

2024 Annual Suck Valley Way Training Conference



The Rise of Loneliness on The Emerald Isle

How Community Development & Planning may be the remedy.



*Conference will be launched by Shane Tiernan - Chief
Executive of Roscommon County Council*

 **Hannon's Hotel, Athlone Road,
Roscommon, Co. Roscommon**



**Wednesday 13th
& Thursday 14th
March 2024**



**9:30am-5:00pm
Wednesday
10:00am-3:00pm
Thursday**

Conference Fee: €130

Contact: Cllr. Anthony Waldron, Chairperson, The
Suck Valley Way
Email: svwconference2022@gmail.com
Phone: 086 7866774





Shane Tiernan

CE Of Roscommon County Council

Mr. Tiernan has worked in the Local Authority sector since 2008. He was appointed as a Director of Services in Roscommon County Council in 2018, having previously worked for Leitrim County Council. In July 2023, he was appointed as Chief Executive of Roscommon County Council following an eight month period serving as Temporary Chief Executive. Mr. Tiernan has wide-ranging experience in the sector, having held senior management responsibility for many service divisions and was Returning Officer for Roscommon in the 2019 local elections. Before working in public service, Mr. Tiernan held senior management positions with several multinational organisations including Magna-Donnelly and Kimball International, as well as working with Ericsson. Qualifying in engineering, Mr. Tiernan attended Atlantic Technology University Sligo. He holds a Masters Degree in Management Practice from Trinity College Dublin as well as a Diploma in Management from the Irish Management Institute and is also a graduate of the Harvard Programme for Senior Executives in State and Local Government.



Martina Earley

CEO of Roscommon LEADER Partnership

Martina Earley, CEO of Roscommon LEADER Partnership is a highly motivated with a proven track record of managing respected local development organisations. She has a Bachelor of Business Studies (Honours) and led the strategic planning process in Counties Leitrim and Roscommon for economic and social development. She is currently the National Chairperson of the Irish local Development Network which entails responsibility for the organisation's strategic direction. At the highest level, this role has honed and refined her tactical management and negotiation skills. Martina is proud to live and work in Roscommon and takes inspiration from the impact of the community and voluntary sector in delivering change for rural Ireland.



Cllr Anthony Waldron

Chairperson of Suck Valley Way Co. Councillor in the Roscommon Municipal District.

Anthony is the Chairman of the Suck Valley Way Development Co-Op Ltd and takes a very hands-on approach to the promotion and development of the wider Suck Valley Region. The Suck Valley Way Conference was Anthony's idea and now in its 3rd year has grown from strength to strength and a popular fixture on the AILG Conference Calendar.

Suck Valley Way Development Co-Op Ltd

Focused on Promoting and developing recreational activities along the River Suck, the Suck Valley Way Development Cooperative Society (‘the Cooperative’) is a community group representing local residents, businesses, clubs, and communities in the river valley region. The group is composed of a committee of members who oversee the activities of the Cooperative on behalf of the wider membership.

Recent Successes included The Suck River Jettys project with the delivery and planned delivery of 2 boat access points locally.

The Completed Blueway Feasibility Study - With a view on delivering a broader amenity, jobs and tourists to our region and establishing a Kayaking Club and training for members

Background Photo: Inlet to the river suck , located near the historic village of Ballintubber , co Roscommon

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TREASURER
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Ronan Bilbow

Roscommon Social Prescribing
Co-Ordinator

Ronan is currently the Social Prescribing Coordinator for Co. Roscommon His role includes helping people in Roscommon integrate back into society by linking them with non clinical, social activities around the county. This is done with the aim of improving physical and mental wellbeing. Ronan was also the Rural Recreational officer for County Roscommon. This role involved coordinating, developing and enhancing recreational waking infrastructure around Roscommon. Ronan also has a background in Training & Consultancy.



Ciaran Mullooly

EUJTF Tourism Activator at Longford
County Council

Ciaran Mullooly is a former journalist and author who started his career as a reporter in the Longford Leader in 1985, later moving to RTÉ, where he worked on the Ear To The Ground show before becoming the broadcaster's midlands correspondent in 1995. The well-known journalist and broadcaster was a familiar face on TV screens across the country having worked with the national broadcaster for 27 years before announcing his retirement in June 2021. He subsequently took up a role as Community Development and Social Enterprise Worker with the Roscommon LEADER Partnership and as recently taken up post with Longford County Council in Tourism.



Frank Dillon

Head of Communications &
Campaigns with ALONE

Frank Dillon is Head of Communications & Campaigns with ALONE, he has previously worked in national radio and the Irish Mens Sheds Association. ALONE has been a campaigning organisation since it was founded and its work involves founding and providing secretariat support to the Loneliness Taskforce, a cross generational coalition which campaigns on loneliness. ALONE campaigns for policy that will transform ageing at home in Ireland.



Gillian McGarry

EU Just Transition Tourism Activator
for Co. Roscommon

A Commerce Int. graduate from NUI Galway with a Master of Business from TUS Athlone. Gillian has a background in finance with a number of multinational organisations. Currently working as the EU Just Transition Tourism Activator for Co. Roscommon supporting economic diversification through the EU Just Transition Fund and Failte Ireland Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme to provide investment grant aid for private and community SME's. This fund provides grants and other capability - building supports to businesses and communities who have ideas for visitor experiences, accommodation choices and other services that complement these developments. This scheme is built on the principles of regenerative tourism. Any tourism investment must seek to develop tourism in a way that helps to deliver a low carbon future, support biodiversity and help regenerate local communities.



Karen Mc Hugh

Safe Home Ireland

Karen Mc Hugh joined Safe Home Ireland in May 2015. She is a Social Worker by profession and has worked in the migrant sector for most of her career, with Irish emigrants in London, immigrants to Ireland and now with returning Irish emigrants. Prior to working with Safe Home Ireland, Karen was the CEO of Doras, a migrant support charity in Limerick and was also a former Director of an Irish Centre in London. Karen is passionate about human rights, inclusion and social justice. Karen is a returned emigrant and knows first-hand the challenges faced by some Irish abroad, in particular the emotional bond and the pull factor to return home once more.

Background Photo: Castlerea Suck Valley Way Tail

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Dick Ridge

Owner PodUmna Village, De Burgos Gate Lodge & Bike Hire,

Dick Ridge owner/ operator of Podumna Village "Glamping site" and "Dicks Bike Hire" both ran as family businesses with his wife Liz and daughter Neasa.

Located in the town of Portumna and operating since 2013 both businesses complement each other and have had a very positive effect on tourism in the local area. His main drive is to create a positive tourism experience for visitors to Portumna and the extended local area, working closely alongside all vested parties, local businesses, government bodies and volunteer groups. He strongly holds the view that success in rural Ireland in the tourism industry can only be achieved when all bodies work in harmony and support each other.



John Higgins

Chairperson of An Bealach

For over 40 years of work at community/town development both as a professional and a volunteer, John Higgins epitomizes much of what is possible for rural and regional development. In 1990 John resigned from his teaching post to work as a full-time community development manager in Kiltimagh, County Mayo. Over 5 years he produced and oversaw an economic development plan, the first of its kind, while also winning a series of community awards. In 1995, John moved on to regional development activity and became CEO of the Western Development Partnership Board (WDPB), under the auspices of the Department of An Taoiseach. The WDPB produced the plan entitled The Challenge, which resulted in the establishment of the Western Development Commission. John has also been seen as the driving force of the regional initiative for the digital creative sectors in the West. An Bealach Creative Hub involves a new-build Digital Creative Hub and Immersive Technology Studio at the Fairgreen site in Ballaghaderreen.



Arnold Donnelly

Assistant Inspector with Inland Fisheries

Arnold Donnelly has spent the last 17 years working with Inland Fisheries across Leitrim, Roscommon and Galway. Originally from Lecarrow in Co. Roscommon, Arnold received his Masters Degree in 2006 from University College Dublin. His current role includes conserving, developing and protecting the local inland Fisheries Resources. The company is responsible for the management of Ireland's 74,000 km of rivers and streams together with 128,000 lake hectares. Arnold worked as a Fisheries Officer in Co. Roscommon, for many years before being promoted to Assistant Inspector where he worked in both Co. Roscommon & Leitrim. Arnold also is involved in the local community through sport and recreation.



Kevin Crowley

Angling Inspector Inland Fisheries

Kevin Crowley has spent the last 26 years working in inland fisheries. After completing his studies at TCD and UCC, he worked on a cross-border EU-funded salmon restoration project, followed by a stint as Catchment Management Officer for the Lough Melvin catchment. In 2004 he moved to Galway to take up a post as Angling Inspector, and has worked in angling promotion since then. Kevin is responsible for the UK tourism angling market and also assists with the French market. He also does a lot of work in education and outreach.

Background Photo: Ballygar to Creggs Suck Valley Way Trail

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Senator Martin Conway

Seanad spokesperson on Justice and
Equality

Martin Conway is a member of the 26th Seanad and previously served in the 24th Seanad on the Administrative Panel, having been elected in 2011. He is the Seanad spokesperson on Justice and Equality and is the first visually impaired member of the Oireachtas. He was first elected to Clare County Council in June 2004 representing North Clare and was re-elected in 2009, topping the poll. Martin graduated with a Degree in Economics and Politics from University College Dublin in 1998. One of his proudest moments was to receive the prestigious University College Dublin President's Award for Excellence, in recognition of his commitment for campaigning and advocacy for people with disabilities. Martin campaigns tirelessly on behalf of people with disabilities for the provision of adequate housing, improved education and employment opportunities, and proper sport facilities. Martin is a founding member of AHEAD-The Association of Higher Education Access and Disability-which endeavours to make education accessible to all. He is particularly proud of the Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) programme which has successfully placed over 150 graduates with disabilities in employment over the last seven years.



Cllr Dr Evelyn Parsons

Leas Cathaoirleach of Galway
County Council 2023 -2024

Evelyn is the current Leas Cathaoirleach of Galway County Council. She was elected as the Cathaoirleach of the Ballinasloe Municipal District in 2022, making her the first female to be elected. Evelyn graduated from NUI Galway with a degree in medicine and practiced as a GP for 25 years. Evelyn is a member of many councils such as the Regional Health Forum West, the regional Health Committee. She also sits on the board for the GRETB and the Galway County Public Arts Management Committee. She is also a member of the regional WoMeN Cllr Caucus which is an association of female councillors that empowers women to be elected and to stay in politics. Her core priorities are Health, Environment, Investment, promoting Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Tourism Development, advocating to route Ballinasloe as the Hosting Town on Athlone to Galway Greenway.



Cllr John Keogh

Chairperson Of Roscommon County
Council

A native of Taughmaconnell, Cllr. John Keogh has been a member of Roscommon County Council since first being elected in 2009. He has been re-elected in each subsequent election in 2014 and in 2019. Cllr. Keogh was elected Cathaoirleach of Roscommon County Council in June 2023. He is a practising solicitor with Hayden & Co Solicitors in Athlone working in the area of general practice and resides in the Monksland/Bealnamulla area in South Roscommon. John is a passionate advocate for community groups and the citizens they serve. He is a strong supporter of the delivery of strong and effective local democracy to bring real and effective benefits to our towns, parishes and villages in Roscommon. As one of the younger serving members on Roscommon County Council, John is also committed to the development of further sporting and recreational facilities for everyone. This commitment will ensure the citizens of the county enjoy a quality of life which provides equal opportunity for everyone.



Tristan Auret

Owner of TN Media

As the owner of TN Media, Tristan specializes in providing high-quality videography, photography, and social media content creation services. With a passion for storytelling and a sharp attention to detail, he creates captivating visuals that connect with audiences. Tristan's passion for digital media led him to complete a degree in Digital Marketing From TUS followed by Digital Media Design in UCD. In addition to his creative work, he offers social media consulting services to help businesses enhance their online presence and achieve their goals. Over the years, he has had the privilege of collaborating with prestigious clients such as Cadbury Ireland, the Irish Women's Soccer Team, TAPiTAG, and Peddler Mac's, to name a few.

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John Neary

Tourism Officer Galway County Council

With over 10 years of experience in the tourism industry, John Neary excels at driving large-scale initiatives, building key stakeholder relationships, and delivering strategic objectives. As a Project Officer on the Wild Atlantic Way Team at the National Tourism Development Authority - Failte Ireland, John played a pivotal role in implementing critical regional and national projects. His strengths lie in project management, stakeholder engagement, and destination development. Recently, John has taken on a new role within Galway County Council. Here, he collaborates with Failte Irelands IHH team on delivering the Just Transition Fund (JTF) program. John is implementing Galway's first dedicated tourism strategy, ensuring sustainable growth and enhancing visitor experiences. His commitment extends to supporting the highly successful tourism industry within County Galway. In this dynamic environment, where innovation meets execution, John continues to drive value and contribute to strategic endeavours.



Lisa Joy

Tourism Officer, Roscommon County Council

Lisa Joy is the current Tourism Officer with Roscommon County Council. Lisa has an educational background in Business and Marketing, and has 18 years local authority experience having worked in a variety of departments including housing, regeneration, communications and International Relations. Lisa is manager of the Visit Roscommon brand and has successfully rolled out recent digital marketing campaigns for Roscommon. Lisa has experience working on tourism projects such as Destination towns, Outdoor recreation, festivals and events, and local authority just transition fund projects.



Teresa Roche

Chairperson of the IFA family and social affairs committee

Galway woman Teresa Roche is the new chair of the Irish Farming Association, Farm Family & Social Affairs Committee. As chair she promises to have a very busy agenda with the range of issues that she will cover. Initially, her focus will be on services for mental health, pensions for farm families, and encouraging greater involvement of women in farming.



Louise Weir

Adjunct Lecturer in Geography Department at NUI Galway

Louise Weir, based in the University of Galway, Ireland is an Associate Researcher, Lecturer and Professional Town Planner. She is currently the Principal Project Manager for the Horizon Europe project, FLIARA. In addition to this, she is also part of two other European projects and is involved in research with the migrant community in Longford as part of an Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission project. Louise's research expertise lies in rural regeneration and the sustainability dimensions of rural development, rural mobility, rural planning and the relationship between people, place and the environment in rural contexts.

Background Photo: Ballymoe to Ballintubber Suck Valley Way Trail

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Paul Healy

Founder of Roscommon People

Paul Healy has been working in the regional media for over 35 years. Having started out with the Longford Leader, he was subsequently appointed Editor of the Roscommon Champion, working in that role for 17 years. He was also Editor of the Longford NEWS for a period. In 2007 Paul and his wife Fiona established the Roscommon People newspaper. Paul is author of five books to date, on topics ranging from sport to social history. He is a regular contributor on the local and national airwaves.



Ciara Lawless

Radio Presenter with RosFM

Musician and Radio presenter, is a dedicated community officer and volunteer at RosFM Community Radio in Roscommon, for the past two years. Growing up in a family business background Ciara has a passion for amplifying the voices of local community groups, organizations, and businesses. Ciara conducts insightful interviews to highlight their invaluable contributions within local communities. Through her work, she not only emphasizes the importance of their efforts, but also fosters greater awareness within the community. At the upcoming Suck Valley Way conference Ciara will be introducing the guest speakers while also doing interviews which will all air live on her current affairs programme 'Good Morning Roscommon' live on Rosfm radio. Currently Ciara presents three weekly shows on Rosfm radio. Good Morning Roscommon, Inspired Lives and Historic looks Fashion Hooks. Promoting local talent and music artists.



Richard Canny

Deputy Editor of the Roscommon Herald

Richard is the Deputy Editor of the Roscommon Herald. He has thirty five years experience working in media and politics. Over this time, he has held a number of editorship roles with regional newspapers, and also worked in TV3 (now Virgin Media) for three years as a current affairs reporter. In the world of politics, Richard has worked as a speechwriter, researcher and policy analyst for politicians over the last two decades. He has also written a number of GAA sports books.



Angelina Nugent

Communication Consultant

Angelina Nugent is a Communications Consultant and freelance Sports Broadcaster with RTÉ Radio 1 and columnist with The Western People newspaper. She has over 25 years experience working in local radio, having headed up the Sports Department in Midwest Radio for 18 years up to 2019.

Background Photo: Castlecoote to Ballygar Suck Valley Way Trail

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Suck Valley Way Training Conference

Conference Programme 2024

The Suck Valley Way 

Wednesday 13th March – 9:30am-5:00pm

| | |
|---------|---|
| 9:30am | Registration for attendees at Hannon's Hotel, Athlone Road, Co. Roscommon |
| 10:00am | <i>Cllr John Keogh</i> Chairperson of Roscommon County Council |
| 10:15am | Official Launch of the Conference MC: <i>Mr Shane Tiernan</i> Chief Executive of Roscommon County Council |
| 10:30am | <i>Cllr Dr. Evelyn Parsons</i> Leas Cathaoirleach of Galway County Council 2023 -2024 |
| 10:45am | <i>Arnold Donnelly & Kevin Crowley</i> Assistant Inspector & Angling Inspector with Inland Fisheries |
| 11:15am | <i>Karen McHugh</i> Safe Home Ireland |
| 11:35am | Interval |
| 11:45am | <i>Martin Conway</i> Seanad spokesperson on Justice and Equality |
| 12:00pm | <i>Lisa Joy</i> Tourism Officer with Roscommon County Council |
| 12:15pm | <i>John Neary</i> Tourism Officer with Galway County Council |
| 12:45pm | Lunch |
| 2:30pm | <i>Martina Earley,</i> CEO, Roscommon LEADER Partnership |
| 3:00pm | <i>Dick Ridge</i> Owner PodUmna Village, De Burgos Gate Lodge & Bike Hire |
| 3:30pm | <i>Gillian McGarry</i> EU Just Transition Tourism Activator for Co. Roscommon |
| 4:00pm | Roscommon LEADER Partnership |
| 4:45pm | <i>John Higgins</i> Chairperson of An Bealach |
| 5:00pm | Closing Statement & Photo Opportunity |

Suck Valley Way Training Conference

Conference Programme 2024



Thursday 14th March – 10:00am-3:00pm

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 10:00am | Registration for attendees at Hannon's Hotel, Athlone Road, Co. Roscommon |
| 10:30am | <i>Ronan Bilbow</i> Roscommon Social Prescribing Co-Ordinator |
| 11:00am | <i>Ciaran Mullooly</i> EUJTF Tourism Activator at Longford County Council |
| 11:30am | <i>Louise Weir</i> Adjunct Lecturer in Geography Department at NUI Galway |
| 12:00pm | <i>Frank Dillon</i> Head of Communications & Campaigns with ALONE |
| 12:30pm | <i>Teresa Roache</i> Irish Farming Association |
| 1:00pm | Lunch |
| 2:00pm | <i>Tristan Auret</i> Owner/ Creative Director of TN Media Design |
| 2:50pm | Closing Statement & Photo Opportunity |

Hotel & Accommodation Details

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Abbey Hotel, Galway Road, Ballypheasan, Roscommon, F42F992. | 090 662 6240 |
| Jackson's Restaurant & Accomodation, Harrison Centre, The Square, Cloonbrackna, Roscommon, F42 H968 | 090 666 5599 |
| Gleason's Restaurant & Rooms, Market Square, Roscommon | 090 662 9654 |
| Hannon's Hotel, Athlone Road, Co.Roscommon (Special Delegate rate €85 single room) | 090 663 7644 |
| Ross House B&B, Ardnanagh, Roscommon | 086 379 7760 |
| Tully's Hotel, Main Street, Castlerea, Co.Roscommon | 094 962 0200 |
| Percy French Hotel, Farnbeg, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon | 071 963 3300 |
| Hudson Bay Hotel, Roscommon Road, Athlone, Co. Roscommon | 090 644 2005 |

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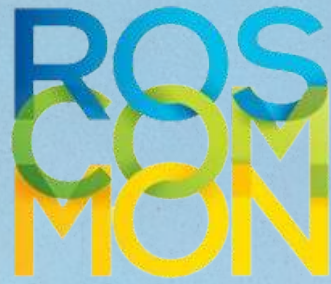
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