

# our shared plate

## community newsletter

a neighbourhood network initiative

## castle dawson estate



On *Sunday 21 April*, **Our Shared Plate** ran a community engagement event in Castle Dawson Estate. The 'Street Feast' event involved food sharing, with local residents bringing home cooked food and baked goods which were laid out on long tables. There was also a composting workshop and several children's games.

We set up in the green to the right of the entrance of the estate, a little used space with a small meadow. There were two long tables bursting with food, a marquee with another table with a map, and places for young people to draw pictures and play. The weather was excellent, which added to the success of the day and the high turnout.

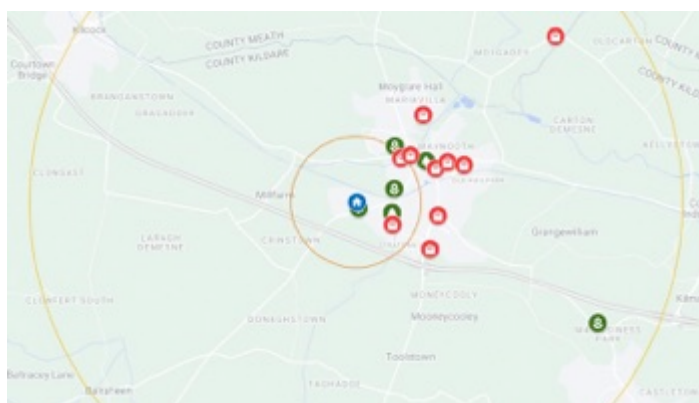
This newsletter provides an overview of responses from the day, including a map of local food sources, suggestions from the community, and information about a food diary project.

# community mapping

The research team from Our Shared Plate and Maynooth University, including Spatial Justice and Geography MA and undergraduate students, gathered some information about food security and climate action in the estate. The team ran a community mapping activity by asking residents to contribute to a food access map of Maynooth. People marked in where they do their grocery shopping (mostly Dunnes) and what other food options are available on the map. Residents also indicated where sustainable initiatives were to get fresh fruit and vegetables, which were not on Google Maps. Some examples included:

## fresh food options:

<b>Maynooth Organics</b>	This is an organic market garden located in Mariaville on Moyglare Road. They offer freshly pickled seasonal vegetables and salads, and customers can pre-order a basket of produce for a set price, operating during the summer periods.
<b>Masterson's Fruit and Veg</b>	Located opposite Tesco. Small shop with fresh fruit and vegetables.
<b>Dunne's Eggs</b>	A local producer of eggs.
<b>Farmers and Food Market Maynooth</b>	Every Saturday, located on the main street of Maynooth by Brady's. Offers organic eggs (from Dunne's Eggs) and limited supply of organic foods. There are also some food stands.
<b>Rathcoffey Zero Waster Community Garden</b>	Located in Rathcoffey.
<b>Graze Dairy</b>	Located in Prosperous Town, offers unpasteurised milk and flavoured milk in reusable, returnable glass bottles. Along with organic eggs.
<b>Castletown Farmers Market</b>	Located outside of Celbridge.
<b>Maynooth University Community Garden</b>	Located on the north campus of Maynooth university, the garden is used by both university staff and select students.
<b>Tommy's Butchers in Centra Maynooth</b>	Located near the Greenfield shopping centre in Maynooth park, the shop offers quality meats for customers.



## maynooth food audit map

Depicts Castle Dawson residents' food options within a 15-minute radius.

Red = food sources  
Green = green spaces  
Blue = Castle Dawson

View the map on Google (created by MA student Elina Musa) using the URL:

Access to food mainly takes place in the town of Maynooth, where there is a good selection of supermarkets as well as fresh produce. An interesting finding from this map was in relation to the distance of the estate from food sources. As supported by residents who provided local knowledge to update the map, there is only one shop within a 15-minute walk, which is a small Spar people use to buy milk. People indicated that shopping could be stressful because of the need for a car or private transportation, and because of the traffic problems in the town. People liked the idea of more accessible local options, and would like to bring back allotments in the community.

## suggestions

The community had a lot of different ideas for the types of events and projects around growing, sharing and eating food. Our Shared Plate also set up a posterboard where residents could use stickers to vote for different ideas. The most popular ended up being fruit trees, edible hedge and a zero-waste cooking workshop. Residents seemed happiest with the idea of lower maintenance projects for the green, such as a herb garden or fruit trees.

We got several suggestions from the community, both in conversation and from the postcard questionnaires, including:

- Community gardens
- International food day
- Bug hotel
- Herb garden for sharing
- Composting workshops
- Kids gardening
- Street fest
- Raised bed gardens
- Orchards
- Biodiversity day
- Edible berry bushes
- Jam making workshops
- Autumn harvest with food and kids' pumpkin carving activities
- Education courses in gardening, growing vegetables and herbs
- Education in food waste
- Cooking sharing skills and resources
- Upcycling classes

## food diaries

As part of the research, the team from Maynooth University also asked people to volunteer for an online food diary. Quite a few people signed up so we hope it will be a success! This will be an online survey of sorts, and anyone taking part will record what their household eats in a week. This can be done through uploading photographs of meals or grocery receipts, and/or by answering questions online.

The aim of this new project is to get a more in-depth understanding of where people get their food from and what they eat and waste. It is completely anonymous, and residents taking part do not have to record every single day meticulously. They will be given access to the online platform as soon as it is available.

Together with the community, we can study the food landscape in the estate and help to create some of the initiatives that were suggested. There was a lot to be learnt at the event, and hopefully the food diaries will give an even greater insight.



The community event at Castle Dawson estate showed quite a few aspects of food sovereignty. Discussions about food practices, preferences and initiatives indicated a real willingness in the community to explore more sustainable and efficient ways of buying, making and sharing food. The desire for initiatives like a community herb garden, fruit trees and zero waste cooking workshops shows that the estate do want better access to healthy food options nearby. The mapping activity also showed how convenience and travel distance to shops is something that can have a big impact on people's lives, as well as drawing attention to places in Maynooth where fresh food is available. Providing access to opportunities to learn more about food sovereignty and independence, and involving children as well, helps in cultivating healthy food landscapes and easy access to nutritious and vibrant food spaces.

Castle Dawson estate is a place with a really lovely community, and the people there showed a lot of interest in the project, and in creating a sustainable neighbourhood. During the event people came together, shared food and chatted with one another. The day was quite a success, and hopefully the community will continue to grow as more follows.

# planning with lucy



On 22 May 2024, four members of the Castle Dawson Resident's Association Biodiversity Committee met with horticulturist Lucy Bell to plan the layout of their communal food growing area. The aim of planning session with Lucy was to logistically plan out the growing space that would incorporate the items identified by the residents during the April engagement session with the neighbourhood. Lucy used flags to map out the distance between fruit trees and provided insightful information to the residents about the various components to consider when planning, planting and growing food.

Residents agreed on installing a small orchard (nine trees based on measuring things out), two edible hedges, and two herb beds with perennial planting around the Holly trees at either side of the entrance into the biodiversity area, as illustrated in the map below. As planting for the orchard and edible hedges can only be done in Autumn, the residents first will focus on organising raised beds, including deciding the herbs to fill the beds, and work on perennial planting around the holly trees. The team decided to place two herb beds on either side of the perennial planting, locating them close to the entrance to encourage people to use them more often. This also provides a more obvious entrance to the biodiversity area.

Smaller rootstock varieties were picked for apple trees to avoid blocking any light into nearby gardens and to ensure that most residents can reach the fruit. To help with pollination of these apple trees, Lucy suggested planting pear and plum trees (two of each) and planting a crab apple tree in the back corner, near the leaf cage. Lucy noted it is important to decide between spur-producing varieties or tip-bearers, as pruning tip-bearers

at the wrong time results in the removal of fruit buds. Mowed paths around the orchard were suggested to encourage people to walk around, helping to create a meadow.



A small edible hedge at the apex of the area and a larger edible hedge running along the wall closest to the entrance/exit to the estate were planned. Residents will discuss which varieties of edible hedges they want planted among themselves and create a 'wishlist' -- up to 60 plants can fit within the three hedges in the planned metre of growing space!

Lucy will hold an 'Information Day' supported by Our Shared Plate to demonstrate to the residents how to prune the fruit trees correctly and maintain all other elements in the growing space later in the year.



**supporting neighbourhoods  
to grow, cook and eat together.**