The Barna Way / Sofia Maksymovich

Synergies Programme August 2026

The Barna Way, Ballybunion, Co Kerry, Ireland, V31YK68



Harvesting Food in the pollytunnel

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1. **Profile of The Barna Way with local and national actors/connections**



Ballybunion Bean Festival

The Barna Way
www.thebarnaway.com

Here we believe in the transformative power of growing food, protecting nature, celebrating creativity and supporting community.

We feel it is so important to listen and learn from the land. We have spent years co-creating together with the land and a team of amazing volunteers. The old Gaelic name for the land is *Barnadarrig* meaning the red gap, probably derived from hawthorn trees with rich red berries in Autumn. The nineteen acres have evolved over the years to include artist studios, woodlands, meadows and organic fruit and vegetable gardens. Last summer we created a Lovelochán, a heart shaped wildlife pond.

Here at The Barna Way we welcome diverse community groups through social farming and live food and creative events, while protecting habitats for wildlife. We are propelled by an accelerated sense of urgency around food insecurity, the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and forced migration.

Lisa Fingleton / Rena Blake

What's here:

- Our home and studios
- *Micro Publisher (3 books so far)*
- 19 acres
- Peace path – a 15/20-minute walk through the woods and the old green road
- Original stonework/entrance for the old Lartigue railway
- Organic food and horticulture
- *Woodland (10,000 trees planted with the Native woodland Scheme in 2020)*
- *Meadows and hedgerows*
- *Lovelochán*
- *Community Kitchen and Shebean workshop space*
- *Earthlings Stage*
- *Social farming*
- Donkeys Biddy and Rory and Kerry our dog

Local Actors/Projects

- Brilliant Ballybunion/ Ballybunion Community Forum
- www.brilliantballybunion.com
- Ballybunion Tidy Towns https://www.facebook.com/p/Ballybunion-Tidy-Towns-100066944881841/
- Ballybunion Nature Group https://www.instagram.com/ballybunionnaturegroup/
- Ballybunion Bean Festival https://brilliantballybunion.com/ballybunionbeanfestival/
- Queer Sheds Kerry https://www.instagram.com/queershedciarrai/
- The Barna Way Books https://www.thebarnaway.com/shop
- Discover Kerry https://www.discoverkerry.com/listing/the-barna-way/69804101/

National Actors / Connections

- *Creative Climate Action- Brilliant Ballybunion* *https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/blog/brilliant-ballybunion-growing-food-creativity-and-community-resilience/*
- Certified organic land with the Irish Organic Association https://irishorganicassociation.ie/members/
- Farming for Nature Ambassadors https://www.farmingfornature.ie/nominees/rena-blake-lisa-fingleton/
- Women in Nature Restoration https://photomuseumireland.ie/women-in-nature-national-photography-campaign/
- Talamh Beo https://talamhbeo.ie/
- Ireland.ie Guiding Lights https://www.ireland.ie/en/visit/lisa-fingleton-and-the-barna-way/



Community Gathering/ Queer Sheds at The Barna Way

2. Overview of Activities /Evaluation of experience



Foraging for blackberries

Daily Activities 7th August – 24th August

8.30-9.30 **Mindfulness/ Yoga / herbal tea**

9.15-10.00 **Organic Breakfast** (Prepared and shared together with team/volunteers)

10.00-11.30 **Organic Horticulture Meitheall** (Irish word for shared work in the garden) / **Community, Eco and Climate Project:**

Options to vary each day:

- Woodland Walk Work

- Gardening / Harvesting
- Seedsaving
- Meadow Management
- Donkey care
- Preparation for community events and Ballybunion Bean Festival 22-23 Aug

11.30-13.00 **Tea Break and Presentation (Lisa Fingleton / Rena Blake)**

- Overview of project
- History of the land
- Community, youth and climate projects at The Barna Way
- Film Screenings
- Explore themes relating to gender issues/eco feminism, access to land, intergenerational cooperation (Workshops and meeting groups)
- Shared learning/Q&A

13.00-14.30 **Organic Lunch** (Prepared and shared together)

14.30 –15.30 **Creative Connections**

- The Art of Nature - Creative eco-art/ Mural project
- Songs for the Spirit - Singing in the spirit of the Irish Rambling House
- Community gathering

15.3000-19.00 **FREE TIME**

Walk or cycle to the beach / Draw / Sketch / relax

19.00-20.00 **Organic Dinner** (Prepared and shared together)

20.00 **FREE TIME**

Additional Activities:

Trip to Kilarney National Park and mountain hike- Saturday 8th August

Queer Sheds Chiarrai event Sunday 9th August

Tralee Art Group – En plein Air drawing workshop Thursday 13th August

Herstory – the stories of women activists and business women in our local town

Ballybunion Bean Festival (See attached programme) 22-23 August

3. Evaluation



Community Volunteers at the Beach

What worked well?

Great relationships. We all got on really well and learned a lot from each other. Sofia was always so upbeat and interested in learning. She contributed so much in every way and we miss her now that she is gone. She made a beautiful installation about Ukraine for the Ballybunion Bean Festival and took part in all activities with great enthusiasm. She also made lovely connections with our Ukrainian friends here in Ballybunion. She is a wonderful ambassador for the Synergies Programme. She also did very good in interviews with us about our work.

- Having other volunteers here
- Access to beach / bike to cycle and see the sunset
- Structured co-created programme with flexibility
- Time invested by the hosts Lisa and Rena (20 plus hours per week)
- All organic and fresh food for lunch, dinner
- Facilities – Large private bedroom and access to showers and bathrooms (indoors and outdoors including eco compost loo)
- Freedom and space – 19 acres of gardens, woodlands and a pond
- Animals
- Connection with lots of community groups
- Session on eco feminism and women artists working with the land
- Learning skills from Lisa and Rena

Some specific feedback from Sofia:

I learned: 1. You don't have to know everything to be a good farmer, you learn a lot along the way; 2. If you give nature a little freedom, it will bring animals to your plot (for example, rabbits); 3. I used to not understand why people drink tea with milk because I thought it was tasteless because they only drink coffee like that. Now I also understand that it is a good way to cool down the drink; 4. It is important to be open to people and maintain social connections; 5. I just want to say thank you - don't be sad that it is over but be happy that it happened

4. Recommendations



- Feel that everything worked really well
- Very important to co create and agree a programme together. The structure worked really well as it gave us time to share food and time together but we also were flexible as needed.
- Definitely important to have opportunities to share music and food. We loved having borscht and other Ukrainian food.
- Feel the communication was very clear from Simone and we really enjoyed the whole process

Report Signed 3rd September by Lisa Fingleton, The Barna Way