

LEADER

Community-Led Local Development



National Rural Network



COASTAL EXPLORERS PROGRAMME

Summary

The Inishowen Basking Shark Study Group (IBSSG) is a member of the wider Irish Basking Shark Project (IBSP) which is an amalgamation of researchers who are regionally based and aim to educate the public on marine life in Irish waters, with a particular focus on basking sharks. This project supported the IBSSG to develop an Inishowen based 'Coastal Explorers Programme' for the youth of Inishowen using the Newfoundland (Canada) Coastal Explorer Programme as inspiration. This programme aimed to engage and inform the youth about the unique coastal heritage that the Inishowen Peninsula has to offer by helping them to develop a range of personal development and maritime based scientific knowledge and skills.

Context

The IBSP is made up of a number of researchers who are environmentalists, marine biologists and conservationists who aim to raise awareness of marine life and basking sharks in Irish waters. Outreach and education initiatives and programmes in the community form a core part of their work in raising awareness. The IBSSG is one of the key and most active members of the group and they operate in the Inishowen Peninsula. In developing this programme, the IBSSG felt that many activities and training are often targeted at disadvantaged groups and do not cater to those who are interested in marine biology and are contemplating it as a career choice. This project came about as a result of demand from the youth in the community who were interested in pursuing a career in marine biology and

Project name: Coastal Explorers Programme

Date: February 2018 - October 2018

Local Action Group: Donegal LCDC

Implementing Partner: Inishowen Development Partnership

Type of Beneficiary: Voluntary Group

Priority & Focus Area: Theme 3: Rural Environment Sub theme: Protection & Improvement of Water Resources

Project Beneficiary Name/Organisation: Inishowen Basking Shark Study Group

Address: Inishowen, Co. Donegal

Further information:

www.baskingshark.ie/coastalexplorers2



Group of participants on the Coastal Explorers Programme - Source: IBSSG





related industries but had little knowledge or practical experience of the sector. Therefore, this project aimed to give the young people on the peninsula experience of the best scientific equipment, training and knowledge available in the marine biology sector, while also developing their awareness about the career opportunities it can harbor. The programme was developed with two strands in mind, primarily a focus on the scientific and practical side of marine biology and also a focus on personal development skills such as leadership, communication and teamwork.

eligible for 100% funding and there would not be a requirement to provide match funding.

“To get the match funding, that was always our greatest challenge, because you have to show it as cash in your organisation and... any money that’s coming in, that’s usually from our own pockets. We don’t go looking for money or we are not part of a wider organisation that gets funding from any state bodies”

Coordinator IBSSG, Emmet Johnson



Participants at sea conducting surveys - Source IBSSG

Objectives

- To engage and inspire young people aged 14-17 from the Inishowen Peninsula to explore and learn more about their local marine environment and heritage.

Activities

The IBSSG already had a relationship with Inishowen Development Partnership (IDP) because they were applicants to previous LEADER programmes for outreach and education initiatives that they ran in local national schools and summer camps. They made contact with IDP to see if the Coastal Explorers Programme would be something that they were willing to fund and if it fit into the current LEADER Programme criteria. The IDP suggested that the IBSSG should apply for funding under the ‘training’ aspect of the LEADER programme, meaning they would be

The IBSSG were informed that if funding was to be given under training that they needed to establish a need for this training and provide evidence that people were interested in engaging with it. The IBSSG decided to carry out a consultation exercise to gather this information and the training provider, Blue Connections, designed this for the IBSSG on a voluntary basis prior to any funding or project approval. This exercise involved the IBSSG going to all the local secondary schools, mainly in the Inishowen area, to conduct the exercise to establish a need. They also used this opportunity to tailor the training based on the interests of the youths of Inishowen and showed them videos and other resources to show them the work the IBSSG are involved in. They also ran a series of breakout sessions to discuss interest in marine biology and to assess from the student’s perspective what skills they believe people in the sector require and what aspects would they like to see included if there was to be a training programme.

“A participative approach to design was key to the success of this training programme. Engaging with young people in the local area to gain their ideas on design and what was important to them gave the trainees a sense of ownership” *RoseMary McCloskey, Blue Connections*





Participants taking part in a beach clean - Source: IBSSG

The IBSSG generated a report based on the information and feedback from these workshop days which helped to support their LEADER application and helped to structure the Coastal Explorers Programme based on ideas they had already developed. This exercise led to them putting a lot more focus on the practical experience out at sea, as many had students had revealed they had little or no experience out on the Inishowen Peninsula.

'Blue Connections', the training provider who has vast experience in Marine Biology and delivering training programmes in this field, developed the materials in collaboration with members of the IBSSG and were responsible for delivering this comprehensive training with help from members of the IBSSG. Much of this work was conducted by Blue Connections prior to project approval to ensure that the programme was ready to be delivered in the Spring, so this relationship between the training provider and the IBSSG proved significant in ensuring the programme was tailored to what participants and the IBSSG wanted and within the timeframe.

First and foremost, a recruitment campaign was launched and the programme was widely advertised in local schools, newspapers, radio stations, social media, community centers and local shops. The process involved an application and interview in order to recruit participants

who were the most engaged. The IBSSG received over 80 applications, but only had 20 spaces.

"Conducting informal interviews meant that young people valued their place on the training programme"

RoseMary McCloskey, Blue Connections

The course ran every week from February to April on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Wednesday evenings focused on more personal development activities and this was delivered mainly by a professional trainer. On this first Wednesday, participants were asked to develop their 'development learning plans'. These plans detailed their skills and interests and what they hoped to learn and achieve from the course. Saturdays involved more practical work out in the field which built on the learnings from the Wednesday teachings e.g. teamwork skills. The practical skills started out from more land-based studies such as river ecology and beach cleans onto sea based activities such as kayaking and surveying, depending on the weather.

"Teaching personal development skills alongside marine skills was critical for the age group of the trainees, and helped trainees recognise their progression"

RoseMary McCloskey, Blue Connections



Participants out on the Inishowen Peninsula - Source: IBSSG



Overall, some of the aspects which participants engaged in included taking on the role of citizen scientists by engaging in practical discoveries such as wildlife and habitat surveying, identifying species, environmental sampling, developing practical marine conservation projects, data analysis and basic marine safety and boat skills. Participants shared their findings and learnings with each other via assignments and presentations at the Wednesday sessions. At the end of the course, an accumulation of their work was showcased at a 'takeover' event for the public, involving presentations on their learnings and each student was awarded with a certificate on the evening.



Learning about the river ecology on the Inishowen Peninsula
Source- IBSSG

Additional to this the IBSSG took a further 10 students from the original 20 to do a full week summer internship called 'Sea Science' which involved a more intensive and higher level of knowledge and practical skills. This involved trainees spending much of the week at sea on a host of different vessels and trainees received an RYA Level 1 accreditation in powerboating (learning how to drive, handle powerboats and approach a buoy safely). Furthermore, the trainees also spent an overnight on the 'Brian Boru' sail training vessel working on their skills and collecting data.

"We got a huge amount out of it ourselves, it's really rewarding, satisfying, and even now I meet people and the feedback is still great from the youngsters themselves and their parents"

Coordinator IBSSG, Emmet Johnson

Results

As part of the course, the participants set out what they hoped to achieve at the beginning and their level of knowledge going into the course. The trainer, Blue Connections, carried out full monitoring and evaluation activities to capture learnings from the course participants. Nearly all (95.5%) of the trainees completed the course and had full attendance over the entire course with the exception of one person who could not complete the course for personal reasons.

"Thoroughly enjoyed it from the Wednesday sessions to the more practical elements. It was all very good and well taught, and I do feel I've learned a lot about myself and what I am capable of and about marine biology and the sea"

Odhran - Programme Participant



Data collection out at sea- Source: IBSSG

Based on the evaluations it was clear that there was a significant increase in knowledge, awareness and





appreciation of the local marine environment and biodiversity in the surrounding area. This has also helped participants to develop more pride and association with their local area and where they live. Not only this but personal development skills such as problem solving, communication and leadership were also key features. The IBSSG felt that the longer-term nature of the course, run over a few weeks, allowed participants to greatly develop these skills and form relationships within the group and with the volunteers of the IBSSG.

“It was great fun. I learned a lot about marine biology. I made amazing friends and loved it so much. I became confident and learned lots of new skills”

Sadhbh - Programme Participant



Participants taking surfing lessons as part of the programme - Source: IBSSG

Some participants have gone on to study Marine Biology at college.

“Quite a few of them have gone on to study Marine Biology at University which has been a real positive development from it”

Coordinator IBSSG, Emmet Johnson

While other participants have gone into related industries such as the fisheries.

“I met a fella the other day and he’s now a fulltime fisherman, and he had been on the course and we had a good chat and it was great, now he’s a more informed fisherman”

Coordinator IBSSG, Emmet Johnson



Essentially, this course has given them more practical knowledge as they go forward and hopefully makes them more informed within their marine related roles.

Lessons

Administrative Process and Timeline

The IBSSG is a voluntary group, who do not hire any staff, administrative or otherwise. The LEADER application process can be quite laborious and requires a lot of time and dedication which was all done on a voluntary basis. Timelines can also be quite long, from the expression of interest stage to each of the steps including the tender process, insurance and so the IBSSG stated that it is important to leave a sufficient amount of time for the application process if you have a project timeline in mind. The IBSSG were lucky to have such a strong relationship with Blue Connections, the training provider, who began organizing materials prior to project approval to ensure the programme could get up and running once the approval came through.

“If you wanted to deliver [a project] or you had a certain timeline, you need to be mindful of that”

Coordinator IBSSG, Emmet Johnson





Participants taking to the waves on the Inishowen Peninsula - Source: IBSSG



One participant learning about the local marine life - Source: IBSSG

Operating Finance

This project processed their funding in 3 phased payments as it was required that they have one third of the funding in the bank to go ahead with the process. The group tried to access a community funding loan to provide bridge financing, as they are a voluntary non-profit group. However, they were advised that their money was too small and they didn't have any assets to act as collateral. In the end, it was one of the members who provided the bridge financing for the project to proceed.

"We were very lucky to be in that position, but I couldn't see many other groups being in that position. So, it's an issue that you need to have addressed right at the very start"

Coordinator IBSSG, Emmet Johnson



Funding

Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) =	€47,550.00
+ (i) Rural Development Programme support (a)+(b)	€47,550.00
+ (a) EAFRD (EU) contribution	€29,861.40
+ (b) National / Regional contribution	€17,688.60
+ (ii) Private / Own funds	€ n/a
+ (iii) Other funding sources	€ n/a

Contact details

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LEADER 2014-2020 NRN CASE STUDY



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