

LEADER

Community-Led Local Development



National Rural Network

NRN LEADER Newsletter No. 1 December 2017

Focus on the LEADER Programme 2014-2020

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The LEADER Programme 2014-2020

Welcome to the National Rural Network's first newsletter focusing on issues relating to the EU LEADER 2014-2020 Programme. Since its inception in 1991, LEADER has provided both private enterprise and community groups with the resources necessary to actively engage and direct the economic and social development of their local area, through community-led local development. The current LEADER budget allocated to Ireland, funded through Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, provides €250 million in financial grant aid to promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural communities.



Jimmy and Bernadine Mulhall and daughter Lucille of Coolanowle Country House and Organic Farm, pictured with renowned celebrity chef Neven Maguire during his stay at their guest house in Ballickmoyler, Co. Carlow. The Mulhall's were granted funding under the previous LEADER Programme to develop their enterprise.



The LEADER Concept

The LEADER programme is based on the ‘bottom-up’ approach. A European Commission report entitled ‘The LEADER Approach – A basic guide’, represents the rationale behind LEADER in the following manner: ‘the main concept behind the LEADER initiative is that, given the diversity of European rural areas, development strategies are more effective and efficient if decided and implemented at local level by local actors, accompanied by clear and transparent procedures, the support of the relevant public administrations and the necessary technical assistance for the transfer of good practice’ (European Commission, 2006, p.8).

7 Key Principles of LEADER

The LEADER approach is based on 7 key principles – all of which must collaborate and positively interact for it to be successful. Indeed, it is important to consider these 7 principles as a toolkit, rather than as separate entities, that can work together to safeguard and build a brighter future for rural communities.



A detailed description of these 7 key principles of LEADER can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/publi/fact/leader/2006_en.pdf

LEADER 2014-2020 Themes and Sub-Themes

The LEADER programme for 2014-2020 includes themes that reflect the overarching needs of rural Ireland. Each theme contains a number of sub-themes which are considered the key areas in need of the greatest support and have the greatest potential to promote the sustainable development of rural communities in Ireland (please see below).

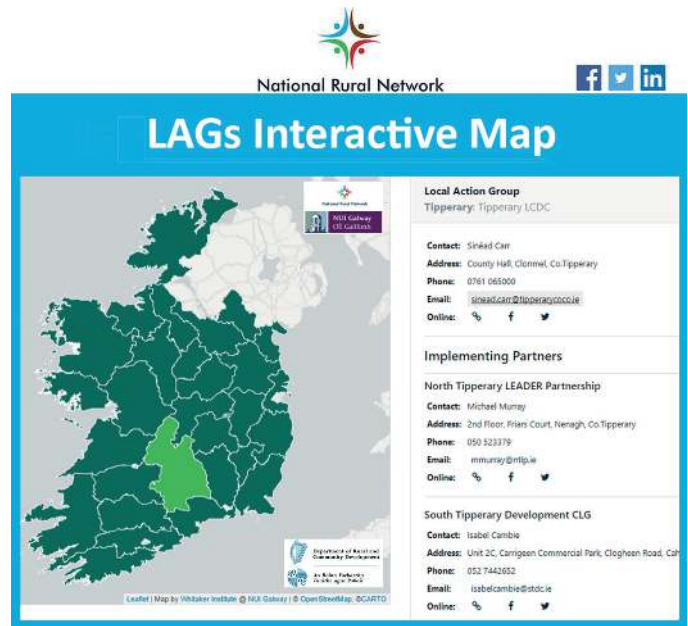


Local Action Groups (LAGs) and Implementing Partners

Decisions on LEADER funding are made at a local level by a network of Local Action Group (LAGs), through the framework of a community-led, Local Development Strategy (LDS). LAGs are made up of groups of people from the local community as well as both public and private partners from a defined geographical area. Currently, there are 29 LAGs who have contracts in place with the Department of Rural and Community Development to support the sustainable development of their sub-regional area. Within each of the LAGs, Implementing Partners are responsible for the day to day management and co-ordination of the Rural Development Programme ‘on the ground’. These companies provide rural communities and local businesses in the catchment area of the region they are located with various supports, such as advice, training and mentoring on behalf of the LAGs.

New NRN Local Action Group (LAGs) Interactive Map

The NRN team at NUI Galway have recently collaborated with David Kelly, Research Technologist at the Whitaker Institute and Moore Institute at NUI Galway to create an informative interactive Local Action Group (LAGs) map of Ireland. This interactive map outlines the geographical boundaries of each of the 29 LAGs located throughout Ireland as well as an updated list of the Implementing Partners located in each LAG region. Links to each of the LAGs and Implementing Partner’s websites and social media pages are also embedded into this map. This ‘one-stop-shop’ LAGs map will provide those interested in accessing assistance under the LEADER Programme 2014-2020, with convenient access to information about the Local Development Strategy and geographical coverage of their LAGs as well as contact details, such as email address and phone numbers. This map will be added to the LEADER section of the NRN website in January 2018.



NRN LAGs Interactive Map

LEADER Projects are Up and Running around Ireland

An increasing number of Local Action Group (LAGs) located throughout the country, responsible for administering grant aid under the LEADER programme in their sub-regional area, have now approved funding with successful applicants. In Co. Donegal for example, over €450,000 of LEADER grant aid has recently been approved by Donegal Local Community Development Committee (Donegal LCDC) for four projects, while in Co. Wexford, almost €400,000 in LEADER funding has been approved by Wexford Local Community Development Committee

(Wexford LCDC) for eleven niche food and beverage businesses located throughout the county. This grant aid is anticipated to result in the creation of up to twenty-five new full-time jobs and fourteen part time jobs in the county over the next three years. For further information on LEADER funding in your local area, including how to apply, please contact your Local Action Group. A full list of LAGs and Implementing Partners can be found on the LEADER section of the NRN website: <http://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/leader>



Donegal Local Development CLG (DLDC)



Wexford Local Development (WLD)

ENRD Thematic Group on ‘Smart Villages’

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) recently formed a Thematic Group on ‘Smart Villages’ to explore how Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) can make rural services – such as health, social services, education, energy, transport, retail - more sustainable and innovative through the deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools as well as by supporting community-led actions and projects. It is envisaged that revitalising rural services through digital and social innovation practices can create more vibrant, sustainable and attractive rural areas. Please click on the following link for more information: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/tg_smart-villages_leaflet.pdf. Two ‘Smart Villages’ Thematic Group meetings have taken place to date in Brussels.



1st Thematic Group Meeting on ‘Smart Villages’

The first Thematic Group on ‘Smart Villages’ was held on the 26th of October 2017 and was attended by over 40 delegates from various Local Action Groups, research institutes, National Rural Networks and Managing Authorities across the EU, as well as by individuals from four key EU institutions: the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Postdoctoral Researcher, Dr Shane Conway attended and participated at this event on behalf of the National Rural Network. This first group meeting discussed integrated strategic approaches to innovation in rural services, emerging projects and the role of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in supporting them, with a particular focus on RDP Measures for basic services and LEADER/CLLD (Community Led Local Development).

The meeting also highlighted four existing approaches to supporting innovation in rural services in Italy, Finland, Germany, and France. These were considered imaginative responses to various rural challenges – such as depopulation, the digital divide, centralisation of public services – creating opportunities by establishing win-win links between rural areas and cities. These presentations demonstrated the wealth of good practice examples in operation across Europe and can be viewed on the ENRD website: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/1st-meeting-thematic-group-smart-villages_en

A key recommendation to come from the first Thematic

Gabriel O'Connell, CEO at Monaghan Integrated Development, leading a focus group discussion at the 2nd ‘Smart Villages’ Thematic Group Meeting.

Group meeting was for the ENRD website to become the focal point for collecting and showcasing inspiring initiatives linked to the topic of ‘Smart Villages’ at European, national and local levels, as such examples can inspire new initiatives to start up. A full report on the highlights of the 1st meeting can be found on the ENRD website: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/tg1_smart-villages_highlights.pdf

2nd Thematic Group Meeting on ‘Smart Villages’

The 2nd Meeting of Thematic Group on ‘Smart Villages’ took place on the 7th of December 2017 in Brussels. Dr Shane Conway again attended and participated at this event on behalf of the National Rural Network. This meeting focused on social innovation initiatives and their role in revitalising rural services and a number of existing initiatives and projects in these areas throughout Europe were discussed. Content presented on the day can be viewed on the ENRD website: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-smart-villages_en. The 3rd Thematic Group Meeting will be held in February 2018.

If you already have, or are planning to implement a ‘smart’ and innovative project that revitalises the provision of basic services in rural areas through the use of new technologies or the mobilisation of the local community, please email shane.conway@nuigalway.ie and we can share your experience with the ENRD Thematic Group.

Transnational Education in LEADER Implementation (TELI2)

Transnational Education in LEADER implementation (TELI2), funded by the ERASMUS+ Programme of the European Union, is a multi-actor transnational project which seeks to develop and / or further enhance the knowledge, skills and competences of staff within Local Action Groups (LAGs) / Local Development Companies (LDCs) with respect to supporting neo-endogenous rural development initiatives through the implementation of the LEADER project within their respective administrative areas.



The 30-month project commenced in September 2016 and it is being co-ordinated by Limerick Institute of Technology, a higher education institution in Ireland. The project consortium also includes another higher education institute, the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia.

The LAGS /LDCs participating in the project include: Stowarzyszenie Lokalna Grupa Działania “Dolina Raby” – Poland; SECAD-South & East Cork Area Development – Ireland; Local Action Group Dobrogea Centrala - Romania; Razvojna agencija Kozjansko - Slovenia; Lokalna Akcijska Grupa ‘Zeleni Bregi’- Croatia; Monte Desenvolvimento Alentejo Central, ACE – Portugal; Lokalna Akcijska Grupa Zrinska Gora (TUROPOLJE) – Croatia; and ADRIMAG – Portugal.

Relationship to the LEADER Programme

The project initially entails a research study of the delivery of the LEADER programme in the respective partner countries - seeking examples of the most efficient modes of implementation; and the transference of this knowledge to identified stakeholders through a special purpose award (Certificate in LEADER Programme Management – Level 8). Limerick Institute of Technology accredits this course.

The key objectives of the project include:

- Carrying out research on the delivery of LEADER in member states and training needs of LEADER staff and Board members.
- Delivering a best practice-based training course pertaining to the implementation of the LEADER programme to LDC / LAG management.
- Promoting shared learning between countries that have established LEADER programmes and those that are relative newcomers to delivery.
- Delivering an accredited programme through a blended learning model with the utilisation of on-line learning and learning workshops. The programme will also include work-based learning by participants and will allow for the Recognition of Prior Learning.

- Up-skilling of LEADER delivery organisations through life-long learning;
- Enabling LEADER staff mobility through their participation in a transnational project and future collaboration and networking in rural development initiatives.

Certificate in LEADER Programme Management Workshop

The first workshop associated with the Certificate in LEADER Programme Management was held from the 9th until the 13th of October 2017 in Midleton, Co. Cork. The event was hosted by SECAD. In total, 16 students from Ireland, Portugal, Croatia, Slovenia, Poland and Romania participated in the workshop. All of the participants work for a LAG, LDC or national agency. Key topics covered in the week-long workshop included: LEADER project management and IT systems; key principles in endogenous development; creating inclusive communities; communication skills; and socio-economic planning for LAGs.

During the workshop, the students had several opportunities to visit local projects funded through the previous LEADER programme in South-East Cork. These included: Titanic Experience (Cobh); Millennium Gardens (Cobh); Clock Gate (Youghal); and wildlife and bird trail (Ballyvergan). All of the participants enjoyed this innovative and practical learning opportunity in Co. Cork.

In Spring 2018, the students will complete another two workshops in Portugal and Poland. In the interim, further teaching on the course will be delivered through on-line blended learning methodologies.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TELI2-1343600152427341/>

Website: <http://teli2.eu/>

For further information, please contact Dr. Shane O’Sullivan, Limerick Institute of Technology (shane.osullivan@lit.ie) or +353 (0)504 28476

Image Credit: SECAD

The Role of the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) is the representative body for the country's 49 Local Development Companies. Over the past quarter of a century, Local Development Companies (LDCs) have become embedded in rural society and today support the social and economic needs of 11,200 rural communities and 83,400 individuals annually through LEADER, Rural Social Scheme, Tús, SICAP (Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme), Local Employment Service, Jobs Clubs, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and other community development, agriculture, education, health and social enterprise programmes. Joe Saunders was appointed ILDN manager earlier this year.

Community-based, Bottom-up Methodology

The community-based, bottom-up methodology of LDCs is key to their effectiveness. This includes an emphasis on pre-development work, building capacity of individuals and communities based on robust needs analysis and customising local solutions. Above all, there is strong community representation on LDC board, putting decision-making close to the point of service delivery. The positive impact of LDCs in successive independent reviews of LEADER, SICAP, LES and BTWEA testify to the effectiveness of the approach.

Given the extent of activity across the 49 companies, 35 of whom operate in rural areas, there is a clear need for a support network that can harness the benefits of co-operation at an inter-company level. ILDN manager, Joe Saunders, explains that the ILDN fulfils this role by 'providing a wide range of network services including representation to funders, policy development and research, employment issues, training, group insurance, Garda vetting, maintenance of thematic and regional committees etc'.

The organisation's main office is in Limerick but it operates a six-region structure with local committees in the West, Border, Mid-West, South, East and Dublin feeding to a national board and Council.



ILDN Chairperson Marie Price Bolger with Jack Roche of IRD Duhallow and Eamonn O' Reilly of NEWKD

ILDN also ensures that government departments benefit from coherent national representation of the sector and an effective communications and consultative channel with the key Implementing Partners for the €330 million worth of statutory programmes it delivers each year. This makes the network the largest provider of rural and community development supports and services in the state.

*Source: Joe Saunders, ILDN Manager
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/theildn/>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/theildn?lang=en>*



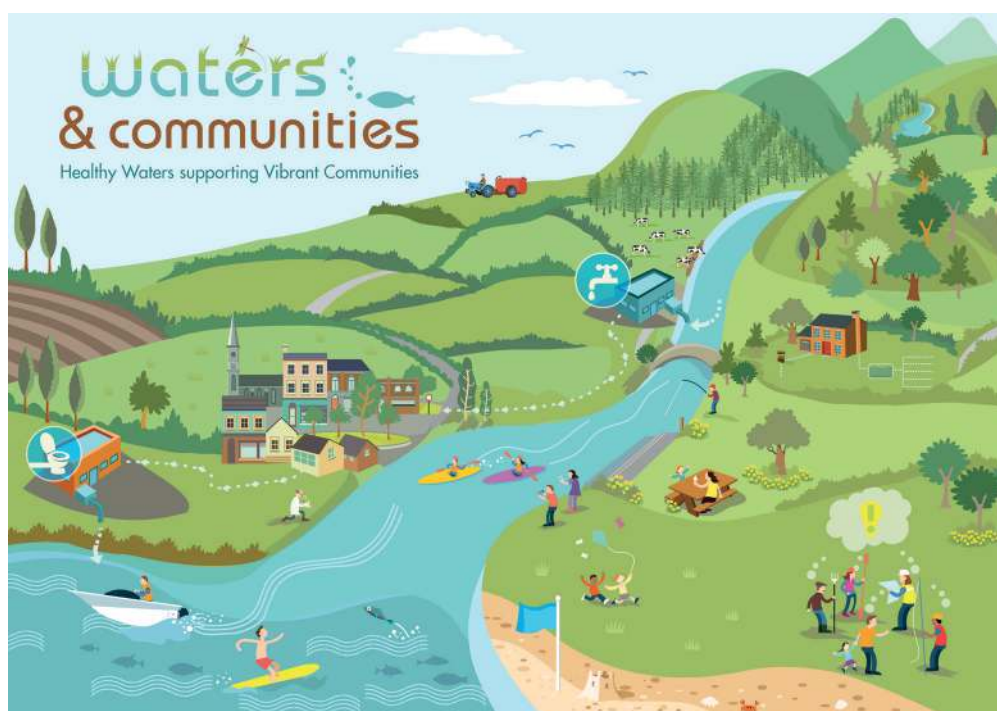
The Local Authority Waters and Communities Office and LEADER 2014-2020

The Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (www.watersandcommunities.ie) was set up in 2016 to promote better management of our streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater for the benefit of present and future generations. Staff are based throughout the country and can provide technical advice or refer a group to the relevant expertise in planning for a water based project, such as those eligible for funding under ‘Theme 3: Rural Environment’ of the LEADER 2014-2020 Programme. Sheevaun Thompson, Funding Lead at the Waters and Communities Office, advises that ‘this funding is an opportunity not to be missed out on by community groups all over Ireland’.

Two of the three sub-themes of the LEADER Rural Environment Theme: (i) Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources and (ii) the Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity, offer opportunities for individuals and rural communities to maximise the contribution of nature and water to the sustainable development of their local area.

The Waters and Communities Office advocate that consideration should be given by individuals and community groups to projects in areas that fall under this theme such as:

<p>GENERAL AMENITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach/River/Lake clean • River/coastal walk • Amenity area/picnic area • Bird watching • Canoe/kayking 	<p>PUBLIC AWARENESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflet of local information • Development of digital/social media tools • Pride of Place/Tidy Towns project/schools • Hosting of events e.g. information seminars/ workshops/training • Feasibility studies/Conservation Plans/Development Plans
<p>CITIZEN SCIENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific monitoring • Purchase of equipment (eg. Sampling equipment) • Targeted surveys 	<p>RESTORATION/CONSERVATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting of trees • River restoration works • Fish passage • Historic man-made weirs • Invasive species control • Silt trapping



Further information on the Waters and Communities Office is available at <http://watersandcommunities.ie/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/watersandcommunities/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/lawcowaternews?lang=en>

Source: Sheevaun Thompson - Waters and Communities Office

LEADER Project NRN Storyboard Database

LEADER has formed an integral part of the support framework for rural Ireland since it began in the early 1990's. The previous Rural Development Programme covering the 2007-2013 period provided almost €340 million to rural communities, and supported almost 9,000 enterprises in addition to creating more than 4,000 jobs. The National Rural Network has created a database of 35 LEADER projects successfully funded under the 2007-2013 Programme. This information, graphically displayed on a Storyboard platform on the NRN website, combines geographical maps, multimedia and interactivity (see image). You can view the LEADER Project Examples at www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/leader

The National Rural Network plan to develop a new interactive LEADER Project Storyboard Database for projects supported under the current Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) once a sufficient number of LEADER projects are up and running.



New LEADER Videos on the NRN Website

A comprehensive list of LEADER themed videos have been added to the National Rural Network website. The NRN would like to sincerely thank the ENRD, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, County Sligo LEADER Partnership Company, Longford Community Resources CLG, Roscommon Leader Partnership, Rural Network NI and the European Commission Representation in Ireland who all very kindly granted us permission to use their content. Their input has helped create this enlightening educational video database that can inspire people in rural areas to maximize the success of the objectives set out in the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. To watch the videos, please click on the LEADER section of www.nationalruralnetwork.ie



For regular updates follow us on:



Join the NRN for Free

If you are interested in issues related to the LEADER programme, please sign up to the NRN at www.nationalruralnetwork.ie. The National Rural Network (NRN) is part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020.

Our ambition is to bring the RDP into the lives of as many people as possible by communicating its key opportunities and outputs to all relevant stakeholders