providers.

Inclusion, accessibility & universality

Calls for universal design principles, including:

- Full accessibility (wheelchairs & mobility scooters, dementia and autism-friendly, signage in Braille)
- Coach/minibus parking allocation, with drop off points at building entrance
- A bilingual approach to signage and identity to reflect Dungarvan's position as a Gaeltacht town
- Age-friendly, culturally inclusive programming
- Potential for a weekday dementia day care centre
- A vibrant, confidential and welcoming space that avoids stigma (a core concern for family support workers)

Cultural, performance and arts spaces

- A performance/rehearsal space
- A small-scale theatre to support events and reduce dependency on hotels or facilities outside Dungarvan. This must complement the existing Town Hall facility, rather than duplicate it.
- A space/studio for art & craft activities

Strategic location & sustainability

- Proximity to public transport or on the ring road was seen as ideal.
- Suggestions include modular construction, green spaces, and social enterprise integration.
- Emphasis on longevity and flexibility to meet evolving needs.

When asked to envision a future for their organisation with a community facility that meets their needs, most interviewees agreed that this would be a vibrant, inclusive, multi-use facility acting as a true community hub, with seamless access to services for all. They saw the space as having integrated space for anchor tenants with multi-use spaces designed to foster dignity, collaboration and participation.

3.3.3 Online Survey

Responses received to the online survey were largely representative of community groups, clubs and societies active in Dungarvan and environs. Their experiences, needs and challenges echoed those arising in the consultation interviews. They are summarised below here.

- **Widespread need for accessible community space**
    - 93% of respondents (84 out of 90) report difficulty accessing facilities that meet their needs.
    - A majority identified a lack of suitable space as a barrier to delivering regular, inclusive, and impactful services.

- **Commonly requested facilities**
    - Activity spaces - flexible, open-plan rooms that can support workshops, classes, events and social gatherings.
    - Meeting spaces - Many groups lack consistent, quiet, or formal settings for their organisations to meet. This includes both board-style meeting rooms and informal community gathering areas.
    - Storage - A lack of safe, on-site storage was repeatedly highlighted. This is a particular issue for groups who use mobile equipment or need somewhere to keep materials between sessions.
    - Accessible facilities
    - Kitchen and catering facilities
    - Dedicated youth-friendly spaces

- **Frequency of use**
    - High demand for weekly and daily access to facilities. This indicates consistent, ongoing need rather than one-off usage
    - A notable demand for monthly to occasional usage of community facilities

- **Current limitations**
    - Use of inappropriate or makeshift spaces where confidentiality is lost (kitchens, cafés, hotel lobbies).
    - Challenges in access and scheduling limits programme delivery.
    - Cost, accessibility, and lack of inclusive design are common barriers.

Quotes from consultations:

'We currently don't have consistent access to a space that is safe, sensory-considerate, fully accessible, and flexible enough to host activities such as art sessions, Yoga, and play-based social groups. This limitation reduces how many children we can support, how often we can meet, and the variety of activities we can provide. A dedicated, inclusive space would make a huge difference in allowing us to grow, meet demand, and offer a wider range of opportunities to children and families in the area.'

'Cannot take on new members due to lack of space'

'We would like to hold cookery days/demos but this is not possible with the current facilities. also buying equipment for exercise activities is not possible due to lack of storage'

'We cannot train for the hours we want, or on the days we want. We cannot train here in town. We cannot train frequently enough, and everything is far more expensive than it needs to be, as we have to pay commercial rates to the venues we hire.'

- **Vision for the future**
    - A welcoming, multi-purpose, inclusive facility that is vibrant, affordable and open to all
    - It must be universally accessible and sensory-friendly.
    - Signage and messaging throughout should be bilingual, showing both Irish and English language.
    - Visions include flexible spaces for creativity, skills development, wellbeing, and social connection.
    - Respondents sought a central space available for training, meetings and events.
    - There was an emphasis on environmental sustainability, accessibility and integration of marginalised groups.

Quotes from consultations:

'We imagine a future where there is a dedicated, inclusive community space in Dungarvan — a place that's child-friendly, sensory-considerate, and welcoming. Somewhere that can host regular clubs, events, and social groups without families feeling like they're asking for special treatment — because inclusion will be the standard.

Our hope is that in 10 years, families won't feel like they're on their own. There will be a stronger local network, more trained staff, and a shared understanding that all children deserve a place to belong.'

'A friendly and inviting space, where people can go to events. Facilities that help groups to be able to put on events without the additional costs associated with outside facilities. Fully accessible, friendly, with parking, easy access to the building, and facilities inside the building to make it an all inclusive place for all. It would be the first fully functioning accessible Community Facility in our town, making the centre fully accessible to all people with accessibility issues.'

'Thriving and regular inclusive workshops, rehearsals and performances by local people for the community.'

'Having a space where all are welcome, family and personal supports are available. Be that just photocopying to parental support, a space where groups can meet and interact.'

- **Other needs identified**
    - Evening and weekend programmes for youth and adults
    - Cultural events and community education
    - Potential for the space to act as a connector across communities and groups.

Throughout the responses, there was a strong interest in continued engagement, and the majority of respondents indicated they would attend a follow-up meeting.

There is a strong and consistent demand across Dungarvan's community sector for a dedicated, multi-functional community space. The responses show that such a space would act as a foundation for expanded social inclusion and community participation.

The authors note that the online survey also shows a clear demand for sports facilities in Dungarvan, like a swimming pool or an all-weather games area. Such facilities are not included in the scope of this feasibility study, but the findings do support the case being made by those calling for more sports facilities for the local community. The strong level of

community input to the survey is very welcome and clearly shows there is a real need and interest in these kinds of facilities.

3.3.4 Potential Users of Community Centre

The authors have engaged extensively with community groups, local and state agencies and public service providers in the course of this research. This multi-faceted approach has provided the authors with a comprehensive understanding of each organisation or group's specific needs, long-term ambitions, and overall enthusiasm for the project.

The list outlined below are potential users of the multi-use community facility as identified through the research findings. It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, and additional existing or emerging needs may add to this list in the future.

Community groups

The research process for this study has also identified potential community groups that could be active users at a new community multi-use facility in Dungarvan. These include:

- Autism Friendly Dungarvan
- Autism Support Dungarvan
- Deise Women's Group
- Deise Women's Shed
- Dún Garbhán le Gaeilge
- Dungarvan - Abbey Bridge Club
- Dungarvan Active Retirement Group
- Dungarvan and West Waterford Theatre Group
- Dungarvan Barracudas Swimming Club
- Dungarvan Drama Circle
- Dungarvan Dramatic Club
- Dungarvan Memory Cafe
- Dungarvan Men's Shed
- Dungarvan St Patrick's Day Committee
- Dungarvan Tidy Towns
- Dungarvan Ukrainian Community Group
- Surprise Surprise Dungarvan & West Waterford
- The A-Team Dungarvan
- Waterford Older People's Council
- White Strand Foroige Club

Agencies & service providers

The needs of these organisations vary, ranging from occasional venue hire to more regularised needs such as weekly meeting spaces and dedicated long-term tenancies. These

organisations have established reputations within the local area and already maintain close working relationships with many of the groups expressing interest in this community facility.

Their potential roles as tenants and service providers within the facility offer a unique opportunity to embed trusted, community-focused services at the heart of the development. Their presence would not only ensure alignment with the centre's ethos but also contribute to its long-term stability, accessibility, and success as a genuinely collaborative community hub.

List of potential users include

- Alzheimer's Society of Ireland/Friends of ASI Dungarvan
- Barnardos Family Support Services
- Carriglea Cáirde Services
- Dungarvan CBS
- Family Resource Centre
- Healthy Waterford
- HSE District Health Services
- Mincéirí Port Láirge
- Solas Cancer Support Group
- Waterford Area Partnership
- Waterford PPN
- Waterford Social Prescribing Service
- Waterford Sports Partnership
- West Waterford Family Support Hub
- Waterford Wexford Education & Training Board

Commercial hire

This study also identified a general lack of public space to rent for community-focused events in Dungarvan, with many such events and activities taking place in hotels or in community centres in other towns and villages in the wider area.

The range of such activities that might take place in this community facility would ultimately be determined by the design and scale of community facilities it accommodates, but might include:

- Business & event hire for meetings, conferences, expos, etc
- Therapy room hire for physical and mental health therapeutic services
- Gym and fitness classes
- Summer and Easter camps for young people
- Live music & entertainment
- Fundraising events and activities
- Sensory space/room

3.3.5 The Synergies of Shared Resources

The concept of shared resources offers significant advantages for community groups in Dungarvan, many of whom currently face challenges accessing affordable meeting spaces and secure storage. At present, most groups operate independently, gradually accumulating their own equipment such as printers, chairs, tables, catering supplies, and audio-visual gear. While some community groups and services are highly self-sufficient, others function with limited resources, relying heavily on volunteers and goodwill.

The prospect of a shared multi-use community facility would bring significant advantage and reduce duplication of resources for many of the community groups in the area through access to shared spaces, communal kitchen and/or tea and coffee facilities and additional resources.

A number of factors will be key in deciding the most suitable community centre model for this facility, such as meeting the collective needs of the community, the availability of an appropriate site, and the terms of suitable funding sources.

Many of those consulted enthusiastically welcomed closer collaboration and connection with fellow community groups in Dungarvan.

Section 4: The Business Model for Long Term Sustainability

4.1 Community Centre Models

The authors present two viable business models for a community centre in Dungarvan that offer sustainability and stability:

1. Community Centre Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) established with a voluntary Board of Directors who have full legal responsibilities under a Constitution. Members of the CLG, that is those who attend AGMs, have voting rights etc. can be the Steering Committee members.
2. Lead organisation/agency are an existing legal entity who have experience of governance, compliance etc. The Steering Group can be a Working Sub-group to oversee day-to-day operations of the community centre. A Memorandums of Understanding between both the lead organisation/agency and the Steering Committee will outline areas of responsibilities.

In both cases, collaboration with the community is essential to the development of Dungarvan Community Centre based on mutual aims, values and ethos. The comparisons outlined below demonstrate the benefits and challenges of each structure.

In Section 7: Recommendations the authors have outlined provide strong guidance with clear actions for advancing the delivery of the Dungarvan Community Centre. Under 7.1 they have provided a summary plan to inform a Strategic, Business and Financial Plan for the Steering Committee and lead structure.

Comparison of Business Models for Long-Term Sustainability

Category	**Community Centre CLG**	**Lead Organisation/Agency with Community Partnership**
Leadership	Community-led CLG constituted and governed by a voluntary Board of Directors	Organisation/Agency-led; Memorandum of Understanding to embed collaboration agreed between community and lead.
Legal Structure	Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG), registered with CRO	Lead organisation/agency Constitution must be aligned to meeting needs of the community
Governance	Voluntary Board with community reps; potential for Independent Chair	Lead organisation/agency governance structures apply; must be aligned with community needs. Steering Group oversee day-to-day operations

Community Influence	High - direct ownership, governance, and operational responsibilities	Moderate to high - strong consultative role, less direct control over finances or capital assets.
Human Resources	CLG is an employer with legal responsibility for contracts etc.	Lead organisation/agency is an employer with legal responsibility for contracts etc.
Funding & Resources	Low/Medium - relies on grants, fundraising, and strategic partners/anchor tenant contributions	Strong - immediate access to structured agency funding, technical support, and staffing
Staffing Proposed	Manager + 2 FT + 4 PT staff; funded via POBAL CSP, Tus, CE Scheme or similar	Manager + staff funded through CE, RSS, Tús, and/or internal staff
Financial Sustainability	Gradual - dependent on community fundraising, grants, and partner support	Strong - early capital and operational support via lead organisation/agency funding mechanisms
Risk Profile	Higher - financial pressure on Board, especially in early years	Lower - agency has ability to carry financial and regulatory risk
Flexibility	High - community defines use, activities, and partner collaboration	Strong - subject to agency priorities, policies, and procurement frameworks
Operations	Shared use of facilities; community-first approach with a potential anchor tenant	Shared use of facilities; community use with a potential anchor tenant
Management	Manager reports to CLG Board	Manager reports to lead organisation/agency; to agree role of Steering Group on operational matters
Key Strengths	Community control, high social accountability, local relevance	Immediate stability, expertise, reduced burden on volunteers
Key Challenges	Requires 6-8 people to sign up as Directors and time of approx. 8-10 months needed to establish a CLG. CLG cannot apply for funding until registered with Companies Registration Office Volunteers time on governance training; potential volunteer fatigue and challenges with succession planning. No immediate resources e.g. funding,	Negotiated responsibilities outlined within Memorandum of Understanding, possible bureaucratic constraints due to costs and compliance re admin, finance, HR, Management etc. Potential skills in developing project to a ‘shovel ready’ position for funding applications

These considerations, while not exhaustive, are key with

- Option 1 - the CLG model - requires strong governance and shared vision
- Option 2 - the lead organisation/agency model - brings immediate resources but may raise issues around control which can be addressed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

A detailed discussion and assessment of these trade-offs is essential in choosing the most appropriate long-term approach that suits this proposed community facility. A more detailed discussion on the business models proposed can be found in Appendix D.

4.2 Planning for Delivery

Confirming a potential site for this facility allows for the next phase of its development to begin. The authors recommend that dedicated project management resources be allocated to support the community stakeholders in this important phase.

With a confirmed site, a business plan with detailed financial projections for the development and operational stages of this facility can be prepared. It should be flexible and updated as the project develops. It will be a key tool for funding applications and approaching potential partners.

A business plan for this community facility should consider the following:

- Construction costs (typically €2,500 - €3,300 per m2)[1]
- Fit out costs (typically €700 - €1,000 per m2)[2]
- Set up costs (to support initial cash flow, staffing, utilities and services, etc).

Exact costs depend on the size, condition and complexity of the site, as well as the standard of fit out required. A loan may be needed to support the set up of this facility, likely to be paid over 5-15 years with revenue generated by the facility as it grows its business. The development of a Strategic, Business and Financial Plan will explore funding and loan options.

4.3 Proposed Financial Model

The centre will follow a social enterprise model that prioritises community, mixing income from commercial hires with community uses. Profits from private or corporate events will help subsidise affordable community access.

[1] Buildcost Chartered Quantity Surveyors (2025), First Half 2025 Construction Cost Guide
[2] Buildcost Chartered Quantity Surveyors (2025), First Half 2025 Construction Cost Guide

It will also earn income from long-term rentals to service providers. This reduces reliance on grants and improves sustainability, making it easier for community focused events and activities to happen.

Key income sources will include:

- Core staff funding contribution through funded schemes e.g. Community Services Programme
- Long-term rentals
- Room or venue bookings

For this financial model, a tiered community-first pricing structure for room/venue hire for this facility can be explored as part of financial planning and may include:

Tier 1: Community & Voluntary Rate (Subsidised)

For local community groups, charities, not-for-profits, youth organisations, etc., offering a subsidised rate to ensure it is affordable and makes the space accessible to all.

Tier 2: Public Sector / Funded Partners Rate (Standard)

For local authorities, ETBs, HSE services, education and training bodies, statutory partners, or publicly funded initiatives, offering a mid-market rate that reflects their ability to pay due to their own funding sources.

Tier 3: Commercial / Private Rate (Full Cost + Contribution Margin)

This rate would apply to businesses, private events, conferences, training and/or service providers charging fees. This should reflect market rate, offer a professional service and generate profit for the facility.

Other options to consider include a membership option for community groups who have dedicated spaces for use within the facility, block booking discounts or loyalty packages for community users.

Pobal Community Services Programme[3]
The Pobal Community Services Programme (CSP) may be a useful source of funding for core staffing costs.

Pobal CSP plays a vital role in supporting the delivery of community-based services across Ireland. Currently, the programme supports 450 services operated by 430 organisations, all working to provide local social, economic, and environmental benefits through a social enterprise model. The core aim of the CSP is to address disadvantage and promote social

[3] https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-services-programme-csp/

inclusion by offering an annual co-funding contribution toward salary costs for key staff. This includes support for full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and, where necessary, for a dedicated manager.

A distinctive feature of CSP is its focus on inclusive employment; at least 70% of supported employees (excluding managers) must come from the CSP Employment Target Groups, which include individuals who face barriers to employment. This ensures that the programme not only delivers essential services but also provides meaningful job opportunities for those most in need. The current cycle of the programme runs until 31 December 2027. Through its funding model, CSP enables local organisations to operate sustainably while making a positive and lasting impact within their communities.

A Business & Strategic Plan for the centre’s operations with financial projections will be required to make a case for CSP funding.

Section 5: Potential Funding Sources

Potential State and European sources of capital funding for community facilities are outlined below here, with details on what each fund requires, such as eligibility to apply for funding and the requirements for making an application. In some cases, a project must be 'shovel ready' with all planning, design, consents, partnership agreements and research complete, ready to start construction once funding is received.

While many of these schemes are closed at present, some will have rolling application periods, and others will have subsequent rounds of funding in future periods. Potential funding sources change over time, so additional options may also emerge in the future or criteria may change. It may be that a package of funding sources is required to complete a project, targeting funds according to their purpose. The project may require match funding depending on the funding criteria or a bridging loan.

In addition, a number of funding schemes exist, administered by local authorities, SEAI, Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications that target climate action which may be suited to Dungarvan's Community Centre. For a project such as this, that might entail energy retrofits, gardens, circular economy projects and climate action initiatives like rainwater harvesting, bike hubs, biodiversity planting, etc.

Community Centres Investment Fund
https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/services/community-centres-investment-fund/

Administered by the Department of Rural & Community Development and the Gaeltacht, the Community Centres Investment Fund is the largest ever capital investment in Community Centres. It provides funding for investments in Community Centres in order that these vital services remain usable, accessible, and safe and continue to meet the needs of the community into the future.
Previous funding streams have largely prioritised refurbishment and improvement works (with awards up to €100,000 in 2024 and €300,000 in 2022), with one round of funding for new build projects (up to €6M in 2023).

For new build projects, the scheme entails:

- Lead applicant must be a State-funded body. The application may involve a partnership with a community organisation, voluntary group or other civil society body.
- 10% match funding is required, with at least 5% in cash. The Fund covers construction costs only and will not cover site purchase nor staffing costs.
- Projects should be shovel-ready (planning permissions, consents in place, and compliant with the Public Spending Code).
- Applications will need to show evidence of need, collaboration between relevant bodies and stakeholders, capacity of the project partners to deliver.
- The running of the facility can be delegated by the State-funded applicant to another organisation.
- The funding recipient is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the community facility.

Community Recognition Fund
https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/services/community-recognition-fund/

The Community Recognition Fund aims to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities for the entire community in recognition of the contribution being made by communities across the country in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

For capital projects, this fund requires:

- Applicant must be a Local Authority (who may delegate to a community organisation who are a CLG).
- The maximum grant is €500,000. Projects over €200,000 must include a detailed business case that demonstrates the community capacity to deliver. Applications must be developed through community consultation, demonstrate community need, local collaboration and community engagement and align with existing local plans.
- Allocations are based on numbers of new arrivals in local authority areas.
- Projects eligible for funding may include - refurbishment/purchase of lands/sites for community use, community sports/play facilities, schools or parish halls with community after-hours use.
- Building purchase and renovation can be split across this and other funds if necessary.
- Projects must comply with the Public Spending Code.

Dormant Accounts Fund
https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/collections/dormant-accounts-fund-annual-action-plans-and-reports/

Administered by the Department of Rural & Community Development and the Gaeltacht, the Dormant Accounts Fund is a scheme that allows money in the Dormant Accounts Fund to be used by Government to fund programmes or projects which would assist:

- the personal and social development of persons who are economically or socially disadvantaged;
- the educational development of persons who are educationally disadvantaged; or
- persons with a disability.

In 2025, the fund will support 51 measures with a total funding allocation of €44.8M.

For capital projects, this fund requires:

- Applicants may be community/voluntary groups, charities, social enterprises, and some statutory bodies with a formal legal structure (CLG, charity number, CRO registered).
- Grants range from €20,000 to €75,000, with minimum 20% match funding required.
- Eligible projects include equipment, building upgrades, transport, and supports to address social, economic, or educational disadvantage.
- Projects must clearly benefit disadvantaged groups (e.g. Travellers, people with disabilities, early school leavers, marginalised youth, etc.).
- The application requires detailed costs, business case and demonstration of need. Evidence of match funding is also required.
- Projects must comply with the Public Spending Code.

LEADER Funding
https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/campaigns/leader/

LEADER is a community-led approach to local development funded through Ireland's Common Agricultural Plan (CAP) Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027. Administered by Local Development Companies (Waterford LEADER Partnership), it offers funding for capital and project-based initiatives. Capital funding allocations are capped at €500,000 and typically require match funding.

For capital projects, this fund requires:

- Applicants for community funding may be a community or voluntary group, or social enterprise.
- Capital funding for community projects is capped at €500,000, with 25% match funding required. This funding must come from a source other than public funding.
- Projects must align with the Local Development Strategy from Waterford Local Area Group.
- Projects must comply with the Public Spending Code.

THRIVE: The Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme
https://southernassembly.ie/erdf-priority-3/thrive/

THRIVE: The Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme is a transformative grant programme for local authorities under Ireland's ERDF Regional Programmes, targeting key towns, strategic growth centres, and cities. THRIVE empowers communities to reimagine town centres by revitalising publicly owned vacant or derelict heritage buildings through renovation, renewal, and adaptive reuse.

The scheme supports locally developed plans with an integrated approach to town regeneration, creating vibrant, attractive centres where people can live, work, and visit. By enhancing their role as business, service, social, cultural, and recreational hubs, THRIVE fosters sustainable and dynamic local communities.

THRIVE offered 100% grants to local authorities under Strand 2 Call 2 with grant amounts of between €2M and €7M towards the renovation and adaptive reuse of vacant or derelict heritage buildings in public control or ownership. To be confirmed if this funding will extend further.

This fund requires:

- Applicants must be a Local Authority.
- Funding for capital development works is €2-7 million. No match funding is required.
- Projects must involve publicly owned heritage buildings in designated towns (including Dungarvan).
- Projects must align with Town Centre First and New Bauhaus principles, to be sustainable and inclusive, developed with a locally led community-centred approach.
- Projects must comply with the Public Spending Code.

Town & Village Renewal Scheme
https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development-and-the-gaeltacht/policy-information/town-and-village-renewal-scheme/

Managed by local authorities on behalf of the Department of Rural & Community Development and the Gaeltacht, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme is funded under Project Ireland 2040. The Scheme is targeted at towns and villages with a population of 10,000 or less and all projects funded under the Scheme must be completed within a 12-to-18-month period. The fund supports revitalisation in rural Ireland, focusing on stimulating town centre economic and social regeneration through projects that support sustainable employment creation, town centre resilience and regeneration, enhancing streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings and lands back into use as community multi-purpose spaces through refurbishment and renovation.

For capital projects, this fund requires:

- Applicants must be a Local Authority. Proposals are developed in collaboration with community and business interests.
- Funding for capital development works is up to €500,000, with 10% match funding required.
- Projects must be strategically aligned (Town Centre First, Our Rural Future, local development plans).
- Projects eligible for funding include the refurbishment/upgrade/development of buildings for use as community centres.
- Projects must demonstrate community need, community collaboration, detailed planning and include sustainability, environmental focus and accessibility. Local authority track record of delivery is also important.

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/campaigns/urban-regeneration-and-development-fund/.

The URDF is providing up to 75% funding for applicant led projects that will support more compact and sustainable development and enable a greater proportion of residential and mixed-use development to be delivered within the existing built-up footprints of our cities and large towns, while also ensuring that more parts of our urban areas can become attractive and vibrant places in which people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and to visit.

The URDF demonstrates a new and more tailored approach to the provision of Government support. Over its planned duration up to 2030, URDF funding support of €2 billion will be targeted to support the regeneration and rejuvenation of our key towns and cities.

A new round of URDF funding is expected to open towards the end of 2025.

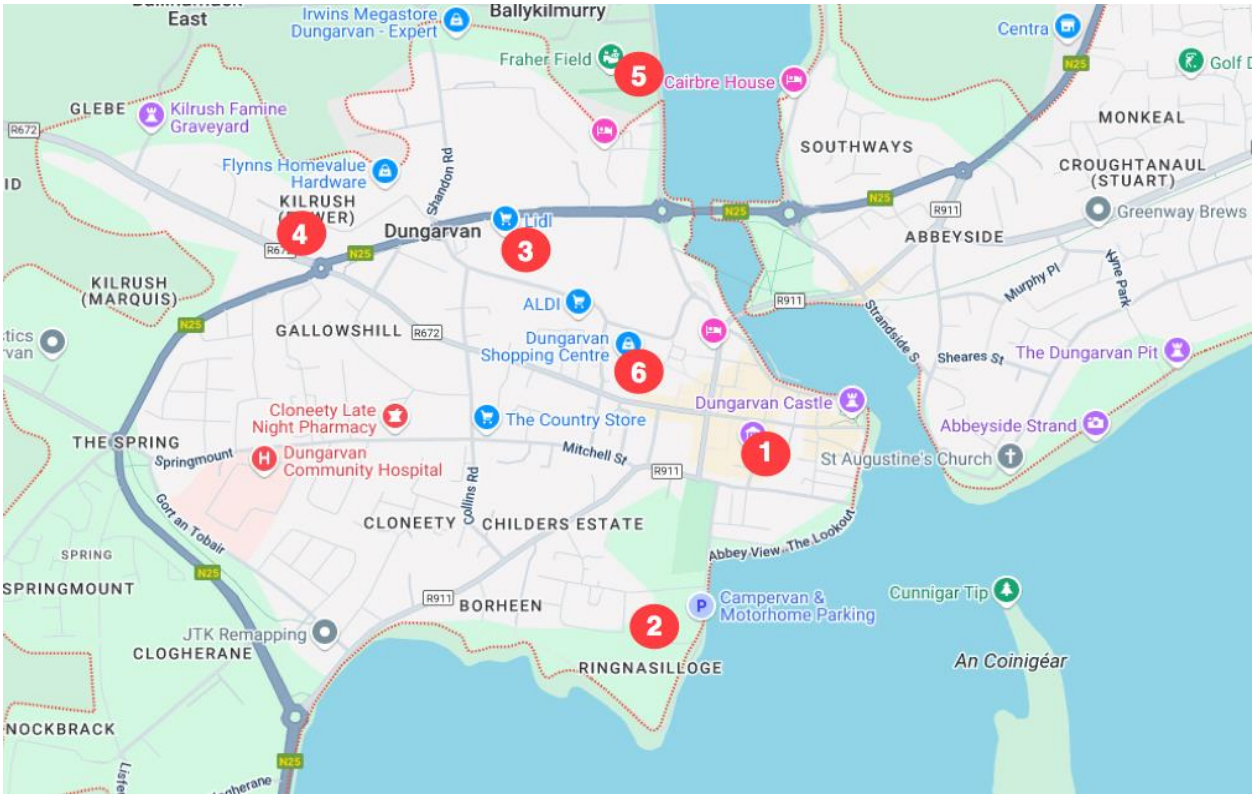
Additional funding avenues may apply, depending on what strategic partners or anchor tenants are involved in the development. For example, were the facility to include a Family Resource Centre or youth centre facilities, capital funding may be possible under the Department of Children, Disability and Equality. Equally health-oriented services may attract funding from the Department of Health or HSE.

For capital projects, this fund requires:

- Applicants must be a Local Authority or public body. Proposals are developed in collaboration with community or private stakeholders.
- Funding for capital development works is up to 75% of project costs. Match funding may be from other public/private sources, or in-kind contributions from local authorities (e.g. land).
- Projects must be strategically aligned (Town Centre First, Our Rural Future, local development plans).
- Projects focus on addressing dereliction in town centres, developing community, multi-use or public realm developments.
- Projects should be shovel-ready (planning permissions, consents in place, and compliant with the Public Spending Code).
- Applications will need to show evidence of need, collaboration between relevant bodies and stakeholders, capacity of the project partners to deliver.

Section 6: Potential Site Options Analysis

In the course of this study, a number of potential sites in Dungarvan that may be suited to the development of a community multi-use facility have been identified by stakeholders. Those sites are considered against several criteria to explore their potential suitability and availability for development.



1	The Friary Hall
2	The Quanns
3	Site adjacent to Lidl, Dungarvan Ring Road
4	Old Dungarvan Crystal Sports Centre, Kilrush Park
5	Fraher Field
6	Dungarvan Digital Hub site

1 - The Friary Hall



Address St Augustine Street, Dungarvan, X35 YR60
Map https://maps.app.goo.gl/JpknLqcFtU4a4PzT9

Criteria	
Site location & access	Central location. Good access by public transport. Public parking nearby, Potentially also parking onsite.
Site ownership	Privately owned (Glanbia)
Size & suitability	This is a large town centre site, sitting in the historic heart of Dungarvan, although some of the site is presently in active use by owners. Its regeneration would be welcome, although potential cost of acquisition may be an issue.
Condition of site & existing buildings (if any)	Brownfield site. Existing buildings, some in use.
Alignment with community needs	Will require full redevelopment, ensuring accessibility requirements can be met. Limited potential to meet all needs articulated.
Planning/regulatory considerations	Zoned town centre, within the architectural conservation area. Not a listed building.
Social & environmental impact	Central location limits barriers to access. Location adds to an existing cluster of community spaces

	in this area.
Funding & partnership potential	Site acquisition by stakeholder/local authority and lease at peppercorn rent. Development in partnership between WWCC and lead stakeholder/anchor tenant.
Risks & constraints	Cost of acquisition and likely size of site available for acquisition. Limited outdoor space. Parking availability.
Strategic fit & long-term vision	While this site brings many opportunities, its full evaluation needs to consider the wider context of community developments proposed for Dungarvan.

2 - The Quanns

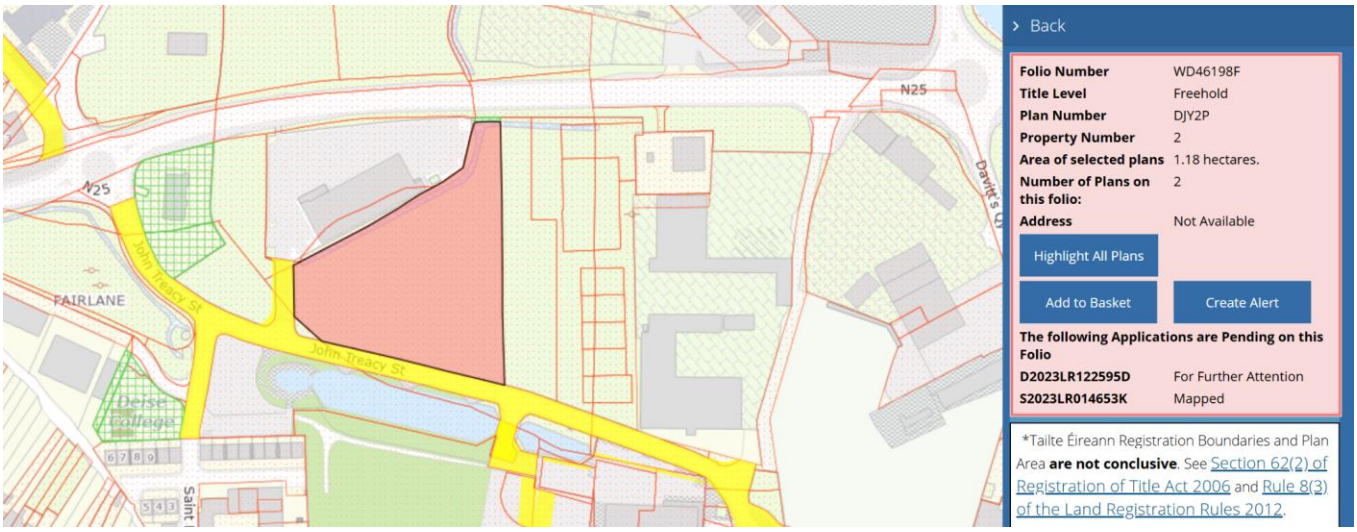


Address Adjacent to The Fusion Centre, Cois Tra, Ringnasilloge, Dungarvan
Map https://maps.app.goo.gl/r2Z6VFDKYq42VQ356

Criteria	
Site location & access	Central location. Good access by public transport. Public parking nearby. Potential for onsite parking facilities.
Site ownership	Public ownership (WWCC)
Size & suitability	This is a large site, sitting within a wider landbank of community facilities (Dungarvan Sports Centre, Fusion Centre, Dungarvan Boxing Club, Pitch & Putt, Motorhome Parking, Dungarvan Youth & Community Centre) and offers potential for considerable community facility development.
Condition of site & existing buildings (if any)	The Fusion Centre and Dungarvan Sports Centre are both on site, and in current use. There is potential to incorporate this facility into a larger

	community multi-use space on this site.
Alignment with community needs	Has good potential to align closely to the community needs identified in this study, offering further integration into existing services and groups in the nearby area. The green area here is used casually by local young people for sports. It would be important that their access to amenities is retained.
Planning/regulatory considerations	A previous plan for a MUGA onsite here should be taken into consideration. This site is adjacent to Dungarvan Harbour SPA (004032).
Social & environmental impact	Consideration of development impact on Dungarvan Harbour SPA. There are opportunities here to create a climate and biodiversity friendly development. Potential positive impact if this development can integrate with social services relevant to the nearby residential community.
Funding & partnership potential	Development in partnership between WWCC and lead stakeholder/anchor tenant. Existing stakeholders and tenants need to be included in all discussions. Enhanced campervan and camping facilities on site could be developed and operated as part of the Community Centre, offering additional income.
Risks & constraints	Conservation and planning process require further discussion. Need for local consultation in developing proposals, consulting with residents and tenants in-situ. Stakeholder and tenant group becomes larger, therefore more complex.
Strategic fit & long-term vision	This site brings many opportunities and may have potential to meet most articulated community needs, along with potential income streams. There is additional benefit in integrating and upgrading an existing community facility, improving its functionality. A full evaluation needs to consider the wider context of community developments proposed for Dungarvan.

3 - Site adjacent to Lidl, Dungarvan Ring Road

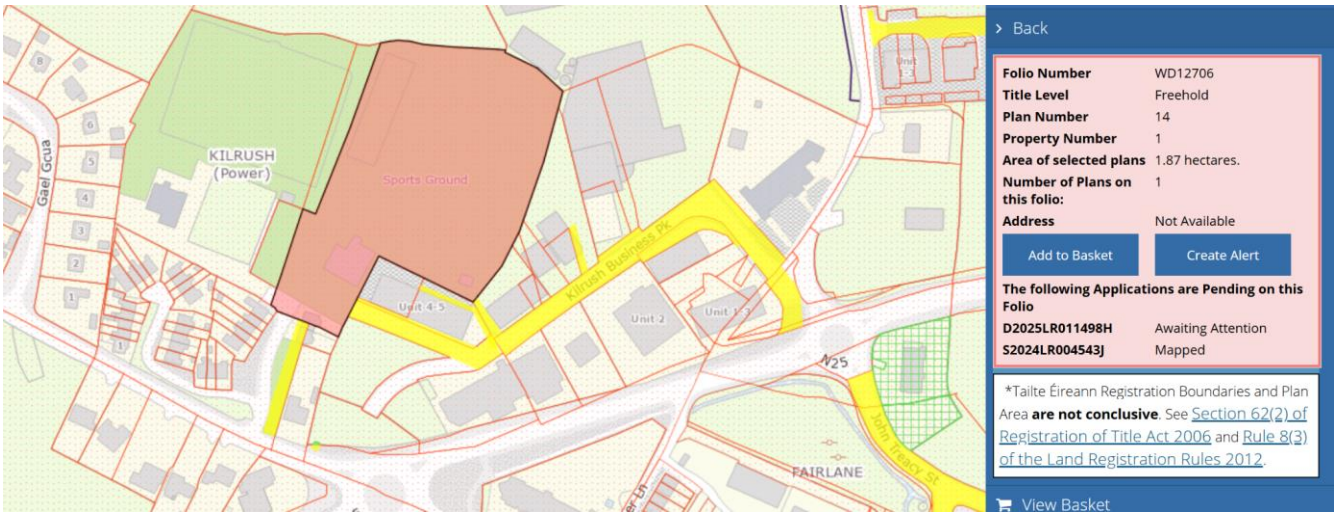


Address Adjacent to Lidl, Shandon Rd, Ring Road, Dungarvan, X35 RF76
Map https://maps.app.goo.gl/M2ArZZ1FQ27vVWEt9

Criteria	
Site location & access	Central location. Good access by car. May be more challenging for those without access to transport. Potential for onsite parking facilities.
Site ownership	Public ownership (WWCC)
Size & suitability	This site is modest in size. This site may be in consideration for housing & Lidl expansion.
Condition of site & existing buildings (if any)	This is a greenfield site, with no existing buildings.
Alignment with community needs	Located in a central, community location, opposite Fairlane Park. Has potential to align closely to the community needs identified in this study, offering further integration into existing services and groups in the nearby area.
Planning/regulatory considerations	Consultation with WWCC is essential to explore potential plans for this site.

Social & environmental impact	The site's proximity to the Fairlane Park and the impressive developments there allows potential for this site to further enhance the civic amenities on offer in this area, increasing its community appeal. There are opportunities here to create a climate and biodiversity friendly development.
Funding & partnership potential	Development in partnership between WWCC and lead stakeholder/anchor tenant.
Risks & constraints	Limited outdoor space available. Parking availability. Site potentially earmarked for alternative development.
Strategic fit & long-term vision	This site brings many opportunities, although its full evaluation needs to consider the wider context of community developments proposed for Dungarvan.

4 - Old Dungarvan Crystal Sports Centre, Kilrush Park



Address Adjacent to Dungarvan United Soccer Club, Kilrush Park, Dungarvan, X35 YW02

Map https://maps.app.goo.gl/CEByH8UNqWXFea1F7

Criteria	
Site location & access	Central location. Good access by car. May be more challenging for those without access to transport. Onsite parking facilities.
Site ownership	Has been purchased by Dungarvan United.
Size & suitability	This is a considerable site, sitting adjacent to Dungarvan United Soccer Club, and offers potential for considerable community facility development. It is understood that this site (or part of this site) may be in consideration for housing.
Condition of site & existing buildings (if any)	This is a mostly greenfield site, with playing pitches and a 1970s clubhouse building with indoor sports facilities. That building needs considerable upgrade/redevelopment. Construction & works on an astroturf pitch are currently underway.
Planning/regulatory considerations	Consultation with WWCC and site owners is essential to explore potential plans for this site.

Social & environmental impact	There are opportunities here to create a climate and biodiversity friendly development.
Funding & partnership potential	Site acquisition by stakeholder/local authority and lease at peppercorn rent. Development in partnership between WWCC and lead stakeholder/anchor tenant.
Risks & constraints	Potential cost of acquisition. Need for local consultation in developing proposals, consulting with residents and tenants in-situ. Stakeholder and tenant group becomes larger, therefore more complex.
Strategic fit & long-term vision	This site brings many opportunities and may have potential to meet most articulated community needs. There is additional benefit in integrating and upgrading an existing community facility and bringing it back into full use. Its full evaluation needs to consider the wider context of community developments proposed for Dungarvan.

5 - Fraher Field



Address Shandon Road, Dungarvan, X35 TP38
Map https://maps.app.goo.gl/tnugDaJcheq95abg8

Criteria	
Site location & access	Central location. Good access by car and public transport options nearby. Onsite parking facilities.
Site ownership	Owned by Waterford GAA
Size & suitability	This is a considerable site, sitting on the grounds of Fraher Field GAA grounds. It offers potential for considerable community facility development.
Condition of site & existing buildings (if any)	This is a mostly greenfield site, with playing pitches and unused green space.
Alignment with community needs	Good potential to align closely to the community needs identified here, offering further integration into existing groups in the nearby area. This site is at some distance from most of Dungarvan's residential areas and may not be as convenient to access as others. The site is on the grounds of Fraher Field GAA grounds, and ensuring access for all users can be agreed and maintained will be key.
Planning/regulatory	This site is adjacent to Dungarvan Harbour SPA

considerations	(004032).
Social & environmental impact	Consideration of development impact on Dungarvan Harbour SPA. There are opportunities here to create a climate and biodiversity friendly development. Potential positive impact if this development can integrate with social services relevant to the nearby residential community.
Funding & partnership potential	Site acquisition/lease agreement by stakeholder/local authority. Development in partnership between WWCC and lead stakeholder/anchor tenant.
Risks & constraints	Cost of acquisition/lease. Need for local consultation in developing proposals, consulting with residents and tenants in-situ. Stakeholder and tenant group becomes larger, therefore more complex.
Strategic fit & long-term vision	This site brings many opportunities and may have potential to meet most articulated community needs. There is additional benefit in integrating alongside existing community facilities. Its full evaluation needs to consider the wider context of community developments proposed for Dungarvan. (Note - Waterford Community Safety Partnership & WWETB have the community house in Shandon which is nearby. Talks of further development here in line with new housing currently being constructed).

6 - Dungarvan Digital Hub site



Address 18/19/20 O'Connell Street, Dungarvan, X35 K283
Map https://maps.app.goo.gl/RDbqeU8PXhkfYB1EA

Criteria	
Site location & access	Central location, Good access by public transport and off street (pay) parking nearby. No parking on site.
Site ownership	Public ownership (WCCC)
Size & suitability	Brownfield site. Numbers 18 and 19 are protected structures, while the site of No 20 allows for a new building to be constructed, with the three buildings amalgamated. Site plans exist for a potential digital hub, exhibition space and universal access on site.
Condition of site & existing buildings (if any)	The site has been vacant for a number of years and has fallen into a state of dereliction. WCCC has undertaken preliminary works on site.
Alignment with community needs	Has some potential for business units and office/meeting spaces. The potential for a new build at No 20 does allow for bespoke design and a purpose-built event space.

Planning/regulatory considerations	Site was identified as the site of a Digital hub. Development Plan - objective DGD004 states that *"Development in Dungarvan shall take place in a sequential manner, with sites closest to Dungarvan town being developed first."*
Social & environmental impact	There are opportunities to bring high profile derelict town centre sites back into use with climate-friendly enhancements. Its town-centre location brings the facility to the heart of the community. There may be potential for a community cafe on site.
Funding & partnership potential	Development in partnership between WWCC and lead stakeholder/anchor tenant.
Risks & constraints	Limited outdoor space available. Large meeting/function space may be constrained due to site size.
Strategic fit & long-term vision	This site brings many opportunities to meet community needs. It aligns with WCCC's strategic priorities and may also align with State capital funding priorities, giving it an advantage in terms of delivery potential. Its full evaluation needs to consider the wider context of community developments proposed for Dungarvan.

Section 7: Recommendations

This feasibility study confirms a strong and urgent need in Dungarvan for a dedicated multi-use community facility. The findings from consultations, surveys and research demonstrate overwhelming consensus across community groups, service providers and statutory stakeholders: current spaces are fragmented, inadequate, or inaccessible, limiting vital services and stifling collaboration.

Through extensive community consultation, a proposal has emerged from this process. The proposed vision is a shared, adaptable hub supporting inclusion, wellbeing, cultural activity, and lifelong learning. There is a clear appetite for shared space, collaborative infrastructure and integrated service delivery involving Dungarvan's community groups, public agencies and services.

The business model options explored - community-led CLG or lead organisation/agency with community partnership - are both viable, reflecting similar successful models nationally. Each model offers strengths and trade-offs. Both can deliver a sustainable, community-first facility if guided by strong governance, clear roles and robust operational planning.

The business model needed for construction will be dictated by funding opportunities and the relevant guidelines. The addition of project management support for the community stakeholders leading this project will be essential in supporting the achieving of this ambition.

While multiple sites within Dungarvan show potential to accommodate such a facility, further assessment is required to identify a location that best meets the needs identified in this study. Site selection must be informed by strategic planning, community consultation and a broader view of how other developments in the town can complement and integrate with this proposed project.

It is critical that the choice of site reflects not just technical suitability, but also community priorities and long-term ambitions for the town. This facility must be a building for all. It will serve a diverse user base and must adhere to international best practice for accessibility.

What is clear, however, is that the "do something" approach is not just feasible - it is essential. Inaction risks compounding social exclusion, inefficiency, and community fragmentation to the further detriment of the social fabric of Dungarvan and its community. Moving forward with the development of a community facility is a timely and strategic investment in Dungarvan's people, identity and future resilience.

The following recommendations provide a clear and actionable framework for advancing the delivery of a multi-use community facility in Dungarvan. They incorporate best practice in community-led development, design for inclusion, effective governance, and long-term sustainability.

1. Delivery and Strategic Alignment

1.1	Engage with Waterford City & County Council and key statutory agencies for site selection and to prioritise the development of a community multi-use facility.
1.2	Coordinate site assessments with ongoing town planning and regeneration efforts.
1.3	Together with Waterford Area Partnership and the Steering Group, facilitate continued co-design with community and other stakeholders, particularly groups currently constrained by space.
1.4	Develop a 5-year strategic vision for the facility, underpinned by annual community planning sessions.

2. Design Principles and Sense of Place

2.1	Design the facility to reflect the identity and values of the Dungarvan community using inclusive architectural features.
2.2	Ensure universal design, lighting and best practice sensory and physical accessibility.
2.3	Incorporate flexible spaces and dual-access (internal/external) anchor tenant and regular user spaces with shared core amenities.
2.4	Include varied functional spaces to include: ● Tiered, secure storage options (in-room cupboards and shelving, shared lockable units/lockers and larger storerooms/garage spaces for equipment (e.g. parade floats, sports gear). ● Domestic kitchen or tea/coffee facilities in-room, and a separate commercial-standard kitchen for training, events or enterprise. ● Sensory/quiet spaces ● Adaptable meeting areas to meet the needs of youth, wellness/health and social services.
2.5	Embed a robust maintenance strategy from the outset to ensure long-term building integrity.

3. Support Infrastructure and Collaboration

3.1	Provide reception and admin support staff through a CSP or equivalent scheme.
3.2	Equip the facility with AV-enabled rooms, hot desks, and administration staff to support volunteer & centre/events coordination.
3.3	Consider a part-time community development officer role based in the facility.
3.4	Develop a 'What's On' centralised public calendar of events, programmes and activities, and use shared communications tools (calendar, noticeboard, app)
3.5	Engage with transport providers (e.g. TFI Local Link) early to address service gaps.

4. Operational Model and Working Relationships

4.1	Operate under a central management entity with a clearly defined staffing structure.
4.2	Maintain transparent operational processes for bookings, events and maintenance.
4.3	Allocate responsibility for upkeep of private spaces to their respective users.
4.4	Plan for programming and partnerships that span ages, cultures, and interest groups - supporting collaboration and reducing duplication of effort.

5. Governance and Oversight

5.1	If agreed establish a CLG with fully independent, skills-based Board of Directors representing Steering Group members to ensure representation, collaboration and responsiveness.
5.2	Ensure Board members, officers and Chairperson are free from conflicts of interest and act solely in the best interests of the facility.
5.3	Seek early expert advice on legal and governance structure (CLG, cooperative, CSP).
5.4	Where a lead organisation/agency is the agreed pathway a Memorandum of Understanding will outline key areas of responsibility.

6. Financial Planning and Risk Management

6.1	Develop a phased capital and operational delivery plan with scalable growth.
6.2	Maintain clarity on operational costs including utilities and consumables.
6.3	Embed safeguards to ensure commercial activities support the core mission.
6.4	Evaluate commercial options carefully for sustainability and community impact.

7. Funding and Resource Development

7.1	Convert the feasibility study into a funding-ready business plan and engage potential funders. An outline plan of what is required to do so is outlined in 7.1 below.
7.2	Secure resources and appoint project management support for community stakeholders to deliver this project.
7.3	Secure early commitments from anchor tenants and core funders.
7.4	Establish a diversified income model with tiered pricing and social enterprise principles.

7.1 Strategic Five-Year Plan for Dungarvan Community Centre

A summary plan of the next steps required to deliver this community facility are outlined below here. Such projects typically take 3-7 years to develop, so this plan considers the development over a five-year period. Naturally, this plan will be further refined as the project progresses.

Key factors such as site selection, delivery model and available funding may change how the project develops and the timelines involved.

Year 1: Mobilisation & Model Confirmation

- Community stakeholders agree preferred delivery model - (Community Centre CLG or Lead organisation/agency with community partnership).
- Set up CLG or partnership formalisation.
- Engage Local Authority and strategic partners/potential anchor tenants.
- Agree a Memorandum of Understanding between all relevant partners for the development of the community facility.
- Secure project management support for project delivery.
- Begin forming governance structures and Steering Group.
- Site selection.

Year 2: Community-Led Development – Phase 1

- Initiate planning permissions, site feasibility, and funding scoping.
- Undertake stakeholder mapping and in-depth community engagement.
- Secure early-stage funding/resources and begin design development.
- Host co-design workshops with the community.
- Explore selected site in detail (planning, costs).
- Develop a detailed business case, with financial projections for development and operations.
- Develop a funding strategy.

Year 3: Community-Led Development – Phase 2

- Advance detailed capital design and cost planning.
- Secure funding, match funding if required and multi-annual operational funding commitments.
- Formalise operational policies, staffing plans, and management model.

● Commence procurement processes and contractor selection.
Year 4: Capital Works & Commissioning ● Carry out construction, fit out and compliance works. ● Implement systems (booking, insurance, safeguarding). ● Agree a Memorandum of Understanding between all relevant partners for the operation of the community facility. ● Build tenant and user partnerships in advance of opening.
Year 5: Launch & Operate ● Official opening and launch of full facility programme. ● Roll out community use, social enterprise activity, and commercial bookings. ● Monitor usage, impact, and sustainability metrics for future planning. ● Implement an ongoing review and feedback process to ensure the facility is delivering on its objectives.

Within this strategic plan, the partnership agreements for the development and operational phases of the project are some of the most important agreements to be made. They will outline the roles and responsibilities of each organisation in achieving their shared goals.

Key considerations for these agreements or Memorandums of Understanding are:

Development Phase

Partnership Roles and Responsibilities Agree a partnership approach with the Steering Group. Define the roles of core partners. Specify responsibility for securing funding, site acquisition, design and planning, legal and regulatory compliance.	**Legal and Governance Framework** Clarify the intended legal structure (e.g., CLG, cooperative). Outline interim governance (e.g. steering committee, advisory board) until formal entity is established.
Decision-Making Protocols Agree on how decisions will be made (e.g., consensus, majority vote) and who holds final authority on key issues like site selection, procurement, or design features.	**Funding and Financial Responsibility** Clarify the financial obligations of each party. Outline who will apply for capital grants and who will manage matching funds, in-kind contributions, or pre-development costs.

Community Engagement Commit to inclusive and transparent community consultation throughout planning, design, and site selection processes.	**Conflict Resolution** Agree mechanisms to resolve disputes and/or conflicts that may arise among partners.
Intellectual Property and Ownership Agree on ownership of any jointly developed plans, studies, designs, or branding.	**Timeline and Milestones** Establish high-level project timeline and phase goals (e.g. feasibility, funding applications, site selection, design, planning permission).

Operational Phase

Ownership and Tenure Clarify who owns the facility, and what lease, license, or tenure arrangements apply (especially for community groups, anchor tenants, strategic partners).	**Governance and Management** Define the structure of the managing body (e.g. CLG board or lead organisation/agency Board), roles of strategic partners, and community representation. Include agreement to meet the Charities Governance Code or similar standards.
Operational Responsibilities Agree who is responsible for daily management, maintenance, insurance, bookings, HR, safety compliance, etc.	**Use of Space and Access** Agree terms for access to shared spaces, storage, dedicated areas. Develop booking policies, pricing tiers, and prioritisation (e.g. voluntary vs. commercial use).
Financial Arrangements Agree finance models for operation and any revenue sharing or reinvestment strategies	**Staffing and HR** Who employs and manages staff and/or employment scheme members; safeguarding, training, and HR policies.
Monitoring and Reporting Agree data sharing and reporting requirements (e.g. usage stats, community impact, financial performance). Frequency of reviews and evaluations.	**Service Level Agreements (SLAs)** For anchor tenants or long-term partners: outline expectations for contribution to the centre's goals, shared facilities use, and community integration.

Dispute Resolution and Exit Clauses Define procedures for managing conflicts, changes in partnership, or termination of agreement.	**Ongoing Community Voice** Agree how the broader community will be involved in shaping programming, feedback loops, and centre development (e.g. annual forums, surveys).

Appendix A: Consultations

Outlined below are the list of local stakeholders who participated in the consultation phase of this study.

Community groups – meetings held with key representatives and/or committee

- Alzheimer's Society of Ireland/Friends of ASI Dungarvan
- Autism Support Dungarvan & Autism Friendly Dungarvan
- Carriglea Community Project Group
- Deise Women's Group
- Deise Women's Shed
- Dún Gárbhan Le Gaeilge
- Dungarvan Active Retirement Group
- Dungarvan Men's Shed
- Dungarvan Tidy Towns
- Surprise Surprise Dungarvan & West Waterford
- The A-Team Dungarvan
- Waterford Older People's Council
- White Strand Foroige Club

Agencies & service providers

- **Barnardos Family Support Services** - Lorna Dee Carter, Coordinator
- **Carriglea Cáirde Services** - Maeveanne Moynihan, Senior Programme Assistant
- **Dungarvan CBS** - Agnes Guerin, Principal
- **Healthy Waterford** - Eoin Morrissey, Healthy City & County Coordinator
- **Mincéirí Port Láirge -** Dolores Corcoran, Co Ordinator, Dungarvan Traveller Community Health Project
- **Sacred Heart Family Resource Centre, Waterford -** Heather Kiely, Project Manager
- **Solas Cancer Support Group -** Tracy McDaid, Manager
- **Waterford Area Partnership -** Jacinta Carroll, Community Development Worker, Brian O'Neill, Community Development Worker, Cathy Burns, Employment Support Coordinator
- **Waterford Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) -** Margaret Collins, Coordinator
- **Waterford City & County Council -** Sinead Breathnach, Senior Executive Officer for Community & Sports
- **Waterford City & County Council -** Conor O'Neill, Town Regeneration Officer Dungarvan (Acting)
- **Waterford County Social Prescribing -** Fiona Laffan, Coordinator
- **Waterford PPN -** Muriel Tobin, Coordinator

- **Waterford Sports Partnership -** Peter Jones, Programme Manager
- **West Waterford Family Support Hub -** Carmel O'Donovan, Barnardos Project Worker
- **Waterford Wexford Education & Training Board,** Tracey Wilkinson, Adult Educator, Community Education Team

Elected representatives

- Conor D. McGuinness, TD
- Cllr Tom Cronin
- Cllr Pat Nugent
- Cllr Kate O'Mahoney
- Cllr Thomas Phelan

Appendix B: Consultation Advertisements in Local Papers



Invite to local community groups, organisations and service providers

In Dungarvan and surrounding area

Waterford Area Partnership is inviting local groups, organisations, and service providers to participate in a short survey on the potential need for a multi-use Community Centre in Dungarvan. The proposed centre will complement existing facilities due to the growing demand to support local activities and events.

Your input will feed into a feasibility study which is currently underway and funded by Waterford Area Partnership Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP), aimed at developing a vibrant, inclusive facility that meets the evolving needs of the community in Dungarvan.

Make your voice heard

Complete the survey at: **https://bit.ly/WAPdungarvan**

Deadline: **Monday, 12th May, 2025**

"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 European Social Fund Plus under the Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) Programme 2021 -2027."

"Tá an Clár um Chuimsiú Sóisialta agus Gníomhachtú Pobail (SICAP) cómhaoinithe ag Rialtas na hÉireann, tríd an Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail, agus Ciste Sóisialta na hEorpa Plus faoin gClár Fostaíochta, Cuimsiú, Scileanna agus Oiliúna (EIST) 2021 -2027."



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Appendix C: Survey Findings

1. Consultation Survey

A total of 25 consultations are included in the findings here. The responses received from elected representatives are excluded as they were not responding on behalf of a particular organisation.

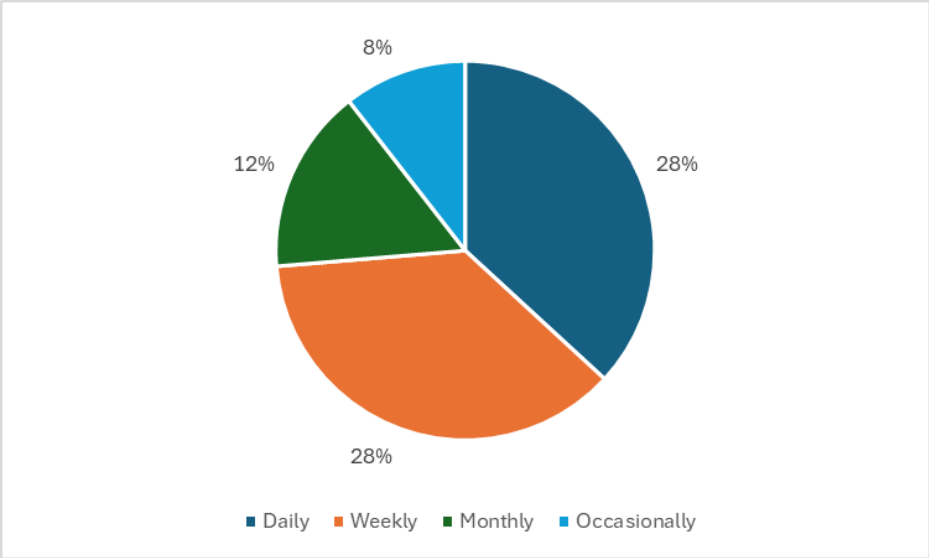
1. **Does your organisation/service have difficulties in accessing facilities to meet your needs?** (Yes/No)

   100% of organisations cited difficulties in accessing facilities to meet their needs.
   If yes, what facilities does your organisation need?

   - Meeting Space 36%
   - Office/clinic Space 16%
   - Hot Desk Space 4%
   - Activities 44%
   - Seminar/Networking Events 40%
   - Catering/Kitchen 40%
   - Storage 44%
   - Other (please state)
     Flexible own door access 16%
     Gym 12%
     Sensory spaces 12%
     Garden/outdoor space 8%
     Neutral spaces 8%
     Public toilets/showers 8%
     Youth/child friendly space 8%
     Mindfulness/mental health space 8%
     Parking 4%
     Therapeutic pool 4%
     Cafe 4%
     Craft workshop 4%
     Accessibility 4%
     Bilingual facilities 4%
     Reception 4%

2. **How often do you need these facilities?**

    - Daily
    - Weekly
    - Monthly
    - Occasionally

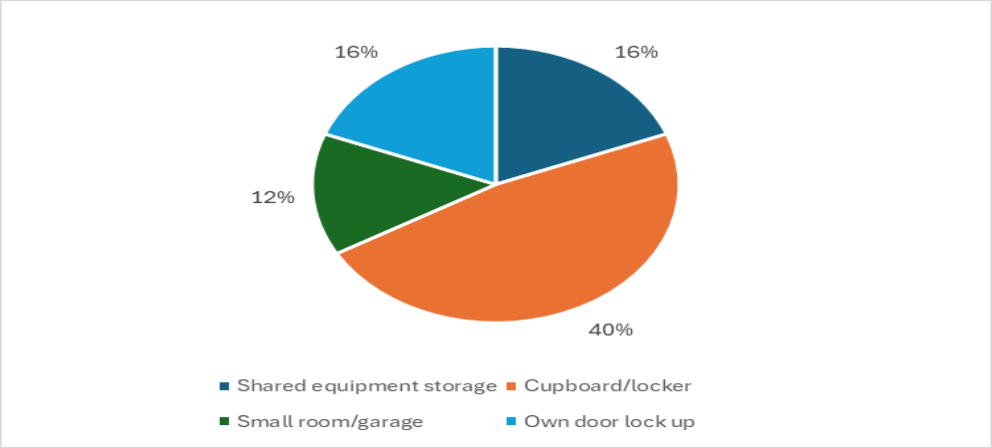


3. **What would you be willing to pay for venue hire?**
    - Meeting room - Half day rate
    - Hall - Half day rate

    Hourly room hire fees proposed ranged €5-40, with a large hall/event space day hire typical rate of €300 proposed for a half day hire.

4. **Storage (if required) - What size storage facility do you need?**

    - Cupboard
    - Small room/Garage
    - Own door lock up

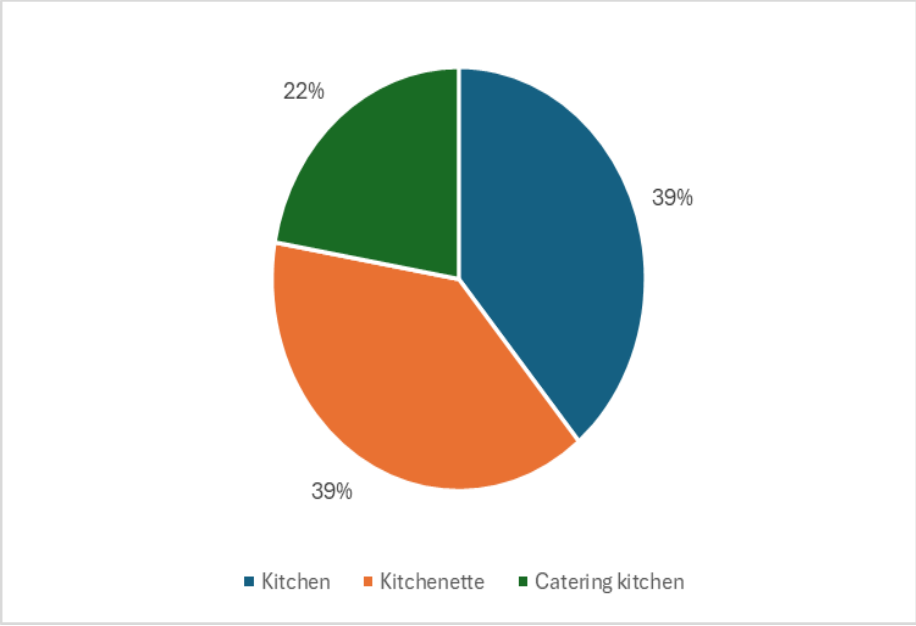


Do you require access 24/7 or only during office hours

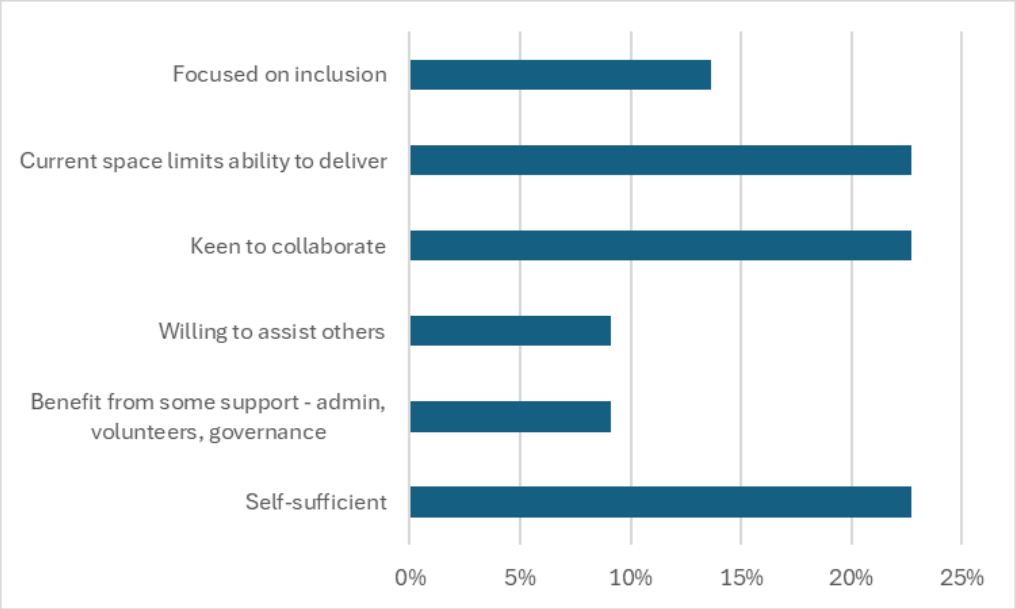
Of those who responded, 19% required access during office hours, 69% also needed access evenings and weekends, while 13% required access 24/7.

5. Kitchen - Do you need kitchen facilities?

- Tea/coffee
- Catering kitchen - how often?



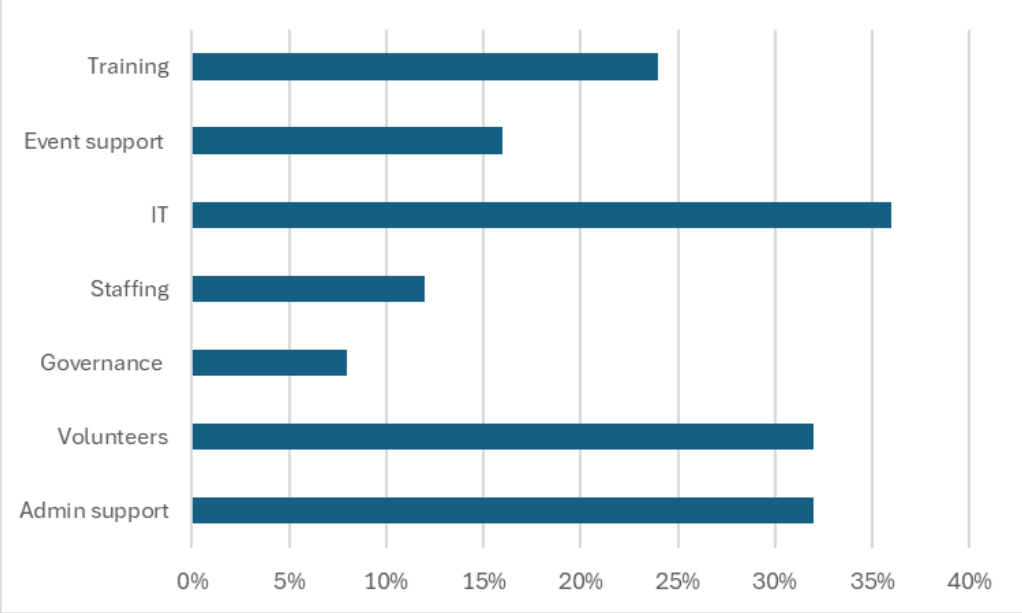
6. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of your group?**



7. **Do you have any other needs this community space could meet?**

   Responses here focused on inclusion, universal access, community shared spaces.

8. **What supports does your group need? This could be training, admin support, tech support, assistance with events, volunteers, etc**



9. **Look ahead to 10 years time when your community needs are met, what does this look like to you?**

   Responses here focused on sustainability, inclusion, succession planning, integrated services, community hub, active, engaged communities.

10. **Do you work with or partner with other groups or communities? Who? Why?**

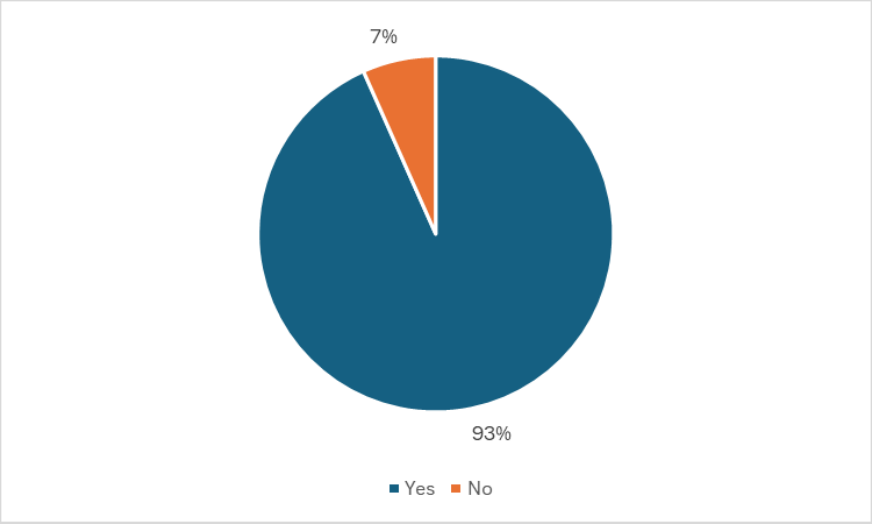
    All bar one respondent was presently partnering or collaborating with other organisations, groups or communities.

11. **Are there other needs that you think this community facility could meet for your community?**

    Here, respondents were keen that the facility be independent, with shared spaces and regular access for groups and organisations, offering flexibility and supporting a wide range of needs. Responses were similar in theme to those for Q1.

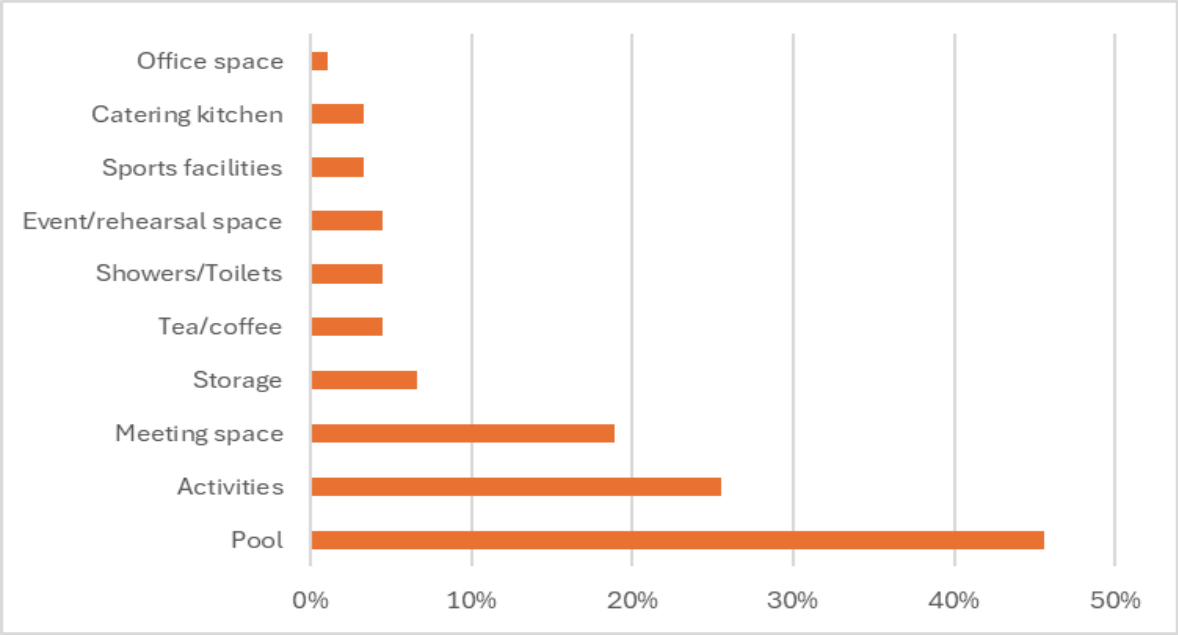
2. Community Online Survey

1. **Does your organisation/service have difficulties in accessing facilities to meet your needs?** (Yes/No)



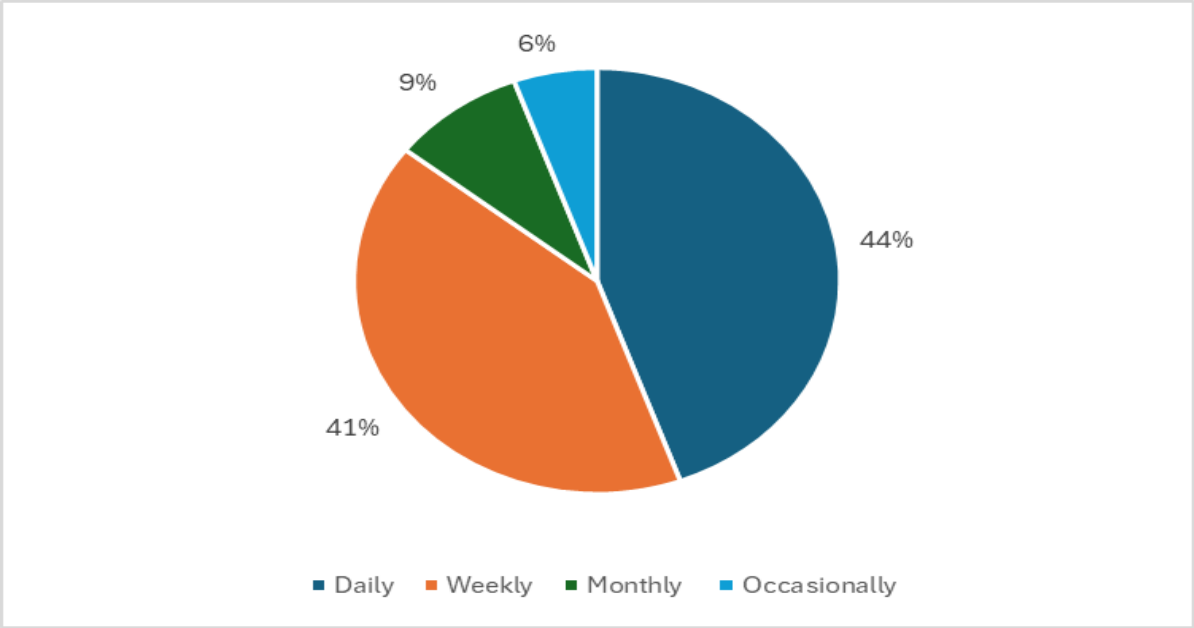
If yes, what facilities does your organisation need?

- Meeting Space
- Office Space
- Hot Desk Space
- Activities
- Seminar/Networking Events
- Catering
- Storage
- Other (please state)

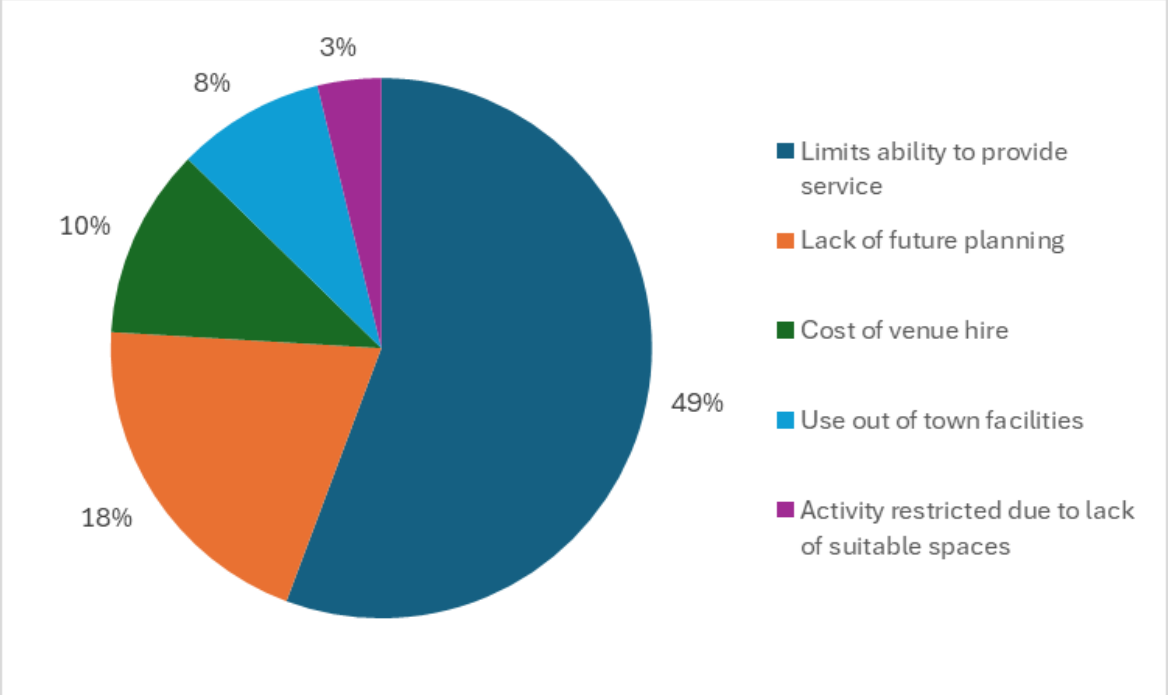


2. **How often do you need these facilities?**

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Occasionally



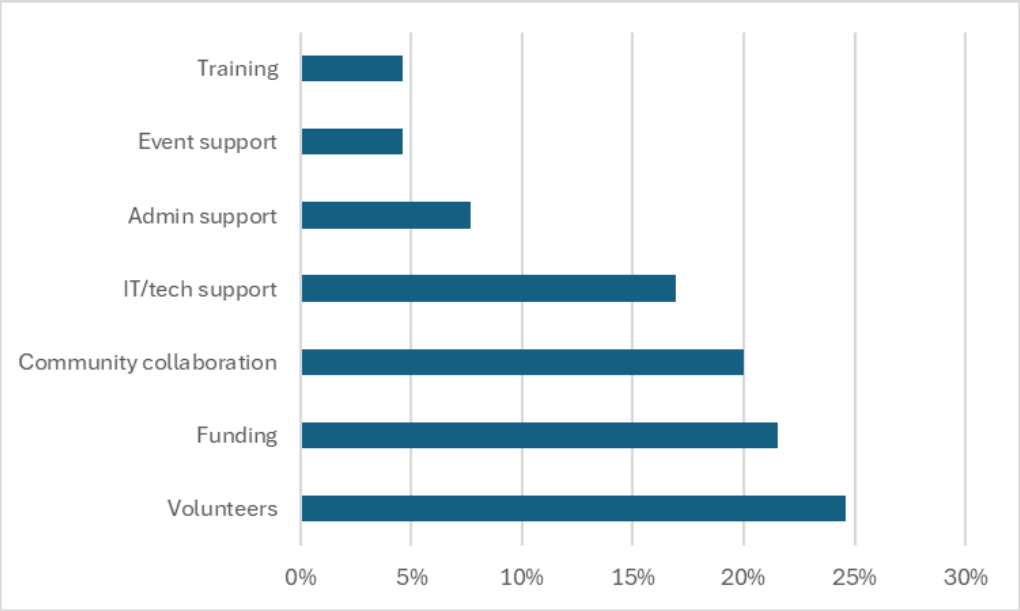
3. **How does the lack of a suitable facility limit the activities of your community group, organisation or service?**



4. **Does your community group, organisation or service have any other needs this community space could meet?**

   Responses here focused on training, collaboration with other community organisations, an expanded service or range of activities and larger, flexible spaces for events, gatherings and community social activities.

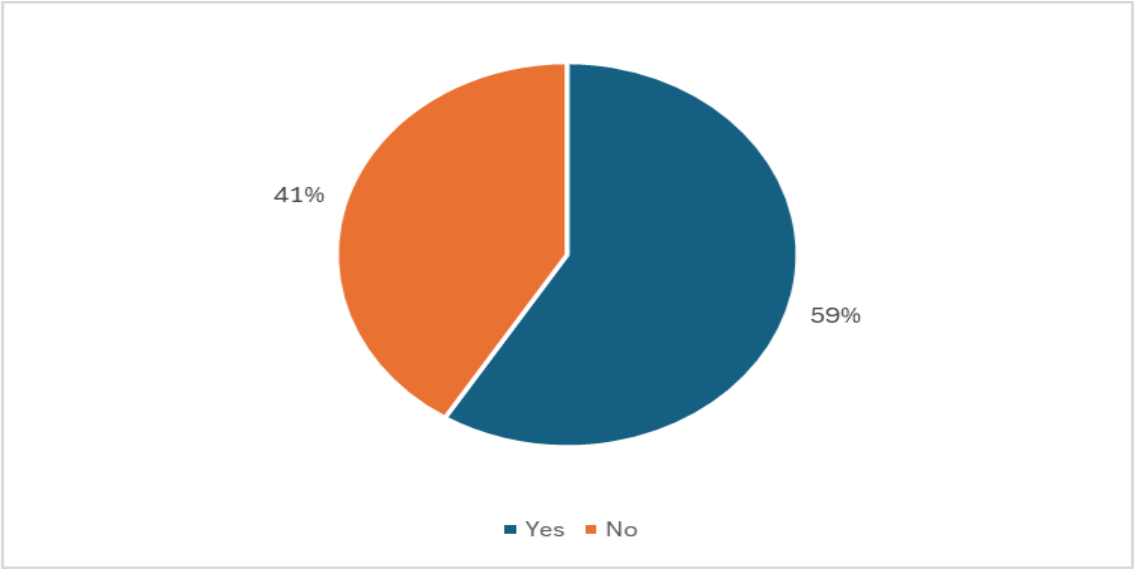
5. **What supports does your group need? This could be training, admin support, tech support, assistance with events, volunteers, etc**



6. **Look ahead to 10 years time when your community needs are met, what does this look like to you?**

   For many respondents, this meant a friendly and welcoming space, inclusive and vibrant, where organisations have security to plan ahead, expand services and activities and communities can connect and collaborate.

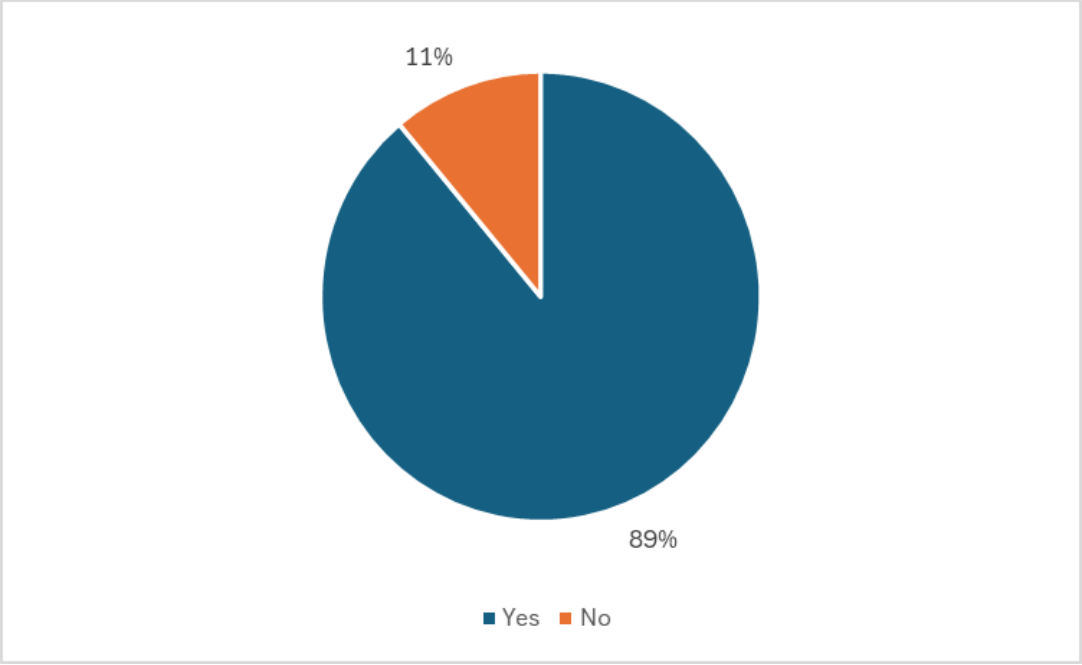
7. **Do you work with or partner with other groups or communities? Who? Why?**



8. **Are there other needs that you think this community facility could meet for your community?**

   Many respondents noted here that a swimming pool or sports facilities in Dungarvan would be welcome so that local sports groups can operate out of Dungarvan rather than travelling to facilities elsewhere.

9. **Would you be interested in attending a meeting in relation to this matter?**



Appendix D: The Business Model for Long Term Sustainability

This Appendix outlines in detail the two business models proposed for consideration for Dungarvan's new community facility.

D.1 Business Model

Community Centre CLG

In this model, the Community Centre will be established and operated as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG), formally registered with the Companies Registration Office (CRO). Ownership rests with the local community governed by voluntary Board of Directors, primarily drawn from the community itself. An independent Chairperson can be appointed to ensure transparency and impartial oversight. The CLG structure is distinctive as it has no shareholders or dividend payments, consisting instead of members who act as guarantors, agreeing to contribute a nominal amount should the company be wound up. This model supports strong community ownership and social accountability.

A key component of this model is the potential establishment of a long-term partnership with an anchor tenant whose Constitution has similar community-focused ethos - most likely a State or local agency or service provider. The anchor tenant will strengthen financial income and provide longer term stability.

Lead Organisation/Agency with Community Partnership

Under this model, ownership and operational responsibility for the Community Centre would reside with a lead organisation/agency, in partnership with the local community. The organisation/local agency will operate autonomously in terms of governance, finance, reporting and procurement etc.

The Community Centre Steering Group on the other hand will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Community and shared facilities within the centre, as agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding. The lead organisation/agency would undertake governance responsibilities, ensuring compliance, financial oversight, and strategic direction. The Memorandum of Understanding will outline responsibilities on day-to-day operations and management of the facility. This model offers a balance between public sector support and grassroots participation.

D.2 Financial Sustainability

Community Centre CLG

A Community Centre operating as a CLG typically faces significant financial challenges in its early stages. Initial funding often relies on community fundraising, philanthropic contributions, and public funding - all of which require considerable time and effort from board members and volunteers, with no assurance of success.

To enhance financial sustainability, forming a strategic partnership with an anchor tenant can be pivotal. Such a partnership may provide access to additional funding opportunities and resources. However, to attract and maintain an anchor tenant, the Community Centre must offer facilities and resources that align with the tenants' needs and operational expectations.

Once these enhancements are in place, the CLG can achieve a more stable financial footing, reducing its dependence on unpredictable community fundraising and grants. Nevertheless, ongoing community support and pursuit of grants remain essential to ensure the centre's long-term viability and its ability to serve the community effectively.

Lead Organisation/Agency with Community Partnership

Partnering with a state or local organisations from the outset grants a community organisation immediate financial stability, opening access to capital, staffing, and technical expertise without delay. Agency involvement often brings structured funding streams such as direct grant support, which allows the project to develop incrementally and resiliently in line with long-term goals

As the project matures, the agency can more confidently secure additional capital investment, whether through central government funds, matched funding or targeted grants. As existing recipients of State funding for their activities, they are positioned to build a sustainable financial model that readily scales and adapts.

A key strength of this arrangement is that the community retains influence and representation, especially during the critical planning and design stages. They provide valuable insights into local needs and aesthetic preferences - without bearing the financial liability of capital guarantees. This shared governance model ensures decisions are co-created, enhancing transparency and legitimacy.

Moreover, streamlined public procurement and reporting processes can be tailored to reduce administrative burdens on community members, with agencies potentially offering up-front funding and technical support - avoiding delays and enabling efficient operations.

D.3 Governance

Community Centre CLG

A Community Centre CLG is governed by a voluntary Board, which drafts and adopts its Articles of Association, alongside comprehensive procedures and policies. This legal framework ensures the centre is governed with integrity, transparency, and accountability from the outset. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be agreed between all parties so that there are clear roles and responsibilities, avoiding any confusion or misunderstandings from the very start. The Board has legal responsibility for funding, HR, planning and construction of the centre, with regular updates to the company members including at the AGM. The members are those who are members of the Steering Group.

On a cautionary note, this thinking is reflective of the current potential partners. It will take a number of years to go from this feasibility study to completed Community Centre. It is quite possible that new partners may be introduced and others may excuse themselves.

Registration with the Companies Registration Office (CRO) and Revenue is mandatory upon incorporation, enforcing compliance with statutory duties. Board members will come from the community, elected as trustees - typically an independent Chairperson, a Finance Director, a Company Secretary, and at least four directors - take on responsibilities such as legal, financial, marketing, HR and community engagement.

Best practice guidance (the Charities Governance Code and CEAI's Good Governance Handbook) recommends clear terms of reference, structured delegation, risk oversight, and performance evaluations to support effective governance. The Board must also maintain conflict-of-interest policies, conduct ongoing induction and training, and ensure transparent decision-making.

Recognising the anchor tenants value, the Board may consider including two directors representing the partner, enabling alignment of interests and shared oversight. Their presence ensures the partner’s perspective is integrated into decisions regarding facility development, programming, resource allocation, and strategic planning.

Lead Organisation/Agency with Community Partnership

The governance model for a lead organisation/agency with community partnership also rests with their Board of Directors, mirroring CLG roles - such as oversight, compliance, finance, HR and strategy.

The Constitution of the lead organisation/agency must align with the proposed Community Centre’s aims, values and ethos with strong community collaboration. A Memorandum of Understanding as outlined in Page 55 to 57 provides a clear framework in developing this approach.

D.4 Management

Community Centre CLG

The Community Centre will operate as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG), with oversight from a voluntary Board of Directors. To ensure sustainable service delivery, it is envisaged that the centre will secure core staffing through a funding agency such as POBAL under the Community Services Programme (CSP). The proposed staffing model includes a full-time Manager, supported by approximately two full-time and four part-time staff. This team will be responsible for the centre's day-to-day operations, including maintenance, health and safety, bookings management, and ensuring a welcoming, inclusive space for all users.

The Manager will report directly to the Board, providing regular reports on centre activities, financial performance, and community impact. Roles and responsibilities for all staff will be clearly defined to promote accountability, service quality, and operational efficiency.

In addition, the establishment of a working committee is recommended. This committee would include a Board member, Manager, and two representatives from local community groups. Its purpose will be to identify emerging needs, collaboratively address operational challenges, and ensure the centre remains responsive to community priorities. This dual structure promotes strong governance, transparency, and a shared vision between the community and its strategic stakeholders.

Lead Organisation/Agency with Community Partnership

Under such a model, the lead organisation/agency would assume primary responsibility for resourcing staffing costs, potentially supported by employment schemes such as Community Employment (CE), Rural Social Scheme (RSS), or Tús. This approach ensures consistent staffing levels and embeds the centre within broader public service frameworks, enhancing stability and integration with local service delivery.

The Manager will maintain a direct reporting line to the Board, providing regular updates on operations, bookings, facility usage, staffing, and community engagement. The operational team may include a combination of full-time and scheme-supported part-time roles, each with clear duties to support the centre's day-to-day functioning, safety, and programming.

To foster collaboration and responsiveness, a separate Working Sub-group is recommended. This group would include the Manager, a representative from the Board, and two representatives from the Steering Group. Its function would be to identify future needs, address challenges, and support strategic planning in a collaborative, inclusive way, ensuring that both the agency and community remain aligned in managing and developing the centre.

The role and responsibilities between the lead organisation/agency Board and Steering Group will be outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding

D.5 Operations

Community Centre CLG

The Community Centre will operate a range of flexible spaces such as meeting rooms, event spaces, and shared amenities like a reception area, kitchen, bathrooms, and toilets. These facilities will be available for booking by local organisations, community groups, and residents for meetings, workshops, and events.

An anchor tenant may be accommodated within the building and may have a dedicated access point. They will also share use of the common areas alongside community users, promoting collaboration and integration while respecting operational independence.

Several community groups will have long-term or regular access to designated spaces within the building, while others may use only storage or occasional meeting/event space. These groups will be supported by the staff team, who will facilitate access during office hours or by prior arrangement.

This shared-use operational model ensures inclusivity, flexibility, and cost-effective management of the building while fostering strong community engagement and shared responsibility.

Lead Organisation/Agency with Community Partnership

The only operational difference under this model, is that they will be accommodated within the building and will have a dedicated access point. They will also share use of the common areas alongside community users, promoting collaboration and integration while respecting operational independence.

Appendix E: Community Centre Case Studies

1. Skerries Community Centre (Skerries, Co. Dublin)

- **Established:** 1982, through strong community initiative.
- **Facilities:** Indoor and outdoor sports facilities, theatre space, studios, Montessori, tennis and hockey.
- **Usage:** ~10,000 visitors/week. Wide range of community, cultural, and sports activities.
- **Funding:** Fingal County Council, rentals (rooms, pitches), summer camps, Montessori/afterschool.
- **Structure:** CLG with a board; reinvests all profits. Roof replacement needed.
- **Staffing:** Manager + 9 staff (incl. Montessori staff).
- **Key Strength:** Long-term community buy-in and diverse, sustainable usage.

2. Foxford Sports & Leisure Centre (Foxford, Co. Mayo)

- **Established:** Built in 1990s, completed in 2000 via Capital Sports Grant & local fundraising.
- **Facilities:** Full gym (cardio + free weights), basketball hall, yoga/dance studio, multiple meeting spaces.
- **Usage:** ~3,000 visitors/week. Serves both general public and local schools.
- **Funding:** POBAL CSP, Dept. of Education (anchor tenant), bingo, summer camps, rentals.
- **2023 Finances:** Modest surplus (€1,995) on €422k income; €30k reserves.
- **Structure:** CLG under POBAL CSP; all profits reinvested.
- **Staffing:** Manager + 5 staff.
- **Key Strength:** Functional, multi-user facility tied closely to the education sector.

3. Bee Park Resource Centre (Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim)

- **Established:** Early 2000s; replaced an older community centre. Rooted in community consultation and fundraising.
- **Facilities:** Offices (some with own door access), sensory room, gym, football pitches, sports hall with stage.
- **Usage:** ~2,700 visitors/week. Acts as a hub for statutory, community, and private activity.
- **Funding:** POBAL CSP, LA grants, office rental, venue hire, gym, donations, commercial & trading activity.
- **2022 Finances:** €1,995 surplus on €331k income; strong reserves (€318k).
- **Structure:** CLG under POBAL CSP; reinvests profits.
- **Staffing:** Manager + 4 staff.
- **Key Strength:** Strong community ownership, excellent partnerships with service providers.

Appendix F: References

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