



Realising our Rural Potential

Action Plan for Rural Development



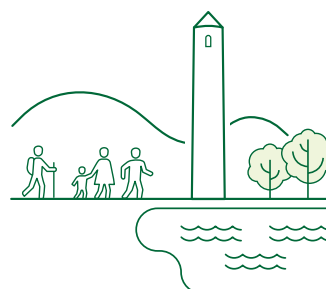
ACTION PLAN FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Key Deliverables



Support **135,000**
NEW JOBS by 2020

Increase
overseas
visitors
by **12%**



Invest **€50+ million**
in sports, recreation
& cultural facilities



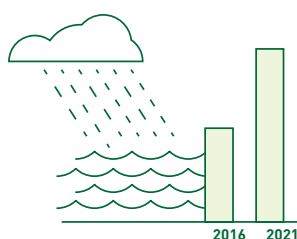
Revitalise **600+**
towns and villages



**PROTECT VITAL
LOCAL SERVICES**



Ensure **ALL** homes
& businesses are
**CONNECTED TO
BROADBAND**



Double investment in
**FLOOD RELIEF
WORKS** by 2021



Support **4,000**
new community
projects

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Foreword – An Taoiseach

Improving the lives of those living and working in rural communities is a priority of the Government's Programme for a Partnership Government. Our objective is to ensure the success of vibrant, rural communities across Ireland. That means supporting the creation of 135,000 jobs in rural Ireland, bringing high-speed broadband to every home and business and revitalising towns and villages through 4,000 projects. The appointment of a Cabinet Minister and Department with responsibility for Rural Development and this Action Plan reflect our commitment to this important task.

The Action Plan builds on the successful model used in the Action Plan for Jobs and is the outcome of extensive consultation. It identifies over 270 specific actions, and assigns responsibility for delivery of each action to a Government Department or other body within a clear timeframe. Ambitious targets are included for job creation, connectivity, culture, tourism and town and village improvements. Taken together, these actions will deliver practical measures to support the economic and social development of rural Ireland. They will ensure our rural communities are vibrant, robust and ready to face future challenges.

As I know well, there is huge untapped potential in rural Ireland. These are strong communities with ideas and ambition for their futures. The objective of this Action Plan is to help communities unlock that potential and improve the lives of people living in rural Ireland. The 2014 Report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas identified the key issues facing rural Ireland in the 21st century. The report contained a series of recommendations to Government,

many of which have already been implemented, and provided Government with the information necessary for the formulation of new policies to better support rural Ireland.

Implementation of the actions in this Plan will be monitored closely and reports will be submitted every six months to the Cabinet Committee on Regional and Rural Affairs which I chair. There will be published progress reports on the delivery of each action, as well as the addition of new actions in response to new challenges and opportunities.

I believe that by working together, we can achieve progress through this Action Plan and ensure that rural communities can look to the future with optimism.

Enda Kenny, T.D.

Taoiseach



Foreword – Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

As someone who has lived and worked in rural Ireland all my life, I believe passionately in the potential of rural communities. Rural Ireland can, and does, make an enormous contribution to our economy and our society through its natural landscape, its industries and, most importantly, its people.

Rural Ireland should never be seen as a challenge to be overcome; rather it is an asset that should be valued and nurtured. In fact, it's time to change the narrative around rural Ireland. Rural Ireland in the 21st century is modern, dynamic and creative, and is an integral part of our identity and economy. For too long, policy approaches to rural Ireland have lacked co-ordination or have focused on specific thematic issues such as agriculture or social inclusion. This approach has failed to address the wider and inter-dependent economic and social needs of rural communities in a cohesive way. This Action Plan, the first of its kind, takes a co-ordinated approach to rural development right across the remit of Government policy to 2020.

The Plan places a focus on creating sustainable rural communities. This means we will implement strategies which will support and empower citizens in local towns, villages and their environs to build on their strengths. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for rural Ireland; it is a diverse and varied place where innovation and indigenous enterprise must be supported and encouraged. Brexit will present particular challenges to rural communities, but there are also potential opportunities, and this Plan, along with other Government activities, aims to better equip rural communities for the impacts of Brexit.

While boosting economic prosperity in rural Ireland is crucial, this Plan also seeks to support social progress and foster culture and creativity in rural areas. Valuing and supporting cultural activity not only brings new opportunities, it contributes to the vibrancy and wellbeing of a local community.

The Plan represents an overarching structure for the co-ordination and implementation of initiatives right across central and local Government. The actions outlined in this Plan are only the start of an on-going process which will be built on continuously as new ideas and new opportunities emerge. In this regard, the Action Plan for Rural Development will be a dynamic and living template to support rural, economic and social progress. In particular, it will feed into the forthcoming Ireland 2040: A National Planning Framework that will give longer term, place-based expression to a resilient and sustainable future for rural Ireland.

We would like to thank all of the Departments, agencies and stakeholders who have contributed to the development of the Action Plan and all those people living in rural communities who gave of their time and took part in the various consultation events around the country. I look forward to all of these stakeholders working together as we drive implementation of this Plan for the benefit of rural communities nationwide.

Heather Humphreys, T.D.

*Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional,
Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs*



Foreword – Minister of State for Regional Economic Development

Improving the quality of life of those who live and work in rural communities is a key objective of this Action Plan for Rural Development. Supporting this objective will involve the combined effort and resources of many Government Departments and agencies. The Action Plan will be the vehicle to drive this effort and to ensure that the resources available to the Government are channelled effectively to make a real difference to the people who live in rural Ireland.

This is the most comprehensive plan any Government has ever produced to support economic and social development in rural areas. It is about supporting, empowering and building sustainable communities; it is about growing jobs and enterprise; it is about maximising our tourism, culture and heritage assets; and it is about improving connectivity in rural areas.

Most of all, this Action Plan is about the people who live in rural Ireland. Through this Plan, we will support and encourage economic development in rural and regional Ireland: strong regions provide the basis for improving the economic opportunity and jobs potential of rural areas. We will also support vulnerable rural communities by improving connectivity, tackling isolation, enhancing supports for older people, and through a range of measures to improve the security and safety of rural dwellers.

Rural Ireland is rich in culture, heritage and natural capital. It offers tremendous benefits and quality of life for those who live outside of our main cities. We want to make it an even better place in which to live and work by creating new opportunities, improving connectivity and access between rural and urban areas, and by protecting and enhancing services in the community.

People who live in rural parts of Ireland have enormous talent, creativity and energy. They also have tremendous sense of pride of place and a capacity to work together to overcome obstacles and maximise their assets. This Action Plan represents an opportunity for us to build on those qualities with the people of rural Ireland and maximise opportunities, whether in industry, local development or improving the structures of our rural communities. I look forward to working with all of our stakeholders and partners in delivering this Action Plan to further develop Ireland's rural potential.

Michael Ring, T.D.

Minister for Regional Economic Development

Overview of the Action Plan for Rural Development

Action Plan for Rural Development – changing the narrative

Rural Ireland has been faced with many challenges over recent decades, notably through the decline of traditional industries and associated job losses; through the emigration of many of our educated young people; and through poor connectivity in terms of transport and telecommunications infrastructure. However, the perception that “rural” is synonymous with “decline” is wrong. Ireland’s economy and heritage are heavily dependent on the contribution of rural areas. Almost 70% of our workforce is located outside of the Dublin region, although a concentration remains on the Eastern side of the country. Agri-food and Tourism – which are both crucial to rural economies – between them employ in excess of 363,000 people (18% of the workforce).

Improvements to Ireland’s road network, improved international air connectivity to and from the regions, and the advent of the Digital Economy all offer new opportunities for rural Ireland to play its part in the modern, progressive and dynamic Ireland of the 21st Century. We are increasingly seeing clusters of new and innovative companies growing in the regions, including in modern internationally trading sectors such as Life Sciences and ICT Services. Our food produce is world-class and supports the employment of 163,000 people in primary production and food processing.

Our road infrastructure continues to improve, making access to and from towns and cities easier and quicker. Parts of rural Ireland are now becoming destinations of choice for those who value a sense of place, space and community. This “sense of place” is also becoming an important factor in attracting foreign direct investment, and individual talent, to Ireland.

It is time to change the narrative about rural Ireland and highlight the vital role which rural Ireland plays - and will continue to play - in shaping Ireland’s economic success, including through its heritage and culture. People who live in rural Ireland have enormous talent, creativity and energy. Rural communities also have tremendous sense of pride and connectedness, and a capacity to work together to overcome obstacles and maximise their assets.

The aim of this Action Plan for Rural Development is to focus on these positive attributes and unlock the potential of rural Ireland through a framework of supports at national and local level. We will ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally, and access to public services and social networks that support a high quality of life.

Key targets

In delivering this framework of supports, we will:

- Support the creation of 135,000 new jobs in rural Ireland by 2020 by supporting indigenous businesses, investing €50m for collaborative approaches to job creation in the regions, and increasing Foreign Direct Investment in regional areas by up to 40%.
- Implement a range of initiatives to rejuvenate over 600 rural and regional towns, including a pilot scheme to encourage residential occupancy in town and village centres.
- Assist over 4,000 projects in rural communities to boost economic development, tackle social exclusion and provide services to people living in remote areas.
- Increase the number of visitors to rural Ireland by 12% in the next three years through targeted tourism initiatives, including increased promotion of Activity Tourism.
- Accelerate the preparation for the rollout of high-speed broadband and ensure that all homes and businesses in rural Ireland are connected to broadband as early as possible.
- Improve job opportunities for young people in rural areas by increasing the number of apprenticeships and traineeships available locally.
- Develop an Atlantic Economic Corridor to drive jobs and investment along the Western seaboard and contribute to more balanced regional development.
- Invest over €50 million in sports, recreation and cultural facilities throughout the country, including in rural areas.
- Protect vital services in rural Ireland by improving rural transport provision, enhancing rural GP services and protecting rural schools.

Realising our Rural Potential

- Introduce a range of measures to boost job creation in the Gaeltacht, including the creation of 1,500 new jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies by 2020 and the development of Innovation Hubs in the Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry Gaeltacht regions to support entrepreneurship.
- Combat rural isolation by improving connectivity and enhancing supports for older people, including significant investment in the Senior Alert scheme.
- Build safer communities by providing a more visible, effective and responsive police service in rural areas, through the recruitment of 3,200 new Garda members over the next four years to reach a strength of 15,000 members, and by introducing a new community CCTV Grant Aid Scheme.
- Improve societal cohesion and wellbeing in rural communities by supporting cultural and artistic provision and participation.

In total, this Plan contains more than 270 actions to support the economic and social development of rural Ireland. There is already a lot being done to support rural development through various Government strategies, but this Plan provides, for the first time, a visible, cohesive and coordinated approach across the whole of Government to rural development.

The Plan will benefit a wide range of stakeholders in rural Ireland – farmers and fishers, rural businesses, rural communities, and families.

Investing in the future of rural Ireland

Achieving the objectives of this Plan will be supported through targeted investment by the Government to support rural areas. Examples of investments which will support the development of rural Ireland include:

- €1.2 billion per annum in direct payments to farmers under the Common Agriculture Policy.
- €4 billion under the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme, including €250 million under the LEADER Programme.
- Up to €30 million per annum for other rural development schemes such as Town & Village Renewal, CLÁR and the Rural Recreation programme.
- Up to €80 million per annum in flood relief measures by 2019, increasing to €100 million per annum by 2021.
- €150 million in regional property programmes by IDA Ireland, to support and attract foreign direct investment.
- Up to €50 million investment by Enterprise Ireland to support collaborative approaches to job creation in the regions.
- € 37.5 million to implement the Social Inclusion and

Community Activation Programme (SICAP) in 2017 alone.

- €275 million as an initial allocation under the National Broadband Plan to bring high-speed broadband to every premises in the country.
- Additional investment in tourism assets such as Greenways, Blueways and National Parks.
- Investment in the creative arts, under the Creative Ireland Programme, including grants to all local authorities.

The publication of this Plan is only the start of the process. The Plan will be updated on a regular basis through the monitoring process, with an opportunity to add new actions every six months. This means that the Action Plan for Rural Development will be a dynamic and living document, which continuously drives the ambition for rural Ireland.

Building on the CEDRA report and the Charter for Rural Ireland

The Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) was established in November 2012 as an independent expert group to examine and report on the medium-term economic development of rural Ireland to 2025. The Commission published its report, **Energising Ireland's Rural Economy**¹, in April 2014. The report made a series of recommendations to Government that the Commission believed would support its vision of rural Ireland becoming a dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi-sectoral economy, supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a high quality of life.

Extensive consultation with local communities was carried out as part of CEDRA's work, and research undertaken by the Commission identified the key issues facing rural Ireland in the first part of the 21st century. The CEDRA report noted that addressing these issues was challenging, as the nature of many rural communities has changed through the decline of traditional rural industries and the growing connections between rural and urban areas. Nonetheless, rural Ireland has significant potential, and there is an abundance of natural, physical, and human assets available that could be better leveraged to support the economic development of rural communities.

Many of the recommendations made to Government in the CEDRA report have been implemented, including the assignment of responsibility for Rural Affairs to a senior Government Minister, the roll out of schemes such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and the Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) initiative, and the establishment of the Local Enterprise Office network.

1. See: http://www.agresearch.teagasc.ie/rerc/CEDRA/CEDRA_Report.pdf

This Action Plan will build on the CEDRA report through more than 270 actions which will support the economic and social development of rural Ireland. As part of the Action Plan, the recommendations of the CEDRA report will be reviewed to determine how best to progress any of the Commission's proposals that remain outstanding.

Following the CEDRA Report, the Charter for Rural Ireland was published in January 2016. The Charter contained a number of commitments which could help establish the foundations for the rejuvenation of the rural economy and rural society as a whole. Key amongst these was a commitment to develop a policy framework to support the economic, social and cultural development of rural Ireland. This policy framework has now found expression in the Action Plan for Rural Development which will build on the commitments contained in the Charter.

Themes and Objectives

There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to rural development. Different rural areas have different needs and require different solutions, depending on their local assets, their peripherality, population density, etc. However, there are common issues affecting rural parts of Ireland throughout the country and this Action Plan provides a cohesive structure across a range of policy areas to help support communities in rural Ireland to maximise their assets and realise their potential, leading to a better quality of life for those living in rural communities.

The Action Plan is based around five key thematic Pillars, each of which has a series of objectives and actions. The key objectives for each of the five pillars are summarised on Table 1. The actions to support each of these high level objectives are set out in subsequent sections of this Plan.

Consultation Process

This Action Plan has been developed through a consultation process with key rural stakeholders. In particular:

- A series of meetings was held with key stakeholder groups including farming groups, fishing groups, Teagasc, Macra na Féirme, Údarás na Gaeltachta, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Chambers Ireland, the Western Development Commission, the Association of Irish Local Government, Irish Rural Link and Waterways Ireland.
- Six structured workshops were held across the country with representatives from local community groups, Local Government, rural stakeholder groups, and relevant State bodies and agencies.

- An information session was provided to Oireachtas members, who were invited to submit proposals for consideration for inclusion in the Plan.
- The Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs was invited to make a submission to the process.

Each Government Department was also invited to provide inputs to the process.

The emphasis in each strand of the consultation process was on the identification of practical actions that could be taken to support economic and/or social development in rural Ireland. This process built on the work of CEDRA, which carried out extensive consultation in 2013 to identify the key issues which affect rural Ireland.

The actions included in this Plan have emerged from the consultation process outlined above, with a focus on those actions that can be delivered in the context of agreed budgetary parameters. However, advancing the economic and social development of rural Ireland is a dynamic process and the mechanism which will support the monitoring of the Plan will enable further actions to be added over its lifetime.

Better co-ordination – Better implementation

In order to support sustainable rural development there is a need for a more integrated approach across Government Departments and Agencies and at local level to rural issues. Rural development is characterised by the broad range of actors involved, from national government to local government and a variety of local organisations representing a cross-section of rural interests, including communities, households and individuals.

If we are to successfully move the rural development agenda in Ireland forward, we need to ensure that a more coordinated approach is taken to maximise the impact of the efforts of the various actors. This Action Plan builds on the model of other Government Action Plans in presenting a series of time bound actions to be implemented by a range of accountable stakeholders, including Government Departments, Agencies, and Local Authorities.

Progress on the implementation of the individual actions in the Plan will be overseen in the first instance by a Monitoring Committee which will include representatives of relevant Government Departments and key rural stakeholder interests. The Monitoring Committee will be supported by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and will meet on a regular basis. In addition, and as part of this process, the

Table 1 - Pillars and Objectives

Pillar 1: Supporting Sustainable Communities
Key Objectives: - <u>Make rural Ireland a better place in which to live and work</u> by revitalising our town and village centres through the implementation of initiatives such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR and RAPID Programmes and measures to support people to live in town centres. - <u>Enhance local services</u> in the community through the provision of support for rural GPs, through ongoing development of the primary care sector to deliver better care close to home in communities, through support for the rural post office network to adapt to a changing business environment, and through continued access to schools for children in rural Ireland. - <u>Empower Local Communities</u>, including through the development and support of the Public Participation Network and Local Community Development Committees, to ensure that a diversity of voices is heard and included in local decision-making processes and that communities continue to identify their own needs and solutions. - <u>Build better communities</u> through ongoing investment in the LEADER Programme and support vulnerable rural communities through initiatives such as the Rural Social Scheme.
Pillar 2: Supporting Enterprise and Employment
Key Objectives: - <u>Grow and attract enterprise</u> and jobs through the roll out of the eight regional Action Plans for Jobs and the development of an Atlantic Economic Corridor to promote balanced regional development. - <u>Support sectoral growth</u> the continued <u>development of the agri-food sector</u> through the implementation of Food Wise 2025 and roll out initiatives to develop the <u>renewable energy sector</u> and <u>International Financial Services</u> in rural Ireland. - Ensure rural communities have the necessary <u>skills</u> to meet the needs of the labour market and to encourage <u>innovation</u> and maximise assets. - <u>Support rural jobseekers</u> through the Intreo offices and initiatives such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, Tús and Community Employment. - <u>Support farm and fishing incomes</u> through CAP payments, the Rural Development Programme and other Government supports.
Pillar 3: Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential
Key Objectives: - Increase <u>tourist numbers to rural Ireland</u> by 12% by 2019. - Support sustainable jobs through <u>targeted rural tourism initiatives</u>, including through the support of key marketing initiatives such as Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way, as well as developing the potential of Ireland's Lakelands. - <u>Develop and promote Activity Tourism</u> in rural areas through the development of blueways, greenways and other recreational opportunities. - <u>Develop and promote our natural and built heritage</u> through investment and development of our Gaeltacht areas, enhanced promotion of our National Parks and Nature Reserves and other natural and built resources.
Pillar 4: Fostering Culture and Creativity in rural communities
Key Objectives: - <u>Increase access to the arts</u> and enhance cultural facilities in rural communities. - <u>Further develop and enhance culture and creativity</u> in rural Ireland through the establishment of culture teams and creativity hubs as part of the Creative Ireland Programme. - <u>Promote the Irish language as a key resource</u> in Gaeltacht and other rural communities.
Pillar 5: Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity
Key Objectives: - Bring high speed broadband to every premises in Ireland through the rollout of the National Broadband Plan and improve mobile phone access in rural areas. - Improve rural transport links through a review of services, support for our regional airports and investment in rural infrastructure. - Implement flood relief measures and other land management measures to protect our rural infrastructure.

Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will work closely with Departments and Agencies on an on-going basis to ensure that progress is on track. On the basis of the Monitoring Committee's work, Progress Reports will be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Regional and Rural Affairs, which is chaired by An Taoiseach, and will be published twice-yearly. The monitoring system will draw on the review processes of other key initiatives such as the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, Food Wise 2025, Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, and others.

A new Division has been established in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to co-ordinate the implementation of the Action Plan across Government and to service the Monitoring Committee.

A key feature of this Action Plan is that it will be a living document, with the capacity to add further actions over its lifetime. The Monitoring Committee meetings will also provide a forum to identify and agree further actions and to facilitate on-going discussion with stakeholders over the duration of the Plan.

Synergy with other national strategies

While the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is responsible for coordinating this Action Plan, supporting the economic and social development of rural areas is the responsibility of a range of Government Departments and agencies and local government. Many Government policies and programmes have a direct and positive impact on rural development and this Action Plan will complement and supplement a number of strategies at national and local level, including the Rural Development Programme, Harnessing our Ocean Wealth, Food Wise 2025, the National Broadband Plan, the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, the Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, and the LEADER Programme 2014-2020. A summary of key strategies and policies which are linked to, or referenced in, this Action Plan is contained at Appendix 1.

A new '*Ireland 2040 - A National Planning Framework*' (NPF) will be finalised in 2017. This will be a strategy for the place-based development of Ireland as a whole over the period to 2040 and will be the successor to the National Spatial Strategy 2002. The NPF will be the long term framework for future development and investment, including in the regions and rural Ireland. The Action Plan for Rural Development will tackle, in the short to medium term, a range of issues through focussed and specific actions. '*Ireland 2040*' will build on these actions and seek to address structural issues facing rural Ireland in the longer term, as part of an ongoing process.

Translating national aims into local actions

The Local Government sector is committed to balanced regional and rural development and the Local Authorities will be key partners in the development and delivery of the Action Plan for Rural Development. The Local Government sector is adept at delivery of social, community and economic infrastructure, including enterprise parks, access infrastructure, housing, and community facilities and amenities.

Significant work has already been undertaken by Local Authorities to plan for the development of rural and regional areas. With the establishment of the Local Community and Development Committees (LCDCs), and the adoption of the Local Community and Economic Plans by the elected members, a framework is in place in each Local Authority area to deliver a suite of initiatives designed to improve local areas, both urban and rural, as places to live, work, invest in and visit. The LCDCs comprise of elected members, representatives of the community and voluntary sector and nominees from development organisations and State Agencies. In September 2016, the Local Community and Economic Plans for each Local Authority area were launched by the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

The Local Economic and Community Plans will be aligned with the Regional Economic Spatial Strategies to be developed by the Regional Assemblies and the National Planning Framework referenced above.

A number of actions were identified throughout the consultation processes on this Action Plan, which fall under the responsibility of Local Authorities. These actions have been examined by the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and are deemed to be broadly consistent with the actions contained in the LECs. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will continue to engage with the Local Authorities to ensure that the Action Plan for Rural Development is capturing any gaps at a strategic level and is supporting the implementation of the LECs.

Rural Ireland Today

Population Distribution

The CEDRA report defined rural Ireland as “all areas located beyond the administrative boundaries of the five largest cities”. In addition to the open countryside, this definition includes large, medium and small towns. However, this broad definition does not convey the multiplicity and heterogeneous nature of rural areas and communities in Ireland. The CEDRA report also highlighted the importance of the proximity and accessibility of rural towns to Ireland’s cities and larger towns. It also referenced the social and economic influence of other towns in areas that are distant from large towns and cities.

During the period 1991-2011, the number of people living in the countryside (areas outside the cities and towns) increased by 44% (1.8 million to 2.6 million), i.e. from 51% of the population nationally to 57%. There was substantial spatial variation over the period, with some areas experiencing very large increases in population, while others experienced declines in population.

In general, rural areas close or accessible to the main cities and larger towns experienced substantial and sustained growth in their populations. Those areas that showed a decline in population between 1991 and 2011 tended to be more remote or less accessible to towns and cities. High proportions of the population in these more remote areas were in older age cohorts. Many left school before the age of 18. This points to the impact of migration from these areas of younger people with higher levels of education and also to the inability of these rural areas to attract (younger) people with higher levels of education.

Census 2016

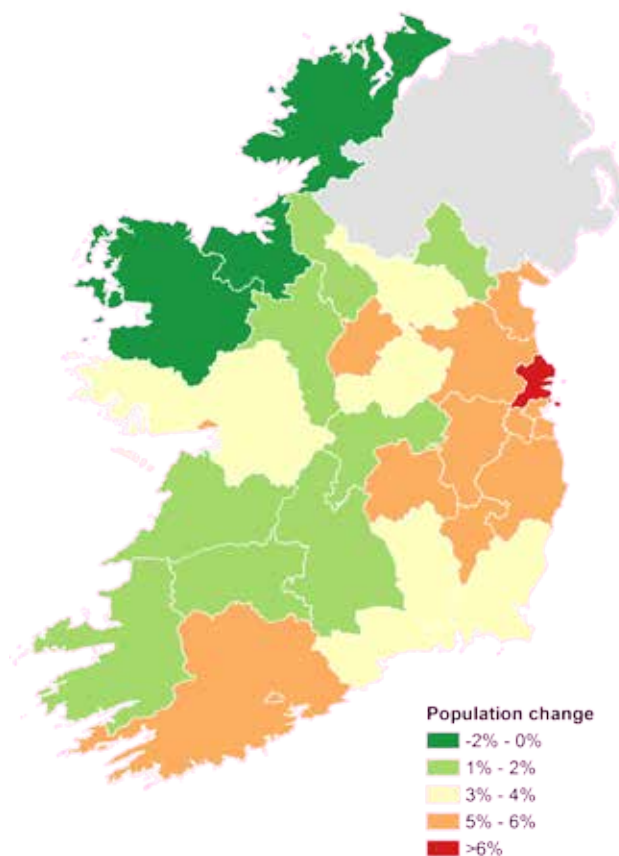
The preliminary results of the 2016 Census shows that the State has a population of 4,757,976 people - an increase of 169,724 people, or 3.7%, since April 2011.

Population change varied widely across the country, ranging from an increase of over 8% in Fingal, to a decrease of -1.5 per cent in Donegal. Among the fastest growing counties were the four administrative areas of Dublin, along with the commuter belt counties of Meath, Kildare and Laois, and the cities of Cork and Galway. While most counties experienced some level of population growth, three counties witnessed population decline over

the five years: Donegal (-1.5%), Mayo (-0.2%) and Sligo (-0.1%). Three other counties grew by less than 1 per cent: South Tipperary (+0.72%), Roscommon (+0.58%) and Leitrim (+0.55%).

Fig. 1 shows the population change by county over the period 2011-2016. With the exception of Cork, the contrast in population change between the East and West of the country is clearly illustrated.

Fig. 1 - Population Change by county 2011-2016



Source: CSO and OSI

Mapping the changes in population at the level of Electoral Districts (EDs) indicates that places close to larger towns and the cities recorded population growth, whilst those distant from or inaccessible to those places have, in general, witnessed population decline. This is in keeping with past trends.

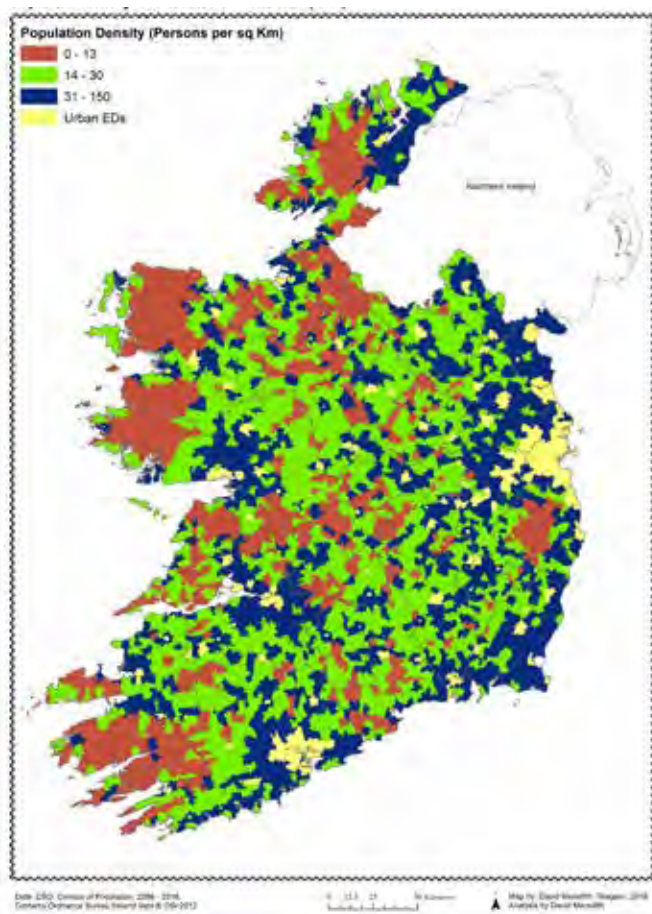
There are different classifications of population densities

which is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

1. Very low density: less than 13 persons per km²
2. Medium density: 14-29 persons per km²
3. Above average rural density: greater than 30 persons per km²
4. Urban: population density greater than 150 persons per km²

This map again reflects the very low population densities predominantly in the Western side of the country.

Fig. 2 - Population Density of Rural Electoral Divisions (2016)



Source: Teagasc

Social and economic drivers of population change

For some rural areas that are distant from or less accessible to larger towns and cities, the absence of jobs encourages outward migration and discourages immigration of younger people. For other rural areas, particularly those close to larger towns and cities, the

concentration of employment in these places has resulted in substantial population increases.

Two social trends in particular have a direct impact on rural economic and social development: greater participation of school leavers in 3rd level education, and increasing numbers of dual-income households.

Growth of participation in 3rd level education

Participation in higher education affects population settlement patterns in two ways. Firstly, the uneven spatial distribution of 3rd level institutions will, for those students distant from such facilities, necessitate relocating where they live. This has the effect of drawing young people out of rural areas. Secondly, on graduation, these individuals find that their return to either their own community or some types of rural areas is limited due to the absence of employment opportunities. Employment opportunities tend to be largely concentrated in or near urban centres.

The dual income household

Female participation in the labour force increased from 32% to 54% between 1986 and 2011. Employment opportunities for women tend to be concentrated in towns and cities. As a consequence, women in work tend to live in, or relatively close to, towns and cities. This residential choice, for many, is taken in the context of the household, i.e. it is not solely based on the travel-to-work needs of one member of a household. Contemporary households need to be located in places where there is access to both spouse's workplace. This is particularly true of households where the couple each have a 3rd level qualification. These developments account for the fact that most people with a 3rd level qualification live in or near a town or city.

Emigration

Research undertaken by University College Cork (UCC) Geography Department in 2013 established that migration is most keenly felt in rural areas. This work established that 27% of households living in the countryside had experienced the direct emigration of at least one family member since 2006. This contrasted with urban and accessible countryside areas where the corresponding emigration figure was 15-17% of households.

The 2016 Census established that a majority of counties experienced population loss to migration over the five year period 2011 to 2016, as illustrated in Fig 3.

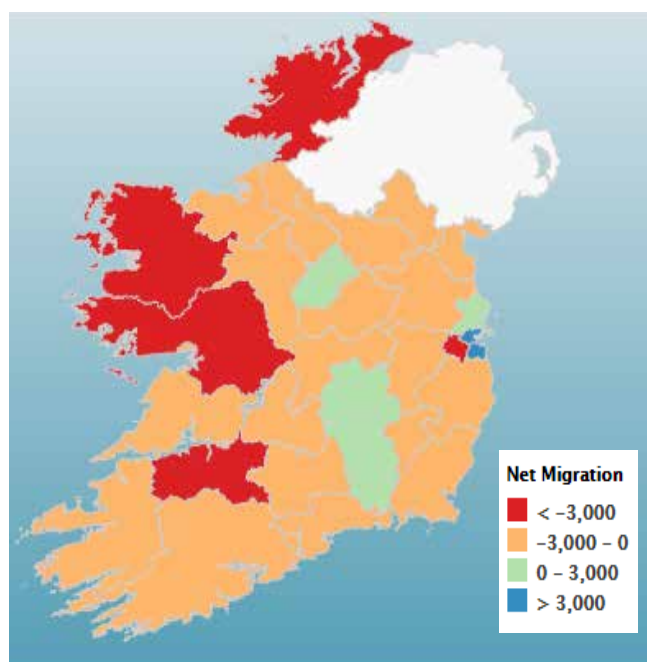
The figures for net migration vary widely, from -6,731 in

Donegal, to + 7,257 in Dublin City. Dublin City and Cork City, along with the administrative area of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, were the only Local Authority areas to experience net inflows of any meaningful magnitude. Fingal (875), Laois (285), Longford (178) and Kilkenny (127) showed marginal increases.

All other areas experienced net outflows, with Galway County (-3,168), Limerick County (-3,375) and Mayo (-3,246) also showing large losses, along with South Dublin (-4,271).

It is important to note that these figures represent not only the net movement of all persons into and out of the country, but also the net movements between counties within Ireland. One of the objectives of this Action Plan and the Regional Action Plans for Jobs is to increase employment opportunities across all regions of Ireland and improve connectivity to rural areas to enable people to continue to live and work in rural Ireland if they wish to do so.

Fig. 3 – Net Migration



Source: CSO and OSI

Employment

The CEDRA report noted that rural communities experienced the negative impacts of the economic crisis due largely to their heavy reliance on declining employment sectors, particularly the construction industry, with the result that unemployment in rural areas increased by 192% between 2006 and 2011, compared to 114% in urban centres. A more current picture will emerge when full details of the 2016 Census are available in the first half of 2017.

Decline in traditional industries combined with a general inability to retain or attract sufficient population has denuded the critical social and economic capacity of some rural areas. It has left them with relatively weak industrial structures, exposed them to consolidation of various economic sectors, with high levels of persistent unemployment and emigration.

However, there are also distinctive subgroups of rural areas, e.g. rural areas with strong agri-food economies or other sectoral clusters, that are transitioning from an agrarian based economy to increasing dependence on the services sector.

Ultimately, strong regions provide the basis for improving the economic opportunity and jobs potential of rural areas. Since 2011, employment has increased in each of the 8 administrative (NUTS III) regions of the country. The Unemployment Rate has fallen to single-digit figures in most regions. One of the key objectives of this Plan is to increase employment by 135,000 in the regions outside of Dublin – i.e. predominantly in rural areas.

Challenges and opportunities for rural Ireland

Challenges

While the objective of this Action Plan is to realise the potential of rural Ireland by implementing the measures contained in the Plan, there are a number of challenges facing rural communities in Ireland today. These issues, and the challenges in achieving sustainable rural development, have been well-documented over the last number of years, most recently in the 2014 CEDRA report. The challenges include difficulties in accessing sustainable employment opportunities, the ongoing trend of migration away from many rural areas, rural crime and rural depopulation. Rural depopulation has also been an aggravating factor in the rise of social isolation in some rural areas.

The ongoing challenge of young people migrating to Ireland's cities and overseas means a loss of talent and potential entrepreneurs in rural communities. It deprives some rural areas of a section of the population that would act as a key driver of commerce for many years to come. The depletion of such a key demographic in terms of economic activity has also contributed to the decline of some rural town centres. Many rural towns and villages have also suffered from the rise of large shopping centres on their outskirts and the consequent hollowing out of commercial activity in rural town centres. Depopulation has also created difficulties in terms of the demand for local services in rural areas. As the populations of rural towns and villages and their environs have diminished, so too has the demand for services such as local post

offices. As capital investment is to some extent driven by population projections, this too has meant that investment in road, rail and other infrastructure has not taken place in some rural areas and has hindered their capacity to compete for industrial investment and other employment opportunities.

Brexit

The biggest challenge facing rural Ireland is potentially the impact of the United Kingdom's decision to exit the European Union. The precise nature and scale of the impact of Brexit on the Irish economy will depend on a number of factors, many of which will only become clear over the coming months and will be determined by the terms of the UK's withdrawal from, and future relations with, the EU.

In 2014, the UK accounted for just under €14 billion, or 15%, of Ireland's goods exports, and €20 billion, or 20%, of our services exports. Pharmachem and Food & Beverage are by some distance the two largest export sectors in terms of value in the economy. Total Irish agri-food exports were worth close to €12 billion in 2015. The UK is the top export destination for this sector, with agri-food exports in 2015 worth over €5.1 billion, or 43% of total agri-food exports. This makes the UK market more important to the Irish agri-food sector than is the case for other sectors of the Irish economy. Some sectors are particularly dependent on the UK market, including beef (51% of export value), pigmeat (60%) and poultry (84%). The prepared consumer foods category is almost completely dependent on the UK market, as is commercial horticulture, particularly in the mushroom sector. Food and Beverage employs around 50,000 people, with over 80% of employment outside of Dublin. The total agri-food sector, including primary farming and fishing, employs around 163,000 people².

Given the importance of the Food and Beverage sector to employment in rural Ireland, with significant employment in primary production also, the potential exposure of rural Ireland to the trade impact of Brexit is high, particularly in rural areas along the border.

With regard to the services sector, tourism faces particular challenges from Brexit. Approximately 40% of trips to Ireland by overseas visitors are undertaken by UK residents. The sector is also sensitive to exchange rate changes which have been impacted by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Excluding the Pharmachem sector, the sectors of the economy most exposed to the impact of Brexit are mostly Irish owned, regionally based, have relatively low profit margins and have a greater share of small and

medium-sized enterprises. In addition, they account for a relatively high share of employment in regions which already have experienced a slower labour market recovery since the financial crisis period. Rural Ireland is particularly dependent on these sectors and is less well-placed to be able to replace businesses that ultimately may be lost, or to benefit from new opportunities that may arise, as a result of Brexit.

The Government has put in place a number of structural and other arrangements to ensure a whole-of-Government response to Brexit, including a new Cabinet Committee which is overseeing the overall Government response.

An inter-Departmental Group has also been formed and has established a number of Sub-Groups to examine different aspects of the potential impact of Brexit, including in relation to Financial Services, Agri-food, Education and Tourism. Relevant Departments, agencies and Irish overseas offices are also being strengthened to ensure that they are fit for purpose in dealing with Brexit issues. There is continued engagement with other EU leaders and Governments and the EU institutions on the matter.

As part of this Action Plan, a specific piece of research will be commissioned on the impact of Brexit on rural areas, and particularly rural areas in the Border region.

Opportunities

While Brexit will undoubtedly pose considerable challenges to rural areas in some sectors of the economy, significant opportunities may also arise in manufacturing, financial services and the attraction of foreign direct investment on foot of the UK exit. Rural towns and their hinterlands will be well placed to avail of these opportunities with the aid of digital technology.

The rollout of the National Broadband Plan has the capacity to deliver significant economic benefits to rural Ireland. It is equivalent in importance to the Rural Electrification Scheme in terms of its importance for the future vitality of rural Ireland. Under the Plan, the Government has committed to delivering a high-speed broadband network to more than 750,000 premises which will not be serviced on a purely commercial basis, covering 100,000 kilometres of road network and 96% of the land area of the country. This will open up rural Ireland to further economic investment and allow its inhabitants and businesses to enjoy the benefits of access to the digital economy and the enterprise opportunities available.

While the size of the Agriculture sector has diminished in terms of its overall share of the economy, the sector itself

2. Source: Food Wise 2025"

Realising our Rural Potential

remains strong and Ireland's excellent reputation as a food producer has been capitalised upon further through the development of agri-food and other value-added industries. This sector retains the capacity for further growth and rural Ireland will directly benefit from developments in this area. Other sectors of potential growth include Tourism (with an emphasis on increasing the share from newer markets) and Renewable Energy, while construction in rural areas will benefit from investments through the Capital Investment Plan and the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

In addition, rural communities benefit from a relatively unspoilt environment containing some of the most spectacular landscapes and collections of flora and fauna in the world. This is further supported by one of the richest legacies of built heritage to be found in any developed country, with over 140,000 archaeological monuments recorded across Ireland's landscape representing every period of human history.

Ireland's heritage affords a huge comparative advantage in terms of our tourism offering over those of most other countries and this has been reflected in the growth of the tourism industry in recent years. This can be further built upon, and initiatives such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East provide a blueprint for ensuring that additional visitors come to rural areas of Ireland. Additional tourist numbers can also be generated by our superb food and drink offering and the development of greenways and blueways across the country will also help us to tap into the growing activity tourism market. This Action Plan specifically targets the development of activity-based tourism in rural areas.

Supporting Sustainable Communities



Case Study

Supporting Sustainable Communities: Ray Community Group

The Ray Community Group, based in the townland nestled between the larger towns of Rathmullan, Ramelton, Milford and Kerrykeel in Co. Donegal, has been to the fore in local and community development in its area for a number of years.

Over that period, the group has worked tirelessly to provide recreation and sporting opportunities for the community, including playing fields, dressing rooms and a tennis court, all funded through small grants and fundraising activities carried out within the community. The group's vision was that a new community centre would form a hub in the heart of the community and would provide a much needed social boost to the area.

"Yes we had a big vision and some people thought it was too big for a small community such as ours, but we knew we could fulfil our goal of building a centre for our community" – Fiona Boyle, Chairperson of Ray Community Group.

"...we knew we could fulfil our goal of building a centre for our community"

With the support of LEADER, the Group planned and delivered a new community centre that acts as a resource for all members of the community by providing a space for a wide range of recreational activities and services, allowing them to secure the long term

sustainability and viability of their small rural community. The Group was actively involved in the planning and construction phase and continue to be involved in the running of the centre. They employ one Tús participant on a part-time basis in the role of Office

Administrator and they also employ a care-taker. The Group aims to employ more people in the future.

"Most of us went to school together and now we are rearing our families here. While other communities are suffering depopulation and emigration, we are witnessing the opposite" – Marianne Buchanan, Assistant Chairperson of the Ray Community Group.



Contract signing: Included in photo is Chairperson of Ray Community Fiona Boyle, accompanied by committee members with Frank Kelly Rural Development Manager and Sinead Mc Laughlin, Leader Project officer.



Pillar 1:

Supporting Sustainable Communities

Key Objectives:

- Make rural Ireland a better place in which to live and work by revitalising our town and village centres through the implementation of initiatives such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR and RAPID Programmes and measures to support people to live in town centres.
- Enhance local services in the community through the provision of support for rural GPs, through ongoing development of the primary care sector to deliver better care close to home in communities, through support for the rural post office network and through continued access to schools for children in rural Ireland.
- Empower Local Communities, including through the development and support of the Public Participation Network and Local Community Development Committees, to ensure that a diversity of voices is heard and included in local decision-making processes and that communities continue to identify their own needs and solutions.
- Build better communities through ongoing investment in the LEADER Programme and support vulnerable rural communities through initiatives such as the Rural Social Scheme.

In the case of all of the actions which follow in this Plan, the body listed first against each action is the lead body for the delivery of that action, unless otherwise indicated.

Making Rural Ireland a better place to live

Our towns and villages are at the heart of rural communities and should be places where people can live, work, access services and raise their families in a high quality environment.

The effects of the recession have been severe in many of our rural towns and villages, with the loss of small businesses and the migration of people to bigger towns and cities. It is important therefore, that we implement

measures to help breath life back into our rural towns and villages and enable them to become vibrant places where people socialise, live and work. The rejuvenation of towns and villages will be supported under this Action Plan through schemes such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR Programme and initiatives to encourage people to reside in town centres. Rebuilding Ireland, the Government's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, will deliver 47,000 new social houses across the country up to 2021 and will help those who are in need of housing in rural parts of Ireland.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
1	Support over 600 towns and villages through an enhanced Town and Village Renewal Scheme, with funding of up to €12 million per annum, to support their revitalisation, boost their potential to support increased economic activity and improve the living and working environment of rural dwellers.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA, LAs
2	Develop and pilot an initiative to encourage increased residential occupancy in town and village centres.	Q3 2017	DAHRRGA, LAs, DHPCLG

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
3	Complementing the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, roll out the National Town Centre Health Check Programme in selected rural towns across Ireland to maximise the contribution of important facilities and assets within rural towns, in particular heritage resources.	Q2 2017	DAHRRGA, Heritage Council, RGDATA, Irish Planning Institute, Irish Landscape Institute, Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland, LAs, 3rd Level Institutions
4	Finalise and implement the recommendations of the Framework for Town Centre Revival to assist with the regeneration of rural towns.	2017-2019	DJEI, Retail Consultation Forum
5	As part of Rebuilding Ireland, the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, support all local authorities to respond to the needs of their communities and deliver 47,000 new social homes which should also stimulate construction and other economic activities on a local and regional basis.	2017-2021	DHPCLG, LAS
6	Review planning legislation to allow the change of use of vacant commercial properties in cities, towns and villages, including vacant or under-utilised areas over ground floor premises, into residential units without having to go through the planning process.	2017	DHPCLG, LAs
7	Increase delivery of small housing schemes in towns and villages as an alternative to one-off housing.	2017	DHPCLG, LAs
8	Based on an examination by the Working Group on Urban Renewal, review the Derelict Sites Legislation with a view to assisting in the revitalisation of towns and villages.	Q4 2017	DHPCLG, LAs
9	Consider the relative requirements and identify appropriate targets for an additional Rural Resettlement Initiative as a measure to facilitate wider re-utilisation of existing housing stock.	2017	DHPCLG, LAs
10	Launch a new phase of the CLÁR Programme in 2017, with funding of €5m, to support small infrastructural projects in rural areas experiencing depopulation.	2017	DAHRRGA, LAs, Údarás na Gaeltachta
11	Expand the Tidy Towns Competition with a view to increasing the level of support available to applicants and the addition of a number of new categories and/or elements to the competition.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
12	Provide support for An Taisce National Spring Clean to heighten awareness of litter and waste issues and recycle and reuse where possible.	Ongoing	DCCAE
13	Support a built heritage investment scheme of an estimated €6m between 2017 and 2019, which supports employment of skilled and experienced craft workers, tradespeople and conservation professionals to invest in and assist in the conservation and re-use of heritage structures to help drive the regeneration of urban and rural areas.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
14	Implement the GLAS Traditional Farm buildings grant scheme to help in the conservation of traditional farm outbuildings as a support to rural communities.	2017-2019	Heritage Council, DAFM
15	Make use of the new RAPID programme to provide small scale seed financing for capital and small scale infrastructure projects of a regenerative nature in disadvantaged areas, including provincial towns.	2017	DHPCLG, Pobal, LAs, LCDCs
16	Implement the Health & Safety Authority's Farm Safety Action Plan 2016-2018, with a focus on high risk activities such as tractor and machinery use, livestock handling, and forestry and timber work on farms, as well as the development of new ways of improving farmer skill levels, particularly around risk identification and management. Measures will include the promotion of farm safety through targeted awareness campaigns, farm inspections and training courses.	2017-2018	HSA
17	Prioritise farm safety through knowledge transfer and inclusion of farm safety measures through knowledge transfer schemes.	Ongoing	DAFM
18	Provide support for an estimated 1,700 small-scale environmental projects under the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund to promote sustainable development at local level.	2017-2019	DCCAE
19	Provide funding for Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Information Services, as well as national organisations such as Volunteer Ireland, which aims to strengthen those organisations and foster a culture of volunteering in Ireland, including to the benefit of rural communities and community-based organisations.	Ongoing	DHPCLG

Enhancing Local Services

The availability of public services at a local level is an important factor in supporting the quality of life for those who live in rural areas. Local services such as healthcare, schools and financial services are important, not just in terms of what they offer to clients, but also in terms of acting as a hub for social activity in the community. Healthcare services enable older people, in particular, to continue to live in their communities, through a range of primary and social care supports.

A range of Government strategies and initiatives will be taken to support local services, including the implementation of the agreement with the Irish Medical Organisation which will help to increase rural GP services.

The ongoing reform of the primary care sector will bring a consistency to how services, including those in rural communities, are delivered across the country. Supports will also be provided to improve mental well-being, which can be an issue for those who feel isolated in rural areas.

Other actions which will help to enhance local services include ensuring that no small school closes against the wishes of parents, developing guidelines for schools to facilitate, where feasible, the use of their buildings outside of school hours, a new funding scheme for youth services, and the implementation of actions to support the Post Office Network arising out of the report of the Post Office Renewal Board and the Post Office Hub Working Group.

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
20	Oversee and monitor the implementation of actions to support the Post Office Network, arising out of the report of the Post Office Renewal Board and the Post Office Hub Working Group.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, An Post and relevant Government Departments
21	Continue to support the use of rural post offices for the delivery of payment services such as social welfare payments.	Ongoing	DSP
22	Develop a strategy for the growth and development of the credit union sector, which is an important resource in rural Ireland, and ensure that credit unions benefit from regulatory support, in order to respond to the needs of a changing economy.	Ongoing	DoF
23	Investigate the potential of the German Sparkassen model and the Kiwibank model for the development of local public banks that operate in defined regions.	2017	DAHRRGA, DoF, An Post, ILCU
24	Increase the number of GPs in rural areas by 2019 through the implementation of the agreement reached with the IMO on rural GP practices, which covers changes in the qualifying criteria for rural support, an increase in the rural practice allowance and an amendment of the special items of service covered.	Ongoing	HSE, DoH
25	In line with the Connecting for Life Programme, provide support for local strategies across rural Ireland to address suicide and improve mental wellbeing.	2017-2019	HSE, DoH
26	Consider the treatment of family farms and small businesses in relation to the 'Fair Deal' Nursing Homes Support Scheme.	2017	DoH
27	Continue the rollout of a multi-year programme of investment worth €435m for circa 90 projects in public nursing home facilities and district and community hospitals in rural areas which could provide up to 5,000 construction-related jobs during their delivery.	Ongoing up to 2021	HSE, DoH
28	Deliver 18 new primary care centres in rural Ireland and support the establishment of primary care teams to allow people to avail of a comprehensive range of health and social care services in their local areas, including access to ultrasound services.	2018	HSE
29	Plan and resource the Primary Care workforce, including GPs, community nursing and allied health professionals, to address the health and social care needs of the population in rural communities, in conjunction with a wider range of network services.	Ongoing	HSE
30	Building on the current number of 14 Community Intervention Teams (CITs), support the full nationwide access to CIT services to facilitate the treatment of patients in their own local community, whether in the patient's home, primary care centres or public or private nursing homes.	Ongoing	HSE

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
31	Enhance supports for older people in rural areas through the network of Day Care Centres, continued provision of grant aid to the voluntary sector and through the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy to support older people in staying healthy and involved in their local communities.	2017-2019	HSE, DoH
32	Maintain the network of senior helplines in operation throughout the country, which offer a listening service for older people provided by trained older volunteers, and help address issues such as loneliness and isolation in rural areas.	Ongoing	HSE, LAs, local communities check with Health
33	Support the role of schools in communities across the country by revising protocols to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents and facilitate amalgamations where desirable.	2017 onwards	DES and School Patrons
34	Engage with relevant education stakeholders and school property owners to develop guidelines for schools to facilitate, where feasible, the use of school buildings out-of-hours.	2017	DES and School Patrons
35	Develop a new funding scheme for youth services in line with the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes, which will help support the provision of such services across the country.	2017	DCYA
36	Expand provision of affordable childcare through the implementation of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, which will assist in delivering greater accessibility to childcare services across the country.	Q4 2017	DCYA

Empowering Local Communities

Rural communities need to have their voices heard on national and local policy issues that have a direct effect on their lives. They also need to be enabled to share best practice and learnings from community development initiatives at local level.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 introduced new structures and broader functions for Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies. A new emphasis is being

placed on promoting the effective participation of local communities in local government matters, including through the Public Participation Network and the Local Community Development Committees. At national level, also, there needs to be a greater emphasis on the potential impact of proposed policy initiatives on rural Ireland. Key actions to ensure that the views of local and rural communities are taken into consideration in the development of national and local policy proposals are set out below.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
37	Develop the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) to ensure all local groups can input to local decision making processes by: - Providing funding for a Resource Worker for each PPN; - Providing a database for each PPN's registered local community organisations; - Rolling out local training and capacity building; - Developing and improving a practical PPN User Guide; and - Establishing a National PPN Advisory Group, fully representative of all PPN stakeholders.	2017-2019	DHPCLG, LAs
38	Consult extensively with the PPN Network and sectoral interests in developing Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.	Ongoing	Regional Assemblies

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
39	Implement the Framework Policy on Local & Community Development to ensure greater participation of rural communities in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of policies, strategies and interventions.	Q2 2017 to end 2019	DHPCLG, other relevant Government Departments, State Agencies and LAs
40	Engage with local communities on water quality projects through the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office.	Ongoing	DHPCLG, LAs
41	Through the National Dialogue for Climate Change, ensure that rural communities have a key role in contributing to our transition to a environmentally sustainable, climate resilient, low carbon economy.	Q1 2017	DCCAE
42	As part of the Energy White Paper, roll out a range of actions to increase the engagement with and participation of citizens and communities in rural areas, to allow for greater involvement in the planning of energy infrastructure in their local areas.	Ongoing	DCCAE
43	As part of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015-2020, support Government Departments and State agencies to involve children and young people appropriately in policies relating to the planning and development of rural communities.	Ongoing	DCYA, relevant Departments and Agencies
44	Develop a new and effective rural proofing model which will ensure that rural development issues are considered in the decision-making processes of all Government Departments, State bodies and agencies.	Q4 2017	DAHRRGA, Department of the Taoiseach
45	Ensure that, in developing the new National Planning Framework, the long-term needs of rural Ireland are taken into account.	2017	DHPCLG, DAHRRGA
46	Work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other relevant stakeholders to identify research needs in relation to rural and regional development to inform policy formulation and implementation.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA, HEIs

Building Better Communities

Improving the quality of life of those who live and work in rural communities is a key objective of this Action Plan. To support this objective, a range of actions will be delivered, as set out below, to support community development, strengthen social inclusion, and to help improve the thermal standards of homes and community premises through energy efficiency grants.

The Sports Capital Programme will provide funding to clubs the length and breadth of Ireland and support the well-being of people of all ages through their participation in sports activities. The Men's Sheds movement, which has grown significantly in recent years, will also provide

space where men can participate in their communities and learn new skills.

It is important that people who live in rural areas feel safe and secure in their communities. In this context, a range of measures will be taken to address crime prevention, including by ensuring that Gardaí are mobile, visible and responsive in the community. 3,200 new Garda members will be recruited over the next four years to reach a strength of 15,000 members. Other supports will be provided through schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch, Text Alert and Seniors Alert. A new Community CCTV grant aid scheme will also be introduced.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
47	Deliver the LEADER measure of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, with funding of €250m to support economic development and job creation, social inclusion and the environment in rural areas.	2017-2020	DAHRRGA, Leader Local Action Groups, LAs, LDCs, Údarás na Gaeltachta
48	Invest €12m in 7 Fisheries Local Action Groups in coastal communities to support a wide range of initiatives targeting job creation, social inclusion, tourism, community regeneration and market development around our coastline.	2017-2020	DAFM
49	Invest €37.5m to implement the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, SICAP, as the main social inclusion programme of Government to support 2,800 local community groups, including low income workers and young people not in education, employment or training, and support lifelong and community education opportunities for disadvantaged communities and individuals.	Ongoing to end 2017	DHPCLG, LAs, Pobal, LCDCs
50	Provide 500 additional places on the Rural Social Scheme which employs the skills of farmers and fishermen to provide services which benefit rural communities.	2017	DSP, Údarás na Gaeltachta
51	Continue the implementation of supports for Social Farming which offers, on a voluntary basis, farming and horticultural participation to people who avail of a range of therapeutic day support services.	Ongoing	DAFM
52	Through the Better Energy Homes Scheme, provide over €300m in grants to householders to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, while supporting over 2,000 jobs and helping make approximately 46,500 rural homes more environmentally sustainable.	2017-2019	DCCAE, SEAI
53	Through the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme, deliver approximately 15,500 energy efficiency upgrades to people living in energy poverty in rural areas, while also boosting regional employment and helping make rural homes more environmentally sustainable.	2017-2019	DCCAE, SEAI
54	Through the Sustainable Energy Communities Network, deliver approximately 700 rural community and premises upgrades.	2017-2019	DCCAE, SEAI
55	Continue to implement the Better Energy Communities scheme which provides competitive funding to community energy projects all over Ireland.	Ongoing	DCCAE, SEAI
56	Recruit 800 Gardai per year, achieving an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.	2017-2021	DJE, An Garda Síochána
57	The Garda Inspectorate, on behalf of the Policing Authority, will examine the dispersement and use of resources available to the Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities and make recommendations to provide a more effective, visible and responsive policing service.	2017-2018	Policing Authority, Garda Síochána Inspectorate

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
58	Launch a pilot scheme to reopen six Garda stations both urban and rural, to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order. The results of this pilot will feed into the wider review of resources being overseen by the Policing Authority.	2017	An Garda Síochána, DJE
59	Continue to support and prioritise community crime prevention schemes including Neighbourhood Watch and the Text Alert Scheme.	Ongoing	DJE, An Garda Síochána
60	Introduce a new Community CCTV Grant Aid Scheme which will benefit both urban and rural communities.	2017	DJE
61	Significantly invest in the Seniors Alert Scheme, which facilitates valuable community based support for vulnerable older people living alone, particularly those in isolated rural communities, by providing grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of personal monitored alarms to enable them to live securely in their own homes.	Ongoing	DHPCLG, Pobal
62	As part of the Government's Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, invest €46m in a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose Garda fleet over the lifetime of the Plan, to provide the Gardaí with additional high-powered vehicles to ensure that Gardaí are mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.	2017-2021	An Garda Síochána, DJE
63	As part of An Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme, a new computer-aided dispatch will be developed to ensure responsive and co-ordinated deployment of Gardaí in the community.	2017-2021	An Garda Síochána, DJE
64	Rollout the new Community Facilities Fund, announced in Budget 2017, which will invest over €2m in rural and urban areas, to enhance communities, address disadvantage and improve social cohesion at local level.	2017	DHPCLG, LAs, LCDCs
65	Invest €30m in sports and community facilities around the country through the Sports Capital Programme.	2017	DTTAS
66	Support the sustainability of 450 Men's Sheds across rural Ireland which provide a safe space where men can gather and participate in their communities, develop social networks and potentially gain new skills and access information.	2017-2019	Irish Men's Shed Association, HSE
67	Promote the health, wellbeing and skills of up to 15,000 men through the 'Sheds for Life' programme.	2017-2019	Irish Men's Shed Association, HSE

Supporting Enterprise & Employment



Case Study

Supporting Enterprise and Employment: Macroom Buffalo Cheese Products

Johnny Lynch is a farmer and cheese producer from Kilnamartery, Co. Cork, where he has a farm. Tired of producing milk for low prices, Johnny bought 15 water buffalos for the farm in Kilnamartery in 2009. Johnny now has a total of 200 buffalos. With a new cheese production facility on the farm, he and cheese expert Seán Ferry began producing cheese from the farm's buffalo milk. The types of cheese produced are Mozzarella, Ricotta and Halloumi. No other company in Ireland is currently making these products from buffalo milk. The company won the gold prize from Bord Bia in 2016 for the Mozzarella and Ricotta it produces.

The cheese produced by Macroom Buffalo Cheese Products is available throughout the country in supermarkets on a wholesale basis and at farmers' markets.

Now in the second year of cheese production, the Macroom Buffalo Cheese Products company has also begun attracting international attention. They recently accomplished a great achievement at the 2016 World



Cheese Awards in San Sebastian, Spain, winning one of the gold medals for their mozzarella cheese. The interest in the cheese is such that Johnny and his staff are always under pressure to meet demand, even though production has increased year-on-year.

An important part of the company's success in the domestic market is the support received from Údarás na Gaeltachta in areas such as training and development grants and consultancy, research and development supports. This award demonstrates the standard of food product that can be delivered globally from our rural Gaeltacht areas thanks to the hard work of our producers and the support and cooperation that Údarás na Gaeltachta can provide.

The company now employs nine people in the rural Gaeltacht area of Kilnamartery and a strategic expansion is now planned for the years ahead due to this global award and the support received from Údarás na Gaeltachta.



Photo Credits: Valerie O'Sullivan and Macroom Buffalo Cheese Products

Pillar 2:

Supporting Enterprise & Employment

Key Objectives:

- Grow and attract enterprise and jobs through the implementation of the eight regional Action Plans for Jobs and the development of an Atlantic Economic Corridor to promote balanced regional development
- Support sectoral growth through the continued development of the agri-food sector through the implementation of Food Wise 2025 and roll out initiatives to develop the renewable energy sector and International Financial Services sector in rural Ireland.
- Ensure rural communities have the necessary skills to meet the needs of the labour market and to encourage innovation and maximise assets.
- Support rural jobseekers through the Intreo offices and initiatives such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, Tús and Community Employment
- Support farm and fishing incomes through CAP payments, the Rural Development Programme and other Government supports.

Growing and Attracting Enterprise

Strong regions provide the basis for improving economic opportunities and jobs potential in rural areas. Increased job opportunities across the regions will provide increased income for rural dwellers and boost local economic activity. The Government's objective is to support the creation of 200,000 extra jobs in the economy by 2020, with 135,000 of those jobs outside of Dublin. The regional Action Plans for Jobs, which are co-ordinated by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, will play a key role in improving the operating environment for businesses so that enterprises can start-up, grow and create employment.

Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland have placed a renewed focus on investing in and supporting enterprises at regional level. In 2016, 52% of all jobs created by IDA client companies were based outside of Dublin, while 65% of

jobs created by Enterprise Ireland companies were located outside the Dublin region. Both of these agencies will continue to focus on supporting job creation in the regions over the period of this Plan. Further job creation measures will be supported through the Local Enterprise Office network, Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Shannon Group, strategies such as Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, and the development of a plan for Ireland to become a hub for Film, TV drama and Animation. The Government will also develop and publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise under this Pillar which will encompass the full range of activity in this sector.

Developing an Atlantic Economic Corridor to promote more balanced regional development will also be a key action to support enterprise growth and job creation in the western part of the country, while supports will be provided to companies to meet the challenges of Brexit.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
68	Implement eight regional Action Plans for Jobs to facilitate each region to achieve its economic potential and raise its employment levels and monitor the impact of these Plans on rural Ireland.	2017-2018	DJEI
69	Provide investment of up to €50m over the period to 2020 to support collaborative approaches to boost enterprise and job creation across the regions. This competitive funding is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in every part of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional strengths.	2017-2020	Enterprise Ireland

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
70	Increase FDI in each of the 8 NUTS III regional areas by 30-40% in the period to 2019.	Ongoing to Q4 2019	IDA
71	As part of the IDA's €150m property investment programme, complete the construction of three new advance buildings in Tralee, Castlebar and Sligo and accelerate the development of six new advance buildings in Limerick, Dundalk, Galway, Athlone, Carlow and Waterford.	2017-2019	IDA
72	Support the creation of 500 new jobs per annum and continue to maintain existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research and pre-commercialisation units in the life sciences, food and business support services and creative enterprise sectors, as well as for community development initiatives.	2017-2019	Údarás na Gaeltachta
73	Through the LEOs, strengthen local enterprise development and job creation with the following supports, which include indicative projections ³ , on an annual basis, for outside Dublin: - 1,400 jobs through Measure 1 approvals - 2,800 Start Your Own Business (SYOB) participants - 23,000 participants on LEO training courses - 2,100 mentoring participants - 18,500 Student Enterprise Awards participants - 350 MicroFinance Ireland (MFI) loan applications	2017-2019	LEOs, EI
74	Continue to build on the LEO Communications Strategy to communicate the range of supports and services available at local level.	Ongoing	LEOs, EI
75	Determine the feasibility of enabling Local Authorities to introduce rates alleviation schemes to support rural development policy objectives.	End 2017	DHPCLG, DAHRRGA
76	Conduct a revaluation of commercial properties in nine rural counties to ensure fairness and equity in the levying of commercial rates on business with a view to rolling out to further counties in 2017.	2017	DJE
77	As part of the National Planning Framework, develop planning guidance for a positive approach to enterprise development in rural areas, where appropriate.	2017	DHPCLG
78	Progress the proposal for an Atlantic Economic Corridor to attract Irish and multinational investment, and grow jobs and economic opportunities in the western regions in the context of the new National Planning Framework.	2017-2018	DAHRRGA, relevant Departments and Agencies and private bodies
79	Implement Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth which aims to double the value of the blue economy and deliver 29,000 additional jobs across the various maritime sectors.	Ongoing	DAFM

3. The above projections are based on preliminary outturn data for 2016 and are subject to revision on foot of actual outturn. In addition, actual targets for the LEOs are set on an annual basis and take into account past performances as well as broad economic context which is subject to change.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
80	Introduce a Marine Development and Investment Strategy for the Gaeltacht in line with Harnessing our Ocean Wealth.	2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta, BIM, Foras na Mara, Galway County Council
81	Invest €21m over five years to provide new and upgraded property solutions to attract FDI and indigenous Irish industries to locate in the Mid-West region.	Ongoing	Shannon Group
82	Provide a new incubation space in Shannon to encourage start-up businesses and rural entrepreneurs.	Q4 2017	Shannon Group
83	Develop advanced property solutions for innovative companies seeking to move from the incubator phase to market-led and competitive commercialisation in the Gaeltacht area.	2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
84	Create appropriate incentives and attract further businesses to join the existing aviation industry cluster in the International Aviation Services Centre in Shannon.	Ongoing	Shannon Group, IDA, Enterprise Ireland
85	Develop four Innovation Hubs in Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry to support entrepreneurship and start-up companies in the Gaeltacht Regions.	2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
86	Review the recommendations of the CEDRA Report and the Charter for Rural Ireland and identify how best to progress any recommendations that have not yet been implemented.	Q1-Q3 2017	DAHRRGA, relevant Departments and Agencies
87	Enhance awareness amongst SMEs and entrepreneurs of State business supports to raise their financial capacity in either starting a business, or in growing and expanding an established business.	2017	SME State Bodies Group, Údarás na Gaeltachta
88	Conduct a review of the credit application process with a focus on the administrative burden for SMEs and the time costs to them.	2017	DOF, SME State Bodies Group
89	Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders.	2017	SBCI, DOF, DJEI, ISIF, EI, DAFM, SME State Bodies Groups
90	Examine procurement policies with a view to enhancing measures to support SMEs to access public procurement markets, including through training and information events and the development of guidance and information notes.	2017	DPER, Office of Government Procurement
91	Agree and finalise a protocol between DJEI and DAHRRGA in relation to the Local Enterprise Offices and LEADER to ensure a collaborative approach to supporting enterprise at a local level.	Q1 2017	DJEI, DAHRRGA
92	As part of the Trading Online Voucher Scheme under the National Digital Strategy, approve a minimum of 1,000 vouchers per annum to micro businesses across the country of which approximately 60% will be from rural Ireland.	2017-2019	DCCAE, LEOs

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
93	As part of the EU Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020, roll out the women's entrepreneurship initiative to promote female entrepreneurship and develop their entrepreneurial capabilities.	2017	DJE
94	Continue the implementation of supports for the Rural Female Entrepreneurs Initiative (Acorns programme).	Ongoing	DAFM
95	Create an industry-wide, long-term plan, for Ireland as a global hub for the production of Film, TV Drama, and Animation.	2017	DAHRRGA, Irish Film Board
96	Develop and launch a new www.ruralireland.ie website which will act as a central portal to provide information on relevant supports, and showcase best practice examples of rural development.	2017	DAHRRGA
97	Conduct a review of the REDZ initiative to measure its impact on rural communities, and to support the development of future calls for projects under the scheme.	2017	DAHRRGA,
98	Through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), support the establishment and development of social enterprises in rural areas.	Q4 2017	DHPCLG, Pobal, LAs, LCDCs
99	Develop and publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise which will encompass the full range of activity in this sector.	Q3 2017	DAHRRGA, relevant Departments and Agencies
100	Commission a specific piece of research in relation to the impact of Brexit on rural areas, particularly rural areas in the Border region.	Q1 2017	DAHRRGA, WDC
101	Fund the development of a programme of initiatives to increase the awareness and capacity of SMEs to deal with the practical consequences of Brexit for cross border trade.	2017	ITI
102	Complete the planned programme of courthouse refurbishment works in seven locations with an investment of €135m over two years and estimated employment of 700 over the construction period.	2017	DJE
103	Continue to deliver the National Waste Prevention Programme on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, including country-wide programmes such as Green Enterprise, Green Business, Green Hospitality, Green Healthcare, Smarter Farming and 'Stop Food Waste'.	Ongoing	Environmental Protection Agency, DCCAE
104	Continue to provide SEAI supports for small businesses across the country, including provision of advice through www.seai.ie , to help them to be more energy efficient and therefore more competitive and environmentally sustainable.	Ongoing	SEAI, DCCAE, , Údarás na Gaeltachta

Support Supporting Sectoral Growth

A number of sectors offer particular opportunity for enterprise growth and job creation in rural areas. Apart from the tourism sector - which is addressed as a separate Pillar under this Action Plan - sectors with strong potential for growth in rural areas include Agri-food, Renewable Energy and International Financial Services.

The Agri-food sector (encompassing seafood) is hugely important to rural Ireland and to the national economy. The Agri-food industry in Ireland provides employment for approximately 163,000 people, with food and beverage manufacturing accounting for 12.7% of Ireland's total merchandise exports. Irish food is produced by thousands of farmers, fishers and agri-food companies across the country and is exported to over 175 countries around the world. Food Wise 2025 sets out a cohesive, strategic plan for the development of the Agri-food sector over the next decade, which will have a significant positive impact on employment in rural parts of Ireland.

Ireland has a number of strengths to support the development of renewable energy, including excellent renewable resources, strong engineering and ICT skills,

and a strong R&D base. The emerging Bio-Economy sub-sector involves the production of renewable biological resources and their conversion into food, feed, bio-based products and bioenergy. It encompasses agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food, pulp and paper production. The Bio-Economy provides considerable return on investment, with each Euro invested generating up to ten Euros of added value. In Ireland, the further development of the Bio-Economy has the potential to contribute to decarbonisation, sustainable growth and job creation in the agricultural, industrial and technological sectors in rural areas.

A key objective of the Government's strategy for the International Financial Services sector, IFS2020, is to encourage the attraction of international financial services jobs to the regions. This will have a positive impact on rural economies and provide job opportunities for rural dwellers. There are also opportunities to locate back-office facilities for IFS companies in rural areas.

The actions below aim to support these important sectors.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
Agri-food sector			
105	Through Food Wise 2025, support the creation of additional jobs along the supply chain from producer level to high-end value, added product development (target to 2025 is 23,000 jobs).	Ongoing	DAFM
106	As part of Food Wise 2025, increase the value of food exports, which will support rural and coastal economies (target to 2025 is 85% increase in exports to €19bn).	Ongoing	DAFM
107	Develop, enhance and promote the effectiveness of the Origin Green Programme as a key marketing tool for the Irish agri-food sector.	2017-2020	Bord Bia, DAFM
108	Support a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs under Food Works and develop the Food Works Plus supports for those entrepreneurs continuing to pursue their ventures.	2017	Bord Bia, EI
109	Support food start-ups through initiatives with retailers including the Food Academy Advance with Musgraves SuperValu and the Taste Buds Programme with Tesco.	2017	Bord Bia
110	Support the agri-food sector through the financial services industry to ensure that financial products are developed for all sectors of farming across the industry.	2017	DAFM, DoF

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
111	Implement the Seafood Development Programme (2014-2020) through a range of supports for fishermen to adapt to the new Common Fisheries Policy, seafood processing, aquaculture, inshore fisheries and the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGS).	Ongoing	DAFM
112	Implement supports for the fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors under: - the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme to achieve sales of seafood worth €1billion by 2020; - the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development; and - Harnessing our Ocean Wealth	2017	DAFM, BIM, Bord Bia, EI, Údarás na Gaeltachta
Renewable Energy			
113	Finalise the Draft Bioenergy Plan, which will capture the potential of the bioenergy sector and help generate employment opportunities.	Q1 2017	DCCAE
114	Create a Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) designed to encourage investment in renewable electricity generation in a cost effective manner and help support economic growth and job creation in rural Ireland.	Q4 2017	DCCAE
115	Create a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) support scheme which will help stimulate demand for biomass and support economic growth and jobs in rural Ireland.	Q3 2017	DCCAE
116	Establish a baseline assessment of the current level of Bioeconomy activity and opportunities across the various sectors in Ireland.	Q1 2017	Dept. of the Taoiseach and other relevant sectoral Departments
117	Hold a consultative seminar on the Bioeconomy with key stakeholders, including the development agencies and the private sector.	Q1 2017	Dept. of the Taoiseach and other relevant sectoral Departments
118	Publish a high-level Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy in Ireland.	Q2 2017	Dept. of the Taoiseach and other relevant sectoral Departments
International Financial Services			
119	As part of the International Financial Services (IFS) Strategy 2020, showcase the competitive and operational advantages of regional locations for new and existing international financial services activities.	Ongoing	IDA, Industry stakeholders
120	Through the Regional Action Plans for Jobs process, identify, in consultation with EI, IDA and other stakeholders, areas for further IFS-related actions at regional level.	Ongoing	DJEI, IDA, EI, Implementation Committees

Skills and Innovation

The skills and talent of our labour force are key assets in attracting foreign direct investment and in helping Irish businesses to scale up, innovate and win new markets. Ensuring that the labour force has the skills required by industry on an on-going basis is essential if companies are to be competitive. The Regional Skills Fora will play an important role, as part of this Action Plan, in identifying and addressing the specific skills needs of enterprises at local level.

Skills are required at all levels on the National Qualifications Framework and will be delivered by education and training providers, including through an expanded range of apprenticeship and traineeship

courses (which are delivered locally by the Education & Training Boards), and through Higher Education courses. Participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths by young students in rural Ireland will be encouraged through Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) Smart Futures programme. Additional measures to promote research and innovation will be delivered through SFI and through Údarás na Gaeltachta. Údarás will also provide €1 million per annum for the Advanced Irish Skills Initiative, aimed at training Irish speakers for employment in translation services in Ireland and in the EU institutions. Teagasc and other approved service providers will deliver training and supports to farmers to support knowledge-transfer and improve off-farm income opportunities.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
121	Through the Regional Skills Fora, facilitate close co-operation between education and training providers and enterprise in addressing identified skills needs in the regions and a local link with the implementation of other strategies including the Regional Action Plans for Jobs and Pathways to Work.	Ongoing	DES, Regional Skills Fora
122	Increase the number of young people accessing employment in their communities through: - strengthening the apprenticeship and traineeship systems - enhancing the range of courses and increasing student places - achieving Government targets of over 100 apprenticeship schemes, and a cumulative target of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship registrations to 2020	2017-2020	DES
123	Increase options for post-secondary school leavers in rural Ireland through agreeing Annual Service Plans between SOLAS and Education Training Boards (ETBs), and monitoring progress against agreed quality and performance targets.	Ongoing	SOLAS, ETBs, HEIs, DES
124	Enact the Technological Universities Bill to underpin the development of a new model of higher education in Ireland, so that these regional institutions will have greater industry links, support enterprise, underpin diversity and promote access and participation on a regional basis with a view to significantly boosting our capacity to create and retain jobs in regions.	2017	DES, Applicant Institutes of Technology
125	Increase the participation of young people in rural Ireland in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths through the SFI Smart Futures Programme, public engagement activities and through the support of regional science festivals in rural Ireland.	Ongoing from Q2 2018	SFI
126	Fund research proposals in Smart Agriculture/ Precision Agriculture to improve farm management and increase quality of life for farmers in rural Ireland.	Ongoing	SFI

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
127	Strengthen links between Údarás and Institutes of Technology and Universities to build capacity in the Gaeltacht region and promote research and innovation.	Ongoing	Údarás na Gaeltachta, Institutes of Technology, Universities
128	Develop stronger links with the diaspora to access investment, establish networks and source skills and experience for the Gaeltacht area.	Ongoing	Údarás na Gaeltachta
129	Work with public and private sector stakeholders to identify and address skills training needs in traditional building skills and architectural conservation through the development and implementation of a Traditional Building Skills and Conservation Education Action Plan to assist the regeneration of our historic cities, towns and villages.	2017-2018	DAHRRGA, DES, SOLAS, LAs, OPW, Heritage Council, CIF
130	Improve knowledge transfer and exchange to farmers by developing a network across all State agencies and relevant advisory bodies to deliver clear advice on how farmers can adopt sustainable practices that deliver both environmental and economic benefits.	2017-2020	Teagasc, DAFM, Bord Bia
131	Develop and deliver training and education programmes for farmers to: - ensure that the appropriate skillsets and knowledge are applied at each stage of development of the primary producer's business; and - Up-skill farmers as employers, in areas such as improving farm practices, employing staff and responsibilities as an employer	Ongoing	Teagasc, Other service providers
132	Continue to develop and implement the 'Options Plus' programme for improving off-farm income generation of farmers and to link farm families with a variety of learning opportunities provided by other agencies including the ETBs, LEOs, LDCs, third level institutions and the Department of Social Protection.	Ongoing	Teagasc, DAFM
133	Continue the rollout and promotion of www.opt-in.ie (a website aimed at helping rural dwellers find the means and skills necessary to increase their income generating options), currently piloted in Limerick and Tipperary.	Ongoing	DAFM, Teagasc
134	Provide in the region of €1m per annum for the Advanced Irish Language Skills Initiative, aimed at training Irish speakers for employment in the EU institutions and at developing the freelance Irish language translation sector at home.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA, 3rd level sector

Supporting Rural Job Seekers and Protecting Incomes

In parallel with promoting enterprise and employment growth in rural Ireland, it is important that we support rural job seekers and low income households, including those in farming and fishing communities.

The Department of Social Protection offers a range of supports to job seekers in rural communities through its Intreo offices and through a range of schemes such as the Rural Social Scheme, Community Employment and Tús.

Other schemes which support rural job seekers and disadvantaged groups include the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and Dormant Accounts Fund measures.

Farm and fishing investments and household incomes will be supported through the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Rural Development Programme, while a number of new tax initiatives to support farm and fishing incomes were introduced under Budget 2017.

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
135	Continue to support jobseekers through the network of local Intreo offices and DSP case workers.	Ongoing	DSP
136	Through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), increase work-readiness and support individuals in accessing employment and self-employment.	Q4 2017	DHPCLG, Pobal, LAs, LCDCs
137	Review impact of SICAP in rural areas and consider this review in the development of a re-designed SICAP for 2018.	Q4 2017	DHPCLG, Pobal
138	Through the Dormant Account Funds, support disadvantaged groups in rural and urban communities through measures that assist their access to employment.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
139	Implement changes to the Farm Assist Scheme, as announced in Budget 2017, which will increase the value of the weekly Farm Assist payments for low income farmers, in particular for those with children, which will ensure that farm families are supported in actively farming their land.	2017	DSP
140	Develop and conduct an awareness campaign in rural communities to highlight the Farm Assist and Fish Assist schemes.	2018	DSP
141	Review the impact of the changes made to the Farm Assist Scheme, as announced in Budget 2017, in early 2018 to ensure that it is addressing the challenges facing farmers on low income.	2018	DSP
142	Maintain the provision of schemes such as the Rural Social Scheme, Community Employment, Back To Education Allowance and Tús in rural communities and the Gaeltacht, having regard to the declining numbers on the Live Register and the need to ensure that these schemes are targeted to the needs of jobseekers and others.	Ongoing	DSP, Údaras na Gaeltachta
143	As part of the EU Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020, roll out training under the "women returning to the workforce" strand, targeting women who are currently detached from the labour market and who are interested in entering/re-entering employment.	2017	DJE

Realising our Rural Potential

No	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
144	Continue to support farm incomes through the roll-out of CAP payments of over €1.2 billion annually.	Ongoing	DAFM
145	Support on-farm investment through the Rural Development Programme (RDP) (2014-2020) and national funding to improve competitiveness and sustainability.	Ongoing	DAFM
146	As agreed in Budget 2017, increase the earned income tax credit to self-employed farmers.	Ongoing	DoF
147	Support the Government Initiative to (a) use the taxation system strategically to encourage greater land mobility, increased productivity and greater profitability at farm level (b) Investigate taxation measures aimed at supporting farmers through periods of volatility (c) Land leasing, partnership and mobility measures will be developed further to ensure the next generation of farmers are supported and the sector is developed strategically for future growth.	Ongoing	DAFM, DoF
148	As agreed in Budget 2017, roll out new income averaging 'step out' for farmers. (The Income Averaging regime allows a farmer's taxable profit to be averaged out over a 5-year period. This is being amended to allow an "opt out" in a single year of unexpectedly poor income, which may be availed of for the 2016 tax year).	2017	DAFM, DoF
149	As agreed in Budget 2017, roll out new tax credits for fishers to assist the viability of the fishing sector (Fishers who have fished for wild fish or wild shellfish for at least 80 days in a tax year can claim an income tax credit of €1,270 per annum).	2017	DAFM, DoF
150	As agreed in Budget 2017, extend Farm restructuring Capital Gains Tax (CGT) relief to end 2019.	Ongoing to end 2019	DoF
151	As agreed in Budget 2017, provide an exemption from Capital Gains Tax (CGT) for payments made by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (on or after 1 October 2016) under the Protected Raised Bog Restoration Incentive Scheme.	Ongoing	DoF

Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential



Case Study

Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential: Blueways Flagship

The Blueway Flagship Initiative was launched in June 2016 and is bringing tourism to the rural areas of Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon, connecting 22 towns and villages located alongside the River Shannon and the Shannon-Erne Waterway, through a blueway. Blueways are a network of approved and branded multi-activity trails on and alongside the river and canal, allowing access to cycling, walking, canoeing and paddle-boarding along the route.

Blueways offer activity packages and make it easy for the consumer to enjoy all that the Blueways have to offer. Visitors are encouraged to stay longer by showcasing the cycling, walking, and paddling trails, together with the diverse range of visitor attractions, quality accommodation and great places to eat, all set within tranquil, idyllic environments.



Creating a strong tourism proposition for the Blueway Flagship required extensive cooperation between public bodies, tourism businesses and local communities. The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy (USEFE) project - a partnership between the four local authorities in conjunction with Waterways Ireland and supported by Bord na Móna and the ESB - has been instrumental in coordinating product development and marketing activities. The USEFE was established to show how business led regional development can help generate economic growth and job creation in the area.

Together the Shannon and Shannon-Erne Blueways offer over 200km of paddling trails, over 70km of walking trails and over 50km of cycling trails, all located beside some of the most beautiful riverine and canal landscapes in the country. The Government's REDZ programme provided assistance to develop the capacity of the communities and businesses in the towns and villages along the Blueway to avail of its full tourism potential.



Launch of the REDZ Blueway Flagship on Friday 24th June 2016



Pillar 3:

Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential

Key Objectives:

- Increase tourist numbers to rural Ireland by 12% by 2019
- Support sustainable jobs through targeted rural tourism initiatives, including through the support of key marketing initiatives such as Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way, as well as developing the potential of Ireland's Lakelands.
- Develop and promote Activity Tourism in rural areas through the development of blueways, greenways and other recreational opportunities.
- Develop and promote our natural and built heritage through investment and development of our Gaeltacht areas, enhanced promotion of our National Parks and Nature Reserves and other natural and built resources.

Support targeted Rural Tourism Initiatives

Tourism is a key driver of economic development in rural Ireland. Ireland's unique culture, landscape and heritage is a major selling point in bringing visitors from overseas and also in fostering home grown tourism and promoting healthier lifestyles.

Through the Tourism Policy, People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025, and through the Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018, the Government has set ambitious tourism policy goals for 2025. These include increasing revenue from overseas visitors to €5 billion, growing employment in the tourism sector to 250,000 (from 200,000 currently) and increasing the number of visits to

Ireland to 10 million. In 2015, 85% of visitors to Ireland visited at least one region outside Dublin. With the revenue this generates in the regions, tourism has a significant role to play in supporting sustainable jobs and growth in rural areas and will be supported through targeted marketing initiatives and co-ordinated approaches at national and local level.

There are opportunities, also, to use the complementarity of different sectors to offer new visitor experiences, for example by supporting agri-food tourism initiatives, or developing cultural-based tourism in the Gaeltacht. Other initiatives which will be supported through this Action Plan include the use of digital technologies to enhance tourist experiences.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
152	Through the Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018, increase tourism volume in rural areas to 8.3 million visits by 2019 (an increase of 12%).	Ongoing	DTTAS, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, LAs, Údarás na Gaeltachta
153	Carry out a feasibility study in relation to the development of the 'Ireland's Lakelands' brand as a separate proposition to sit alongside the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East.	Q1 2017	Fáilte Ireland, DTTAS, LAs

Realising our Rural Potential

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
154	Develop a Tourism Investment and Development Strategy for the Gaeltacht.	Q1 2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland, OPW, LAs, LDCs, Community Enterprises, Private Sector initiatives
155	Provide practical support to the local authorities in the development of comprehensive tourism strategies and support collaborative approaches at Local Authority and community levels.	Ongoing	DTTAS, LAs, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta
156	Ensure that supports for festivals and events are updated to reflect changing market needs – including identifying key indigenous events with the greatest potential for attracting international visitors and off-setting seasonality to be supported by a multi annual framework; and reviewing arrangements for regional and community festivals to ensure maximum value for money in terms of incremental visitors.	Q4 2017	Fáilte Ireland, LAs, DAHRRGA
157	Support direct access to the regions outside of Dublin by extending the Regional Co-operative Market Access Scheme, which promotes air and sea access to regions outside of Dublin, until 2018.	2017	Tourism Ireland, DTTAS, LAs
158	Include Eircodes in Satnav and digital spatial mapping platforms to help simplify navigation in rural areas and enhance the tourist experience.	Q2 2017	DCCAE
159	Develop cultural digitisation initiatives to enhance “Ireland’s Roots” tourism offering.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, General Register Office, National Library of Ireland and National Archives of Ireland
160	Work with representatives from Government agencies and voluntary action groups for the development of targeted tourist mapping to assist in the promotion of rural tourism locations.	Ongoing	OSI
161	Accelerate diversification of overseas tourism to Ireland to reduce the impact of possible decline in visits from Great Britain.	2017	Tourism Ireland
162	Continue to develop Irish language based tourism in the Gaeltacht through the provision of Gaeltacht scholarships for Irish language learners in international 3rd level institutions.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA, international universities, Fulbright Commission, Ireland-Canada University Foundation
163	Support Agri-Food tourism initiatives by local authorities, including local markets and food and beverage trails.	Ongoing	DAFM
164	Develop cross-Border tourism initiatives to support the tourism potential of the Border region, building on projects such as the Ulster Canal Greenway from Smithboro (Co. Monaghan) to Middletown (Co. Armagh), the Carlingford Lough Greenway, and historic literary trails.	Ongoing	Local Authorities in collaboration with cross border counterparts and other relevant parties

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
165	Examine the potential to promote rural Ireland as the destination of choice for US colleges wishing to avail of a rural based learning or study abroad experience.	Ongoing	Connemara West and other relevant stakeholders
166	Provide assistance for the promotion of island development and island tourism, to maximise the benefit of the Wild Atlantic Way to our offshore islands.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, Comhar na nOileán, Fáilte Ireland, LAs

Develop and Promote Activity Tourism

Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas in particular, by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to

support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking. These activities provide new incentives for people to visit an area and can attract a new profile of visitor. Improving and building on these resources also has benefits for local communities through the promotion of healthier lifestyles. The actions set out below will help to support these aims.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
167	Develop a strategy to underpin the development, funding and promotion of Greenways to support activity tourism in rural areas.	Q2 2017	DTTAS, LAs
168	Develop and promote Blueways (multi-purpose activity trails on or beside water) on the Royal, Grand and Barrow Canals and on the Shannon Navigation to expand the recreational and tourism offering, with a capital investment of €6m over the period 2017-2019.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland
169	Enhance infrastructure on and along the inland navigation system to support increased recreational and economic activity in rural Ireland.	2017-2019	Waterways Ireland, LAs, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, LEADER LAGs
170	Through the Rural Recreation Scheme, provide funding for new recreation infrastructure and the maintenance of existing structures resulting in the creation and retention of jobs in rural areas.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
171	Expand the National Walks Scheme with a view to doubling the number of walks in the scheme by 2019.	2017-2020	DAHRRG
172	Ensure co-ordination of major outdoor recreation projects with all main State land owners to maximise potential for sustainable tourism in rural areas through the Inter-Agency Group on Outdoor Recreation.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, Waterways Ireland, OPW, Fáilte Ireland, Bord na Mona, Coillte
173	Through the Inter-Agency Group on Outdoor Recreation, develop a Public Outdoor Recreation Amenities Plan (PORA) to transform the provision of outdoor recreation facilities and services on public-owned land and waterways over the next five years which will add a potential €142 million of economic activity per year across rural Ireland.	2017	DAHRRGA, Coillte, OPW, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Mona, LAs

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
174	As part of the PORA, progress four flagship, co-operative projects to enhance outdoor recreational activities to drive tourism in rural Ireland, viz: - Midlands Cycling Destination; - Barrow Blueway Flagship Project; - Connemara Cluster; and - Spatial Geodatabase	2017 onwards	Coillte, Waterways Ireland, OPW, Fáilte Ireland, Bord na Móna, DAHRRGA
175	Progress the development of niche outdoor activities in our National Parks and Nature Reserves drawing on their unique attributes which will contribute to sustainable tourism in rural areas.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
176	Agree and implement a scheme to indemnify private land owners with regard to recreational users of their lands.	2017	DAHRRGA, State Claims Agency, Farming Organisations
177	Reorganise the operation of structures such as Comhairle na Tuaithe to ensure the most appropriate/effective mechanisms are in place to progress rural recreation policy/implementation issues.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, DTTAS
178	Implement the new tourism capacity maintenance programme under the National Strategy for Angling Development to ensure that the capacity of the inland fisheries resource is maintained and continues to deliver social and economic benefits to rural communities.	Ongoing to 2020	Inland Fisheries Ireland
179	Continue to deliver the annual Inland Fisheries Ireland Sponsorship Scheme to assist rural communities to engage with angling, angling tourism and environmental issues.	2017-2019	Inland Fisheries Ireland
180	Implement the Minor Capital Angling Access Scheme under the National Strategy for Angling Development to help in sustaining the capacity of the inland fisheries resource.	Ongoing to end 2017	Inland Fisheries Ireland
181	Develop and promote Ireland's angling tourism offering abroad to assist in generating tourism in rural Ireland.	Ongoing	Inland Fisheries Ireland
182	Rollout the Capital Works Scheme under the National Strategy for Angling Development to help deliver an accessible and sustainable, world class inland fisheries resource.	2017-2018	Inland Fisheries Ireland
183	Continue to deliver the annual Inland Fisheries Ireland Something Fishy National Schools Programme to inform and educate students on fish, water, angling and the environment in their local areas .	2017-2019	Inland Fisheries Ireland
184	Issue of blog content on walking routes in Ireland to promote the use of the outdoors for recreation purposes.	Ongoing	OSI
185	Support the inclusion of the voices of children and young people in the development of tourism and recreation opportunities, through the Children and Young People's Participation Hub.	Ongoing	DCYA, relevant Departments and Agencies

Develop and Support our Natural and Built Heritage

The diversity and range of Ireland's unique built and natural heritage is one that is rooted in community and in rural Ireland. The protection and promotion of our natural and built heritage assets helps to generate employment and revenue for rural Ireland through cultural and heritage tourism. Our heritage sites play an important role, both in attracting overseas tourists and also for domestic holidaymakers. These assets are dispersed

around the country and can bring much needed economic and employment opportunities to rural communities, assisting in balanced regional development. Significant investment has been made in Ireland's National Parks and Nature Reserves and the continued development of these and our built heritage assets will greatly contribute to our tourism offering and the positive development of rural communities.

Actions to support the development of our natural and built heritage are set out below.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
186	Develop Ireland's six National Parks and Nature Reserves through a capital programme of up to €10 million over 4 years, in partnership with other State agencies, to support marketing initiatives such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East, by developing the trails network and improving visitor experience to drive sustainable tourism in rural areas.	Ongoing from Q2 2017	DAHRRGA, Fáilte Ireland, relevant State agencies
187	Explore the potential for the development of new tourism and recreation activities within the context of the National Peatlands Strategy, including the consideration of a National Peatlands Park and centre of excellence.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
188	Develop and publish an updated National Heritage Plan to protect, manage and promote our built and natural heritage.	2017	DAHRRGA, Heritage Council
189	Co-ordinate a programme for the management of Ireland's uplands areas, expanding on the pilot already carried out in Wicklow.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA
190	Progress the designation of additional sites to UNESCO for inclusion in Ireland's World Heritage list which will assist in the development of sustainable tourism and also preservation of our natural and built heritage.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, LAS
191	Continue the rollout of the programme of investment in State heritage sites with a view to developing the tourism potential of our heritage sites and assisting in the creation of local employment opportunities in tourism-related industries.	Ongoing	OPW, Fáilte Ireland, DAHRRGA
192	As part of the implementation of Fáilte Ireland's Tourist Investment Plan 2016-2021, work to enhance the presentation of key State Heritage Sites to help encourage greater employment in the tourism sector including the rural areas covered by the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East.	2017-2021	DAHRRGA, Fáilte Ireland, OPW
193	Through the Built Heritage Structures at Risk Fund, with an estimated €2.4m of matched funding available between 2017-2019, encourage investment of private capital in labour-intensive projects to conserve historic structures in public/private ownership.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
194	Support the development of conservation and heritage tourism in rural areas through the Community Heritage Grants Scheme, with an estimated investment of €2.5m between 2017 and 2019.	2017-2019	Heritage Council
195	Raise the profile of, and access to, our built, natural and cultural heritage nationwide, through the roll out of Heritage Week, thus helping to preserve our unique heritage assets.	2017-2019	Heritage Council, LAs
196	Through the Historic Towns Initiative, invest in our historic towns to encourage tourism, foster traditional building skills and regenerate historic towns.	Ongoing	Heritage Council, DAHRRGA
197	Encourage the conservation and reuse of historic properties and lettings to tourists in rural communities.	Ongoing	Irish Landmark Trust
198	Implement the Action Plan for Irish Historic Houses to assist in the promotion and development of Historic Irish Houses as centres for employment, tourism and innovation.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
199	Support the Irish Walled Towns Network to ensure that these heritage assets are appropriately managed and conserved as a tourism asset to their areas.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, Heritage Council, LAs
200	Enhance animation and interpretation at key heritage sites and augment existing networks and trails with additional sites and materials to create new visitor experiences.	2017-2020	DAHRRGA, OPW, Waterways Ireland
201	Seek to forge links internationally to key monastic and historic sites to draw more international visitors as part of pan European heritage, cultural and ecclesiastical networks.	2017-2020	DAHRRGA, OPW, LAs
202	In the context of the National Landscape Strategy, develop dedicated actions that assist in the promotion and development of Ireland's national landscape characteristics with regard to management, employment, tourism and innovation pilots.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA

Fostering Culture & Creativity in Rural Communities



Case Study

Fostering Culture & Creativity in Rural Communities: Lights in the Darkness

Lights in the Darkness - Lantern installation is a wonderful example of a Community Art project in rural Ireland. The installation featured 50 life size sculptural lanterns of men, women and children placed in Longford town. The project was undertaken as part of Longford's programme of events to mark the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising and the sculptural lanterns making up the installation set out to symbolise and pay tribute to all those who died or were injured during the events of 1916.



Photo by Tom Meskill of a participant working on one of the lantern sculptures.

This project was unveiled during the special 1916 Commemorative Weekend in Co. Longford in April 2016, attended by 5,000 people from home and abroad, including representatives from Longford's twin towns in Sparks, Nevada USA and Noyal Chatillon-sur-Seiche, Brittany France. This project was led by community artist Tom Meskill, a grandson of Patrick Doyle, one of the 15 Longford people who took part in the Easter Rising.

In order to realise Tom's vision, over 100 people from a diverse range of community groups and secondary schools in the county assisted in creating the sculptural lanterns through a series of workshops in various locations across Longford over a two month period. This collaborative community effort helped drive a sense of ownership of the project and its aims, and brought a new 21st century perspective to the commemoration of a pivotal moment in our nation's history by incorporating new cultural and ethnic influences.



Lights in the Darkness - Lantern installation by Tom Meskill

Pillar 4:

Fostering Culture & Creativity in Rural Communities

Key Objectives:

- [Increase access to the arts](#) and enhance cultural facilities in rural communities.
- [Further develop and enhance culture and creativity](#) in rural Ireland through the establishment of culture teams and creativity hubs as part of the Creative Ireland programme.
- [Promote the Irish language](#) as a key resource in Gaeltacht and other rural communities.

Increase access to the arts in rural communities

Access to the arts, in all its forms, enriches society in many ways, including by improving the health and wellbeing of individuals. Many rural communities all over Ireland have a thriving arts scene and it is important that facilities and assets in rural areas are enhanced to strengthen the social fabric of rural life. Culture 2025, the draft Framework Cultural policy, aims to increase the

participation of individuals and communities from across Ireland, including rural communities, and will provide a platform for bringing together the numerous local, regional and national cultural entities with a view to sharing best practice, and developing synergies between these networks. The actions below will help to improve access to the arts, in all forms, for rural communities.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
203	Roll out a new small grants scheme which will provide essential upgrades to existing regional arts and culture centres to support the revival of the cultural sector in rural Ireland.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA
204	Increase funding supports to regional museums across the country ensuring access to our cultural heritage for rural dwellers.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
205	Facilitate access by rural communities to our National Collections through increased loans of art works between our National Cultural Institutions and regional museums.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
206	Through the Arts Council's Touring and Dissemination of Work Scheme, increase investment in 2017 to €1.4m and annually thereafter to support quality professional productions to tour venues across Ireland, increasing access to the arts for rural communities.	2017-2019	Arts Council
207	Introduce a new programme as part of the Framework for Collaboration with Local Government in 2018, specifically advancing children and young people's provision, cultural diversity and arts and disability.	2018	Arts Council, LAs

208	Increase our investment in small festivals from 2017 to support greater participation in the arts throughout the country.	2017 onwards	Arts Council
209	Provide grant assistance of €0.48m to refurbish and develop a theatre in Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Donegal, in order to provide a suitable space to develop Irish language theatre in the North West.	2017-2018	DAHRRGA

Enhance Culture and Creativity in Rural Ireland

Rural communities have a history of strong cultural activity through local festivals, amateur drama and music. It is important that cultural participation is actively supported in rural communities, as a way to combat rural isolation, enhance and contribute to the vibrancy of rural Ireland, and generate economic activity, for example through cultural tourism.

The Government's Creative Ireland programme is a five-year initiative from 2017-2022 which places creativity

at the centre of public policy. It is designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing through a culture-based programme. Many of its actions, which are captured below, will contribute to a vibrant cultural sector and support creativity in rural Ireland. These actions include the development of a nationwide network of culture teams and creativity hubs which will co-ordinate cultural activities in each local authority area, the establishment of an annual "County of Culture" award, and the development of a national plan to enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
210	As part of the Creative Ireland Programme, develop a nationwide network of culture teams and creativity hubs which will co-ordinate cultural activities in each local authority area. This will have a particular benefit for rural communities who will be encouraged to participate and engage with culture in their communities.	2017 onwards	DAHRRGA, LAs, National Cultural Institutions, Arts Council, Heritage Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta
211	Develop a Culture and Creativity Plan in every county as part of the Creative Ireland programme.	End 2017	LAs, DAHRRGA
212	Allocate a dedicated budget to each local authority with the primary objective of citizen engagement with their Culture and Creativity Plans.	2018	DAHRRGA, LAs
213	Develop a new Creative Place Programme in partnership with Local Government which draws on the work of artists and arts organisations to animate local communities, particularly in rural areas.	Q4 2017	Arts Council
214	As part of the Creative Ireland Programme develop and implement Cruinniú na Cásca, an annual programme of arts activities and cultural reflection over Easter weekend which will take place all over Ireland and will have a positive effect on culture and arts activities in rural Ireland.	2017 onwards	DAHRRGA, LAs
215	As part of the Creative Ireland Programme, establish and support an annual County of Culture award, allowing individual counties to showcase their cultural creativity over a 12-month period.	2018 onwards	DAHRRGA, LAs

216	Review the requirements of rural Ireland in the context of the development of the five year capital investment programme for the culture and heritage sector.	End 2017	DAHRRGA
217	Develop a national plan to enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding.	End 2017	DES & DAHRRGA
218	Increase funding to Local Authorities across the country to roll out an enhanced culture night experience which will be of particular benefit to rural communities.	2017	DAHRRGA, LAs
219	Implement the Arts in Education Charter, a joint initiative between D/AHRRGA and D/ES to ensure that arts and cultural engagement in schools at all levels will be attained across the country.	Ongoing	Arts Council, DAHRRGA, DES
220	Introduce formal agreements with individual Local Authorities from 2017 to assist in clarifying shared and individual responsibilities in the context of regional and local planning and the national perspective of the Arts Council.	2017 onwards	Arts Council, LAs
221	Develop an integrated Arts Strategy for the Gaeltacht and Irish Language Arts in conjunction with Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Arts Council.	2017	DAHRRGA, Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta
222	As part of the Town & Village Renewal scheme, provide competitive funding for public art works which contribute to public spaces and reflect the culture and characteristics of the town or region.	2017-2020	DAHRRGA, Local Authorities

Promote the Irish language as a key resource

The Irish language is a vital part of the living heritage of the State and a key natural resource of the Gaeltacht.

The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has overarching responsibility for the implementation of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 which promotes a holistic,

integrated approach to the language which is consistent with international best practice. The implementation of the language planning process set out under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, in conjunction with Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge, combined with the ongoing support and investment in community and language infrastructure in Gaeltacht areas, represents a critical part of the Strategy. The actions below will further help to foster our language as a key resource, particularly in Gaeltacht communities.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
223	Advance the implementation of the Language Planning Process through the provision of funding, advice and technical support in order to foster the Irish language as a key resource in Gaeltacht areas.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, Údarás na Gaeltachta, community-based organisations

224	Continue to support and invest in the language and community infrastructure of the Gaeltacht by way of a wide range of schemes, measures and initiatives (capital and current) currently administered by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. These Schemes include: - Capital Programme to develop community facilities - Irish Language Assistance Scheme - An Clár Tacaíochta Teaghlaigh - Scéim Seirbhísí Réamhscoile agus Iarscoile - Summer camps in the Gaeltacht - Assistance for Gaeltacht Organisations	Ongoing	DAHRRGA
225	Roll out the Techspace as Gaeilge Initiative, currently operating in the Connacht region, to all other regions.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA
226	Roll out An Diplóma sa Chultúr Dúchais to assist community capacity building through tourism development and professional development for Heritage Officers in the Gaeltacht.	Ongoing	Údarás na Gaeltachta, DAHRRGA, NUIG
227	Continue to provide funding for Ealaíon na Gaeltachta Teo to foster creativity and the arts in the Gaeltacht.	2017-2019	Údarás na Gaeltachta, An Comhairle Ealaíon and other relevant agencies
228	Continue to support the development of cultural tourism in the Gaeltacht by administering the Irish Language Learners scheme.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA
229	Implement Foras na Gaeilge schemes such as the Festival scheme and Drama scheme to foster culture and creativity.	Ongoing	Foras na Gaeilge
230	Implement Foras na Gaeilge Schemes which create capacity building for young people in the Irish language community such as summer camps and special youth events.	Ongoing	Foras na Gaeilge
231	Continue to support three NUIG Outreach Centres in Gaeltacht areas (Gaoth Dobhair, Carna and An Cheathrú Rua) in order to maintain Irish-medium educational opportunities at local level.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, NUIG

Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity



Case Study

Improving Rural Infrastructure and Creativity: The Ludgate Hub

The Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen, Co. Cork, named after Percy Ludgate, a computer pioneer born in the town in 1883, provides an exciting glimpse of how rural Ireland will benefit from the full rollout of the Government's National Broadband Plan.

The Ludgate Hub is a 10,000 sq. ft digital hub, boasting a 1,000mbps connection, which is located in an old cinema and bakery. The hub, which was opened in July 2016, is the first resource of its kind in a non-urban area in Ireland. Businesses operating from the hub have cited the "unparalleled broadband speed" as a primary reason for

establishing operations there and its occupants work in a collaborative and creative work environment.

The long-term vision of the board governing the operations of the hub is to make Skibbereen a hotspot for technology startups and multinationals. In that regard, the initiative aims to facilitate up to 75 digital entrepreneurs with a view to creating over 500 direct jobs and 1,000 indirect jobs in the West Cork area by 2020. The insights gained in the establishment of the Ludgate Hub will, over time, be shared with other rural areas in order to help generate rural development on a larger scale.



The Ludgate Hub, Skibbereen, Co. Cork (Ludgate Hub)

Pillar 5:

Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity

Key Objectives:

- Bring high speed broadband to every premises in Ireland through the rollout of the National Broadband Plan and improve mobile phone access in rural areas
- Improve rural transport links through a review of services, support for our regional airports and investment in rural infrastructure
- Implement flood relief measures and other land management measures to protect our rural infrastructure

Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021

The Government's €42 billion Capital Investment Plan is a framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland over the period 2016 to 2021. The €27 billion Exchequer component of the Capital Plan, supplemented by a new €500 million phase of the PPP programme, is primarily targeted at addressing priority needs in transport, education, housing and health care. Investments will also be made to mitigate risks from flooding.

The €14.5 billion non-Exchequer component of the Capital Plan will be delivered by the State companies, which include ESB, Irish Water, and Ervia (formerly Bord Gáis Éireann). These investments will primarily be targeted at energy infrastructure development, including renewable energy and smart metering, and on the enhancement of water and wastewater infrastructure. The Capital Investment Plan will have an impact on all parts of Ireland and specific projects are referenced under the Plan which will benefit rural Ireland. For the purposes of this Action Plan for Rural Development, an emphasis has been placed on three priority issues around rural connectivity which arose in the consultation process. These are broadband, rural transport and flood relief measures.

Broadband and Mobile Phone Access

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to conclusively address Ireland's connectivity challenges, by ensuring that every premises in the country has access to high speed services. Broadband is essential to economic prosperity and social development. The State is currently progressing the procurement process for the service, and the roll out of the NBP will put Ireland to the forefront internationally in terms of connectivity. It will also effectively reverse the urban/rural divide by giving rural businesses and homes access to a technology which is not widely available in our towns and cities at present.

The rollout of the NBP constitutes one of the single biggest investments in rural Ireland for generations and will allow communities and businesses in rural areas to compete effectively and realise their full potential. While the Plan will be rolled out on a progressive basis, the Government will take immediate action to accelerate and facilitate both broadband roll out and improvements to mobile phone reception in rural areas by implementing the recommendations of the report of the Taskforce on Mobile Phone and Broadband Access⁴.

The actions detailed below cover not just the implementation of the National Broadband Plan but also the preparations for rollout, setting out the Government's approach to overcoming potential obstacles to works and for ensuring that rural communities are best positioned to capitalise on full access to the digital environment.

4. See: <http://dccae.gov.ie/communications/Lists/Publications%20Documents/Taskforce%20Report.pdf>

Realising our Rural Potential

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
232	Implement the National Broadband Plan to provide high speed broadband to every premises in Ireland.	Ongoing	DCCAE, DAHRRGA
233	Establish an Implementation Group to drive and monitor the recommendations in the report of the Taskforce on Mobile Phone and Broadband Access to accelerate the rollout of broadband infrastructure and mobile phone access in rural Ireland.	Q1 2017	DCCAE, DAHRRGA
234	Work with local authorities to plan for and facilitate early access to high-speed broadband to rural communities in Ireland by identifying and addressing barriers and through the rollout of Strategic Community Access Hubs across Ireland.	Ongoing	DAHRRGA, DCCAE, LAs
235	Assign an officer with responsibility for broadband in each Local Authority area who will act as a single point of contact for telecommunications operators who are building out broadband infrastructure.	Q1 2017	LAs, DAHRRGA
236	Develop Local Digital Strategies in each Local Authority area to ensure that businesses and communities are in a position to realise the full benefit of the National Broadband Plan once it is rolled out.	2017	DAHRRGA, DCCAE, LAs, Údarás na Gaeltachta
237	Implement a new Digital Skills Training Programme under the National Digital Strategy, to support 25,000-30,000 citizens who have never used the internet, thereby assisting in upskilling rural communities ahead of the rollout of broadband across the country.	2017-2019	DCCAE
238	Remove development contribution charges for the placement of telecommunications infrastructure across all Local Authorities as a matter of priority.	Q1 2017	LAs
239	Complete the duct installation on 95km of roadway on the M7/M8 corridor to enable operators to deploy end-to-end telecommunications infrastructure between Dublin and Cork.	Q2 2017	TII, DTTAS
240	Explore whether take up of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) can be improved, including through a review of the pricing and other arrangements relating to connections.	Q2 2017	DCCAE
241	Review the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) on an ongoing basis and, building on existing arrangements, establish an appropriate Stakeholder Forum to provide for a clear and transparent engagement process for formal dialogue between the relevant stakeholders in relation to road openings.	Ongoing	DTTAS
242	Optimise State assets to facilitate the roll out of strategically-paced telecommunications infrastructure, leading to improved broadband and mobile phone coverage.	Ongoing	Relevant Non-commercial State bodies
243	Develop revised 'Exempted Development Regulations' to allow industry to accelerate the rollout of 4G services by exempting 4G antennae from requiring planning permission.	2017	DHPCLG

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
244	Develop a licensing scheme allowing for the use of mobile phone repeaters to improve the quality of indoor mobile coverage, particularly in rural areas.	2017	COMREG, DCCAE
245	Generate and publish online a composite national mobile phone coverage map (similar to the map produced by the UK regulator (Ofcom)), which will help consumers - particularly in rural areas - choose the network provider that best meets their needs depending on where they live and work.	2018	COMREG, DCCAE
246	Assess the extent of mobile phone reception blackspots being experienced across the country, which affects rural areas in particular, and identify actions to rectify this. This could include consideration of how spectrum in the 700MHz band is allocated.	Q2 2017	DCCAE
247	Convene a forum of all stakeholders annually to discuss issues impacting on the rollout of telecoms infrastructure across the country.	2017	DAHRRGA, DCCAE

Rural Transport

The provision of a high quality, inter-connected system of transport in rural Ireland is key to the realisation of the inherent social and economic potential which exists in rural areas. The actions outlined below detail measures relating to public transport, the Rural Transport Programme, air travel and transport solutions designed to

meet particular needs, such as those of island communities. These actions will help form the basis for improved transport connectivity between rural areas, local population centres, cities and international destinations. Improving transport links to and from rural areas will have positive impacts for rural communities and rural businesses, particularly by reducing travel time and business costs.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
248	Progress the major roads projects detailed in the 7 year transport element of the Capital Investment Plan which will help deliver economic and business benefits across rural areas and regions.	Ongoing	DTTAS, Transport Infrastructure Ireland
249	Improve transport services for the off-shore islands to support the sustainable and inclusive development of island communities and to encourage tourism and other economic benefits, including improved co-ordination with relevant Local Authorities and DTTAS as appropriate.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA, Service Providers, LAs, DTTAS
250	Continue capital investment in island piers and harbours.	2017-2019	DAHRRGA, LAs
251	Conduct a full review of public transport policy, including the rural transport dimension, to ensure that it meets the needs of rural communities.	2017	DTTAS, NTA
252	Work with rural communities to assess and implement improvements to existing rural transport routes and develop new rural transport routes as necessary.	Ongoing	NTA
253	Rollout a programme of awareness of the Rural Transport Programme amongst rural communities.	Ongoing	NTA
254	Ensure that Rural Transport Programme vehicles are accessible, having regard to all passenger needs.	Ongoing from 2017	NTA

Realising our Rural Potential

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
255	Examine the potential for, and where possible, integrate Health Service Executive non-emergency transport services with rural transport services.	Ongoing	NTA, HSE
256	Support rural communities by bringing eligible children to their local school through the provision of safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services.	Ongoing	DES
257	Conduct a review of the small public service vehicle driver licensing framework to ensure, amongst other things, the availability of taxi/hackney services including in rural areas.	2017	NTA, DTTAS
258	Examine the scope for increased investment in regional roads in the context of the review of the Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021.	2017	DTTAS
259	Promote increased funding for Local Improvement Schemes (for non-public roads and laneways) and Community Involvement schemes (for regional and local roads), on an annual basis, as resources permit.	Ongoing	DTTAS, LAs
260	Implement the capital and operational support schemes, as appropriate, under the Regional Airports Programme 2015-2019 at the regional airports in Donegal, Kerry, Waterford and Ireland West Airport Knock, utilising the additional €10m of support provided for under the Programme for a Partnership Government.	Ongoing	DTTAS
261	Arrest and reverse the decline in passenger numbers at Cork Airport and increase connectivity by air into and out of Cork.	2017-2019	daa
262	Grow existing routes and services at Shannon Airport which will benefit the region.	Ongoing	Shannon Group, Tourism Ireland
263	Agree and implement a Code of Practice with relevant infrastructural providers to ensure timely and efficient transport links and other key infrastructure are maintained across rural Ireland whilst safeguarding Ireland's archaeological heritage.	2017-2020	DAHRRGA, TII, Eirgrid, ESB Networks, Bord na Móna, Irish Concrete Federation, Coillte

Flood relief measures

Since 2011, the OPW's Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme has formed the basis of the Government's strategy for addressing areas at potentially significant risk from flooding. The actions below capture the cross-agency approach, led by the OPW, through the Interdepartmental Flood Policy Co-ordination Group and the Shannon Flood Risk State

Agency Co-ordination Working Group, which is currently underway to proactively address and alleviate the risk and damage of flooding. The actions encompass Flood Risk Management Plans to address risk through major flood defence, mitigation and coastal protection works, and measures to help public authorities and communities improve their readiness to avoid the worst effects of flooding.

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
264	Increase Capital funding for flood risk management schemes up to €80m per annum by 2019 and increasing to €100m per annum by 2021, as provided for under the Capital Plan 2016-2021, to accelerate delivery of flood defence schemes around the country that will provide protection for properties at risk of flooding.	2017-2021	OPW, DP&ER

No.	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
265	Approve and implement Flood Risk Management Plans setting out flood risk management measures identified for areas of significant risk around the country, including over 100 further proposed measures for rural communities in addition to 28 flood relief schemes for rural communities already in progress.	2017-2027	OPW, LAs
266	Introduce a prioritised and targeted voluntary homeowners relocation scheme for those again affected by the flooding of December 2015-January 2016.	2017	OPW, DSP, LAs
267	Establish a Working Group comprising representatives from Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, OPW and Local Authorities to examine in the first instance the feasibility of a targeted and prioritised voluntary farm building relocation scheme for those farm buildings again affected by floods in Winter 2015/2016 and where alternative flood alleviation remedial works and measures are not feasible.	2017	DAFM, OPW, LAs
268	Implement Stage 1 of a National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service/Flood Forecasting Service to be established within Met Éireann within 5 years.	2017-2021	Met Éireann, OPW
269	Assess rural and dispersed flood risk, and where possible develop strategies and actions to manage the assessed risk, under the second cycle of the EU Floods Directive.	2017 onwards	OPW
270	Strengthen the engagement with the insurance industry to improve the availability of flood insurance cover, given the State's ongoing investment in flood defence schemes.	2017	OPW, DoF
271	Review Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Schemes to support Local Authorities in their work to address localised flooding problems in their areas.	2017-2021	OPW, LAs
272	Introduce a trial to lower the water level on Lough Allen in specific conditions in order to help to mitigate potential flood risk.	2017	OPW, Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group
273	Evaluate the benefits from any short and medium term programme of localised dredging and any future piloting to remove some pinch points along the Shannon.	2017	OPW, Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group
274	Assess the use of cutaway peatlands and pumping and peat stock management regimes to assist in flood risk management.	2017	Bord na Mona, OPW
275	Identify potential solutions to address the risk of flooding from turloughs.	2017-2019	GSI, OPW
276	Continue implementation of the Forestry Programme (2014-2020) by increasing annual planting, carbon sequestration and more effective land management.	Ongoing	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Monitoring Progress

Monitoring Committee

The implementation of this Plan will be overseen in the first instance by a Monitoring Committee which will include representatives of relevant Government Departments and key rural stakeholder interests. The Monitoring Committee will be supported by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and will meet on a regular basis. There will also be ongoing engagement with relevant Departments, agencies and stakeholders between meetings to ensure that progress is on track. A new Division has been established in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to co-ordinate the implementation of the Action Plan across Government and to service the Monitoring Committee.

Recognising that the Plan has a three-year life span, the monitoring process will identify priority actions and milestones for the forthcoming six months on a rolling basis. Progress on the delivery of these actions and milestones, along with “on-going” actions, will be scrutinised at the end of the six-month period by the Monitoring Committee. This process will enable clear time-bound targets to be set and reported on over the lifetime of the Plan.

On the basis of the Monitoring Committee’s work, Progress Reports will be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Regional and Rural Affairs, which is chaired by An Taoiseach, and will be published twice-yearly. A new updated website, www.ruralireland.ie, will provide information on resources available to support rural development, and will contain examples of best practice emerging from the delivery of the Action Plan.

The Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will also appoint an Ambassador for the Action Plan for Rural Development, who will assist the Monitoring Committee in identifying the impacts of the Plan on rural Ireland, as well as encouraging businesses, communities, sporting organisations and other community/cultural organisations to engage with the Plan.

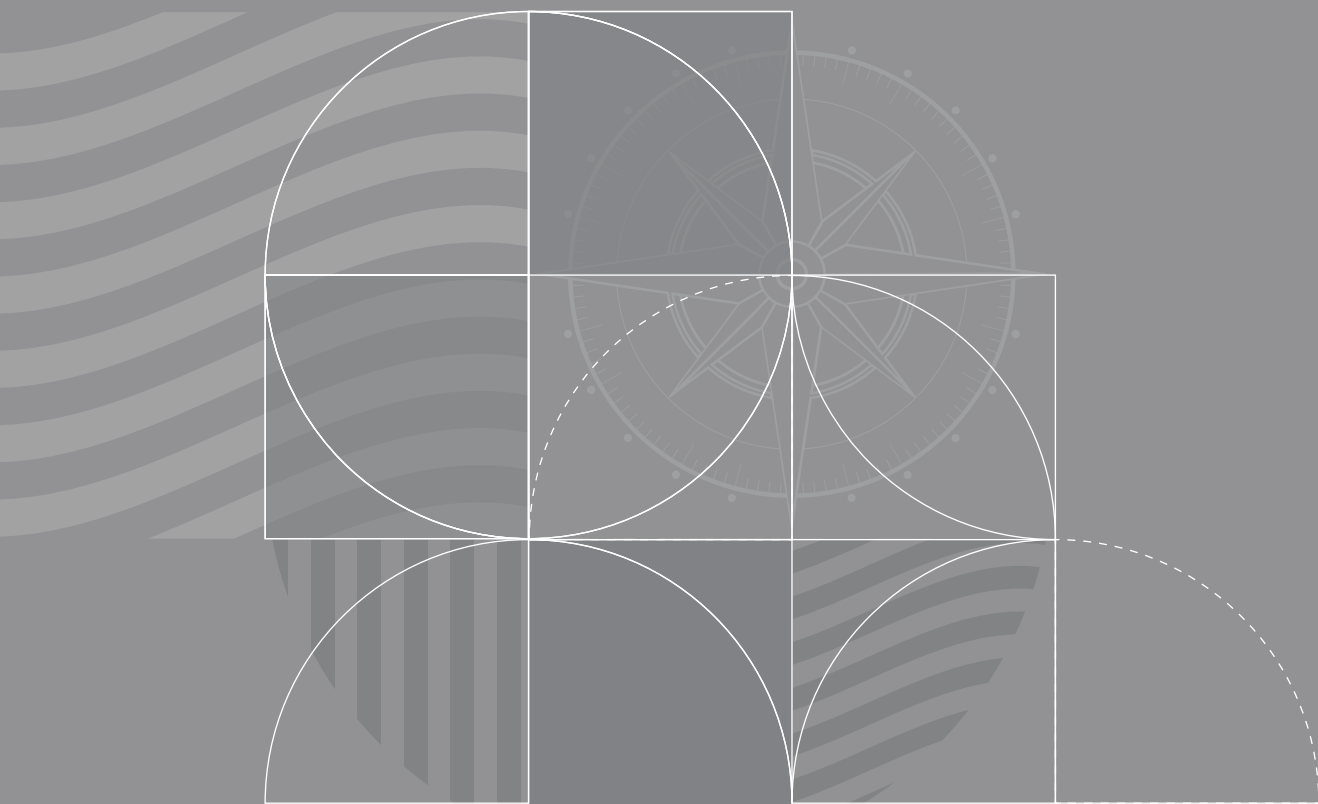
A key feature of this Action Plan is that it will be a living document, with the capacity to add further actions over its lifetime. The Monitoring Committee meetings will provide a platform to identify and agree further actions and to facilitate on-going discussion with stakeholders over the duration of the Plan.

Measuring impacts

Measuring the economic and social impact of the Plan on rural communities will be an important part of the monitoring process. Identifying these impacts is challenging due to the breadth of the Plan and the range of issues it addresses in the economic, social, and cultural spheres. However, appropriate output and impact indicators for the Action Plan will be developed in 2017 by the Secretariat in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and with the input of the Monitoring Committee.

The Monitoring Committee process will also help to identify emerging trends or areas of concern for rural Ireland and will help with the formulation of new or revised actions to address policy issues that need to be tackled. Policy formulation will also be informed by research undertaken by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in consultation with relevant stakeholders and experts.

Appendices



Appendix 1 – Programmes and Strategies referenced in this Plan

An Dioplóma sa Chultúr Dúchais

This course, run by NUI Galway, is aimed at people interested in native culture and folklore of Ireland. The course aims to share information with participants to give them insight into this cultural richness.

Better Energy Communities Scheme

The Better Energy Communities scheme encourages community and locally based organisations to apply for funding to upgrade the energy efficiency of buildings in their community, from homes to businesses and community facilities. It aims to inspire and mobilise communities to take control of their energy usage.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is the overarching national policy framework for children and young people (aged 0-24 years), developed and led by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on behalf of the Government. Almost all policy areas have a direct or indirect effect on children and young people's lives. The purpose of this framework is to coordinate policy across Government to achieve better outcomes.

Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021

The Government's €42 billion Capital Investment Plan is a framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland over the period 2016 to 2021. The €27 billion Exchequer component of the Capital Plan, supplemented by a new €500 million phase of the PPP programme, is primarily targeted at addressing priority needs in transport, education, housing and health care. Investments will also be made to mitigate risks from flooding.

The Plan has been designed to meet the needs of a growing economy, to improve the delivery of services to communities, and to maximise the benefits of support by providing Exchequer investment throughout the country. There will be a Mid-Term Review, which will take

stock of progress to date and provide the Government with an opportunity to reaffirm priority projects. This Review will also provide the Government with an opportunity to consider the scope for increased levels of investment, should fiscal and economic circumstances permit.

Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM)

The CFRAM Programme is central to the medium to long-term strategy for the reduction and management of flood risk in Ireland. The Programme delivers on core components of the National Flood Policy, adopted in 2004, and on the requirements of the EU 'Floods' Directive. The Irish CFRAM programme is being carried out in parallel with similar programmes across the European Union. The OPW is the lead agency for flood risk management in Ireland and is the national competent authority for the EU Floods Directive. The OPW works in close partnership with all Local Authorities in delivering the objectives of the CFRAM Programme.

Community Facilities Fund

The Community Facilities Fund will be implemented through the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and it will be targeted at disadvantaged urban and rural areas, but not exclusively so.

Community Heritage Grants Scheme

The Community Heritage Grants Scheme, operated by the Heritage Council, provides funding for local heritage projects across the country. A wide range of projects may be supported, including those related to heritage awareness, conservation plans for monuments, buildings or graveyards, heritage research, conservation projects, community publications etc.

Community Involvement Schemes

Community Involvement Schemes are joint ventures between County Councils and local communities, for the purpose of carrying out maintenance and improvement works on suitable Regional and Local roads. This allows community participation, either in money or in kind (for example through the provision of road-machinery, excavators, road building material, labour, etc.) in having lightly trafficked roads maintained to a good standard.

The Creative Ireland Programme

The Creative Ireland programme is the Government's Legacy Project for Ireland 2016 – a five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which places arts, culture and creativity at the centre of public policy.

EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) direct payments 2014-2020

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine administers payments of €1.2 billion a year in CAP basic payments and greening under Pillar I of CAP. These payments provide a measure of income stability and certainty for farmers and the wider rural community.

Farm Assist

Farm Assist is a special means-tested income support scheme available to farm families when their income falls below a certain threshold. Qualification for Farm Assist can also lead to the farmer becoming eligible for the Rural Social scheme.

Fish Assist

Fish Assist is an income support available to self-employed fishermen that qualify for jobseeker's allowance, i.e. available for and genuinely seeking work and satisfy a means test.

Fisheries Local Action Groups

New Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) have been established as part of Ireland's €241m European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme. The FLAGs will focus on community-led development to enhance the economic opportunities and social sustainability of Fisheries and Aquaculture dependent areas. Each FLAG will receive technical support to prepare a Local Development Strategy, in consultation with local communities, setting out the FLAG priorities for development and support in their area.

Food Wise 2025

Food Wise 2025 (FW2025) sets out a cohesive, strategic plan for the development of agri-food sector over the next decade. This sector is embedded in every region and area of the country and FW2025 predicts that over the next decade, Ireland can increase the value of agri-food exports by 85% to €19 billion and should deliver a further 23,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2025.

Forestry Programme 2014-2020

Forests play an important economic, environmental and social role. The Department Agriculture and Food's afforestation programme will contribute to rural viability and will have a major role in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. The Forestry Programme sets out to address four specific needs, namely, to increase the level of forest cover, to increase supply of forest-based biomass, to support private forest holders in actively managing their forests, and to enhance the environmental and social benefits of new and existing forests.

Framework Policy on Local & Community Development

The Framework Policy on Local & Community Development will seek to secure a joined-up, collaborative and participative approach to local and community development at local level and will be implemented on a cross-departmental basis. The development and implementation of policies, programmes and other

interventions will be carried out by central and local government in line with the Framework Policy's core objectives.

Harnessing our Ocean Wealth

Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth is an Integrated Marine Plan detailing Ireland's response to the global marine market which covers seafood, tourism, oil and gas, marine renewable energy, and new applications for health, medicine and technology. The plan sets out a roadmap for the Government's vision, high-level goals and integrated actions across policy, governance and business to enable our marine potential to be realised.

Inland Fisheries Ireland – Sponsorship Programme 2017

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) provides support to groups, associations, clubs or other appropriate bodies to assist with events which meet the aims of the IFI Sponsorship Programme, e.g. large international competitions, representative angling teams at international events, initiatives to promote fisheries awareness and novice angler events and training.

LEADER Local Development Strategies

The EU co-financed LEADER programme provides funding for rural development under three key themes:

- Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation;
- Social Inclusion; and
- Rural Environment.

Funding of €250 million (including EU co-financing) has been made available up to 2020 to the programme, as part of the Rural Development Programme.

LEADER will be delivered through Local Development Strategies in 28 sub-regional areas of the country. These sub-regions cover all areas of Ireland outside of the city boundaries of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

The Local Development Strategies, which cover the period to 2020, have been developed by the LEADER Local Action Groups in each respective area. The Local

Action Groups are comprised of public and private partners from the local area, and include representatives of the local economy and community. The Strategies are therefore developed and driven by local people in respect of their own local area. The actions identified in the Local Development Strategies are also cognisant of the Local Economic and Community Plans produced for each region.

Local Community Development Committees and Local Economic and Community Plans

As part of the reform of local government, Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) have been established in all Local Authority areas for the purposes of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development in those areas. The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is the key mechanism through which LCDCs will discharge their role. The Plan comprises two elements – economic elements, developed by Strategic Planning Committees for Economic Development and Enterprise, and community elements developed by the new Local Community Development Committees. The LECPs seek to promote the well-being and quality of life of people and communities, bringing key stakeholders together to work in partnership and facilitating integrated service planning and delivery.

Local Improvement Schemes

Local Improvement Schemes (LIS) provide funding for non-public roads and laneways that have not been taken in charge by a Council i.e. the maintenance and improvement of the road/laneway is a matter for the relevant landowner. Administration of the LIS is delegated to the County Councils and the selection and prioritisation of the road projects to be funded under the scheme is a matter for the Councils, subject to the terms and conditions of the grants provided by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Men's Sheds

A Men's Shed is any community-based, non-commercial organisation which is open to all men where the primary activity is the provision of a safe, friendly and inclusive environment where the men are able to gather and/or work on meaningful projects at their own pace, in their own time and in the company of other men and where the primary objective is to advance the health and well-being of the participating men.

National Dialogue for Climate Change

The Programme for Partnership Government includes a commitment to establish a National Dialogue on Climate Change (NDCC). The NDCC will examine the key infrastructural, land use and economic issues that need to be addressed in the long-term transition to a low-carbon future and will reflect the views of all stakeholders including businesses, communities and citizens.

National Planning Framework

Ireland 2040 – A National Planning Framework (NPF) will be finalised in 2017. This will be a strategy for the place-based development of Ireland as a whole, over the period to 2040. It will be the successor to the National Spatial Strategy 2002. The NPF will be the long-term framework for future development and investment, including in the regions and rural Ireland. As the principal planning policy document for the country, the NPF will directly influence regional strategies, in particular the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to be developed by the Regional Assemblies, and the City/County development plans of the Local Authorities.

National Strategy for Angling Development 2015-2020

The National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD) 2015-2020 is the first comprehensive national framework for the development of Ireland's angling resource. The strategy sets out to ensure that our fish stocks and angling infrastructure are protected and enhanced for both their economic value and their recreational benefit to the communities and visitors they serve.

National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020

The goal of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives. It focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

National Peatlands Strategy

The National Peatlands Strategy, published in 2016, aims to provide a long-term framework within which all of the peatlands within the State can be managed responsibly in order to optimise their social, environmental and economic contribution to the well-being of this and future generations.

National Waste Prevention Programme

The objectives of the National Waste Prevention Programme is to implement EU and national policy to reduce wasteful consumption of material, water and energy resources, enhance competitiveness and reduce business costs, support sustainable growth and employment in the green economy, manage hazardous substances and inform and influence evidence-based decision-making by compiling and publishing quality data on waste.

Public Participation Network (PPN)

A Public Participation Network (PPN) has been developed in each Local Authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the County/City level) to enable the public to take an active formal role in relevant policy making and oversight committees of the Local Authority.

RAPID

The RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) Programme is a Government initiative which targets 51 of the most disadvantaged urban areas in the country, including rural towns. The Programme aims to ensure that priority attention is given to the 51 designated areas by focusing available resources.

Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness

The Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness launched in July 2016 aims to ramp up delivery of housing from its current undersupply across all tenures to help individuals and families meet their housing needs. While much of the focus of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness centres on addressing housing need and supply shortages in urban areas, there is equally a requirement to facilitate a sufficient supply of homes for purchase, rent and social housing throughout Ireland's towns and villages. This Action Plan will actively address these issues through a range of time bound actions.

Regional Action Plans for Jobs

As a follow on from the National Action Plan for Jobs process, started in 2012, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation is implementing a series of Action Plans for Jobs at regional level (Mid East, North East/North West, West, MidWest, South East, South West, Midland and Dublin) setting out specific actions relating to entrepreneurship and job creation that will be undertaken to build on the unique strengths and opportunities of each region.

Regional Airports Programme 2015-2019

The 2015 - 2019 Regional Airports Programme provides for Exchequer support to cover safety and security related projects/activities at the four regional airports in Waterford, Kerry, Donegal and Knock (IWAK) under four separate Schemes - Capital Expenditure Grant Scheme (CAPEX), the Core Airport Management Operational Expenditure Subvention Scheme (OPEX), Public Policy Remit Capital Expenditure Grant Scheme (PPR-C) and Public Policy Remit Core Airport Management Operational Expenditure Subvention Scheme (PPR-O).

The Programme establishes a definitive framework for the future development of Ireland's regional airports.

Regional Co-operative Market Access Scheme

The Regional Co-operative Market Access Scheme promotes air and sea access to the regions outside of Dublin. The fund, which will be extended until 2018, will be administered by Tourism Ireland with matching funding by airports and ports and regional tourism stakeholders including Local Authorities.

Regional Skills Fora

The Network of Regional Skills Fora created as part of the National Skills Strategy provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. The Fora provide a single contact point in each region to help employers connect with the range of services and supports available across the education and training system.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies are being developed by Regional Assemblies to provide long-term planning and an economic framework to implement the National Planning Framework and the economic policies or objectives of the Government

Renewable Electricity Support Scheme

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is currently working to assess the economic and technical viability of a range of renewable energy technologies as part of a new renewable electricity support scheme. The introduction of any new scheme - including the overall costs and technologies to be supported - will be subject to Government approval and State aid clearance from the European Commission. It is expected the new scheme will become available at the end of 2017.

Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020

Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 is co-funded by the EU's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the national exchequer. EU support for the RDP will amount to €2.19 billion over the 7-year Programme period and will be supplemented by exchequer funding to bring the total support available under the RDP to some €4 billion. Ireland's RDP contains an extensive suite of measures aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, achieving more sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage resources and ensuring a more balanced development of rural areas. Funding under the RDP is made available to all farming sectors, and supports Community Led Local Development by means of Programme LEADER.

Rural Economic Development Zones

Rural Economic Development Zones are defined as sub county zones within which most people live and work, REDZ are functional rather than administrative geographic areas that reflect the spatial patterns of local economic activities and development processes. The pilot scheme was launched in June 2015 and €3.7m in total was allocated to 52 projects.

Rural Female Entrepreneurs Initiative (Acorns)

The ACORNS initiative seeks to assist in realising the potential of female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland. The objective is to equip these early stage entrepreneurs with the appropriate knowledge, confidence and networks to successfully start and develop sustainable businesses.

Rural Social Scheme

The aim of Rural Social Scheme is to provide income support to low-income farmers and to provide certain services of benefit to rural communities. The Scheme is managed by 36 Implementing Bodies (35 Integrated Local Development Companies and Údarás na Gaeltachta, in the Gaeltacht).

Rural Transport Programme

The Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was launched in 2007, following an earlier pilot Rural Transport Initiative (2002 to 2006), and is funded by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to address social exclusion in rural areas arising from unmet public transport needs. The RTP is managed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) which contracts the bus services provided under the programme. Seventeen Transport Co-ordination Units (TCUs), located throughout the country and operating under the Locallink brand, manage the passenger services on behalf of the NTA.

Seafood Development Programme 2014-2020

The main vehicle for driving sustainable seafood production in Ireland is the Seafood Development Programme. This programme covers the fishing fleet, aquaculture sector, seafood processing sector, Fisheries Local Action Groups, Blue Growth, Marine Spatial Planning, Control and Enforcement, Data Collection and Marine Biodiversity.

Seniors Alert Scheme

The objective of the Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS) is to encourage community support for vulnerable older people in our communities through the provision of personal monitored alarms to enable older persons of limited means to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind.

Something Fishy National Schools Programme

Something Fishy is an Educational Programme, aimed at Primary school pupils aged between 10-13 years, which informs and educates students on fish, water, angling and the environment by the use of lesson plans and activity sheets based on the theme of the 'Life cycle of salmon'.

Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018

The Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018 sets out 23 actions to be addressed in the period between now and 2018 aimed at securing continued growth in overseas tourism revenue and employment. The actions address a range of key issues, including the marketing of Ireland as a visitor destination overseas, visitor access to and within Ireland, the effective presentation of Irish culture, sport, and events to visitors, the role of Local Authorities in supporting tourism, visitor accommodation capacity, and skills development in the tourism sector.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

This scheme sets out to support the revitalisation of towns and villages in order to improve the living and working environment of their communities and increase their potential to support increased economic activity into the future. The type of projects funded under this initiative is primarily a matter for the Local Authorities to identify in partnership with local business and communities.

Appendix 2 – Glossary of Terms

BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
CIF	Construction Industry Federation
CSO	Central Statistics Office
daa	Company formerly known as the Dublin Airport Authority
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DAHRRGA	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCCAE	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DHPCLG	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DoF	Department of Finance
DoH	Department of Health
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSP	Department of Social Protection
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
EI	Enterprise Ireland
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
HEIs	Higher Education Institutes
HSE	Health Service Executive
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
ILCU	Irish League of Credit Unions
ISIF	Ireland Strategic Investment Fund

LAs	Local Authorities
LAGs	LEADER Local Action Groups
LCDCs	Local Community Development Committees
LDCs	Local Development Companies
LEOs	Local Enterprise Offices
NTA	National Transport Authority
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway
OPW	Office of Public Works
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
PPNs	Public Participation Networks
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development Areas
RGDATA	Retail Grocery Dairy & Allied Trades Association
SBCI	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
WDC	Western Development Commission