

LEADER 2014-2020 NRN CASE STUDY

WESTPORT BEEKEEPERS EQUIPMENT

Summary

Westport Beekeepers Association was established in 2010 in response to the decline in the bee population across Ireland and all over the world. Their aim is to increase interest in biodiversity by assisting and providing education and training to anybody interested in bees and beekeeping. The association now has 118 members with a strong base in Westport but this also includes members from all across the county. To keep up with this growth, this project supported the purchase of beekeeping equipment such as beekeeping suits and accessories, as well as new and a variety of different hives for training purposes.

Context

Westport Beekeepers Association has been up and running for a number of years with a growing membership base. The association meets once a month and runs a number of courses on the different aspects of beekeeping as well as practical training. The association also hosts a number of invited speakers on a range of different aspects of beekeeping including topics such as preparing for winter, spring management of hives, swarm control, queen rearing and disease control and it regularly interacts with other beekeeping associations in Mayo, such as those in Ballina, Ballyhaunis and Erris, in this regard.

The Association's approach is that people learn best by 'doing' and they provide the opportunity for 'doing' in their Training Apiary. Notably, getting involved in beekeeping and raising bees can be quite a costly investment considering the cost of hives, bees, specialised equipment

Project name: Westport Beekeepers Equipment

Date: Nov 2018 - June 2019

Local Action Group: Mayo Local Community Development Committee

Implementing Partner: South West Mayo Development Company

Type of Beneficiary: Non-profit, non-governmental organisation

Priority & Focus Area: Theme 3: Rural Environment /Sub theme: Local Biodiversity

Project Beneficiary Name/Organisation: Westport Beekeepers Association

Address: Newport Road, Westport, Co. Mayo

Further information: www.wbkc.info & <https://www.facebook.com/westport.beekeepers>



Members of the Association at the National Tidy Towns Conference 2017 - Source: Westport Beekeepers Association

and protective clothing. Therefore, the training apiary allows their members to trial all these aspects before investing as well as helping members develop the key skills they require to rear their own bees. The Association insists that all members sit a preliminary exam with them before they acquire their own hives.

"The support from the Association is very important when starting out" Mary Munroe, Treasurer of Westport Beekeepers Association



While the training apiary has been very successful over the years, to properly utilise the asset, it required a number of new pieces of equipment and some new and a wider variety of hives so that members can get better training and more experience with a variety of hives.

A Swarm of Bees- Source: Westport Beekeepers Association

Objectives

- To maintain and update beekeeping equipment
- To provide a variety of new hives for beekeeper training and education purposes at the association's apiary in Knappagh, Westport, Co. Mayo

Activities

As the previous committee submitted an application to LEADER before, some members had previous experience of the application process. Therefore, first and foremost, the current committee got together to draw up a 'wishlist' of items that they required support for to write into their

application. The application included a number of items to upgrade and maintain their training apiary, specifically a variety of new hives to include National, the Congested Districts Board (CDB) hive, widely used in the West of Ireland due to more adverse weather conditions, and Top Bar hives. The Top Bar is not the most common however; it can be suitable for people with back problems or people who find Supers too heavy to lift when full of honey. The application also included the need for the purchase of 'Nucs', or half sized hives, which are used for nurturing new colonies of bees which the Association then sells to members. While the Association is not interested in production of honey 'per se', it is beneficial to members to see how to extract honey and therefore the Association decided to purchase an extractor which they now make available to members to borrow as it would not be economically viable for individuals to purchase.



Visit to apiary during summer 2019 with new equipment in use- Source: Westport Beekeepers Association

Protective clothing is a necessity when going into an apiary and therefore the Association required these for the members for safety purposes and also to allow them to trial the different types of suits before investing in their own. Other hardware items included a trough and barrel which were required for harvesting water, for mixing sugar and water; linseed oil and 'Fencelife' to paint onto hives for protection. Some toolboxes to store smaller items of equipment as well as a gas torch used to 'roughen' the

interior of the new hives were also purchased. The application also included the purchase of a laptop and printer to support their outreach training programmes and also their in-house training and association meetings.

The Association maintained regular contact with the South West Mayo Development Company who helped to guide and give them regular feedback throughout the LEADER application process.

Results

This investment in new equipment has resulted in more satisfied members as this allows them to gain more hands-on beekeeping experience. Following the purchase of the new beekeeping equipment, the Association ran their Beginners Course in April 2019 followed by a practical exam in the apiary. The new suits that were part funded by LEADER allowed members to do their practical exams and training safely. This also allowed them to trial different styles of suits and other equipment, such as hives, before purchasing their own which can cost anywhere in the region of €300 for a hive and €80-€100 for a suit, (plus the additional cost of purchasing the bees).



Newly purchased hives in the training apiary - Source: Westport Beekeepers Association

New hive tools dedicated to the club apiary are now in use only for this apiary which helps to avoid the spread of disease. Apiary managers and committee members have

held a number of apiary visits over the summer in which current and prospective club members can attend to view the upgraded facilities. The newly purchased 'Nucs' were used to house new bee colonies which were then sold to club members and the new extractor will be used to demonstrate how to harvest honey. Overall, this project has increased pollination, continued food production, as well as helping to produce local honey and wax products and indeed resulted in happier beekeepers!

"Wouldn't have taken the chance to get into beekeeping without this experience" Member of Westport Beekeepers Association

Lessons

Deciding on what to include in your application

The Association recommends that groups applying for LEADER funding allow for plenty of discussion amongst all members regarding what the project should be about and what is needed or should be included in the application. They state that the creation of a 'wish list' should be an iterative process whereby everything mentioned should be included and this should be revised to cut it back to what is really necessary.

Funding

Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) =	€8,339.19
+ (i) Rural Development Programme support (a)+(b)	€6,254.39
+ (a) EAFRD (EU) contribution	€3,927.76
+ (b) National / Regional contribution	€2,326.63
+ (ii) Private / Own funds-Subscriptions & Fundraisers	€2,084.80
+ (iii) Other funding sources	n/a

Contact details

Project beneficiary name	Westport Beekeepers Association
Contact person	Secretary
Email	secretarywbka@gmail.com
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