



The National Lottery Heritage Fund - Great Place Scheme Nations

Programme Evaluation Case Study 3

Coalisland and East Tyrone: The Historical Manufacturing Base of Mid Ulster

Heritage skills development

April 2022

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Context

- Lead partner: Lough Neagh Partnership Ltd
- Grant expiry extended to: September 2021, from January 2021
- The Fund grant awarded £312,100.00
- Full project budget £394,152.00

Project activity (approved purposes)

This Great Place Scheme Nations explored the rich manufacturing legacy of the people of Coalisland and East Tyrone (C&ET) with the aim of increasing access to C&ET's heritage. Through a series of projects involving disadvantaged communities, the scheme also aimed to address issues of inequality and enhance quality of life. The programme was adapted in response to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, however it still included all the planned elements, including:

- Events reflecting songs, music, poetry and prose of East Tyrone; Community Plays, including a play on the story of manufacturing in East Tyrone: “Coalisland Tales: Crafted, grafted, woven and spun” Written by Mark Shields and directed by Oliver Corr with recorded extracts available through a podcast before its performance post-Covid-19 pandemic.
- Four plays by the Craic Theatre written, videoed for broadcast or performed during the European Heritage Open Days 2019 and 2021. These Open Days gave access to the Coalisland Weaving Factory Museum once it was refurbished (housed in the Coalisland Museum and Heritage Centre on the site of the former Coalisland Weaving

Factory run by the Coalisland & District Development Association). For the first Open Day, in 2019, the Museum was brought back to life, through the Craic Theatre's performances, when the former factory owner, Jackson Clark, and his machine operator Peter McGrath, travelled 100 years to the twentieth century to tell visitors their story.

- The launch of the book "Geordie Hanna - the man and the songs" took place in July 2021 and, as a community cultural event, included a performance of his songs by local musicians.
- Community Archaeology Programme - In 2019 Queen's University Centre for Community Archaeology led a community dig at Owler's Pottery, Derrybuoy, Coalisland and a further dig took place in 2021 in Newmills along with an Archaeology Summer School in partnership with Newmills Primary School.
- Field & Place name Interpretation and Place name Poetry, Songs and Stories - including production of a series of podcasts, 'The Place Where Your Face is Known'.
- Project sculpture/legacy art piece - delivered in collaboration with Jonny Kerr and Money Penny's Forge

with the support of the heritage skills bursary programme in Blacksmithing and sited at Newmills.

- Exhibitions e.g. at the Craic Theatre and the exhibition at the Coalisland Museum and Heritage Centre, "Coalisland Experience," which tells the story of the industrial heritage of Coalisland and East Tyrone - the history of the local coal mines, factories, canals, spade mills and brickworks.
- Training programmes for heritage Interpretation guides (delivered by local training organisation Coalisland Training Services); Community Heritage Education programmes including schools resources on Coalisland and East Tyrone's industrial heritage; Delivering craft skills programmes (e.g. remote clay workshops) and apprenticeships converted to bursaries (delivered with local craft and manufacturing organisations).

More information at <https://coalisland-lnp.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Coalisland-East-Tyrone-Great-Place-Scheme-114141443480087>



Partnership approach

The project was led by the Lough Neagh Partnership Ltd working in partnership with Mid Ulster District Council, Queens University Belfast, Centre for Archaeological Research, The Craic Theatre, Coalisland and District Development Association, Western Systems, South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP), Island Turf Craft, Diane McCormack Ceramics and others.

¹ Link to Mid Ulster Economic Development and Local Plan <https://www.midulstercouncil.org/MidUlsterCouncil/media/Mid-Ulster->

The Lough Neagh Partnership is a stakeholder organisation that was established in 2003 to help manage and protect Lough Neagh. The board of the partnership is made up of elected representatives, landowners, fishermen, farmers and local communities.

Strategic context: skills development

The Coalisland and East Tyrone Great Place Scheme Nations was designed to address the needs of the area as set out in local strategies (it should be noted that these strategies were developed pre-Covid-19 pandemic). While the programme was wide-ranging, it responded specifically to the skills development need identified for the area. The project focused on the craft and heritage skills which characterised the areas industrial and manufacturing heritage.

The Mid Ulster Economic Development and Local Plan 2015-20201, which includes the area of Coalisland and East Tyrone, while not referring to heritage specifically, included ambitions to promote the towns and villages of Mid Ulster as places to shop, visit, invest and live, citing signature events as a way of achieving this. It also

<https://www.midulstercouncil.org/MidUlsterCouncil/media/Mid-Ulster-Council/Econ%20Dev/Publications/Economic-Development-Plan-2015-2020-2.pdf>

focused on addressing, *‘the skills requirements in Mid Ulster’s key sectors, while at the same time ensuring that those not in employment or training have the opportunity and support they require to find a job, apprenticeship or training scheme which meets their needs.’*

The area is a mix of rural and local towns and has a population make-up which is one of the most deprived of all the localities of the Northern Ireland Great Place Scheme Nations projects. The Mid Ulster District Council Community Plan² (a ten-year plan written in 2017), sets out the situation in mid-Ulster:

- *‘The proportion of those with no qualifications in Mid Ulster was found to be higher than the regional average. Similarly, educational attainment at NVQ level 4 has been below average within the council area.*
- *Almost three Mid Ulster employees in every ten work in manufacturing, nearly two and a half times the NI average. Construction and agriculture also remain significant.’*

It articulates a vision for Mid-Ulster.

² Link to The Mid Ulster District Council Community Plan <https://www.midulstercouncil.org/MidUlsterCouncil/media/Mid-Ulster->

‘Our Vision for Our Place Mid Ulster... a welcoming place where our people are content, healthy and safe; educated and skilled; where our economy is thriving; our environment and heritage are sustained; and where our public services excel.’

The Coalisland and East Tyrone Great Place Scheme Nations project particularly responds to two of the identified outcomes - *‘Our people are better qualified and more skilled’* and, *‘We are more entrepreneurial, innovative and creative’*.

To this end, the Coalisland and East Tyrone project worked with the local authority to develop new heritage and culture products in partnership with other stakeholders. It joined forces with local businesses, training organisations and arts and cultural heritage bodies to explore how to address disadvantage and inequality issues and:

- Build a new skills capacity
- Revive lost artisan and manufacturing working skills
- Celebrate the area's great industrial manufacturing heritage through the medium of arts and culture.

[Council/Community%20Planning/COMMUNITYPLAN-2017-10-Year-Plan-for-Mid-Ulster\(10\).pdf](https://www.midulstercouncil.org/Community%20Planning/COMMUNITYPLAN-2017-10-Year-Plan-for-Mid-Ulster(10).pdf)

While some activity was delayed or adjusted in response to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the project was able to develop relationships and projects which it aims to continue to develop into the future.

Crafts and heritage skills development

The skills development programme was delivered initially remotely, and in 2021 developed a model which it could deliver in person within the remaining time available for project delivery.

Assist Youth group training

Partnering with the Assist Youth group, an initiative of Coalisland Training Services, the project offered opportunities for younger people to engage with their local heritage. Initially members of the Assist Youth group were invited to help ready the Coalisland Museum and Heritage Centre for re-opening (in collaboration with the Coalisland & District Development Association), and through this work, their interest in heritage grew. Three of the group provided further support welcoming the public on the re-opening of the museum for the European Heritage Open Day in 2019 and some went on to continue to volunteer and provide tours.

The Assist Youth group is a programme for young people who are in, or close to, the criminal justice system, vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment, not in education or employment, struggling with substance abuse, in poor mental health or from a challenging social background.

A group of young people from the Assist Youth group, completed an online virtual course with South West College in Spring 2021 in tour guiding (originally this had been intended to be delivered in person to achieve the OCN Level 2 qualification in Tour Guiding). As Covid-19 restrictions eased, they were able to complete their course, tutored by James Walsh, of Ireland Coach Tours, with a series of lectures, guided walks and a boat trip highlighting local industrial heritage.

“The young people were fascinated and they said that they had learned far more through this way of learning than they ever did at school and found the history of the area really interesting. So much so that several of them went on to do a level two, tour guiding qualification. This is really brilliant for them because it is sort of giving them roots in their local community. They’re passing on that information to their peers and to their children. And then I know that they want to work with local school children in the area and

so that they can show that history can be fun and can be fascinating and that's really all thanks to the project.”

Coalisland Training Services

In addition, the project provided funding for a Royal Yacht Association Powerboat Training course. This meant that the young people were qualified to guide trips for members of the public on the River Blackwater Community Barge.

Remote clay workshops

Facilitated by Diane McCormick, in May 2021, the project offered local people the opportunity to take part in remote clay workshops. Participants borrowed a sterilised Home Craft Kit which contained tools, equipment and clay. They then made their own clay art piece by following an online video tutorial which had been filmed by local ceramic artist Diane McCormick. The kits and finished clay pieces were later collected, under strictly controlled conditions, and Diane fired everyone's work in her kiln.

Over 50 people took the chance to make something special at home and the talent and creativity was amazing. Some of the pieces were returned to the participants and others have been incorporated into a large public artwork on permanent display, called 'InterAct', in the Craic Theatre in Coalisland. One piece represents the different 'townlands' or parcels of land, through

clay weaving shuttles and patterns on ceramic pieces to make a large cog representing the area.

'And they actually gave me loads of different ideas as well because lots of people are living in the location and they were able to say oh look at my 'townland' it's slightly different and they researched their own area.'

Diane McCormick, Ceramics and print artist

Skills development bursaries



The proposed apprenticeship scheme was re-structured as a bursary programme. Bursaries were available for residents in the project area who wished to undertake further or higher education/training to help move towards starting their own

business or beginning a career in the heritage sector. The bursary provided 75% of the course fees, up to a maximum total of £3,000. 18 heritage skills training bursaries were awarded, and during the late summer and early autumn of 2021, the participants worked under strict social distancing and Covid-19 controls and completed their courses in glass cutting, blacksmithing and stone carving.

Glass Cutting with Tyrone Crafted Glass, Coalisland.

Tyrone Crystal was a thriving business in the area from 1971 until 2010 when the factory closed - ending a tradition which had been in the area since 1771. In 2021, a group of ex-glassmakers from the area formed the Dungannon Crystal Regeneration Group which now runs Tyrone Crafted Glass to ensure that the craft of glass blowing and glass cutting continues in the area. At their new workshop, opened in August 2021, one-to-one training in glass cutting is available and in partnership with Coalisland and East Tyrone Great Place Scheme Nations project and Mid Ulster Council, it hosted four people under the heritage skills bursary programme.

Our students are having lots of fun training up to be glass cutters to carry on the craft. Basically, that's what this is about.

Chairperson, Dungannon Crystal Regeneration Group



Blacksmithing with Moneypenny's Forge, Portadown.

On behalf of the Coalisland & East Tyrone Great Place Scheme Nations, Moneypenny's Forge facilitated six workshops through the bursary scheme at their premises beside the Newry Canal during August to September 2021.

With the support of the heritage skills bursary, trainee blacksmiths from Newmills worked along with Jonny Kerr, at Moneypenny's Forge, to create a fantastic metal sculpture called "Tommy". The sculpture can be seen in the Newmills Community Wildlife Garden.

The figure represents a veteran serviceman home from war and returning to his farm, reflecting the Biblical verse "*...they shall*

beat their swords into ploughshares" and it fits with the commemorative themes represented in the rest of the Wildlife Garden.



The final bursary, was for stone carving with Jonny Kerr.

Looking ahead

The heritage which has been brought to light through the Coalisland and East Tyrone Great Place Scheme Nations project, has revived an interest in the area's industrial heritage. As with many of the Great Place Scheme Nations projects, the work in Coalisland and East Tyrone has focused on heritage which is within living memory - crafts people, individuals and business owners who used to work in the manufacturing industries or are based in the area have championed the work of the project. The Great Place Scheme Nations investment has tied existing initiatives into a wider infrastructural or strategic context - through discrete projects and activities demonstrating the potential impacts for increased tourism, skills development and job creation over the longer term. It has worked with people and organisations which are already embedded within the community, and brought added value to their work by exploring new opportunities. It remains to be seen if the Great Place Scheme Nations work can be scaled up and made sustainable over the longer term.

Several of the steering group, other local businesses and stakeholders are developing a new partnership project building on

the Great Place Scheme Nations programme and a funding application has been prepared for a new heritage, art, drama, music and crafts programme. To this end, Venture Folk consultancy were appointed to deliver, "Way Forward 2022-2025 - Sustaining our Great Place" - a strategy to help build on the success of the project and ensure that the beneficial outcomes are taken forward. An online consultation took place and a community open day with volunteer guides from the Friends of Coalisland Museum & Heritage Centre and Island Turf Crafts in partnership with Craic Theatre in August 2021.

As the Heritage Project Officer leading the project relates, over the course of the project new ideas have emerged through partnership working, and as partners have become more comfortable working together over time they have moved out of their comfort zones. In this way the project has been able to activate partners within the community, laying the foundations for future working.

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