



The Corduff Raferagh Community Association was established in the early 1980s. The community purchased land, developed a football pitch and built a new community centre in 1983. All associated costs from this purchase and initial development were settled by 1986. In 2003, the community centre was extended and upgraded.

In 2016 the Corduff Raferagh Community Association identified the need for repairs to the building were apparent again. The initial driver stemmed from the need to replace the roof of the community centre. Computer facilities at the centre also needed updating. A special community committee was formed to help drive and develop the project. The project proposal developed to encompass wider improvements and repairs to help enhance the centre's community value. It incorporated upgrades to the building's energy efficiency and computer training facilities.

Objectives

- **This project aimed to make improvements and repairs to the Corduff Raferagh Community Centre.**

Its primary objectives were to:

- **Repair the roof to prevent damp and deterioration of the building's structure**
- **Improve the energy efficiency and comfort of the building**
- **Improve the aesthetics and comfort of the hall for all users**
- **Upgrade the computer suite to make it suitable for training young and old**

Activities

Initial community meetings began in 2016 where ideas were gathered around needs and the direction of the upgrade works. The Corduff and Raferagh Community Association CLG are a well organised and enthusiastic local group. They carried out a thorough local needs analysis which took into account a broad set of local groups and stakeholders. In October 2016 the group submitted an expression of interest to Monaghan Integrated

Development to carry out necessary repairs and upgrades to their community centre. The group completed procurement for the works and submitted a full application in April 2017.



Stage at Corduff Raferagh Community Centre. Image credit: Corduff and Raferagh Community Association

In June 2017, Corduff Raferagh Community Association CLG were approved for LEADER support at a rate of 75% to a maximum amount of €133,561.50. To assist with cashflow during the works, the group were able to avail of phased payments. Between July and October 2017 most of the structural work was completed. The community had planned the project with the aim that most work could be complete during the summer months to minimise disruption, such as to the pre and afterschool club running at the centre. The project was fully complete in early 2018.



Corduff Raferagh Community Centre roof after upgrade works and installation of solar panels. Image credit: Corduff and Raferagh Community Association





The local community also carried out fundraising to generate outstanding finance required for the project. The specially formed committee worked to coordinate fundraising events.

A new insulated roof and ceiling was installed to stop damp patches occurring within the building and prevent heat escaping. The heating system was insulated and solar panels installed to improve the energy efficiency of the building. Other external works were cleaning of external walls, provision of flashing on external vents and minor structural repairs.

Within the hall, a new stage lighting system was installed, a projector and screen, acoustic panels on the ceiling for sound dampening, new skirting and architraves, along with painting and decorating to improve the aesthetics and comfort of the hall for all users.

A new computer suite also formed part of the project. Existing computer facilities were put in place in early 2000. The community association purchased 10 laptops that upgraded facilities provided in the dedicated computer room suitable for computer training classes. The local Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) now provide adult computer training at the community centre. The first new classes started in September 2018. Future courses that the VEC could potentially provide will be assessed and local needs evaluated. Laptops have the added benefit of mobility given the computer room's location on the top floor of the community centre. The local Active Retired Group also aims to use the new computer equipment. Laptops allow them to locate their classes downstairs which better suits their needs.

“Having the grant available to us safeguards the centre for the current groups using it and for future use. The people behind the centre can now focus on running it and not worrying or devoting time to the structural things”.

Patricia Murtagh, Assistant Secretary of the Community Development Group

Results

The upgrade works safeguard the centre for future years. The community centre is used by all ages all year round for sport, arts and culture, music, dance and drama, numerous fundraising events, training, education and socialising. The Corduff Raferagh Community Centre caters for local functions and social events in the area. The community has a strong musical tradition. A social dance is held fortnightly and other types of dance held regularly include Céilí, Irish, Sean-nós and set dancing. The centre also provides facilities for all sporting organisations in the community including the Bowls Club, Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) Club, Handball Club, Ladies GAA, Juvenile Club along with the Community Association, Active Retirement group, Irish Farmers Association, Water Scheme Committee, Community Alert, Pipe Band, Pioneers, Heritage Group, Parent and Toddler Group and Drama Club. The improved facilities provide additional benefits for these groups using the community centre. For example, they can make use of the projector and screen to display information to assist their events.



Corduff Raferagh Community Centre. Image credit: Corduff and Raferagh Community Association

To mark the completion of the project the community held a re-launch event in September 2018 and launched a new Corduff Raferagh Community Centre (CRCC) logo. Originally from the area, Irish meteorologist Gerry Murphy and RTÉ





weather forecast presenter acted as MC for the event. This helped to showcase the facility to groups using the centre. It also helped to revive interest and re-engage groups who had used the centre less often in recent times.

The community centre has now reduced its carbon footprint and running costs. Electricity bills have reduced. A 6.8 kWp solar PV system was installed on the centre's roof. According to Activ8 Solar Energies who installed the system, based on its operation from November 2017 to September 2018 the solar PV system has exceeded expected production (SAP) to date by 10%. The solar PV system off-sets the equivalent amount of carbon as a five-acre forest.



Ceiling of Corduff Raferagh Community Centre before upgrade works. Image credit: Corduff and Raferagh Community Association



Ceiling of Corduff Raferagh Community Centre after upgrade works. Image credit: Corduff and Raferagh Community Association

Lessons

The importance of the Corduff Raferagh Community Association and the special local committee that formed to steer and drive the project was important to its success. The committee was multi-skilled which helped deal with different aspects and demands of the project as it progressed. Holding a re-launch event at the end of the project helped to highlight the upgraded community centre facilities to the wider community. It helped mark the achievement and impacted a strengthening community spirit. It also helped bring community groups back in to the centre. The project also gained the interest of new individuals to become part of the community association, bringing new ideas and energy to the group.

From the Local Action Group perspective, the project highlights the critical importance of the animation support function in LEADER as a developmental programme and its role in guiding the group through the whole project lifecycle. The group worked very effectively with John Toland, the LEADER Development Officer at Monaghan Integrated Development. The animation process was very effective with no major issues holding up the project. The LEADER Development Officer worked closely with the group to ensure that the funding application progressed smoothly from expression of interest to final payment. Public procurement and general compliance with LEADER Operating Rules are areas where community and voluntary groups can struggle. If not undertaken correctly, this can lead to the project being stalled or even being rejected completely during the final stages of assessment.

Funding

Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) =	€178,082
+ (i) Rural Development Programme support (a)+(b)	€133,561.50
+ (a) EAFRD (EU) contribution	€83,876.62
+ (b) National / Regional contribution	€49,684.88
+ (ii) Private / Own funds	€43,521
+ (iii) Other funding sources	€1,000 (Community & Environment Scheme 2017 Monaghan County Council)

