



LEADER in Ireland

Supporting Rural Development
Empowering Rural Communities



LEADER

Development led by local communities





Local Development Companies Network clg is supported by the Scheme to Support National Organisations which is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural & Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

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Introduction

This booklet showcases the breadth, quality and impact of projects supported through the LEADER Programme across Ireland. Together, these examples illustrate how community-led investment can strengthen rural places — socially, economically, culturally and environmentally — while supporting local people, organisations and enterprises to respond to the needs and opportunities of their own areas.

Since its introduction in 1991, LEADER has been a cornerstone of rural development in Ireland and across Europe. Its origins lie in the recognition that rural communities are diverse, and that effective development must be rooted in local knowledge, local assets and local participation. This philosophy gives rise to LEADER's seven core principles and its unique and enduring methodology.



The projects featured in this booklet reflect the diversity, adaptability and continuing relevance of LEADER. More than that, they show what is possible when developmental funding places equal emphasis on the development and the funding, helping communities not only to develop ideas, but to build the confidence, skills, and structures to bring them to life.

LEADER and the Local Development Companies

The Value of Integrated Services

In Ireland, LEADER is synonymous with the Local Development Companies (LDCs), through which it has been delivered since the first LEADER programme in 1991. Within the LDCs, LEADER helps to anchor a much wider local development ecosystem that includes programmes and services spanning social inclusion, employment, social enterprise, health and wellbeing, education, rural recreation, and climate and the environment.



In practice, this means that LEADER funding is rarely just that. A community group might receive guidance to shape its proposal or develop its committee structures; an early-stage business might benefit from mentoring, networking or sustainability supports; a social enterprise might gain staff and volunteer support, or a better understanding of how to generate traded income; or an environmental group might gain access to specialist advice on protecting and restoring biodiversity.

The benefit also works in the other direction. LEADER-funded projects often create the spaces, infrastructure, and networks through which other LDC programmes reach into the community and connect with people in ways that would otherwise be impossible.

This integrated delivery model – founded on the long and enduring relationship between LEADER and the LDCs – is unique to Ireland, and it is one of the reasons that LEADER remains the most recognised and effective approach to community-led rural development in this country.

A Snapshot of LEADER's Impact in Ireland

From 2016-2026...



LEADER
supported
6,858
projects



Delivered
€286.7m
in funding to
community groups
and rural businesses



Leveraged approx
€143m
in additional, matched funding



26 counties and a
rural population of

3,415,118
people



2,678

LEADER Action Groups
across Europe



35,000

EU citizens signed a 2025 petition
calling for LEADER's long-term
funding to be protected

Featured Projects

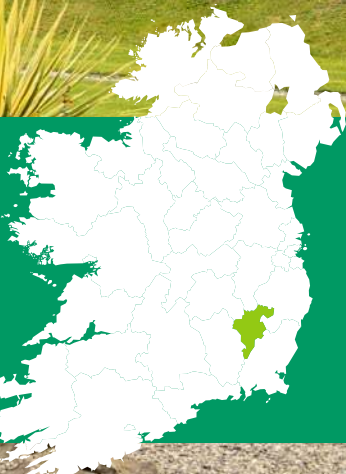
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CARLOW

Carlow County Development
Partnership



Flying Tumbler Irish Whiskey



Enterprise & Job Creation



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Agri & Food



Culture & Heritage



Tourism

This project involves the conversion of two unused farm buildings into a bonded whiskey warehouse and production space on the promoter's family farm at Ballytarsna, Nurney. Mount Leinster Distillers Ltd (T/A Flying Tumbler) will use the space to store, blend and bottle Irish whiskey for export markets in the US, Europe and Asia. It represents a clear example of agricultural diversification, making commercial use of existing rural assets while creating a new income stream that sits outside traditional farming. Their long-term plan is to source malted barley from local growers, keeping the agricultural link intact and supporting the wider rural economy. They are committed to recruiting locally, particularly from South East Technological University Carlow's Brewing and Distilling programme.



Location:
Ballytarsna,
Nurney, Co. Carlow



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2023–2027

"For us, Flying Tumbler Irish Whiskey was always about returning home. The farm at Larch Grove has been in our family for generations and we wanted to create a new farming future for generations to come. We are extremely grateful to the Carlow County Development Partnership and their programme for their help in realising our vision."

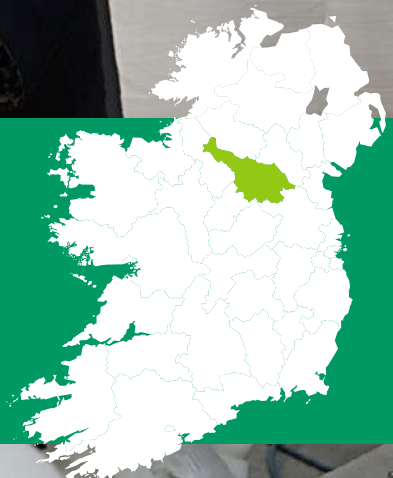
Patrick Walsh, Founder,
Flying Tumbler Irish Whiskey





CAVAN

Cavan County Local Development



Aurora Beds



Enterprise & Job Creation

Aurora Beds was established in 2012, and was originally located in Ballyjamesduff, County Cavan. They received support from LEADER for the purchase of six pieces of equipment to assist them in increasing their range of mattresses, increasing quality and improving manufacturing efficiencies. The new equipment provided the company with the ability to rapidly scale up production of high-quality mattresses. At the time of this LEADER project application the company was sustaining 26 FTE jobs on site; in 2026 they now have 50 FTE employees, having exceeded their forecasted employment creation.

LEADER has enabled the company to expand their manufacturing footprint, increased turnover, increased employment and now exports 30% of their sales into the UK market. They have established a reputation as one of Ireland's leading quality bed manufacturers and supply into over 250 retailers in the UK and Ireland.



Location:

Cavan Town, Co. Cavan



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014–2020

“Following the installation of the equipment in early 2022 we increased our employee numbers to 34 and have increased our average mattress production from 700 to 1,000 per week.”

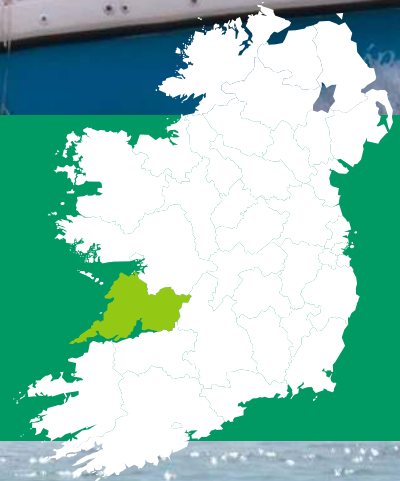
Padraig Donohue,
Director, Aurora Beds





CLARE

Clare Local Development Company



Scattery Island Ferry



Enterprise & Job Creation



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Tourism

Scattery Island Tours is a rural tourism enterprise in County Clare supported by LEADER funding through Clare Local Development Company. LEADER support contributed to the purchase of a larger passenger ferry, enabling the business to expand capacity and improve access to the historic Scattery Island. The investment supported the growth of a locally owned tourism service, building on the island's heritage and increasing visitor numbers. The project demonstrates how LEADER funding can help small tourism enterprises scale and enhance regional attractions.



Location:

Kilrush-Scattery Island,
Co Clare



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014–2020



"This new ferry will ensure that we can manage growing visitor numbers over the coming years and continue to position Kilrush and West Clare as a family friendly tourist destination, for both domestic and international tourists, further enhancing the development of the local economy. The vessel was partially funded by the LEADER grant tourism programme and we are very grateful for the support received from LEADER aided by the Clare Local Development Company."

Irene Hamilton, Founder,
Scattery Island Tours



CORK

Avondhu Blackwater Partnership
Ballyhoura Development
Comhar na nOileán
IRD Duhallow
SECAD Partnership
West Cork Development Partnership

Baile Glas Eco Village



Climate & Environment



Social Inclusion

Baile Glas is an Eco Village located in Lombardstown, Co. Cork. LEADER worked in collaboration with Cork County Council to deliver Ireland's first sustainable social and affordable housing scheme. It includes 12 energy-efficient homes designed to reduce ecological footprints.



Location:

Lombardstown, Co. Cork



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2000–2006

The homes are designed to achieve a 60% reduction in heat energy use. The project fosters a high level of social cohesion and led the way for the development of environmentally friendly housing. Furthermore, enhancement of the green spaces has improved the quality of life for residents and the wider community.

12

Eco-homes
constructed

60%

Reduction in
heat energy use

Investment of over
€800,000

Our People, Our Place: Ballyhoura Heritage & Diaspora Programme



Culture & Heritage



Tourism

Over successive LEADER programme periods since 2007, a series of connected initiatives has advanced community genealogy and heritage in the Ballyhoura region. Beginning with the “Our People, Our Place, Our Heritage” training programme, and collaboration with Eachtra Heritage to digitise historic graveyards, communities explored local ancestry and diaspora links. This work uncovered the largely forgotten Peter Robinson Settler Emigration to Canada in the 1820s, prompting renewed engagement with descendants. Subsequent projects deepened research into communities of origin, while the 2023–2027 programme supported a creative production showcased at the 2025 Ireland-Canada Homecoming. Collectively, these initiatives have revived local heritage and fostered international diaspora tourism with significant economic benefit.

The project has strengthened community identity and pride by reconnecting people with their local heritage and family histories. It has built skills in genealogy, research, and digital recording while fostering collaboration between communities. The rediscovery of the Peter Robinson Migration has created meaningful links with diaspora descendants, leading to renewed relationships and visits to the region.



Location:

Ballyhoura Region, North Cork & East Limerick



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2007-2013

LEADER 2014-2020

LEADER 2023-2027

“From our arrival to our beautiful lodgings at Deebert, to our reluctant farewell, we felt so very welcomed, and were humbled by so much generosity. The events we attended were above and beyond what we could have expected. The welcoming words the day of our arrival, at the beginning of our meal of, ‘Welcome Home’, brought tears to my eyes. Strangely I hadn’t thought of it that way until that moment. And it was a ‘coming home.’”

Patricia Young & Gary Wice,
descendants of Peter Robinson
emigrants to Canada



THE VALUE OF INTEGRATED SERVICES



The Tús programme played a critical role in enabling and sustaining the historic graves initiative. During the 2008 economic downturn, two qualified archaeologists joined the Tús scheme as participants and progressed into supervisory roles. They worked closely with Eachtra Heritage to implement and refine the graveyard digitisation methodology, before leading its delivery locally across North Cork and Limerick. This capacity was pivotal in scaling the project, resulting in the digitisation of hundreds of graveyards. Tús support ensured a consistent, community-led approach, significantly advancing genealogy resources and embedding long-term skills and expertise within the Ballyhoura region.

- Over 15 years of continuous LEADER support
- 1,000+ historic grave records digitised across the Ballyhoura region
- Engagement with 150 community groups and volunteers across participating parishes
- Reconnection with descendants of over 2,000 Peter Robinson emigrants from the 1820s scheme
- Ireland Canada Homecoming event in September 2025:
 - Attracted 190 international visitors
 - Yielded an economic impact of €6.8 million
 - Achieved a PR reach of 5.3 million people



Cultural activities and the 2025 Homecoming have increased participation, visibility, and local engagement. Overall, the initiative has generated social cohesion, enhanced heritage awareness, and supported sustainable tourism, bringing economic benefits and a stronger sense of place to the Ballyhoura region.

West Cork Technology Park



Enterprise & Job Creation



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Tourism

In the early 1990s, a group of local people began to consider how they could create jobs in West Cork so that residents would not have to leave the area to find employment in Cork or further afield. With support from the LEADER programme and expertise provided by University College Cork, a local task force was established to plan and develop a business park for the region. Within two years of its formation, the task force had designed a full technology park, and construction had begun on three buildings on an idyllic site one mile from Clonakilty, along the main N71 route serving West Cork. The park is located just 35 minutes from Cork International Airport and approximately 40 minutes from Cork City. A dedicated team was then assembled to market the park and attract companies to its state-of-the-art facilities.

The West Cork Business and Technology Park is a modern business park development in the heart of West Cork. It benefits from a superb telecommunications infrastructure designed to meet the specific needs of a diverse range of businesses including software development, e-commerce, internet and application service providers, shared services, R&D, training and customer support. It is the number one technology and business location in West Cork, and serves as a living demonstration of how West Cork's natural beauty, its amenities and sense of community can offer companies and individuals all the benefits of location in an area which offers every attraction in terms of business, communication, transport and infrastructure.



Location:
Clonakilty, Co Cork



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 1991-1993

- Hosts a range of world-leading companies and local and impact-driven organisations, including Capital, Global Shared, Sensational Kids and Cork North and West Local Enterprise Office.
- Approximately 1,000 people working out of West Cork Development Park.
- Software developed at West Cork Development Park is exported to more than 100 countries.

Newmarket Pitch & Putt

IRD Duhallow



Youth



Tourism

Newmarket Pitch and Putt is a community recreation project in North Cork developed with significant support from the LEADER Programme through IRD Duhallow. LEADER funding enabled the redevelopment of the site into a modern 18-hole course at the James O’Keeffe Institute, including initial ground development works and facility upgrades. The investment supported the return of pitch and putt to the area, creating a high-quality outdoor amenity accessible to families, community groups, and visitors. This highlights LEADER’s role in enabling local communities to develop recreational infrastructure that supports wellbeing, tourism, and social inclusion.

Newmarket Pitch and Putt has provided an accessible, high-quality recreational facility for the local community. The LEADER-supported development has reintroduced pitch and putt to the area, encouraging participation across all ages and supporting social inclusion. It offers a shared space for families, community groups, and visitors, promoting active lifestyles and wellbeing. The facility also enhances the local tourism offering, contributing to the wider appeal of Newmarket and supporting economic activity in the Duhallow region.



Location:
Newmarket, Co Cork



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2014-2020



125

Registered
Members

1,025

Rounds
Played

25

Competitions
Played

Leahy's Open Farm

SECAD 



Agri & Food



Enterprise & Job Creation

Leahy's Open Farm is a family-run rural tourism and agri-food enterprise operating in East Cork for over 20 years. Supported by SECAD from its early development, the farm was established to preserve traditional farming heritage while creating an engaging visitor experience for families and schools. Over time, the business expanded to include adventure activities, a café, seasonal camps, school tours and educational experiences. In 2018, the farm opened a new Ice Cream and Chocolate Factory, producing homemade products using milk from cows on the farm. LEADER funding supported the purchase of specialised ice cream and chocolate production equipment, air conditioning systems, and branding and marketing supports, helping to expand production capacity and enhance the visitor experience.



Location:

Dungourney, Co. Cork



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 1994–1999

LEADER 2000–2006

LEADER 2007–2013

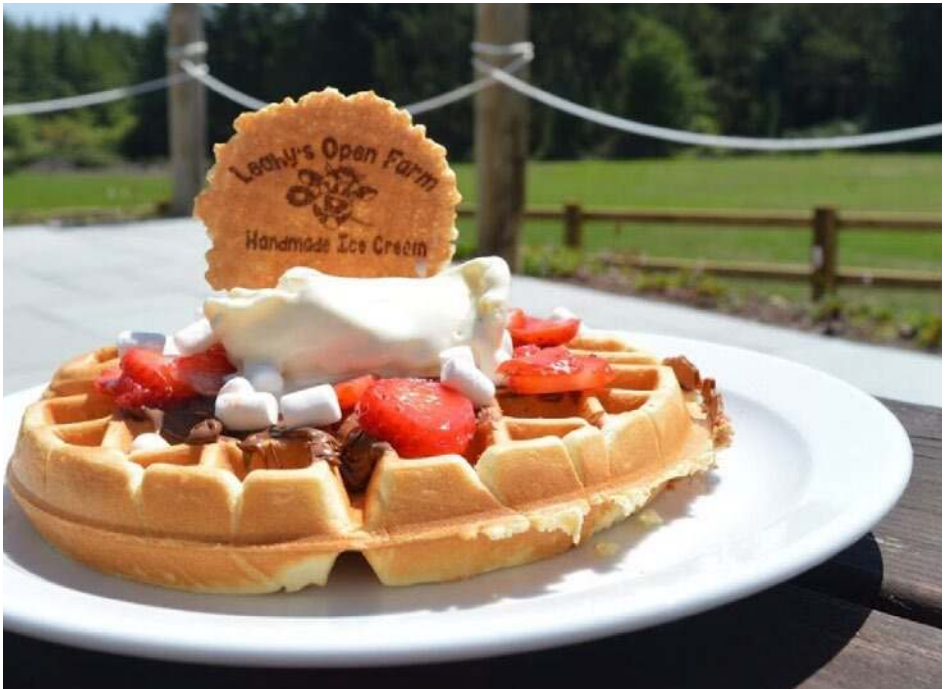
LEADER 2014–2020

20

Full-time jobs

70,000+
Visitors annually





Leahy's Open Farm has made a significant contribution to the rural economy and tourism sector in East Cork by creating sustainable local employment, attracting visitors and supporting agri-tourism development. The project is a strong example of successful farm diversification, combining tourism, food production and education in a rural setting. The Ice Cream and Chocolate Factory has enhanced the visitor experience while creating additional jobs and new business opportunities. With its café, school tours, seasonal camps and family attractions, the farm has become an important community and tourism asset that increases visitor numbers and economic activity in the wider area.

"Through the support received from the LEADER Food initiative, we were in a position to increase our production capacity and improve efficiencies in the production process, allowing us to meet the increase in demand from growing visitor numbers."

Whiddy Island Community Hall



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Social Inclusion

Whiddy Island Development Association built a multipurpose 'one-stop-shop' facility which accommodates the existing and future needs of the community and visitors alike, optimising its uses for the community to create solidarity, cohesion and personal development. The facility includes a multi-purpose hall, toilets and showers, a kitchenette and community tea room with an outside seating area, with storage rooms at the rear. The hall is used for community events such as gatherings, concerts, meetings and communions, and hosts plays and visiting theatre groups.



Location:
Whiddy Island, Co. Cork



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2014–2020

"It is wonderful to now have a community centre for the first time ever on Whiddy Island."

Whiddy Island Resident

It is accessible to walkers and provides a space for the doctor to see HSE patients; public toilets and showers for those visiting the island and for water-sports users; and indoor facilities for sports such as badminton and table tennis.



On many of the islands along the coast, the community centre is the one facility that provides services when short-term economic ventures close down. Many businesses are only open seasonally and there are no services for the rest of the year – community centres fill that gap. This is the only community space on Whiddy Island and is a focal point in the community. The need for a community

space had been identified over many years by various organisations and the West Cork Community Council.

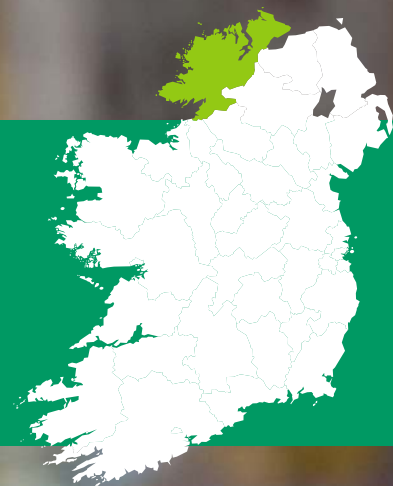
Centres such as this one, which is maintained by an RSS worker, also provide a focal point for the community where they feel they have a social ownership, and many great projects have developed once space is provided.





DONEGAL

Comhar na nOileán
Donegal Local Development CLG
Inishowen Development Partnership



Ionad Nuálaíochta Thoraí (Tory Island Innovation Centre)



Enterprise & Job Creation



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Tourism

Tá Comharchumann Thoraí ag feidhmiú mar eagraíocht forbartha pobail ó bhí 1971. Rinne siad bainistíocht ar cuid mhór tograí cosúil le seo sna blianta a chuaigh thart, ina measc an tIonad Pobail, méadú leis an Ionad Pobail, Ionad Sláinte Oileán Thoraí, agus athchóiriú Club Sóisialta agus Ionad Ceardaíochta ar an Oileán.

Ionad Nuálaíochta atá i gceist leis an togra seo — foirgneamh nua le hais an Ionad Pobail. Istigh sa togra úr seo beidh seomra ranga le haghaidh cúrsaí, spás oifige, leithris, cistin agus príomh-sheomra le 14 deasc oibre. Tá córas nua ardluais leathanbhanda san ionad, mar pháirt den phlean náisiúnta leathanbhanda le tacaíocht ó Chomhairle Contae Dhún na nGall.

Is deis iontach atá anseo chun fostaíochta a chruthú agus tá an comharchumann ag meallach teaghlaigh nua chuig an Oileán. Tá siad ag comhoibriú le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta fá choinne GTEIC (Gréasán Digiteach na Gaeltachta) a chur ann chomh maith. Tá Scioból na bhFear ag reáchtáil cúrsaí ó shin, ina measc adhmaidíocht, snoí cloiche, tógáil bád, déanamh ciseán agus ríomhaireacht. Tugann na cúrsaí seo réimse leathan eolais ar cheardaíocht éagsúla do phobal an Oileáin, le tacaíocht ón ETB.



Location:

Oileán Thoraí,
Co. Dhún na nGall
(Tory Island, Co. Donegal)



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014–2020

*“Is áit lárnach anois é
an t-Ionad Nuálaíoch ar
an Oileán. Tá muintir an
Oileáin an-bhródúil as.”*

Marjorie Ní Chearbhaill,
Oileán Thoraí

Tá ar a laghad 5
chúrsa reáchtáilte
san Ionad ó
tógadh é agus
go leor imeachtaí
pobail eile.

Donegal Thatching School

Donegal Local
Development CLG
Forbairt Áitiúil
Dhán na nGall

DLDC



Culture & Heritage

Thatching is a declining tradition in Ireland, and without intervention the specialised skills needed to maintain thousands of heritage thatched buildings risk being lost. Dolmen Leisure CLG, based at The Dolmen Centre in Portnoo, secured LEADER funding to address this challenge.



Location:

Portnoo, Co. Donegal



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014–2020

LEADER 2023–2027

The Centre received €175,359 under the 2014–2020 programme to establish Ireland's only thatching school, followed by €73,087 under the 2023–2027 programme to deliver a fully accredited 28-day intensive course. Delivered in a purpose-built, all-weather workshop, trainees learn reed and straw techniques, gaining the practical skills required to enter the trade and help preserve Ireland's thatching heritage for future generations.



LEADER investment in the Dolmen Centre has achieved more than the establishment of a thatching school; it has secured the future of an ancient Irish tradition. With most practising thatchers now in their 70s, the pipeline of skilled tradespeople has become critically depleted. The school directly addresses this gap by training a new

generation capable of maintaining Ireland's heritage thatched buildings. Beyond heritage, the project delivers wider benefits, attracting trainees who require local accommodation and supporting local farmers who now grow suitable straw and harvest coppice material for the courses.



Wild Ireland



Climate & Environment



Enterprise & Job Creation



Tourism

The Wild Ireland project is a unique wildlife and biodiversity park located on 23 acres of native Irish woodland in Dundrean, Burnfoot, County Donegal. It is one of Europe's leading conservation centres, working at the front line of efforts to conserve Europe's most endangered native wildlife and wild places. Visitors to the park are transported back in time to when Ireland was covered entirely by woodland and boasted a rich diversity of flora and fauna that was native to this ancient land.



Location:

Burnfoot, Co Donegal



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014-2020

*“Tógfadh sé blianta fada
oraínn an tionscnamh seo a
dhéanamh muid féin, gan
cúnamh.”*

Killian McLaughlin,
Owner Wild Ireland



Through hunting and habitat destruction, much of Ireland's biodiversity has vanished, posing a serious challenge to our planet's future. Wild Ireland, a Wildlife Park, is on a mission to change this through Education, Conservation, and Rescue, inspiring the children of today to become the conservationists of tomorrow. The park showcases Ireland's native animals, together with species that have been hunted to extinction in this country, such as wolves, bears, wild boar and lynx. Many Irish place names still bear the names of these long-lost animals, and we are reminded of the wild beasts our ancestors feared through many of our Irish myths and legends. A full education programme, delivered through both Irish and English, enlightens visitors about this fascinating period in our history. The animals are housed in secure enclosures that reflect their natural habitat. Wild Ireland continues to provide Inishowen with a first-class tourist attraction, suitable for young and old, located right on the Wild Atlantic Way.



10,000
Native trees planted
by Wild Ireland since
opening

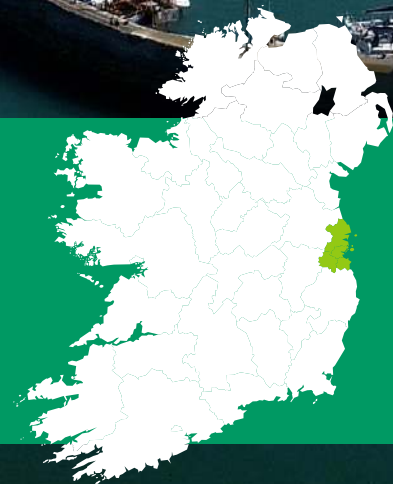
130,000+
Visitors per year





DUBLIN

Fingal LEADER Partnership



Ballyboughal Smart Village Plan



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Social Inclusion

Ballyboughal is a growing rural village that has experienced increasing population pressure, evolved service demands, and changing community needs. While the village benefits from an active community and strong voluntary engagement, there had been no comprehensive, evidence-based strategic plan in place to guide its future development in a coordinated and sustainable manner. Ballyboughal Community Council identified the need to develop a SMART Village Action Plan to provide a structured roadmap for the village's future growth and service development.

The SMART Village concept is an innovative approach supported through the LEADER programme across rural areas. Smart Villages are rural communities that use innovative solutions to improve their resilience, building on local strengths and opportunities. Through this project, Ballyboughal developed a SMART Village Action Plan which now provides a structured, data-based assessment, strategy, and roadmap for the village. Approximately 115 individuals directly participated in the community survey, with additional residents attending the public engagement meeting and stakeholder workshops. The completed plan will directly inform future funding applications aimed at improving basic services and infrastructure within the village. It establishes a clear framework for continuous improvement across the themes identified in the roadmap, in line with SMART Village principles.



Location:

Ballyboughal, Co Dublin



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2023-2027



- Increased community engagement and awareness of future development opportunities
- Strengthened collaboration between the Community Council, local stakeholders, and residents
- Improved local capacity to plan strategically and develop evidence-based funding applications
- Identification of priority infrastructure and service needs within the village
- Creation of a coordinated roadmap to guide sustainable rural development



GALWAY

Comhar na nOileán
FORUM Connemara
Galway Rural Development



Taispeántas Déanta Currach Árainn (Aran Currach Experience)



Enterprise & Job Creation

Taispeántas Déanta Currachaí Traidisiúnta agus Eispéireas Rámhaíochta — tugann an tionscnamh turasóireachta cultúrtha seo deis do chuairoteoirí taithí thumthach a fháil ar oidhreacht na gcurrachaí traidisiúnta Éireannacha, go háirithe Currachaí Oileáin Árann. Beidh an gnó seo lonnaithe in Inis Oírr. Níl an tionscnamh ach ina thús ach fiú anois tá an-tóir ag turasóirí ar agus grúpaí á gcur in áirithint chuile lá.

Meallann an tionscadal seo turasóirí chuig Inis Oírr. Tacaíonn an tionscnamh freisin le turasóireacht inbhuanaithe trí chuairoteoirí a mhealladh le suim in oidhreacht chultúrtha seachas ollturasóireacht, rud a chabhraíonn le tírdhreach nádúrtha an oileáin a chosaint.



Location:

Inis Oírr, Co. na Gaillimhe
(Inis Oírr, Co. Galway)



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2023–2027

*“Tógfadh sé blianta
fada orainn an
tionscnamh seo a
dhéanamh muid
féin, gan cúnamh.”*

Máirtín Seoighe, Inis Oírr



Ballyconneely Community Park



Health & Wellbeing



Social Inclusion



Youth

Ballyconneely Community Park is a locally developed recreational space at the heart of the village, beside the community hall and playground. Created through strong community effort and supported by the LEADER programme, it includes plans for a walking track, open play areas, seating, and landscaped surroundings. The park has evolved in phases, shaped by ongoing fundraising and volunteer input, and is designed as a shared amenity for both residents and visitors.

The park is having a significant positive impact on the community by bringing people together through fundraising, volunteering, and a range of community events, including Connemara Pony Shows, sports days delivered by Slyne Head Athletics Club, and its extensive daily use by local residents and visitors. It has become a focal point for local activity and collaboration, strengthening community pride and ownership. Support from local organisations and residents has enabled continuous development, while events and initiatives hosted around the park foster social connection and inclusion, reinforcing its role as a valued and growing community asset.



Location:

Ballyconneely, Co Galway



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014-2020

"We are so grateful for all the help and support we got from everyone in FORUM in helping to make our dream a reality. The LEADER programme worked so well for us and that is, in a large part, due to the level of support and advice FORUM provided. The difference the park has made to the area is immense. From a field that was used once a year to a park that can be used year-round: it has truly rejuvenated the area."

Bernie Dowd



Mountbellew Walled Garden



Culture and Heritage



Tourism

Mountbellew Walled Garden is a community-led heritage regeneration project in County Galway, focused on restoring an 18th century walled garden as a cultural, recreational, and tourism asset. The project is led by the Mountbellew Heritage and Tourism Network, with support from Galway Rural Development through the LEADER Programme. LEADER funding played a critical early-stage role by financing a detailed Development Plan and research to guide conservation works, providing the evidence base required to progress restoration and secure future capital investment.

The project is strengthening the local community by preserving a significant heritage asset and creating opportunities for tourism, employment, and community engagement. The restoration aims to provide a new amenity to complement local attractions, and increase visitor numbers to the area. LEADER's support has been instrumental in enabling this long-term vision by funding the planning and preparatory work needed to unlock larger-scale investment. This demonstrates how early-stage LEADER funding can catalyse complex heritage projects and support sustainable rural development.



Location:

Mountbellew, Co Galway



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014-2020

“The money invested in the community is for the good of the community. This is a major project but at the end we hope there will be jobs and a tourist attraction there. Linking with other local attractions such as the Forge Museum, adjacent forest walks and local raised bog, we should have a full day package”.

Jimmy Noone, Chairman,
Mountbellew Heritage and
Tourism Network





KERRY

IRD Duhallow

NEWKD (North, East & West Kerry Development)

South Kerry Development Partnership



Glanageenty Walkways



Health & Wellbeing



Tourism

Since the first loop walk was developed in the Glanageenty Woodland area there has been a marked increase in activity in the area with a very positive effect on the local community. Glanageenty Walks are made up of three loops totalling 10 km. Due to the undulating terrain, it attracts walkers of all abilities. The Glanageenty Walks have been featured on RTÉ's Tracks and Trails and were chosen as one of the top 100 loop walks in Ireland in a walking magazine in 2022.

The walk plays a key role in supporting the physical and mental health of the community. It also caters for school tours and historic tours as well as sporting events, bringing added revenue into the area. The project is located in rural Ireland – by improving the walks it supports and promotes rural Ireland as a destination.



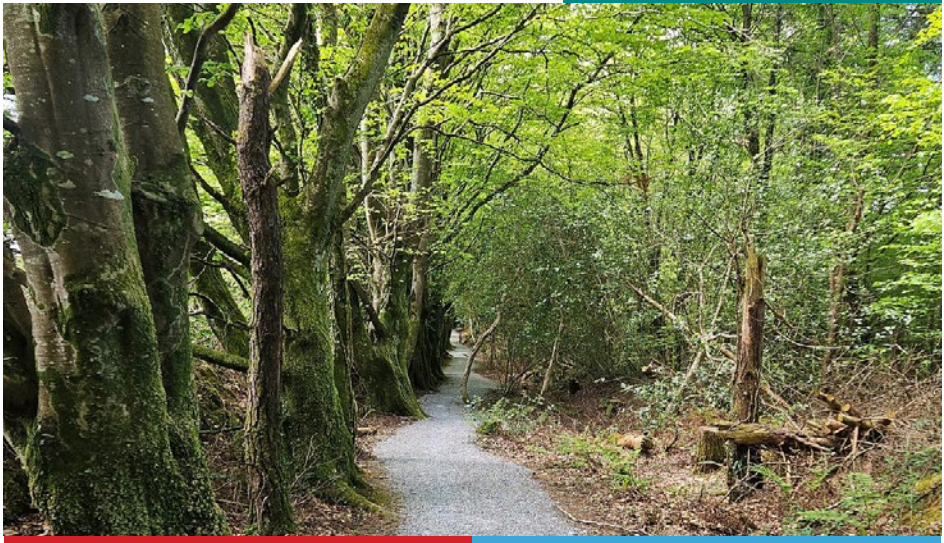
Location:
Co. Kerry



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2014–2020

Among the
Top 100
Loop Walks
in Ireland

Used by up to
2,000
people per week



Tureencahill Community Hub



Infrastructure and Connectivity



Rural Enterprise



Social Inclusion

Tureencahill Community Hub is a modern, multi-purpose facility in rural Kerry, developed by the local community to transform a former national school into a vibrant centre for social, educational, and enterprise activity. The hub includes a digital workspace with high-speed broadband, meeting space, and facilities for community events, supporting remote working and local engagement.

Its development reflects a community-led approach supported through LEADER and IRD Duhallow structures, which assist rural communities in delivering projects that enhance local services and infrastructure.

The hub has significantly enhanced community life by providing a central space for work, learning, and social connection. It supports remote working, reduces isolation, and enables local people to access professional facilities within their community.



Location:
Tureencahill, Co Kerry



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2014-2020



The centre hosts activities, meetings, and services that strengthen participation and wellbeing across all age groups. By repurposing a former school into a thriving hub, the project has revitalised a key local asset. Supported through LEADER, delivery by IRD Duhallow, it demonstrates how targeted rural investment can sustain vibrant, connected communities.

Killarney Technology Innovation Centre



Enterprise & Job Creation

This project involved the development of a purpose-built, technology-rich enterprise incubation, research and innovation centre – known as Killarney Technology Innovation Centre – in Killarney. Supported through LEADER II funding in the 1990s, the project was established to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise development within the region. The centre provided modern office, research and business support facilities for start-up companies, emerging enterprises and technology-focused businesses. It aimed to strengthen the local economy by encouraging investment, supporting job creation and fostering collaboration between industry, education and the wider business community. The project contributed significantly to enhancing the region's capacity for innovation and sustainable economic development.

The development of the centre has had a lasting positive impact on the local community and economy. It created a supportive environment for entrepreneurship, innovation and business growth, helping start-up companies and expanding enterprises establish themselves within the region. It contributed to local employment, attracted investment and strengthened links between business, education and research. By supporting enterprise development and retaining skilled employment locally, the project enhanced economic resilience and made the area a more attractive place to live and work. The centre remains in operation today, continuing to support business development and innovation in the region.



Location:

Killarney, Co. Kerry



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 1994–1999

“The impact of LEADER funding extended far beyond bricks and mortar — it gave confidence to communities, created opportunities for people to build businesses locally, and helped establish an environment where small and medium-sized enterprises with real growth potential could flourish.”

Sean Counihan, Chairperson,
Killarney Innovation Centre

KILDARE

County Kildare LEADER Partnership



Hydroelectricity Hydraulic Infrastructure



Climate & Environment

Celbridge Community Centre has a long history of generating hydroelectricity from their premises along the River Liffey. This LEADER project funded important repair works to the tail-race screen, mill race screen, and sluice gates at the entry to the existing turbine and upstream from the mill race. The contribution of LEADER grant aid was essential in allowing these works to take place, which allowed for the more efficient operation of the turbine and for Celbridge Community Centre to maintain their history of generating renewable energy at this important site.



Location:
Celbridge, Co. Kildare



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2014–2020

“The Board of Directors of Celbridge Community Centre CLG has received excellent co-operation and assistance from the staff of County Kildare LEADER Partnership in all matters pertaining to the successful completion of all the works involved in this project.”

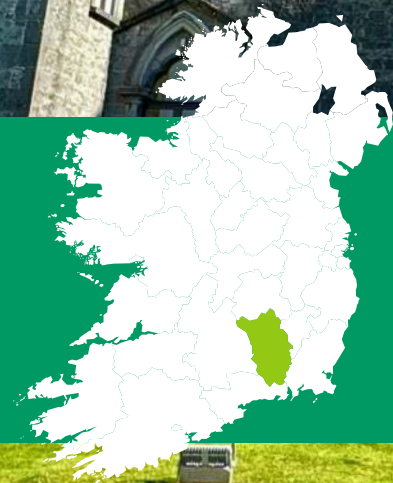
Mairead Byrne, Chair
Celbridge Community Centre CLG





KILKENNY

Kilkenny LEADER Partnership



Watergate Theatre



Culture & Heritage



Tourism

Among the projects supported in the very first LEADER programme was the Watergate Theatre in Kilkenny. Kilkenny had been without a dedicated theatre for roughly 30 years, since the closure of earlier venues in the 1960s, and the Watergate represented a deliberate attempt to restore a permanent performing arts space in the city. Since its opening in 1993, the theatre has staged national, international and world-renowned performances across all genres, theatre, music, opera, stand-up, dance and musical theatre. The theatre quickly became a central cultural hub, helping to revitalise the performing arts scene in Kilkenny.

The Barrow-Nore-Suir (BNS) LEADER Partnership of the time approved funding of IR£49,572 toward the IR£123,930 project to get it off the ground.



Location:

Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 1991-1993

LEADER 2014-2020

The theatre officially opened on 4 April 1993, with the ceremony performed by President Mary Robinson. Today, the Watergate Theatre is a vibrant, 324-seat civic theatre, located in the heart of Kilkenny, with gallery and bar spaces. Kilkenny LEADER Partnership subsequently aided the purchase of a Digital Cinema Projector for the theatre in 2020.

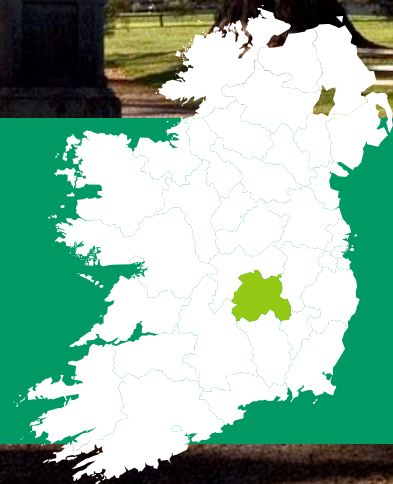
“The LEADER funding the Watergate received in 2022 made a real and lasting difference to what we were able to offer our audiences. The investment in a DCP projector significantly expanded our programme, allowing us to screen film alongside our live performance offering in a way that would not otherwise have been possible at that stage. That kind of targeted, practical support for existing arts organisations is enormously valuable. It doesn’t just fund equipment — it opens up new artistic possibilities and widens the experience available to local communities. We are grateful to LEADER for backing us for this development and support of our artistic expansion.”

Joanna Cunningham, Executive Director, Watergate Theatre



LAOIS

Connect Laois



Killeshin Community Centre



Enterprise & Job Creation



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Social Inclusion

Killeshin Community Centre CLG developed a modern multi-use community facility and business hub in the heart of Killeshin village to support community activities, local enterprise and job creation. Supported by LEADER funding, the project involved the construction of a 340 sq.m². extension comprising a flexible community space and high-quality business units. The development replaced outdated prefabricated accommodation and provided an A-rated, energy-efficient facility for local businesses, community groups and residents. The centre has become a focal point for village life, supporting over 20 community organisations and more than 60 jobs while creating a vibrant and sustainable hub that enhances the social and economic wellbeing of the wider community.

The development has transformed the village of Killeshin by creating a sustainable focal point for community life, enterprise and local services. The project has strengthened the economic vitality of the area by supporting local businesses, creating employment opportunities and encouraging people to spend time and money within the village. It has enhanced social cohesion by providing a welcoming space where people of all ages can meet, participate in activities and build connections. The centre has increased the attractiveness of Killeshin as a place to live, work and visit, helping to support population growth, community pride and long-term rural sustainability.



Location:

Killeshin, Co. Laois



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014–2020

60+

people employed by
businesses based at
the centre

Used by

20+

community groups
and organisations

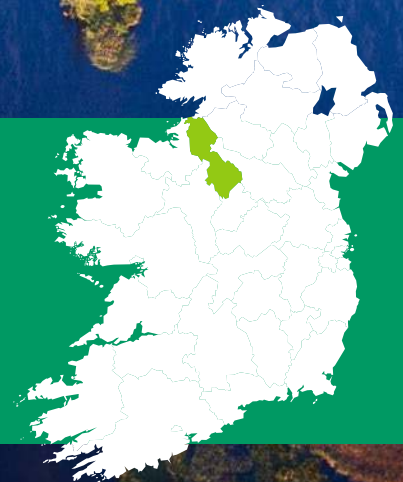
“When setting up a committee, look for people with a variety of skill sets, and have a good, tight, working committee who have foresight and vision. The process might take longer than you think — it took us ten years.”

Laurence Phelan, Chairperson



LEITRIM

Leitrim Development Company



The Old Rectory Events Venue



This project involved the purchase of a specialised marquee with tables and chairs for events at The Old Rectory. The Old Rectory previously received LEADER funding under the 2007–2013 Programme for the conversion of stables to 4-star self-catering accommodation. They also received funding under the 2014–2020 programme for the latest marquee project, which has supported them in expanding their offering as a venue for weddings, corporate events and private functions.

This project has resulted in increased spend in the locality. The promoter is deeply embedded in the tourism sector and is proactive in promoting The Old Rectory as a unique tourism venue. This project has resulted in increased visitors and spend in the county. They work closely with other local accommodation and hospitality providers to ensure that visitors to The Old Rectory contribute to the wider local economy.

 **Location:**
Co. Leitrim

 **LEADER Programme:**
LEADER 2007–2013
LEADER 2014–2020

1,460
Estimated guests

2,770
Estimated
additional bed
nights





LIMERICK

West Limerick Resources



Manor Fields Adare



The Manor Fields Adare is a community-owned 25-acre amenity for recreational and community purposes for people of all ages and all abilities. A masterplan was created with the support of LEADER funding in 2010 and a phased approach to its development has since been pursued. Phase 1 included developing access to the site and the installation of an all-abilities playground with LEADER funding. Phase 2 saw other facilities installed, including multi-sport grass pitches, a multi-sport floodlit astro pitch and walking paths. Funding was again sought for Phase 3, which included the construction of a pavilion building incorporating changing rooms, a toilet/shower block, a refreshments area, a coffee dock, meeting rooms, a referees' room and a first-aid room. Most recently, LEADER funding has been approved to install a battery storage system for the onsite solar panels.

With the population growth planned for Adare and the surrounding area as a result of additional housing units, the demand for quality recreational facilities for people of all ages continues to grow. The development of a major recreational amenity that is multi-purpose, multi-sport, for people of all abilities and for all ages is unique in its approach, enabling entire families to use the amenity.

Location:
Adare, Co. Limerick

LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2007–2013
LEADER 2014–2020
LEADER 2023–2027

“LEADER funding has made a profound difference to what The Manor Fields means to our community. Through this support, we have delivered an inclusive all-abilities playground, a welcoming pavilion building and a solar PV battery storage system that strengthens our long-term environmental and financial sustainability. These investments have created a 25-acre recreational space where people of all ages and abilities can come together, be active and feel part of their community. With approximately 75,000 user visits annually, the impact of this funding is seen every day in the connections formed, the wellbeing supported, and the opportunities created for everyone who uses The Manor Fields.”

Barry O'Halloran,
Manor Fields Adare

3
FTE staff

Approximately
75,000
user visits annually

15
Active
volunteers



LONGFORD

Longford Community Resources



Ballycloghan Carrickboy Parish Hall Renovation



Culture & Heritage



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Social Inclusion

The local parish hall in Ballycloghan, Co. Longford had fallen into a state of disrepair and was close to dereliction. Originally a two-teacher school established in 1847, it served as a meeting place for Ballycloghan and Carrickboy but was no longer fit for use. A major refurbishment delivered a welcoming, modern meeting space that promotes inclusiveness and rejuvenates a unique piece of local heritage. In total, LEADER provided funding for six elements across two programmes, amounting to over €117,000. These included the hall refurbishment, stage, lighting and sound equipment, exterior patio works to provide additional event space, equipment to maintain the grounds, and restoration of an old village well.

Since the upgrade, the hall has become a hive of activity, facilitating Girl Guides, Foróige, classes, dancing, a drama group, Tuesday Chatters and events such as the Christmas Market, Easter Egg Hunt and summer barbecue. It has revitalised the communities of Ballycloghan and Carrickboy, strengthening community, vibrancy and cohesion among residents. The hall is now accessible, allowing the elderly and those with mobility issues to fully use the facility. The renovation has also acted as a catalyst for further projects, including the well restoration, enhancing the village and contributing to strong Tidy Towns results.



Location:

Ballycloghan, Co. Longford



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014–2020

LEADER 2021–2022

“It has absolutely instilled a lot of confidence that, starting from nowhere but with tremendous support from LEADER and LCRL and local politician Paul Ross, we feel we are starting the journey of making Ballycloghan and Carrickboy a notable place to visit and not just a drive through anymore. We feel we can do anything we set out to do.”

Committee member

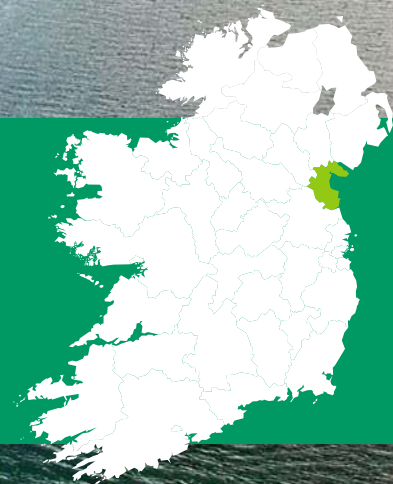
“The refurbishment had a lot of people saying it would never take off. It is like the film Field of Dreams — build it and they will come. Ye built it, they did come, and continue to come.”

Member of the community



LOUTH

Louth Local Development



RIP.ie (Gradam Communications)



Enterprise & Job Creation

The project involved setting up a website that would provide the public with a comprehensive source of information on death and bereavement, as well as a free online forum for publishing death notices. A photograph of the deceased could appear on the death notice and messages of condolences could be sent to the bereaved families.

The online platform was very slow to take off but within four or five years almost all deaths in the Republic of Ireland were published on this platform. The platform became very popular with people who could not attend funerals in Ireland. In 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the use of the site was a vital and crucial way for mourners to express their sympathies to bereaved families. In addition, the Central Statistics Office used RIP.ie during the pandemic to help calculate excess mortality, recognising the platform's unique role in documenting deaths across the country.

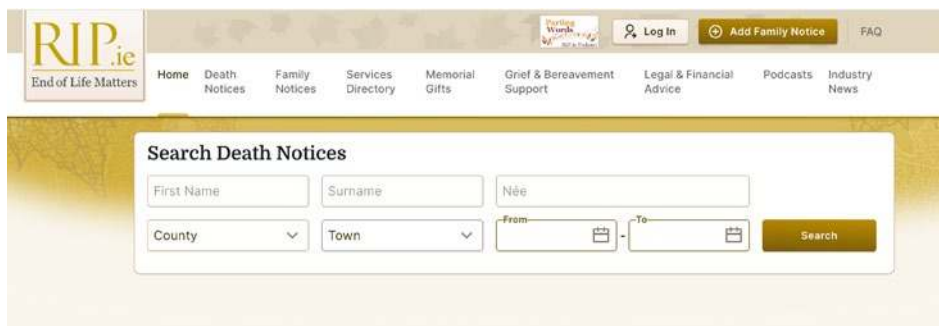


Location:
Dundalk, Co. Louth



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2000–2006

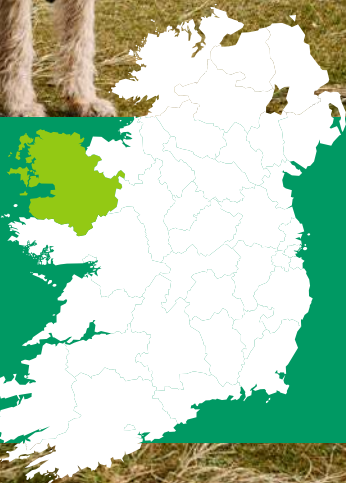
By 2021, the site was receiving around
250,000
visits per day and more than
50m
page views per month.





MAYO

Comhar na nOileán
Mayo North East
South West Mayo Development Company



Inishturk Community Club Redevelopment



Social Inclusion



Tourism

The original building on Inishturk Island was built in 1988. It was completed in 1991 using voluntary labour, locally raised funds and a small grant of €13,000 from the National Lottery. This centre had become the focal point of the Island, housing the only public house and hosting all social events. Under LEADER, the building was redeveloped and expanded to include a café and improved facilities, allowing the community to host larger events and grow the tourism offering on the island.

The new building has allowed the community to host larger events, and the new café allowed the tourism product on the Island to grow and develop further. Until that point, all B&Bs on the island had to provide evening meals for their guests as there was no restaurant on the island. The redevelopment has allowed the island to be advertised on a wider footing as a destination where visitors can stay and eat without depending solely on B&B-prepared evening meals.



Location:

Inishturk, Co. Mayo



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2007–2013



Sisters of Mercy Convent



Culture and Heritage



Tourism

The Sisters of Mercy Convent in Ballina is a community-led regeneration project supported, led by River Moy Search & Rescue and enabled by LEADER support via Mayo North East LEADER Partnership. In 2024, LEADER funding delivered two key studies – a conservation assessment and an environmentally sensitive lighting study – providing critical evidence to guide the redevelopment of the historic convent. These reports underpin plans to restore and repurpose the building for community use, demonstrating how LEADER support can enable early-stage technical work that is essential to unlocking complex heritage and regeneration projects.

The regeneration of Ballina Convent is having a growing impact by reactivating a long vacant historic building as a community asset. Supported by LEADER-funded studies, the project is enabling evidence-based plans to restore and repurpose the convent for social, cultural, and service use. This is helping to mobilise local volunteers, attract wider investment, and create a shared space for community activities. By preventing further deterioration and unlocking future uses, the project is strengthening community pride, participation, and long-term regeneration in Ballina.



Location:

Ballina, Co. mayo



LEADER Programme:

2023-2027

“We have a great team and we are getting a good response locally. This is a positive example of a community-led project which is trying to continue the Sisters’ tradition of charity and trying to be a force for good in the town.”

Councillor Mark Duffy

Foundation 4 Life



South West Mayo
DEVELOPMENT COMPANY CLG
Comhlacht Forbartha
Iardheisceart Mhaigh Eo CTR



Social Inclusion



Youth

Foundation 4 Life (F4L) is an innovative life skills and activation programme designed for young people who are disengaged from employment, education and training. Using a staged, small-step approach, F4L delivers a mix of accredited and non-accredited modules tailored to individual learning needs and abilities. The programme combines practical course content with intensive wrap-around supports, including one-to-one mentoring, goal setting, and follow-up guidance after completion. To reduce barriers to participation, supports such as childcare contributions, travel assistance and meals are provided. F4L was developed by South West Mayo Development Company under SICAP, in partnership with the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force and local stakeholders.



Location:
Inishturk, Co. Mayo



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2007–2013

“We received amazing training and qualifications as part of this amazing programme ... All of these make us more appealing and more prepared for the working world.”

Foundation 4 Life participant

Over its three-year pilot phase, F4L successfully engaged and retained hard-to-reach young people who were previously disconnected from employment, education or training. Since launching in 2017, the programme has achieved a 95% retention rate, with 70% of participants progressing into employment, education or training — significantly above national averages for similar initiatives. F4L's success has received national recognition through the European Social Fund Special Award at the AONTAS STAR Awards. In 2019, LEADER funding enabled the programme to expand training opportunities, including Communication Skills Workshops, Cooking Skills and Drive Safe Awareness courses, further enhancing participants' confidence, skills and employability.

THE VALUE OF INTEGRATED SERVICES

LEADER funding complemented the wrap-around supports already delivered through SICAP and worked in partnership with the Western Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force. This collaborative approach strengthened the programme's ability to engage hard-to-reach young people aged 18–25 in County Mayo, build confidence and life skills, and support progression into further education, training and employment.





MEATH

Meath Partnership



Ornan Kitchens — Sustainable Heat System



Climate & Environment



Enterprise & Job Creation

Ornan Kitchens Ltd, a well-established rural enterprise employing 27 staff, received LEADER support to install a fully automated woodchip boiler system at its Wilkinstown manufacturing facility. The investment replaced outdated and inefficient heating infrastructure and enabled the business to utilise its own timber by-products as fuel. This reduced waste disposal costs, lowered carbon emissions and improved overall efficiency. The project, in addition to other planned investments and upgrades onsite, creates three new full-time jobs, continues the company's strong record of apprenticeships, and strengthens its long-term sustainability and competitiveness in both the residential and commercial furniture markets.

This innovative system runs on woodchip fuel produced from the promoter's own timber off-cuts and by-products generated during furniture manufacturing. This approach eliminates the need for costly external fuel sources, significantly reduces waste disposal costs and embeds a 'closed loop', circular economy model within the business. The boiler is fully automated, providing consistent, reliable heat output while requiring minimal manual intervention. This supports improved energy efficiency, reduced emissions and enhanced operational reliability compared with the legacy fossil-fuel system previously in use. The new technology positions the business to meet tightening environmental standards and sustainability requirements across both private and commercial markets.



Location:

Wilkinstown, Co. Meath



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2023–2027

“LEADER support has enabled us to combine modern renewable energy technology with sustainable business development, creating a project that not only improves our infrastructure but also supports resource efficiency, innovation, and rural job creation.”

Ronan O'Reilly,
Director, Ornan Kitchens





MONAGHAN

Monaghan Integrated Development



Sillis Green Veg



Enterprise & Job Creation



Agri & Food

Sillis Green Veg was set up in 1997 as a small family-owned business supplying ready-prepared vegetables to the catering and retail industry. From their rural base outside Glaslough in Co. Monaghan they prided themselves on producing a quality product while providing a consistent market and price for local producers.

In 2005 they built a new factory and were successful in securing €65,000 in LEADER support for the purchase of equipment to scale their business and increase efficiency. With a focus on quality and good customer service, Sillis Green Veg have grown consistently and added prepared fruit into their product range and extended their factory. The company was successful in recently securing LEADER funding to purchase a new juicing production line and knife peeler to the value of €200,000.



Location:

Glaslough, Co. Monaghan



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2000–2006
LEADER 2023–2027



70-80%

of raw materials are sourced from Irish suppliers

48

Full-time jobs

30%

of raw material comes from growers in the immediate vicinity

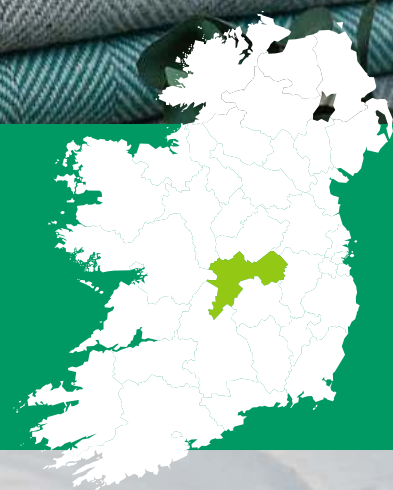
10-15 tonnes

of vegetable off-cuts — previously used as animal feed — now being used to produce vegetable juice.



OFFALY

Offaly Local Development Company





Enterprise & Job Creation



Agri & Food

Dooley Wool is a family-run business located in County Offaly on the Laois-Tipperary border at the foot of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Established in 1955 by Seamus Dooley, the company has evolved from wool purchasing and exporting into the production of premium 100% Irish wool products including mattress toppers, duvets, pillows, throws and blankets. Through successive LEADER programmes, the business has expanded and modernised through investment in specialist machinery, mobile equipment and digital systems. These investments have improved efficiency, strengthened competitiveness, and supported the long-term sustainability of this generational family enterprise.

The continued development of Dooley Wool has strengthened the rural economy by supporting local farmers, sustaining traditional agricultural activity, and maintaining employment within the area. As a long-established family enterprise, Dooley Wool contributes to the identity and sustainability of the local community while supporting rural supply chains and agricultural heritage. The project demonstrates how targeted rural investment can help traditional businesses adapt, grow, and continue providing economic and social value for future generations.



Location:
Killavilla, Co. Offaly



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2007–2013
LEADER 2014–2020
LEADER 2023–2027

“LEADER funding has played a vital role in helping us modernise and diversify the business while continuing a family tradition that began over 70 years ago. The support allowed us to invest in specialist equipment and develop new Irish wool products, creating sustainable employment and adding value to Irish wool within the rural economy.”

Kevin Dooley, Dooley Wool





ROSCOMMON

Roscommon LEADER Partnership



Lough Ree Access for All — VR Project, Phase 1



Accessibility



Culture & Heritage



Social Inclusion



Tourism

The project involves the development of an immersive Virtual Reality (VR) tour of Inchcleraun Island (aka Quaker Island), expanding the promoter’s current offerings. Inchcleraun is steeped in history, with links to Queen Maeve and the Táin Bó Cuailnge, St. Diarmaid, St. Ciaran and the monastic settlement on the island, as well as being rich in native flora and fauna. The project involves the development of a 10-minute immersive experience, delivered in segments via 30 VR headsets controlled by a tablet on each of the three LRAFA boats.

Inchcleraun Island is now uninhabited and has no pier, jetty or proper landing point. Access is limited for all; those with disabilities or infirmities are entirely prevented from landing on the island. The project gives everyone the chance to tour the island and delve into the history of the area. It uniquely combines cutting-edge VR technology with accessibility features, making local history and culture available to individuals with diverse abilities. It will merge with and enhance the existing LRAFA boat tours on Lough Ree and the River Shannon, blending real-world experience with the virtual tour.

6
new jobs
created

Doubling of
visitor numbers to
6,000



Location:
Ballyleague, Co.
Roscommon



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2023–2027

“Fabulous occasion today for Lough Ree Access for All who have launched the new Inchcleraun VR experience, opening up the island’s rich history to those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to visit, making a real visible difference to the community. From the stories of St. Diarmaid to Queen Maeve, it’s a powerful way to connect people with local heritage.”

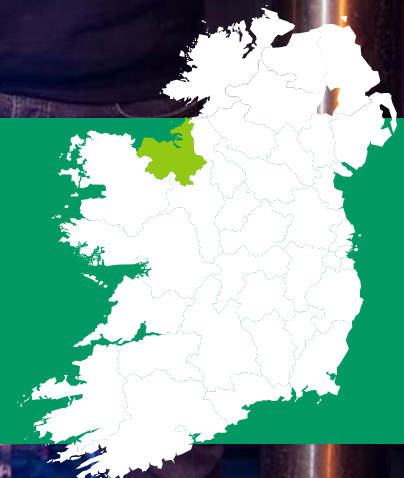
Kevin ‘Boxer’ Moran TD





SLIGO

Sligo LEADER Partnership



Lough Gill Brewery — CO₂ Recovery System



Agri & Food



Climate & Environment



Enterprise & Job Creation

Lough Gill Brewery, a small independent craft brewery in the west of Ireland, secured LEADER funding for a CO₂ recovery system — the first system of its kind to be installed and operated at a small independent brewery on the island of Ireland. The system, sourced from Denmark, captures CO₂ produced naturally during fermentation, cleans and stores it, and allows it to be reused throughout the brewing process rather than being vented to the atmosphere.

The project reduces waste, lowers the brewery's dependence on externally supplied industrial CO₂, improves long-term sustainability and helps future-proof the business against supply chain disruptions and rising energy and input costs.

Beyond the environmental benefits, the project demonstrates that advanced sustainability technology is now becoming achievable for smaller independent producers, not just large multinational breweries. It also strengthens the visitor experience side of the brewery by giving customers and tourists a real example of modern sustainable brewing in action.



Location:
Co. Sligo



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2023-2027

"The CO₂ recovery project has been a major step forward for the brewery and something we're extremely proud of ... The support [of LEADER] was absolutely critical in allowing a small rural brewery like ours to take on a project of this scale and importance ... For us, this project is part of a much bigger long-term commitment to sustainability, innovation, and building resilient rural enterprise in the west of Ireland."

James Ward, Lough Gill Brewery



TIPPERARY

North Tipperary Development Company
South Tipperary Development Company



Portroe GAA Club Community Walkway



Health & Wellbeing



Infrastructure & Connectivity



Social Inclusion

Walking in Portroe is dangerous, particularly in winter, but also in summer with overgrown ditches and winding roads. This walkway is the only floodlit, secure and safe walkway in the area. A new, floodlit 2m wide, 650m long community walkway — bolstered by existing ample car parking at the GAA grounds — has been delivered, providing a safe environment for walking, exercise and social connection.

The community walkway, which is maintained by two Community Employment participants, has been a game-changer in the area. It is used constantly and a coffee shack has been erected to provide refreshments. A “Track Attack” programme has been in operation in 2026, providing a fun way to improve fitness. Social capital and communication have been increased, and rural isolation reduced.



Location:

Portroe, Co. Tipperary



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2023–2027

“The walkway has made a big difference to my life and health, as I can now drive down here and park and then walk safely and chat even in the dark evenings. You’ll always meet someone to chat with, which is great as I’m alone above in the farmhouse.”

Community Member



Up to **500** locals using the walkway on a regular basis.

O'Donnell Engineering Ltd



Agri & Food



Enterprise & Job Creation

O'Donnell Engineering (ODE) was founded in Emly, Co. Tipperary in 1978 by William O'Donnell. This family-run rural business has grown to become one of Ireland's leading agricultural engineering companies. Initially operating from a small garage, the company has now expanded to a production facility of 123,000 sq. ft. encompassing large workshops, storage and office space across two sites. They have been designing, producing and supplying the agricultural market with a diverse range of high-quality animal handling products for over 40 years and can cater to any size project, from small-scale farms to large consignments. They were approved LEADER funding in 2021 for the purchase and installation of a new laser tube processing system, enabling them to enhance their manufacturing capabilities and future-proof their business.

ODE had been approved for funding previously under earlier LEADER programmes over the past two decades, and South Tipperary Development CLG had guided them through the process by providing advice, support and guidance. Previously funded projects include the installation of three-phase electricity at their newly expanded manufacturing site in 2010 and the purchase of a bandsaw and bending machine in 2011.



Location:

Emly, Co. Tipperary



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 1994–1999

LEADER 2007–2013

LEADER 2014–2020

“We are very grateful to South Tipperary Development Company and LEADER for their support of us over the years. They came on board at crucial points in our development, and helped us to grow to our current size, employing 31 people in the small village of Emly.”

Billy O'Donnell,
O'Donnell Engineering Ltd

It was through their positive experiences from these successful projects that they felt enabled to embark on this — their most ambitious project to date.

This innovative rural private enterprise project has contributed to securing valuable employment for 31 highly skilled employees, from general operators to qualified welders, in the rural, disadvantaged area of Emly while providing the very real opportunity for further expansion. All current employees of ODE live within a 15-minute commute and contribute to the local economy. Additionally, ODE are now able to complete more automated manufacturing in-house instead of via third party or a very labour-intensive and slow manual process, eliminating variability in quality and production time. This has resulted in lower consumption of steel and reduced wastage due to increased precision and efficiency, and a reduction in their carbon footprint — eliminating the need to transport steel components to third parties in Ireland and to import certain products from Italy.





WATERFORD

Waterford LEADER Partnership



Anne Valley Walk — Phase II



Accessibility



Climate & Environment



Health & Wellbeing



Social Inclusion



Tourism

The Anne Valley Walk runs through a constructed wetland. Phase II of the project extended the walk from Dunhill Castle to Annestown, building on the success of the original LEADER-funded 2.5 km walk from Dunhill village to Dunhill Castle. Additional enhancements have since been provided by the group, including a car park at the village entrance, signage, seating and a walkway to the castle at the castle end. The walk passes through farmland in the Anne Valley that has been kindly donated to the project, with the land value included as part of the voluntary matching contribution. The walk is on the National Trails Register and is insured by Sport Ireland. The area of land around the walk is natural bog land that stretches down to Annestown, a haven for wildlife and native birds providing a tranquil space for young, old and less mobile members of the public to enjoy.

The Anne Valley is the only fully multi-access trail in Co. Waterford, ensuring that people of all abilities can experience and enjoy the amenity. The flat, smooth trail surface is meticulously maintained to a standard accessible to wheelchair users, those with mobility aids, and families with buggies. Clear waymarking and recycled-plastic viewing platforms enable visitors to navigate the trail with ease and engage fully with the natural landscape. Sensitive development through native Irish wetland habitats has ensured minimal disturbance to wildlife, with educational signage providing information on the diverse flora and fauna. A café at the trailhead offers a welcoming starting point and an idyllic vantage over the lakes, contributing to the local economy.



Location:

Anne Valley, Dunhill, Co. Waterford



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2014–2020

The Anne Valley Walk attracts more than **56,000** walkers annually.

THE VALUE OF INTEGRATED SERVICES

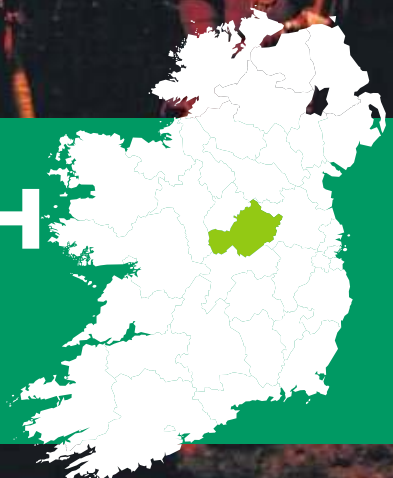


The walk was added to the Walks Scheme in 2022, with additional funding allocated for its upkeep and improvement through the Walks Scheme Development Fund and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, a process which was led and co-ordinated by the Rural Recreation Officer at Waterford LEADER Partnership. The landowners and the community Trail Management Organisation, in collaboration with Waterford LEADER Partnership, have continued to enhance the trail with a strong focus on biodiversity and accessibility.



WESTMEATH

Westmeath Community Development



Mollie Moo's Pet Farm



Enterprise & Job Creation



Tourism

Mollie Moo's is an award-winning family-run pet farm established by Linda and Gerry Syron. Located alongside the working farm close to Lough Ennell in Mullingar, the business caters for families, groups and school tours, providing a fun, inviting and educational experience for all ages. The venture has been supported by LEADER across successive programmes.



Location:

Anne Valley, Dunhill,
Co. Waterford



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2007–2013
LEADER 2014–2020
LEADER 2023–2027

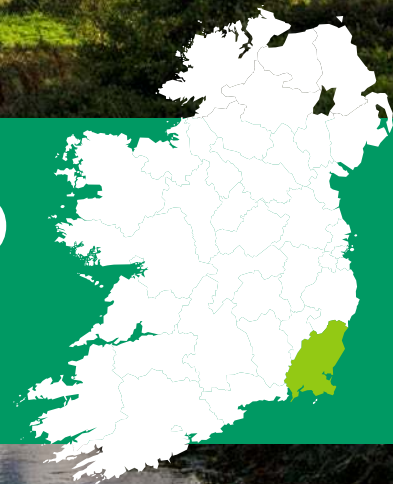
Mollie Moo's contributes to the rural tourism product in Westmeath and addresses a need for engaging outdoor recreational spaces that are both fun and educational, particularly for young children. The project complements other facilities in the area and has contributed to the wider economy in the locality.





WEXFORD

Wexford Local Development



Colclough Walled Garden



Culture & Heritage



Social Inclusion



Tourism

Colclough Walled Garden is a restored early-19th-century Georgian garden located beside Tintern Abbey in County Wexford, originally built by the Colclough family around 1814 as part of their estate at Tintern. It was designed to be both productive and ornamental, supplying fruit, vegetables and flowers to the big house while also serving as a place for leisure.



Location:

Saltmills, Co. Wexford



LEADER Programme:

LEADER 2007–2013

After the Colclough estate declined in the 20th century, the garden became overgrown and almost disappeared into woodland.

Beginning in 2010, a dedicated local volunteer group cleared, rebuilt and replanted the entire site, assisted with a small LEADER grant. The entire plan was rebuilt using 1830s Ordnance Survey maps, giving it an authentic period feel and making it one of the most historically accurate restorations in Ireland.

The garden reopened in 2012 and is now one of Ireland's most impressive community-led heritage restorations, showcasing heritage flowers, fruit trees, vegetables and long formal paths — achieved through a small LEADER grant and a huge amount of local community volunteerism and fundraising.



Since its restoration the project has continued to make a deep impact in the community. Driven by local volunteers, it created a strong sense of ownership, pride and shared purpose, with many volunteers gaining new horticultural and conservation skills. The project saved a historic site that had been lost to overgrowth for decades.

The garden draws visitors to the Hook Peninsula, especially when paired with Tintern Abbey, supporting cafés, B&Bs, craft shops and local guides. Schools, gardening groups and heritage organisations use the garden for learning about biodiversity, Georgian horticulture and restoration techniques, and locals walk, meet and volunteer in a peaceful, accessible outdoor space. Restoring the garden has strengthened the community's link to the Colclough estate and Tintern Abbey, reinforcing local heritage and pride in place.

THE VALUE OF INTEGRATED SERVICES



Other LDC services have been leveraged to support the project, including RSS and Tús staff, providing a steady flow of willing and skilled workers for restoration phases, ongoing maintenance and horticulture activities. The promoters have undertaken a significant amount of training and are members of the Wexford Walking Trails group. Members also availed of a Tintern Trails Training Programme, which provided them with relevant information on the flora and fauna in the woodlands surrounding the garden, and now provide informative walks for visitors.

10,000+
Volunteer hours

40,000+
Visitors annually

€300k-€500k
Economic impact
per annum

200+
Heritage fruit trees
and shrubs planted



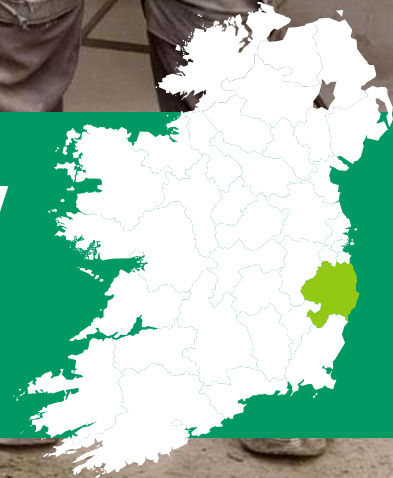
“When we first came in here, you couldn’t even see the walls. It was a jungle. To watch it come back to life has been incredible. We uncovered the paths exactly where the old maps said they’d be. It felt like the garden was revealing itself to us. People come in and say they can’t believe locals did this. That makes us proud.”

Garden Manager and
Project Lead



WICKLOW

County Wicklow Partnership



Made in Wicklow



Culture & Heritage



Enterprise & Job Creation

Made in Wicklow (MIW) has rapidly grown into a flagship initiative for County Wicklow's creative sector, providing a digital trail, marketing platform, and showcase and retail opportunities for over 50 craft practitioners. The initiative began in 2021 with the development of a Craft Strategy for Co. Wicklow, leading to the creation of MIW as a structured platform to support and promote local makers. The project combines digital presence (website, individual maker video profiles, social media), high-profile in-person events, and sustained engagement with craft producers to raise the visibility and commercial viability of Wicklow's craft sector.

Over 50 craft practitioners are involved in the project. Craft producers have been featured on the MIW platform/website with individual video profiles. Overall the project has significantly increased awareness of Wicklow's craft products through high-profile local events, the website and social media activity, strengthening the visibility, identity and commercial reach of the county's makers.



Location:
Co. Wicklow



LEADER Programme:
LEADER 2021–2022
LEADER 2023–2027

In 2025, the *Head, Heart and Hands* craft exhibition and the *Cinematic Thread: From Screen to Craft* exhibition at Powerscourt House drew more than 18,000 visitors, generating significant footfall and exposure for Wicklow craft producers.









About Local Development Companies Network

Local Development Companies Network (LDCN; formerly Irish Local Development Network or ILDN) is the national representative body for Local Development Companies (LDCs) in Ireland. LDCs operate in all urban, rural and island communities and are overseen by voluntary boards that are constituted to ensure a community-led, socially inclusive focus.

Current programmes include the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP), LEADER, Rural Social Scheme, Tús, Local Area Employment Services, the HSE Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme, the Rural Recreation Programme, the Walks Scheme, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Social Farming, and various supports for Social Enterprises.

Each of our member LDCs are unique and provides services that reflect the needs of their communities. Beyond the core programmes listed, LDCs also deliver national and European initiatives that enhance the development of their communities through enterprise, training, activation, education, health, and community supports. LDCN as a representative body liaises with funders and policymakers to ensure the voice of communities and programme delivery specialists are highlighted in national, regional and local community policy and provision.

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www.ldcn.ie



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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LEADER
Development led by local communities

