



ACTIONS FROM GEAR SWAPS TO GOVERNANCE

The GAA Green Club Toolkit contains simple and practical advice on actions clubs can take in the areas of Energy, Waste, Water, Biodiversity & Travel & Transport to protect their environment and future-proof their operations and facilities.

This section highlights how many of these Green Club actions also promote inclusion and engagement in clubs and communities and can be of particular benefit in bringing seldom heard groups into the life of the club. Part 2 here focuses on a wide range of green initiatives for inclusion, from gear swaps to lighting upgrades, while Part 1 contains a great overview of inclusive biodiversity actions

Reducing Waste, Reducing Costs.

Gear Swap

The real or perceived cost of taking up a new sport can be a barrier for engagement with Gaelic Games clubs. This can be especially true where families are new to Gaelic Games or don't have a tradition of playing or belonging to a club. Gear swaps and hurley and helmet banks are simple ways of addressing these barriers, giving players young and old the opportunity to start playing and to become familiar with the club and the games. Clubs like Gort in Galway and Knockananna in Wicklow have hurley and helmet banks for their young players, so that families are saved significant costs when introducing their children to the sport and that those children who don't have, e.g., siblings or relatives to hand down kit are not at a disadvantage in getting involved in sport.

Gear swaps can be powerful tools for both inclusion and environment. Gear swaps reduce the cost on the planet by promoting reuse and extending the life of clothes, boots and equipment, they reduce the cost on families and players of having to purchase new gear and boots and they give new members the opportunity to pick up club-branded gear and proudly display their belonging to club and community.

There are tips and example on and of running gear swaps in the Green Club Toolkit at: <https://learning.gaa.ie/GreenClub/Waste>



A Culture of Circularity

Gear swaps work best of the environment and inclusion when they are designed and run as initiatives to involve and benefit all club members, rather than being aimed at any particular groups or members. Creating a culture of circularity can help with this.

Circularity means minimising what throw out or we put to waste, reducing what we buy and consume, re-using what we do have and repairing what breaks. Many Green Clubs are creating a culture of circularity in their clubs, through Gear Swaps, looking at gear ordering, and ensuring old equipment and kits find new life elsewhere (for example, passing onto schools or other sports teams or group) but also by eliminating single use plastic bottles and cups in the club (see <https://learning.gaa.ie/GreenClub/Waste> for tips and templates) and running imaginative and engaging initiatives that create community bonds and make it easier for everyone to be part of community life.

Many clubs repurpose materials in their biodiversity and walkway projects, while clubs like Ballindereen in Galway and St Fechins in Louth both have community book-share facilities on site and other Green Clubs, including St Finian's Swords and Round Towers Clondalkin in Dublin, run special Halloween Swap shops, to reduce the waste associated generated by Halloween costumes each year and ensure all young club members can experience the enjoyment of dressing up at Halloween.



Transport that Doesn't Cost the Earth

For many people, especially those from seldom heard, marginalised or disadvantaged groups, getting to the club can be a challenge in itself. In some rural areas, or where clubs and pitches are a distance from towns and urban centres and not well served by public transport or by safe active travel routes, those who don't have access to a car can be unintentionally excluded from the club and its activities, unable to bring their children to training or attend training, meetings, matches or other club activities themselves.

Green Clubs across the island, like Gort in Galway and the Banner in Clare, have been looking at transport ideas that make ensure that the club is accessible to all, regardless of circumstances and situation. These include:

- Organising carpooling so players and members without cars can get to the club.
- Setting up walking and cycle buses so children can travel safely to the club together.
- Engaging with local authorities on developing and maintaining safe active travel routes.
- Installing bike parking and repair facilities.
- Using minibus transport.

The largest part of the climate impact of sport comes from transport and while these transport actions are being adopted by clubs to increase inclusion in club activities, they have an important positive climate impact too. There are tips and resources for these sustainable and active travel initiatives available in the Green Club Toolkit at: <https://learning.gaa.ie/GreenClub/Travel>

One of the major challenges is to maintain initiatives once they are set up. Carpooling, for example, can peter out without rotas or some kind of structure or planning in place. Measures such as reserving carparking spaces for carpooling and issuing communication and reminders can support these actions. Active travel teams in local authorities will be able to support and advise on promoting and providing for active and sustainable travel. Other clubs and organisations in the area may be experiencing similar issues so it can be worthwhile to consult and partner locally – e.g., with potential for collaborating on community minibus sharing.

Transport challenges will vary from club to club and area to area. Finding out who is being hindered from playing with or getting involved in the club due to transport difficulties, and learning what these difficulties are, is a vital first step. Clubs can learn about these challenges by, e.g.,

- Seeking out the experience and knowledge in local schools.
- Consulting with members of seldom heard groups in the community.
- Engaging with other community groups and representatives.

Carrying out a simple mapping exercise of club membership and population centres and groups in the community to identify if any areas or groups are being unintentionally excluded because of transport accessibility issues.

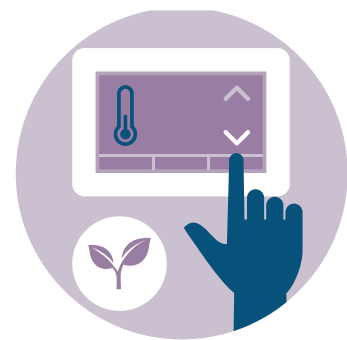
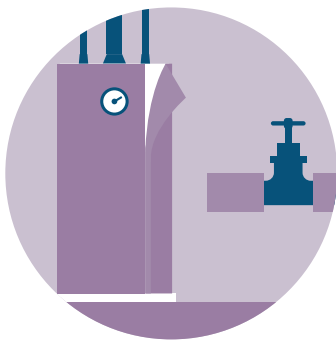




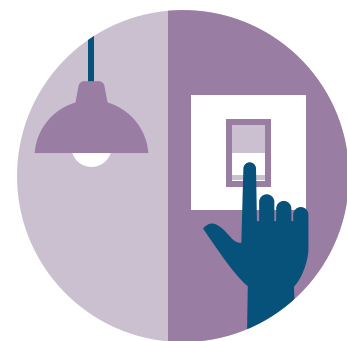
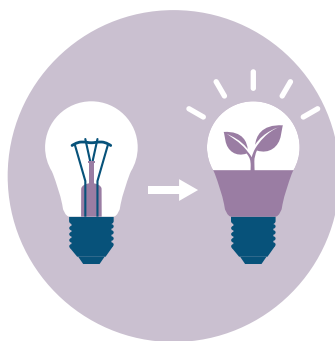
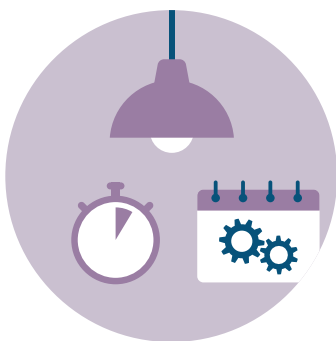
Energy and Engagement

Clubs across the country are implementing energy upgrades, to save money, to future-proof their facilities and to reduce the carbon being produced by club activities. These energy-saving actions can also have a sometimes underestimated positive effect on inclusion and engagement. Similarly, taking the needs of current and prospective club users into account from the start of energy upgrade planning can address some barriers to engagement.

ENERGY-SAVING HEATING PROJECTS like club house insulation and upgrading of heating systems not only save the club money and cut down on fossil fuel use but also make the club house a warmer and more welcoming places. For Killarney club Dr Crokes, energy upgrades have enabled the club to welcome older people from the town, who gather for social meetings and regular events, including bingo, exercise classes and card nights. A warmer clubhouse is especially important to vulnerable groups and people who may have uninsulated houses or are at risk of fuel poverty, and provides a place come, to meet and to be safe and warm, especially on cold winter evenings. Both Gort in Galway and Clan na Gael in Louth share the Dr Crokes experience of energy upgrades having a significant positive effect on the community as a whole. For Clan na Gael, a recent energy upgrade has had the dual effect of allowing the club to host more community events and of increasing club income from local hire, allowing the club to continue to grow and serve the community.



LIGHTING UPGRADES offer another opportunity to take the impact on club users into account in energy planning. When upgrading to LED, changes can be made to lighting settings to allow clubhouse spaces to be adapted for users with different needs. In Ballindereen in Galway, new lighting settings in the hall mean that lighting can be adjusted, e.g., for children who experience sensory issues, opening up club life and activities for children in the community who might otherwise have been unintentionally excluded.





Nothing about us without us

To ensure a real and lasting impact from these activities, community and engagement initiatives need to be embedded into club planning and decision-making. Governance and communication are core elements of this.

Governance

Inclusion and engagement activities will have the most impact where they are central to club engagement and where the voices of seldom heard communities are brought into the club and listened to. This may operate differently in different clubs and may take developing in steps and stages. Methods of putting inclusion and engagement at the heart of the club include (i) having periodic updates or presentations on club initiative and impacts at committee meetings (ii) introducing community and inclusion programmes as a standing item on meeting agendas and in club reporting and (iii) including direct representation of some of the community's seldom heard groups on club committees or sub-committees.

Communication

Club and community members without traditional links to the club, or who are no longer involved in playing and administration, may not be aware of opportunities to get involved in the club and its activities. Seldom heard groups and prospective new club members can be better reached by looking beyond traditional club communications and:

- (i) going out directly to groups in the community where they are. The Inclusion Mapping resource in this Toolkit can be an aid in this.
- (ii) ensuring that communication is adapted to the realities of groups within the community – e.g., available or communicated in other languages, accessible to those who don't have access to or aren't comfortable with digital communications or social media.

Club open days can be a great way of highlighting the range of club activities and bringing members of the community into the club. Open days or fun days shine a new light, for existing club members as well as for the wider community, on what club grounds and activities have to offer to community members and how community members of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can get involved. For Green Clubs like Gort in Galway and the Banner in Galway, club days have opened a new world for people who might not otherwise be involved in the club. See the Gort and Bannr club spotlight videos here.

Will it cost and how will we pay for it?

While many climate and inclusion initiatives, including many of those suggested here, are low- or no-cost, funding can be a barrier to launching or expanding some club engagement and inclusion programmes. Happily, there are increasing funding opportunities available to clubs and community groups. Clubs in the 26-counties can sign up to their local Public Participation Network (PPN) or Local Sports Partnership (LSP) newsletter to get information on these while clubs in the North will have access to funding opportunities through the GrantTracker updates sent out to all club secretaries. Community partners and sponsors are often very interested in collaborating on and supporting club inclusion project. General sports and community funds also increasingly reward community, inclusion and climate engagement and actions in their criteria and assessment.

See <https://learning.gaa.ie/GreenClub> for funding tips for clubs undertaking Green Club projects.