

CASE STUDY

Pocket Forests



“We are reconnecting people with the natural world in nature-deprived areas of Irish towns and cities”

Catherine Cleary,
Co-founder of Pocket Forests




PROFILE SNAPSHOT

Website	www.pocketforests.ie
Social channels	 @pocketforests  @pocketforests
Contact us through Alliance	Catherine Cleary (catherine@pocketforests.ie)
Country	Ireland
Main sector	Private
Uforest thematic discipline	Socio-economics
Stage of development	Implementation



By energising the local community to co-create thriving green spaces that support economic growth and enhance wellbeing.



By restoring soils, salvaging degraded spaces, and repurposing waste materials.



By creating multiple climate-shelters and carbon sequestration nature patches.



By increasing urban neighbourhoods' green cover, and boosting local biodiversity.

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START-UP

Pocket Forests was founded in 2020 by Ashe Conrad-Jones and Catherine Cleary as a nature-based social enterprise to plant compact urban forests in Dublin and its surrounding areas. Based on the 1970s concept of 'tiny forests' by botanist Akira Miyawaki, this initiative brings lush miniature forest ecosystems to neighbourhoods and gardens.

POCKET FORESTS GOALS:

Create dense, fast-growing, self-sustaining native woodlands in tight urban spaces, from 6m² up to 100m², to:

- Help reconnect people with nature in the long term.
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- Provide nature-rich habitat patches to support urban wildlife.



INITIATIVE MODEL

MAIN ACTIVITIES:

What does Pocket Forests do?

- It regenerates soils and salvages derelict areas.
- It plants native species of trees, shrubs and ground cover plants.
- It repurposes locally sourced waste products (e.g., cardboard, coffee sacks, wood chips, horse manure, coffee grounds, etc.).
- It organises workshops for local residents to experience how to design the space, regenerate soil and plant trees.
- It teaches about circular economy and forests' cultural and natural ecosystem services.
- It creates planting, pruning and tree guide plans.
- It records the number of trees that are planted and works with the digital platform [Restorify](#) on some of its projects.

BENEFICIARIES:

Who benefits from Pocket Forests' activities?

- 1. Nature-deprived communities and owners of private gardens** that can now design, create, care for and enjoy their own green spaces in schools, universities, sport grounds, healthcare facilities, and public and private spaces.
- 2. Youngsters and teenagers** who learn how to work with soil, create ecosystems and care for trees and plants.
- 3. Schools** that can give classes outdoors.
- 4. Marginalised groups** (e.g., prisoners and ex-offenders) who are encouraged to volunteer and work in climate positive projects.

PROMOTION:

What is Pocket Forests' promotion strategy?

Pocket Forests' communication strategy is based on these channels:

- Social media.
- Press and TV media.
- Pocket Forests website.
- Tree planting demonstrations.

GOVERNANCE:

How does Pocket Forests implement its activities?

- Led and implemented by the two founding members.
- An advisory board oversees the activities and ensures good governance.
- Executed locally by volunteers.
- The Pocket Forests Tree Hub supplies native small trees.



- Collaboration with local authorities to implement the activities.
- Initial scientific and technical support by Afforestt in India, Earthwatch Europe, IVN Nature Education in the Netherlands, Common Ground and Mapping Green Dublin, and photographer Beta Bajgartova.

FINANCES:

What are Pocket Forests' main resources?

To cover tiny forests services, there's mixed funding:

- **Public funding** (40%) from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine through the Woodland Support Fund, and from local authorities' projects.
- **Private funding** (60%) from:
 - Individual clients.
 - [ChangeX projects](#).
 - Projects for philanthropic organisations and companies.

POLICY AND STANDARDS LEADING THE INITIATIVE:

- It uses plants and seeds from accredited Irish-grown sources and co-operates with the State Forestry agency Coillte.
- It uses electric cargo bikes and public transport to work with minimum carbon emissions, following the Sustainable Mobility Policy by Ireland's Department of Transport.



UNIQUENESS

What makes Pocket Forests a one-of-a-kind project?

- Following the **'tiny forests' methodology**, these small woodlands are grown in under a year.
- The soil, microbes, plants and insects create a local **biodiversity hotspot** that grows 10 times faster, is 30 times denser and absorbs 16 times more carbon than conventional forests.
- The **inclusive approach** encourages the active involvement of the local community, reconnecting them to their surrounding nature, and raising awareness of global environmental challenges.
- It prepares the soil with **repurposed materials** and people power instead of heavy machinery.
- In partnership with The Digital Hub, it has installed the **Pocket Forests Tree Hub**, Ireland's first native tree nursery in a city centre location.



EXPECTATION

By **2025**, Pocket Forests aims at developing a tree pack as a commercial product. It also seeks to influence policies on urban forest initiatives focusing on community-created native ecosystems.

What does Pocket Forests need to be successful?

- Core funding to make it economically sustainable.
- Academic studies that show evidence of the social and environmental benefits of tiny urban forests.

What are today's main challenges?

- Ensuring young forests are maintained for the first two to three growing seasons before they become self-sustaining.
- Managing the time, stress and pressure of starting up a social enterprise.

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