

CycleUp initiative result of women power and passion

By Richard Canny

Roscommon Women's Network (RWN) recently showcased its CycleUp social enterprise, which combines skilled training and the reuse of material to create employment in what is called the circular economy.

The showcase event entitled 'A New Chapter for RWN' took place at the Riverside Centre, Athleague. Previously used materials from the RWN's shop located at the Old Mill in Castlerea have been transformed by skilled hands, producing a wide range of colourful and attractive homeware, giftware and environmentally friendly items. An impressive array of CycleUp products was on show during the event in Athleague.

MC for the event and a member of the RWN voluntary Board of Directors, Rita Kearney said the story of CycleUp was an example of how women power and passion came together to become the basis for the initiative.

"We regard CycleUp as a growing social enterprise, which can truly have impacts on the lives of women, their

families, local communities and beyond. I am honoured to represent the voluntary board of directors of RWN. This is indeed the opening of a new chapter for RWN and we are delighted to celebrate with you here this morning," she said.

Rita also thanked Sarah Miller of the Rediscovery Centre who provided the funding through the Arise Project. The Rediscovery Centre is the National Centre for the Circular Economy connecting people, ideas and resources to support greener low-carbon living.

RWN Manager Nora Fahy said the network now looked forward to developing its business plan with the support of the Rethink Ireland social enterprise start up fund and accelerator programme, working with Declan Droney as RWN's business mentor. Ms Fahy outlined that vital funding of €15,000 had been initially secured when Deputy Denis Naughten was Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

"With all your continued investment and support, RWN CycleUp will continue to have the wind at her back



Rita Kearney, RWN board director; Martina Hourigan, co-ordinator; Dr. Sarah Miller, CEO Rediscovery Centre; Nora Fahy, RWN Manager and Jane Haywood, RWN volunteer, pictured at CycleUp Textiles Showcase in the Angling Centre, Athleague. Picture: Gerard O'Loughlin

and in her sails, making high quality upcycled goods, providing training far and wide, and creating employment in the Circular Economy. The RWN organisation will continue to adapt and evolve, all the while maintaining the safe harbour for other women and families coming through," she said.

Then Roscommon County Council Acting CEO, Shane Tiernan said the council was acutely aware of the need to embrace environmental initiatives that were sustainable, environmentally friendly and which were also part of a vibrant social and circular economy.

"Our focus in Roscommon County Council is to support projects like these that are driven and inspired by the actions of people like you, from the ground upwards. An initiative such as this is inspired from the community, by the community and for the community," said Mr Tiernan.

He said it was most encouraging to see this CycleUp concept facilitated an optional tutoring qualification and soft skills training for its participants. "I believe the potential for this Upcycling initiative is immense - your story is only just beginning. Please be assured of our continued support for your wonderful project, which is a model of environmental responsibility which so many other community and voluntary groups could learn from," he said.

Jane Haywood, an RWN volunteer, spoke about how she became inspired about the whole concept following a visit to the Rediscovery Centre in Ballymun. Martina Hourigan, CycleUp Co-ordinator, explained to the event that RWN was now a member of the Rediscovery circular economy and training courses had been rolled out across the county.

Dr. Sarah Miller, CEO, Rediscovery Centre, described the RWN as a wonderful organisation and that it was the first member of the centre's circular economy. "We're very proud of that," she said. During a questions and



Margaret Browning, Castlerea; Martina Hourigan, co-ordinator; Julie Ann Finan, Community Enterprise, Roscommon County Council and Linda Ward, Charity Retail Ireland.



Gertie Finan, Ballinlough, pictured at CycleUp Textiles Showcase in the Angling Centre, Athleague.



Sally Cronin, Cloonfad; Laura Young, Castlerea and Maria Hourigan, Castlerea, pictured at CycleUp Textiles Showcase in the Angling Centre, Athleague.

answers session, Cllr Orla Leyden hoped that the RWN premises in Athleague could

become a satellite centre for the Rediscovery Centre and for the region. Rita Kearney

echoed the sentiments, saying: "We can become a centre of excellence for the West."