

## Notes from meeting 9<sup>th</sup> March, at the Playtrail, Racecourse Road, Derry

### Actions

Action	By
Putting content on NING	everyone
Investigating possibility of digest email	Sandra
Mail round supporting organisations for small contributions to running costs.	Dee
Possibility of branding	Katie
Investigating Organic centre as location for next meeting	Grace

### Attending

- Kimberly Morrison, Grow Belfast
- Grace Brady, Organic Centre
- Sandra Austin, Dublin Growing Network & Treasurer of the CGN
- Katie Holten, Community Artist
- Georgina Buffini, Healthy Food for All
- Kieran Craven, Trinity Community Gardens, Dublin
- Gareth Austin, Community focused Horticulturalist
- Benny & Marilyn Patton, Twin Towns Community Garden
- Aimee McGork & Caroline Morgan, Twin Towns Community Garden
- Dee Sewell, Greenside Up & Coordinator of the CGN
- Miriam Turley, Federation of City farms and community Gardens.
- Conor McGilloway, Youth Action NI Representative
- Marian Farrell, GIY Derry & Transition Towns
- Wayne Ford, Derry

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Presentation from Youth Action NI about their work, and particularly their approach to engaging Young people. [Link to their page here.](#)

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#### 1. NING Feedback

The NING has been going since June last year, supported by HFFA and FCFCG. It was chosen as the method of having a web presence over Facebook because of its accessibility and multifunctionality: There is space for discussion, a place to store and share documents, a calendar, and somewhere to upload videos and pictures. Also individual CG groups can make their own independently functioning web page for their project in it – there are 15 so far. This means that instead of individual groups paying £100 a year for a web site, they can do it through CGN, who absorb the cost.

There are 112 members so far and some good resources up on the site.

So far the events calendar is under used, and it would be great if there were more discussions happening on the discussion forum. Also anyone can contribute to the blog page.

Feedback: Some people use it; some don't interact with the internet in that way.

It could just be taking time to build up a presence and for people to get into the habit of using it. At some stage there will be more of a critical mass of interest. Encouraging links to it is helpful, and it has been mentioned in a book and in the newspapers.

There have been spamming problems recently, so Sandra introduced an approval procedure for new members, and worries that it might put new people off. It was also noted that on a phone you can't see the site at all without logging in. It is a good thing that usually information is available to non-members.

The site is working well for coordinators (e.g. Dee). It is good to centralise all contact, to simplify communication. We discussed the possibility of a digest of all new content on the site, possibly monthly, that would automatically get mailed out to all members. Sandra will ask the NING discussion community for advice on how to set up a digest.

Suggestions for extra tabs/pages: Income generation and new models of enterprise, an allotments tab and a projects tab, showing building projects, and how they were done, including materials used, plans and photos.

It was mentioned that GIY still haven't contributed to the cost of the NING for and Sandra has been paying the monthly bill as a result. Dee to follow this up.

## **2. Allotments**

We had a discussion about whether the network can include allotments, which many people identify as a separate thing. There is some historical territoriality about this issue.

If you Google for allotments there is very little information, even though there are allotments out there.

We are all aiming for the same thing, it is good to be inclusive and share learning, and in fact is in the spirit of community gardening. There are plenty of common issues, for example sharing information about insurance. Also many allotment sites have communal aspects (e.g. polytunnel) and a good community feeling. There are more Community Gardens here in Ireland. It is important to try to link up with everyone. We could possibly have a tab for allotments. Noted that we can't afford to turn anyone away, and anyway we want to be as inclusive as possible. The aim is to find all gardens and put them on the map. At the moment there isn't much centralised information. General consensus that it is ok to include allotments and the wording will be amended on the NING site to mirror this.

**NOTE:** Sandra and Dee met subsequently and felt that a simple change in wording to Supporting Community Growers rather than Community Gardeners should satisfy this without a major name change.

We had a little discussion about GIY –which is aimed at people growing it themselves, whether at home or in an allotment, rather than in a community garden. So they have a different scope, but we have Mick from GIY as a coordinator for CGN, so there is a good overlap. Also noted that GIY seem to be expanding into schools and community gardens.

Also a little mention for the people who don't use computers much. Thought that if one person in group can get info from web they can print it out and share it. FCFCG posts out newsletter to members.

### **3. Funding/Branding/Publicity**

The CGN hadn't really needed money before, but at the moment the coordinators are out of pocket. Dee will mail round possible small funding sources, just to cover current expenses, to mail GIY, (other organisations?) FCFCG and HFFA for contributions.

Sources of larger amounts of funding suggested: Board Bia, International Fund for Ireland, HSE, Ulster Bank, a possible fund from GIY/AIB?, Peace... 'Get Ireland Growing'?

A decision needs to be made about what level of funding is needed. For immediate needs the email Dee is to send should be sufficient. But if the project is to expand (visiting gardens, certifying projects, Quality standards, etc) there will need to be thought about more significant funding. FCFCG area already doing some of this networking in the North, and would happily work on a joint application for this work. It is really about where we go from here, which is perhaps still being decided. Noted that it would be good to have funding for 4 networking events a year.

Noted that community gardens don't need much funding, but also that it perhaps isn't good to rely on voluntary labour, and some money is needed, especially if core people are not to get burnt out, or have to move on for financial reasons. Also most community gardens need a champion, and if they don't have this they can tend to drift, which can lead to vandalism. Projects can share staff, but it is good to have someone responsible.

We mentioned the importance of Research, quantification and evidence.

Suggestion that donations are asked for on the website.

Crowd Sourcing and Fund it were also mentioned as possible new sources of money. You can offer small rewards for different levels of donation.

Re: Branding, Katie offered to investigate the possibility of finding someone to do a logo/ some branding for the Network pro bono/as a work experience project. Will communicate with Sandra and Dee.

Sandra will look into the CGN changing from a group to a charity to aid with funding.

**Note:** Dee & Sandra met subsequently and will put together a Development Plan for the CGN which will place us in a good position to apply for funding. Something we would like to implement is the usual quarterly network meeting but with added value such as training opportunities. Details will be posted on the NING.

### **4. New models of enterprise.**

Some discussion on different models of social enterprise, and sustainability. People shared stories about projects that sold plants, or rented herb pots to restaurants. In Ballybofey the hens pay for their own feed through income generated through egg sales! Noted that Mick from GIY recently did a talk about sustainable projects' income.

Suggestion for a revenue generation page up on the NING. Often in projects people don't want to get into fundraising, as it's a distraction from the main aim.

#### **5. Group representation at events:**

There has been someone from CGN at Bloom, at a CloughJordan event, at the Dublin City Harvest Festival. Mentioned the possibility of getting onto the Board Bia stand, which would avoid having to pay the stand fees. Other possibilities are the Castlefin Harden Festival in May, and the Hillsborough festival. Once there is a logo there can be a banner and flyers made.

#### **6. AOB**

A brief point was made about the future of food, and food security in a changing world, and the importance of networking towns with the surrounding rural regions, and also of linking in with other movements.

**Next meeting:** End of June, possibly at the Organic Centre in Leitrim? Grace to communicate with Dee.