

Good Governance Clinics

If you are a member of a management committee of a community organisation who would like to learn more about how to manage your group more effectively, by putting in place good internal systems and practices we are offering a limited number of free one-to-one governance clinic sessions avail of online or in person on **Thursday 7th March from 5pm – 9pm.**

If you are interested, please email yvonne@ruralcommunitynetwork.org or call 028 86766670 for further information and to book an appointment.

Alternatively you can fill out the form [here](#) to select a time preference.

Meet the Funder

Come along to Newcastle Community Cinema to hear more about The National Lottery Heritage Grants programme and how to apply for funding to support rural heritage projects.

This event is in person. Tea/coffee and refreshments will be provided.



Location: Newcastle Community Cinema

Date: Thursday 21st March 2024

Time: 7.30pm - 9.00pm

To book a place, see [here](#).

Planning Advice Clinic

Community Places are offering free, impartial and confidential planning advice for individuals and community groups in the RCN Office, Cookstown.

They can give advice on:

- How the planning system works
- What stage your Local Development Plan is at
- Whether you need planning permission
- How to comment on a proposal that may impact on your home or community
- Your council's decision-making process

Drop in any time or call 07783 649288 to book an appointment, or email hello@communityplaces.info

Location: Rural Community Network, Cookstown

Date: Thursday 14th March

Time: 12pm – 3pm

Planning Advice

We're here to offer free, impartial and confidential planning advice

Policy Link

February's Policy Link includes articles on the Restoration of the Ni Executive and Assembly, RCN's response to the DfC consultation on VCS infrastructure support and more.

Check it out [here](#).



February 2024

Assembly Returns...Again

After a hiatus of almost two years the Assembly met on Saturday 3rd February, elected a speaker and the parties appointed Ministers using the 'd'froid' process. This followed a week of rapid political developments as the DUP ratified the Safeguarding the Union agreement after months of negotiations with the UK Government. Within days, the Assembly was recalled, and the Executive was formed. The public reaction has been a cautious welcome as there is a myriad of issues to be addressed across the public sector. However, many people will question the stability of the Executive and Assembly, considering the massive challenges to be faced. There is the potential for further turmoil as the UK diverges from EU rules and standards in the coming years, unforeseen consequences on the movement of goods between Britain and Northern Ireland could destabilise politics here.

Looking to breed and butter issues, the Executive 'to do' list is a long one and includes issues such as childcare; poverty; huge demand for social housing; public sector pay; and a range of infrastructure deficits. Health is foremost in many people's minds. Health Service waiting lists; access to GP services; implementing pay rises for health workers; and the transformation of health services present a series of interlocking challenges. These issues are of particular concern for people in rural communities - with services either collapsing or being removed from the South West Acute Hospital, Daisy Hill, and Causeway in recent years - leading to public campaigns voicing concerns about the future downgrading of services. RCN accepts that there are clinical reasons why some services need to be relocated, but remoteness of many rural communities and longer travelling times are not given the consideration required. If, in line with the Bengoa Report recommendations, services are to be concentrated on fewer sites, then that needs to happen in tandem with greater investment in ambulance services; in public and community transport; and in the road infrastructure to allow patients to make those journeys. Another key element of the Bengoa recommendations which does not receive as much media attention is the need to invest in primary care at community level. In many rural communities there are serious concerns about GP practices closing.

Investing in Community Leadership

The Investing in Community Leadership Programme are excited to launch our new accessible, online training suite with access to almost 200 certified courses which have been pre-paid.

High quality, video-based, virtual courses last from 10mins-45mins and once registered you can complete in your own time and at your own pace, whenever works for you.

Register through Fermanagh Trust and you can gain accreditation for free. Open to any individual volunteering or working in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Register via this link [here](#) and have look at the full course catalogue & course details (Only look at the course catalogue, please do not click on links for quotes or payments.)

Once you find a course you want email leadership@fermanaghtrust.org to register, and for more information.

Rural Support

RCN's team delighted to welcome Rural Support's CEO Kevin Doherty to our office today. Excited to learn more about the valuable work they are doing across the region. Looking forward to deepening our collaboration in the future.



Find Help NI

Visiting RCN offices this week to find out about our work we had Norah Hughes, Community Connector with Find Help NI.

Find Help NI believes in the power of finding the right help at the right time. Their wellbeing support website has a map of local services, useful self-care advice & practical tips for managing our mental health throughout life's ups & downs. Find out more about them on their website [here](#).



RTE Toy Show Appeal - Grants

The RTE Toy Show Appeal - Community Grants Round will open on Monday 26th February 2024 and children and family charities with an annual income of £20,000 – £500,000 can apply for funding. Grants of up to £10,000 are available to eligible organisations. The grants call will close on Friday 22nd March 2024.

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is hosting an informative online pre-application support session on Tuesday 5th March 2024 to support charities in their application – register [here](#).

For more information about the grant and how to apply click the link [here](#).