



S.C.É.A.L.

Social Community Enterprise
for the Advancement of Lorrha/Rathcabbin

SCÉAL Lorrha

The parish of Lorrha Rathcabbin is located in a central position nationally and in the very northern section of County Tipperary close to the Offaly and Galway borders. Lorrha is a small village and contains important historical monuments which contribute significantly to its character. Lorrha East is a small area within the Electoral District of Lorrha Rathcabbin with a population of 155 and deprivation score of -13.06 in the 2016 census classifying it as an area of disadvantage. The East side of Lorrha as well as areas of Redwood and Rathcabbin are CLÁR designated. CLÁR is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in areas that experience disadvantage.

NTLP has been involved in many initiatives in this rurally isolated and disadvantaged area of North Tipperary over the last decade. More recently SICAP has been involved in community development work to promote social inclusion and sustainable development in the area.

In 2015 SICAP staff built on prior Local Community Development Programme work by producing a Community Action Plan for Lorrha Rathcabbin. (Attached).

The Community Action Plan was prompted by the closure of the local Post Office and Shop. The Lorrha Community Hall was also struggling to break even due to high costs of heating and lack of a comfortable space for smaller groups such as a local Mother and Toddler Group. The committee were finding it difficult to maintain a viable local community hall.

As a result of SICAP predevelopment work a local community group was set up called SCÉAL. SCÉAL stands for Social Community Enterprise for the Advancement of Lorrha/Rathcabbin. The formation of the group arose as a response to the everyday challenges of the rural community and to promote the parish as an interesting and inspiring place to visit and live. SCÉAL which means story in Irish aim to promote the entire parish as a whole, working with a broad range of organizations and with neighbouring parishes. Social and economic benefits for the whole community is the main goal and to enable this in many sectors such as sport, crafts, heritage, history, tourism, small businesses and agriculture.

SICAP and SCÉAL worked together on the community plan and SICAP assigned specific staff to the task. Work included:

- One to one meetings within the parish with LCG's, locals, business owners and parish representatives
- Profile of area and LOT profile
- Facilitated session with up to 40 locals to identify the needs of the parish
- Analysis of results and production of Action Plan
- Printing / Distribution of Plan
- Launch of Plan

A successful launch event for the Lorrha Rathcabbin Community Action Plan was held at Lorrha Community Hall in May 2016 and attended by over 80 people. A number of public representatives including Ann Rabbitte TD, Joe Hannigan, Michael O'Mara and Ger Darcy attended the event endorsing the great work that had been done by SCÉAL to date. At this time SCÉAL were already utilising the space for their budding Community Heritage Centre and Café and were showcasing local crafts, food, produce and heritage items. The event was a sign of things to come in regards to support from the local community and the abilities of SCÉAL to follow through successfully on an initiative.

The Lorrha Rathcabbin Community Action Plan 2016-2019 identified the need for a community and social enterprise; The Lorrha Heritage Museum, Café and Community Shop, as being a key goal for SCÉAL going forward. In the report Lorrha Community Hall was identified as a possible venue. This would serve two functions, providing a community space and also revitalising the hall which was already experiencing problems at a functional and administrative level.

Supported by SICAP and encouraged by the action plan, SCÉAL proceeded with developing a heritage centre/café/community shop as a hub and to promote the parish, attract tourists and act as a focal point for local people to meet. SICAP organised mentoring for the group from Mary Fogarty of Loughmore Tea Rooms which further motivated the team. The long term goal was to pursue funding to improve the hall. A well designed refurbishment would re-orientate the building making it more open to the public and suitable for the community hub. A secondary benefit was to improve the comfort and energy efficiency of the building. To this end Lorrha was supported by SICAP to avail of the Sustainable Energy Communities Scheme through Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative an initiative cofounded by a LCDP/SICAP Community Development worker. In recent years the community has

benefitted from the retrofit scheme with the Lorrha Community Hall upgraded and up to 80 private households availing of retrofit supports.

Since 2016 SCÉAL have operated The Lorrha Heritage Museum, Café and Shop in Lorrha Community Hall improving and expanding services all the while. The facility was developed on a voluntary basis using equipment and furniture donated by the local community. It is frequented regularly by residents and visitors to Lorrha, utilised by all in the community as a meeting point, information hub and informal gathering space. It welcomes visitors 7 mornings a week and has become a vital front line offensive against social exclusion and rural isolation in the area. Local foods and crafts are sold in the shop and residents can avail of staple items saving them the 12 mile round trip to Portumna otherwise. Like Loughmore Tea Rooms the enterprise is supporting several other local food producers and craftworkers.

Lorrha Community Hall is not a practical solution for this community space in the long term as it occupies the main part of the hall preventing use of the space by other local community groups for other activities such as drama, indoor sports, meetings etc. When there is a need to use the hall, it creates an unsustainable amount of work in regards to removal of furniture and heritage displays to free up the space.

Early in 2018 SCÉAL made contact with NTLP's Rural Development Programme seeking support for a feasibility study for development of Lorrha Community Hall. Throughout the process SICAP worked collaboratively with the RDP team to support SCÉAL in preparing and completing an application for funding under the RDP programme. This involved several group meetings and a number of telephone and email conversations in regards to the preparation of supporting documentation. SCÉAL were assisted with a number of tasks including following National Public Procurement Guidelines, the preparation of a tender specification document and obtaining the requisite number of quotes. These interventions were effective in building the capacity of the group to be able to make applications for funding in the future.

SICAP supported SCÉAL in exploring possibilities for staff for the heritage centre and café to mitigate the huge voluntary contribution that is currently contributed by the committee. SICAP linked the group with Shannonside Improvements Association, Terryglass to avail of a CE participant locally, this is currently in progress. SICAP have also linked SCÉAL with the Tipperary Volunteer Centre to assist with volunteer recruitment.

The RDP Application for a feasibility study was successful and SCÉAL are currently working with an Architect to prepare proposals and drawings for renovations to the community hall. The SCÉAL committee are fully engaged. The total cost of the study is €12,300.00 and the grant rate 90% so SCÉAL will avail of €11,070.00 of financial support for the project once it is complete.

In the future SCÉAL hope to utilise the documents produced by Derek Coulter Architects to form the basis of an application for capital funding to implement the renovations at Lorrha Community Hall. As part of the feasibility project the architect will help SCÉAL undertake necessary pre-development work and support in submitting a planning application for the renovations required and a tender process for proposed building works. SCÉAL hope to have a 'shovel ready' project once the feasibility is complete and will be ready for potential funding streams in the future, RDP or otherwise.

Threats to the Lorrha Social Enterprise:

SCÉAL are still seeking support in terms of the staffing of the Heritage Centre and community Café. This could be a real threat to the initiative as volunteers can become burnt out by such a high level of commitment on a long term basis.

SCÉAL were made aware of the Community Service Programme during 2017 as a way to provide staffing support for the Heritage Centre and Community Café but were not ready to proceed with an application. They did not have a formal governing structure in place and the application requirements included audited accounts which had not been prepared – SCÉAL was very much operating on a community and voluntary basis at the time.

Displacement of other services from Hall. Since the hall is almost fully utilised by the Shop/Café/Museum, it is difficult for other groups to utilise space without a huge amount of dismantling and setting up of space.

SICAP Work with Lorrha SCEAL 2018

Feb – July

SICAP staff worked in collaboration with RDP staff in progressing SCÉAL's RDP application for a feasibility study for Lorrha Community Hall to facilitate the new Community space. Interventions included meetings, phone calls, emails and guidance regarding documentation required and how to access VAT clearance, Tax Clearance etc.

March: Connecting SCÉAL with Shannonside Improvements Association, Terryglass re: CE scheme participant for the Community Shop.

April: Review of Business Plan for Social Enterprise by SICAP staff

May: SICAP connect SCEAL with Tipperary Volunteer Centre to support in recruiting new volunteers

June

- SICAP / RDP staff attended a Lorrha Dorrha Familiarisation Day (Leaflet attached)

SCÉAL organised a 'Fam Day' – a tourism initiative to promote Lorrha and the surrounding area as a tourist destination. The day started with tea and speakers at the new Community Enterprise followed by a whistle-stop tour around the main attractions and amenities including lunch in The Friars Tavern, Lorrha and a boat trip on the Shannon.

- SICAP Staff Assist SCÉAL with Local Agenda 21 Application for a 'Lorrha Keep Cup' a re-useable cup to promote recycling, reduce waste, create awareness of the Lorrha Community Enterprise and create revenue for same.
- SCÉAL exhibit at SICAP/Tipperary Volunteer Centre/PPN event to promote volunteering in North Tipperary

July

- Assist SCÉAL in getting in final documentation for RDP application
- Application approved
- SCÉAL attend GDPR training for community groups provided by SICAP

September

- SCÉAL were awarded funding under the Local Agenda 21 for a keep cup and SICAP are in contact with group to work on production and launch night of 'Lorrha Keep Cup'

NTLP's SICAP and RDP team are looking forward to supporting SCÉAL in the next stage of their development - creating a sustainable space for their unique community enterprise.

TESTIMONIAL from Chairperson of Lorrha SCEAL

To whom it concerns

My name is David Broderick. I helped create our local community group in Lorrha in 2015. The name chosen for the group was SCÉAL, we used the Irish word for story as we felt it was time to tell our story as our community was in decline.

SCÉAL also stands for Social & Community Enterprise for the Advancement of Lorrha/Rathcabbin.

Our shop closed the previous year and our post office was also closed. We felt we had nowhere for people to gather or meet and we were also inspired by the work done in Loughmore by Mary Fogarty and others.

We have been helped, advised and guided since we began by LEADER staff on the Social Inclusion and Rural Development Programmes.

They initially set up meetings and working groups for us so we had clear objectives and goals and have always been there to help us since.

All the local information was pulled together and NTLP staff came up with a very detailed community plan. This plan was circulated throughout and showed local people how serious we were about breathing life back into our community.

With all the work and support we received we felt confident to open our own community shop and heritage centre in 2016. This venture has been a great success and we plan in the future again with the help of LEADER to build an extension onto our community shop.

We have firmly put our parish back on the map and with the guidance we are receiving we feel we can turn our area into a viable tourist attraction.

NTLP Community Development staff are a credit to the LEADER group for the thorough professionalism but also the genuine interest in helping our community.

David Broderick

Chairperson of SCÉAL 2015-2017

VIDEO CLIP produced by Lorrha SCEAL to promote their area:

<https://youtu.be/MXzlAILXzJg>

Lorrha SCÉAL in pictures.....







