

## LEADER 2014-2020 NRN CASE STUDY

**Project name:** Musical Development and Rebranding of the Accora Orchestra

**Date:** 2017-2018

**Local Action Group:** Cavan Local Community Development Committee

**Implementing Partner:** Cavan County Local Development

**Type of Beneficiary:** Non-profit Charitable Organisation

**Priority & Focus Area:** LEADER Theme 2: Social Inclusion/Sub-Theme: Rural Youth

**Project Beneficiary Name/Organisation:** Castletown Accordion Orchestra

**Address:** Mullagh, Co. Cavan

**Further information:** [www.accoraorchestra.com](http://www.accoraorchestra.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/AccoraOrchestra/>

### Musical Development & Rebranding of the Accora Orchestra

#### Summary

Castletown Accordion Orchestra was established in 1981. Since its establishment, the orchestra has moved from its original Castletown location. LEADER funding supported the orchestra to re-brand itself as the 'Accora Orchestra' to reflect how it has evolved. The name 'Accora' is derived from the first five letters of accordion. It is also a play on 'chara', 'a chairde' and 'chorus', reflecting the orchestras' ethos. This LEADER project also supported investment in new music and computer equipment which has helped the Orchestra to diversify its performance potential and to streamline and make its administration processes more efficient.

#### Context

Accora Orchestra (formerly known as the Castletown Accordion Orchestra) was established in 1981 in Navan, Co. Meath. It has approximately 90 members from the south-Cavan and north-Meath areas. Membership is open to all, irrespective of gender, age, race, ability or financial circumstances. The Accora Orchestra is an important organisation in the locality aiming to maintain a supportive partnership with parents, schools and the local community. The Orchestra provides music tuition and currently has four orchestras that perform regularly at an international level. These include the 'Mini Musicians' orchestra which was developed in 2017 where 4 to 6 year olds learn notation and rhythm.



*Accora Orchestra's senior orchestra after a performance at a Viennese Ball in Headfort House – Source: Accora Orchestra*

When John Chilton, resident accordionist with the National Symphony Orchestra, became Musical Director in 1993 the orchestra became focused as a classical accordion orchestra. In Ireland the accordion is more commonly associated with traditional music, while classical accordion music is more popular in Italy, Croatia and more broadly in Eastern Europe.

LEADER supported the development of the Accora Orchestra in a number of ways. In 2014 the orchestra relocated to St Killian's National School, Mullagh, in Co. Cavan where the majority of its youth members are based. Since the orchestra had moved from its original Castletown location the orchestra looked to re-brand itself to reflect this change. LEADER funding supported this collaborative process. The project also supported the newly named Accora Orchestra to invest in quality musical instruments and equipment to enhance the orchestra's overall sound and enable outdoor performance and funding was also used to purchase a laptop and software to support more efficient administration.

### Objectives

This project aimed to support the development of the Accora Orchestra through:

- **Re-naming and rebranding of the orchestra to reflect its evolution and to develop a distinct, contemporary identity which will increase its profile**
- **Investing in new musical equipment so that the orchestra can diversify its performance potential to include outdoor concerts**
- **Investing in new computer equipment to support more effective administration**

### Activities

The re-branding of the Orchestra was a collaborative process involving the youth orchestra, committee and design experts. The name 'Accora' is derived from the first five letters of the word accordion. It is also a play on the words 'chara', 'a chairde' and 'chorus' reflecting the

orchestras' ethos as the theme of friendship featured heavily during the design consultation process. The outcome of the process was the new logo and name 'Accora Orchestra'. The logo design aims to be modern and also has symbolic representation linking to the classical accordion which is the orchestra's primary instrument.



ESTD: 1981  
FORMERLY THE CASTLETOWN ACCORDION ORCHESTRA

*The new Accora  
Orchestra Logo-  
Source: Accora  
Orchestra*

LEADER funding also supported the newly named Accora Orchestra to invest in quality musical instruments and equipment. This included a bass accordion, percussion instruments, an amplifier, microphones, speakers and a trailer for the transport of equipment. The amplification and microphone equipment were selected to have a particular specification suited to amplify the sound of the classical accordion. This has helped to enhance the orchestra's overall sound, as well as set up the orchestra so it can accept outdoor performances. A Pingini Base Accordion was also purchased from Italy. This was essential in maintaining the orchestra's authentic classical accordion sound, as opposed to the accordion which is more common in traditional Irish music. The purchase of a laptop and printer also supports more efficient administration and makes important documentation more easily accessible and safely stored which has the added benefit of bringing administration in line with GDPR requirements.

### Results

The re-branding of the orchestra has rejuvenated the orchestra, bringing a newly revived sense of pride. The

orchestra's uniform now features the new logo and youth members value the modern, revived image.

*"The rebranding has helped support a growth in the orchestra's profile now with a modern symbolic representation illustrating the significance of our primary instrument, the classical accordion" Barbara Carolan, Accora Orchestra Committee Member*

The project also supported the purchase of additional equipment to expand the activities of Accora Orchestra. This equipment now enables them to attend national and international outdoor events and competitions. For example, as a result of the new amplification equipment, the Accora Orchestra travelled to Sundgau in France in 2018 to perform an outdoor concert. They also competed at the World Music Festival in Innsbruck, Austria and in 2019, they became World Champions at two different levels. The Accora Youth Orchestra, led by Yvonne Chilton, scooped first place, while the Senior Ensemble, led by John Chilton, were also awarded first place. This has resulted in the profile of the Accora Orchestra being raised internationally and strongly associated with classical accordion music.



*World Champion's Accora Youth Orchestra & Senior Orchestra – Source: Accora Orchestra*

Additionally, the purchase of a laptop and software has had numerous significant organisational benefits for the Orchestra by helping them to streamline their administration, enhance communication and increase use of digital services.

*"All important documentation is now easily accessible, backed up and safely stored, helping us meet our GDPR requirements. We can now communicate efficiently with members, parents and other relevant organisations by email and also avail of internet banking" Barbara Carolan, Accora Orchestra Committee Member*

This project has also indirectly resulted in a number of strong social benefits for local youth by providing an important social outlet for them in this rural area where they can socialise with groups outside of school. Youth members not only learn and perform classical accordion music, but also get opportunities to travel and build new friendships. Accora Orchestra works to enable students to develop a love of music and their full musical potential in accordion, keyboard or percussion. Outside of these music-related outcomes, students also gain self-confidence, as well as building social and interpersonal skills and independence.

### Lessons

#### *Importance of co-operation and trust between promoters and LAGs*

Reflecting on the LEADER application process, trust and collaboration of the programme team were crucial to overcome challenges. The voluntary nature of most local music and youth groups leaves limited time to commit to the LEADER application process. This highlights the importance of strong cooperation and trust between promoters and LAGs. Both parties need to work to understand where the other is coming from. For example, administration and paperwork can be very onerous for a voluntary music organisation, but supporting documentation are an essential part of the LEADER application process to ensure accountability and transparency is upheld.

#### *Importance of different funding sources*

Fundraising is an ongoing activity of Accora Orchestra but is an unpredictable source of funds and challenging to raise

significant amounts. This makes wider funding sources such as through the LEADER programme of vital importance to the sustainability and development of Accora Orchestra. Many funding streams have come together to support the development of Accora Orchestra.

*"Fundraising is ongoing and continuous. You can end up hitting similar people time and time again. That's why LEADER funding was so important to us" Barbara Carolan, Accora Orchestra Committee Member*

### Funding

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) =</b>             | <b>€14,424.54</b> |
| <b>+ (i) Rural Development Programme support (a)+(b)</b> | €10,717.28        |
| <b>+ (a) EAFRD (EU) contribution</b>                     | €6,730.45         |
| <b>+ (b) National / Regional contribution</b>            | €3,986.83         |
| <b>+ (ii) Private / Own funds</b>                        | €3,707.66         |
| <b>+ (iii) Other funding sources</b>                     | €n/a              |

### Contact details

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Project beneficiary name</b>                    | <b>Castletown Accordion Orchestra</b> |
| <b>Contact name</b>                                | Yvonne Chilton (Musical Director)     |
| <b>Contact number</b>                              | 0879949006                            |
| <b>Email</b>                                       | accoraorchestra@gmail.com             |
| <b>Address of beneficiary or implementing body</b> | Mullagh, Co. Cavan                    |