

## LEADER 2014-2020 NRN CASE STUDY

### iRoUTE (INTEGRATED RURAL URBAN TRANSPORT EVOLUTION) CONFERENCE

#### Summary

The iRoUTE conference was spearheaded by the Kilkenny Integrated Transport Action Group. Stakeholders came together to reflect on good practice towards developing an integrated public transport system, focusing particularly on rural areas. Held in June 2017, the conference was interactive and proactive. Following presentations outlining regional public transport initiatives, participants reflected during workshops and formulated ideas around an integrated public transport system for Ireland. The iRoUTE conference provided a key driver leading to the development of a Comprehensive Mobility Plan for the Kilkenny region. The knowledge and networks have also influenced broader activities of the action group and its members.

#### Context

The Kilkenny Integrated Transport Action Group is made up of several parties that share a concern with the development of a sustainable transport system. The group includes Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, Kilkenny County Council, Ring a Link and the Three Counties Energy Agency. It is also supported by a broader membership of community, enterprise and environment interests. The group was formed to consider the immediate and long-term issues affecting public transport in Kilkenny. Alongside this, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership's consultations for its local development strategy identified

**Project name:** The iRoUTE Transport Conference: (Integrated Rural Urban Transport Evolution)

**Date:** 27 to 28 June 2017

**Local Action Group:** Kilkenny LEADER Partnership

**Implementing Partner:** Kilkenny LEADER Partnership

**Type of Beneficiary:** Community-led local development company

**Priority & Focus Area:** Theme 2: Social Inclusion /Sub theme: Basic Services targeted at hard to reach communities

**Project Beneficiary Name/Organisation:** Partnership between Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, Kilkenny County Council, Ring a Link and Carlow Kilkenny Energy Agency

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the paucity of integrated public transport as a contributor to a poor quality of life for rural residents. Public transport availability impacts access to services and opportunities to socialise. Public transport was also identified as a barrier to economic development in areas such as tourism and access to employment.

In 2017, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership used the 'Think Tank' model to compete a consultation process and audit of existing public transport services in the region. This resulted in the publication of the Kilkenny Transport Services Report which highlighted large gaps in basic transport services in the county. In this context of growing evidence and stakeholder organisation, the Kilkenny Integrated Transport Action Group agreed that a conference would be hosted to focus on the integration of transport provision for the Kilkenny region, with particular focus on rural areas. This would bring stakeholders together to create a vision for public transport in Kilkenny.

### Objectives

- The iRoUTE conference aimed to help communities and transport stakeholders to begin their own journey to a transport system that would serve current and future needs.

The iRoUTE conference intended to:

- Inform and inspire Irish stakeholders around the potential of realising a successful integrated public transport system in the region
- Bring examples to Kilkenny from similar small EU states where they have managed to move closer to the ideal of a successful integrated public transport system
- Inspire and motivate transport stakeholders in Kilkenny to drive the development of an integrated transport system in the region.

### Activities

The iRoUTE (Integrated Rural Urban Transport Evolution) conference was held on the 27th and 28th of June 2017. The conference was organised by a partnership between

the four organisations that form the Kilkenny Integrated Transport Action Group.

iRoUTE explored the potential of developing a sustainable 'joined-up' transport system for rural Ireland. It focused around key themes which were:

- Improving the integration of bus services within county Kilkenny
- Improving the planning and co-ordination of transport services in Kilkenny, especially in rural areas
- Increasing usage and knowledge of public transport in Kilkenny.

The programme combined presentations, workshops, panel discussions as well as an evening networking event. Presentations focused on EU project examples such as Belbus in Flanders, flexible transport in Gelderland, the Netherlands and the best elements of the Danish approach. Speakers also came from the European Transport and Telematics Systems Ltd, the National Transport Authority and the Society of the Irish Motor Industry.

**"Basic accessibility guarantees access to important social places on a demand driven basis by different means of transportation." Odette Buntinx, De Lijn, Belgium**

One of iRoUTE's unique features was the hosting of themed workshop sessions to analyse and discuss the preceding presentations. Each workshop featured groups of approximately 20 people working in smaller clusters of four or five and addressing a set of themed questions leading on from the presentations participants had just heard. The participants then used a limited number of colour-coded post-it notes to record their diverse prioritised contributions. Facilitation staff undertook comparative analysis and grouping of responses into categories on display boards for recording and further analysis. Following the final workshops, the iRoUTE team started the process of visual analysis and display of the two days of proceedings on large display boards on the stage area. A brief account of the trends and themes emerging from the process was delivered. A clear desire emerged for cooperation between

transport providers and all stakeholders, as well as that the integration of services be considered in a broad fashion to include all sections of society.

The final panel discussion focused on next steps and the most important issues emerging from the conference. Irish stakeholders expressed the view that a pilot integrated transport initiative in the Kilkenny region would be worthwhile and that they would meet to consider how to advance that, armed with the evidence from iRoUTE. It was also agreed that iRoUTE organisers would look to establish a platform to help create a nationwide transport stakeholder network advocating for the development of a state-wide integrated transport system based around the principles of the Vientiane Declaration on Sustainable Rural Transport. A resolution was adopted unanimously by the participants to explore this possibility.

At the close of the event iRoUTE stakeholders had reached a common vision on the required evolution of thought and behaviour to design an integrated public transport system, not just for the Kilkenny region, but for rural Ireland as a whole. The conference also highlighted the need for better information provision to rural communities on existing transport services provided by private and publicly funded operators. Alongside this, integration of these services also emerged as an important priority step forward.

**"Any person or area without a local service cannot have access to integrated system, no matter how good it is, there must be sufficient level of service at times people need to travel." Brendan Finn of CEO of ETTS, iRoUTE presenter.**

## Results

The conference was attended by over eighty transport providers, regulators, international experts, practitioners, academics and community interest groups from throughout Ireland.

To progress the integrated transport initiative, the Kilkenny iRoUTE stakeholders met and developed a project based on

the concept of 'basic mobility levels' used in Belgium and elsewhere in the EU.

They also commissioned a study to develop a 'Comprehensive Mobility Plan' for the region, with the intention of using it to access resources to create the desired integrated transport system. A number of actions emerged from this study and focused around five key areas: structures and strategic planning; representation, communication and advocacy; funding and finance; provision, integration and connectivity; and modal shift. Specific actions that were part of the plan included highlighting the need for continuance of the iRoUTE conference as a forum to build collaboration potential and share knowledge.



Image credit: Photographer - Dylan Vaughan

The potential to create a nationwide transport stakeholder network was explored through a follow up meeting. Adequate resources were not available to progress this however it remains an action to be explored as part of the Comprehensive Mobility Plan.

The iRoUTE conference publicly brought Kilkenny LEADER Partnership in contact with a Scottish LAG with similar transport concerns. This in turn has led to a trans-national LEADER cooperation project with Cairngorms LAG on the development of an integrated transport system in their respective regions.



The conference also helped to stimulate thinking around public transport beyond what bus transport can offer. Kilkenny LEADER Partnership is also now exploring the possibility of developing a LEADER cooperation project focusing on a public bike scheme for Kilkenny. This project would see Kilkenny LEADER Partnership working with Velenje in Slovenia, which is a similar size to Kilkenny and has a successful bike sharing scheme 'SYSTEM BICY'.

**"Work closely with everybody involved; be sure to manage expectations, adopt the spirit of the 'Three Musketeers' and stay on course even when it gets tough, and a 'Big Bang' is not necessary; organic growth worked in Denmark." Finn Sorenson, FlexDanmark, Denmark**

## Lessons

*Importance of sharing existing information and knowledge to enhance policy development:* The iRoUTE conference was the first community-based conference of its kind in Ireland. It focused on learning lessons from small EU states with similar demographics and resource limitations to Ireland. There is a great deal of information to gain from other EU states and regions. The conference provided an important forum to focus on existing information, examples and good practice to steer future policy planning and change.

*Importance of networking to facilitate efficiency and cooperation on shared concerns:* Another key lesson emerging is the importance of cooperation among varied users, providers and destinations of transport when seeking to move towards the goal of an integrated transport system. This in turn means that the optimum transport service for both rural and urban areas must be integrated to avoid waste and maximise coverage. The partners also learned that there were other LAGs with an interest in improving their public transport systems, and that cooperation on a project may offer the best option to reach a solution for each locality.

*Interactive conferences are an effective method of stakeholder engagement:* The conference's innovative workshop sessions allowed two-way communication

between all the participants. It was a major success with learning directly of international 'best practice' and discussing the implications of these examples through workshops.

*Conferences provide an important forum to reinforce and build momentum on key rural issues:* The iRoUTE conference also helped to reinforce the importance of integrated regional public transport systems connecting both rural and urban places to each other. The benefits not only relate to social inclusion, but also economic development. For example, better connecting key tourist sites in Kilkenny through integrated public transport would help harness tourism development in a more balanced manner.

**"The National Journey Planner is putting in place better technology to develop the better integration of services." Ann Graham, CEO of the National Transport Authority**

## Funding

<b>Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) =</b>	<b>€29,517.96</b>
<b>+ (i) Rural Development Programme support (a)+(b)</b>	€11,821.08
<b>+ (a) EAFRD (EU) contribution</b>	€7,423.64
<b>+ (b) National / Regional contribution</b>	€4,397.44
<b>+ (ii) Private / Own funds</b>	€15,667.88
<b>+ (iii) Other funding sources</b>	€2,029 (Ticket sales)

## Contact details

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