

Tallow....

Futures Project ●●●●



TALLOW FUTURES PROJECT REPORT

Modules 1 & 2

September 2012

●●●● Our Town..Our Future

Report prepared by Future iQ Partners

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TALLOW FUTURES PROJECT REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Tallow Futures Project covered in this report covers the two module community engagement and planning process, facilitated by Future iQ Partners in partnership with the Tallow Enterprise Centre. These community sessions were held in Tallow on 11 and 18 September 2012.

These initial modules of the Tallow Futures Project had a number of key objectives:

- To engage the community residents in a meaningful and purposeful conversation about the potential long term future for the community;
- To better equip community residents and leaders to understand and adapt to a changing regional, national and global environment;
- To assess the community against attributes of successful communities (in the European context), and begin building a stronger 'can-do' culture.

The initial two modules (out of a proposed five), attracted in excess of 100 residents of Tallow, attended the sessions, distributed equally across both modules.



MODULE 1: EXPLORING THE FUTURE - SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2012

This module was an introduction session, opening up the conversation about the future of the community and setting the context for the process. This session was comprised of conversation about the future of Tallow, Case Studies, Attributes of Successful Communities and a Community Survey.

INITIAL FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Initial 'round-table' discussions asked Tallow residents to examine their thoughts about the future of the community. Some summary comments from the discussions included:

- Residents primarily estimated that approximately only 3% of the residents of Tallow were involved in the leadership process in the Community. In setting up the context for the Community Engagement process, there was a robust discussion about the goals of the Community and the current situation.
- There was a strong emphasis on youth and keeping youth in the area, through improvement of facilities and providing youth with an opportunity to engage with the future of Tallow. This was also seen as a challenge – while young people were seen as essential to the future of the community, engagement of these people was seen as difficult.
- Employment in Tallow was also discussed. The lack of a large employer in the Region, and the inability to attract industry was seen as a real challenge for Tallow.
- The appearance of the town was also debated. It was widely agreed that the appearance of the town was an issue, and it should be improved in order to attract tourists, investors and people to move to Tallow. There is no tourism brand in Tallow, unlike its neighbouring towns Dungarvan and Lismore. Tallow has natural resources, which are not utilized, such as rivers, walking trails, a Quay and it was reiterated that the community does not come together to improve the town.
- The recent issue of the Bank closure and the prospect of the Garda Station closing down, further enhanced the concern from the community about Tallow

CASE STUDIES

A series of proven case studies of roughly comparable communities (from Western Australia) were presented and examined in order to understand the keys to success in building vibrant and successful communities in today's world. These Case Studies centred upon the town of Hyden, Western Australia and how this town of 600 people created a new future for their community through coming together and creating a tourism industry out of minimum natural resources. These Case Studies were used to create conversation and work around the possibilities available to Tallow in the future.

ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

This interactive exercise was used to assess the Tallow Community against attributes of successful communities. From this a context was created about where Tallow is now, in 2012, and what were the strengths and weaknesses of the community, thus, what were the challenges the community would face in the future.

Some of the observations and implications from the attributes exercise include:

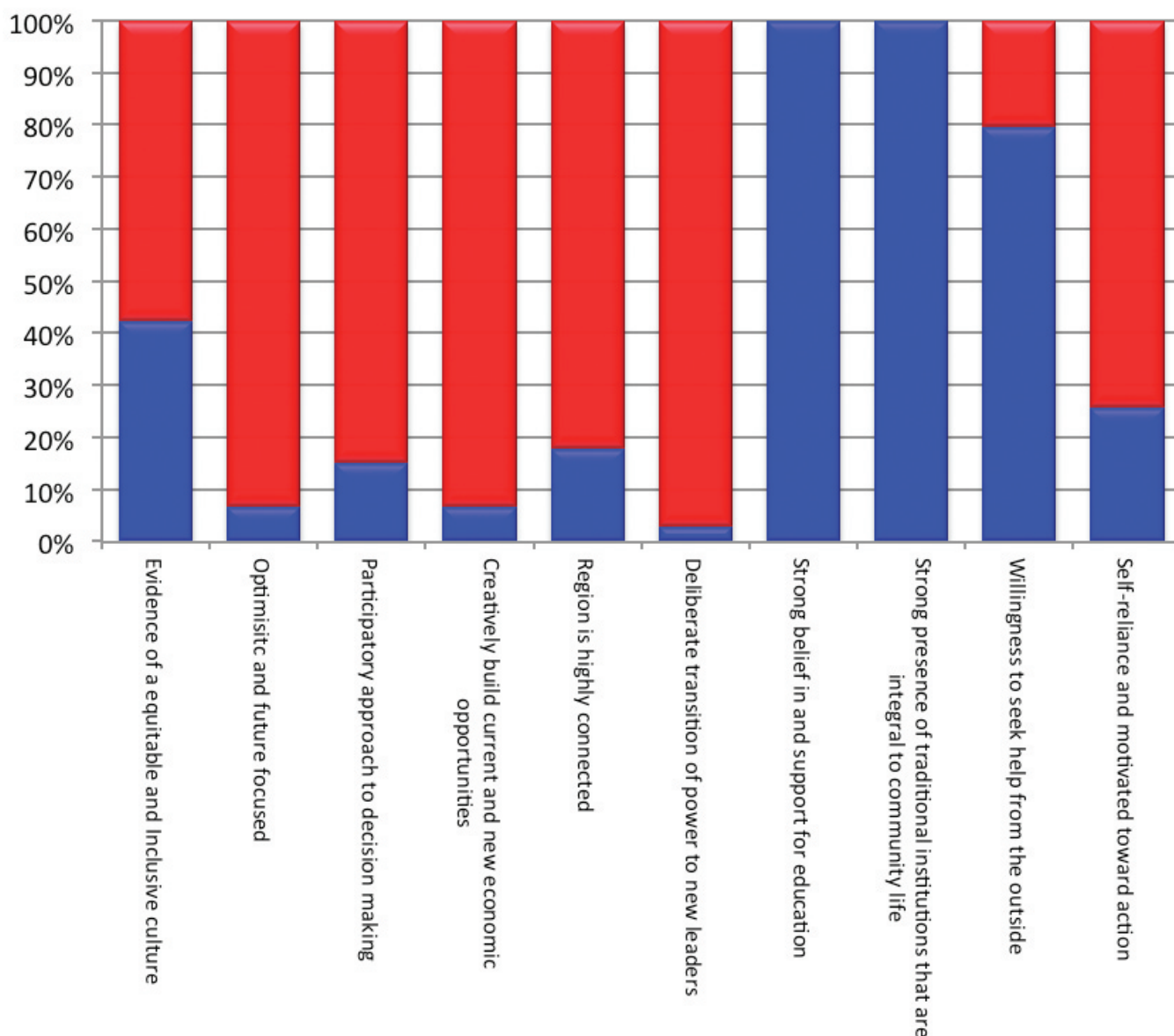
- There was a strong orientation towards traditional values and beliefs – for example 'Strong belief in and support for education'; 'Strong presence of traditional institutions' and 'Willingness to seek help from outside'; were all rated as strong attributes in the community. These could be considered traditional rural community strengths and values.



- There was a noticeable weakness around the attributes that are more orientated towards the future such as; 'Invest in the future', 'Participatory approach to community decision making', 'Creatively building new economic opportunities', 'Deliberate transition of power to new leaders' and 'Communities are self-reliant'. These attributes are more orientated towards building a future.
- Of importance to this work with Tallow, there was an identified weakness in the major economic attribute of 'Creatively building new economic opportunities'. In order to build a responsive community that is able to adapt to a changing world and actively shape its own future, then Tallow will have to consider building additional strength and capacity around innovative new economic development.

Addressing some of the attribute areas was important to build the capacity for the community to shape a preferred future. This was defined, both in the attributes exercise, and in general discussion to be a critical factor for the future success.

Attributes for Successful Communities - as rated by Tallow Area Residents ■ Weakness
Tallow Future Project, Community Session, 11 Sept 2012 ■ Strength



SURVEY

At the completion of the first module, community members were asked to individually fill out a survey that examined their thoughts and views around a series of key questions.

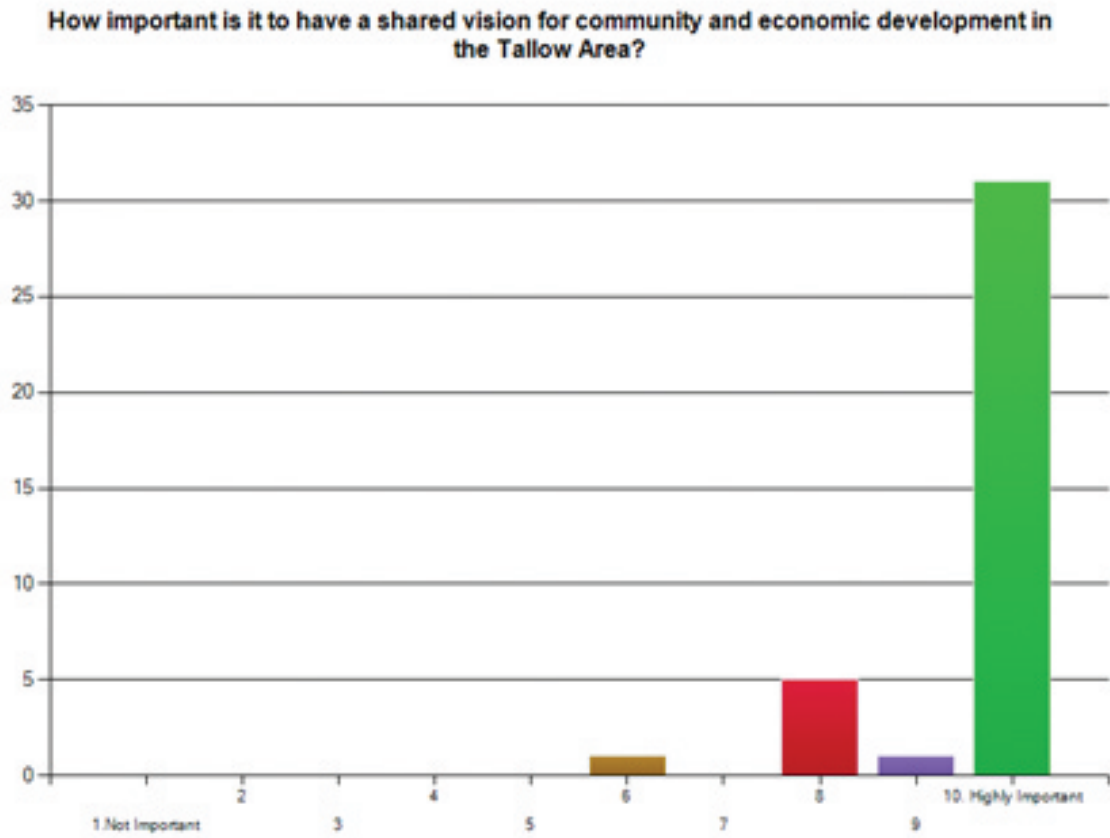
MODULE 2: THE FUTURE GAME – SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2012

This Module was to build upon the work carried out by the community and facilitators, in the previous session. It included a presentation of the survey results, and then playing The Future Game – Ireland.

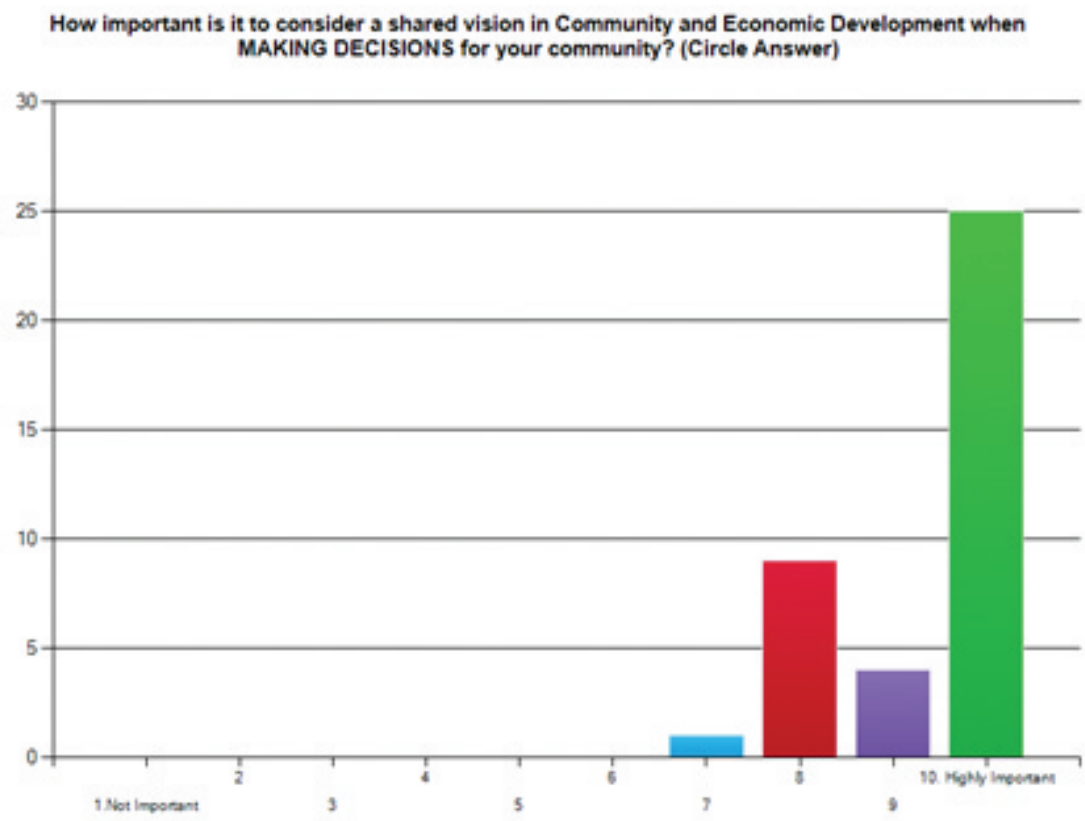
SURVEY RESULTS

The Survey results were presented back to the Community of Tallow.

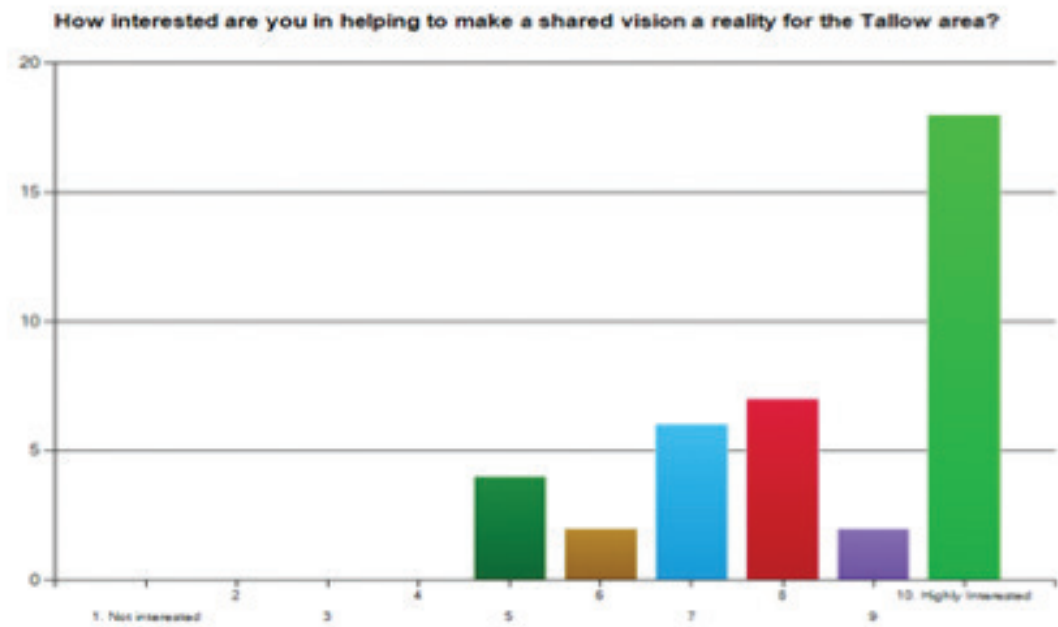
There was almost overwhelming support for the a Shared Vision in Community and Economic Development in Tallow, from the community.



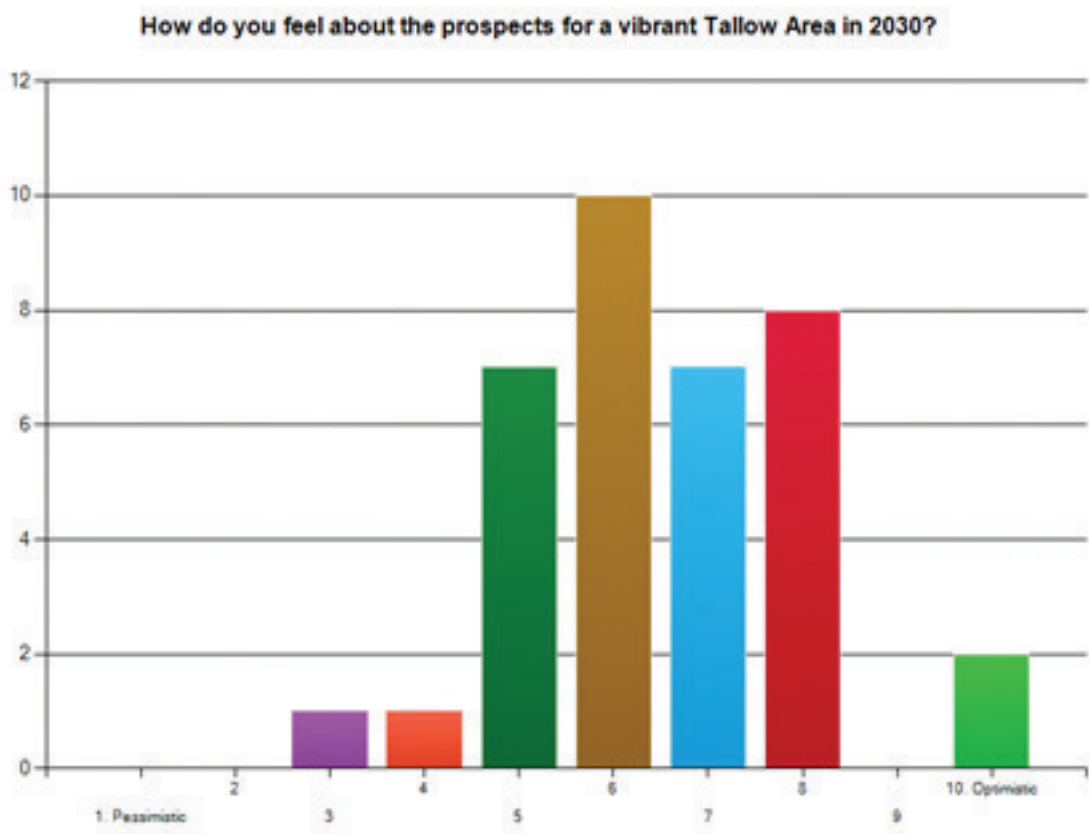
The community recognised the value of considering a Shared Vision in Community and Economic Development, when making decisions for the community, with the majority considering this highly important.



While the community saw the importance in Tallow having a shared vision, and a large number were interested in assisting with the Shared Vision, the community responses were rather more undecided. This reiterates the considered weakness of the community – Participatory approach to decision making.



The Community were sceptical about the prospects for a vibrant Tallow Area in 2030. Their responses ranged from mildly pessimistic, spiking at undecided (6) and only a small amount showing optimism.



A text analysis was carried out on the individual responses to the questions. The responses were analysed and key words which came through the responses were highlighted.

WHAT MAY TALLOW LOOK LIKE IN 2030 WITHOUT A SHARED VISION OR ACTION PLAN?	WHAT MAY TALLOW LOOK LIKE IN 2030 WITH A SHARED VISION OR ACTION PLAN?
<div>Bank Businesses Decrepit Derelict Dormant Dormitory Existing Future Population Town Youth</div>	<div>Attractive Businesses Community Improved Outward Place Positive Outlook Social and Recreational Services Thriving Tidy Towns Upgraded Facilities Welcoming Young People Younger Youth</div>

THE IRELAND FUTURE GAME



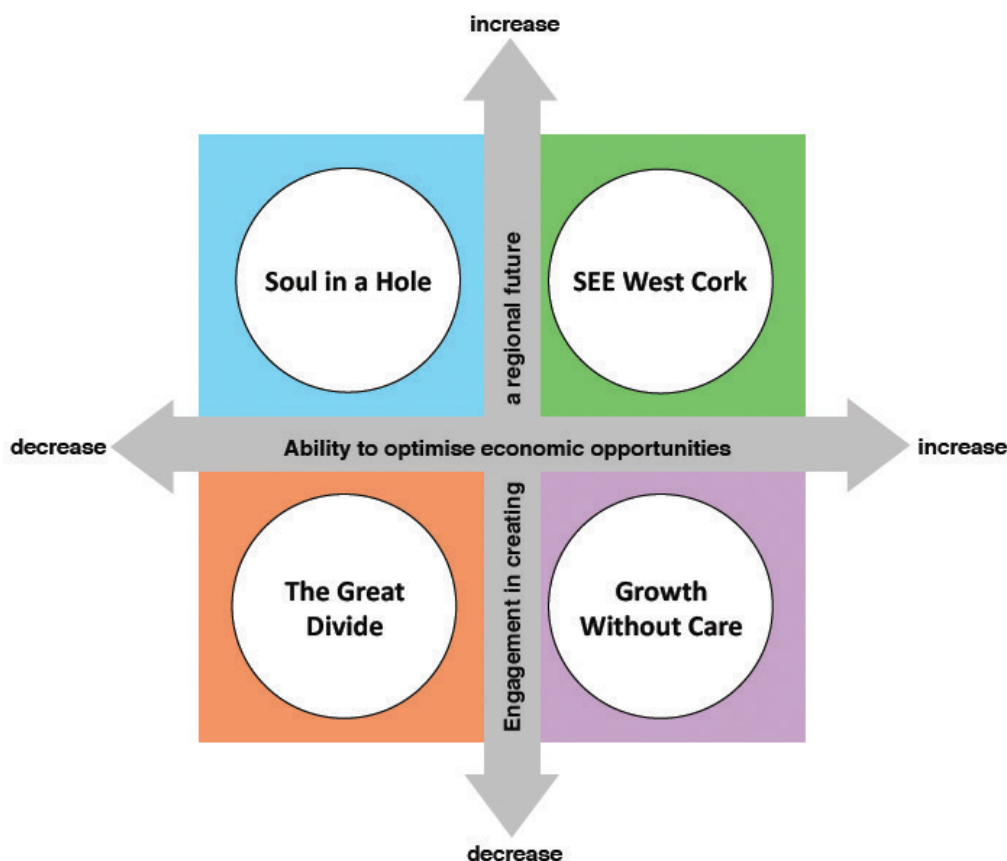
The Ireland Future Game was designed to explore how regional and local decisions can shape long-term economic, environmental, and community well-being. The highly interactive and participatory simulation game provides an enjoyable and accessible way for community residents to engage in robust discussions about contemporary challenges of community and economic development.

The game was designed around a Scenario Planning process, carried out in West Cork in 2010. A series of decisions are made over a 20 year period in order to see how decisions made now can influence the future enormously.

There were 11 groups of residents, playing the game, and the vast majority ended up with a future named “Soul in a Hole”. While this is a hypothetical simulation learning game, it can help reveal important

aspects to the underlying decision making process within community leaders and citizens. This outcome of this future in the game, creates a future full of positives and negatives, and creates a future that continually falls down economically. Local community groups are well organised and are connected across the region. There is a strong community spirit to make major changes to manage the environment and to foster civic, cultural and community action. However, the region is in a hole economically. The spirit is strong, but economic development is weak. The region has never really recovered from the debilitating “global financial crisis” of the early 2000s.

Scenario matrix, which formed the basis of The Future Game - Ireland



The key lesson for the Tallow Community from playing this game is that the community and the leadership group must focus on the twin objectives of building an engaged community, and also focus on building a vibrant and entrepreneurial local business culture. Over time, this twin focus has the best chance of creating the type of future for Tallow that the citizens desire.

CONCLUSIONS

The two Modules carried out in Tallow conveyed a community who know that they need to work together better to create a new future for Tallow.

- The community residents at the modules were in agreement about the strengths of the community (tradition, education, seeking help from the outside) and the weaknesses of the community (new leadership, participation, optimistic and future focused).
- They are in alignment on most of the issues and challenges facing Tallow's future.
- Youth was a consistent theme running throughout the two sessions. There is recognition of the need for youth to be involved in decisions for the area and to be included and encouraged to take an active role in their town. There was uncertainty as to how this could be achieved.
- There was strong recognition that the community needs to come together around a shared vision, and begin the process of building a vibrant and engaged community and local economy.

The Tallow Community offers a unique setting to undertake a comprehensive community long term planning effort. The existing strong community leadership, and the active support and participation of the LEADER Programme, provides a strong foundation on which to build this larger community planning initiative.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

Within the existing Tallow context, there is an opportunity, and a necessity, for local community driven initiatives to define and drive future community and economic development activity. Given the potential volatility of the economic base in the region (and Ireland in general), there is an opportunity to look at some successful processes of the highly engaged and participatory communities using self-sufficient models that have been developed with great effect in other regions of the world. Some of these vibrant entrepreneurial community and business development efforts and models may make a significant contribution to building a culture of new innovation in the Tallow Community.

Proposed next steps include:

- Develop a range of plausible scenarios for the Tallow Community, based on the identification of the critical drivers shaping the future of the community and region;
- Create a preferred future (vision) for the Tallow Community, looking 10-20 years into the future, that takes into account community, economic and environmental dimensions;
- Develop a detailed action plan for the community, which defines a 'road-map' to the preferred future and outlines key steps, and roles and responsibilities for stakeholder groups in the community.

It is important that community residents and participants engage in the Tallow Futures Project and identify the meaningful actions that will building a more vibrant and prosperous community future.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Tallow Enterprise Centre on behalf of the broader Tallow Community initiated the Tallow Futures Project. Special acknowledgement is made of the efforts of the staff and team at the Tallow Enterprise Centre and Chairman, Mr Sean Tobin. Sincere appreciation is extended to the people of the Tallow Community who attended the sessions and participated so willingly in the important discussions about the future of the community.

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