

Musical Instruments Reuse Project, Fingal County Council

BACKGROUND

The reuse of materials is a core part of the Circular Economy and an important contributor to global sustainability. The items that we throw out may still be fit for their original purpose – albeit a bit of fixing up may be required. This was the case when, in 2019, Fingal County Council established an Instruments Reuse Project. It had been noticed that old instruments were being disposed of at their recycling centres, many of which were in good working order. The project involved establishing a collection facility at the recycling centres and cleaning and mending the instruments as required. Once ready, instruments were re-distributed to a variety of community organisations such as centres for autism, addiction and rehabilitation.



DELIVERY

Collection

Recycling Centres, especially in urban areas, receive many items that can be easily mended or repaired for subsequent re-use. Starting at Fingal County Council's Estuary Recycling Centre a pilot was set up to collect and repair musical instruments.



Repair

A local musician was engaged to check and test the instruments before they were passed on to new homes. Some of the instruments were in excellent condition while others required cleaning or minor repairs. Those that were beyond repair were kept and used for parts.



Engagement

Based on the initial success of the pilot, Fingal County Council now accept instruments at their recycling centres in Estuary, Swords or Coolmine. They will take any type of instrument, accessories and small practice amps, cables etc. They can't accept pianos (due to their size) but encourage people to contact the local voluntary sectors and offer any pianos to them.

RESULTS AND FEEDBACK

As these are instruments that have been given a new lease of life, they're ideal for community and group settings. Some of the beneficiaries include:

- The Autism Family Support Network where eight instruments were given to children who were delighted to receive them.
- Another handover was to a residential rehabilitation centre in Dublin 15 where a number of guitars and keyboards were gratefully accepted by the facility. These are used by individuals but also used for group music therapy sessions.
- The Migrant Reception Centre in Fingal takes instruments which are given out to residents, many who have come from areas of conflict and are dealing with trauma and grief. Music is a great way for people to communicate and be creative and the instruments are particularly beneficial in settings where a number of different languages are spoken.
- Several individual members of the community requested instruments and Fingal was in a position to provide these.
- Schools teaching music programs also availed of several instruments in Fingal – these instruments are used by the students for practice-learning and exams and group music lessons.
- Fiddles were donated to Comhaltas groups and the wind instruments were given to brass bands in Fingal – again they will be used to teach students who might not otherwise be able to afford these expensive instruments.

Success

This initiative has continued to grow in success and, in the first 2 years over 60 instruments have been re-homed. They have received all sorts of instruments – guitars, ukuleles, drums, violins, keyboards, electric guitars, accordions and many more. This has been made possible by the people donating instruments and through those that intercept them before disposal at the local recycling centres. [RTE filmed a piece on this project in 2019.](#)

For more information or to donate contact: sinead.fox@fingal.ie



Monaghan's Success Story

Based on the initial success of the Fingal County Council pilot, Monaghan Co Co initiated a similar project in 2020. Having discussed the initiative with the Environmental Awareness Officer from Fingal County Council, they first considered how a similar project could work best in Monaghan. The next case study (overleaf) explores the key questions Monaghan Co Co needed to address before beginning their own project.



How do we source instruments?

Initially Monaghan Co Co advertised on social networks, newspaper and radio asking people to donate instruments. This wasn't successful and it was found that the best way to source instruments was to partner with:

- local music shops that had some damaged, old, non-selling, shop soiled instruments and cases; and
- local repair businesses who used their contacts to source instruments from musician friends

Who will repair the instruments?

Knowing/identifying someone to do this work is key and they need to be involved in the development of any criteria for types of instruments accepted or the state of repair they need to be in. Luckily there was a local person in Monaghan that was available and interested in doing this. They agreed an hourly rate for all the repair and cleaning work carried out on the instruments. In addition to sourcing all the materials needed for the repairs, he also sourced instruments for donation.

What instruments will you ask for?

Everything was accepted except for pianos as these are difficult to store and transport. It's important to remember that not all instruments are worth the time and expense to repair, either due to their age or their value.

For example, one 1940's piano accordion was received but it would have cost ~€1,000 to fix and was deemed not worth it. Similarly, two cheap guitars were donated and again, it wasn't worth repairing them. However, these were retained for spare parts.

Who will receive the repaired instruments?

It was decided that all instruments would remain the property of Monaghan County Council. Once all instruments were ready for reuse, they were supplied with a case if they did not already have one.

Then, Monaghan Co Co partnered with Music Generation Cavan/Monaghan which is a publicly funded programme (led by Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board in partnership with Monaghan and Cavan County Councils) that supports music teaching in schools in both counties. Some instruments were also given to local music clubs where people were doing lessons but couldn't afford the instruments.

Success!

In the first year of operation this initiative re-homed 20 instruments including guitars, banjos, fiddles, mandolins, keyboards and a drum kit. The initiative is ongoing and all instruments that are donated are reused. Monaghan County Council have a log of who the instruments go to and if they are no longer needed they will go back to the County Council for donation to others. It was found that it is important to get the right instruments for the right groups.

