



# Communities Creating Jobs

Online Magazine – Christmas/Winter 2020 – Issue 31



**Feature Piece on  
AgriKids; A Vital &  
Successful Social  
Enterprise**

**Yvonne Kieran Tully talks  
to its founder.**



**More  
Awards for  
Billy & Mary  
Sharpe and  
Irish  
Gourmet  
Butter**



**Community Finance Ireland's New CEO, Donal Traynor**

**Also**

**Triest Press  
Into the Future**



**Europe Letter  
Neale Richmond, TD**



**Covid Update &  
Vaccine Rollout  
Prof Luke O'Neill**

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Remember to keep wearing your mask over Christmas to keep yourself and others safe and have a wonderful holiday



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**Activist and Ploughing Champion Maura Canning.  
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## Editorial: Dr. Senan Cooke

### Social Enterprise Sector



**Social enterprise** is of the people and by the people. It empowers people in their own place to find solutions to everyday problems with those who need the help. Solutions

and opportunities are identified in a voluntary, trusting context. Beneficiaries of services and facilities developed know and appreciate the people contributing their time, effort and often their finances to improve lives in a voluntary capacity. A long term and unique relationship is at play between members of the community, those engaged in the development and those benefiting from it.

Social enterprise champions economic and social cohesion and provides improvements and new opportunities – in education, employment, environment, security, health care, heritage, recreation, arts, transport and other areas and disciplines that impact positively and often decisively on the lives of people. The social enterprise sector is unique in that it operates on the front line in the socio-economic-cultural life of the country, bettering the lives of young and elderly, women, and men, employed and unemployed, native, and migrant, abled and those with disabilities. It operates in the moment and can facilitate an immediate response.

The sector and individual social enterprises should as a priority be supported by local agencies and government departments across the whole of government. Many social enterprises through their networks source support

from private enterprise and philanthropists that serve to match state agency aid. Many social enterprises draw support from the community in particular high-quality volunteers with outstanding expertise, networks, and funding much of which would remain dormant if not activated.

Social enterprise should not be an addition to mainstream economic system but a critical and central element of it. It is likely to ensure that those who become isolated and ignored are invited into the mainstream. Its primary role is to ensure few are ignored or neglected and that those in need are recharged, stimulated, included, and provided with new opportunities and supports.

Every social enterprise has social good and economic sustainability as a priority objective. Social enterprises often act as a bottom- line safety net for disadvantaged, isolated, excluded and all who face difficulties in their lives. Social enterprise projects facilitate the strong with resources and expertise to contribute to community well- being. We all live in each other's shadow and when those who need help are supported everyone benefits, the giver and receiver. Social enterprise crosses all social, economic, educational classes promoting empowerment and collaboration in the interests of the common good. It is a sector that is ready to give much more with its access to a mass of resources that are not yet fully utilised. It facilitates local solutions by local people who have the capacity to leverage support from the **State, Community and Private Sectors**. It is a unique resource of immense importance in economic, social, and cultural recovery in the coming 3/5 years post **Covid19** and **Brexit**.

**Social enterprise facilitates, resources and both empowers and contributes to community well being**

## Triest Press by Emma Raftery

### *The Roscommon Company Plans for the Future*

What a strange and difficult year **2020** has been. At **Triest Press** we try to put a positive spin on things as much as possible and for us, this year has given us opportunity for reflection, restructuring and planning for our future.

However, there is no denying that developments this year have added to the number of vulnerable people in our communities. Now more than ever we feel society needs more of the social enterprise model and business for good principles. I think some things became increasingly apparent to the world during this time such as a conscious lean towards sustainability, ethical consumerism, coming together at a time of crisis and the importance of having good mental health services available to all.

The third sector in **Ireland** is growing every year and it is heartening to see some amazing enterprises being born that enrich all our lives in one way or another. We believe the future of Ireland's business landscape lies with social entrepreneurs who mitigate social issues while contributing to our economic recuperation.

Based in **Roscommon** town, **Triest Press** began as a small print finishing house that provided employment to people with intellectual disabilities and has evolved over the years into an award-winning print and design house with a strong social mission. We specialise in traditional hand finishing methods coupled with state-of-the-art digital printing. Our print finishing team are professional and highly skilled at what they do, they also happen to have an intellectual disability.

We have personally witnessed the impact social enterprise can have on the lives of vulnerable people and society as a whole. Some of our staff members have never had meaningful employment before and it is a magical experience to see someone blossom when the right supports, understanding and opportunities are presented to them. There has been lots of success stories within **Triest Press** but one stands out for us. Our longest serving staff member **Ann Bernadette** crushed everyone's expectations from the get-go when she joined **Triest Press**. Ann experienced a tough life growing up in **Ireland in the 60s** at a time when there were hardly any supports available to people with a disability. She came through institutions and was moved around a lot but eventually found solace in the **Brothers of Charity** services Roscommon in the **early 90s**. It was then that Ann, *(pictured below with Heather and Paschal Donohue, TD and Minister for Finance)* joined the team at **Triest Press** and where she found her purpose. She won everyone over with her work ethic,



charisma, and never-ending energy supply. A force to be reckoned with. A real woman about town, Ann was known to everyone and was a friend to all. She was so proud of her job at **Triest Press** and loved having the independence that earning her own money brought her. She became a mentor to other staff members and was always keen to welcome and

show new people the ropes. Ann sadly passed away earlier this year, but her spirit lives on in everything we do in **Triest Press** and we will continue to honour her memory by breaking boundaries, challenging public perceptions, and



supporting individuals with **ID** in attaining (*Pictured above, Ann working away at Triest*) their work goals whilst producing world class print and design services.

Our **Christmas** wish this year is that more businesses become open to the possibility of employing people with disabilities.

Ireland is falling behind in disability employment numbers when compared to the rest of **Europe**. We know that work is a central part of most people's lives but those with an intellectual disability are far less likely to have a job than other people of working age and it is one of the main ways in which people with ID are excluded from mainstream Irish life.

**Triest Press** are dedicated to bridging that gap and hope to see others come together to build a strong system of support within the very fibre of the Irish workforce.

**Looking into 2021**, we have a lot to look forward to as an enterprise. We are launching our new and improved **eCommerce website**, we are expanding by opening a second **Triest Press** location in **Castlerea**, we are creating new meaningful employment positions and launching some new innovative products. We also love the idea of collaborating with

other social enterprises to create unique products that will mutually increase our social impact. If this sounds like something you would be interested in, why not reach out to us and we can have a chat!

*Ireland is falling behind in disability employment numbers when compared to the rest of Europe*



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**Neale Richmond, TD.**

***A European Letter on Our Shared Island & the Implications of Brexit***



**2020** has been an incredibly tough year for Irish businesses, big and small. The twinned crises of **Brexit** and **Covid-19** have placed the

economy under huge pressure, but businesses have shown great resilience under the most difficult of circumstances. As we look towards a new year, uncertainty regarding Brexit and Covid-19 still persists, however we are faced with opportunities to strengthen the relationships on our island.

In a year of uncertainty, what we can be sure of is under the **Northern Ireland Protocol** in the **Withdrawal Agreement**, Northern Ireland is protected from the worst effects of Brexit. **NI** will continue to be aligned with the regulatory and customs frameworks of the **EU**. How this will be enforced is still in question, but the framework is in place. For businesses that operate on an all-island basis, this will be a huge relief.

Small businesses will greatly benefit from the maintenance of the status quo regarding Northern Ireland and Brexit. **In 2018, 46%** of all cross-border trade was carried out by **SMEs** and so the maintenance of a soft border and the lack of customs and tariffs is of the highest importance. **SMEs account for 99.8%** of business in the private economy and employ **1.06 million people**. The maintenance of their trading links with Northern Ireland is of huge importance to our economy and their staff, especially given the threat posed by Covid-19.

Trading links with mainland UK will be impacted by customs charges and tariffs,

however if businesses take the necessary steps to prepare now, they will experience a much smoother transition come **January**.

Our island is now more connected than it has been for decades, in terms of movement of people and goods and our cultural links remain strong. However, as we look towards Brexit becoming a reality, it is crucial that **North-South links** on the island are prioritised to allow the relationship to move from strength to strength.

Included in the **Programme for Government** is a lengthy section on a **Shared Island**, and serious commitments are contained therein to prioritise the relationship with our nearest neighbour, which will benefit everyone on this island, personally and economically.

Crucial in building upon our relationship with Northern Ireland, is maintaining the relationship between Ministers on both sides of the border. With the **Northern Executive** back up and running, this has allowed for the resumption of meetings of the **North-South Ministerial Council** and regular engagement between Ministers.

**Budget 2021** includes a **Shared Island Fund worth €500 million** to be dedicated to cross-border cooperation and infrastructure projects. This fund will fulfil the obligations reached in such discussions between our Ministers and their counterparts. Words backed up by actions and plans will help to move our relationship forward.

While the relationship between Ministers and politicians on this island is crucial, conversations cannot be limited to those who make the decisions. As recently announced by the **Taoiseach**, a **Shared Island Dialogue** has been established to provide a forum for inclusive and constructive discussions on the future of our island. All viewpoints and backgrounds

will be welcome in these discussions, which will not always be straight forward, but are vital to securing an inclusive future for our island.

As the Brexit transition period nears its end, and businesses face significant change, the strengthening of the North-South relationship will add a level of certainty to the coming year. Strengthened relations on this island, increased cooperation and cross-border infrastructure and projects will bring us into a new chapter on this island and allow us to move towards the goals of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust as outlined in the **Good Friday Agreement**.

*SMEs account for 99.8% of business in the private economy and employ 1.06 million people.*

Neale Richmond is an Irish Fine Gael politician who has been a Teachta Dala, TD, for the Dublin Rathdown constituency since the 2020 general election. He previously served as a Senator for the Labour Panel from 2016 to 2020



### **The Toledo Declaration: Another Positive Step for Social Enterprise**

At a recent high-level meeting on the social and solidarity economy in the EU, **Ireland** became one of a number of EU states to sign the ‘**Toledo Declaration on Social Enterprise**’.

The Declaration is a recognition and a commitment to strengthening the decisive role that Social Enterprises can play as the EU emerges from the health, economic, and social crisis caused by the **COVID-19** pandemic.

#### **What does the Toledo Declaration entail?**

The Toledo Declaration includes seven commitments and calls on other EU member states and international institutions and organisations.

#### **Why is this important to us?**

Signing this declaration is a further endorsement by the **Irish Government** of the importance of the social enterprise sector – this is welcomed and critical for the success of the social enterprise sector.

**SERI** looks forward to working with DRCD to deliver on the commitments in the declaration – *success comes from Government and the sector working in tandem.*

[To read more, click HERE.](#)

## Social Enterprise Policy Objectives and Definition

### Policy Objectives

Building Awareness

Growing & Strengthening Social Enterprise

Achieving Better Policy Alignment

### Department of Rural and Community Development

New Social Enterprise Policy launched on July 18<sup>th</sup> by Minister Michael Ring, TD, in Speedpack, Coolock, Dublin

### Social Enterprise Definition

A Social Enterprise is an enterprise whose objective it to achieve a social, societal, or environmental impact, rather than maximising profit for its owners and shareholders.

It pursues its objectives by trading on an ongoing basis through the provision of goods and/or services, and by reinvesting surpluses into achieving social objectives.

It is governed in a fully accountable and transparent manner and it is independent of the public sector. If dissolved, it should transfer its assets to another organisation with a similar mission.



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

**For social enterprise volunteer directors, volunteers and staff, support agency staff, private sector, colleges, and civic society to know and understand**



## Irish Gourmet Butter, Dunhill, *More Awards for Quality*

In these times of **COVID-19** when the countries businesses are going through perhaps their roughest time since the last recession, it is a joy to be able to bring our readers and contributors some good news on the small business front. As a result of their efforts, the **Sharpe** mantlepiece must be well weighed down this **Christmas** as their company, **Irish Gourmet Butter** has scooped yet another award for their unique and high-quality product. Based in the **Dunhill EcoPark** Billy and Mary's company won the **Best Artisan Product** at this year's **Blas na hEireann/ Irish Food Awards**. This time the company also won gold for their **Lightly Salted Butter**, gold for their **Wild Garlic Butter** and bronze for their **Taste of the Forest Butter**. These they can add to the other awards also won for **Best in Waterford** and **Best in Munster**.

Their lightly salted product is churned in the traditional manner and by using milk from grass-fed cows with ground sea salt added.

**Mary Sharpe**, who runs the company with her husband **Billy**, noted, *"our first award with Blas na hEireann was in 2017, soon after we became a business, and was a massive boost at the time"*. Mary went on, *"it was a vote of confidence and made a real difference to our business for customers to see the Blas medal logo on our butter. We couldn't be prouder or happier"*.

This year the judging took place in **Dingle** in July and the finalists were notified in August.

**Blas na hEireann** say they are thrilled with how the event went this year given the difficulties the surrounded its staging

with the increased restrictions during the **COVID-19** pandemic.

*"Faced with restrictions around college campuses and meetings in place, our Blas judging this year was very different to our usual format"*, Chairperson **Artie Clifford** said. He went on, *"we are delighted with how it worked so well this year under challenging circumstances and are so very pleased to announce our perfect pair of winners"*.

*"The founding mission of Blas"*, said Artie, *"- establishing quality benchmarks for Irish produce on a level playing field – has been strictly adhered to and measurably applied again this year, despite the challenges we all faced"*.



*(Billy, Mary, and Bronagh Sharpe of Irish Gourmet Butter, from Waterford)*

We at **CCJ** would like to offer Billy, Mary and Bronagh our heartfelt congratulations and wish them continued success with their outstanding product. It is indeed a tribute to their perseverance that even at such a restrictive time for small businesses what with **Brexit** and **COVID-19** to contend with, they have, yet again, come out on top.

### **Irish Gourmet Butter Details**

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## Community Finance Ireland

*Donal Traynor Appointed as New CEO*



*Donal Traynor pledges social finance solutions for every community across the island of Ireland.*

**Community Finance Ireland**, the fastest growing social finance provider in **Ireland** and the **UK**, has announced the appointment of **Donal Traynor**, (*pictured below*), as the organisation's new chief executive officer.

Originally from **Cavan**, Mr. Traynor, (44), is the youngest **CEO** in the organisations **25-year history**, and the first to come from a non-banking background. He served as **Associate Director with Community Finance Ireland since 2014**.

On his appointment he said, *"My qualifications in economics and business, and my accreditation from the Institute of Bankers might have paved the way to a traditional banking career but after 16 years working in social finance, I have seen the incredible impact that it can have on communities, particularly those that bore the scars of the 2008 recession.*

*"Since 2004, I have driven the length and breadth of Ireland to meet the staff and volunteers who are changing their communities for the better. From local GAA clubs, to mountain rescue teams, and after-school groups, I have collaborated to develop new projects or start building works. At the heart of every single project Community Finance Ireland have supported is the dedication and capacity of the staff and volunteers. They have the commitment and the energy and often they just need the right funding to get an idea off the ground or*

*take the next step. I believe that affordable, innovative, and sustainable social finance solutions should be as accessible and common-place as local cooperatives or credit unions.*

*This year we have seen the incredible things that can happen when communities pull together, whether it's rising to the challenges of unprecedented times or taking an opportunity to create something new for their community. For me, local community has always been about sport. I've played GAA and soccer since I was a kid and now my own children are involved in our local club in Meath. I know what these organisations – whether it's a sports club, a faith group, or a community farm - mean to their communities and the positive impact that they have".*

**2020** marked a new chapter for **Community Finance Ireland** as they launched their new all-island brand and demonstrated their reach right across the island of Ireland. **2021** will see Donal lead the business into the **new normal**. The recent pivoting of the **NI** business to aid the deployment of **The Covid Social Enterprise Grant Fund (9 million to NI based social enterprises)** and a new recruitment drive for three new roles, are



clear indications that we are confident in our clients and our communities and in our collective ambition to ensure that social impact is felt, not simply dreamt.

**Contact Us – We Are Listening**  
**[www.communityfinanceireland.com](http://www.communityfinanceireland.com)**  
or  
**@ComFinanceIrl.**

## Farm Education for Children

*Yvonne Kieran Tully in Conversation  
with Alma Jordan, AgriKids Founder*



**AgriKids**, is an innovative farm safety educational platform for children, it was founded by social entrepreneur **Alma Jordan in 2015**. It was established as many social enterprises are, as a solution to an existing problem of farmyard safety particularly among children. Alma noted that, after **Ireland** recorded its worst year ever on record, for farm fatalities in **2014**, including the deaths of many young children, she had to do something to prevent families from farm accidents and the aftermath of such horrific experiences.

Having been brought up on a farm herself and marrying a farmer she is immersed in farm life every day. As a mother too, she was also concerned for the safety of her young child on the farm and did not want her family to be another farmyard accident statistic. She wanted to be proactive, to start the conversation in homes and in schools about the dangers for children of being on a farm.

Alma also felt that there was a need to move away from the traditional approach, where the emphasis was on **farm safety** for the farmer and the **enforcement of penalties** on the farmer.

**AgriKids mission is to create a farm safety culture that is instinctive and widespread significantly reducing accidents and deaths that occur on farms.**

It aims to fulfil its mission by creating an all-inclusive positive friendly approach, one that would involve the whole family, with children very much at the heart of it. AgriKids ethos is therefore *“to engage, educate and empower children to be farm safety ambassadors”*, by concentrating on the children. We hope by doing so that we will have a more informed future generation of farmers and farming families in Ireland.



**Farm Safety Graphic from AgriKids**

Alma began her journey to engaging, educating, and empowering the children of Ireland to be farm safety ambassadors by developing child friendly resources that parents and schools could easily utilise. Writing a series of books, developing activity books, designing a range of clothing accessories, and offering digital resources to support the messages in the books were all part of the programme. In time, AgriKids hit the road and went on tour, hosting events at the **National Ploughing Championship** and going around national schools and libraries all over the country, facilitating farm safety workshops using a series of props and getting the children involved in role plays.

The workshops proved very successful for Alma as she noted *“it was the kids who were telling me the dangers, they noted of being on a farm”*. Alma went on to say that, *“the kids were immediately responding to the topic which was great”*. Over **30,000 children** have now completed these workshops all over **Ireland** and as Alma says in her own words, *“I never advertised once, it has all come about through word of mouth”*, which I think is testament to the programme Alma has produced and the demand for it. As a parent myself of three young children who live on a farm and want to be out on the tractors, I feel this programme gives a voice to the anxious parent. It clearly displays the dangers and helps dispel the myth, *“it won’t happen to me”*.

While farm safety is on the national school curriculum, Alma feels it is *“not good enough, as a lot of children have easy access to one of the most dangerous workplaces in Ireland”*. Alma went on to say, *“we need to be preparing them, equipping them with knowledge and experiences that will in turn help them and their families to stay safe, whilst at the same time encouraging them to know more about farming life and its safe potential as a career”*.

Alma went on to develop the **AgriKids gaming app**, this app made it into the **Top 5 App List that farmers in the UK can’t live without**. This poll was conducted by **The Yellow Wellie Foundation** in the **UK** for farm safety last year (**2019**).

Again, a truly inspiring success story coupled with further recognition when AgriKids, Alma Jordan, was one of **The Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) Award winners of the year 2019**.

During the **Covid 19** pandemic and the closure of schools, AgriKids was quick to adapt and continue its mission by creating its first ever **‘Farm Safety Together’** interactive webinar which were sponsored by **FloGas** and aided by **FBD Insurance**. This webinar has since been delivered to over **4,000 children** which has proved a more efficient method, as opposed to the slower traditional method of driving to schools for workshops, whilst also creating a strong online presence for AgriKids.

Without the collaboration of **FloGas** in particular, AgriKids like all other social enterprises back in **March 2020**, were worried for the future, Alma noted *“we were facing an 80% fall in revenue, due to the closure of schools, cancellation of summer camps and the cancellation of the national ploughing championships”*.



At home on the farm, Alma, and her son with friends.

AgriKids recently featured on an **RTE** documentary which was produced in association **Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI), Changing Ireland, “My Big Idea”** back in **April 2020**, this was great national exposure for Alma and her enterprise. I



Farm Safety Book from  
AgriKids

think there are so many social enterprises, doing fantastic work, like AgriKids operating in small pockets of Ireland that so many of us have not heard about yet. When we do, we should use every opportunity to promote these enterprises and the impact they create.

When I asked Alma, what problems did she encounter along the way, she noted a few, Alma feels there needs to be a top-down **dedicated campaign with a consistent approach to farm safety for children in all national schools in Ireland**. A creative programme could be rolled out to teachers using the tools and resources available by AgriKids to let them take the lead on this curriculum topic; and strive for farm safety accreditation for their schools, however, there lies the problem, the educators lack the platform for this.

Alma also felt there needs to be a collaborative approach to this new proactive and progressive way of thinking in a bid to change the culture around farm safety in Ireland. **The Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture** need to collaborate and take responsibility for what is falling between the ditches. There needs to be a more joined up approach to this topic, linking life in the classroom to life on the farm.

Alma also noted the difficulty she has been experiencing because of there being no clear legal structure for social enterprises in Ireland. Whilst she started out as a *‘for profit’* entity, it was not long before she realised, **she was a social enterprise**, all her money goes back into the enterprise. This is something which also needs to be tackled in a bid to take away all the misconception of social enterprises, as Alma felt, *“people view me as a limited commercial entity, when that is clearly not the case”*. AgriKids are there to create social impact, to engage, educate and empower young children to be farm safety ambassadors and make a difference in society because other sufficient supports are not available.

I went on to ask Alma what qualities and skills she felt were important for her work with AgriKids, she noted that *“good communication, marketing and public relations skills were all very important to the success of AgriKids”*. All of which Alma was lucky to have been experienced in having previously studied a **Tourism Degree** and working for many years in the corporate world. Alma’s feels she has *“to initiate the change and to be the change vehicle”*, using all her previous knowledge and skills to communicate, market and sell AgriKids for it to be a sustainable social enterprise.

I asked Alma what she sees for the future of AgriKids, Alma wants **to go global** with AgriKids, whilst there has been quite a bit of traction in the **UK** for the programme, she wants to bring AgriKids into the **European children’s educational market space**.

I mentioned to Alma about the newly launched **Social Enterprise Accreditation** mark which was launched by **Social Impact Ireland on International Social Enterprise Day, Thursday, Nov 19<sup>th</sup>**,

**2020** and that it might be something worth considering for AgriKids.

**The Social Enterprise Mark** is the only internationally available social enterprise accreditation, enabling credible social enterprises to prove they put the interests of people and planet before shareholder gain. The Mark acts as an independent, externally assessed guarantee that a business is operating as a social enterprise, with the central aim of using income/profits to maximise social benefit, taking precedent over generating dividends for owners/shareholders. This may be the way forward for AgriKids, as the Social Enterprise Mark defines what it means to be a genuine social enterprise, thus instilling in people that AgriKids is an accredited social enterprise and not a commercial business. **Social Impact Ireland** are currently running this accreditation as a pilot project and there would be no costs incurred by AgriKids in pursuit of accreditation which lots of supports and resources available from Social Impact Ireland. Alma followed up with me to say that she was getting in touch with Social Impact Ireland to find out more about this exciting news for social entrepreneurs.

More good news for AgriKids just in as I was writing this piece, an article by **Sylvester Phelan in AgriLand (Nov 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020) headlines an article “AgriKids founder nominated for humanitarian award”**. [Agrikids.ie](http://Agrikids.ie) has been nominated for the new **Digital Influence category** at the annual **Irish Red Cross Humanitarian Awards**. According to the Red Cross, the awards seek to recognise those who have had a humanitarian impact on the lives of others through volunteering, skill sharing, storytelling, or fundraising and will highlight the efforts of those who have given a voice to humanitarian issues.

Best of luck Alma and AgriKids on **December 15<sup>th</sup>** when the winners will be announced. AgriKids is really going from strength to strength. I could not have picked a better social enterprise to write



about for this winter edition. You may have noticed AgriKids logo symbolises a circle, **‘The Farm Safety Circle’** which has been designed to help educators, children, and their parents learn more about how to **“Be Farm Safe & Stay Farm Safe”**. It is a continuous process with no definitive beginning or ending. AgriKids sets out to prevent the preventable, by introducing farm safety



conversations into schools, homes, and communities in pursuit of sustainable safety on farms for everyone.

As a member of the **Parent’s Association Committee** at my children’s school, I think this will be well worth mentioning to the principal and the parents. Let’s all support our social enterprises. All the best in the future Alma with AgriKids. Keep doing what you are doing.

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## State of the Union

### *Brexit and Vaccines*

By Malcolm Paull Murphy



**Brexit: The European Union** and the **UK** have agreed to *'go the extra mile'* in a last

effort to resolve their differences over Brexit. Following almost a year of negotiations, and with the deadline for the UK to leave fast approaching, it was announced on **Sunday December 13<sup>th</sup>**, that talks would continue past that days deadline. In a press conference **British Prime Minister Boris Johnson** good humouredly stated that he was *"delighted that Ursula"*, (von der Leyen, EU Commission president), was optimistic, but *"there were still some vast differences that separated the EU and the UK"*.

In a joint statement from **Mr. Johnson** and **Ms. Von der Leyen** they stated, *"despite the exhaustion after almost a year of negotiations, despite the fact deadlines have been missed over and over we think it is responsible at this point to go the extra mile"*.

Previously they had both hinted that Sunday would be decisive as **January 1<sup>st</sup>** is the date any agreement needs to be implemented.

One of the main stumbling blocks is still around the disagreements preventing a deal on how to agree access to **British** fishing waters. **Dominic Raab** said this was also about creating a *"level playing field"* to ensure fair competition between companies. He went on to insist that altering the, so called, red lines was the only thing that could unlock the process. Mr. Rabb was also of the opinion that the logjam in the negotiations could only be

cleared at the level of Prime Minister and Commissioner von der Leyen.

Meanwhile **Taoiseach Michael Martin** said on **BBC's Andrew Marr** show that *"with any bit of energy we have left we have to focus on negotiating a deal"*.

What cannot be allowed to happen as the deadline of **January 1<sup>st</sup>** approaches, from Ireland's perspective, is that we find out with 24 hours to go that there will be no deal. **Irish Foreign Affairs Minister, Simon Coveney** said this was a situation that must be avoided at all costs. He said that while we have been preparing at governmental level for over a year for a no deal scenario, if this was in fact to be the case then Ireland needed to know well in advance of the deadline date.

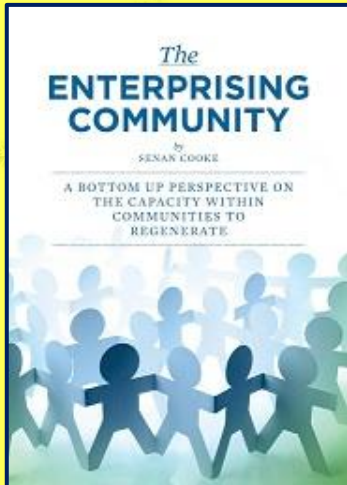
With fear among many European capitals as to the prospects of a deal and general



pessimism from them, the EU this week launched contingency plans to make sure planes were kept in the air and trucks kept driving through the **Channel Tunnel**. These plans are seen as vital as a failure to do a deal would mean that existing legal arrangement would disappear practically overnight. Without a deal **World Trade Organisation** terms will take effect on **January 1<sup>st</sup>** and this could include steep tariffs on some goods.

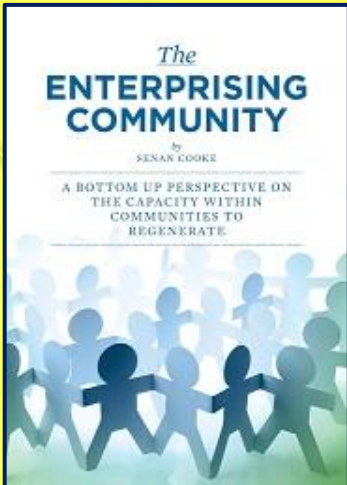
**Emergency Meeting to Approve Vaccines: The European Medicines Agency (EMA)** has said it will hold an extraordinary meeting on **December 29<sup>th</sup>** *"at the latest"*, to consider emergency approval for a Covid-19 vaccine developed by [BioNTech](#) and [Pfizer](#).

The [EMA](#) also plans to decide by **January 12<sup>th</sup>** next whether it will approve the vaccine being developed by [Moderna](#).



# The Enterprising Community

## By Dr. Senan Cooke



**A bottom-up perspective on the capacity within communities to regenerate**



*"As a community, we in DCU would argue that Ireland has a natural affinity with social enterprise. Indeed, we believe that we can become leaders in the development of social enterprise at a European level over the next decade".*

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Joe O'Hara  
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*"Rural Ireland needs people; people need jobs. Jobs mean local enterprise, community, sporting, and cultural clubs. In this book, Senan outlines what has been achieved...and more importantly, what can be achieved in the future".*

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**The Enterprising Community is the definitive work about social enterprise. Volunteerism and its importance, community regeneration and numerous case studies tell the story of social enterprise and what exactly it is and how relevant it is to Ireland today.**

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## Maura Canning

*Activist, Ploughing Champion and Forward Thinker: A Life in Farming.*

Maura Canning has been farming all her life. She grew up on a suckler and sheep farm in the **West of Ireland** on a family run farm they have been farming for three generations.

Maura has been a key spokesperson for many farming-related activities. One of these was as an advocate for the overhauling of the Fair Deal Scheme. This was the deal designed to dramatically reduce the financial burden placed on farming families and business owners in Ireland who retire to nursing homes. The deal has finally been done.



**Maura ploughing in the Championships**

This overhaul of the Fair Deal Scheme will see the special situations facing elderly farmers acknowledged for the first time by the state. It is hoped the legislation will change forever in **2021** after eight years of political lobbying. Maura says that even now *“I still ring the politicians to keep them on their toes and tell them not to forget how important this change will be for the farming community. Every politician has always been courteous and called me back”*.

Maura held a prestigious national position with the **Irish Farmers Association** for the four years from **2013 to 2017**. She was the **IFA Farm Family & Social**

**Affairs Chairperson**. During this time, she travelled all over the country helping others and promoting all that is good in farming. In this position she showed tremendous insight and has delivered impressive presentations to various groups all over Ireland on a wide range of topics including the afore mentioned Fair Deal Scheme as well as **Farm safety, Mental Health Pensions and Heart Health**.

Maura has impressed on the international stage too and has travelled to **Brussels** on numerous occasions where she represented Ireland on the **COPA Women’s Committee** and where she lobbied for change in the area of pensions for women in farming. She also lobbied to improve the participation of women in agriculture both in Ireland and **Europe**. Maura has always believed that women need a stronger voice in policy debates so that their visions and concern for agriculture and rural communities are not only heard but included when policy is being discussed and developed.

When her time with the IFA finished Maura says, *“I decided to go back to college, something I never thought I would do after leaving school. I am now studying Community Development Business Arts and Enterprise in an IT under the remit of Equal Ireland. This has been of great benefit to me. I feel at this present time of the Covid-19 pandemic, rural regeneration is going to be so important in rural communities. It will be important to keep the local communities alive by bringing people together and keeping communication going so we can enable young and old work together. A good example of this is in our local community in Loughrea. This is Mullagh Community Development where I sit on one of the committees. We have had massive development in the last*

*two years, and this is all due to funding secured and our own fundraising. We have developed the local community hall and pitch. We also have a state-of-the-art gym as well as a walkway around the pitch and a car park and playground. Everyone in the parish has made some contribution to make this possible. Hopefully, we will soon be back to being able to hold events in the near future”.*



**Maura with Anna May McHugh of the National Ploughing Association**

Maura has also been involved in the **Galway County Ploughing Association** for the last four years. When she became involved, she was made **the County Secretary** where she immediately underwent a **baptism of fire**. She hit the ground running and almost at once was organising various ploughing events in County Galway. Although the association has been in place in Galway since the **1930's**, little did she think when she became involved that she would herself be ploughing for **Galway** and even representing them in **the Farmette Class at the All-Ireland National Ploughing**

**Association Championships**. Recalling those days, Maura says *“the first day I ploughed for Galway in the Nationals it rained so much I thought I would never plough again but, as they say, ‘where there’s muck there’s luck.’ I came fourth in the competition in the All Ireland. This was a huge achievement for me because when I was young, I would have picked stones off a ploughed field with my dad, but he never used a plough himself”*, she laughs at the memory. *“I am,”* she says, *“delighted to be representing Galway every year so far in the National finals. Hopefully, I will again next year when we have the world in Ireland for our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary”*.

Maura believes strongly that this is an association that needs to be kept alive in every county in Ireland as *“the lure of the plough and the land is still quite strong through the homesteads, fields and boreens of Galway and every single county in Ireland”*.

Maura says she would love to see a book on the history of the plough in county Galway as it would, she says be a unique book. Something that traced the history and origins of ploughing right back to prehistoric times. There is a fascinating story behind the evolution of the ploughing match since the **19<sup>th</sup> century** right through to the establishment of the NPA. *“it would be a lovely read”* says Maura, *“by anyone with an interest in agricultural history”*.

Maura also became involved with **AgriKids**. This is a farm safety platform for children whose ethos is to engage, educate and empower children to be safety ambassadors. (See our feature article on **AgriKids on page 11**). All last year Maura was involved with AgriKids but as with so many events of **2020**, their events also fell victim to the **Covid-19** pandemic

and put a stop to attendance at shows, ploughing matches and schools.

*“I have a passion for safety as I would have delivered many presentations in the past and the importance of safety on our farms. This is crucial and what better way to do this than with AgriKids”.*

Maura believes AgriKids has the potential to become synonymous with child welfare, wellbeing, and safety in farming today. Maura has also been involved in the **Galway County Childcare Committee** for many years.

It is to be hoped that **2021** will see us all coming out of Covid safe and healthy and able, once again, to attend the events Maura talks so passionately about. I am sure if Maura has anything to do with it, we will all be ploughing happily away in our own furrows well into the future.



**Maura with EU Commissioner Mairead McGuinness**



### **Anna May McHugh**

Anna May has been involved with the **National Ploughing Association** for 66 years. She is the author of *Queen of the Ploughing*. She was also assistant secretary of the NPA for 21 years up until 1973 when she was made Managing Director. In that time the National Ploughing Championships have become Europe's largest outdoor agricultural trade exhibition and has almost 300 thousand visitors over the three days it is held. Anna May has been acclaimed as the driving force behind the event's spectacular growth. She lives in Ballylinan in the house she shared with her late husband John. This is also the headquarters of the National Ploughing. Her daughter Anna Marie works alongside her in the NPA and her son D.J. is a farmer.

## Professor Luke O'Neill

### *Vaccines are Coming but Care Still Needed*



The **Covid-19** pandemic keeps on burning all over the world. We are not doing too badly in **Ireland** in terms of the virus, coming **fourth in Europe** for getting it under control. A great performance by all of us. This has been at no small cost as we all know, economically and psychologically. We must bring this virus under control in order for our lives to go back to the way they were.

**How do we do that?** First and foremost, **vaccines**. We had good news over the past few weeks with **four vaccines** showing promise. Two of these – the ones developed by **Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna** – are now being examined by the **FDA** in the **USA** and the **EMA** in Europe, (*see page 15*), with more to follow.

We have yet to see the data, however. If they are deemed safe and efficacious, they will be rolled out. Ireland is expected to get **nine million doses from the EU**, more than enough to vaccinate everyone. The challenge will be logistical – **shipping the doses to Ireland**. And secondly **convincing people to take it**.

This will be a big one, as people are naturally reluctant. It will need a lot of work to convince people. I will take the first vaccine that is approved to encourage others. Be in no doubt. The **vaccine is the best way** out of this as it will protect everyone and get the virus right down to levels that will not worry us anymore. It

will restore our economy as it will also build consumer confidence. We might see widespread vaccination starting in the Spring and then by Summer, the virus should be on the run. We remain cautiously optimistic.

**Plan B** meanwhile is **new treatments** in hospitals if people are sick with **Covid-19**. **Two new medicines** were approved recently. They are made by the companies **Lilly and Regeneron** and they work by blocking the virus from getting into your lungs and enhancing the ability of your immune system to clear the virus. They will save lives. If we can get the death rate down a lot, this will be tremendous too. The fear will begin to go away.

As we face into **Christmas** though, we must be as careful as we can. It is like a boxing match. We are ahead on points, but we must keep our guard up. The virus is still there and can still do damage if we do not watch out.

The end is in sight though so we must look after each other. Christmas will therefore have to be different. We must have some celebration though and be able to meet family members, but just be cautious.

#### When Visitors Come to your House

1. **Ensure good ventilation**
2. **Ensure hand washing and mask Wearing.**
3. **Better still do things outdoors**  
**Indoors you can take your mask off to eat your Christmas dinner! You can also have a wee drink or two but do not overdo it!**

And remember. Keep your immune system healthy with a **good night's sleep, exercise, and a well-balanced diet**.

We just have to get through the next few months. I have no doubt that as **2021** rolls on, things will get better and better and we can look forward to a wild and bright **Christmas** next year. So, hang in there and look forward to brighter days ahead.

## Rolling out the Vaccine

The Government is expected to sign off on a plan on **December 15<sup>th</sup>** to roll out **Covid-19** vaccination programme.

**Dublin City University** president, **Brian MacCraith**, (*pictured below*), has chaired the high-level vaccine taskforce and this will be discussed by the **Cabinet on the 15<sup>th</sup>**.

Nursing homes are expected to be a particular focus with sources describing the taskforce report as a **“living document”** which can be changed as new data comes in. For example, if one vaccine proves to be more effective in certain settings or on older people then this will be directed where it is needed most. .



- 1. The Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine, due to be the first one approved, requires refrigeration at -70 Celsius.**
- 2. Five types of vaccine administration locations are envisaged to be used at different stages of the roll out.**
- 3. These begin with healthcare facilities first. It then moves on to long-term residential care facilities which will be served by mobile distribution vaccines teams. This will be done before mass vaccination centres are opened, using the experience of the first two phases.**
- 4. The final phases will see GP's and community pharmacies administering the vaccine.**

Once broader sections of society are vaccinated, **GP's** and pharmacies will play a bigger role.

During the early stages of the roll out **Covid-19** health measures such as social distancing, wearing masks and hand washing, will all still stay in place.

**Cabinet sources** say that a communications strategy **“will be critical”** to living with the ongoing restrictions. The communication plan will have two stages.

- 1. This will outline the complex logistics of the rollout.**
- 2. This will be a move to reassure the public on the safety and efficacy of the vaccines.**

A digital process is being designed by the **HSE** to ensure that all vaccinations are the same, with a software programme ready to be rolled out by the end of the year to handle bookings.

Higher Education, and former minister for



health, **Simon Harris, TD**, (*pictured below*), said he believed **2021** could be the year the world **“takes a step away from Covid-19”** but he also said he could not **“gaze into a crystal ball. I think we have to be open and honest with people on the questions they have. a really robust public information plan will be in place”**.

**Article sourced from the Irish Examiner**



# Contact Us

We are inviting our readers, project teams and organisations to submit articles with photographs that inform our network on any aspect of social enterprise development; any job creation project or voluntary community development that you feel would be helpful to others. CCJ is a shared learning network dedicated to helping fellow organisations and projects realise their ambitions and objectives. Any information, idea, solution, contact of interest and value should be shared within our network. Many thanks.

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089 252 9885

*Wishing all our readers and contributors a happy and peaceful Christmas and a prosperous 2021. Stay safe and have a wonderful holiday and see you all next year.*