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Business people

'New Chapter' for RWN's social enterprise

■ DAN DOONER

There was a good turnout for Roscommon Women's Network's showcase of its CycleUp textiles social enterprise at the Riverside Centre in Athleague on Friday last.

The event dubbed 'a new chapter for RWN' heard from keynote speakers such as Dr. Sarah Miller, CEO of the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin, as well as Acting Chief Executive of Roscommon County Council, Shane Tiernan.

The event also heard from CycleUp designers, producers and tutors, Maria Hourigan and Margaret Browning.

On display were a number of items which the Roscommon Women's Network had created from up-cycled clothes and other materials.

RWN board member and MC for the event, Rita Kearney said the CycleUp enterprise was an example of members' power and passion and enabled the network to focus on inclusion while addressing climate change in a tangible way.

RWN Manager, Nora Fahy, said funding for the enterprise had been obtained during former Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment Denis Naughten's tenure.

She thanked all those who have supported CycleUp including RWN volunteers past and present, for their part in the continued de-

velopment of Roscommon Women's Network, describing it as a "safe harbour".

Ms. Fahy said the RWN was looking forward to working with Rethink Ireland business mentor, Declan Droney, as well as the reopening of community services: She added that the CycleUp enterprise would create employment in the circular economy while RWN continued to provide a vital service for women in the county.

The CycleUp enterprise was originally the brainchild of RWN volunteer Jane Haywood, who told those gathered that she had gained inspiration following a visit to the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin.

CycleUp Coordinator Martina Hourigan said she was inspired by the passion and motivation displayed by Jane and other volunteers. She added that RWN had become a member of the Rediscovery circular economy and that a number of training courses had been rolled out in Roscommon.

Rethink Ireland business mentor, Declan Droney, told those present that he had worked with 50 social enterprises but Roscommon Women's Network's CycleUp initiative really stood out.

"Entrepreneurs jump off a cliff and learn how to build a parachute on the way down...this parachute will be made out of recycled clothes," he said as he praised members for their strong leadership, vision and resilience.

Sarah Miller, CEO of the Rediscovery Centre also paid tribute to the RWN.

"It's a wonderful organisation and CycleUp is a fantastic project," she said before confirming that her organisation would be working closely with RWN in the future.

Acting Roscommon County Council CEO Shane Tiernan said the event was a "beacon of light" on what had started out as a dark and dull day weather-wise.

He added that it was also a poignant day as former Council CEO Eugene Cummins was stepping down.

"He (Mr. Cummins) would have been passionate about a project like this," he said.

"Roscommon County Council's focus is on supporting projects like these...the UpCycle enterprise is one of the first of its kind in the county".

Mr. Tiernan added that the circular economy was the way forward and pledged the continued support of the local authority.

Speaking during a questions and answers session towards the end of the event, Cllr. Orla Leyden, who had previously served on the RWN board for 10 years, praised volunteers and current board members.

Cllr. Leyden expressed her hope that the RWN premises at Athleague become a "satellite centre for the western region", a view which was echoed by RWN manager Nora Fahy.



Speakers at Roscommon Women's Network's showcase of its CycleUp social enterprise in Athleague last Friday included (left to right): Martina Hourigan, CycleUp Coordinator, Sarah Miller, CEO, Rediscovery Centre, Jane Haywood RWN Textile Upcycling Instigator, Rita Kearney, RWN and MC for the event, and Declan Droney, Business Mentor, Rethink Ireland. Pic: Mick McCormack

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