

# WEAVING WATERFORD

An inspiration and weaving event to support everyone who wants to build the future we aspire to

**Bioregional Weaving Lab**  
Waterford

**16<sup>th</sup> December 2022**  
**DUNHILL EcoPark**



“We want future food to come from a place where community is core. Our aims are both idealistic and practical. We want to create new habits, and new ways of working. We want viable ways of living. We want to protect our rivers, restore nature, cherish life. We want a world where everything is connected, from rocks to the human heart”.

*From the Waterford Bioregion Food Manifesto, co-written autumn 2022*

# Aims

The aim of the gathering on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022 was to create a space to:

- a) present just a few of the inspirational things going on in the bioregion, or that are relevant to it, and that can contribute to the aims of our co-created manifesto and the wider Bioregional Weaving Lab vision.
- b) run a workshop to use these and other inspirations to consider what concrete steps are needed to advance towards the future we aspire to.

## Speakers and participants:

*29 total*

Convenors	
Sarah Prosser	BWL
Pieter Ploeg	Commonland
Speakers	
Present	
Mike Walsh	SETU and farmer
Donal Sheehan	Farmer and Farming with Nature
Kit Keawwantha	Fibreshed
Helen Kavanagh	Dunhill MEC Community Hub
Online	
Grace O'Sullivan	MEP
Luis Camargo	OpEPA and Weaving Lab, Colombia
Steve Collins	Aronia Ireland
Geert van der Veer	Herenboeren, Netherlands

Participants	
John Kiersey	Dairy farmer
Owen Carter	Comeragh Farmer Community
Susie Nicholls	Social enterprise management
Damian Nicholls	Copper Coast Permaculture
Ray McGrath	Storytelling and nature
Nicole Keohane	SETU PhD Ecology
Gary Graham	Hortitude
Eleanor Deegan	Hortitude
Catherine Seale	LAWPro
John Carney	Farmer
Pat Deasy	Irish Bee Conservation Project
Donal Nolan	Waterford Chamber EU
John Geraghty	SETU Land Sciences
Mick Kelly	GIY CEO
Seáníe Comerford	GIY Philanthropy
Richard Mee	GIY Head Grower
Barry Flinn	GIY Communications
Tor McIntosh	GIY Content
Molly Garvey	GIY Communities

# Agenda

*Lunch at 12.30pm.*

Including welcome at 1pm by Helen Kavanagh, Dunhill Multi-Education Centre - The potential around community hubs

## 1. How can we shift pathways to a future we aspire to? 1.30pm - 2pm

Grace O'Sullivan – MEP (filmed message)

Steve Collins – Aronia Ireland (online)

Luis Camargo – Founder The Weaving Lab and Colombia Regenerativa (online)

## 2. Pockets of the future in the present 2pm - 3.30pm

A portfolio of 'people, projects and places moving towards universal well-being' and reflections on BWL since April 2022

Sarah Prosser (BWL) and Michael Kelly (GIY)

*Examples from outside and inside the bioregion*

- **Farming with Nature – what can we do for future food systems?** – Donal Sheehan, Farmer.
- **Anne Valley: demonstrating the science base for future food and agriculture** – Mike Walsh, SETU
- **Fibreshed Ireland - towards regenerative textiles**– Kit C. Keawwantha
- **Herenboeren, people-driven regenerative farming** – Geert van der Veer, Netherlands (online)
- **Dingle biodistrict** (tbc)

## 3. Pathways to transition, break-out discussions 4pm - 5pm

*Introduction: Systemic innovations in other BWLs* - Pieter Ploeg, Commonland

Action pathway 1: **Place-based transitions**

Action pathway 2: **Market transitions**

## 4. Harvesting our insights for 2023 5pm - 5.30pm

*Festive Supper at GROW HQ for those that wanted to*

# The speakers

Inspiration



**Theme:** European policy and importance of holistic approaches

# Grace O'Sullivan

## MEP for South East Ireland

### **Background:**

Grace O'Sullivan is MEP for South East Ireland. A big part of her work in 2020 and 2021 was working as Chief Negotiator on behalf of the European Parliament on Environment Action Programme to 2030, that has now passed into law.

Grace had hoped to be with us Dunhill in person, but the weather-related transport challenges across Europe prevented this. Instead she sent us a pre-recorded message.

### **Summary of talk:**

- There is quite a **lot of legislation** being proposed:
  1. From next year will be a **common legal framework for the protection and sustainable use of soil** – an EU wide law. Can assure the reduction of pesticide usage in the EU, but is a big fight to make this happen - for the benefit of our soils, air and the water we drink and food we eat.
  2. Soon in Ireland we will see implementation of **EU Nature Restoration Law**: 20% of EU land and sea to be restored by 2030, and 25,000 km free-flowing rivers.
- 'We have been out of sync with our natural environment for too long: it is under massive pressure to even survive. **I really do believe that things are changing for the better now**'
- 'Hard grafters and influencers such as yourselves are key in keeping the momentum going and driving positive progressive change'.
- 'We need **to support landowners to adapt** and that does not only mean financial support. I believe we need to have a **holistic approach to sustainability**, by using weaving metaphors, bringing together different disciplines, regions and actors and creatively combining them together, we can view the climate, our biodiversity, healthy eating and sustainable food production as one organic interconnected web'.



**Link to Grace's talk:**

<https://youtu.be/81ybCEG6UtI>

*"I believe your approach of interconnection of all stakeholders for the common good is the only way possible to create this systemic change"*

**Theme:** Weaving is so much more than networking

# Luis Camargo

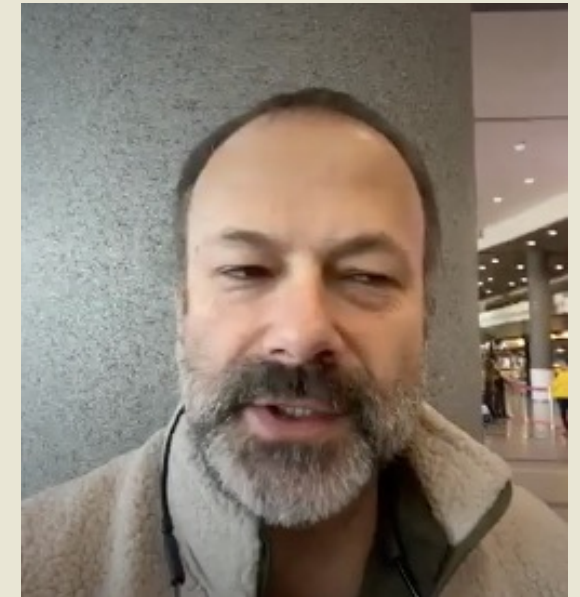
The Weaving Lab, OpEPA

## Background

Luis Camargo is founder and Director of OpEPA an organization that has been working 25 years to reconnect people with the Earth in order to accelerate the transition to sustainable and regenerative cultures. He is co-founder of The Weaving Lab, Founder of Colombia Regenerativa, and former advisor to departments of environment and of planning.

## Summary of talk

- We have to get to shift everything that is really not good today. **We need a road to regeneration.**
- Weaving: initially I thought it might be like a second level of networking. But now I think it is so much more. Imagine you walking an ecological system that is working. **What is giving it health is not the components, but the relations – the invisible.** We need to learn how to **sense and feel those relations** – those connective tissue elements.
- I invite you to **focus on the spaces in-between**, the spaces that are not evident. Silence is what allows us to see these invisible spaces. Be fully present in the spaces and fully sense what is going on.
- **Sensing allows you to understand the invisible** such as interactions, the state of well-being of each individual and how that influences other individuals. Individuals can be a tree, a farm, a person.
- Ireland is the place of the invisible. **Through history and storytelling** – it is a place where all nature spirits really came out to speak.
- So allow yourself to sense, listen and feel to all voices in nature, which will allow you to weave. Because **weaving opens the capacity to create flow** and **connect the invisibles so the visible** so they can become prosperous and thrive with a lot of energy.
- Waiting to see what happens in BWLs quest – sure we **can use your learnings in Columbia and around world** and **all regenerative communities that are sprouting up** in the same line as you guys to create a transformation that is **deep**, that is **lasting** and that is really **shifting** the way we relate to the earth, to others and to ourselves.



Luis joined us from the airport in his home country of Colombia

## Link to Luis's talk

<https://youtu.be/WMLwAGHMRsE>

## Interested in more?

[The Weaving Lab](#)

**Theme:** New mountain berry crops on marginal soils in West Cork

# Steve Collins

## Aronia Ireland

### Background

Steve Collins grows organic blueberries and aronia berries on his mountain farm in West Cork. He is also developing the market for selling the products derived from these, juices and powder with significant health benefits. Steve is an Ashoka Fellow (a global leading social innovator) and was formerly a doctor working with international development.

### Link to Steve's talk:

<https://youtu.be/WMLwAGHMRsE> - Steve starts 7mins into recording

### Summary of talk

- Picture a berry field which would have been producing a tiny amount of sheep or maybe a little bit of beef, but now from an **acre of blueberries there is a turnover of 5-10K per annum.**
- Higher up the farm, at 220m altitude, Steve grows aronia berries. These can grow on **marginal soil** that otherwise would produce maybe one mountain lamb, selling at 40 Euro each. The same area is now harvesting berried to give **1500 Euros**, this **after three years with minimal care.** Currently 1kg fruit per plant, **will rise to 5kg** with time.
- Steve has started a **brand to create a market:** if you want to change what people are growing you have to make sure they can sell. Juices and powder are selling well.
- Aronia berries have highest polyphenol of any vegetable – **incredibly healthy, deep rooted perennials.** So creating **biodiverse ecosystem** around them. They are alternatives to mono-cropping grass for sheep and cattle that are far more profitable. That **can regenerate soil and regenerate the environment.**
- Forestry would be only other option for this land, but this is food production.

### Interested in more?

[www.aroniaireland.com](http://www.aroniaireland.com)



### Discussion:

*Owen Carter:* This would be a revelation to farmers in Comeraghs. It comes down to sales and marketing and depends on communities and individuals as well as the soil and environment.

*Steve:* yes, I have had to ship in 4 tonnes of organic berries from Poland to meet the demand and have had to turn away investment. The juice sells well. **I am actively looking for farmers for next EIP round: UCC are on board, Aronia are commercial, now looking for farmers with marginal land to try this out and scale it up.**

*Owen:* The Comeraghs were also an EIP, **if you are looking for partners I can introduce you to farmers who might like to pilot and learn how to do half and acres,**

*Steve:* **Connect us**, perfect, I can come and tell the farmers more.

**Theme:** The role and potential of rural enterprise and learning hubs

# Helen Kavanagh

## Dunhill Multi-Education Centre Manager

### Summary of talk

- Dunhill Ecopark was established in 1999 **by members of the community** and as a social enterprise with a mission: **To cultivate an entrepreneurial culture and facilitate job creation.** It is situated on an 11.5 acre site, 13km from Waterford City and 10km from Tramore. The park is managed and operated through a voluntary board of directors, and a community hub of enterprise, innovation and work.
- There are a wide range of businesses and services including (but not limited to): Artisan Food and Beverages; Craft; Plant Hire; Hair and Beauty; Treatment and therapy; Education and conference facility; Horticulture; Remote working hub and hot desks.
- Why Eco? Waste water is managed through an **integrated constructed wetlands** system. Site also incorporates the East Waterford Beekeepers Teaching Apiary and Community Garden
- **Dunhill Multi Education Centre** is a tenant of the Ecopark. Formed in 2004, it is award-winning community social enterprise with charity status and voluntary board. The centre also supported by Pobal Community Services Programme and the Waterford and Wexford Education and training Board. It operates with the input of in excess of **30 volunteers** and employs up to **40 full and part time staff.**
- All training offers by the multi-education centre are delivered to be flexible, accessible, encouraging lifelong learning and enhanced employability. The **training is either contracted or developed as bespoke courses** to industry (for example to Teagasc on a national basis), and income is supplemented by renting out conference, training and meeting space. The provision of community resource and meeting spaces, community training and local employment opportunities means the Centre **is delivering social as well as financial returns** in the area.
- In the future Dunhill Ecopark and Education Centre aim to continue to demonstrate good practice community development and believe that others **can learn and be inspired to replicate** what they have succeeded in when it comes to how to build a **strong resilient community where people love to live, work and learn.**
- Unique aspects of interest in the Dunhill model could be:
  - how **local government and communities can work together,**
  - how to provide **an integrated offering** of work, education and community services;
  - how to support a **strong, sustainable** Copper Coast region;
  - how to support and recognise social enterprises and the **social return** they deliver.



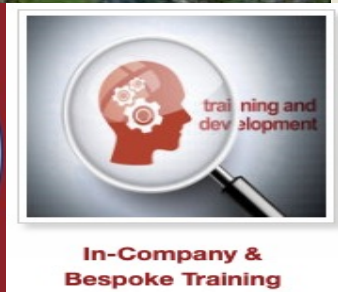
### Interested in more?

**Dunhill EcoPark:**

<http://www.dunhillecopark.com/>

**Dunhill Multi-Education Centre:**

<http://www.dunhilleducation.com/>





**Theme:** innovative routes to biodiversity and sustainable farming

# Donal Sheehan

## Farming with nature

### Background:

Donal Sheehan is a dairy farmer living in close to the Bride River in East Cork where he pushes the boundaries of a compatible food production and farmland biodiversity system. He was project manager for the Bride Project- a European Innovative Programme that brought 42 farmers from the river catchment area together to testing new ways of measuring and paying for increasing biodiversity on their land. The Farming with Nature concept and app is an outcome of this.

### Summary of talk:

- We are in an **unsustainable food system**. Farming with Nature (FwN) is one part of the solution.
- If we are to achieve the BWL manifesto – wild salmon and more – then we **need to do everything at once**, and FwN is one part of this.
- FwN came out of an EIP government way of funding biodiversity, **and if we kept rewarding farmers to keep doing this it would end up with pristine water** too – and salmon.
- There is currently a focus on organic certification, including Teagasc new research farm at Clonakilty. But this will not address the fact that 1 hectare of land for milk is hugely valuable, while 1 hectare of land for biodiversity is not. Loss of wetlands species, pollinators... **they are all disappearing because they have no 'value'**. Farming with Nature is trying to address this problem of value. Trying to generate a value for land not in production, or in semi-production to give the equivalent of the 1000 Euros per hectare dairy farming gives. Need to cover the costs of taking out three cows and replacing with oak, CO2 +ve, biodiversity, water quality and more.
- FwN has developed **an app**, you map your biodiversity and you get your subsidy. **The money comes from the consumer**, a safer long-term revenue than relying on the tax payer.
- The EU commission is getting to a point where **farmers can ignore subsidies** – value of them has declined, the cost of living increases have made them less relevant. Typical value of subsidies might be 10K which is not worth jumping through hoops for if running a successful commercial farm, even when fined. This is worrying since **no need to look after biodiversity**, habitats etc.
- With regard to growing vegetables: we are losing the ability to do this with each generation. **It comes down to food security in the bioregion** – access to food withing 20miles of home.



*“It comes down to food security in the bioregion”*

*“Farming with Nature is just one part of reaching the future we aspire to (as described in the BWL manifesto). We need to do everything at once”.*

### Discussion:

- The bioregion could be the **right scale** to pilot and experiment with the FwN concept.
- **Future EIP programmes** could be compatible with ambitions of BWL, FwN and other related stakeholders. Keep an eye out for funding calls.

### Interested in more?

<https://www.thebrideproject.ie/>

**Theme:** soil and animal health, farming with no chemicals

# Mike Walsh

## SETU

### Background

Mike Walsh works at the Land Science Department at SETU, with research areas spanning from soil health to livestock management and wetland systems. He is currently involved in presenting components of a Masters in organic, biological and regenerative farming techniques. Mike was behind the development of the Anne Valley Walk in Dunhill and related community engagement, and has a background in international agriculture development.

### Summary of talk

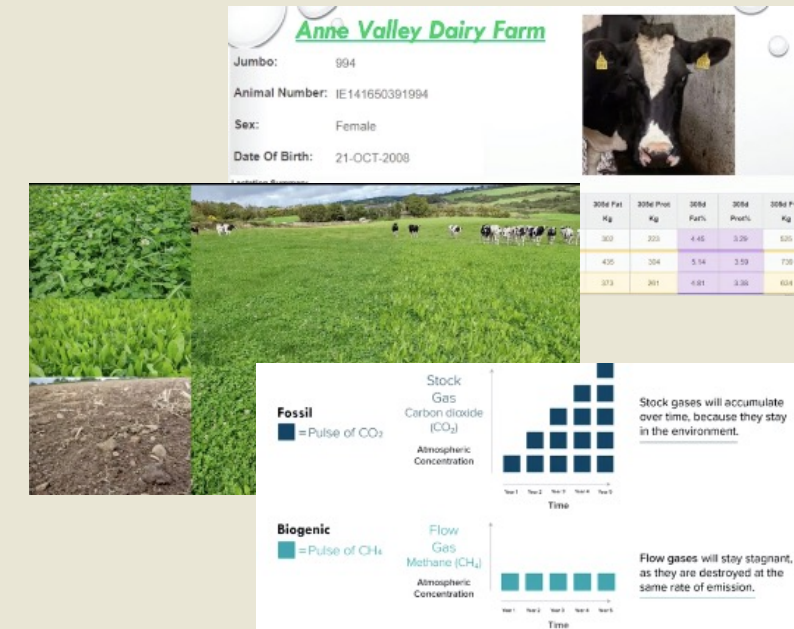
- Going forward, we have to feed 8 billion people and take care of the environment at the same time. We have to move forward carefully, which hasn't happened in agriculture till now. **We have been careless** and will have to pay at some point. Look at our local ecologies – there is a lot we don't see and that is easier to ignore and not take care of.
- **Ruminants** – Billions of microbes in the rumen: a massive system that needs to be taken care of. This is matched by what is happening in the soil. Disrupt it disrupt the plants on top to lift up nutrient, then they are not nutritious, and not good enough for the rumen. **We can't look at the ecosystem separately as separate entities.** Understanding the links between the soil, plants, the animal and the livestock is key. Need to manage without disrupting it at any point at microbe level.
- **Anne Valley** – animal longevity, example: 10 lactations. Average 8500 litres per year. Phenomenal performance. Main reason is that everything she eats into the rumen is carefully managed. Is **no requirement for any factory chemicals.** Taken out the manufactured fertiliser, let nature do it for us. Going to organic or low input solutions is thought to be reducing production. Cannot do it all at once. Can do a third of a farm at a time. The soil and the plants adapt really fast. Getting urea out of the system makes a massive improvement.
- Clover, Ryegrass, Timothies and ?s – kept coming. Still coming late into the year. **Is a myth that you can't graze animals on high clover.** Any bloat was on swards with chemical nitrogen. Not a single case of bloat on this farm – no chem nitrogen. Is not the bloat that causes death, it is the nitrogen poisoning.
- There are a billion cows in the world – 2012 to now stayed **stable**. Dairy are 14% of that (140million). Giving us best quality food possible – protein. Methane is broken to Co2 in a twelve year cycle. Photosynthesis takes it back into grass, eaten by the cow. **Cycle such that a 10 lactating cow is carbon neutral.** Ruminants are part of the ecosystem. Biogenic CO2 is flat. Only **fossil methane and CO2 is increasing** – fuels and fertilisers.



### Link to Mike's talk

Mike gave a similar talk at NOTS Biofarm Conference 2022 His and many other relevant talks can be accessed through this link

<https://nots.ie/product/6374d2d84403b/>



**Theme:** Building a local and regenerative framework for Irish textiles

# Kit C. Keawwantha

## Fibreshed Ireland

### Background:

Kit Christina Keawwantha runs Fibreshed Ireland with co-founder Malú Colorín. Part of a global network, Fibreshed Ireland is all about creating a supportive network of farmers, crafters, processors and designers in facilitating an Irish regenerative fibre system based on local fibre, local dyes, local labour.

### Summary of talk:

- Irish textiles are part of global system with social inequity, environmental degradation, dependency of fossil fuel. **Currently 70% of clothing and household textiles are 70% plastic.** This causes huge microplastic pollution when washing and disposing. Insane textile waste in global fashion: **1 lorry load of textile waste is dumped every second.**
- Ireland – **we consume more than double the EU average** and ignore natural sources. Wool – large amounts dumped or incinerated. No market value currently
- Fibreshed is global grassroots movement, in Ireland since 2022. Model is **soil to soil systems**. Promote locally grown fibres, with ability to close the circular loop.
- Regenerative circular frameworks (for wool, or any natural fibre). Sheep take carbon from grass, from air, produce wool, return to soil keeps out of atmosphere. Process with no inputs – infrastructure run on renewable energy, natural dyes, any waste is natural and can be returned back to soil. Not possible if any fossil fuels – released back into atmosphere. **Which carbon pool is supplying your clothing? Fresh or fossil?**
- Envisage local textile mills, regenerative farming, creating a variety of products that are returned to farms at end of life. Supporting local economies and local communities.
- **Defining regenerative fibre:** not just the ecology and biodiversity – also animal welfare, soil, natural productivity, and cultural and creative heritage. Regenerate the cultural aspects of Irelands textile industry. Regenerate knowledge, producer/consumer relationships etc.
- Marino fibre dominate, but 250 species in world, many are threatened. **Local heritage breads are more resilient.**
- **Systems changes required:** agriculture: from extraction, to reciprocity; industrial: from resources to relationship; financial: from acquisition to distribution; value flows: from monetary to ecosystem services and culture; educational: from western centric to local and indigenous wisdom; social: from scarcity to sufficiency, equality and diversity.
- **Vision:** to see Ireland as a leader in building innovative, circular textile economies which regenerate the ecological and cultural landscape through localised production and global equitable partnerships.

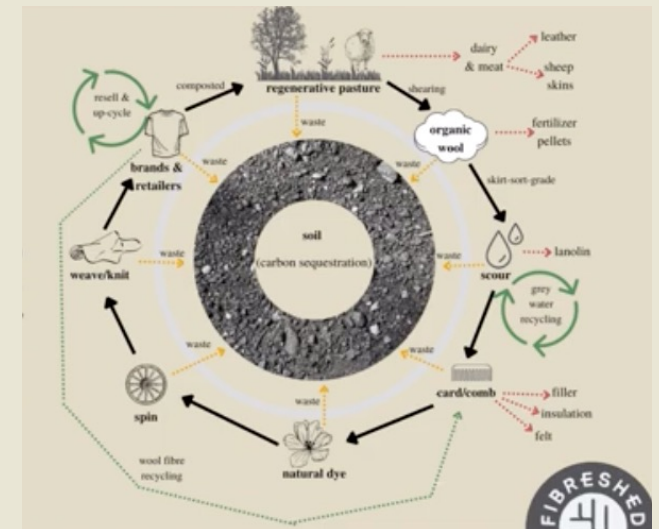
**Fibreshed Ireland provides a framework which empowers local communities to positively impact global challenges while defining Ireland as a leader in developing innovative, circular, textile economies.**

**Link to Kit's talk**

[https://youtu.be/yDJ\\_l3JscNg](https://youtu.be/yDJ_l3JscNg)

**Interested in more?**

<https://fibreshedireland.ie/>



**Theme:** Connecting food to consumers through co-owned farms in the Netherlands

# Geert van der Veer

## Herenboeren

### Background:

Geert van der Veer is a pioneer in the regenerative food and agriculture space in the Netherlands. He is co-founder of community owned farm Herenboeren, a model now replicating across the country, and the principles are replicating across the world. He was once a more conventional farmer and started his own regenerative journey in 2012.

### Summary of talk

- How to address modern farm challenges such as soil, climate, biodiversity? but also importantly: **Can we earn decent income** if we are also to contribute to solving other things? And is there a concept where **society really connects to food**?
- Model: 200 families lease a farm, becoming **co-owners**, and they **employ a farmer** who fully operates it. The farmer produces the food the community wants to eat. They know where their food comes from and how it is produced. They help out sometimes on the farm (average 40). By doing so they are also contributing to a **new food system** in the Netherlands.
- The families **pay 2000 Euros** per person, multiplied by 200 is 400K Euros to lease the land. 20 hectare farm. Mixed use: vegetables, cows, eggs, fodder, fruit – through **a mix of permaculture and regenerative farming methods**.
- **Famer is paid a salary**. So the **entrepreneurs is no longer the famer, but the co-owners**. Once a year the cooperative takes the big decisions, day to day decisions are made by the farmer.
- Herenboeren **supports the communities**, they do not buy or organise the farm. Key task now, instead of pushing products in the market, is to find people who want to start farms. In 2022 – **22 farms up and running**.. 35 in the pipeline. 12,000 households, **25,000 people eating from the farm concept**.
- Big enough numbers now to be seen by Ministry of Ag. Need them because we were **creating small scale farm concept** and these were not seen in Netherlands any more – **all legislation created to service big farms for global market**. Also since were a mixed farm, no laws. So was **almost impossible to be a legal fam concept in beginning** – eg. pigs were not allowed outside. So they **had to get legislation** for small scale farmers working sustainable ways.
- Promise we made to society was: **let us build our farms and we think we can build a better world**. Being connected with your food is a Trojan horse – it opens more conversations about everything. So we have to **connect everyone with their food production**. Not necessarily as close as through the farms,, but somehow. Society will be more beautiful.
- Troidos Bank now funding to see if we can reach our goal of 350 farms in the Netherlands.
- It is very difficult – many failures along the way!



### Link to Geert's talk

<https://youtu.be/RqfFgl4cB14>

(hop over the minute around 2.45 with tech)

### Interested in more?

Herenboeren model in English:

<https://farmingcommunities.org/>

Podcast and interview about Investing in Regenerative Agriculture and Food

<https://investinginregenerativeagriculture.com/2019/09/29/geert-van-der-veer-2/>

**Theme:** The effect of having BWL at GIY

# Mick Kelly

GIY

## **Background:**

Mick Kelly is CEO of GIY (Grow It Yourself) and Ambassador for the Bioregional Weaving Lab in Ireland. GIY works to get more people growing some of their own food, and for the impact that is made through wider food empathy arising from doing so. Mick started GIY as a social enterprise in 2014 and now reaches over a million GIYers through television, schools, corporate partnerships and book publications.

## **Summary of talk:**

Mick was asked to reflect on the effect of having the BWL in the Waterford bioregion, based at GIY.

- BWL adds an extra dimension in bilateral meetings that can **shift the energy level**. Examples include:
  - 1) meeting the Department of Culinary Arts at SETU to discuss educating the chefs of the future. GIY brings experience through initiatives such as the Chef's Manifesto and content from its extensive resources for growing food and taking it through cooking to eating. When the BWL initiative was introduced into the conversation, with its wider perspective and focus on collectively participating in shifting systems, there was a **shift in energy – a feeling of hope and optimism** that things can change amidst all the doom and gloom about climate change and food system. The idea of employing a weaver inside the university seemed like a good one.
  - 2) meeting the Planning Department in Waterford County Council. We discussed wide open space strategy, how communities and neighbourhoods can be supported through green spaces and opportunities to grow food. When the wider BWL perspective was brought into the conversation, **the level of ambition and hope** that collective impact could bring about a more integrated sustainable and regenerative future, again brought a **tangible shift in atmosphere** to what we might aspire to. The idea of employing a weaver inside the council seemed like a good one.
- GIY and partners in BWL have **taken a leap of faith to** see what happens by exploring the potential of working in this way. Initially we thought mostly about scaling and replication opportunities for GIY in other areas of Europe. Now we see the potential for weaving multi-stakeholder in the local bioregion is as powerful. Sarah took a leap of faith too, and her optimistic outside perspective is positive.
- Next steps should move towards **more tangible actions and activation**. We have built a good foundation for this and can move from a phase of exploring the value of establishing a BWL to agreeing that it is here to stay for the next three years, as long as funding and collaboration continues to grow and flourish.



## **Interested in more?**

[GIY](#)

[Chef's manifesto](#)

[BWL Ireland](#)

[BWL Europe](#)

# The workshop

What are the next steps to the future we aspire to?



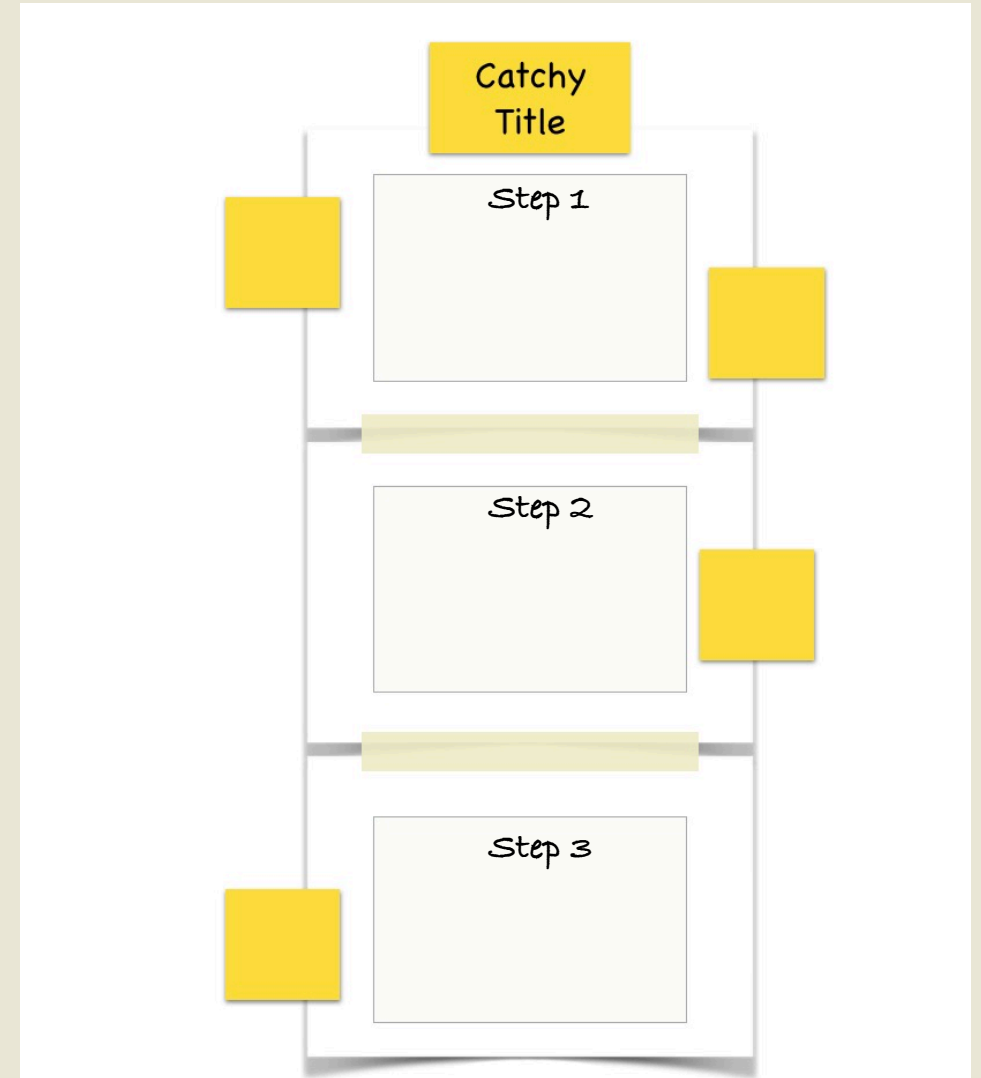
# Workshop process

## Background

The aim of the workshop was to take the inspiration we harvested from the presentations given (and summarised on earlier pages), while also building on input from previous BWL workshops, to consider what the next practical actions and steps we could do to get some ideas to grow into actions for systemic change for our collective BWL vision.

## Workshop methodology: Three Step Concept

- In this exercise, the 'concept' refers to an illustrated standalone idea, which requires little or no verbal explanation and can demonstrate three concrete steps along a pathway to a solution to part of the systemic challenge we are focused on.
- The method of drawing the concept in three steps encourages the participants to really focus on the actions and development phase they are trying to address now and where to move to in the future.
- The pictures should stand for themselves, annotations on sticky notes can give more explanation or context. A catchy title should be added



## Group 1

# Cultivating Community

Inspired by Herenboeren talk (Geert van der Veer), developed and adjusted for our local bioregional context

### Step 1

Invite local people and local experts to a meeting. Brainstorm the possibilities for co-operative leasing groups of local farms. Agree on core principles and ideas.

### Step 2

Collect models of good practice, look for local land opportunities, set up a cooperative, consider what crops and meat would work. Look at legislation: is this legal and possible?

### Step 3

Operating farm. Guaranteed income for employed farmer. Education use and benefits for wider community. Access for all.

### Next steps (concrete and potential)

- Does anyone want to invite to a very first meeting?
- Get more information from Geert about what can happen in first meetings and early stages (Sarah)
- ?





## Group 2

# Living the Comeragh Dream

### Step 1

The Comeragh Upland Community project was awarded EIP funding to work with learning, education, communications and community. This has just ended with outputs that include a guide to the flora and fauna and a report. The intangible outcomes of increased knowledge of local nature and heritage, as well as social bonds, were of as much importance. The drawing shows the learning and knowledge exchange between farms and educational institutions.

### Step 2

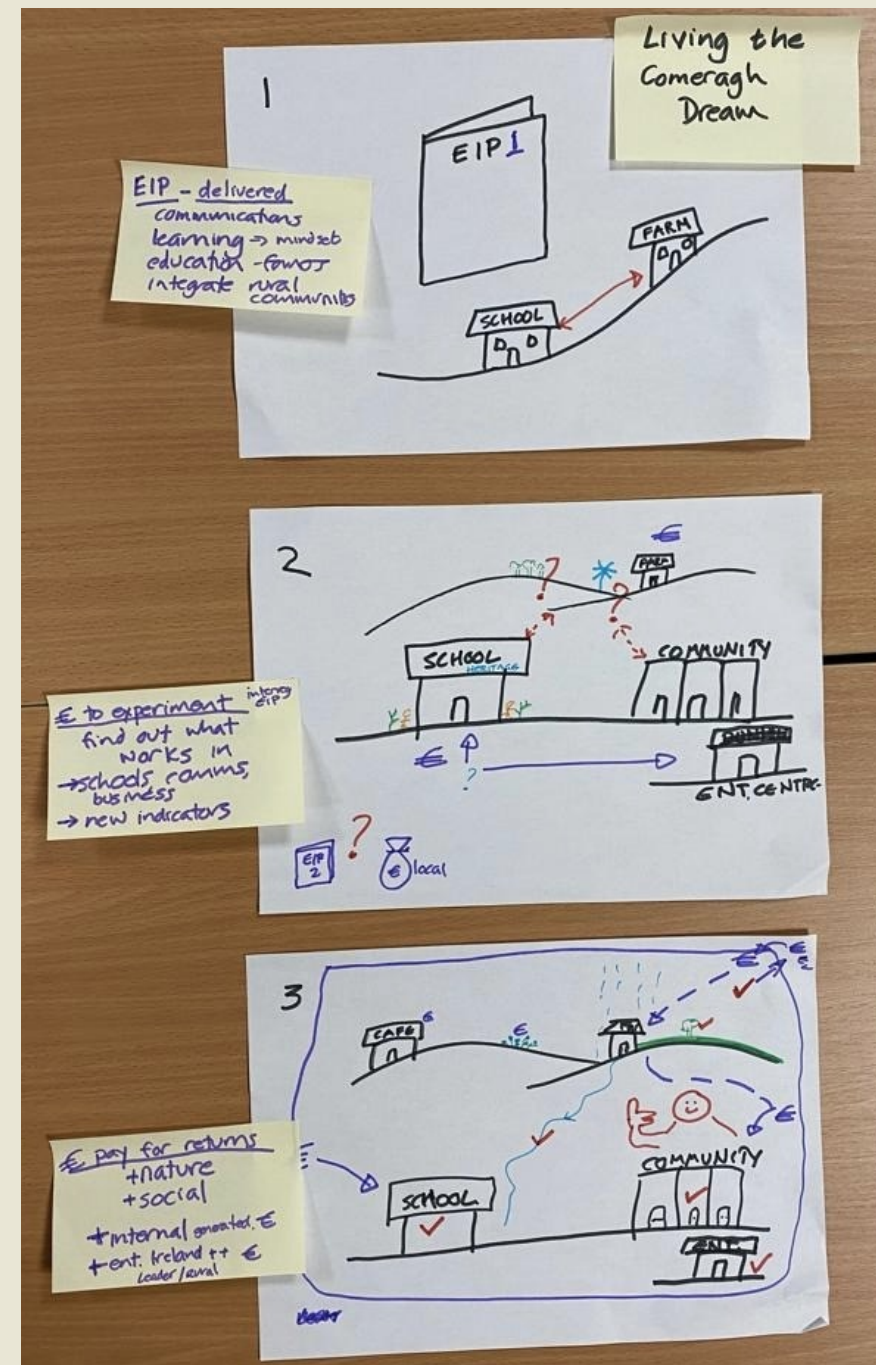
Building on the outcomes of the EIP project, there is a need and desire to experiment deeper and wider about capacity building and learning for more sustainable and robust initiatives (financial, social and nature). How will the communities link to the farms and the schools of the future? How will rural hubs play a role in building local enterprises and linking farms with knowledge? Could the Aronia Berry example be explored more to see if local farmers wanted to experiment with this new cash crop? Applying for next round of EIP might be the way to go?

### Step 3

A long-term financial mechanism is needed to invest in the whole ecosystem – and the returns they are generating on nature and social dimensions. Financial flows will be within this system, supporting local communities, but also from major national and international institutions beyond the region.

### Next steps (concrete and potential)

- Connect Steve Collins with Owen Carter and Pieter Ploeg (upland farms) (Sarah)
- Arrange study trip for BWL stakeholders to Steve Collins's aronia berry farm (Sarah and Steve)
- Look out for EIP call (Sarah and Owen)
- Explore other systemic innovations for living the Comeragh Dream through local innovations in the bioregion and/or the wider European BWL portfolio (Sarah and Owen and anyone else – get in touch if interested)
- Consider a co-weaver for the natural zone - upland farm projects (funding dependent, or voluntary? Discuss in next gathering? Sarah)



## Group 3

# Paradise Regained

### Step 1

Anne Valley and its estuaries are mapped and issues around chemical nitrogen, water quality, dead rivers and contaminated food are holistically linked and illustrated.

### Step 2

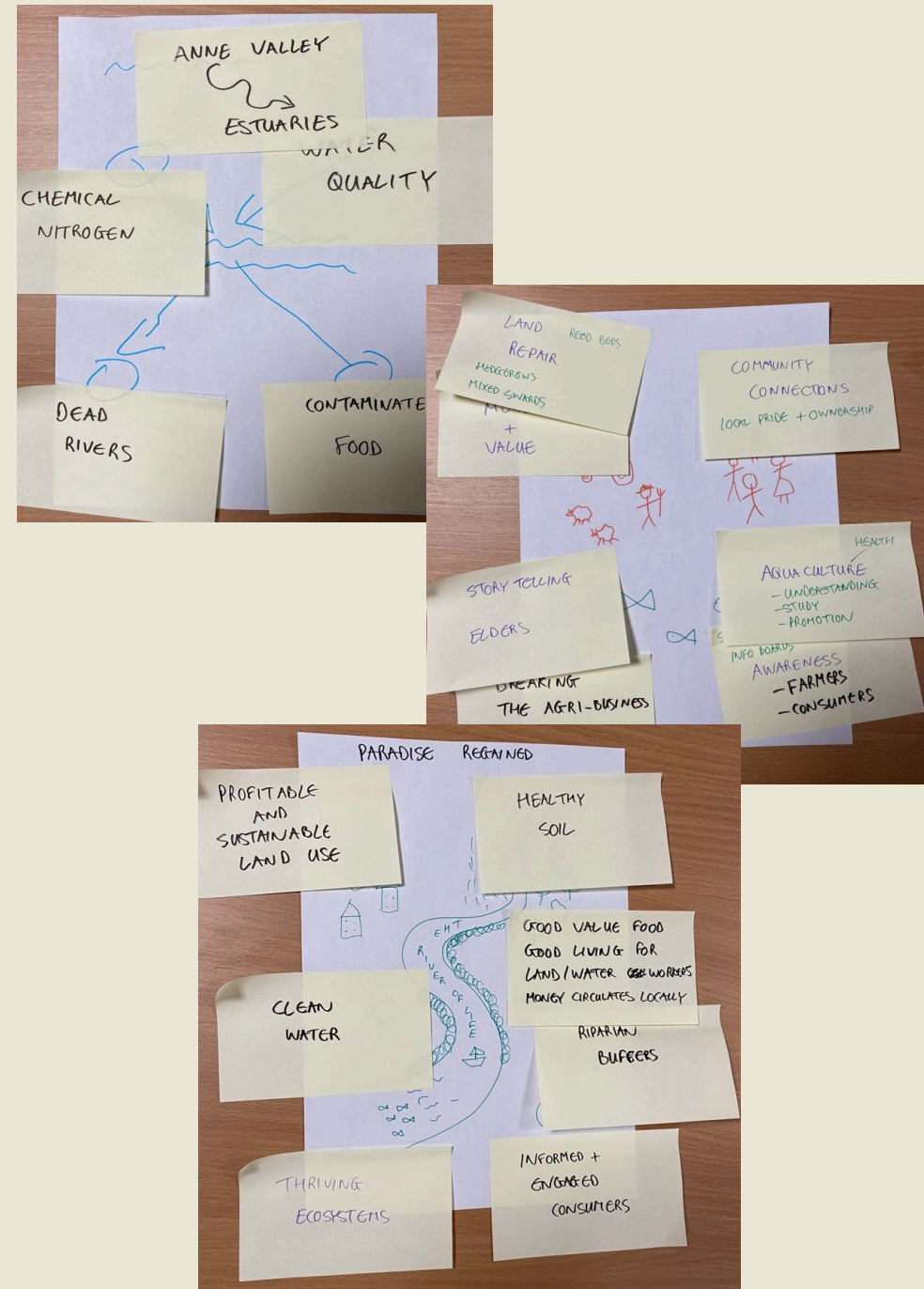
Hedgerows, reed bed, mixed swards and other NBSs are introduced for land repair. Community connections are made through local ownership and pride. Storytelling is encouraged and supported, and elders are listened to deeply. Aquaculture is explored, better understood and promoted. Awareness campaigns for farmers and consumers are conducted through digital and notice boards. The agri-business chain is gradually broken.

### Step 3

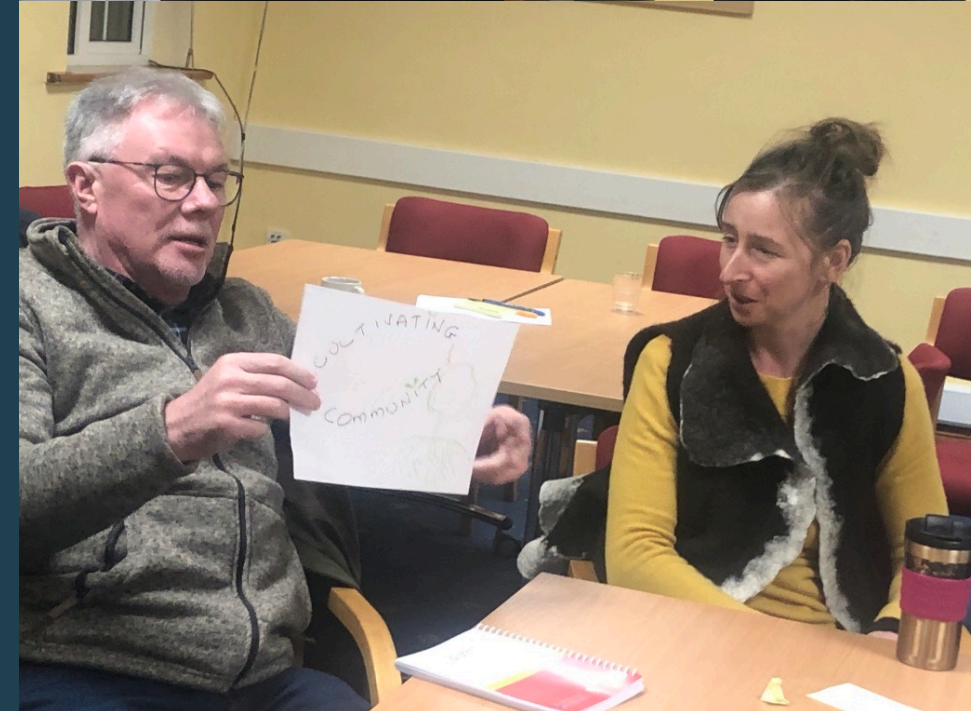
Paradise regained. Land use has become profitable and sustainable. The soil is healthy and the water is clean, ecosystems are thriving and good value food is being produced. Money circulates locally to support the local economy, and consumers are informed and engaged.

### Next steps (concrete and potential)

- Anne Valley mapping – holistic visualisations and links. (Mike, Helen Sarah others interested? Could perhaps connect to BWL mapping project which will start in 2023)



# Conclusions and next steps



# Conclusions

The presentations gave **inspirational insights into what is being done.**

The main outcome of the workshop was the **realisation that there are bridges between and towards interested stakeholders in the bioregion, and that we could start experimenting with small pilots.**

NB: There is a small pot in the BWL budget for supporting experiments – how and who and where will be taken up in our next meetings

## Replication and scaling of systemic innovations

The workshop at Dunhill showed that there are some interesting systemic innovations that can be investigated further with regard to developing and/or scaling. These include:

- **Aronia berries** on bioregional upland farms could work – let's explore more?
- **Farming with Nature** app – can it be developed to pilot on bioregional scale?
- **Cooperative owned farms** – could they work in the bioregion? Where would the first group emerge from?
- **Textiles** – what can we as a bioregion explore for systemic changes that would help build Ireland as leader in this field of regenerative textiles?
- **BWL** as additional energy and inspiration boost to other innovative partnerships? Are co-weavers in major institutions a possibility? Increasing capacity for weaving as a methodology for change could be investigated.

The question is what from this list, and, importantly, previous BWL workshops and reports, has the energy and support to be taken further?



# Next meetings

Let's have a very informal check-in online or in person. More dates will be shared soon for more formal gatherings.

Everyone welcome at the two options below.

## Agenda

To say hello in 2023, ask any questions about previous events, be updated on the Dunhill event, share own updates, insight and ideas.  
Touch on how to use pilot funds and apply for further funding.

### Online catch-up

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 4pm

[Click on this link to join](#)

### In person GROW HQ

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> February 10.30am





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