



# Annual Report 2017

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## **Introduction**

Established in 1997, VOICE is a registered charity supported by public membership, donations and bequests.

## **Patrons**

Darina Allen  
Pauline Bewick  
Don Conroy  
Christy Moore  
John Feehan  
Brendan Kennelly  
Sr. Mary Minehan

## **Directors**

Dr. Ruth McGrath (Chair)  
Gay Brabazon  
Gary Clare  
Ken Kilbride  
Michael O'Dwyer

## **Vision:**

Promoting the wise use of natural resources for a sustainable future.

## **Mission Statement**

VOICE promotes a respectful relationship with the Earth by encouraging a way of life in harmony with nature rather than in conflict with it.

## **Objectives**

VOICE strives to achieve this mission by:

- Informing the public on environmental policy/issues
- Empowering individuals and local communities to become environmentally active to protect Ireland's resources.
- Advocating on behalf of our members to influence policy and practice with government and other stakeholders.

## **An Overview of 2017**

VOICE's work on waste expanded dramatically this year. Over the past few years, we have been working extensively on food waste reduction through public engagement and public awareness events. While we have continued our food waste campaign through several Food Rescue events, food waste in business talks and the development of our food waste home economics pack, we launched Zero Waste Cashel, the Recycling Ambassador Programme, and was key in the development of the Conscious Cup Campaign and numerous events during National Reuse Month in Dublin and Cashel.

We have also had impact on public policy as our Coordinator testified before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Budget and before the Oireachtas Committee reviewing Irish Water as a representative of the Public Water Forum and has been involved in promoting the Waste Reduction bill.

Our work in the water arena has been mostly limited to the Coordinator as vice-chair of SWAN and VOICE's membership of SWAN. However, water continues to be a hot topic, both in the development of the River Basin Management Plans and identifying Significant Water Management Issues. Irish Water continues to be controversial and VOICE has been an active member of the Public Water Forum and the National Water Forum.

### **Staffing:**

**Mindy O'Brien**, Coordinator, VOICE

**Azarah Minihan**, part-time bookkeeper

**Claudia Tormey**, part-time social media guru and project manager to organise our food rescue and food waste home economic module pilot.

**Derry O'Donnell**, part-time project manager of Zero Waste Cashel.

Recycling Ambassador Team who includes:

**Suzie Cahn**, Project Manager

**Aoife Brittan**, Liaison Officer, Connacht Ulster Region

**Tad Kirakowski**, Liaison Officer, Southern Region

**Michele Hallahan**, Liaison Officer, Eastern Midlands Region

In addition, we have identified around 30 recycling ambassadors around the country to run workshops. They are paid on a per workshop basis as independent contractors.

Our volunteers for the year include:

Niamh Madden: Newsletter  
Jonathan Forsythe: Accounts

### **Governance:**

We are in compliance with the governance code, have registered as lobbyists and have registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority. All our filings are up to date.

### **Funding:**

#### Irish Environmental Network/Environmental Pillar:

VOICE received funding from the IEN in various forms:

Core funding	€15,400
Meetings attended in 2017	€1,475
Budget working group	€2,000
Greening the Budget wg (2016 work)	€1,750
Policy Submissions 2016	€340
Capacity Grant for RAP	€10,000
<b>Total Received in 2017:</b>	<b>€30,965</b>

#### Local Agenda 21:

We received €4,750 for Food Waste Home Economics initiative for 2016/2017.

#### Membership:

Our membership numbers continue to reduce slightly each year. However, we received €8,048 from our members.

Donations:

We received €1,050 in donations.

Corporate Donation:

We received €25,000 from Repak to run our recycling coaches programme in 2018. This is the first tranche of a total of €50,000

Reuse Month in Dublin and Cashell:

We received €4,065 from Dublin and €1,300 from Limerick County Councils for this month-long initiative.

Recycling Ambassador Programme:

We received our first tranche of €100,000.

Total Funding Received in 2017:

Source	Amount (€)
IEN/Pillar	32,690
LA21	1,820
Membership	8,048
Donations	1,050
Sales and Services	1,456
Corporate	25,000
Reuse Month	5,365
Recycling Ambassadors	100,000
Conscious Cup Campaign	2,000
Total funding for 2017	177,429



**Campaigns:**

**Food Waste:**

I met with Aoibheann O’Brien from Food Cloud to work together as much as possible to create a joined-up approach to reducing food waste. They agreed to provide food for our events as it was becoming more difficult for us to source food. Many shops we were approaching contracted to give their surplus food to Food Cloud. This is a win/win situation. We have sourced food from them for three of the events thus far.

**Food Rescue:**

We organised three food rescue events and facilitated one other that was organised by someone else.

Dublin: Working with Trinity College Dublin Environmental Society student group and the catering staff, we organised a FR event in the dining hall. We had a meal and a world café style event with Food Cloud and We Share Dublin also attending. There were about 150-200 students who ate with us.

We also worked in conjunction with the Five Lamps Festival at the beginning of April where we held an event where we cooked Moroccan cous cous with food donated by Food Cloud. We had a glut of short-dated food to give away and a cook off between two chefs who made lovely dishes from surplus food. We screened ‘Just

Eat it', a film about food waste and a skill offered/needed exchange table. About 100 people attended the event.

Clare: We worked closely with the Slow Food people in the Burren and held an event during their festival. We had a cooking demonstration and food waste talk. Unfortunately, this event was very sparsely attended although the contact person there was very good.

Cork: An individual organised an event as a fundraiser for her school. We helped source the food from Food Cloud and they had a very successful event. This was the second time that our event was organised by a third party.

### **Food Waste Home Economics Module:**

We received LA21 grants from Dublin, Fingal, Kildare and Wicklow to develop and run a food waste module within the home ec course. We have spoken with various schools and hope to run these pilots in the new year.

### **Food Waste workshops in businesses:**

We have received funding from the Southern Region to conduct food waste workshops in 10 businesses in the Southern Region. We have developed the programme and have run four workshops to date.

### **Waste:**

#### **Zero Waste:**

We hired Derry O'Donnell as our project manager, and he will work 25 hours/week. The project was launched in March and was well attended by local community leaders, counsellors and government representatives. We were interviewed on several local radio stations and featured in the local papers. The Irish Times also mentioned us and had a photo of us on their on-line version. Derry has been meeting with local groups and EPA and attended the Zero Waste Europe AGM in April where he received training and a huge amount of information from other zero waste communities. VOICE is now a member of Zero Waste Europe. Derry and his kids wore bags of rubbish and marched in the Cashel St. Patrick's Day parade. We also sponsored the best entry that used recycled material.

At the end of April, we had a facilitator come in to hold two focus groups for local officials, businesses and residents to discuss what zero waste is, what types of waste is troublesome and what type of initiatives they would like to see in Cashel. We had around 20 people in the first session and 8 in the second session. We found the session extremely useful and have received a report with recommendations.

Derry O'Donnell has been active in conducting an extensive public awareness campaign. He is involved in the development of a new playground with other community leaders. What's special about this playground is that they are trying to use recycled materials and used equipment to deck it out.

We have conducted around 15 business waste audits through EPA's Green Business initiative and were involved in a Green Business seminar in Cashel and Thurles in October. Derry has been networking with all the community groups and scheduled eight activities during National Reuse Month (October).

We have met with local waste companies and secured baseline data to measure our progress. We are working closely with the Southern Waste Region and EPA and they sit on our steering committee. We have held four steering committee meetings. Thus far we have met our targets but have some work to do to achieve our goal of reducing residual waste by 25%.

We have developed our work plan and targets and will now go into the community (both businesses and residential neighbourhoods) to provide training and education (and motivation). We will also receive the results of a waste characterisation report in the new year to understand the amount and type of waste generated in Cashel, in comparison to the rest of the country.

Social Media has been active both on twitter and facebook and he has been on local TV and radio promoting the initiative. He has also met with county counsellors and has made presentations before council meetings. Overall, we have received good media coverage thus far.

### **Conscious Cup Campaign:**

A few individuals from the Zero Waste Ireland Facebook group along with VOICE met together to start a campaign to reduce the amount of disposable coffee cups. We are urging coffee shops to offer a discount for people who bring in their own cup. We have met several times and VOICE secured a €2,000 grant from the Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Office to finance these efforts.

We have since worked with the three waste regions and secured €30,000+ to hire a part-time coordinator starting in January 2018. The campaign featured heavily during Black Friday in November where volunteers handed out free conscious cups at Wolfe Tone Square. We secured funding from Dublin City Council to purchase 1,800 KeepCups.

### **Recycling Ambassador Programme:**

We have received a commitment from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to fund our 16-month (until the end of 2018) ambassador programme. The annual cost is just over €300,000. We have received our first two

tranches of €50,000 in 2017. We will receive €50,000 every other month to run the programme. Since approval in mid-July, we have:

- Advertised and hired a team of four people.
  - Suzie Cahn, full time project manager
  - Michele Hallahan, part-time Eastern Midlands Liaison Officer
  - Tad Kirakowski, part-time Southern Liaison Officer
  - Aoife Britton, part-time Connacht Ulster Liaison Officer
- Identified and trained 30 ambassadors
- Designed and printed promotional items
- Designed a RAP website page
- Created a budget and workplan
- Contracted with Salesforce to develop a CRM system to maintain our survey results (plan to reach over 15,000 people)
- Secured €50,000 from REPAK for our Recycling Coaches programme
- Launched the initiative on the 29th November with Minister Naughten.

To date, we have conducted around 100 workshops up to the end of 2017 and reached around 1,500 people and collected an equal amount of surveys. We have had extensive media around this initiative both nationally, regionally and locally. This is part of a larger national recycling campaign, [www.recyclinglistireland.ie](http://www.recyclinglistireland.ie).

### **Reuse Month:**

We received funding from the Southern and Eastern Midlands Regions to support several initiatives both in Cashel and Dublin. In Dublin, we collaborated with other organisations and individuals to set up a Library of Things, Repair Café (Fix Jam), Clothes Swap and T-shirt to bag workshops at the Dublin Food Coop.

In Cashel, we worked with community groups to host recycled art workshops, bicycle repair, upcycling furniture, fashion show, tool and toy swaps, second-hand baby clothes event and a cooking demonstration.

### **Waste Reduction Bill:**

The Green Party has submitted a bill to ban single-use non-compostable items and establish a deposit/refund scheme for closed drinks containers. We are helping with the drafting of the bill and its promotion. We participated in the plastic demonstration with Friends of the Earth before the Dail when the bill was introduced. We are working to get tidy town group support and in the process of bringing on a volunteer to support.

***Waste Prevention Advisory Committee:***

Mindy O'Brien is the environmental representative on this committee. Thus far this committee receives information from the government on the successful measures and actions taken on waste prevention. We suggested that more be done to tap into the expertise of the committee in terms of policy proposals. This is in the works at the moment and Mindy sits on the steering committee.

**Water:**

***Irish Water Stakeholders Forum/Public Water Forum:***

VOICE was a vocal participant in the Stakeholder's Forum, which has representatives from all sectors. We were there as a SWAN member. The forum is fairly toothless and just ticks the public participation box. We have stepped off this Forum and now sit on the statutorily established Public Water Forum to review and make recommendations on the functions of Irish Water. We have meetings nearly every 6 weeks. We have also met with Irish Water on the proposed water extraction from the Shannon River and with the Expert Commission that investigated the pricing structure of Irish Water. Our Coordinator made a presentation with the PWF before the Expert Commission.

The government has since established a new forum, the National Water Forum, which oversees all water issues. This group will subsume the Public Water Forum and be the main public forum on water and water issues. Mindy sits on this forum along with other environmental groups.

Our coordinator is on SWAN's Fracking Subcommittee and had a day long workshop. SWAN's fracking report is complete and was presented to the government. It was used as an expert reference during the Dail debate on the fracking ban bill which passed the Dail in 2017.

We also participated and our coordinator spoke at the Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) workshop at Farmleigh House, which was organised by the Department and EPA. We also attended EPA's Water Conference in Galway.

Our coordinator continues to be quite active with SWAN and sits as the Vice Chair.

## **Meetings:**

- We have joined Zero Waste Europe and Derry attended their AGM and a later campaigning workshop
- We are on the government's circular economy working group and the waste prevention advisory council and are feeding into the government's submission to the EU on the package.
- Our coordinator continues to meet with the three Regional Waste Prevention Officers and with Community Reuse Network Coordinator on waste issues, including RAP, Zero Waste Cashel, food waste and the Conscious Cup Campaign.
- Our coordinator attended the National Economic Dialogue forum as a member of the Pillar.
- Our coordinator attended the National Waste Prevention Committee as a Pillar representative.
- We have attended SWAN's board, plenary meetings and AGM.
- attended Public Water Forum and National Water Forum meetings as well as a meeting with Irish Water.
- Attended and participated in the Sustainable Communities Workshop with SEAI
- Attended Ploughing Championship to promote RAP.
- Met with industry re: waste reduction bill and recycling

## **Conferences, government meetings:**

Mindy O'Brien attended the Water Conference in Galway. She met Minister Naughten, at the National Economic Dialogue and with Minister Naughten in an IEN meeting. We also met with EPA with the IEN.

She attended the Forum on Food Waste, participated in NESC Circular Economy workshop and the Circular Economy Report launch.

## **Environmental Pillar:**

Mindy has stepped off the Pillar Steering committee, but continues to be active in the Pillar. She heads up the Greening the Budget working group and as such attended meetings with Eamon Ryan, Fianna Fail staff, Department of Finance staff and Budget Committee staff. She wrote the Environmental Pillar's budget submission and testified before the Oireachtas Committee on the EP proposals.

## **Irish Environmental Network:**

Our Coordinator is on the board of the IEN and has attended the funding meeting with Minister Naughten. She is active in the internal issues of the IEN and attends the board meetings.

## **Social Media, Newsletters, Website and Messaging:**

We have posted 24 blogs, sent out over 20 call to action emails, sent out 2 e-newsletters and sent out our Summer and Winter 2017 paper newsletters. We are active on Twitter and Facebook and have increased our followers from 2,245 to 2,886 and 1,687 followers on Facebook. We also have a YouTube channel, which has just become a bit more active with our RAP initiative and an Instagram account. Our website is currently undergoing a full facelift.

We also have Facebook and Twitter accounts for Zero Waste Cashel with 569 followers on Facebook and 440 followers on Twitter. Zero Waste Cashel also has a website, [www.zerowastecashel.org](http://www.zerowastecashel.org) and an e-zine sent out every few months.

Our RAP initiative has a Facebook account with 252 followers and our website page is [www.voiceireland.org/rap](http://www.voiceireland.org/rap)

Conscious Cup Campaign has an active facebook page with around 1,000 followers and a twitter account which has 880 followers. The website is [www.consciouscup.ie](http://www.consciouscup.ie).

We have shared news and other actions from other environmental organisations through our mailchimp and email accounts.

We have hired Claudia Tormey to handle our social media and communications and we are currently working on a full strategic communications plan to ensure that we bring all our various campaigns under one VOICE umbrella.

## **Press and Media:**

Our Coordinator interviewed with the following media outlets over the year with approximately 25 interviews:

Newstalk Radio: Ten times on such topics as food waste, home economics, waste and recycling

RTE Morning Ireland

Near Fm

Flirt FM (Galway)

Kfm (Kildare)

Kerry Radio

Shannonside

Liffey FM

Tipp FM

Tipp Midwest FM

Primetime

Irish Times (feature on our Zero Waste Cashel initiative)

Our Zero Waste Cashel Project Manager has been a regular feature on local radio and papers.

Conscious Cup Campaign has been on Q102 and featured on other stations.

RAP has featured in local papers and radio stations where there are workshops being held.

### **Training:**

- One of our staff attended a training session on the new EU data protection requirements. Our administrator attended training with SAGE with accounting software.
- Both the Coordinator and Zero Waste Cashel(ZWC) Project Manager attended a Zero Waste Facilitator course.
- Our ZWC project manager attended training in Spain with Zero Waste Europe and has attended several courses in Cloughjordan.
- The RAP team had Salesforce training to understand how to use the system for RAP surveys, data entry and report generation.
- We provided training for our recycling ambassadors and worked with Philip Smythe from Cool Planet to run the workshops. We held full day training sessions in Dublin, Cork and Carrick-on-Shannon

## **Talks/Presentations:**

Our Coordinator gave several talks to groups on waste prevention and recycling. Those include: the Howth Peninsula Women's Group, Zero Waste Festival, We Share Meeting, Fumbally Stables and Citibank. She also gave talks on Zero Waste Cashel at a CloughJordan event.

VOICE presented about food waste at the Dublin and Cork offices of Bord Gais, Energia, BNY Mellon, Optel, Abbot Labs and Axa Insurance.

The PM of Zero Waste Cashel gave presentations at a Local Authority Prevention Network along with our Recycling Ambassador Southern Region Liaison Officer about the RAP initiative and Coordinator about the business food waste project. Our Cashel PM also presented at several Green Business workshops and other workshops around Cashel and Tipperary.

Our Recycling Ambassadors presented over 100 workshops throughout the country in 2 ½ months and our RAP Project Manager presented before the EAO Network and has been networking extensively. RAP has also been featured in many Public Participation Network meeting with presentations from our Ambassadors, liaison officers and Project manager.