

## IRELAND

# Implementing Local Development Strategies

### Location

Knockgriffin, Cork county

### Programming period

2007 - 2013

### Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

### Measure

41 – Implementing local development strategies

### Funding

Total budget 52 000 EUR  
EAFRD 30 000 EUR  
Private 22 000 EUR

### Project duration

2013 – 2015

### Project promoter

South & East Cork Area Development

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### Website

[www.ringofcork.ie/birdtrail](http://www.ringofcork.ie/birdtrail)

The innovative East Cork Bird Trail created a high quality Bird Trail, providing extensive interpretative resources including a high quality, fold out map of the area.

## Summary

South and East Cork Area Development (SECAD) is Local Action Group managing an area of international importance for its bird life and wetland habitats. In response to the increasing need for development that would not jeopardise the preservation of these fragile natural resources, they developed a strategy that combines the conservation of the environment with economic activities.



The key feature of the area is the Bird Trail which consists of 28 locations. The project supported setting up interpretative signs where users can stop and view the birdlife while they can use their smart phone to get additional information. To this aim extensive community consultation was undertaken to identify suitable locations and collect information about local history and anecdotes to include on the signs. Promotional material was also produced including a short video, website and map pad. In addition, a market research was conducted to support the promotion of the trail to national and international tourists.

## Results

The trail has helped to increase in visitor numbers, through offering additional activities for visitors within the area. The navigation aspect of the website allows visitors to travel easily between locations, encouraging visitors to stay and explore the area.

Local area enhancement has been a key output of the project, as new picnic areas have been developed and areas opened up to the public which had been closed off.

The Bird Trail with its clear eco-tourism and eco-education objectives, forms part of the Ring of Cork, which is an innovative regional initiative to promote the area. Feedback from both service providers and visitors to the area has demonstrated significant demand for activities, which draws upon the area's natural beauty and ecological assets.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The lead in or development time was substantially underestimated, in particular the securing of the necessary permissions and the redevelopment of the text.
- ❑ In line with best practice, consultation with stakeholders proved essential and many new linkages and networks were formed during the consultation phase.
- ❑ A multi-disciplinary team with SECAD was essential in the roll out of the project. Team members with skills in project management, trail development, community development and construction all formed part of the team which worked on the project. This mix of skills was instrumental in project delivery.
- ❑ The bird trail will continue to evolve and the LAG is now looking at the use of technology, primarily in the area of user experience, which will allow to update information on an ongoing basis for trail users. By establishing the bird trail they have created the physical infrastructure or foundation to continue to develop something truly unique.

### Context

The first East Cork Bird Trail was developed by ECAD (East Cork Area Development) during the 1990's with the aim of encouraging eco-tourism by providing extensive information on bird life and ecology in the area. The initial development of the bird trail formed part of a LEADER II transnational project between ECAD and Po Delta in Emilia Romagna, Italy, which aimed to share expertise in the further development of eco-tourism, environmental education and conservation practices between the two areas.

In 2008, partnership's area was extended and the organisation evolved into South and East Cork Area Development (SECAD), following which a decision was made to extend the bird trail to incorporate South Cork. Following targeted research project with two leading environmental NGOs 28 locations were identified as suitable and funding sought to develop and upgrade the trail.

### Objectives

The bird trail managed by SECAD is acknowledged as an area of international importance for its bird life and wetland habitats. With increasing need for development which integrated the conservation of the environment with economic activities, the project aimed to formulate an innovative strategy to ensure the preservation of these fragile natural resources for future generations.

### Activities

The South and East Cork Bird Trail consists of interpretative signage at 28 locations throughout the area. Interpretative signs were set up areas where it is suitable for users to stop and view the birdlife and will feature a QR code, which when scanned with a smart phone, will bring the user directly to a website containing additional information on the trail.

Preparatory work consisted of the assessment of the condition of existing sites and the identification of potential new sites in particular in the new area of South Cork. At each of the new and existing sites, a survey was carried out to identify the birds which could be observed, with particular reference to unusual or rare species.

Extensive community consultation was undertaken with a view to ensuring suitable locations were selected. In

addition, many communities had excellent records of local history and anecdotes which were perfect for inclusion on the sign, anchoring the trail within a community and imbuing it with authenticity.

The text and artwork on each sign was then reviewed and updated where necessary, to reflect any changes to the area since the signs were first installed. The LAG entered into extensive consultation with the Local Authority with a view to securing the necessary permits to install and replace the signs.

Focus then shifted to the creation of promotional and after much research, the decision was made to create a short video, website and map pad. At initial stages, consideration was given to developing Android and Apple Apps, but it was decided to develop the trail first and to develop innovative additions such as an App once the physical infrastructure of the site was in place. Lastly, market research was also undertaken into the effective launch and ongoing promotion of the trail to national and international tourists.

A key aspect in the promotion of the trail lies with the Ring of Cork website ([www.ringofcork.ie](http://www.ringofcork.ie)) and social media platforms which promotes accommodation, food and activities for visitors to the area and offers excellent opportunities to promote the trail to a wide audience. By creating this link, SECAD not only helps to ensure excellent targeting and promotion of the trail, but helps to share the ownership of the project with local service providers.

*'...It encourages eco-tourism, create awareness of the value of local biodiversity and is a platform for downstream eco-education initiatives'*

Ryan Howard  
SECAD Chief Executive Officer



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#### Additional sources of information

[www.secad.ie](http://www.secad.ie)