

LEADER 2014-2020 (EXTENDED TO 2022) NRN CASE STUDY

Churchill Forge Project

Summary

This project set out to restore and protect the heritage of forging in the community of Spa-Fenit, County Kerry. The local Forge, which was established in the 1840s, had fallen into a state of disrepair and was at risk of being lost due to its continuing deterioration. In 2002, the Spa Fenit Community Council (SFCC) acquired the Forge from a local benefactor and set about restoring it to its former glory. With the help of LEADER funding, the Forge has been fully restored and now houses an additional visitor space with over 20 display panels detailing the history of forging in Spa-Fenit. This project has not only preserved the local history, it has also protected and developed a community asset.

Context

The SFCC was set up in 1985 with the aim of helping to develop and enhance the community of Fenit. Over the years, the Community Council has been involved in a number of local projects such as the development of local viewing points and the initiation and active promotion of the local 12 kilometre greenway connecting Tralee to Fenit.

In 2002, a local benefactor, Fred Kreidbiel, acquired the Churchill Forge in Fenit and gave it to the

Project name: Churchill Forge Project

Date: 2016 – 2020

Local Action Group: Kerry Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Implementing Partner: North, East & West Kerry Development Company (NEWKD)

Type of Beneficiary: NGO

Priority & Focus Area: Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation / Subtheme: Rural Tourism

Project Beneficiary Name/Organisation: Spa Fenit Community Council

Address: Fenit, Tralee, Co. Kerry

Further information:

[Churchill Forge Heritage Centre](#) | [Facebook](#)



Churchill Forge – Source: Spa Fenit Community Council



Community Council, in trust, so that it could be restored to its former glory. Forging has a long tradition in Ireland, going back over thousands of years, and in more recent times there has been a re-focus on forging and on preserving it along with a number of other traditional skills. The Churchill Forge was originally established in the 1840s and in recent times had fallen into a state of disrepair.

The initial stage of the project was supported by funding under the previous LEADER Programme. As well as fully repairing and restoring the building, a full range of metal forming tools were acquired to be housed in the Forge and put on display. The most significant of these tools were the anvil, hammer, bellows, furnace and a range of hand tools such as tongs and punches.



The original Forge workshop – Source: Spa Fenit Community Council

In 2016, the Community Council decided to develop the Forge even further as an attraction. In this iteration of the project, LEADER funding was sought to support the development of an additional visitor space at the Forge and to create a number of explanatory viewing panels detailing the history of forging in the area.

Objectives

- To protect and preserve the history of forging in the community of Spa-Fenit.
- To develop the Forge as a community asset and local tourist attraction to benefit the community.



Spa Fenit Community Council Members – Source: Spa Fenit Community Council

Activities

The Community Council approached LEADER to seek funding to develop an additional visitor space. This would facilitate the hosting of events and would help towards kitting out the space with a number of display panels detailing the history of forging in the area. This would also supplement the display of equipment and





tools that were already in existence in the Forge workshop.

“Sean Linnane was the co-ordinator and he was outstanding. He gave us great advice in applying for the funding and was very supportive” Dermot Crowley, SFCC

In addition to submitting an application to LEADER, the promoters needed the support of match funding to accelerate the project. They relied on the fundraising efforts and generosity of the local community as well as a number of corporate donations from local businesses and further donations from the benefactor.

“There is no way we could have progressed the project without LEADER support” Dermot Crowley, SFCC

Once funding was approved, the Community Council acquired a bridging loan from Clann Credo, who provide community loans for LEADER and community development projects in Ireland. This allowed the SFCC to get the project underway without delay.



Showcasing the work of the Blacksmith – Source: Spa Fenit Community Council

Results

This project has resulted in the preservation of local history and contributed to the development of a community amenity. The development of the multi-use visitor space at the Forge, along with the installation of over 20 visually stimulating wall panels, has enabled the Forge to open as a tourist attraction.

“It would have been terrible if the Forge was left to go into disrepair because it would have been knocked and a lot of the history attached to the area would have been lost” Dermot Crowley, SFCC

The addition of the visitor space has been instrumental to the success of the project. The space has been used to host a number of traditional nights, cultural events, local community events and talks from guest speakers on forging and other traditional crafts. In addition, during National Heritage Week, the Forge hosts a local open day, which demonstrates a range of traditional



Images and forging memorabilia on display at the Churchill Forge – Source: Spa Fenit Community Council





skills and crafts including weaving, bottle making and beekeeping. The space has the capacity to host up to 60 people.

The match funding requirement is something that applicants need to bear in mind before approaching LEADER.



New visitor space with display panels – Source: Spa Fenit Community Council



Local events being hosted in the new Churchill Forge Visitor Centre – Source: Spa Fenit Community Council

The Forge also hosts visitor tours, with over 2,000 attending prior to COVID-19. As well as this, the Forge engages with local schools, by running an interactive competition every year, allowing children to learn about the local history of forging, while also helping to promote the Forge.

Bridging Loans – Clann Credo

Clann Credo was a great asset in helping this project to progress in a timely manner. The promoters availed of a bridging loan to start works while waiting for the approved LEADER grant to come through. This bridging service can be particularly useful for capital build projects where the granting of planning permission can take time.

“We are thrilled to have a fabulous amenity that will be open to the public and it will be great for the people who visit the area post COVID” Dermot Crowley, SFCC

Sustainable Projects

When developing a project idea, the promoters advise being clear about how the project will benefit the community now and into the future. It is helpful, they say, to have an active community group and continuity with development organisations.

**“You need to get a project that will last the test of time”
Dermot Crowley, SFCC**

Lessons

Match Funding

To be successful in gaining LEADER support, as well as developing a good project idea, the promoters advise applicants to submit a carefully budgeted application which details the amount of match funding required.





Funding

Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) =	€164,422.25
+ (i) Rural Development Programme support (a)+(b)	€52,422.25
+ (a) EAFRD (EU) contribution	€32,921.17
+ (b) National / Regional contribution	€19,501.08
+ (ii) Private/ Corporate Donations	€85,000
+ (iii) Own Funds (fundraising)	€27,000

Contact details

Project beneficiary name	Spa Fenit Community Council
Contact person	Michelle Burke, Secretary
Email	mushburke@gmail.com
Address of beneficiary or implementing body	Fenit, Tralee, Co. Kerry

