

Glór na Móna

Tuarisc Coimrithe an Stiúrthóra /Directors Summary Report, 2024/ 2025

Executive Director, Dr Feargal Mac Ionnrachtaigh

Overview of 2024/25

On the whole, we are again delighted and inspired in equal measure by another amazing year progress, growth and renewal. The phenomenal growth of the many projects that have formed part of our long-term strategic vision for youth and community development and language revitalisation more generally have also brought the welcome addition of new staff and resources that have strengthened our overall operational output. It is testament to the commitment, diligence and ingenuity of our staff members that we have been able to manage this in very constrained office space. Despite it's the additional workload involved, the development of Anam- Caifé na Carraige, as envisaged as one of our 2023 Strategic milestones, has acted as a brilliant addition to our network of projects through providing an excellent and welcome hub for community organising, solidarity events, meetings with funders and visitors. Although the workload has been intense and overwhelming at times, we have stuck to an integrity based growth process throughout and this made all the difference in fostering a collective sense of ownership amongst the team. This was undoubtedly strengthened by the Strategic planning process that we conducted and completed in early 2023 which augmented our own processes of bi-monthly developmental planning sessions with full-time staff. Our commitment to facilitating staff development continued in 2024 and we were delighted that Padraigin Nic Mhathúna, Emma Ní Mhuireagáin and Gearóidín Mhic Mhathúna all completed degree courses in Integrative Counselling, Youth Work and Management and Digital Business (Msc) respectively.

We also drew great value and inspiration from the process of developing the 20th anniversary short film and book. This gave us an opportunity to reflect positively on the core ethos, philosophy and ideological underpinning of Glór na Móna over the past two generations. This has helped renew our commitment to the emancipatory politics of decolonisation and our belief that this can change things for the better and inspire people to positive action.

New developments for CLG Laochra Loch Lao, who will have funding to recruit and appoint two full time staff in 2024 under the auspices of Fís an Phobail's language plan and the exciting new funding commitment from the National Lottery Heritage begin funding our efforts to chart the inspirational history of the Upper Springfield area will create many more opportunities for growth in 2025. We have a detailed calendar of work and a diverse yet inspiring programme for the year ahead. We look forward to the exciting challenges of the year ahead and would like to thank the board, and the wider community for their ongoing

support, inspiration and patience. The Glór na Móna community are delighted, humbled and inspired by another amazing year progress, growth and renewal. The phenomenal growth of the many projects that have formed part of our long-term strategic vision for youth and community development and language revitalisation more generally have also brought the welcome addition of new staff and resources that have strengthened our overall operational output. It is testament to the commitment, diligence and ingenuity of our staff members that we have been able to manage this in very constrained office space. Our January 2025 commitment to develop our adjacent vacant land as a community growing and rewilding space in partnership with Gáirdín an Phobail was a massive success as this thematic strand of work became central to all our youth and community projects and culminated in the completion of the Tearmann Ériu outdoor sanctuary on what was previously a derelict waste ground attracting anti-community behaviour.

April- June

Having extended our Winter school and began planning for our May Festival, Féile na gCloigíní Gorma, we decided to cut back on our Seachtain na Gaeilge /Féile an Earraigh programme. We did continue with the 'Curious Minds will find a way' critical discussion series in partnership with the New Script for Mental Health and had Professor John Read, from the University of East London, who delivered a fantastic talk entitled, 'Are diagnoses and drugs the answer to human distress?' on March 6 in the Long Gallery at Parliament Buildings Stormont. We also organised our first annual Matt Lundy memorial lecture with Dr Lauren Ní Néill who delivered a fantastic presentation on Irish placenames. Fóram na nGael also came together to organise the Matt Lundy spring dianchúrsa in Coláiste Feirste which was almost 200 learners in attendance in what was a fitting memory to Matt's enduring legacy.

In April, we learned the sad news of the passing of the great Seán Mag Goill, the renowned activist architect who we named our building after in 2016. We posted a written eulogy of Seán and his legacy on our website and did some video media with Meon Eile. In late April and early May, we also hosted a couple of solidarity media events for Belfast born Palestinian activist Khalid el Astal, who had also spoken at our Winter school in January, who lost his wife in the genocide in Gaza but was able to get his children back to Ireland in safety. We were put in contact with the lawyer, Fred Rooney, who oversaw their passage to safety. He put us in touch with a delegation of grassroots mental health practitioners from Pennsylvania in the US, he agreed to come over and visit our May festival, Féile na gCloigíní Gorma. One of their cohort, a psychotherapist named Connor Moriarty, ended up narrating our Féile wrap up video at the end of the festival. We also had contact from and another delegation from indigenous, riverine and agrarian traditional communities of Brazil's Amazon rainforest who agreed to visit us during their stay in London and facilitate a roundtable discussion on the battle against illegal mining. The Féile itself was a massive success and was

aided by lovely weather than brought over 3500 people to a packed 8 day extravaganza of events which mixed serious discussion that explores the key issues of the day and fun-filled outdoor program of activities and events for the community to enjoy: with SEN family days, a community walk and run on the mountain, The Hills Are Alive outdoor activities with the Rewilding the Black Mountain project, a workshop with internationally recognised psychologist Dr Lucy Johnston, community lunch by the asylum seeker and refugee campaign Kind Economy, interview with Dublin GAA legend Jim Gavin, sunrise swims, sports tournaments, the Scríbhneoirí an tSléibhe poetry night, a Stonelifting workshop with David Keohan and much more all.

Deriving from the workshop we hosted with the delegation from the Amazon rainforest during the Féile, they extended a formal invite to Glór na Móna to visit their communities in a solidarity visit to Brazil in February 2025. Led by our Community Projects Officer, Eoghan Ó Garmáile, a group of 5 young activists who showed a keen interest in taking part in the trip, launched a new network, Meitheal Uí Chadhain under the watchwords; solidarity, education, and internationalism with the aim 'of learning from radical communities around the world as well as support them through acts of solidarity not only while we are in those countries but also from here at home.' Meitheal Uí Chadhain began a fundraising and awareness raising campaign for the trip to Amazon which has been ongoing since June.

At the end of May, we recruited and appointed Emma Ní Mhuireagáin as the new youth co-ordinator of Cumann Óige Uachtar Chluanaí and she immediately hit the ground running by deploying Michael Cunningham and Michael Gerd Ó Dochartaigh to do some reflective practice and strategic planning with the part-time staff before they embarked on planning the summer programme.

Our PhD researcher, Róisín Nic Liam, also successfully passed her first year differentiation exam after performing brilliantly in her oral interview. She then presented a paper on her work so far at an international minority language conference in University College Cork in mid-June along myself who presented on the work of Glór na Móna.

In June, we began formed a sub-committee work on our 20th anniversary dinner which was booked as the finale event of Féile na Carraige 2024 in Belfast city hall and involved attracting over 30 organisations to buy tables in order to fill the 300 capacity venue. It was agreed that the event would double as a commemorative celebration and a fundraiser for Croí na Carraige. On June 21st, after a few months of preparatory work which typically took longer than we expected, we officially launched, Anam- Caifé na Carraige with a soft launch for partner organisations and colleagues. The launch, which was attended by our funders in the Housing Executive's social enterprise scheme, got excellent media coverage and positive feedback from the local community. It was agreed that the Caifé would open on Fridays and Saturdays and developing organically over the months that followed. Our Sólás na nÓg co-ordinator, Pdraigín Nic Mhathúna, immediately saw the opportunity to utilize Anam as resource to develop the confidence, social skills and work experience for our teenage cohort.

Fís an Phobail received word in June from DFC that our pilot funding proposal from March for staff member to develop the Meitheal Meantóireachta programme had been approved. This created an exciting new role, which though limited to 9 months in terms of funding commitment, provided a platform to significantly develop the project. After an internal trawl, Eimear Nic Ionnrachtaigh was appointed to the role. The 2024 Meitheal Meantóireachta cohort also concluded their course with presentation of certificates at Queens University. June concluded with the staff from all the projects coming together for the Ciorcal machnamhach where we did workshops on the 20th anniversary events and how best we could utilise the new café to enhance the impact of our youth and community empowerment projects.

July-August

Our youth summer programmes again went from strength to strength with Sólás na nÓg holding two weeks of bespoke summer programme for our young people with SEN and these catering from an age range of 7-18 years of age. Dr Órla Nig Oirc was also recruited again to conduct a follow on research report from her 2023 report. This report was focussed on measuring impact on a smaller cohort of young people and assessing the organic relationship with our schools and the impact of the provision on the holistic development of the young people.

This was mirrored by our Cumann Óige Uachtar Chluanaí summer programme, which was oversubscribed for its summer output. Having achieved record numbers, the youth team conducted their own evaluation of the programme which suggest that the team will need to attract additional funding resources to extend the summer programme and cater of the increased demand.

In terms of family transmission and language acquisition in the home, Fís an Phobail's programme of work which was being led by Sorcha Nic Cathmhaoil, who was now full-time in the role, continued to grow and develop. The 'Scéim Samhraidh na dTeaghlach' was spread over the summer with weekly events rather than the intensive one-week programme for those families in West Belfast who are raising children in Irish. The overnight 'immersive Irish Medium' camping trip to Tullymore Forest Park' had now doubled in size with over 50 taking part in a fantastic programme of activities which was supported by Journey Free.

The Fís an Phobail research report 'Saol Trí Ghaeilge' was launched in Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich where researcher Dr Órla Nig Oirc presented her findings. Foras na Gaeilge, Deputy CEO, Pól Deeds also spoke at the event, along with one of the parent cohort Connlaith Ní Raifeartaigh. A corresponding launch was also organised for later in the year in An Carn in Maghera and Foras na Gaeilge expressed an interest in exploring a pilot 'family immersion' funding initiative between each area.

Glór na Móna also hosted renowned GAA hurler and 'wild Irish retiree' Diarmuid Lyng where he was interviewed by Irish language journalist and broadcaster, Tomaí Ó Conghaile. His partner Siobhán De Paor also facilitated an outdoor poetry workshop in Gáirdín an Phobail.

Róisín Nic Liam delivered a fantastic lecture as part of the Liú Lúnasa festival at the end of August and Meitheal Uí Chadhain organised a brilliant Brazilian solidarity night in the Gaelionad to begin the fundraising for the trip. Buiding on the great work of the Matt Lundy spring dianchúrsa, Fís an Phobail brought the groups in West Belfast together to work on a collective promo video targeting language learners in West Belfast who wished to enrol in September Irish classes.

September-October

Fóram na nÓg staff and some of the Glór na Móna youth team took part in Ulster University's 'Stop the Clock' international youth conference where I delivered a short paper on Irish medium youth engagement in political organising and campaigning. This was followed by Foras na Gaeilge's language planning conference in Croke Park at the beginning of October which saw the programme partly shaped by our Language Planning Co-ordinator, Ciarán Mac Giolla Bhéin, who was on the organising committee. Fóram na nÓg Director, Orliath Mhic Leannáin, delivered a fantastic presentation on the work of FNN an Irish medium youth work which was well received from activists across the country. A couple of weeks after the conference, FNN hosted Pól Deeds and Colm Ó hArgáin from Foras na Gaeilge to explore funding support from Fóras for the work. They explained that Cumann na bhFiann have yet to fill two posts in the north and inquired whether FNN would be willing to think about a service level agreement of some kind fill this gap through our programme of work. We explained our reservations about this approach but agreed to discuss it when the details had been worked out.

Our second Aspire Programme apprentice, Tarlach Bairclagh, whose post is funded through the Rank foundation, started in September. As long-standing part-time youth worker with Cumann Óige Uachtar Chluanaí, Tarlach availed of all the Fóram na nÓg accredited youth training and began working closely with Emma one day a week as well as supporting Eoghan's participatory democracy work at Laochra Loch Lao's schools work. Fís an Phobail's language proficiency programme 'An cúrsa cruinnis' also kicked off again in September and was immediately oversubscribed with over 25 registered.

The following week, FNN Director Orliath Mhic Leannáin led a delegation from the Irish medium youth sector to meet with Education Minister Paul Givan in Stormont for a very positive and worthwhile engagement where agreed to come out and visit our young people before the end of the year.

Our GAA club, CLG Laochra Loch Lao, were overjoyed to get confirmation that our yearlong engagement with Roinn na Gaeltachta for funding support for the club had been successful. Gaeltacht Affairs Minister, Thomas Byrne came to An Sportlann to announce £800,000 funding over 4 years for Laochra Loch Lao and Na Gaeil Óga and get in a photograph with reps from each club.

Belfast City Council also agreed to move ahead and procure for a design team to work up the Croí an Carraige proposal to stage 4 development. A number of meetings ensued and a new and updated design was developed. We also began a range of meetings seeking advice

about fundraising in America for the building. Anam also received 4 stars in the Belfast City Council scores on the door inspection which gave the team great confidence.

Our 2024 Féile na Carraige programme had a special buzz in 2024 as we put the finishing touches to our celebratory dinner in Belfast city hall. We organised a range of excellent other events also which included; an interview with Irish wild rainforest guru, Eoghan Daltún; Fís an phobail organised a workshop with Aoife De Bhál in Gáirdín an Phobail; Fóram na nÓg hosted a youth policy consultation with the Department of Education; Anam held a live broadcast with Raidio na Gaeltachta and we held a landmark Harry Holland discussion with Clare Daly and Bernadette McAliskey in St Marys University college with over 300 in attendance.

Our Community Projects officer and Bayview Media's Martin Keenan worked and produced a fantastic 15-minute short film to mark the 20th anniversary of Glór na Móna which was shown on the night of the dinner where over 320 people in attendance where presentations were also heard from 3 generations of Glór na Móna activists. We had support from local community development organisations, GAA clubs, our two universities, Trade Union, human rights NGOs and local businesses. The event was huge success but was unfortunately embroiled in controversy in the week that followed when a portrait of a former DUP mayor was damaged after the event. We dealt with this well and put out a public statement with the support of our solicitor. To date, there has been no long term repercussions. October concluded with Fóram na nÓg taking the Coiste na nGael Óg cohort on an historic trip to Boston where they were supported by long-term supporter and ally, Michael Patrick McDonald.

Cumann Óige Uachtar Chluanaí went from strength to strength under Emma's stewardship with a doubling of enrolment figures and the developing of two new volunteer training cohorts for young women and young men, one of which began planning for an international trip to Barcelona. Similarly, Sólás na nÓg developed two exciting new programme for our young people. Having completed the Lego based therapy training with Lego for Carol, the Sólás team began delivering the programme to our young people through the medium of Irish for the first time ever. In addition, a sports programme was developed in partnership with CLG Laochra Loch Lao and An Sportlann for the young people from Sólás who rarely get the opportunity to take part in sports programmes.

Anam continued to flourish and develop in November with our new Business Development officer, Caoimhe Ní Choinn organising and hosting a range of events of international solidarity events such as 'Coffee for Palestine', Belfast Dabke Traditional Palestinian dancing, and the Céad Míle Fáilte programme to inspire the use of the Irish language amongst new communities. Caoimhe also took part in a community inquiry in Glasgow at the beginning of November where she spoke about Glór na Móna and our burgeoning partnership with Gáirdín an Phobail. Anam has become a vibrant and lively community safe space in the Upper Springfield which is developing the philosophy of self-help within the community while placing an emphasis on sustainability and self-sufficiency through the use of local produce whenever possible. It is providing training and employment opportunities for

young Irish speakers and one of these young people Úna Nic Gabhann, who attends the Sólás na nÓg youth project for those with additional learning needs was recently awarded the Glór na nGael young entrepreneur of the year for 2024

We also hosted visitors from the US, Guatemala, Palestine, Brazil and Scotland. We hosted a successful 'clothes swap shop' and Caoimhe successfully pitched for 9k funding support from the Belfast City Council Social Incentive Fund in a competitive application process. By the end of November, we had piloted soup and stew, with the support of Bia Loch Lao, and they were resounding success.

Meitheal Uí Chadhain hosted a delegation in mid-November with Dr Brian Garvey from the University of Strathclyde, who are the principal organisers of the trip to the Amazon, and facilitated a film showing and discussion about mining exploitation in Áras Uí Chonghaile. Both myself and community projects officer, Eoghan Ó Garmáile, took part in the Rank Foundations' annual end of year conference in Manchester where we built more worthwhile networks and connections. We also hosted a brilliant visit to Anam and Gáirdín an Phobail with Joe Guinan from the Democracy Collaborative in Washington DC and David Cobb from the People's Network for Land and Liberation. The conversation with both continued, along with Khali Akuno from the Jackson Co-operation co-op, when a few of our team participated in Trademark's Scoil Chois Chlaí Political Education weekend in Lusty Beg Fermanagh where I was also facilitating a workshop on the language revival.

As part of Fleadh Feirste, we also launched our 20th anniversary book which included 23 personal memoirs from Glór na Móna activists, founders, colleagues and comrades over the past 20 years.

At the beginning of December, Fóram na nÓg hosted Minister Paul Givan, for a follow up visit to Glór na Móna to meet with young people from Coiste na nGael óg and some of our youth staff at Cumann Óige Uachtar Chluanaí. The visit received very comprehensive media coverage and the sector's collective position on the need for strategic and sustainable long-term funding for Irish medium youth work made very clearly and articulately.

The year finished with some good news as Irish hip-hop sensation Kneecap decided to donate £7200 from their compensation victory funding over the British government to our youth projects. In addition, we were delighted to hear that our large grant application of just under £500,000 that we submitted in August to National Lottery Heritage Fund was successful. The aim is to create a profound and lasting impact by establishing the Croí na Carraige multi-purpose community building as a central hub for heritage interpretation within the West Belfast area that curates and showcases the remarkable history of the Upper Springfield area.

The funding will use to create a permanent interpretive heritage display curating the history of the area in our new proposed capital build and associated staff costs and activity/programme plan. At this stage, we have only received word of phase 1 Development funding of circa 40k to work up the project in order to apply for the larger delivery phase at a later date. We have two years to use this development phase effectively to ensure we receive the remainder of the funding.

January-March

The year commenced with a 2-day staff development and planning residential in Ballygally Hotel in Larne on the 13-14th January where the team reflected on the challenges and achievements of a busy 2024 before setting out the key operational milestones to be developed in 2025. This was followed the week after by our Ciorcal Machnamach clapholais (Twilight reflective circle) which also involved our part-time staff which meets every January to compare our progress and future operational objectives to our current 2023-28 Strategic milestones which are under continuous review. This five-year strategy that was summarized in 11 strategic milestones and underscored by the need to treat staff members, volunteers and engaged community participants as leaders and central stakeholders to organisational strategic growth. We also hosted Seán Mac Bradaigh from Gáirdín an Phobail who conducted a collaborative workshop regarding the integration of a community growing and rewilding programme into our calendar of youth and community projects.

Having made contact with a wide range of Irish American organisations who expressed an interest in supporting our fundraising efforts for Croí na Carraige, I was invited on a 4-day feasibility visit to New York at the end of January to explore the potential of organisation a fundraising event later in the year. We forged a partnership with the International Longshoremen's Association who agreed to fundraise £500,000 amongst their local branches in return for tour building bearing the name of their President Harold Daggett. The Irish Echo through Máirtín Ó Muilleoir agreed to become event sponsors and help raised funds to cover the costs of a fundraising event in June in Manhattan. We also attracted sponsoring support from a diverse range of businesses and individuals including Power Sustainable, Fine Construction, Silvercrest, O'Cathain Law Group, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), Friends of Sinn Féin, Conradh na Gaeilge Brooklyn, James Connolly Labour Association.

Our two youth projects, Cumann Óige Uachtar Chluanaí and Sólás na nÓg, relaunched in 2025 with a massive increase in numbers. Sólás na nÓg conducted 'Lego Therapy training' in January with staff and young people which was the first time the training was conducted through the medium for the Irish. At the beginning of February, our youth teams led on launching the story in the Belfast Media Group about the 'jeopardy of our capital funding' due to lack of progress and absence of political will from both the Department of Communities and Department of Education. This was followed by the launch of youth-led campaign video called 'Space to Breathe' that highlighted the current spatial and physical resource restraints including lack of adequate facilities and space are really hindering the needs and development of our young people. This video received local, national and international traction. This was followed in February when high profile Irish medium rap band, Kneecap visited Glór na Móna and our young people to launch our Go Fund Me campaign for Croí na Carraige by donating a £7,000 cheque to launch the community-led efforts for a new flagship youth and community facility, Croí na Carraige. Having won £14,000 in a court case against the British Government due to discrimination on political beliefs, Kneecap announced before Christmas that they were donating £7,000 to Glór na Móna and £7,000 to another youth organization on the Shankill Road.

In mid-February, a cohort of young leaders from Glór na Móna, who had set up an international solidarity network named Meitheal Uí Chadhain in 2024, embarked on a two-week solidarity trip to the Amazon in Brazil with the goal of supporting and learning

from Indigenous communities who are living there and resisting environmental exploitation carried out in the interests of capitalist and colonial powers, particularly those of the US, Britain, and the European Union. Having spent 5 months organizing community events—including concerts, film nights, quizzes, and much more, Meitheal Uí Chadhain reached the ambitious goal of raising £10,000 for the Indigenous people of the Amazon. Their successful two-week solidarity trip built excellent international networks and knowledge exchange. February concluded with our Language planning co-ordinator and Glór na Móna founder-member, Ciarán Mac Giolla Bhéin being elected as President of Conradh na Gaeilge on Glór na Móna's recommendation. In addition, Fís an Phobail's Meitheal Meantóireachta programme commenced again but this time on an expanded 11 training month programme. Funding support from Live Here, Love Here and Housing Executive Social Cohesion Fund supported us to build Anam Café's own garden under the stewardship of Caoimhe Ni Choinn who completed the final 6 months of our Ciste funded Business Development Officer role until the end of January and Seán Mac Bradaigh from Gáirdín an Phobail. Caoimhe also completed a range of excellent development initiatives for Anam caife by applying and successfully pitching for a £9000 social innovation grant from Belfast City Council for the development of Anam from March 2025 to March 2026 which including equipment, marketing, and staff costs.

Our staff team co-ordinated a successful Seachtain an Gaeilge/Féile an Earraigh programme which included, our free community breakfast, an Irish language and Arabic exchange, a community clothes swap, the Matt Lundy Spring Irish language crash course, a book launch and discussion with Trevor Birney, Niall Murphy and Barry McCaffrey and the annual Matt Lundy lecture with Kerron Ó Luain presenting on his research on the history of Irish medium education. We concluded the festival by launching Sólás na nÓg's new report by Dr Órla Nic Oirc which makes the clear case for developing more structured collaboration between Irish-medium schools and the ground-breaking youth service at Glór na Móna.