



The Cavan & Leitrim Railway

 Dromod, County Leitrim

Dromod is a unique family attraction, which allows visitors to ride on heritage locomotives and view their collection of aircraft, buses and steam/diesel locomotives.

The project began in 1992, when a group of enthusiasts visited the site of the original Cavan and Leitrim railway building and track bed. They then purchased the station site and track bed. The group then brought their collection of artefacts, re-laid the railway and constructed a new workshop and carriage shed. In 1995, the first public services operated, enabling visitors to ride the diesel “Dinmore” or steam service “Dromod”. Since then, more acquisitions have arrived at the site, which offers a museum of artefacts and railway rides.



Interview Questions and Responses

How did you decide upon a single project idea?

The project was developed in the 1990s by a group of enthusiasts to demonstrate a piece of Irish heritage to the local community, due to an interest in social history. The group is diverse but all have an interest in the project. The project started out as an interest in heritage and has since developed into a community project.

How did your group agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver?

From the beginning, the objective of the project was to provide an experience to the public which could educate people on what it was like to travel. While the primary aim related to the education of the public, there was also an element of tourism from the beginning.

To do so, the group set up the site from scratch. Everything that is currently on the site has been bought or donated, then assembled or made by volunteers on the site.

Describe the process by which you achieved consensus around objectives and projects?

Initially, an unofficial committee of members was established. This was made of people who shared the same goals and had the drive and motivation to set up the railway. Whilst members of the group have departed, there is still a core committee group which operates the project on a day-to-day basis.

How did you approach planning and project management around your selected idea?

Project management is addressed by the core committee group. Each person within the committee has a different area of expertise, including administrative knowledge, mechanical engineering, admin, railway management, engineering and restoration, and track work.



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How has that stood the test of time through the project? Have you had to revise your plans? How have you managed that process?

There is not a written plan for the project overall, but plans are developed for specific projects. For example, they have developed a conservation management plan. This plan is used to gain agreement on which funding methods might be a good fit and which organisations can be approached for advice. Plans are developed using best practice and the sharing of ideas with other groups.

How did you identify a funding need?

The museum at the Cavan & Leitrim Railway site has a donation fare which raises enough to cover basic expenses for the site such as electricity and water. There is also an open fund for the project, whereby people can donate as much, or as little, as they'd like. Beyond that, specific projects, such as the restoration of a specific artefact, require outside funding.

How have you managed the process of bidding for funding?

The project received EU funding in the 1990s and the project has also received funding from the Heritage Council, Failte Ireland and Leitrim County Council. The funding from Leitrim County Council comes in the form of small community grants (of less than €1000) and is given for specific projects. The bidding process is managed internally on a voluntary basis.

Did you have a need for specialist expertise for your project? If so how did you handle that and approach experts?

The project has never paid for external specialist expertise but has received advice from other groups delivering similar projects to gain direction. There is a degree of goodwill whereby they would help the other groups when needed.

Within the core committee group, each member has a specific area of expertise based on their previous experience gained from setting up other railways. Their knowledge of experiences and challenges in other locations helped them to overcome the challenges in Leitrim.

The public safety element of their project is regulated and requires personnel with specific expertise. While the safety element was obvious, other areas of expertise such as the administration side, social media and event planning have developed over time and grown naturally as more of the public have come through the doors.

What have been the hardest difficulties to overcome and how did you overcome them?

Initially, there was some pessimism from the local community, as community members thought it would be difficult to set up a railway from scratch. This challenge was overcome early on through public engagement.

Operating the railway alongside a full-time job can be difficult. Balancing full-time employment with a voluntary role was important, as there are certain responsibilities to keep in mind to keep the project running such as project sustainability, ensuring expenditure is paid, securing the appropriate insurance and having a duty to the volunteers.

Has the project team managed to stay true to the original project vision? If not, why not? If it has, how has this been achieved?

The project aligns with the initial vision. There was nothing there when the initial group of enthusiasts started in the 1990s. A range of bi-annual projects have resulted in the growth of the project, as it has gained additional artefacts.

This was achieved through the group's own ambitions. Other members have come on board with the project and understand the meaning within the region, meaning they support the project financially or through volunteering.

What have been the biggest learnings from the delivery of your project?

If a community has vision for a particular project, they should expand a project and bring people on board to understand if it is realistic. Community groups should get in touch with other groups if they're in need of direction.

What decisions, or elements of organisation have been the most important in the delivery of your project?

The people involved within the project have become close to each other because they are all dedicated to the objectives of the project. Having a closely bound team driving the projects is key for the success of the railway.

What were the most important sources of advice and guidance for your group as you moved through the different phases of the project?

Community groups have reached out to gain advice or guidance from the project manager of the Dromod and Leitrim Railway and have provided support. This is critical for developing projects and understanding the work of other communities. Therefore, undertaking research into what other similar communities are doing across Ireland and reaching out to them is critical.

Key contact

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Links

Website: <https://www.cavanandleitrimrailway.com/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheCLR2011>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cavanandleitrimrailway>