



# SUMMER NEWSLETTER

EDITION 1

## 2022



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## ABOUT

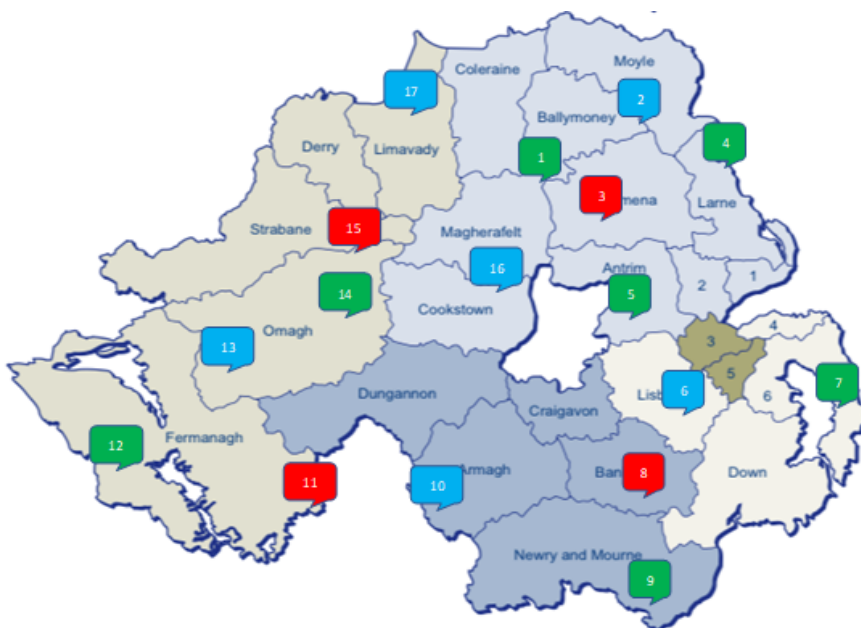
Delivered by Rural Support, Plough On is a five-year project, funded through the National Lottery Community Fund, which provides social experiences for men who have experienced challenging and demanding roles as farmers, helping improve mental and physical wellbeing. Over five years, the project will establish groups across 17 locations, engaging 325 men.

## GOVERNANCE

An Advisory Committee has oversight of the Plough On project. Meeting on a quarterly basis, members are drawn from the charitable, public and statutory sectors and are responsible for ensuring the project is delivered as per its objectives, outcomes and within budget.

## GROUP LOCATIONS

Each group is led by a Group Leader and supported by a volunteer.



### Cohort 1

1. Kilrea
2. Glenarm
3. Killead
4. Kircubbin
5. Hilltown & Rathfriland
6. Belcoo
7. Plumbridge

### Cohort 2 (Commencing April 2023)

8. Ederney
9. Coagh
10. Glack
11. Corkey
12. Ballymacbrannigan
13. Derrynoose/Newtownhamilton

### Cohort 3

14. Rosslea
15. Glenderg
16. The Grange
17. Bannside



# BELCOO

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Our Belcoo Group, led by Alex Cromie and John Cassidy, has been meeting monthly since December 2021.

Lakeland Community Centre provides a warm and welcoming space for the Belcoo group to meet. They have enjoyed talks from a variety of guest speakers, such as Pat O'Doherty, multi award-winner of Fermanagh's famous Black Bacon; a local accountant and doctor who gave talks on business health and looking after your physical and mental health and a local historian who discussed the history of farming in Fermanagh. The group also enjoyed a trip to the Spring Farm Machinery Show in Cavan and The Marble Arch Caves.



More recently, the group have been researching their family tree under the guidance of local genealogist, Frankie Roofe. The benefits and importance of the group for the participants is clear to see with one gentleman reflecting, *"It is a great group to be in, chatting to other farmers who are dealing with the same issues as you."*





# GLENARM

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Our Glenarm Group is led by Maureen Currie and Roy Kennedy and have been meeting in the beautiful River Lodge at Glenarm Castle since October 2021.

To date, the group has enjoyed a range of guest speakers, had the opportunity to take a tour of the grounds and livestock at Glenarm Castle, and take trips to the Winter Fair at Balmoral, Rathlin Island, Carrick Museum and The Andrew Jackson Cottage. Group leader, Maureen, reflected, *"There is a lovely camaraderie amongst the group and it is an opportunity for the men to meet up and talk."* The feedback from the participants has also been very positive with one gentleman saying, *"I look forward to the monthly events, to meet people and enjoy the varied programme."*

The group are undertaking a very special legacy project together. As well as having their monthly meetings in the beautiful grounds of Glenarm Castle, the gentlemen are contributing to the re-pointing of an old chapel in the castle grounds!





# HILLTOWN & RATHFRILAND

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Established in November 2021, the Hilltown & Rathfriland group is led by Martina Byrne and supported by John King. Enjoying a particularly busy nine months, the group has travelled to the Spring Machinery Show at Balmoral, Castlescreen Farm, Shane's Castle Steam Rally, Clogher Valley show and have been treated to an afternoon of entertainment from a local story teller. There have also been opportunities to enjoy the company and camaraderie of the group over dinner.

Reflecting on her experience to date, Group Leader Martina said, *"It is lovely to see the men growing in confidence and building relationships with one another. It is a real pleasure to lead the group."* Participants are also sharing how important the group is to them with one gentleman commenting, *"It is good to get out and talk and to have a sense of purpose."*







# KILLEAD

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Our Killead Group, led by John Taggart and Linda Davis, started strong with twenty members when they first met in February 2022. The group has had a very busy spring, enjoying trips to Glenarm Castle, Shane's Castle, Robinson's Quarry, McCauley Trailers and a farm walk exploring the journey towards Net Zero Emissions in Kells, Co Antrim.

There has been great interest in the group from the outset and Group Leader, John, reflected, *"It is great to see the men becoming more confident and happier. It's a tremendous project which I sincerely believe is making a positive difference to people's lives."* Using a local Church Hall for meetings, the group have been greatly supported by the local community.





# KILREA

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Kilrea is one of the largest Plough On groups, led by Brian Knipe and supported by Wilbert Steen. Most meetings see a turn out of about 32 men which is testament to the importance of the group to the participants since it began in October 2021!



They have had a busy ten months enjoying guest speakers as well as trips to the Terex Factory in Ballymena, the Winter Fair at Balmoral, local farm visits, Lough Neagh Eel Fishery and most recently, a summer social event.

The importance of the group has been highlighted by many of the participants with one gentleman commenting, *"I really look forward to the monthly meetings and having the chance to meet up with others for a chat. It is such an enjoyable group."*





# KIRCUBBIN

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Our Kircubbin Group is led by Ellen Woods and Scott Laidlaw. Using Kircubbin Community Centre as their base, the group has enjoyed various guest speakers and also taken trips to the Winter Fair at Balmoral, Balmoral Show, and enjoyed a tour of Dunleath Estate's anaerobic digester.

Over the Autumn and Winter months, the group will be researching and reminiscing on the change from horses to horsepower in the Ards peninsula. One participant reflected, *"The group is great craic. It is the only thing I am involved in and has allowed me to meet new people."*







# PLUMBRIDGE

The Plumbridge group, led by Mervyn Smyth and Kellie Rouse, meets in the 2000 Centre, Newtownstewart. Enjoying the company and conversation which, the group has also taken trips to the Glenpark Estate, Balmoral Show, Clogher Valley Show, Hillsborough Castle & Gardens and attended a Rural Support celebration event in Loughry campus, meeting with HRH Prince Charles.

The participants themselves have noted many positive benefits of the project commenting, *"It's good craic. It gives you a lift and it's great to get out of the house."* Group Leader, Mervyn, reflected, *"I've worked with farmers all my life, so it is lovely to give something back. I have developed relationships with neighbours that I had never spoken to before. I really enjoy the group and never leave a meeting feeling unhappy."*



# EXTERNAL EVALUATION

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Appointed in December 2021, Insight Solutions are the External Evaluators for the project. Over the next five years, they will capture and collate feedback, stories, and data, and complete comparative baseline evaluations with participants, gaining insight and tangible evidence of the impact this project has had.

## Achievements to Date





# REDUCING ISOLATION



"Keep it going, a lot of lonely people out there. Difficult two years."  
(Plough On Participant)

"It's great - the only thing I am involved in. Meet lots of new people."  
(Plough On Participant)



"Great cross-community relationships built."  
(Plough On Volunteer)

"Thank goodness for these meetings - they give me something to look forward to beforehand and talk and think about afterwards."

(Plough On Participant)

"I had got into the rut of not going out, so the group is an important social gathering for me"  
(Plough On Participant)



## ENHANCING CONFIDENCE & SELF ESTEEM

"Organising and delivering the group has given me a great boost of confidence and I get a buzz after each meeting and a feeling of accomplishment."  
(Plough On Group Leader)



"It's a tremendous project which I sincerely believe is making a positive difference to people's lives. Great to see men becoming more confident and happier."  
(Plough On Group Leader)



## IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLBEING

"I really enjoy my time with the group. I lost my wife one year ago and this group helps a lot."  
(Plough On Participant)



"Never leave a meeting feeling unhappy or down. It's very fulfilling - like a big family."  
(Plough On Group Leader)