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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

An Audit of the Activities of Ballinora and District Community Association and its Effectiveness Within the Community

Bryan O' Shea

CARL Research Project
in collaboration with

Ballinora and District Community Association

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Name and year of course:	BSc. Government and Politics IV
Date completed:	19/08/2021

What is Community-Academic Research Links?
Community Academic Research Links (CARL) is a community engagement initiative provided by University College Cork to support the research needs of community and voluntary groups/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These groups can be grass roots groups, single issue temporary groups, but also structured community organisations. Research for the CSO is carried out free of financial cost by student researchers.

CARL seeks to:

- provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education;
- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers (www.livingknowledge.org).

What is a CSO?
We define CSOs as groups who are non-governmental, non-profit, not representing commercial interests, and/or pursuing a common purpose in the public interest. These groups include: trade unions, NGOs, professional associations, charities, grass-roots organisations, organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life, churches and religious committees, and so on.

Why is this report on the UCC website?
The research agreement between the CSO, student and CARL/University states that the results of the study must be made public through the publication of the final research report on the CARL (UCC) website. CARL is committed to open access, and the free and public dissemination of research results.

How do I reference this report?
Author (year) *Dissertation/Project Title*, [online], Community-Academic Research Links/University College Cork, Ireland, Available from: http://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/completed/ [Accessed on: date].

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CARL is part of an international network of Science Shops called the Living Knowledge Network. You can read more about this vibrant community and its activities on this website: http://www.scienceshops.org and on Twitter @ScienceShops. CARL is also a contributor to Campus Engage, which is the Irish Universities Association engagement initiative to promote community-based research, community-based learning and volunteering amongst Higher Education students and staff.

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This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

Bryan O' Shea

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank Mr. Pat O' Connor and all other members of Ballinora and District Community Association and wider community for their helpfulness and participation throughout the course of this project.

I also wish to thank GV3102 Work Placement Manager, Dearbhail O' Callaghan and my academic supervisor, Prof. Andrew Cottey, for their work and support.

Introduction

Ballinora and District Community Association (BDCA) was established in 2012 in response to a parish-wide survey that identified eight areas of concern for local residents. Those eight areas were as follows:

1. Culture and Heritage
2. Social Inclusion
3. Environment
4. Safety and Security
5. Roads and Road Safety
6. Communications
7. Recreation
8. Infrastructure

Since 2012, BDCA has compiled Action Plans based on the eight themes outlined above to assist with progress on community projects. BDCA has achieved remarkable success since its founding in 2012 with numerous projects completed. These include, a text alert programme, a heritage trail through sixteen locations of interest in the area, an impressive and regularly updated community website, biodiversity projects, and restorations of historical sites to name a few. The community association is representative of what is good about a thriving rural Irish community and their unending commitment to improve and serve their local parish is testament to their members. In Rural Ireland (1965), it is the kind of parish that Muintir describes as a "community, and wishes to bind together, with everything focusing on the little central village for communal activities".

The association is led by dedicated, voluntary, elected members, and at the outset of this project in May 2021, was seeking to reassess its activities and practices in the area at a time of unprecedented challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this research is to conduct a general audit of the activities of the community association, to identify useful and innovative practices utilised by other community organisations, and to provide feedback and recommendations to Ballinora and District Community Association. This project aims to contribute to the long-term survival of BDCA and identify areas where they can improve and strengthen.

Community Associations in Ireland

There are numerous websites run by various organisations that offer conflicting figures for the number of community organisations in Ireland. While the entire non-profit sector accounts for over 30,000 organisations (Benefacts, 2021), it is more difficult to source accurate figures for a breakdown in those numbers. For example, a database of solely rural-based Irish community organisations would be helpful. The regulatory landscape around non-profit organisations is also difficult to negotiate, and has several, thick layers of bureaucracy, with the Charities Regulator also failing to maintain a categorised list of non-profit organisations. In any case, a comprehensive 2020 report by benefacts.ie estimated the entire sector to be in excess of 30,000 members but in that same report noted the following:

> Missing from our financial analysis of the sector are more than 22,484 local nonprofits. These are mostly schools, parishes, associations and clubs (including **unincorporated charities**) which don't publish accounts or for which there is no regulatory source of publicly available financial data.

Benefacts.ie used more than 40 sources of data to compile their report which itself suggests the need for a reliable and regularly updated database of community organisations in Ireland. (Benefacts, 2021). While various databases exist, there is little consistency, and a database of specifically rural-based community organisations would be a helpful resource for researchers and community organisations themselves.

Ballinora and District Community Association

Summary of activities since 2012

BDCA was formed in 2012 and its first project – in consultation with SECAD and UCC was to conduct a parish-wide survey to gain an understanding of the issues of concern to those living in the area. The results were collated and 8 key topics were identified:

1. Culture & Heritage

2. Social Inclusion

3 - Environment

4. Safety & Security

5. Roads and Road Safety

6. Communications

7. Recreation

8. Infrastructure

Upon completion of the community survey, annual action plans have been compiled by BDCA since 2012 to ensure continued community development in the eight key areas of concern for residents. In addition. a community website was launched in 2013 and has been regularly upgraded with a dedicated administrator appointed in 2021. Between 2013 and 2021, funding has been received from local donations, SECAD and Cork County Council amounting to €110,000. This is a significant amount of funding which showcases local governments commitment to rural community development. BDCA also participated in the Community Employment Scheme and supported the formation of the Tidy Towns Committee and the Retired Mens Club. BDCA also provide support, insurance and funding when possible to the Tidy Towns Group. Since 2012, in association with UCC, a number of projects have been carried through CARL (community academic research links) to assist the work of BDCA from a research and academic standpoint. BDCA also maintains regular engagement with Cork County and City Council officials and elected representatives to ensure essential roadworks are completed. Through Cork County Council's Village Renewal Scheme, several works have been carried out in the villages of Ballinora and Waterfall to improve roadside fencing and to clear areas for planting with flowers and shrubs. A major project was undertaken to improve the visual appearance of Ballinora and Waterfall with flowers planted in hanging baskets, flower baskets erected on bridges, flowers planted in half barrels, and other measures to improve the visual appearance of the area. Wilding areas have been set aside throughout the parish to create bee friendly environments and the use of herbicides and pesticides was discontinued. A mural was also painted on the school wall at the entrance to the GAA pitch in Ballinora, depicting the major events in the parish since 1199.

Interpretative signs have been erected in Ballinora, Waterfall and Inishkenny graveyards and a heritage trail has been identified and mapped. Sixteen plaques explaining the history of the various focal points along the trail have been put in place and public seating was installed in a number of locations along the trail. BDCA, in collaboration with the Retired Men's Club, cleared the historic graveyards at Inishkenny and Corbally and are presently being maintained on a regular basis with a stone stile built under supervision of the Heritage department at Cork Count Council to provide access to Corbally graveyard.

Name stones have been placed at the entrances to Ballinora and Waterfall villages and at a number of cross roads. Over twenty finger post signs have also been installed throughout the parish. “Walkers on the road” signs were installed on roads around the parish to alert motorists to drive carefully, electronic speed signs were installed in Waterfall and Curraheen, and a text alert system was established to improve security in the area.

Improved lighting and a footpath were installed in Ballinora village, the school and church walls have been painted and two electronic traffic calming signs were installed at both sides of the school as increased security measures to alert motorists to the presence of schoolchildren.

BDCA, in collaboration with Ballinora Tidy Towns built a stone wall near Waterfall railway bridge. Working with Wildworks, BDCA has prepared a local digitised habitat map to Fossitt Level 3 as part of a 5 year nature and biodiversity plan. The ultimate objective of this project is the preparation and implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for the Ballinora/Waterfall area. A bat study is also currently underway.

Future projects include a walkway between Ballinora and Waterfall villages, a footpath from Waterfall village to the GAA pitch in Ballymah, traffic calming signs on roads throughout the parish and so on.

Projects undertaken since 2012

- Corbally graveyard stone stile pedestrian entrance.
- Tree removal project at Enniskenny.
- Collaboration with the Men’s Shed on a planting scheme in both graveyards from our BDCA funds.
- Identifying and mapping of a Heritage trail including the stone markers, the walking signs and public seating.
- Vintage runs.
- Insurance support put in place for the Tidy Towns committee.
- Text Alert system.
- Flower project of 2018.
- Fossitt level 3 habitat mapping single site project/ biodiversity project of 2019/2020 (Including Bats in Ballinora project, 2021).
- Wildwork report issued and uploaded to ballinora.com website.
- Information brochure printed and distributed throughout the parish.
- Website Upgrade.

The above projects represent large-scale projects. Within these projects are often dozens of additional sub-projects as outlined below:

- Dinny Cronin's bridge cleaned.
- Poles and hanging baskets erected at this bridge.
- Flower boxes attached to this bridge.
- Turn at Dinny Cronin's cleaned and banked up with top soil.
- Ballinora stone sign placed at Dinny Cronin's corner.
- Wall at Fr. Declan's painted.
- Ugly drain cleaned up opposite Priests house.
- Church walls painted.
- Walls painted outside house next to Ballinora Graveyard..
- Poles erected outside both gates of Church.
- Flower tubs placed outside main entrance door to Church.
- Flower tubs placed outside school entrance.
- School walls painted.
- Church perimeter walls and Graveyard wall painted.
- Poles and baskets erected outside wood side estate.
- Heritage sites identified and marked with plaques in the colours of Ballinora.
- Interpretative board designed and placed across the road from the GAA entrance.
- Bank cleaned up at Goblin corner and banked up with top soil.
- Ballinora stone sign placed at the corner Hall Hill.
- Poles and hanging baskets erected at Hall Hill Bridge.
- Flower boxes attached to Hall Hill Bridge.
- Wall repaired and pointed at Hall Hill Bridge.
- New stone sign at Waterfall.
- Waterfall Bridge and surrounding areas cleaned.
- New kerbing installed down from Waterfall Pub.
- Flower tubs placed outside O'Shea's Pub and other locations around the parish.
- 18 finger post signs placed at various locations around Ballinora and Waterfall.
- 16 Text alert signs erected at various locations around Ballinora and Waterfall.
- Poles and baskets erected outside Falvey's wall.
- New railway beds designed and place on the bank opposite the pub.
- New path laid outside bank opposite the pub.

- Poles hanging baskets and interpretative board placed outside Springvale Estate.
- New seat, base and flower tubs placed outside entrance to Springvale Estate.
- High bank cleaned across from Springvale.
- New Waterfall stone sign placed between Pub and Lynches Farm.
- Finger post sign erected pointing towards Inniskenny Graveyard and Corbally Graveyard.
- Inniskenny graveyard tidied up.
- Signs replaced at Corbally Cross.
- New Heritage sign erected outside Inniskenny Graveyard.
- Innskenny Graveyard survey and mapping completed for this graveyard.
- Two stone signs placed at Jimmy's Cross.
- Corbally graveyard cleaned.
- Finger post sign placed at Corbally.
- Roads lined from Marymount to Abbey Bridge and through Ballinora Village.
- School traffic calming signs installed.
- Traffic calming signs installed at Curaheen and Waterfall.
- Stone sign at Maglin bridge.
- Stone sign at Corbally Cross.
- Road kerbing laid across from Tony O' Mahony House.
- Area around Waterfall Bridge cleaned and ivy removed from bridge.
- Heritage Trail completed.
- Walker signs erected around the parish.
- Large mural to Ballinora Village.
- Vintage Rally.
- Village street lighting.
- Corbally graveyard style entrance completed.
- 3 seats placed around the parish.
- Information brochure distributed to every household in the parish.

On May 26th, 2021, Ballinora and District Community Association conducted a review of their progress on their 2020 Action Plan. The review is organized in line with the 8 key themes first identified in the 2012 survey and by geographical area.

1. Culture & Heritage

- Erect a fence and access stile at Corbally graveyard. **(Completed)**
- Remove trees at Inishkenny graveyard. Funding granted. (**Scheduled for completion in September 2021.)**
- Prepare a maintenance plan for Inishkenny and Corbally graveyards. **(Completed)**
- Place vintage agricultural machinery in areas other than Ballinora and Waterfall villages. **(Not Completed)**
- Seek funding to place sculptures/art pieces in Ballinora and Waterfall villages. **(Not Completed)**
- Research impact of West Cork Railway on life in Ballinora. **(Not Completed)**
- Prepare management plan for Waterfall bridge**. (Not Completed)**
- Research archeological sites in Ballinora/Waterfall. **(Not Completed)**
- Research local activity in Ballinora/Waterfall during the 1921 War of Independence. **(Not Completed)**
- Research the building of the Viaduct and railway line passing through Waterfall. **(Not Completed)**
- Paint mural of Waterfall Railway Station somewhere in Waterfall village. **(Not Completed**)
- Repair/restore the old church in Inishkenny graveyard. **(Not Completed)**
- Install old style replica phone box. **(Not Completed)**

2. Social Inclusion

- Investigate rural bus service for Ballinora/Waterfall. **(Not Completed)**
- Promote social opportunities for older people, particularly during the day - a Drama Group, Book Club, Scrabble Club, Historical Society, House Visitations. **(Not possible due to Covid 19)**
-

3. Environment

- Through the 'Better Energy Communities Programme 2020', facilitate a **c**ommunity-wide deep retrofit energy improvement in buildings. **(Not Completed)**
- Promote reduction in plastic use. **(Not Completed)**
- Take active steps to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides. **(Completed)**
- Prepare a water conservation and food waste reduction plan. **(Not Completed)**
- Research appropriate native shrubs and flowers and carry out pollinator friendly and companion planting**. (Completed)**
- Investigate establishing a community composting facility. **(Not Completed)**
- Identify and put in place a plan to eradicate invasive plant species. **(Not Completed)**
- Identify areas suitable for 'wilding'. **(Completed)**
- Repair gaps in hedgerows. **(Not Completed)**
- Identify areas suitable as 'managed areas for biodiversity'. **(Completed)**
- Participate in BirdWatch Ireland's Garden Bird Survey in Dec/Jan/Feb. **(Completed)**

Waterfall Village

- Improve visual impact of entrance to Waterfall Village from the west. **(Completed)**
- Add extra Waterfall finger post signs. **(Not Completed)**
- Plant Ballinora Pippin apple trees. **(Completed)**
- Fit solar lighting to Waterfall Railway Bridge, plant 4 sides of the bridge. **(Not Completed)**
- Plant native and pollinator friendly shrubs in Waterfall Village. **(Completed)**
- Erect stone wall between railway bridge and Kent's entrance. **(Funding Granted)**
- Conduct a biodiversity, flora & fauna and pollination baseline study. **(Completed)**
- Paint field gates around Waterfall. **(Completed)**

- Replace Waterfall village post box. **(Not Completed)**

Ballinora Village

- Paint perimeter church and school walls. **(Partially Completed)**
- Prepare a biodiversity, flora & fauna and pollination baseline study**. (Completed)**
- Erect a display board at Goblin Corner indicating A Natural Bird Sanctuary at this area. (Completed)
- Install footpath in Ballinora Village from the bridge to the school. (Partially Completed)
- Plant Ballinora Pippin apple trees. **(Completed)**
- Place 2 more flower boxes on bridge at bottom of hall hill. **(Completed)**
- Set up a working group to maintain the village on a weekly basis. **(Not Completed)**
- Repair the stonework on bridge at entrance to the village from Ballinora Cross. **(Not Completed)**

Jimmy's Cross

- Install public lighting. **(Not Completed)**
- Cut grass on road verges, ditches and ditch walls on a regular basis. **(Completed)**

Ballinora Cross

- Install public lighting. **(Not Completed)**
- Cut grass on road verges, ditches and ditch walls on a regular basis using strimmer. **(Completed)**

Maglin Bridge

- Install public lighting. **(Not Completed)**
- Cut grass on road verges, ditches and ditch walls on a regular basis using strimmer. **(Completed)**

Corbally Cross

- Clean area across from Corbally graveyard. **(Not Completed)**

- Install public lighting. **(Not Completed)**
- Cut grass on road verges, ditches and ditch walls on a regular basis using strimmer. **(Completed)**

Top of the World

- Erect 360 deg panorama photo of surrounding countryside. **(Not Completed**)

4. Safety & Security

- Offer property log-books to residents. **(Not Completed)**
- Install public lighting. **(Not Completed)**

5. Roads and Road Safety

- Identify and resolve repeat road flooding black spots around the parish. **(Completed)**
- Remove 2 trees at west side of Old Abbey Railway Bridge. **(Not Completed)**
- Build a pathway from Ballinora to Waterfall to Ballymah GAA pitch to Marymount bus stop via rural regeneration program. **(Study Commenced)**
- Put traffic management plan in place for the roads from Maglin to Jimmy's Cross, Curraheen to Ballinora Cross and Ballymah to Waterfall.
- Provide input to the current rural road speed limits review by Cork County Council.
- Place convex mirrors at dangerous bends.
- Erect kerbs near the wall at Inniskenny Graveyard and tarmac into the new kerbs.

6. Communications

- Appoint an administrator for the community website/twitter/Facebook. **(Completed)**
- Publish a monthly information leaflet with information on events taking place in the parish. **(Not Completed)**
- Conduct a parish wide survey with assistance from SECAD. **(Not Completed)**
- Erect a 'billboard' in Ballinora ad Waterfall for use by organisations promoting events. **(Not Completed)**

7. Recreation

- Position seats at various locations along the heritage trail. **(Completed)**
- Develop Sli na Slainte walk in the parish – km marking, steps taken, Kcal burned. **(Not Completed)**

8 .Infrastructure

- Investigate location and costs of 40+ seating meeting room with kitchen, toilets etc. **(Not Completed)**

Methodology

For the purpose of this project, a qualitative method is used to gather and collate feedback, via a limited online social survey, from key stakeholders in Ballinora. This survey is used in tandem with a literature review to identify best practices and areas for improvement that may benefit Ballinora and District Community Association. Internet research methods using online methods of communication such as email are useful in a number of ways. They are economical in terms of time and money, distance is no problem, and data can be collected and collated very quickly. (Bryman, 2012: 658).

The method of administering the online social survey for this project was via email. The web survey was attached to the email following an introduction to the questionnaire in the body of the email. The web survey was constructed using a secure google form which was only available to participants who directly received the email from the researcher. One of the main advantages of the web survey is that they can be designed so that, "when there is a filter question (for example, 'if yes go to question 12, if no go to question 14'), it skips automatically to the next appropriate question". (Bryman, 2012: 671).

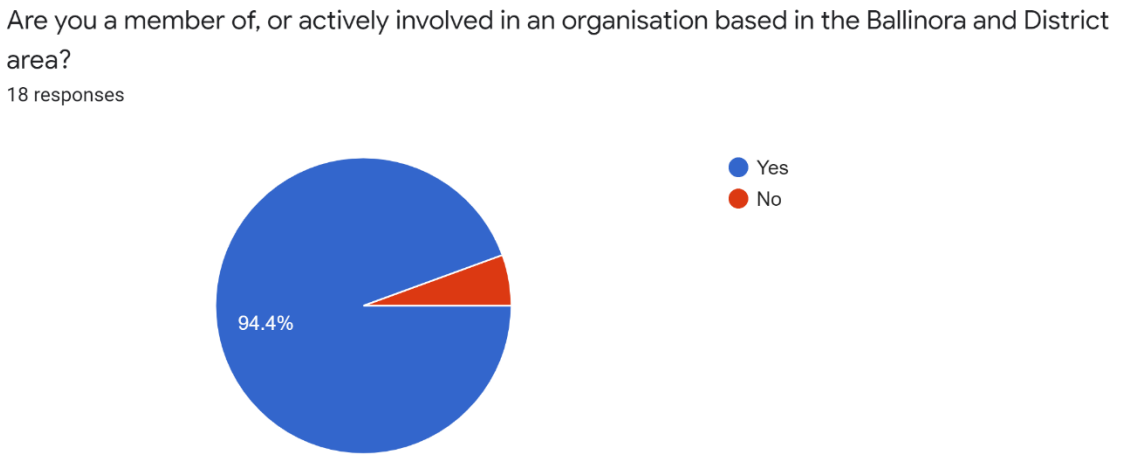
Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, administering a wide-scale community survey would present enormous challenges in terms of individual access to internet, computer skills of older participants, and the ability of the researcher to accumulate emails for a large population. In person surveys were not feasible given current pandemic restrictions. The survey was sent, via email, to 23 'key stakeholders' in the Ballinora area. These key stakeholders were identified through their activity in other Ballinora and district based organisations at the community level. Also included in the survey are current members of Ballinora and District Community

Association. The primary aim of focusing on this select group is to generate responses from those members of the community who are actively involved in both the BDCA and other community, sporting or other Ballinora based organisations.

As with all online surveys, the researcher is presented with sampling issues and limitations on the data collected. “A major issue and limitation is that not everyone in any nation is online and has the technical ability to handle questionnaires online in either email or Web formats”. (Bryman, 2012: 673). This issue was overcome by focusing on key stakeholders via interorganisational survey administration. This allows the researcher to generate feedback from a population of particular relevance to the project being undertaken. Additionally, most people actively involved in organisations will generally be computer literate and “familiar with the details of using email and the internet”. (Bryan, 2012: 674).

Survey Results

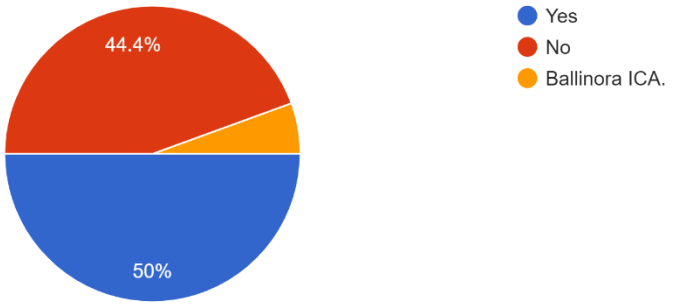
This survey formed part of a wider audit of the activities of Ballinora and District Community Association and was used to generate feedback from stakeholders in other Ballinora and district based organisations. The purpose of this survey was to help the researcher and BDCA gain a broader understanding of the perception of the activities of the community association, and to assist in the formation of a successful and sustainable future strategy in the community.



Key:

Yes =	17
No =	1

Are you a member of, or actively involved in Ballinora and District Community Association?
18 responses



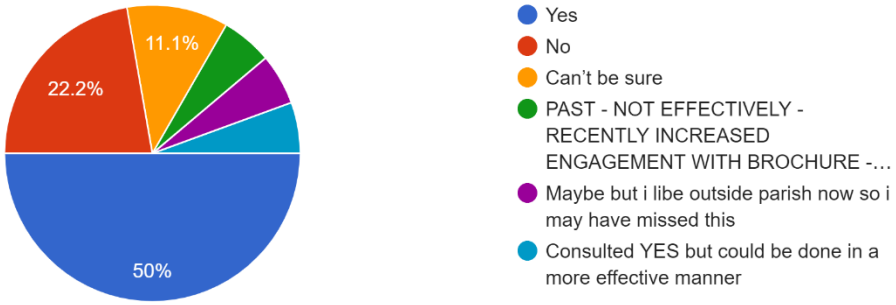
Key:

Yes = 9

No = 8

"Ballinora ICA" = 1

In your opinion, does Ballinora and District Community Association (or has it previously) engaged with or consulted the residents of the community ...of the community association in an effective way?
18 responses



Key:

Yes = 9

No = 4

"Can't be sure" = 2

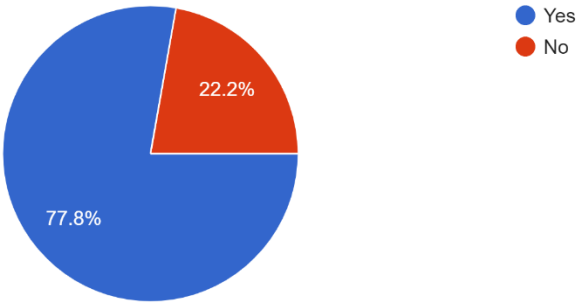
Past – Not effectively – Recently increased engagement with brochure - Current improving with more engagement ie website, Facebook, Twitter, and present survey = 1

Maybe but I live outside parish now so I may have missed this = 1

Consulted YES but could be done in a more effective manner = 1

Have you or the organisation(s) you are a member of/involved with ever worked with Ballinora Community Association on a project or activity in the community?

18 responses



Key:

Yes = 14

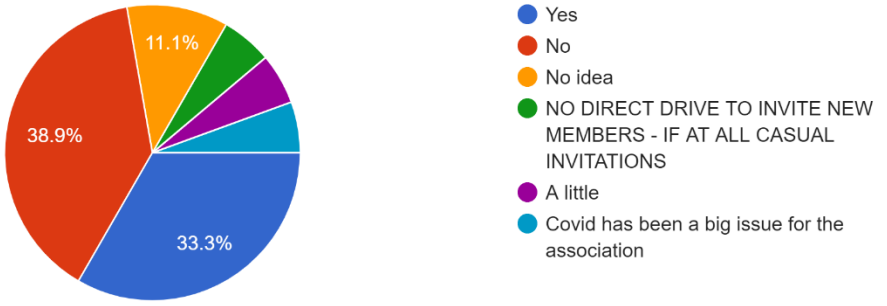
No = 4

If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, how would you describe the experience of working with Ballinora and District Community Association, and would you like to work with them again? 14 responses

- Tidy towns and shared scout hall
- The organisation has been very proactive in dealing with issues raised in the 2012 survey
- we have a very good relationship with the above association and will be happy to work with them again
- CURRENTLY AS A MEMBER WORKING WITH BDCA - POSITIVE EXPERIENCE - WILL CONTINUE WORKING ON CURRENT AND NEW PROJECTS
- Very rewarding as a retired mob of community
- I feel it benefits the community.
- Very helpful and open to the needs of our community
- Worked well...would work again. However more streamlined structure and clear roles required
- Communication poor. Tend to do their own thing.
- They do great work, but it appears very few people from the parish know much about this work
- Excellent and I would do so again.
- I am a member of the community association, I am also an active member of the GAA, Tidy Towns and local church.
- very good and yes would work with them again

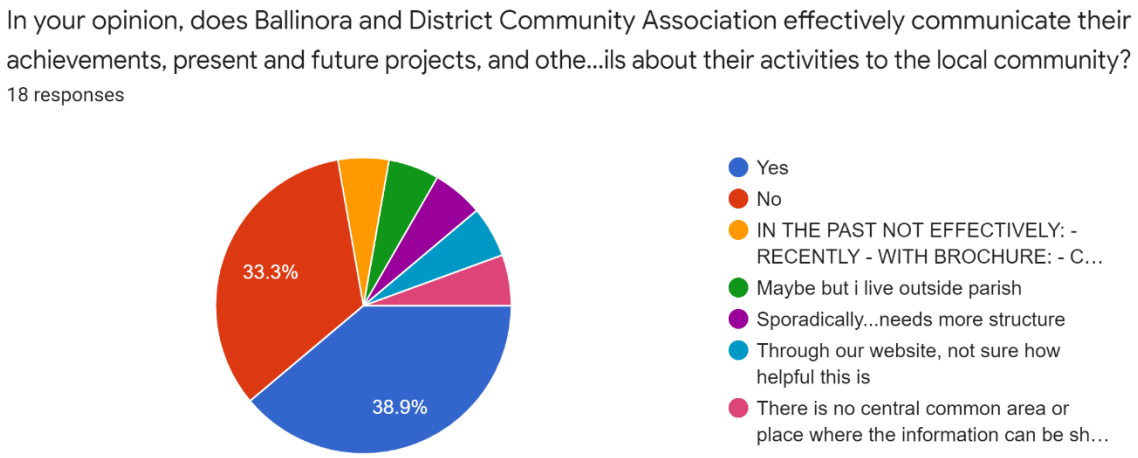
In your opinion, does Ballinora and District Community Assocation actively invite membership of the organisation?

18 responses



Key:

Yes =	6
No =	7
No idea =	2
No direct drive to invite new members – if at all casual invitations =	1
A little =	1
Covid has been a big issue for the association =	1



Key:

Yes = 7

No = 6

In the past not effectively – recently with brochure – currently increasingly with renewed website, Facebook and twitter = 1

Maybe but I live outside parish = 1

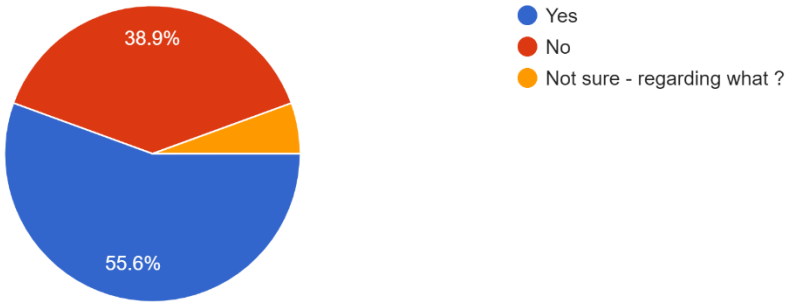
Sporadically… needs more structure = 1

Through our website, not sure how helpful this is = 1

There is no central common area or place where the information can be shared and spread around to everyone in the community = 1

Ballinora and District Community Association circulated an information flyer/literature to residents in recent times. Do you recall receiving this flyer?

18 responses



Key:

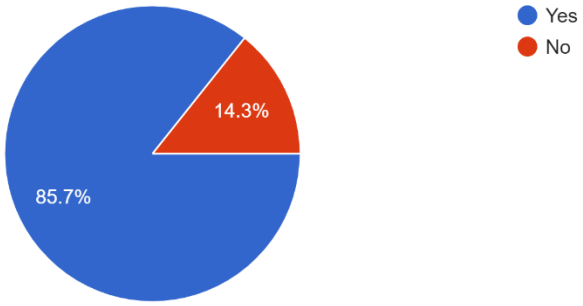
Yes = 10

No = 7

Not sure – regarding what? = 1

If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, would you like to see more frequent information flyers delivered to residents/disseminated in the ...from Ballinora and District Community Association?

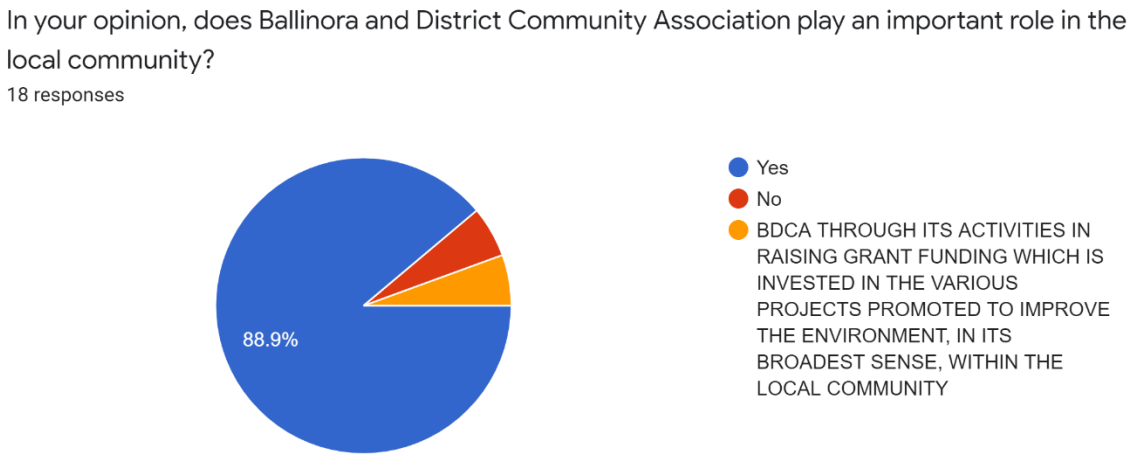
14 responses



Key:

Yes = 12

No = 2



Key:

Yes = 16

No = 1

BDCA through its activities in raising grant funding which is invested in the various projects promoted to improve the environment, in its broadest sense, within the local community = 1

As a member of another Ballinora and District based organisation, would you like to see more collaboration and cooperation between Ballinora an... Association and other organisations in the area?

18 responses



Key:

Yes = 15

No = 0

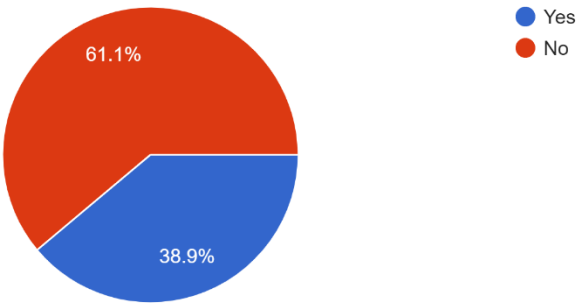
As a member of BDCA would wish to see greater collaboration with other community organisations. Desirable to have other organisation formally represented on the BDCA = 1

It seems satisfactory as is = 1

Not involved but would like to see it = 1

Would you like to get involved more actively in Ballinora and District Community Association?

18 responses



Key:

Yes = 11

No = 7

If you answered "Yes" or "No" to the above question, please explain your answer in a few sentences. 18 responses

- I wish participate and assist with community activities
- I would like to be involved in specific projects of interest.
- I am happy to help when requested. However I am actively involved in 3 other community activities and so could not commit to having a greater involvement with Ballinora and District Community Association
- AM CURRENTLY INVOLVED WITH BDCA
- I am doing my best so far
- Not at this time but certainly in the future.
- Am already involved
- Busy enough at present
- I'm in the scouts and Tidy Towns which is under the umbrella of the community development
- Very actively involved at present
- Too much on at the moment
- I am a committee member and hope to remain for a couple of more years
- Too busy
- Community involvement is always beneficial on a personal level.
- I am already involved.
- Not sure what the assoc. Do
- By being involved , I can include others in the activities and thus help our community association to grow.

In your opinion, does Ballinora and District Community Association need to improve? If so, how would you like to see it improve? 18 responses

- Possibly- I cannot say
- Yes - communication with the residents needs to be improved.
- The association has achieved a lot since it was established and have been recognised at county level for their efforts. I look forward to them developing the projects already in place
- (1) INCREASE COLLABORATION WITH OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS WITH FORMAL REPRESENTATION ON THE BDCA. (2) ACTIVELY INVITE YOUNGER INDIVIDUALS TO BECOME MEMBERS OF BDCA (3) CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE SUCCESSES OF THE BDCA AND IMPROVE AND DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE BROADER COMMUNITY
- Don't know
- No,.The volunteers are doing a great job.
- Yes. Broader committee base with new ideas.
- They probably will do more when covid restrictions ease.
- Communication is the key. It's hard to get information across to all the community. Some people not on social media so I think that's our biggest challenge. Some

projects are visable to the public but alot of background work is not. So I think our biggest challenge is communication.
- More interaction on regular basis with community. More representative of community and better interaction with other community groups.
- Needs to engage more with the school and community. Have done great work but need to publicise it and be more vibrant like the Tidy Towns.
- Better communication, more members new blood, better cooperation within the parish.
- Communication and consultation before taking on initiatives
- BDCA is doing very well and constantly seeks to improve.
- Communicate through electronic means much better. Our facebook page and website are not regularly updated. I also believe that we should have social gatherings, coffee mornings/table quizes when health advice allows.
- Not sure what they do so need to improve and showcase what they do and who they are!
- Grow in members,get as many people and families involved

Analysis

While the survey results should not be considered as having a wide representation of the views of the wider community, there are several examples of areas where BDCA can benefit from a narrower and more focused survey. The survey was sent to 25 people of which 18 responded. The respondents are, in all cases but 1, active members of various different organisations within the Ballinora and district area. The primary areas of improvement identified from the survey are within community engagement, communication, and BDCA's efforts to get the wider community actively involved as stakeholders in their area.

There are several examples of each of these three categories being raised in the comments and in the answers provided to the survey questions. As we can see from the results, over 55% of respondents recall receiving an information flyer from BDCA and of those respondents, over 85% would like to see more frequent circulation of flyers to residents of the area. One area of interest for BDCA is recruitment and a broadening of their activist base. It is best practice for organisations of a voluntary and rural nature to encourage a wide range of age demographics to be actively involved in the running of the organisation. BDCA could appeal to younger demographics through the selection of projects that would appeal more specifically to younger residents.

The key takeaway from the survey is the need for more engagement with the community from BDCA. This is, of course, not without its own challenges in the era of Covid-19. There are many innovative ways that this can be improved such as through establishing an active and

conversational presence on social media platform where community groups can specifically be created for residents of Ballinora to communicate directly via these platforms. These have been used to great effect by other organisations and immediately increase awareness of BDCA and engagement with the wider community.

Conclusion

Ballinora and District Community Association is an excellent example of what an effective rural community organisation can be with enough dedication and hard work, particularly from a core group of members who share the same goal. BDCA are always seeking to improve and evolve in their community. There are, of course, always ways in which you can improve. There are innovative solutions to almost every issue an organisation will face. For BDCA, the most important areas for improvement, in my view, are as follows:

1. Undertake initiatives in response to the above survey. Couple this with a full community survey in 2022, which will be 10 years since the previous community survey.
2. Diversify funding sources. BDCA has so far relied largely upon funding from local authorities. While this is often adequate for community organisations, there are over 500 other funding bodies active in the NGO sector in Ireland. Many of these bodies provide funding for specific projects and specialised, target funding for local initiatives. BDCA can exploit many of these opportunities simply by analysing the databases available online. These are provided in the bibliography.
3. Appeal to younger people. This is somewhat tied to point 2 above because a great way to engage younger people in the community is by embarking upon initiatives that younger residents can have a more active role in. For example, BDCA could apply for grant specific funding to build a tennis court or basketball court. This would increase the awareness of young people towards the association and give them some ‘skin in the game’ to coin a phrase.

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