

Siul Eile

Walking with Friends

STEP IN. SURPRISE YOURSELF.



Impact Report





SUMMARY OF TOPICS

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INTRODUCTION BY LIAM FLEMING

At Siul Eile, our vision is to build connected and active communities with improved health and wellbeing outcomes. Our mission is in bringing communities together through walking programs to live quality healthy lives, socialise together and combat isolation.

Since its foundation after participating in a Social Impact Ireland incubator program in 2016, almost 6,000 people have taken part in our walking programs, predominantly in Co. Tipperary.

The support of Social Impact Ireland as well as Tipperary County Council, Tipperary Sports Partnership, Rethink Ireland have been instrumental in Siul Eile getting to this stage. This is backed up by an army of committed volunteers providing a variety of free weekly walks in their communities. Surveys have revealed participating in Siul Eile has significant positive impacts on health and wellbeing.



Reconnecting people with each other and with their locality



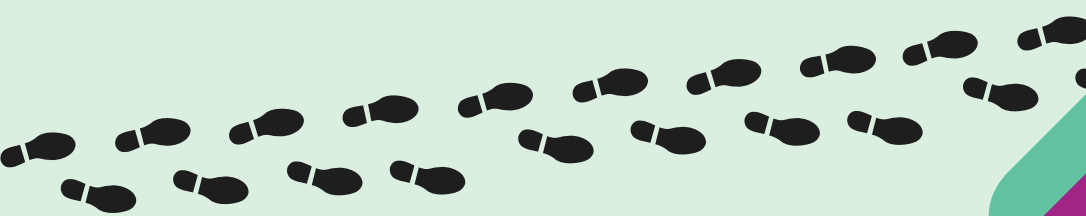
SIUL EILE



ABOUT SIUL EILE

WHO WE ARE

Siul Eile is a social enterprise helping communities come together to form walking programs and challenges using the under-utilised local environment in their own community and to develop a sustainable walking culture in their community.




OUR STORY

Modern day rural Ireland has become so fast paced in the last couple of decades that we are fast losing touch with each other. We were once a country that was famous for its “cead mile failte”, nowadays we barely have time for a quick “hi” to each other. In the present-day Information age we are more likely to be aware of what is happening thousands of miles away in a foreign country, than what is happening two miles down the road from us.


There is also history and natural beauty all around us in our communities that is being overlooked for the modern day fascination of the next “big story” that is consumed and forgotten in days as it is replaced by the next story and so on it continues as we live our lives by slowly but surely disconnecting ourselves from the people and environment that is all around us.





SIUL EILE BELIEVES THAT IT IS TIME TO STOP AND TAKE STOCK OF WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO US AND BELIEVES IT IS TIME TO RECONNECT WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.

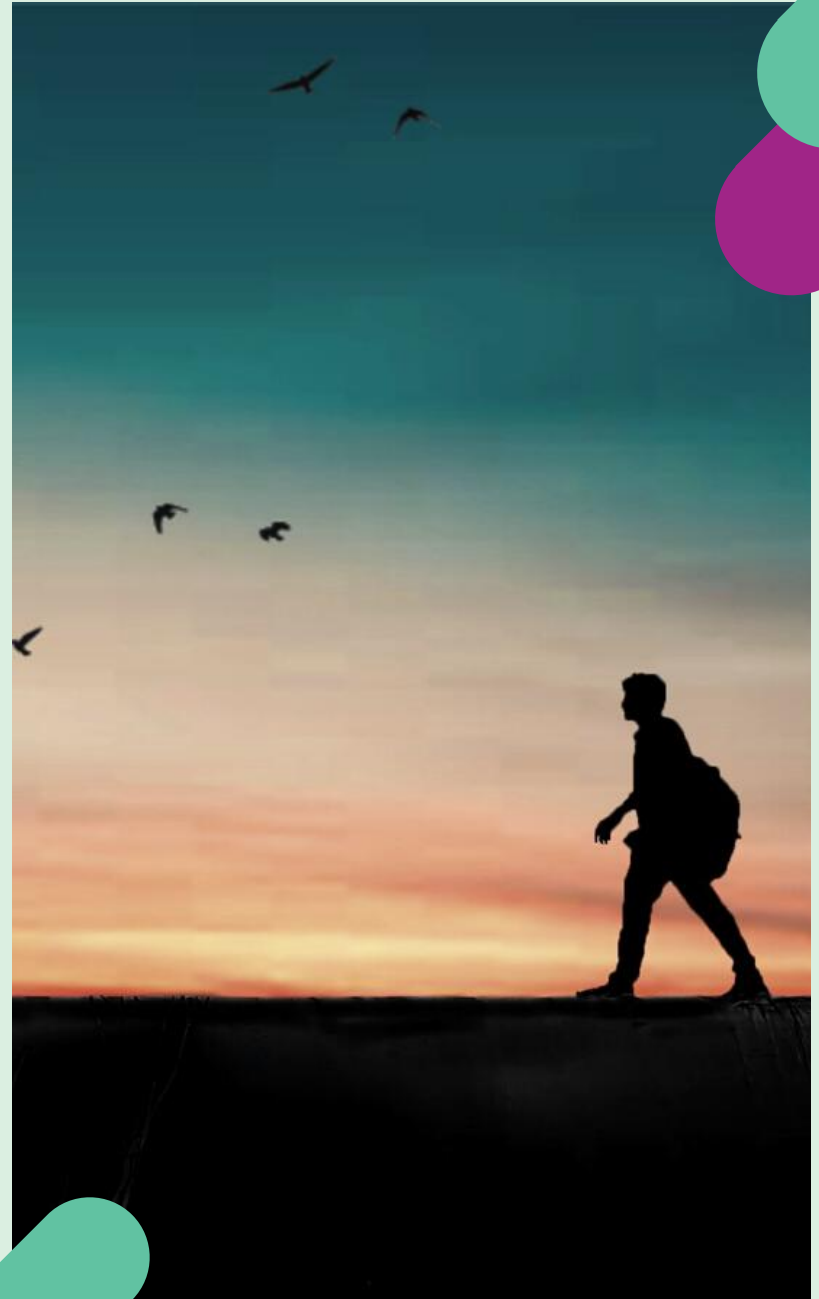
We aim to bring life back to communities by energising their people and appreciating the local history and natural beauty that is part of our local community and by extension part of each one of us.



We do this by building a network of local communities where each community has bespoke walking programs unique to their locality where unconnected neighbours can meet to share and enjoy their local environment.

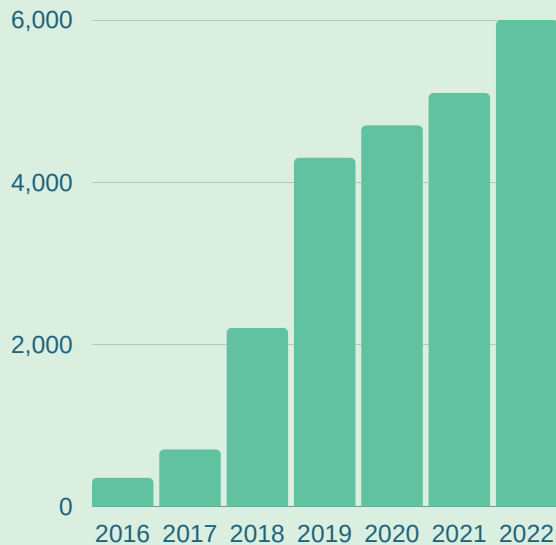
WHAT WE DO

Siul Eile is designed for local communities to live quality healthy lives, socialise together and to combat rural isolation – delivered by the support of over 100 volunteers determined to create a walking culture in their community. Not only do we foster walking within the community but we also connect between communities through cross community guided treks, challenges and support events.

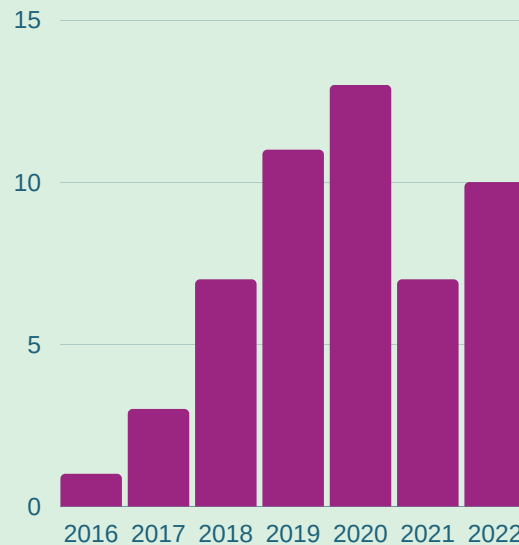


COMMUNITY WALKS

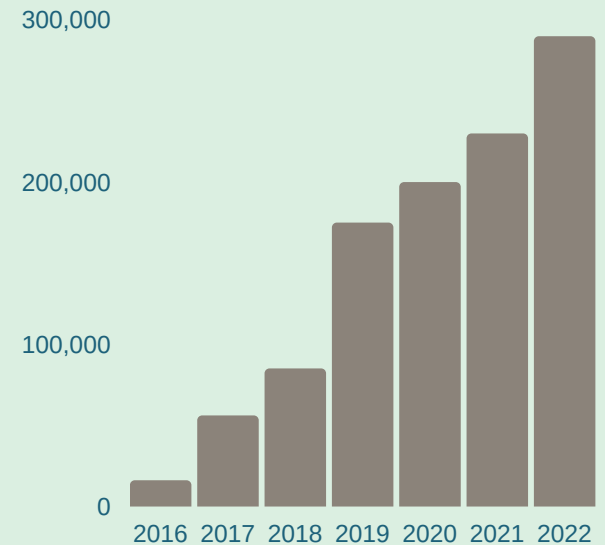
Working with local volunteers we develop a bespoke community walking programme unique to each community. Siul Eile is now active in 13 communities in Mid and North Munster.



Active Individuals



Active Communities



Total KMs walked

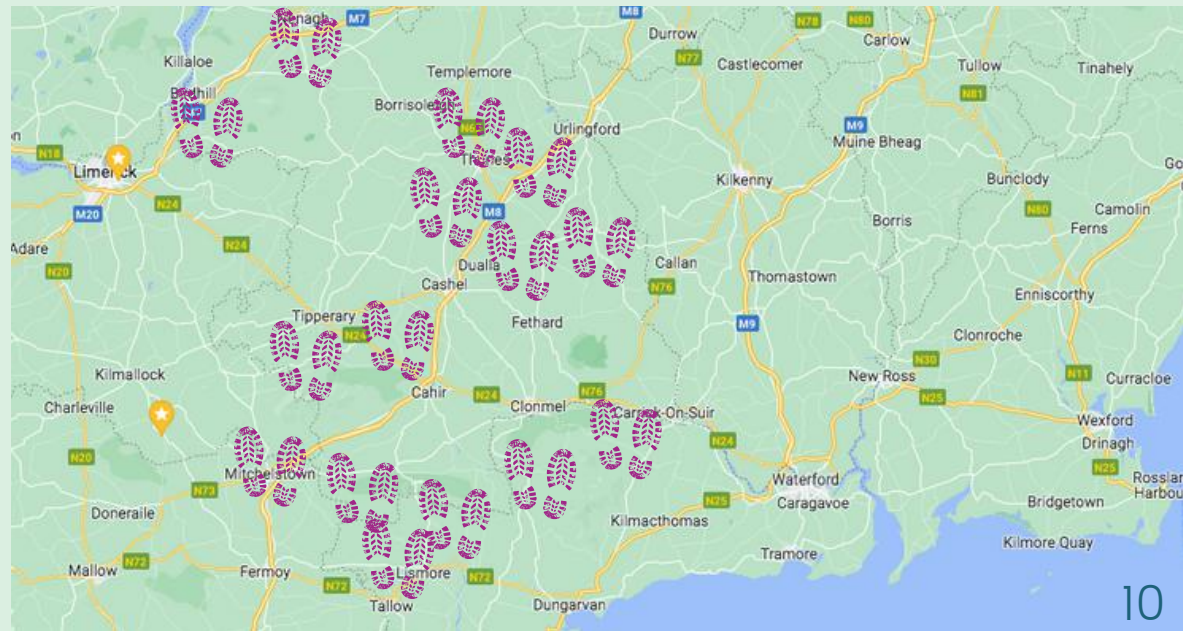
COMMUNITY PROFILE

In engaging with a community Siul Eile, working with potential leaders develops a bespoke programme unique to that community over an initial eight week period. Within that period we provide structure and safety guidance along with a simple online infrastructure to support the local programme post the set up.

The importance of volunteer commitment and variety of walks have been crucial learning for the development of Siul Eile where we have now grown a large community network across Tipperary and into neighbouring counties.

Siul Eile
Communities 2022

- Nenagh
- Ballina / Arra
- Inch
- Moyne
- Thurles
- Slieveardagh
- M-B-L
- Cashel
- Tipperary
- Galtees
- Clogheen
- Ardfinnan
- Clonmel
- Carrick on Suir
- Liosmore



Siul Eile also regularly checks in with each community post set up to continue both support and further development as desired and driven by the local leaders. To show the enthusiasm and interest we will profile briefly two of our communities – Clogheen and Clonmel.



CLOGHEEN
Community



CLONMEL
Community

VOLUNTEER LED – LEADERS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Crucial to each Community are the leaders who support the Siul Eile initiative on a voluntary basis. So far Siul Eile has over 100 active leaders who give of their time to their community supported by us.

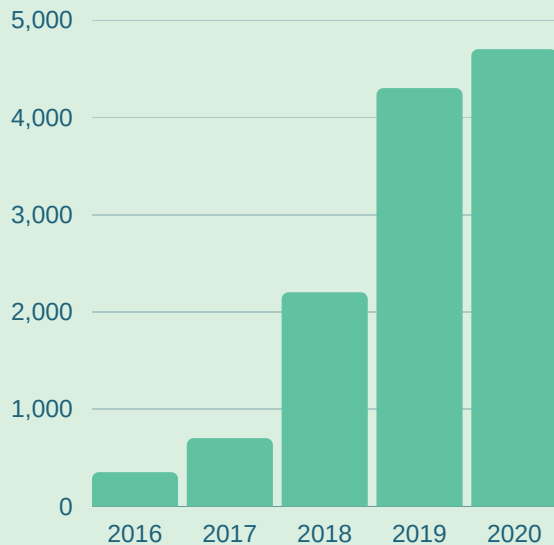
The key to our success is our connection and sustained interaction with our local leaders – we succeed through their commitment and sense of fun from their work.

We provide structure and support but never lose sight that it is personal enjoyment and fun that sustains and build community spirit – the magic our leaders bring!

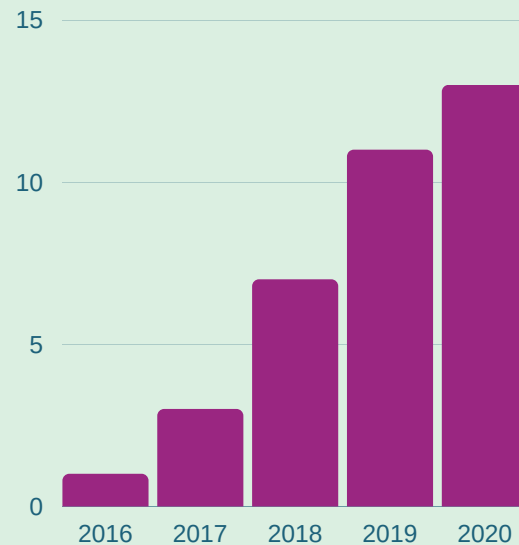


VOLUNTEER LED – LEADERS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Our typical Community has around 40 events within their environment catering for all demographics. This activity is supported through our core volunteers who contribute annually over 1000 hours of their time to their communities.



Active Individuals



Active Communities

ACTIVE, FUN AND ENGAGED

Sustaining community engagement comes from a sense of enjoyment and fun in engaging. A cornerstone of our approach is INCLUSIVITY – participation by all in a way that works for them. To assist with this we provide an ever expanding array of events matched to an array of levels to allow maximum participation.

Our ‘On the Clock’ event as an example is an out and back walk where people walk at different paces that suit them but where all finish together where they started at the same time – letting each person fit to a pace that works for them but still feel part of their collective community.

Key to a sustained community is a variety of walks so this set-up piece of developing the right mix of walks, physical demand and variety is key. While most communities have possibilities, we tend to concentrate on those with under-utilised diverse local environments. This has led to our primary focus on communities aligned to the national Way-Marked Trails.

SIUL EILE WALKING PROGRAMS (LEVELS)

- Walk In The Park (1)
- HowsSheCuttin (2)
- Walking Through The Years (2)
- Community Walks (2)
- Ambling & Rambling (4)
- Step It Up (2,3,4)
- Couch 2 Mountain Top (2,3,4,5)
- Community Hall Crawl (2,3,4,5)
- Transformation Walks (2)
- On The Clock (2,4)
- Walk On The Wild Side (2)
- Siul Eile As Gaeilge (2)
- Night Time Graveyard Tour (2)
- Trails 2 Mountain Top (3,4)
- Walking For Health (1)
- Young At Heart (1)

1

Gentle – Short easy walks, gentle pace
(2-5km)

2

Easy – walk at your own pace
(4-7km)

3

Progressive – the weekly walks will get longer and/or higher

4

Moderate – walks require moderate walking experience and fitness

5

Challenge – programme builds to a challenge/celebration walk climax

OUR EVENTS – CONNECTING BEYOND THE COMMUNITY

Not only do we want to connect within communities but also across communities. Prior to Covid we began initiating a series of events or challenges for people looking to explore further. We also saw this as a way of drawing in people beyond the core communities to help experience the benefits of walking within our environments.


We focus on initiatives that open up further that environment and add rather than compete with other walking initiatives.

Our focus up till now was learning who would be interested and what would be attractive to them. Our Events would focus on challenges physically a little beyond the community walk, typically in the 15km range. This work was impacted hugely by Covid but as we emerge from that we are re-activating this and developing it very much aligned to access to the Way-Marked Trails within Munster.

OUR PARTICIPANTS

- What do they think
- Who participates and why
- Which walks best suit them





Our focus is on our participants – So what do they think?
From our 2021/22 Survey, over 90% respond that they :



Have improved fitness and/or physical health benefits since walking with Siul Eile

That their mental health benefitted from walking with Siul Eile

Feel an increased sense of personal achievement from walking with Siul Eile



Testimonials


"Like the community spirit, getting to know new people, getting to go on walks with the safety of having others with you, like getting out and getting fresh air and exercise."

"I love meeting new people and seeing new scenery. I enjoy the variety of offerings. I enjoy that someone else organises the walks."

"Safety of walking in numbers."

"The physical exercise and the outdoors, the benefits to my physical and mental well-being."

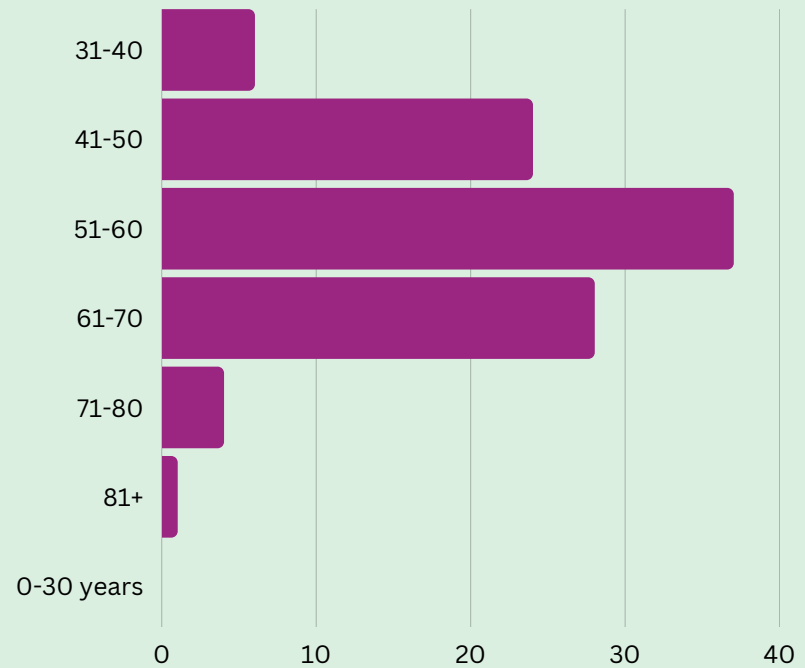
"Enjoy the organised walks that are challenging, and of course there is no getting lost. The social aspect is an additional bonus. Great encouragement from leaders and sweepers."



AGE GROUP

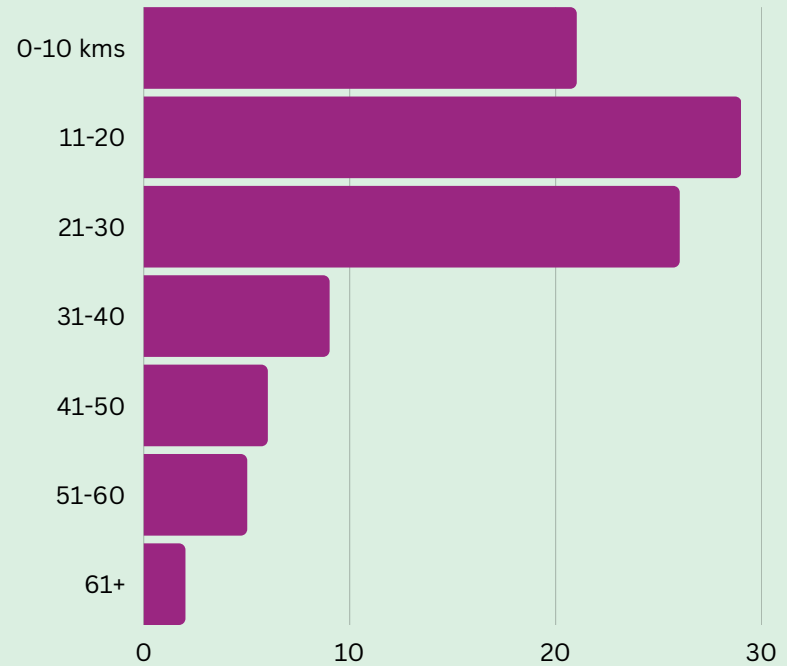
In our survey we also looked at who participates and why. Just over 80% of our participants are female and with a wide age profile, particularly among people as they progress in life

2021/22 survey



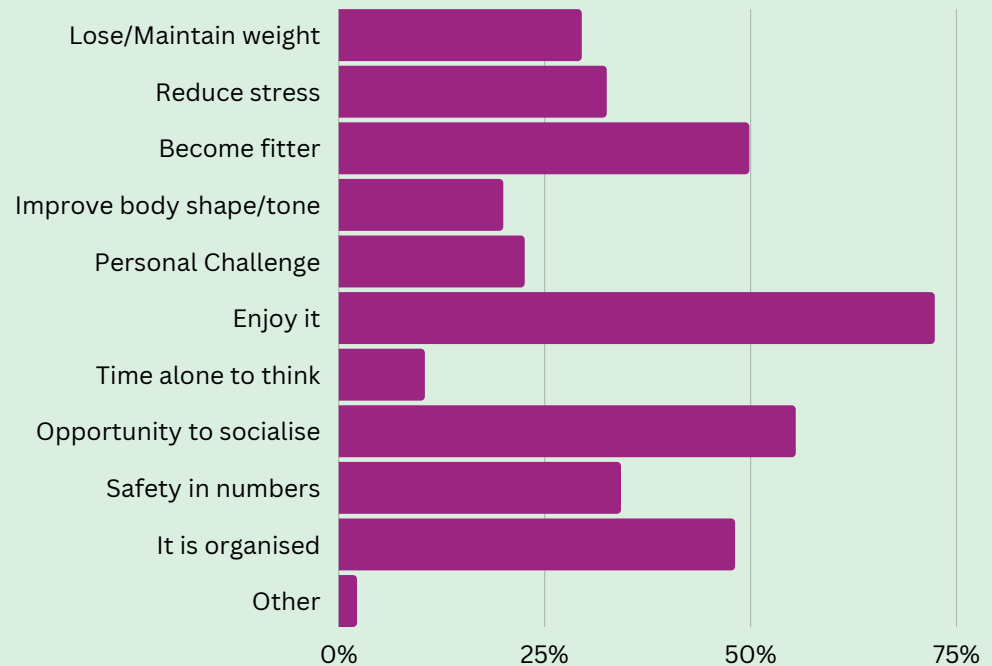
The inclusivity of the approach can be seen by the walking history of people before they engaged with Siul Eile. It varies from people who would have rarely walked to those that would be active walkers. This highlights also our belief that Siul Eile augments pre-existing walking organisations as it allows people to explore walking easily.

HOW MANY KMS WOULD YOU WALK IN AN AVERAGE WEEK?



We also looked at why people participate and the motivations align very closely with the purpose for which Siul Eile was started.

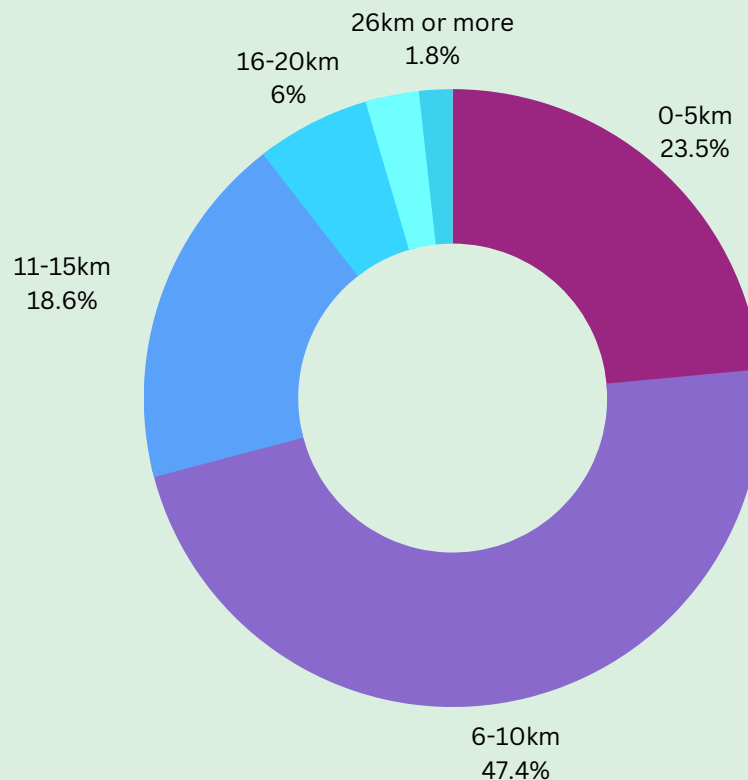
WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR WALKING WITH SIUL EILE?



What walks best suit their needs?

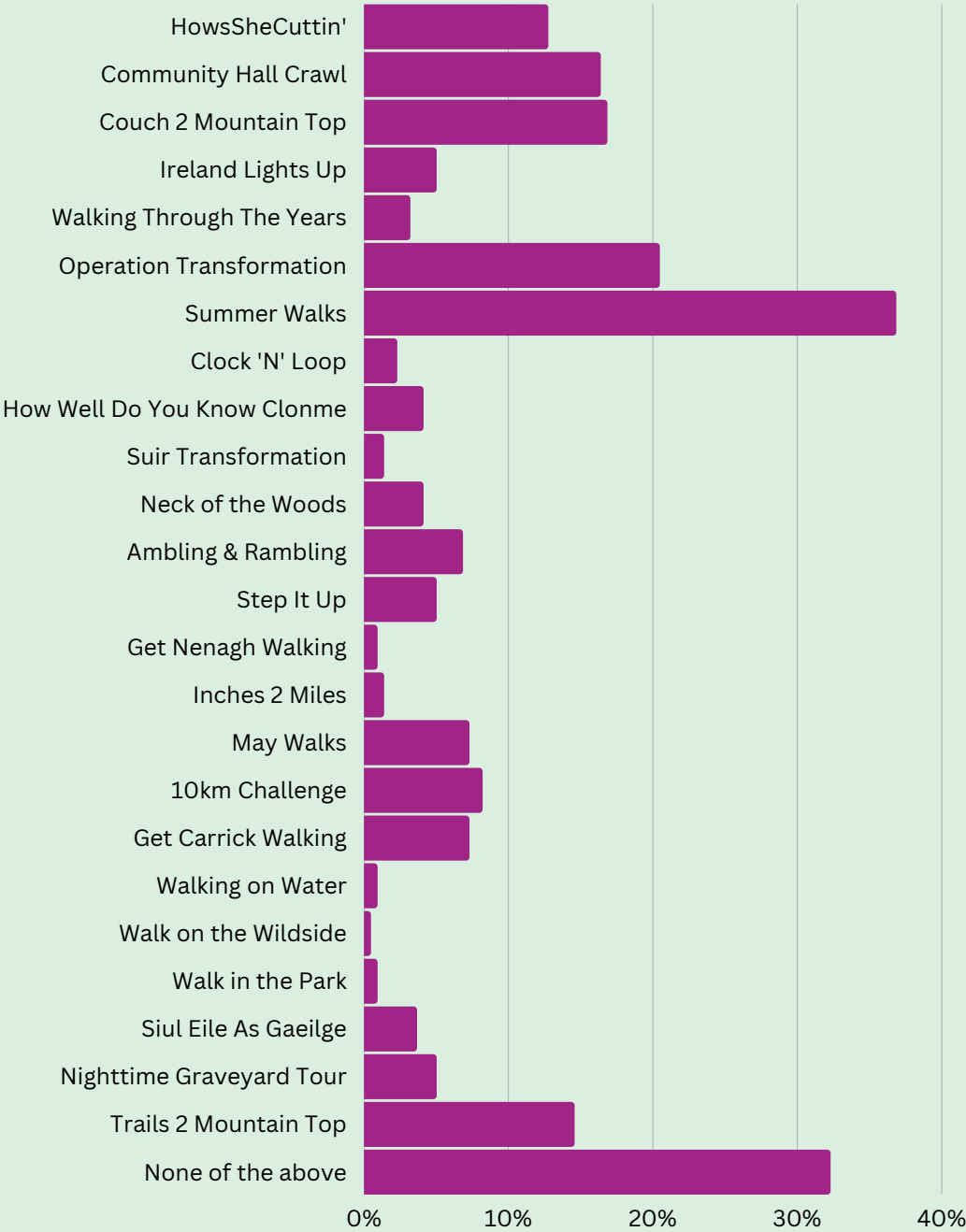
From our survey, most participants are very comfortable with 6-10km walks almost regardless of their prior walking experience. The variety in surfaces also has appeal as does the variety in available walks.

WHAT DISTANCE WALKS DO YOU ENJOY?



A key learning for us is that a vibrant walking community needs the combination of a small few motivated volunteers local to the area aligned to an environment that gives multiple options for different walks. Our community set-up approach is focused on developing this.

The appetite for our walks can be seen in this sample of the variety of participation across a wide range of events through 2021-2022 as Covid impact has declined.



Siul Eile

Walking with Friends

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SIUL EILE

WHY IT MATTERS AND
THE IMPACT IT HAS



BENEFITS TO THE INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

Much research exists about the health benefits of walking – benefits in physical wellbeing and mental wellness.

The benefits of walking are well-documented. A strong body of literature demonstrates its positive impacts on physical health. If engaged in at recommended levels (i.e., for a minimum duration of 30 min at a minimum frequency of 5 days/week and at a moderate intensity), walking can play a role in managing coronary heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, obesity, elevated cholesterol, osteoporosis, and osteoarthritis (see Lee and Buchner, 2008). In addition, it has been posed seriously as a potential means to prevent dementia [see Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics (US), 2004]. Furthermore, walking is relevant to addressing obesity by producing increases in caloric expenditure (Lee and Buchner, 2008).



BENEFITS TO THE INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

In raw numbers:

40 events per community per year – walking an average of 4.5km per event.

And that is only the formal events – one of the key feedbacks from our participants is the sense of restored confidence in walking within their community.

But it is not only physical well being but also mental wellbeing – Our surveys give almost unanimous endorsement of the mental wellbeing that people gain from participation



BUILDING COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

Walking a neighborhood route, though perhaps undertaken for physical activity, to clear one's mind, or for fresh air, brings about increasing encounters with neighbors (i.e., micro-exchanges), including with those who are either previously unknown or recognized from regular activities, but with whom one does not typically interact or communicate (Rogers et al., 2011). As a slowmoving activity that lets walkers “take in” their neighborhood as they walk through it, neighbors attend to what is going on in their surroundings, thereby creating opportunities for social interaction and the strengthening of neighborhood ties. At worst, when neighbors repeatedly subject themselves to and observe each other while walking their neighborhood, the minimal social contact involved (e.g., nodding or a simple “hello”) increases their public familiarity (Rietveld et al., 2019).



BUILDING COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

The shared daily path of a neighborhood walk makes neighbors more recognizable. Moreover, neighbors who see each other routinely become more visible, potentially transforming into familiar strangers or possibly even acquaintances or eventually friends, as time goes by. Connections thicken as interactions become more regular and frequent. What begins as “routinized relations” established during casual walks can turn into something more meaningful (Lofland, 2017). Lund (2002) found a strong association between the frequency of walking within neighborhoods and unplanned interactions with neighbors, which contributes to relationship formation and development.

‘Neighborhood Walking and Social Connectedness’, Troy D. Glover*, Joe Todd and Luke Moyer, The Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, Canada, 2022



BUILDING COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

Yes, our participants gain physically from engaging – Yes, our participants improve their mental wellbeing, sometimes in very impactful ways. But the uniqueness of Siul Eile is not doing this for the individual but in amplifying this across the community. Almost none of our local walks have occurred without one participant saying ‘I never stopped by here before’, pointing at the realisation of what lies unseen to them within their own neighbourhood. Equally it emboldens people to take ownership of their own place again, overcoming the disconnect that lack of familiarity and perceived potential personal safety concerns that would have inhibited as individuals. Ultimately Siul Eile strives to help locals amplify the social capital within their neighbourhood to the benefit of people within that neighbourhood.



Covid 19

Impact and Opportunity

A woman with long dark hair is wearing large black headphones and is focused on her work. She is sitting at a desk with a silver laptop open in front of her. Her right hand is holding a white pen and pointing at a tablet device. The background is slightly blurred, showing a bookshelf and some indoor plants. The entire image has a semi-transparent purple overlay. In the top right corner, there are two overlapping rounded rectangular shapes, one light green and one darker green. In the bottom left corner, there are two overlapping rounded rectangular shapes, one light green and one darker green.

Covid19 has significantly impact us through 2020 and 2021. It is only now in 2022 that we are fully recovering. Obviously meet-up restrictions stopped most of our work and led to a sharp decline in activity through 2020 and early 2021.

Through the sustained lock-down periods we saw a decline in active communities from 13 back to 7 but returning above 10 as normality returned largely this year. We also learned in that period that diversity in local groups was a key factor for sustainability with those nearer to naturally diverse local environments proving more robust. By the end of 2022 we will have restore and indeed exceeded our pre-covid levels.

GOING VIRTUAL FOR 2020-2021

In 2020-2021 we initiated a range of 'virtual events' to help sustain people with their positive habits developed with Siul Eile. We created set of monthly 'challenges' for individuals to try, while not reproducing the impact of Siul Eile still maintained a sense of companionship through a difficult time, a time that in ways showed even more the importance of what we do. Check out some of our virtual challenges here –

100k in May



Get high in July



Marching in March



PROACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL USE

Siul Eile actively pursues the utilisation of our local environment in a sustainable way. All events operate under the 'Leave No Trace' principle and awareness of sustainable use of our local environment is built into the Siul Eile approach.



Plan Ahead and Prepare



Be Considerate of Others



Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife



Travel and Camp on Durable Ground




Leave What You Find



Dispose of Waste Properly



Minimise the Effects of Fire



Our desire in our activities is to minimise our environmental impact while expanding awareness and understanding of how to interact with that environment.

Our Community Walking programme is of its nature a low carbon footprint activity. Within our events we mitigate the travelling carbon footprint to events by bulk transporting people within that event, minimising multiple car trips and enhancing the potential for social interaction.

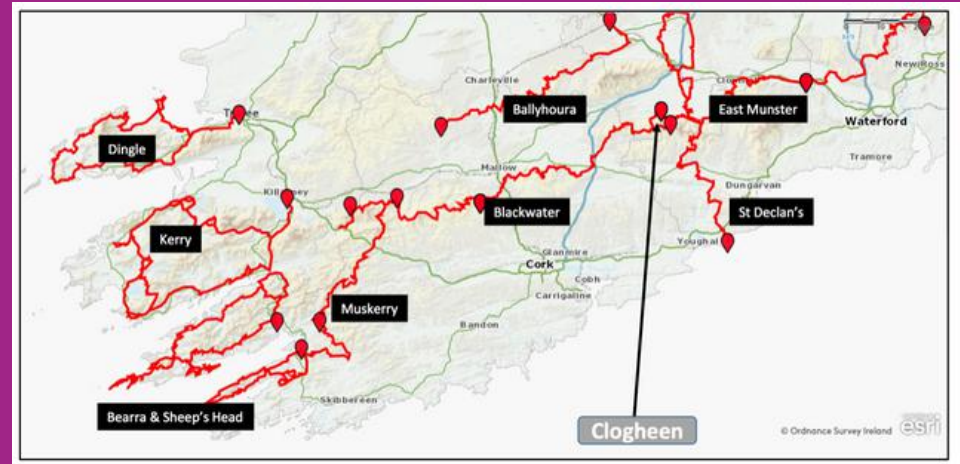
Our real impact on the environment is a positive one, one based on assisting in both awareness and sense of value people have of their locality while also making them confident in operating within it.

Unquantified but a constant theme in our surveys is that sense people get of opening their own local environment up to them in a way that they feel safe.

THE FUTURE WE ARE BUILDING WITH OUR PARTICIPANT COMMUNITIES

Siul Eile was initiated in the Clogheen community. Clogheen Community lies at the junction of three key Trail Walking ways – East Munster, Tipperary Heritage Way and Blackwater (Avondhue) way. In common with many of the marked ways in Ireland they are largely underused and offered an ideal setting for Siul Eile.

Siul Eile very much aligns with OPW and Coillte's intent to develop these ways in a more proactive way and foresees the potential should East Munster, Blackwater, Ballyhoura, Bearra, Kerry and Slive Felim Ways become a connected trail network across Munster.



While Siul Eile supports any community who shares its values and goals, we are actively seeking to connect communities along these marked ways. This focus arises from the underutilised assets within the communities but also has the potential to add economically to these communities adding further to their resilience.

BUILDING OUR FUTURE

The next phase of Siul Eile is to continue to spread our impact beyond the Tipperary borders.

While the majority of our walks take place in Tipperary, through our Trail Walking Series and indeed the hugely successful Rhododendron Walking Festival (a spin off of the first Siul Eile group) we have welcomed thousands from outside Tipperary to take part in our walking events.

The Trail Walking Series allows the Siul Eile groups already set up to mingle in these cross community walks of generally 10-25kms with visitors from outside the area and indeed international visitors also. Everything is laid on for the walking visitors with guides, stewards, first aid, transport, catering all included as the trail walking series goes from community to community along established but under utilised National Way Marked Trails in stages giving a real glimpse of hidden Ireland. To date we have completed the East Munster Way (a number of times), Tipperary Heritage Way and Avondhu Way. Plenty more are in the pipeline as we continue to unveil these hidden gems of walks as well as the communities connected to them.

It is the Trail Walking Series that allows us to continue to our vision and mission of building connected and active communities to live quality healthy lives, socialise together and combat isolation.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MARK



Siul Eile has received the Social Enterprise Mark.

The Social Enterprise Mark is externally assessed and internationally recognised, and provides an independent guarantee that an organisation has met sector-agreed criteria and is operating as a genuine social enterprise, committed to creating positive social change.

Attending the Awards Event in the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin, Siul Eile was one of the first Social Enterprises in Ireland to receive the Social Enterprise Mark.



OUR SUPPORTERS



OUR PLANS FOR 2022-2023

2022 is a year of post Covid recovery. By year end we expect to have exceeded again our pre-covid community and participant numbers. We would plan to add a further four communities as a minimum in 2023.

Also within 2023 we expect to see a significant increase in the number of Events we enable. We will continue to add new events further opening up for people the East Munster Way, Tipperary Heritage and Blackwater- Avondhu way marked trails.

Within this timeframe we will continue to work both with our participant individuals and Communities as well as Tipperary Sports Partnership and Coillte who have been of great support to the development of the initiative.

Through it all however we still hold to our core ethos:

“Walking with Friends – Connecting people to place and to their neighbours”

Get Active | Meet your Neighbours | Discover

ABOUT OUR IMPACT MEASUREMENT APPROACH

THEORY OF CHANGE

In Siul Eile we utilise Theory of Change to identify and measure our Impact. Our methodology is based on the outline shown on next page.

Based on this analysis we have identified measure that we use both to measure and enhance our impact as we progress our business.

From the indicators displayed, a set of relevant measures have been developed, measures which have been utilised within this report. We continue to review and enhance those measure to better guide our mission.

THEORY OF CHANGE

01

Mission and Vision

Why we exist - our values and purpose for being



02

Impact

The impact we want from our Mission



03

Outcomes

That outcomes that will show us we are delivering on our Mission



04

Activities

The activities that we do to achieve this



Relevant Indicators

Our Mission

Siul Eile is a social enterprise helping communities come together to form walking programs and challenges using the under-utilised local environment in their own community and to develop a sustainable walking culture in their community.

The Impact from our Mission

Alleviating Social Isolation

Reducing health conditions from inactivity

Strengthening community bonds

Heightening local environment awareness

The Outcomes from our Impact

Physical well being

Psychological well being

Social connectedness

Volunteer engagement

Structure and Governance

Environmental Impact

Safety ethos

Stakeholders

Transparency

Relevant Indicators

- Active communities
- Individual participants
- Volunteer Development
- Programmes
- Environmental Impact
- Transparency
- Safety
- Events
- Public Participants

The Activities to achieve the Outcomes

Events

Public participants

Active communities

Individuals (community)

Volunteer Development

Programmes

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THEORY OF CHANGE

Siul Eile

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IMPACT BY NUMBERS

4700

ACTIVE INDIVIDUALS IN 2020

200,000

TOTAL KM WALKED

94%

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITTED
FROM WALKING WITH SIUL EILE

100+

VOLUNTEERS

88%

IMPROVED FITNESS/PHYSICAL
HEALTH BENEFITS SINCE
WALKING WITH SIUL EILE

40

EVENTS PER
COMMUNITY PER
YEAR

IMPACT BY PHOTOS



**GET
INVOLVED**

Siul Eile

Walking with Friends

STEP IN. SURPRISE YOURSELF.



GET ACTIVE

Walking is one of the simplest activities,
suitable for nearly everyone

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Meeting people from your community
is really important

DISCOVER

There is history and natural beauty all around us

CONTACT SIUL EILE

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Walking with Friends

STEP IN. SURPRISE YOURSELF.



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