

Episode #218 To Be Heard

Deirdre de Bhailís

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[00:00:00] **Susan:** Well, today I am excited actually to welcome, an extra special guest to Life Beyond the Numbers Deirdre de Bhailis You are so welcome

[00:00:12] **Deirdre:** So much Susan. I am very excited to be here as well.

[00:00:16] **Susan:** and one of the reasons that this is. exciting is because Deirdre de Bhailis lives in the Dingle Peninsula, and any of you that listen to this podcast regularly will probably recognize that that is my hometown. Now, I haven't lived there for a long time, and Deirdre left and went back, but recently, and the reason for this conversation is that.

Dingle or the dingle of Peninsula received the greenest place in Ireland award, which is quite incredible, And we thought that we would get together and talk about this. So first of all, Deirdre, congratulations

[00:01:00] **Deirdre:** It was really, really great to receive that recognition. There's so much work underway on the peninsula from multiple, multiple groups, there to protect our place and sustain it for the future. So, receiving that award then was a recognition of all of that effort, all of those tireless work that goes into, building community

protecting the environment, working together to make, things happen at a local level.

[00:01:34] **Susan:** For those who are listening and have never heard of the Dingle Peninsula, right? Maybe you'd start by describing it. What are we talking about here? And the greenest place in Ireland doesn't mean the color of the fields either.

[00:01:50] **Deirdre:** Somebody did ask me was it because it rains so much. So for those who are not familiar, we are, in the southwest corner of Ireland, a little peninsula with, approximately 13,000 people living there. but we see residents in excess of 1 million annually because it is a very, very, popular tourist destination.

It's very scenic. It's very beautiful. A lot of people describe it as having a very strong energy and you meet so many people here who came for a weekend 20 years ago and are still living here. Multiple, multiple stories like that. I have memories myself of. Being very, eager to race out the road at the age of 17. Now you all tell me, my friends all tell me. I always spoke of coming back. I don't recall that being the plan, but I certainly felt a, a draw to come back here, in later years and I'm so delighted I did. It is a really, really beautiful special place. and



it is one that I and many, many others living here feel it's worth a lot of effort to sustain it into the future.

[00:03:06] **Susan:** Amazing. Thank you. And having seen so much of the world myself, I can honestly say very few, if any, compared to the beauty, the natural raw beauty of the dingle of Peninsula.

And then of course the community, Deirdre, because I think that's something about the sustainability that you're talking about, community, communities across the planet as I read somewhere in the articles, face one of the biggest challenges of our lifetime dealing with the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss.

So was this one of the catalysts for the work that you'd now do?

[00:03:55] **Deirdre:** yes. Well. We know that, and this is not a takeaway from, things that have to happen at at large corporate level or at at national levels, or all the responsibilities of the governments. But we do know that, The actions that are taken at community and local level can have a very, very strong impact on, it's about 60% of what we need to do to tackle climate change, and biodiversity loss.

it is very significant what we can do. and it is all about those small local actions, I won't say they're not life changing. Yes, they are. They are changing your behavior, but in ways that we can control. And sometimes we look at these challenges as individuals and we say it's overwhelming.

how can we possibly do anything? How can anything we do make a change and we can't let those others that I mentioned off the hook either.

But what we see is it's, multiple, multiple actions at a local level. it is, Taking a look at your food waste, 8% of our global emissions can be attributed to food waste and when you speak to older generations, they say they wouldn't have even have had a bin in their homes because there was no such thing as food waste a couple of generations ago. So that's in our power. We can take choices to manage that as effectively as we can.

we are being driven and pushed in all other directions. You go into a supermarket, it's, Buy one, get one free, buy all these deals that ultimately end in the bin. But it's just a small example of what we can do, Then transport, really contributes to our, our global emissions. It's understanding our own choices around that. Often we don't have choices, and I know living on the peninsula here, we are very dependent on private cars and there's little choice around that. And I know I wouldn't be a very popular person around here if I made any attempts to get rid of, private cars.



But what we can do, is encourage our public transport services is work with our agencies to say, what kind of services can we have, in where we're remote, rural area here? and then. Work with people to encourage, well, where can those services be used if we run community events, can we work with the timetables of our public services so that, you get people to those events.

it's all of those tweaks and changes that we can make. it's looking at sharing our road safely, understanding here that it's unlikely we're gonna have. maybe large investment into greenways, even though it's such a beautiful place for walking and cycling. And a recent survey we did survey the emotions of people on their, journeys and found that cycling is completely underrated.

So from when people started their journeys to when their end there was the largest differential in their emotions. So it's something we can really tap into, but we need safe roots and many of our roots are no longer safe. they used to be, when you and I were going to school, it was the norm to cycle.

Very difficult to leave your kids on the road now with the traffic volumes that are there. But I suppose the work that we are doing is just trying to figure out, solutions around that. We've lots of secondary and tertiary roads. Can they possibly be quiet lanes? It's a concept from the UK actually that we really identify with and see as a viable solution here.

And we recently had, a really lovely event on the back road to entry in September where 150 people came out driven by the school kids. Who said, dragged their parents out to this event and said, we want this road. We want to be able to cycle it and we want to be able to cycle it safely. And I sat back and I reflected and I thought, oh my goodness I had such independence as, an 11, 12-year-old. My bike could take me wherever I wanted to go. We are really robbing our young people of this. And this goes back then to, yes, it's good for the environment, but it's so good for our wellbeing. and it's so good for, social cohesion as well, that these kids have their independence.

It, it really is so important. and then every time we work, on different environmentally sustainable initiatives, we see the multiple different dimensions of benefits. From it,. Be it economic or social. and that's what we're trying to draw out the whole time.

[00:08:32] **Susan:** as you were talking, I was thinking about actually, 'cause we've talked about, communities across the planet. So this what you are doing in, in West Kerry, the Dingle Peninsula, and you mentioned.

Learning something from a community in the UK or from the uk. So I also wonder, yeah. Do you collaborate or do lessons learned or exchange ideas with other communities across the planet as well?



[00:09:00] **Deirdre:** yes.

From the very early days of the Dingle Hub, we developed relationships with, the research community. And I find that that is a very, useful approach that communities can take to look to your local research organizations and. See where you can partner with them. Of course, that then gives you exemplars and case studies.

It gives you access to those. Not that you can find them on the internet if you want yourself, but it's wonderful if you have a relationship with a researcher who will point you in the right direction. and we've seen multiple good examples.

From an energy perspective, I suppose our heroes really would be places like Samso in Denmark who became energy self-sufficient.

I think. 2008 and now run an energy academy over there. again, it's all down though to social cohesion. their starting point was to invest in district heating systems there, but they had to go door to door. to see the people. Do you want to be involved in this? So they're not unlike the Dingle Peninsula in terms of size and their population is dispersed.

I, I thought with district heating you had to, maybe have a, a condensed population. It would be in an urban area, but not so there. And then for their district teaching system. They got support from their local municipality just to guarantee the loan for that. and then instead of going out with a large tender for an external company, they broke the tender down into multiple smaller sections, which allowed their local trades to apply for the tender. They would've been, I suppose, eliminated from it, really, or they wouldn't have been able to access it if it was one large tender, but they can now trace that back to 170 jobs in the renewable energy sector. On a small, island off the coast of Denmark.

So these are the type, type of exemplars that we are seeking to, to follow, and to replicate, on the peninsula.

And as we said already, we look to the UK for, solutions for transport. And the quiet lane one is a really lovely one here. There's no framework in Ireland for that yet. But we're hoping, working with our local council that we can help write the framework in Ireland for it. which would be brilliant.

[00:11:23] **Susan:** Which is exactly what I was thinking about as well, is, you've talked about 60% of changes can come from the locals, so people in their own community doing something. that can be the impact and then there's local efforts, there's community efforts, let's say, but then obviously there is your local council or before you get up even to the greater echelons of what the government says or anything.



And how easy is it to form partnerships there? Deirdre because oftentimes I think councils have an agenda, let's say, and whether that's true or not, it can seem like that. And a lot of it is about do I get reelected as opposed to what's in the best interest of my constituents?

[00:12:11] **Deirdre:** Yeah. Absolutely. Well, I will say, we've had a lot of support from our local counselors for that quietly initiative. they proposed it as a motion last January. the counselor supporting, it takes a small amount of funding to be able to run events like that even just for the.

Publicity around it, the advertising, making it happen. so we are being very well supported in that. And so everyone wants this to happen from a council, right down to the local people. So then you're trying to work within the structures that exist your building, the understanding what do people want on that road, what type of signage.

What would be the measures needed to make it a quietly and you're building the social acceptance around that and then you're working with your local council, to explore different funding mechanisms for that. So that's where we need to work very strongly in partnership with them.

Now, as that has been the role and the work of Dingle Hub over the last eight years.

Is to build those very strong relationships with, local authorities, with government agencies at a national and at a regional level. Obviously, we're a small organization, local community enterprise. Really, I'm not going to be the one changing the road space here, but I suppose where we see ourselves really is sitting that last mile between government policy, getting down to the local authority level and then coming out into, so trying to bridge that gap between policy and action.

And that's what we see as the missing piece, particularly in Ireland. we don't really have any structures at the local community level, to allow that piece of building that bottom up approach, building their plans and feeding in then to the local statutory plans for the local authorities and into overall government strategy.

That it's just that piece that's missing. we're really great over here writing fantastic strategies and policies and all that, but the getting to action, from what I've seen from my experience, is it has to happen. At a very hyper-local level.

And even working at the peninsula with the population of 13,000, that's almost not granular enough.

we are seeing the actions happening in the local communities of, population of about 300. It's those groups getting together. It's where, everybody knows each other. Everybody trusts



each other. That word trust is vital in all of this. There's nobody trying to come in and enforce something on a community that they don't want.

So the more organized a community is, the more they have worked together to build a vision for the future, the more they can feed into those statutory plans and get that system working for them, which is critical.

So that's a lot of the work that we are doing. What's the framework for doing that? what does that look like? At a local level, how do people come together? What type of a plan do they build? What do they need to build plans like that. But we do know as well, we've seen a lot of reports to say the communities that are stronger, that know each other. Everyone knows each other well. Everyone has built an understanding over time.

Which happens over the cup of tea and scones, which happens over coming to nice community events that are enjoyable for everyone. They're the communities that are more resilient in the face of adverse climate events. they're the communities that are coming outta that quicker.

And we, have a exemplar community here on the north side of the peninsula and the Maharees, who really leading the charge on this, and they're working together to build their vision for a future on the mahar, but also looking at, a resilience hub for the area. what do they do if they're completely cut off after a bad winter storm and they have to wait, for the services to get there?

How can they support each other? Who do they call? What happens? it's really, really practical stuff. It's not rocket science, it's just let's not get cut out. We know these things are coming. we can see all the science is there. We can predict what's gonna happen. Let's get ready and let's plan for it.

And we. I've been working on a wonderful project with them for the last two years. They have been doing Trojan work to build up their sand dunes as a coastal defense, over the last 10 years. But we've been lucky enough to work with them for the last two under a creative Ireland funded project, and watch them, I suppose build that vision together of what does a future on Maharees look like? and And when we started that project, we spoke about it as speaking about the hard truths. They're on a tombolo, a low lying tombolo, which is like little peninsula off of Peninsula, one meter sea level rise is going to have a very serious impact on Maharees.

So they've been looking at, flood studies so they can see what areas are going to be flooded. How do they manage that into the future? It may mean decisions now, not to purchase a particular house in an area, or for some it means. Get to enjoy my house for the next 50 years, it won't be there after that.



They're very, very difficult conversations and they're not the type that you call a town hall meeting and say, come in here, look at this study. And this is what we're facing because you'll get fear and, and from fear comes anger, and then everyone is up in arms. So it's been a very delicate process over the last two years to have those difficult conversations and for people to feel comfortable to voice their concerns, and to do it in a really respectful way and in a way that, strengthens that community.

And yes, they're facing, very difficult challenges from climate change and what's coming, but they're gonna be doing it together and they're going to be doing it in the most positive way that they can adapt for what's coming. They're not going to be hit unawares about this. so I am very excited about that work in particular. I think that is really a roadmap for communities to build the, the plans, and again, they will look at resilience in the face of storms. They will look at food resilience and security.

There's such a tradition of growing food there that we are losing unfortunately. But they're working to retain the skills for growing food. They will look at their transport solutions their coastal defenses, of which they really are a front runner for rebuilding the dunes, using nature-based solutions. so we are gonna hopefully learn from them, work with our local council to see how do we scale that out to other communities? How do we work at other first at risk communities, particularly along the coastal area, and work with them through a process of replicating what they have done.

[00:19:26] **Susan:** Wow. I mean, that sounds incredible. And there were so many things that were flashing up for me. especially given my background working in disaster preparedness lot around the world and, you know, the communities and the countries that were prepared for an earthquake or whatever, always responded better and we're, we're quickly able to regain whatever community strength was needed and everything.

And it, it is amazing how you can be prepared, even for the worst. And not to say that it's going to happen, but there's nothing wrong with being prepared. And it also, well here, there's been a lot of erosion on the East Coast in particular where houses are starting to fall into the sea and that is quite scary as well. I mean, I don't know how widespread it is, but it's certainly happening.

And the other thing that came to mind was, I read a news article recently, in the last few days, that the Irish government are recommending people keep cash at home. And I think that. Which is really interesting because I always think, can you imagine if the internet goes down for 48 hours, which is more likely to happen in the Dingle Peninsula than a lot of the rest of the world given the exposure.

And I suppose that brings me then to think about income dear to, because like it is amazing to be able to live and earn a sustainable income in west Kerry in the Dingle Peninsula and



probably a reason why many of us left when we did in the eighties and nineties, say, and, and I'm sure people still do.

So what? That's part of a sustainable green.

[00:21:13] **audioDeirdre21824719559**: absolutely.

[00:21:14] **audioSusanNiChriondain11824719559**: Yeah. So how does that work?

[00:21:17] **audioDeirdre21824719559**: Yeah, it has to be really. And it was the one thing that really attracted me to the role in the hub, for state, was I grew up same generation as you, go get educated and keep going. There is nothing for you here. And having worked, many summers, I suppose, in the hospitality sector. I was fairly sure I wasn't going to do that.

and then the other option was agriculture. And I know my father was quite adamant none of us were going to be going into, into that sector. so yes, growing up in a generation where you were told. At the time it, it didn't seem so sad to me that that was the case. 'cause I was dying to go and get going.

but when I looked back, I said, my God, it's such a beautiful place to be able, to. Work here to, to build a career, to have a livelihood from here. And that was one of the very first, objectives of the hub, which, up until recently was a remote working space. looking and the provision of fast, reliable broadband for people was quite a key enabler.

But more recently, we are now focused on the sustainability projects and the opportunities for them. So in those early days, we said, well, if we're gonna try and attract, economic activity in the area, we want to, to. Be in a sustainable way. and one of that was, I suppose we've run a lot of innovation projects, particularly in the area of energy over the years.

And there is a really nice example of how that works in, you might be familiar with Solar Beo. It's a solar pv, provider here on the Peninsula. well that is, local Brothers, Ciaran and Pdraig O Murchu. They are domestic, electrical contractors back in 2019. And, ESB networks, were running a pilot project in the area to install batteries and solar PV and 20 houses in Ballyferriter.

The batteries, manufacturers were German and they were quite insistent that they wanted to install the batteries themselves. and we happened to be in those meetings and we were saying there's really nothing for the local community in that, you come in 20 people get a battery system, bit of data goes outta the peninsula. Nobody hears anymore about it. So we pushed. for them to go out to tender for the installation of those batteries.



O Murchu Electrical won the tender for that.

they got trained in, they got commended subsequently for the quality of their work. 'cause that was one of the things the manufacturers wanted to stand over. And I think from engaging with ESB networks in electric Ireland. And on the job training, they learned the direction of travel. So they pivoted their business and became Solar Beo to install, solar PV panels, battery management systems and electric vehicle chargers. And they've gone from two people employed to 20 people employed and regular work for 30 contractors on the peninsula.

I'm so glad we pushed that time. one of our board of directors was very strong on it and, insisted that happened, but that's what innovation projects can do. It provides the opportunity, and they are real incomes here on the peninsula, which is, is really, really wonderful.

and the other thing then we do, that's a lovely case study, It's tourism and agriculture two sectors here. So it is working with the tourism sector, to decrease costs as much as possible from them, from an energy perspective, from a food waste perspective, to try to ensure that those businesses stay viable into the future.

'cause we know that sector is under a lot of pressure. and it is keeping those businesses that Our exemplar from the point of view of looking at minimizing their food waste using local food, doing things in a sustainable way. trying to support them then to look at how all of their costs are reduced because of that, and they remain viable into the future.

And it's the same thing then Because we see the pressures on agriculture to reduce stock. and really what they are producing is the champagne of food on the peninsula, and it needs to be recognized as such. So we know we need to, make the connections locally where they can provide, their produce into local markets.

But it's also looking at diversification for those farms as well. some. Are interested in agritourism. It's not for everyone, but it's supporting them to find the, the right avenues for those businesses. it's looking at some producing energy on their farms and gaining an extra income stream for that.

Ultimately, resilience on those farms is going to look like multiple diverse income streams so you're not just a price taker at the mart, on a Saturday. so it's trying to build up those incomes and retain them into the future. 'cause I think we all lose if we lose our smaller farms and you see them all becoming larger, larger.

And those larger farm enterprises are much, more vulnerable to climate events. You know, when you have multiple, multiple animals, I see my own father's farm now. It's not



economically viable, but those events will not impact him. He has less stock on the land, but it's very stressful for the larger, so in my opinion, that is the wrong direction for, for food. And we as consumers, we need to stop demanding, you know, below cost, price, food, and being more discerning about what we eat. It's a very difficult message. I'm sure nobody get elected on it, but it's to try eat less of higher quality.

[00:27:19] **audioSusanNiChriondain11824719559**: Well it is back to almost where we started with having no food waste when we were growing up. Or the previous generations, but also I think the ownership piece that comes out very strongly through all of this. If we even start with the project you talked about in Denmark and those construction workers, whatever, getting work and that.

Create local ownership and local buy-in to what's happening. And then you talk about the Omar Who brothers and suddenly you can see the impact of if we do this locally and we are empowered. and you've talked about this yourself, you can't change everything in one big goal.

Like it's overwhelming. And, and so it's step by step, isn't it? And then those steps have ripples. and that takes time, doesn't it? And that's the whole community piece again.

So I wonder who are the naysayers and not, not name them, but in a community It can be quite challenging It's not like an organization where there's a hierarchy as such, and that's it it's my way or the highway maybe. But in a community you really do need that buy-in. So what challenges have you faced yourself as a leader in communities as opposed to in organizations that are sector specific, say.

[00:28:38] **audioDeirdre21824719559**: Yeah. it, it's absolutely like, it, it, it doesn't have the, the, a structure or is at that hierarchical order or anything. and I have had to learn the hard way over and over again. it's communication. Communication, communicate. You just can't do enough of it. and more listening than talking often.

and so y yes, it is a challenge. Yes. in the early days, maybe I'm all action, action, action, and could steam ahead too quickly. If anything I've learned over time, reduce the pace, reduce the pace. Listen, find out, are people coming along with you? If there is a dissenting voice in there, where is it coming from?

There's normally something quite valid behind it. but it's about trying to draw that out in the right way, in the way that you can have a constructive conversation. it has been described to me as there's a lot of emotional labor in this job. I definitely wasn't ready for it, but I have the scars to prove it over the years.



and you could think everything is trundling along nicely and this all makes perfect sense and realize if you haven't been listening, you've missed something over here, and that could happen at any time. So you're constantly listening for, that dissenting voice, the more positive impact you can have and demonstrate, obviously that really, really helps because you can point to different examples and, and how things work.

And even with Ireland's greenest places you look at, getting that recognition and a level, for the Peninsula and seeing, well, how can we make the most of that now, is that a value to people? Know that the work that they're doing, will they participate more in sustainability initiatives because of that type of recognition and the fact that it is a huge value, particularly to the tourism sector here, when more and more visitors are going to demand that the places that they're coming to are looking after their, environmental impact, or the environmental impact of the visitors coming here as well, which,

can cause it its own intentions because growth, growth, growth is not the model anymore. and it's trying to find that right balance between the, the viability of those businesses and the communication of, how to mind the place when, visitors come here, and I think things like the, the lovely electric local link buses, they send a strong message to visitors.

it's a really nice way to travel around the peninsula. It's very, very enjoyable. so it's trying to. More so than a large sign, even to say Ireland's greenest places more so to try and embed things in the culture that things are the norm. we have a community forum group here on the peninsula and one working group of that is looking at, your ke cups.

And it's just lovely messaging around, Beir leat do cupa, bring your own, rather than being prescriptive about it or, saying, we can't have these things. It's just encouraging. It's just constantly encouraging. So what we were aiming for is that feeling because the visitors will follow it, but we have.

A shared road space, even if Google Maps brings them down a quiet road, if there's enough signage and if that's how local people use that road, it can be followed. It, we can lead and, and our visitors will fall because that's what I like to do. And I fall, go to a place I like to fall in and try to be in tune with what local people are doing so you're not stepping outta place.

but it's all understanding. Of that. but there's no doubt. Yeah. in a community enterprise and working within communities, there are multiple different opinions and ideas of how things should be done, which is why that collective visioning piece is so, so important and multiple different ways to draw.

People interact in different ways and traditionally we might have had those town hall meetings and they suit some people, but not everyone, it needs to be one-to-one for some people. With the creative projects, we've been able to have a lot of artists involved in what we're doing, so a lot of it has maybe involved, Doing podcasts, people sharing their stories,



true podcasts. it has been true making and creating things so you can actually talk about these challenging issues while you're making lanterns. It was in one case, you know, so it's just giving people multiple ways to, to feed into this and to be heard. To be heard is the most important thing, is what I've learned.

[00:33:27] **audioSusanNiChriodain11824719559**: Without a doubt, and for any of us, I think anywhere in what we do, being seen and being heard and being understood is such a fundamental human. And if you don't get that in your own community where you choose to live, then yeah. And the one thing I, I keeps going round in my head, Dee, is the, tourism and, you talked about Inga Peninsula having a population of 13,000 people, which is like nothing, right?

It's a really small number and, and suddenly, you're dealing with a million people descending on. the town, the peninsula, every year. That's quite something for everyone to be involved with, isn't it?

[00:34:11] **audioDeirdre21824719559**: I mean, we, we are on the precipice, I would say, of over tourism, but we still have a real opportunity to get this right, And that is, again, as I said, it's not, banning things or saying we can't have this. It's just about building a culture. It's what we value ourselves. Do we value our walks and hikes?

Yes, we do. We really love them. and the people who come to walk and hike the peninsula, you rarely even see their impact. they know where to go. They know what to do. They're the ones demanding local food and they're the ones staying, maybe outside of the main town itself. So you, they're visitors, you really, really want to encourage to come.

So it's about, ensuring that that is sustained into the future. And that is the model that works for everyone around here. And then it is about managing how people move around the peninsula as well. That's why, those public transport buses, those local link carry buses are so important to us.

And then we see that it's really popular for visitors to take electric bikes and go around the peninsula. Again that's really, really positive, as long as we have safe road space for them and we can manage those roots as well. So it's not something that needs major change or major investment.

And even when we explored that quietly, and I'm so glad it came up among the concerns, You've gotta protect the flora and fauna. You know, we really don't want any major changes on this road. It's lovely as it is. It's more about people knowing that they're sharing the space. Expect a child to come around the corner in a bike or an animal.



so again, it's back to the communication now and the awareness raising and the signage and getting the maps out there to our visitors, but it is about managing how they enjoy. The peninsula as well. There's no doubt about it. there are pressures and particularly on the town itself, in July and August in particular.

So I think we're still fortunate that the, the rest of the year is quite manageable. And when you go back to community, I think. Ever before there was any work really done on, it may be a sustainability aspect. There was that need to do things for ourselves because we were in such a remote, rural area and you have all of the wonderful festival committees, you know, who have sprung up. And that creates a social cohesion as well because everyone knows each other. And once you start to know each other, you know where people are coming from. and there is incredible work that goes into that.

But then if you take the example of the food festival and realizing that, oh my goodness, this is great for the town. creates an awful lot of waste. The taster dishes, and what the samples and the, what they would be handed out. And so you had a collaboration between the food festival committee and Transition Carina done Trojan work on that over the years to, I mean, they're on target for a zero waste food festival now.

It is really, really fantastic, working with the businesses to say, well, could you serve that on a napkin? Can that napkin be compostable? people, volunteers, manning. wash stations all throughout the festival, then to make sure the waste is segregated properly. Last year the story was that the bins were blowing over on, on the Sunday because they were so empty, which, that's a really great thing to hear and it's year on year looking after that.

So something that is bringing, a very positive economic impact into the town. That also is layering on the environmental to looking at that and, trying to do things in a sustainable way. And it's initiatives like that that stand out when you go for, awards like Ireland's greenest place.

[00:38:04] **audioSusanNiChriodain11824719559**: Which is a perfect segue into what I wanted to read out because this was from the Irish. Limes, which is one of the leading daily newspapers in Ireland.

It strikes me that the core of the work this community has been doing for the past few years can be summed up by the simple fact that they don't take any of their peninsulas considerable advantages for granted, caring for their beautiful environment and creating imaginative ways to be more sustainable in the way people work and live there is to acknowledge that the peninsula will be an improved place to be handed on to its next generation of residents and visitors.

And I think that sums up our conversation as well, to some extent, dear to today, because it does really come across, and I know, I mean, we're friends. What I didn't say at the



beginning of this episode is that Djo and I started school together a long, long time ago, and we've been friends for years and years and, and I know that from visiting from other people who are involved in the Hub. And it's wonderful to get the recognition. The recognition is just one thing. It's still about the work, isn't it? And I think people often give up without recognition or without that external validation. So if there are people listening today, Deirdre, who are committed to some sort of community venture. and are doubting themselves, what would you say to them?

[00:39:35] **audioDeirdre21824719559:** Wow. Yeah, it's, for me it is all about trying to build that collective vision for the future. a lot of the work that the hub does, we need it's budgets to host events that can bring people together ultimately. and it is. I, I would say keep an eye on the Maharees and the community led Climate adaptation plan template that they are going to, be working through and, release

The hub itself started with an energy master plan back in, 2018. And that was funded by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland under the, sustainable Energy Communities Initiative. And that was because, it gave that little bit of funding and support to create a plan. Initially, now I think it's a, a fantastic model.

it's very technical and it's just energy and we very quickly realized that it needs to go beyond energy. you do need to understand economic resilience. You do need to understand food security. You absolutely have to take account of biodiversity and any coastal or whatever is.

applicable to an area. For us it's coastal erosion. In other areas it could be air quality. There'll be different priorities in different areas. So I think that broader plan is the key piece to it. And that's what in Ireland, we would be hoping to create, I suppose, a, a structure that communities could.

Avail of the ability to build those plans together. and then that's not to say you have to go out and do that in the morning, but have that target in mind. if you are working on initiatives, start talking to people. About that. who are the people who might get enthused about doing this?

'cause you do wanna gather a good group around you. I had a wonderful, board when I started off and now it's turned into a team at the hub and it's just a team of very, very. Committed local people who are passionate about building, you know, a future for the peninsula and a future for the next generations on the Peninsula.

So it's gathering those people around you. Keep in mind that your goal is to build that community vision and try to find the mechanisms to do that. Keep an eye on us too, and hopefully we'll have created some mechanisms in Ireland.



[00:42:01] **audioSusanNiChriondain11824719559**: Deirdre, our time is up. and, I'll put all the links to what we've talked about. Well as whatever I can garner onto the show notes.

And I just wanna say thank you so much for your time today. It's been cool to connect like this.

[00:42:18] **audioDeirdre21824719559**: I knew I was going to enjoy this chat and I so did. Thanks, Susan.

[00:42:22] **audioSusanNiChriondain11824719559**: You're most welcome and if anyone would like to reach out to you, Georgia, or to the hub

[00:42:26] **audioDeirdre21824719559**: that, that is the day job. Yeah, it's, it's constantly reaching out. Like I said, we're connectors conveners, so that means seeing what's out there as well.

[00:42:36] **audioSusanNiChriondain11824719559**: Okay, fantastic. And I'll put all of those, as I said in the show notes. Thanks again.

[00:42:41] **audioDeirdre21824719559**: Thank you. I.

