

Submission by Regeneration Ballyleague – Cashelmor Properties to the Just Transition Fund 2022:

Submission to - Enhancing potential of region as a place to live and work

Population: Census 2016 recorded the population for the overall settlement of Ballyleague and Lanesborough as 1,454 persons



Executive Summary

A strong focus on the regeneration of derelict buildings in the Ballyleague-Lanesborough area is crucially important in this JTF territorial plan as Ballyleague villages and Lanesborough town should be the engines of economic development in this disadvantaged areas. **Our vision is to develop this settlement, which once relied so heavily on Bord na Mona as a social impact innovation town with strong local investment, global links and recognition.** We will support an ecosystem that addresses societal needs by combining emerging technologies, social innovation, communities, entrepreneurs, and investment into a regeneration plan that re-kicks the economic activity of this area and ultimately creates jobs. This Ecosystem will improve the scale and impact of social enterprises across the region where Bord na Mona once created 220 jobs

This new territorial plan should inspire and support social enterprises in the Ballyleague-Lanesborough area such as childcare facilities, tourism accommodation providers and encourage buy-in by a range of commercial partners. The Regeneration Ballyleague consortium wish to support the social

The JTF Territorial plan must support a specific policy to regenerate our village by acknowledging the urgent issue of childcare displacement and creating an incentive to convert derelict buildings back into modern childcare community facilities.

economy and promote social entrepreneurship and innovation as a vehicle to boost the ability of the town and community to compete economically, promote inclusive growth and become a social innovation hub .

In the EU reports prepared to inform the Just Transition Territorial plan one key issue is NOT addressed in any significant fashion and this is the transition from male employment to female employment within the context of the average household composition in Bord na Mona communities as they proceed now in the harsh aftermath of the closure of the Lough Ree Power plant.

Traditionally Bord na Mona employed 98 per cent male employees in these communities but the enforced redundancies of over 800 people have now reversed the employment roles within the households in Bord na Mona communities – with very clear knock-on repercussions for issues such as childcare in communities such as Ballyleague and Lanesborough.

In reality – more than 70 per cent of females in formerly Bord na Mona employee households are now the only working member of the household – a factor that is not included anywhere in the JTF reports.

In the course of preparing this submission, Regeneration Ballyleague carried out our primary research with parents of children within the settlement of Ballyleague and Lanesborough – see survey results and analysis attached below.

The findings confirm a serious lack of childcare within the region arising directly from the retirement of 220 Bord na Mona workers in the area.

Survey participants confirm that, where once a significant amount of their childcare needs were looked after by the wives or partners of BNM employees in that home, this is no longer possible as the carer is now either engaged outside the home in full employment or has retired. Previously workers relatives also provided this childcare role but this is no longer possible as many employees have left the local area and this again leaves a void in the service.

The result of this situation is an alarming lack of childcare services in the Bord na Mona communities – a factor that has a knock-on effect on the economy and indeed the viability of the local area. If childcare is not available locally, then parents have to drive out of the town and up to 30km away on a daily basis for childcare – spending their money outside of the local community and thereby weakening the local economy.

The JTF Territorial plan does NOT address this displacement issue of childcare services in any section and we are respectfully requesting that the finished draft would not only take this urgent issue into consideration but carry out detailed quantitative research to further establish the scale of the issue.

Once the plan focuses on the problem, the addition of new community facilities and appropriate and the JTF territorial plan IS dealing with this but there must be a focus not just on the counties but specifically on the Ballyleague-Lanesborough and Shannonbridge town areas if the economy of these settlements is to be retained.



Accordingly we welcome a dedicated fund which would be made available such that, where identified and within the budgeted allocation, repurposing of an existing site(s) (including refitting of technology and facilities) for the purposes of childcare space, factories or manufacturing buildings or other buildings which could conceivably be repurposed to serve as suitable workspace or hot desk, training base (childcare/tourism and skill upgrading training) , incubation units.

A high quality childcare facility is required with fully kitted out creche facility incorporating a sensory room with an adjacent garden, after school care facilities, Coffee dock, car parking etc. We feel that a fully fitted creche facility is needed in the Lanesboro/Ballyleague area because of the reasons pointed out above with the displacement of childcare in the community and expected population trends arising from the Covid 19 lockdowns.



1. Why does Ballyleague and Lanesborough need social enterprises?

Social enterprises are a perfect example of what the EU's vision of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth could look like in real life situations. At the member state level, social enterprises are endorsed by the Western Development Commission and all local partners as new and promising actors that can support the public sector in addressing social challenges such as childcare and community services, while at the same time creating jobs and growth yet the Just Transition Fund territorial plan needs to acknowledge a greater role for social enterprise in the rehabilitation of Bord na Mona communities.

Given its potential to address societal challenges and contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth, the EU has launched many actions to support social enterprises and the social economy under the 2011 Social Business Initiative (SBI) 2016 Start-up and Scale-up initiative. Social economy organisations, such as the Lough Ree Access for all initiative for people with disability based in the heart of Ballyleague and Lanesborough also contribute to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

We are requesting that this additional emphasis be included in the updated plan.

2. Local Plan compliance



The Roscommon county Development Plan 2021 to 2027 is at late development draft plan stage but includes the following key development objectives for the Ballyleague area – which embrace the general outline of our submission: The objectives as set out are -

1. To facilitate quality residential development at appropriate locations within Ballyleague village settlement boundary, and of a scale and character which is compatible with its surroundings – which means more homes and in turn means more families and children requiring childcare
2. To support the provision of local and community services which can assist in sustaining and developing a resident community in Ballyleague – i.e a local community creche
3. To encourage opportunities for employment generation through appropriate developments, commensurate with the scale of the village, and in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development – creating jobs in social enterprise

All of our submissions feed into this plan and should be endorsed,

Additionally the same plan recommends town and village policy objective visions as set out here:

1. Support the growth and development of rural communities in the county by strengthening the role of rural towns and villages and facilitating development that will rejuvenate these settlements and make them an attractive location in which to live.
2. Encourage the redevelopment of centrally located vacant and/or underutilised areas within towns and villages.

3. Support initiatives by local community groups and stakeholders seeking to enhance their towns and villages

Disappointingly there has yet to be 1:1 consultation by either the department of Environment, communications and climate change or the MRTT with local community groups in the Ballyleague-Lanesborough area.

Now that the Covid emergency has passed, it is not sufficient to state that it was not possible to hold community consultations in person.

We request that the final territorial plan be delayed until such consultations have taken place on the ground in Ballyleague, Lanesborough and Shannonbridge and the views of local community groups be taken on board and included in this plan.

We have also checked and noted that NO local community groups in the Ballyleague-Lanesborough area were met with by the consultants who prepared the previous development plans for the JTF process and this is regrettable.

3. Grant funding, crowdfunding, and other early-stage capital



Matched crowdfunding gets communities to put their money where their mouth is. Some new funding streams will be announced from the EU as part of the 2021 – 2027 budget but we believe the JTF territorial plan should address the area of match funding for private and community promoters of projects aimed at revitalising these communities. .We believe that new funding mechanisms are

needed for community groups and SMEs in Bord na Mona communities to support/ invest in social enterprises.

- We believe the JTF plan should explore new funding mechanisms to leverage additional finance to provide to social enterprises.
- The fund should work with other agencies to develop a social investment market and establish a crowdfunding platform for social enterprise.
- We believe the JTF should specifically fund the employment of a team of development personnel in all Bord na Mona towns to help locals develop a capability to write applications and secure EU Funding (EU Green Deal and Horizon Europe) to support social enterprises and social innovation across the region

4. Help on the ground

Like the private sector, a vibrant social enterprise sector requires a range of supports to help it flourishing all the time. Well-targeted financial supports can make a difference to the number, quality and sustainability of the social enterprises and the jobs that develop and we believe the JTF territorial plan should specially zone the area of 20km around Lanesborough and Shannonbridge for specific funding supports at a rate of 100 per cent in the following areas :

- Structured training programmes
- Networks of practice
- Access to Space
- Events
- Mentoring
- Access to finance and other business supports
- Toolkit for social enterprise and social innovation
- Governance training
- Childcare staff training
- Small farm income – special status – both counties

5. Building of Workspace Capacity:

As has been discussed, the lack of suitable workspace represents a barrier to employment opportunities being brought to Ballyleague and Lanesborough by IDA, EI and LEOs.

We believe the fund should include provision in the final territorial plan to

1. **Provide Training Infrastructure to support the Retrofit Program:**
Stakeholders involved with the retrofit programme highlight how the development of retrofit training centres infrastructure would be useful facilities to enable the effective development of skills and the roll-out of the Programme. This may also involve new facility construction.
2. **Rural Mobility:** Among the services thought to be lacking in the territory are inter regional and external transport links. Indeed, further to investments outlined above and the development of ecosystems around green-energy hubs and office or co-working facilities, consideration should be made to their accessibility.
3. A suggested approach may consider the potential for shuttle links between towns, remote working hubs/ offices, and educational institutions.
4. **Business Incubator Site:** Investment is needed in a business incubator site designed to assist burgeoning green enterprise and facilitating the sustainable transition of existing companies such as Irish Pallet Systems and Donnellans Engineering in Ballyleague. It should be noted that such investment is in the skills and training element of the incubator and involves hiring staff to deliver supports.

5. Funding local business owners and the community NOW

We are told the third pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism is the public-sector loan facility which aims to leverage, and support increased public sector investment in regions undergoing climate transition, by offering concessional loans to provide resources to implement measures which facilitate transition in a

just manner (European Commission, 2020) but one must ask why funding has not already been made for local business and the community groups who have already embraced phase 1 of the JTF process

We also require a facility that consists of both a grant and a loan component to lighten the financial load, by providing support to help with the repayments of a loan provided by a financial partner.

Examples of investments that the facility really needs to support include energy and transport infrastructure, district heating networks, green mobility, smart waste management, clean energy and energy efficiency measures including renovations and conversions of buildings, as well as up-and reskilling, training, and social infrastructure.

Local small business simply does not have the resources to meet these match funding demands and if the first round of the process proved anything it must be that more must be done.

We are asking for this provision to be included in the territorial plan.

Conclusion

This submission is specifically to the draft plan dealing with Enhancing potential of region as a place to live and work

The people behind the Regeneration of Ballyleague - Cashmor Properties wish to enhance the community of Ballyleague/Lanesboro by repurposing derelict premises in the area with a view to leasing it back into the community for periods of over 30 years. Rather than start from scratch with no sites and no buildings, this policy will enable the community to be innovative, and sustainable with a state of the art childcare facility incorporating sensory room and garden along with all modern facilities required for childcare. This in turn will enhance the locality and develop new jobs and allow all parents to work without having the stress of picking up children after school. This will bring back much needed life into our community and allow it to thrive and be a

vibrant community again – as shown in the survey information gathered by us and attached below.

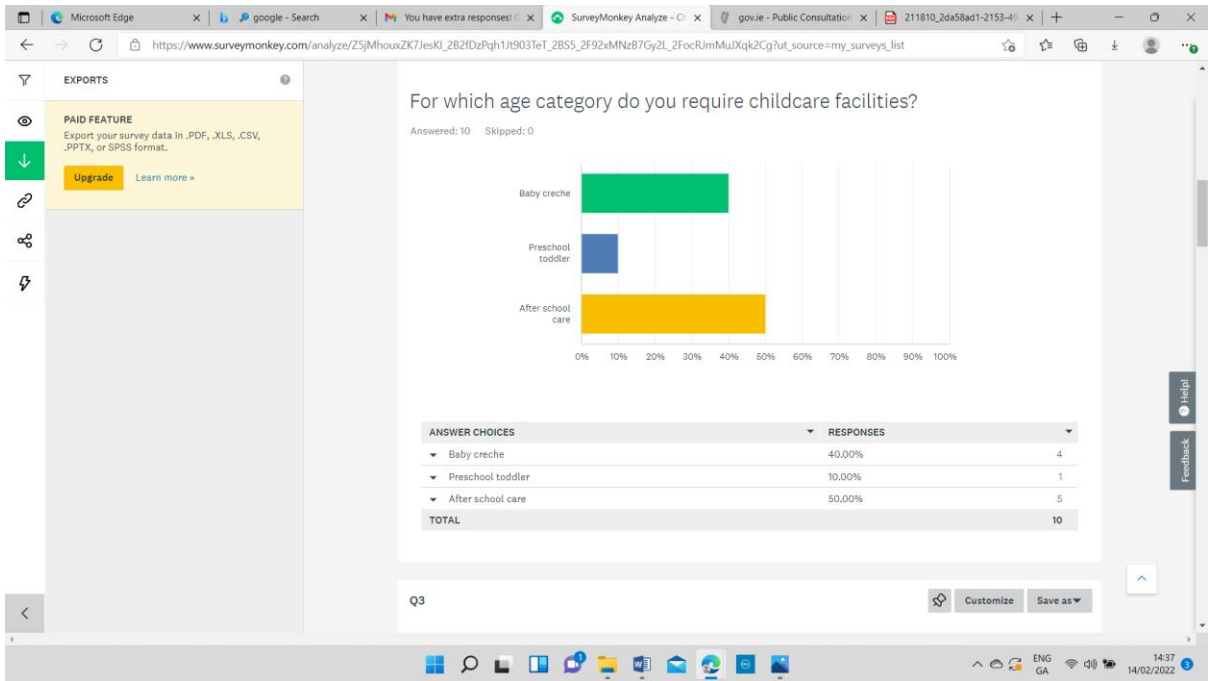
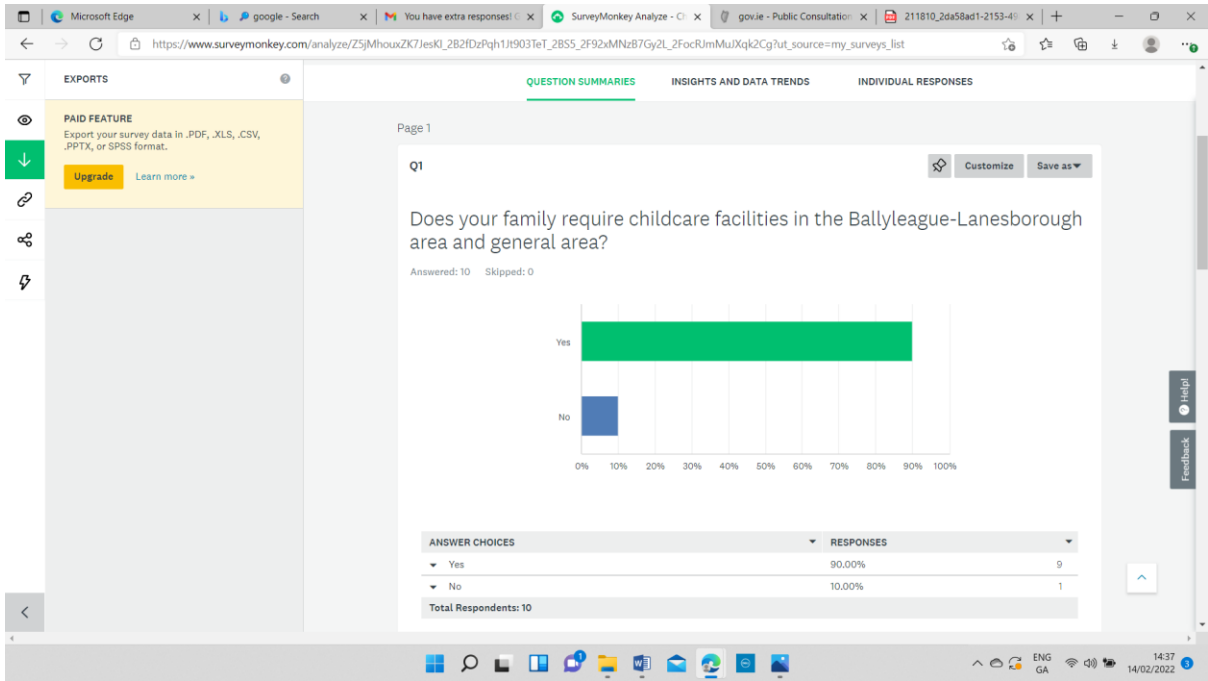
We respectfully suggest that the JTF team must VISIT Ballyleague-Lanesborough and Shannonbridge and engage with us in the business community on the ground – not on zooms or virtually

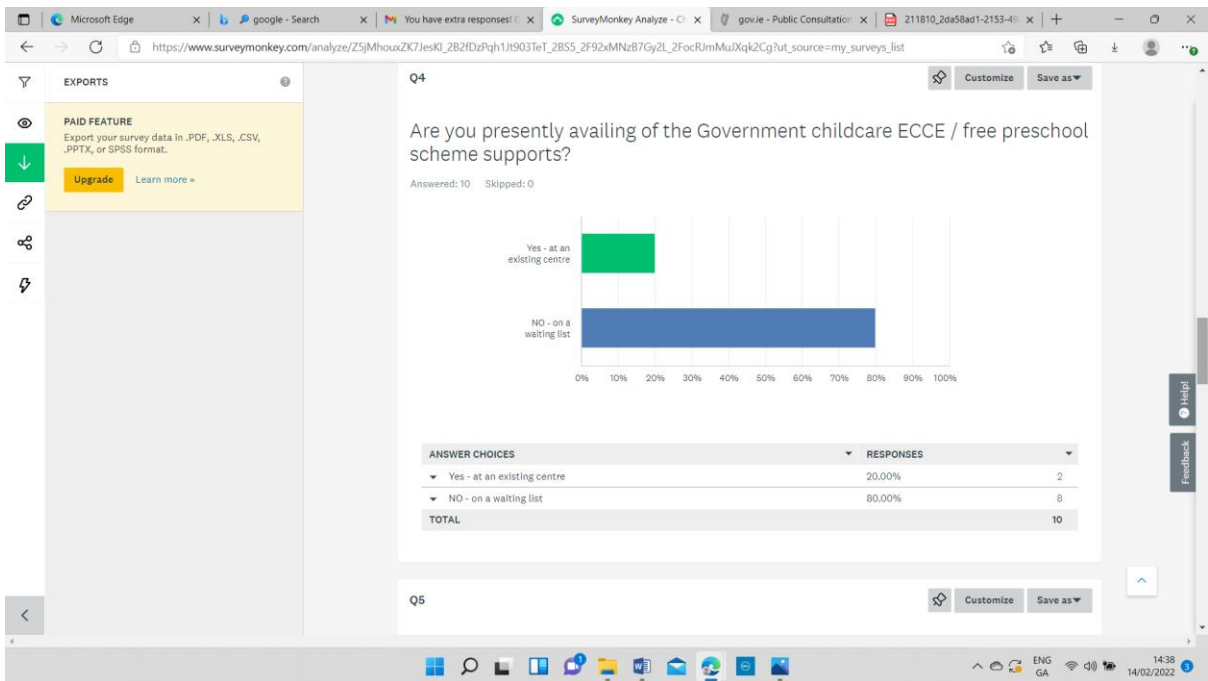
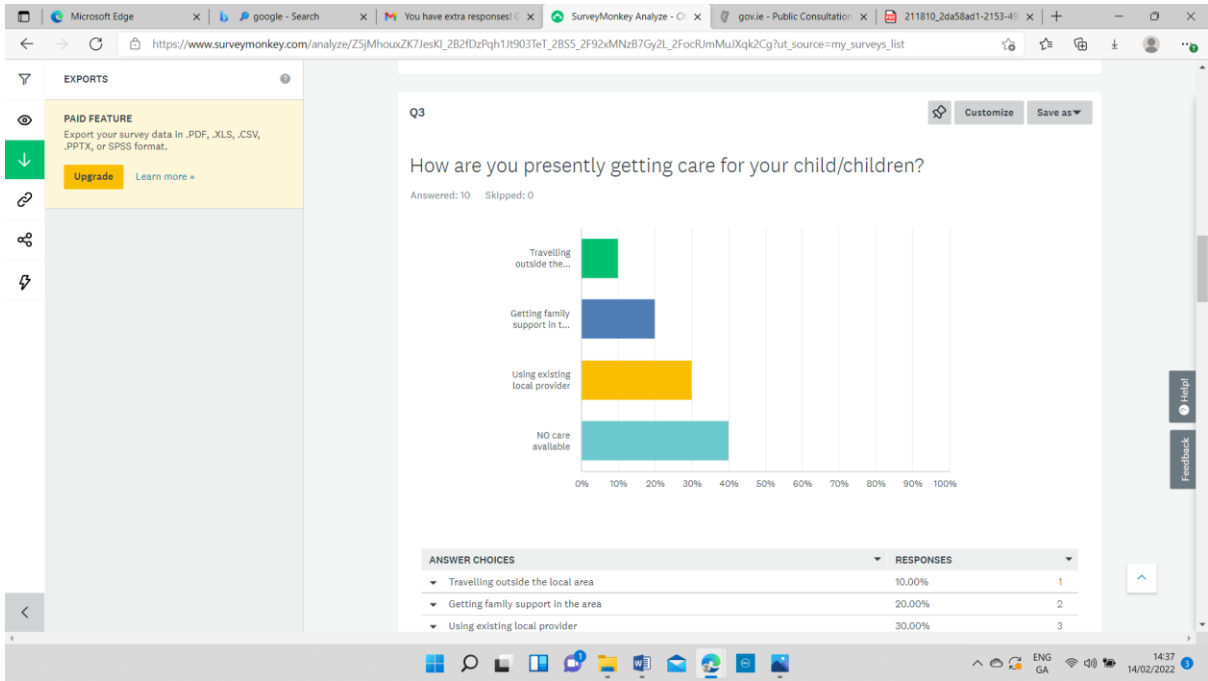
On one such visit, the JTF policy makers could meet in person with local community groups and parents and examine the validity of the proposals attached here and see for themselves some of the derelict sites that are available here.

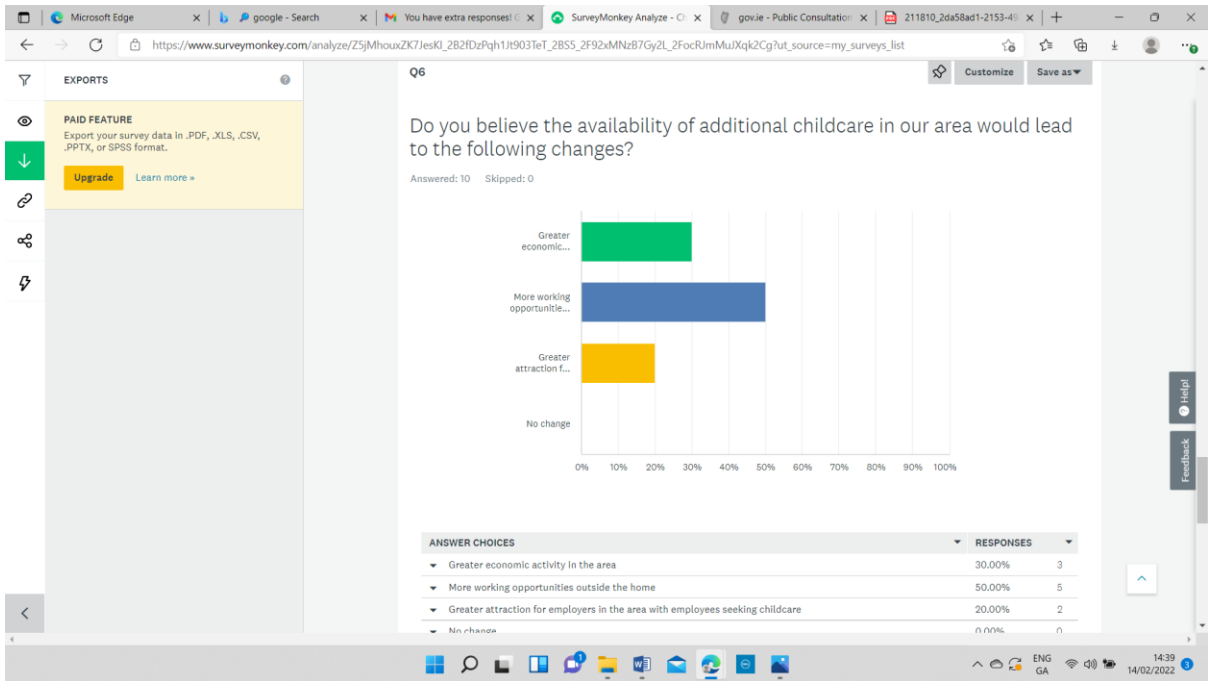
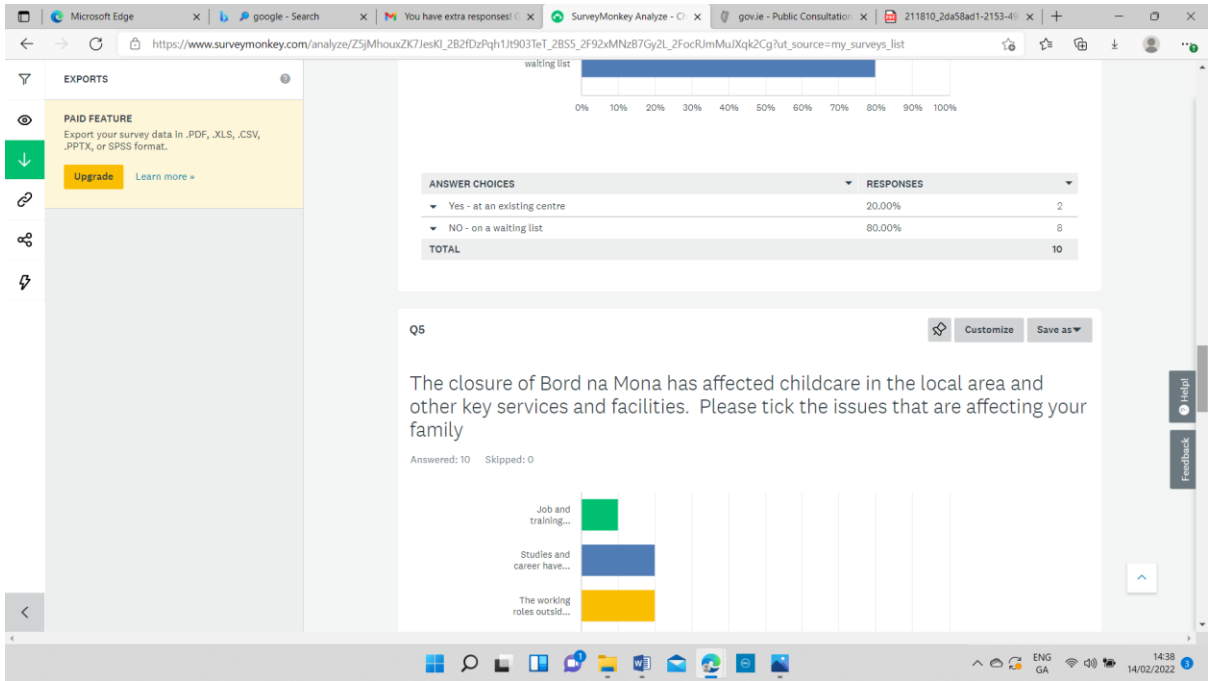
Many people within the community did NOT take part on online consultation because they are unfamiliar with technology or unwilling to engage outside the internet process.

We are therefore asking for the consultation process to be formally suspended until the JTF territorial plan policy comes to meet with the community here in Ballyleague and Lanesborough.

Thanks in advance.







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Q7

If all of the NEW childcare facilities referred to above were available in 2023/2024 school season - would your family avail of the service in the community?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	80.00% 8
No	20.00% 2
TOTAL	10

14:39 14/02/2022