

# LEADER NEWS



## THE LEADER PROGRAMME: VALUABLE SUPPORT FOR A COMMUNITY IDEA

This aerial shot shows work in progress at Fairgreen Park in Castledermot, the first phase of which received support from LEADER funding. This phase includes drainage works, soil works and paving. Subsequent phases will include playground works, hardscaping and planting. The majority of works associated with Phase 1 were completed by the end of September at which point the playground installation works commenced. The playground will cater for children aged between one and 12 years of age. It will feature a range of equipment including swings, a roundabout, junior and senior multi activity units, sensory panels, double cable run, seesaw, slides, trampoline, sand digger, sand pit, balance beams, natural features such as willow tunnels, seating and bins. This is a great example of a community-led project that leveraged different funding streams to realise a shared vision.





## HARTWELL CREATIVE RETREAT CENTRE: A MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT FOR WELLBEING.

One thing which has been in the centre of our awareness throughout the COVID pandemic is the need to take care of our mental health. In recognition of this, the Government launched on Thursday 29th October a Community Resilience campaign, entitled "Keep Well". This has 5 themes, including "Switching Off and Being Creative" and "Managing your Mood"

It is extremely timely, therefore, that the work on a new **Creative Retreat Centre near Kill**, supported by the LEADER Programme, is almost fully completed. The Centre is the brainchild of Stephen and Heidi Morrison who wished to create a place close to nature for holistic and creative retreats. Being in nature has significant beneficial effects on wellness, health, and overall mood and this has been especially evident in recent months.

Stephen is a full time farmer with a busy 300-acre family farm at Hartwell, outside Kill. He has worked hard in recent years to ensure that he farms in a balanced way, with increasing biodiversity and with low impact on the wildlife that share the land there. He has planted native woodland and a forest garden and links in with schools to spread awareness of ecological issues. His wife Heidi is a Visual Artist and Art Psychotherapist and this combination of creativity, therapy, mental wellbeing and a love for nature have all come together in the vision for the Centre.



Both Stephen and Heidi are passionate about the importance which nature has for the human psyche and this is symbolized by the magnificent Tree Root which is suspended from the ceiling in the bright and spacious main room which will shortly host courses, meetings and workshops in an inspiring setting. A beautiful and much-needed farm diversification project which we are proud to support.



## UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PROJECTS

As well as responding to ideas which come in from individuals and communities around the county, the LEADER process seeks to build social capital and strategic directions in support of the rural economy. Here is an update of some current initiatives:

### BARROW BLUEWAY STRATEGY :

Blueways are a network of paddling, cycling and walking trails on and alongside waterways, connecting villages and communities in predominantly rural settings. The Blueways initiative promotes experiences where visitors will be truly engaged with the landscape, flora and fauna of the environment. Louise Browne Associates are in full swing working on the LEADER funded Kildare Barrow Blueway plan, and were lucky that, before lockdown, they could take a Barge for hire along the route (Robertstown to Athy) to get more familiar with the area – the barge was extra long to allow for social distancing of a crew of two! Alongside the desk research the team are also hosting a series of workshops for local service providers or businesses planning to operate as part of the Blueway visitor experience. The workshops will support existing and potential business service/activity providers along the waterway.

### FOOD NETWORK DEVELOPMENT :

Work is starting on the development of a Kildare Food Network which will promote and expand the valuable food sector in the county

Interested parties can submit an Expression of Interest which can be found on the Local Enterprise Offices website;  
<https://www.localenterprise.ie/>