2015

Meath Local Development Strategy

Meath Partnership

12/18/2015

Contents

Preface

The Local Development Strategy for County Meath is structured on a framework of six high-level local objectives congruent with the principal themes of rural economic development, social inclusion and rural environment as set out in the National Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020. These local objectives are not wholly discrete and many of the issues included under one objective may also relate to elements of the others.

The Local Development Strategy for County Meath sets out to establish clear linkages with other relevant development plans and programmes relating to County Meath including those developed by local government, external state agencies and community organisations. The Local Development Strategy for County Meath provides a readily accessible resource for anyone wishing to find out what actions the Local Action Group intends to take to advance the position of rural dwellers in County Meath over the coming five year period under each of the Strategy's six primary objectives. However, it is always important to set the context, and therefore the Local Development Strategy for County Meath also offers an overview of the relevant policy context; identifies the needs and priorities within the County; and outlines the progress which has been achieved since 2009 in the culmination of the previous LEADER Programme in County Meath.

In relation to each of the primary objectives and developmental issues they address, the Local Development Strategy (LDS) clearly states the strategic initiatives, actions, targets and indicators and it is intended that progress towards the achievement of these targets will be reviewed annually. The Local Development Strategy for County Meath conforms largely to the submission template advised by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and is set out accordingly.

The Local Action Group will have in place an Annual Operating Plan (AOP) which sets-out the scheduled LDS activity for the coming year and places it in context with the LDS. The proposed template for the AOP will include at a minimum the following detail: meeting dates and application deadlines; schedule and theme(s) for time-bound calls; project development; animation and capacity building; communication plan; monitoring and evaluation; and financial planning. The AOP will order the interface between the Local Action Group, its stakeholders, target groups, existing customers and all intending applicants seeking LEADER aid. Effective planning and the efficient facilitation of rural communities seeking to engage with LEADER will be a central objective of the AOP.

Chapter 1: The Local Action Group

1.1 Legal Description of LAG

Meath Local Community Development Committee is the Local Action Group (LAG) for the delivery of the LEADER Programme in County Meath for the programme period 2014 - 2020. The LCDC consists of both public and private sector partners from within the administrative boundary of the County. The LCDC is comprised of 19 members, 10 from the private sector and nine from the public sector. A full list of the LCDC membership including names, organisations and relevant sector are contained within Annex 1.

The LCDC as the LAG brings together all the local stakeholders, including the local authority, state agencies, social partners, local development company and representatives from the community and voluntary sector in its role to promote economic and local development through a partnership approach, for the benefit of the citizens of County Meath. Central to the work of the LCDC is the promotion of collaborative work between the public and private sectors, with a view to maximising an integrated delivery approach to local community based services. The LCDC, like the CPG and SPCs, is a committee of the local authority. However, unlike the CPG and SPCs, the LCDC is independent from the local authority in the performance of its functions. Accordingly, how those functions are carried out and any decisions to be made by the LCDC when carrying out those functions are solely a matter for the LCDC. This independence is provided for explicitly in sections 49A (2) and 128B (8) of the 2001 Act.4.3

1.2 Organisational and Contact Details

Legal Name: Meath Local Community Development Committee

Contact Details: Mr. Barry Lynch, Chief Officer, Meath County Council, Buvinda House, Navan, County Meath.

Primary Contact for LEADER

Name of contact person, position: Ms. Aine Bird, Administrative Officer

Contact details: Meath County Council, Community Section, Buvinda House, Navan, County Meath

Email: ABird@meathcoco.ie

Telephone: 046-9097400

Date of establishment: 1st July 2014

1.3 Skills Matrix of LAG Members

Themes	Theme Detail	Skills/Knowledge	Organisation/Groups/Individuals	Management of Public Funds	Collaboration	Advisory	Administration	Animation
Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation	• Promotion and support for high quality, sustainable rural tourism attractions & accommodation • Development of innovative rural enterprise, with a focus on job creation and support for micro-enterprise • Redevelopment of rural towns as enterprise hubs with the necessary infrastructure to support micro/SME enterprise • Support for small scale broadband development to assist rural enterprise	Access to Additional Funding	MCC-LEO-MP-UD-DSP	▪	▪	▪	▪	
		Mentoring/Training Supports	LMETB-LEO-MP-JM-UD-YWIM		▪	▪		▪
		Economic Development & Analysis	MCC-MP-LEO-COC-UD		▪	▪		▪
		Employment Law & Advice	SIPTU-DSP-LEO-UD			▪	▪	▪
		Social Enterprise	PPN-MP-UD-YWIM	▪	▪	▪		
		Business Planning	MCC-LEO-MP- COC-UD		▪	▪	▪	
		Employability	DSP-LMETB-LEO-JM-UD	▪	▪	▪	▪	
		Agriculture, Food & Drink	IFA-MP-LEO-UD	▪	▪	▪		▪
		Tourism Development and Support	MCC-MP-LEO-UD		▪	▪	▪	▪
Theme 2: Social Inclusion	• Support for basic services (community facilities, recreation etc.) targeted at hard to reach communities • Actions aimed at engaging with and supplying services to rural youth	Community Development	MCC-PPM-MP- YWIM-CR-UD	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
		Partnership Working & Networking	MP-PPN-MCC-EP-UD		▪	▪		▪
		Project Inception & Management	MCC-DSP-MP-LEO-UD			▪	▪	▪
		Financial Management	MCC-LEO-MP-UD	▪		▪	▪	
		Equality & Integration	CR-DSP- PPN	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
		Governance	MCC-SIPTU-MP-UD			▪	▪	

Theme	Initiatives	Subtheme	Organisations					
		Youth Advocacy, Engagement & Support	YWIM-LMETB-DSP-CR-MP-PPN		▪	▪		▪
		Higher Education & Further Education	LMETB-DSP-MCC-MP-JM-LEO	▪	▪	▪		▪
		Health & Welfare	HSE-DSP	▪	▪	▪	▪	
		Volunteering	MP-PPN-YWIM		▪		▪	
Theme 3: Rural Environment	• Initiatives to support the protection and sustainable use of water resources • Support for the protection and improvement of local biodiversity • Development and implementation of renewable energy technologies and initiatives • Actions to support the built and natural heritage	Land Management	IFA-EP-MCC	▪		▪	▪	
		Wildlife and Ecology	EP-MCC-MP	▪		▪		▪
		Cultural & Built Heritage	MCC-MP-UD-EP	▪	▪			▪
		Natural Heritage	MCC-MP-IFA-EP	▪		▪	▪	
		Low Carbon Development & Renewable Energy Production	MCC-EP-MP-LEO-UD	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
		Recreation	MCC-MP-COC	▪	▪	▪		▪

The skills base of the organisations, agencies and individuals who make-up the Local Action Group demonstrate high level competencies which when applied to the oversight, management and delivery of the Rural Development Programme LEADER 2014-2020 provides for both a coherent and integrated approach to rural development whilst facilitating unequalled transparency in respect of decision-making.

As a committee of the Local Authority, established under Section 36 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the LAG (Meath LCDC) does not have a separate legal identify nor does it possess a current tax clearance certificate. As the LAG financial partner, Meath County Council's TCC has been provided as an annex to the LDS (Annex 2).

1.4 Description of main activities

Meath Local Community Development Committee was established for the purposes of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. Accordingly, the LCDC in Meath will:

- have primary responsibility for co-ordination, planning and oversight of local development spend, whether that spend is delivered by local authorities or on behalf of the State or by other local development agencies and structures
- bring a more coherent approach to the implementation of local and community development programmes and interventions, seeking to ensure an integrated approach to local community and local development services between providers and delivery structures
- drive meaningful citizen and community engagement in the scoping, planning, delivery and evaluation of local and community development programmes
- ensure a more efficient administration of local and community programmes and delivery structures, the appropriate matching of resources to priorities and the achievement of value-for-money in the delivery and governance of programmes and the management of local delivery arrangements
- develop approaches that focus on learning and feedback, enhancing the links between practice and policy developments, and
- explore and pursue opportunities for additional funding resources for the area, whether Exchequer, EU, private or other sources.
- have responsibility for the contracting of the delivery of SICAP and oversight of same and as a Local Authority group hold responsibility for the delivery of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020.

1.5 LCDC Functions

These functions include:

- to prepare the community elements of a 6-year Local Economic and Community Plan (the Plan),
- to implement, or arrange for the implementation of, the community elements of the Plan,
- to review the community elements of the Plan at least once within the period of 6 calendar years and, if necessary, to amend the community elements of the Plan,
- to monitor on an on-going basis the implementation of the community elements of the Plan and, if appropriate, to revise the actions and strategies set to achieve the objectives of the community elements of the Plan,
- to coordinate, manage and oversee the implementation of local and community development programmes that have been approved either by the relevant local authority or by agreement between the LCDC and a relevant public authority (e.g. government department, State agency etc.)

- to improve the coordination of public-funded local and community development programmes and reduce duplication
- in addition to public-funded programmes, to coordinate generally the local and community development programmes within the operational area of the LCDC,
- to consider a draft of the economic elements of the Plan and adopt a statement for consideration of the Council in this regard, and
- to prepare an annual report on the performance of its functions.

1.6 Performance of Functions

Delegation of local authority functions:

The functions of a local authority regarding promoting the interests of communities, as set out in section 66 of the 2001 Act, have been delegated to LCDCs by section 128B (2).

As per section 66, promoting community interests includes actions that promote:

- social inclusion or the social, environmental, recreational, cultural or community development, or
- the general development, including enterprise and economic functions arising from local and community development activities, within the local authority administrative area.

It should be noted, however, that the delegation of these functions to LCDCs does not restrict the functions of local authorities regarding promoting the interests of local communities or other related functions under section 66.

1.7 LAG Roles and Responsibilities

The following constitutes an agreed proposal on the implementation arrangements for the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 in Meath where it has been agreed that Meath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is the Local Action Group (LAG) with the Local Development Company, Meath Community Rural and Social Development Partnership Limited, trading as Meath Partnership, as lead implementing partner (LDC). At the LCDC meeting of 1st December 2015, the LAG confirmed that Meath Partnership would act as the Implementing Partner for LEADER in County Meath for the programme period 2014-2020. A signed declaration to this effect is included as Annex 3.

1.7.1 Implementation of the Local Development Strategy (LDS)

In line with EU regulatory requirements, the LAG will have ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the LDS and decisions on the funding of actions under the LDS. However, it is the decision of the LAG that the LDC will operationalise the strategy on behalf of the LAG through a Memorandum of Understanding to be put in place on the approval of the LDS, based on the following LAG approved delegation of responsibilities. The LDC will be fully accountable to the LAG in this regard.

As the implementation partner, the LDC will deliver all of the project and animation and capacity related actions associated with the implementation of the LDS. The LDC will carry

out all work from the issuing of calls for proposals up to, and including, submitting project recommendations to the LAG for final approval. This role will include, but will not be limited to:

a. developing and issuing calls for proposals,
b. managing call for proposals processes,
c. managing open-call project application processes
d. implementing, managing and coordinating animation activity in the LAG area,
e. developing funding proposals with project promoters,
f. receiving and processing funding applications,
g. preparing and collating documentation for Article 28/48 checks,
h. submitting files for Article 28/48 checks and following up on issues identified through Article 28/48 checks, if required.
i. project development, management and monitoring work with project promoters,
j. developing and implementing LDC-led and LAG-led projects,
k. submission of projects to the LAG evaluation committee,
l. recommend applications to the LAG for final approval,
m. submission of proposals to reject project applications for decision,
n. preparing and issuing contracts to project promoters on behalf of the LAG,
o. managing the appeals process,
p. quarterly report of activity to LAG, and
q. general file management, audit compliance and administration related to the above actions. The LDC role will include at a minimum all of the actions allocated to the LDC in sub-section 1.1.11.E.

There will be no fragmentation of the programme delivery role among other LAG partners.

1.7.2. Local Authority (LA) Role

The LA is the lead financial partner of the LAG and will carry out the administrative tasks associated with this role, including –

a. providing advance administration and animation funding to the implementation partner,
b. approving the issuing of contracts following Article 28 administrative checks,
c. making payments to promoters on behalf of the LAG subject to article 48 checks, and
d. requesting quarterly drawdown of monies from DECLG.

The lead financial partner will underwrite/indemnify the LAG and its members for actions taken in implementing the LDS. The financial partner will have a robust verification role in respect of processes around decision-making to allow it underwrite LAG activities with confidence. This will be largely facilitated through the Article 28/48 verification process. Additional verification processes can be implemented if agreed between the LAG and the financial partner.

1.7.3 Article 28/48 Administrative Checks

DECLG may delegate the performance of Administrative Checks (Article 28/48) on third party projects to a LAG where it is satisfied that the LAG has the capacity and sufficiently robust administrative systems to support these checks.

Where DECLG delegates the Article 28/48 checks to the LAG, the Local Authority (LA) will be responsible for these checks in its capacity as financial partner and, accordingly, must ensure that a robust checking system is developed and implemented. These checks may be carried out in-house by the LA or may be sub-contracted by the LA to a centralised service provider. For the purposes of this application, it is confirmed that Meath County Council will carry out Article 28/48 checks on behalf of the LAG for third party projects only. Article 28/48 administrative checks will be undertaken by DECLG/Pobal on LAG 'in-house' projects and administration/ animation expenditure. The preparation of documentation and files for administrative checks will be the responsibility of the LDC.

1.7.4 Principles of the Partnership Approach

The agreed arrangements will operate on the following basis –
   a. the LDC will discharge its role under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the LCDC, this MOU will adhere to the agreed arrangements laid down in this LDS,
   b. the LDC role will run for the duration of the LEADER programming period, subject to continued compliance with the requirements of the Managing Authority and as per the MOU with the LCDC,
   c. the LDC role will include all project implementation elements i.e. there will be no fragmentation of the programme delivery role among other LAG partners,
   d. an on-line reporting system will support the administration of the programme, reducing the administration burden on the implementation and financial partners.

1.7.5 Contractual Arrangements

Where the LAG has had its LDS submission approved, the contract for the implementation of the LDS will be held by the LAG i.e. the LAG will sign the contract with DECLG. As lead financial partner, the LA will co-sign the contract with the LAG. The LAG will have Memoranda of Understanding with the lead financial partner and the lead implementation partner for the carrying out of their respective roles. The LAG will implement internal oversight arrangements in respect of the operations of both the Financial Partner and Implementing Partner.

1.7.6. Payment Functions

DECLG will provide for both an arrears and advance payment system. Under the arrears payment system LAGs will issue payments to beneficiaries and claim reimbursement of these payments from DECLG on a quarterly basis. This will lessen the administrative burden on all levels of the payment process, but it will require each LAG to have a lead financial partner with the capacity to operate under an arrears payment system – the Local Authority will be the lead financial partner where the LCDC is the LAG.

Under the advance payment system, DECLG will advance funds to LAGs to cover their administration and animation activity. Funds normally will be advanced quarterly on the basis of LAG expenditure in the previous quarter. However, in accordance with Article 63 of Regulation 1303/2013, the "payment of advances shall be subject to the establishment of a bank guarantee or an equivalent guarantee corresponding to 100% of the amount of the

advance". Where the LCDC is the LAG, it is envisaged that the Local Authority will provide the necessary guarantee. Meath County Council confirms that it will provide a bank guarantee or an equivalent guarantee in respect of the payment of advances of RDP funding in accordance with Article 63 of Regulation 1303/2013.

1.7.7 Running Costs and Animation

Article 35(1) of the Common Provisions Regulation No. 1303/2013 provides that support for community-led local development shall cover, inter alia –

"running costs linked to the management of the implementation of the community-led local development strategy consisting of operating costs, personnel costs, training costs, costs linked to public relations, financial costs as well as the costs linked to monitoring and evaluating that strategy…",
and
"animation of the community-led local development strategy in order to facilitate exchange between stakeholders to provide information and to promote the strategy and to support potential beneficiaries with a view to developing operations and preparing applications."
Article 35(2) provides that *'support for running costs and animation … shall not exceed 25% of the total public expenditure incurred within the community-led local development strategy.'*

Ireland's RDP 2014-2020 may provide up to €62.5m for running costs and animation for the full programming period. Where the LCDC is the LAG, 100% of the required running costs and animation budget (other than the cost of Article 28/48 checks) will be allocated to the lead implementation partner (LDC). It is therefore proposed that 5% of the administration and animation budget will be awarded to the financial partner to meet costs associated with the carrying out of Article 28/48 checks.

1.7.8 Decision Making

The LAG is responsible for the awarding of grants to projects implementing the local development strategy; all projects will be checked for eligibility including all checks it is possible to carry out through the application of the Article the 28 project and project file audit process. This technical audit process will be carried out by the Local Authority on behalf of the Meath LAG. In deciding on the award of grant aid to a project the LAG will be required to score each project against a set of criteria based on the programme objectives as laid down in the local development strategy. Specific criteria may be applied in the case of the six strategic objectives contained within the LDS. Decision making will be conducted on a one member one vote basis.

As per Article 32, 2 (B) of EU Regulation 1303/2013, decision making will be implemented with neither public authorities or any single interest group making up more than 49% of the voting rights. Decisions on grants or on any other business may not be made without a quorum being present. Where decisions are being taken on project applications the LAG will apply the double quorum rule for meetings where decisions on project applications are being taken; at least 60% of the members should be present with at least 50% of members present being not public authority members. If this condition cannot be fulfilled the LAG meeting will be postponed. In decision making on projects 50% of the votes cast will be cast by members who are not public authorities, Article 34 B.

In the course of decision making, members will have regard for the code of conduct for the members of the Local Community Development Committee (LAG) as laid down in the Local Government Act 2001 ('the Act') which sets out a new ethical framework and imposes a statutory duty on all in the local government service and concern for public interest.

It has been accepted by Meath Local Community Development Committee that the existing standing orders and terms of reference in relation to decision making which were agreed on 1st July 2014, will need to be amended to reflect the requirements set out above in the EU Regulations in relation to the operation of the LAG in respect of the LEADER programme. Once the Operating Rules for the Programme have been finalised and issued, the Meath LAG will bring forward a series of amendments to bring these in line with the prescribed requirements.

The decision making process in respect of RDP project applications is of vital importance to the LAG and to the proper implementation of the RDP (LEADER) in Co Meath. The use of a schematic to detail this process, page 14, provides for high level transparency in respect of the process and outlines the role of the implementing partner, project evaluation committee and LAG. The process also provides for an Appeals Procedure should project applicants wish to have a decision of the LAG reviewed or appealed to a higher authority. It is understood that the details of the appeals process are being prepared by DECLG and the Meath LAG hereby undertakes to manage appeals in full compliance with the appeals process as advised by DECLG.

1.7.9 The LAG Governance Model

The membership of the Meath LAG, and governance of same, is guided by the procedures set out for Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), Section 128E of the 2014 Regulations. The key parameters of same are outlined below:

- The Chief Officer shall consult with the Corporate Policy Group to seek and select nominees to the LCDC, and in effect the LAG, from time to time, and shall submit a list of recommended nominees to the members of the Local Authority for their consideration.
- Any public sector vacancies that arise in the future, it will be a matter for the Local Authority to recommend representatives to sit on the LCDC, and in effect the LAG.
- Any vacancies arising through the state agencies and private bodies, nominations will be sought directly from these bodies.
- The community, social inclusion and environmental representatives shall be sought through the Public Participative Network (PPN) when vacancies arise.

The specific knowledge and experience of the existing membership of the Meath LAG, relative to their role in overseeing the delivery of the LDS has been referenced in the submitted LDS. Such considerations will be to the fore, when seeking and appointing any replacement/new LAG members.

1.7.10 Project Selection Procedures for LEADER

Ensuring the transparency of the application and selection procedure is of the utmost importance in maintaining the motivation and trust of local stakeholders and potential project

promoters. Effective project selection processes translate into eligible and impactful projects that contribute towards the achievement of the LDS objectives.

There are two main approaches to developing and selecting project applications proposed by the Meath LAG:

- open calls for submissions followed by project development and support activities and submission of application leading to the actual selection process; and
- direct implementation and delivery by the LAG (or LDC on its behalf)

Time-bound open calls for applications may be organised and targeted in a number of ways:

- a specific LDS local objective or strategic action
- strategic action targeting rural communities (EDs) experiencing disadvantage and not performing in line with county trends
- different groups of target beneficiaries (i.e. hard to reach or rural youth)
- themed priorities focusing on for example the environment, tourism, community facilities, etc.

In designing the proposed selection process, the LAG has also considered the following elements:

- The assessment criteria
- The application and assessment process
- The way in which projects are animated

The assessment process proposed is designed to enable well informed, objective and carefully considered decision making through a robust and transparent procedure taking into account the local objectives and the proposed monitoring and evaluation indicators set out in Chapter 7.

Application and decision-making procedures and criteria will be clearly set out in the application materials and any associated publicity in line with the LDS, Operating Rules and relevant regulations. The design of materials will guide applicants towards an understanding of the LDS objectives and the process and the criteria which will be applied. In animating and supporting project development, LEADER staff will seek to ensure that these procedures and criteria are clearly understood.

1.7.10.1 Assessment Criteria

There are two main types of criteria for consideration:

- Eligibility criteria for assessing the admissibility of applications
- Selection criteria for the qualitative (and quantitative) assessment and ranking of the quality and merit of applications
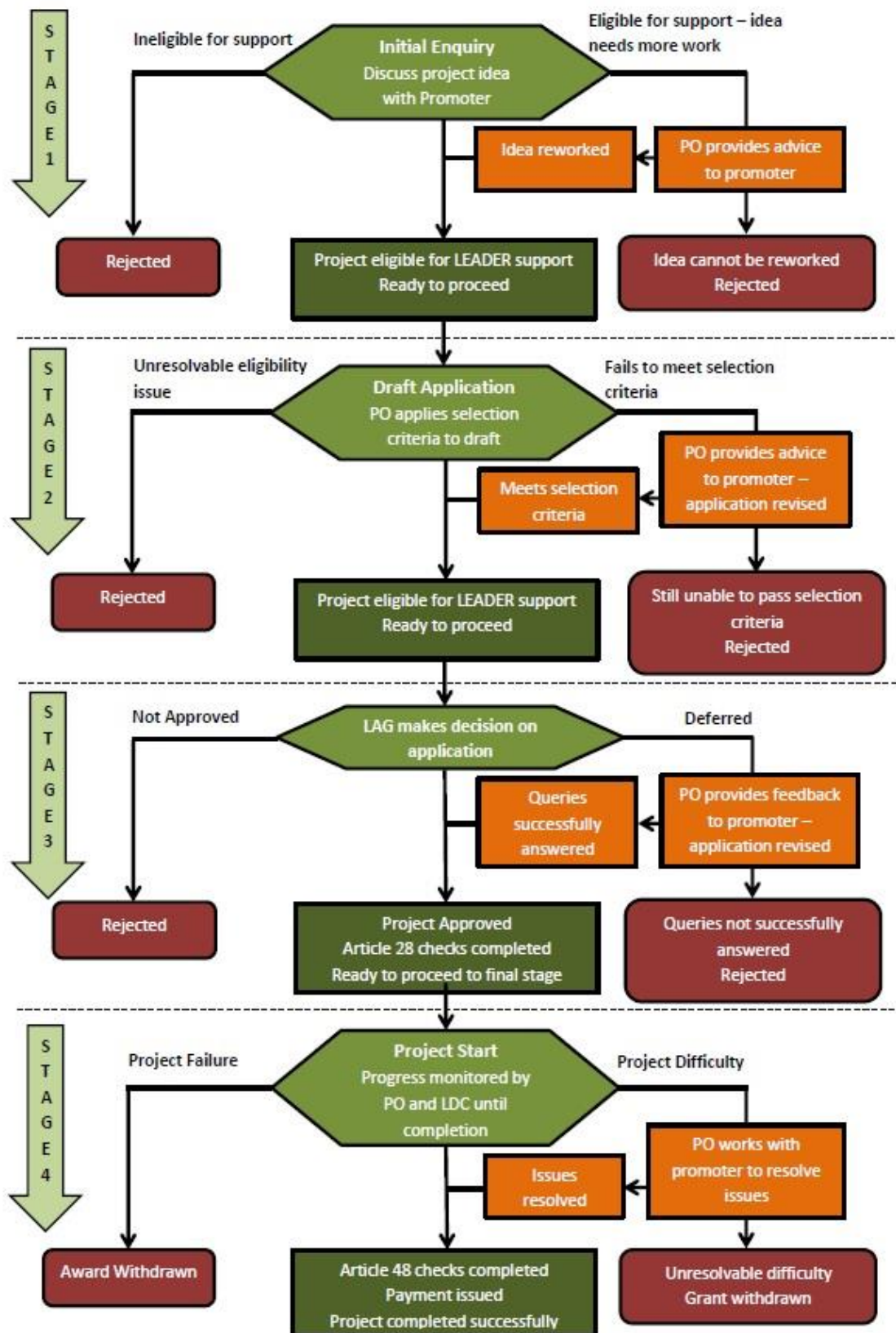
The eligibility criterion includes:

- Programme level eligibility criteria that all projects must meet in order to be admissible for a further qualitative assessment - these relate to the eligibility of activities, beneficiaries and expenditure as set out in the operating rules and relevant

regulations. These criteria are normally assessed through a technical assessment by the implementing partner; there are no threshold values applied and the judgement is absolute

- Programme specific eligibility criteria will be associated with the targeting of the strategy in terms of area, beneficiaries and/or types of activity supported. There will be a direct link to the LDS to ensure the consistency of project activity, assessment of strategic fit and contribution of project proposals to the LDS, its target groups and its objectives. Specifically LDS-specific criteria will examine the following:

  o the extent to which the project contributes to the achievement of the strategy and complements activities covered by other relevant initiatives;
  o the extent to which the project responds to identified need and is supported by evidence of prospective demand including an assessment of any possible displacement of existing activities;
  o the degree of local appropriateness and consistency with needs
  o the additional benefits of the project outcomes i.e. the extent to which the achievement of these is dependent on LEADER support
  o deadweight in terms of whether the need for grant aid is clearly demonstrated
  o the inclusion of realistic and measurable milestones and targets with associated performance indicators
  o value for money, i.e. the balance of proposed costs and LEADER support vs the outcomes sought (e.g. by comparison with other initiatives or project benchmarks)
  o innovative aspects in line with the model set out in Chapter 5
  o the realism of the proposed approach in terms of its physical and financial deliverability, viability and the applicants capability to deliver; and
  o the sustainability of the proposal, what is the completion, continuation or exit strategy.

The objective of designing these LDS-specific selection criteria is to optimise the decision-making process assisting the Meath LAG to select and award appropriate funding to those projects which can contribute most to the achievement of the LDS in an impartial, consistent and transparent manner. It is envisaged that the scoring of projects against checklists within matrices will be used by the Meath LAG in order to provide a robust basis for justifying decisions.

1.7.10.2 Application and Assessment Process

STAGE 1

Ineligible for support

Initial Enquiry
Discuss project idea with Promoter

Eligible for support – idea needs more work

Idea reworked ← PO provides advice to promoter

Rejected

Project eligible for LEADER support
Ready to proceed

Idea cannot be reworked
Rejected

STAGE 2

Unresolvable eligibility issue

Draft Application
PO applies selection criteria to draft

Fails to meet selection criteria

Meets selection criteria ← PO provides advice to promoter – application revised

Rejected

Project eligible for LEADER support
Ready to proceed

Still unable to pass selection criteria
Rejected

STAGE 3

Not Approved

LAG makes decision on application

Deferred

Queries successfully answered ← PO provides feedback to promoter – application revised

Rejected

Project Approved
Article 28 checks completed
Ready to proceed to final stage

Queries not successfully answered
Rejected

STAGE 4

Project Failure

Project Start
Progress monitored by PO and LDC until completion

Project Difficulty

Issues resolved ← PO works with promoter to resolve issues

Award Withdrawn

Article 48 checks completed
Payment issued
Project completed successfully

Unresolvable difficulty
Grant withdrawn

The effective use of an expression of interest or pre-selection process significantly streamlines the decision-making process and well-defined criteria at this stage are essential. Normally these would represent a simplified subset of the selection criteria outlined previously as a basis for screening submissions, providing feedback and informing project development and support. The appeals process should be sufficiently comprehensive and be capable of completing a review of each stage of the decision making process should this be requested by the applicant.

The Meath LAG has determined that project applications coming before the committee for decision on funding will be formally scored against the predetermined criteria to be applied and collated into a matrix which will form the basis for the final decision of the LAG. In some cases the evaluation of a project application against the criteria may result in recommendations being made or conditions being applied to projects prior to the award of support.

In respect of the decision-making process employed by the Meath LAG, there is full agreement that it has to be properly recorded providing auditable evidence justifying the decision. It will show that project selection criteria has been used in a way which is fair, objective, robust, repeatable and consistent and that the specified procedures, e.g. regarding conflicts of interest is consistent with the provisions of Council Regulation No 1605/2002 Article 52. or that the LAG's decision-making quorum regulations have been followed.

By designing the selection criteria into the whole LDS delivery process and linking this to the objectives and indicators broken down under the Local Objectives and associated Strategic Actions, the LAG also has the ability to monitor the progress of individual projects and their contribution to the LDS is ultimately strengthened. This will promote coherent links between the core goals of the LDS and the actual projects undertaken enhancing the measurability of LEADER's added value. Finally this will provide a basis for the on-going review of the progress of the LDS and, if required may provide the justification for the modification of the criteria to address evolving needs.

1.7.10.3 LDS Animation and Capacity Building

In order to encourage applications consistent with the strategy and guide project development towards successful projects which contribute to the LDS priorities, it will be necessary for the implementing partner to guide this development process away from inappropriate or generic projects which lack strategic focus or links to the LDS.

Delivering aspects of the new programme where projects are supported following open calls for proposals will present new challenges, particularly where projects are required to be innovative, or where they need to address new programme aims in areas such as the environment and biodiversity, while also meeting general LEADER eligibility requirements and serving core rural development objectives. Raising awareness of upcoming calls, as well as animating and building the capacity of target groups to respond to such calls, will require work on the part of the LAG beyond the ACB work necessary to generate applications under the traditional rolling application approach.

Actively supporting project development and local development actors is one of the key factors differentiating LEADER animation and capacity building methodologies from more conventional mainstream approaches. Animation and capacity building in a LEADER context

is not to be confused with mainstream community or local development, it is a specific tool of the LEADER Programme to support local communities, both voluntary and business, to engage with the programme for the development of their rural territory. It is an instrument that is embedded in the project initiation and development process and where correctly applied is proactive in responding to local issues and opportunities.

Proactivity is therefore favoured both as part of the overall approach in Meath delivering positive effects on the quality of projects produced by improving awareness of the LDS and types of project sought and then by supporting their development and delivery.

Simply providing information is not enough, in itself, to generate strong strategic projects. Animation and capacity building measures require strong, strategic and proactive management if quality projects are to emerge. Our animation and capacity building approach will involve the following:

- Targeting of specific sectors or productive areas of operation and employing working groups to exploit these
- Targeting particular groups with specific needs or limiting challenges, helping them initiate change and progress
- Capacity building, identifying local stakeholders' needs, developing and providing training to meet these needs and to support project initiation and development
- Developing a deeper understanding of LEADER and CLLD across those agencies and organisations where co-operation and integration of resources can add value to programme outcomes.
- Capacity provision, directly or indirectly may be necessary for people to become involved in LEADER to stimulate the development of their own capabilities, working collectively with the local community, providing advice and technical support to local people, supporting them in developing local operations on a step-by-step basis
- Direct project development, the LAG may choose to develop strategic projects, e.g. as a flagship or demonstration project, to target a specific gap or need or to provide a basis on which other project activities may be developed
- Support the transition between project ideas and project actions nurturing these embryonic operations improving their alignment or fit with the LDS enhancing their relevance and deliverability.

Meath's Animation and Capacity Building Model is represented in the diagram below:
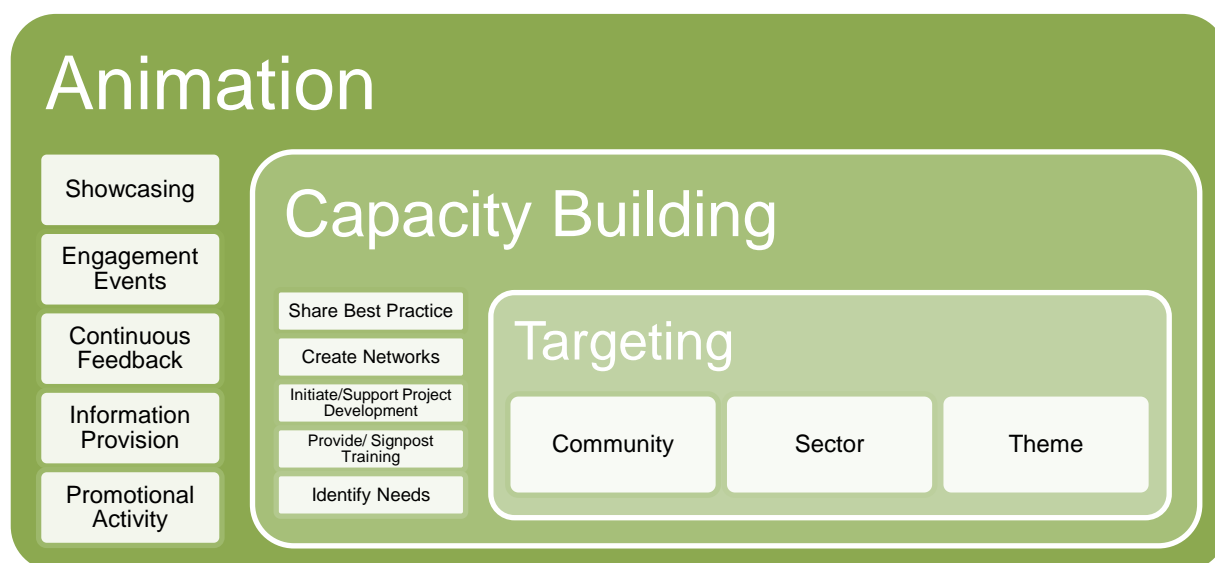
Capacity building in this context is also strongly linked to improved cohesion through interagency devised solutions and initiatives deriving from bottom up feedback which can then be enacted through a co-ordinated interagency approach, this process can prove invaluable. The experiences of the voluntary and community sector to date demonstrate that training related capacity building programmes have the potential to bring together the best expertise and human resources available. Bonding these resources into an effective and efficient network within which experiential growth in capacity can be nurtured is essential. Success in this respect is an imperative for the LDS.

1.8 LAGs Financial Management

Sound financial controls and procedures are an integral part of Meath County Council operations, with the Local Authority subject to a number of financial reporting requirements, both statutory and forming part of the DECLG's own governance processes.

The Annual Budget schedules are prepared and presented to the elected members for approval at the Annual Statutory Budget meeting. The Annual Budget process and timetable is governed by legislation and circular, while the Annual Financial Statement (AFS) are prepared in accordance with the terms of the Local Government Act 2014 and the Accounting Code of Practice.

All activities of Meath County Council are subject to audit by the Local Government Auditor, who must be able to certify that the AFS represents a true and fair view of the operations of the Council.

Meath County Council operate a number of financial controls (division of duties, security, the existences of an audit trail and provision of management information) to verify that activity occurs in accordance with the preordained plans, and said controls will also be applied to the financial management for LEADER, including:

- Clearly defined roles and clarity regarding where responsibility rests in respect to administrative checks, payment processing and final payment approvals. Oversight

of the required administrative checks (Article 28 & 48) will be completed at Administrative Officer grade, while all payment approvals will be authorised at Director of Service level.

- Accurate and timely information, with accounts based on full purchase order processing. Agresso is the Financial Management System that is used by Meath County Council to ensure this financial control is achieved. All supplier payments must be properly authorised and paid on time, in line with the prompt payment regulations. Meath County Council operates a Central Invoice Processing Unit, which is responsible for matching invoices to approved purchase orders and ensuring tax and prompt payment compliance.

- Regular monitoring systems so as to ensure detection of any variances at an early stage

- Financial reporting at the appropriate levels of detail available for each responsibility level within the organisation (as per management structure of Meath County Council)

- Local Government Audit – verifies that expenditure has been incurred on approved activity, in accordance with statutory requirements

In addition, the accounting records and control systems pertaining to Meath County Council's role as the Lead Financial Partner for LEADER will be subject to our internal audit process, which will objectively examine, evaluate and report on the adequacy of our control systems, which in turn is subject to scrutiny by the Audit Committee.

Meath County Council has the suitably trained and specialist staff in respect to financial management and procurement, that are available to provide the necessary expertise to support the financial management of LEADER.

Competitive tendering is the normal procedure for Meath County Council, supported by the Procurement Officer within the organisation. Accordingly, as the Lead Financial partner, this expertise will be available, in tandem with existing internal procurement policy and procedures to ensure full compliance with EU Public Procurement Directives and the National Public Procurement Guidelines.

As Lead Financial Partner, Meath County Council will have responsibility for the flow of funding in respect to the LEADER Programme, both in terms of administration and animation activity and the issuing of payments to beneficiaries, and claim reimbursement of these payments from the DECLG on a quarterly basis.

Outlined overleaf is the proposed procedure in respect to the payment arrangements of both LEADER advance and arrears payment systems.

LEADER Advance Payment System – Administration & Animation Expenditure

Payment of advance by DECLG to the financial partner at **the start of each financial quarter based** on LAG estimates of funding requirements (max €250,000 - financial partner will have dedicated job code so that advance funds are used for **LEADER only**).

Financial partner transfers the relevant portion of the advance funding to the implementing partner within 5 working days of receipt.

Implementing partner submits vouched expenditure returns to the financial partner within 3 working days of the start of each month. This **monthly return** is facilitated through the LEADER ICT system.

Chief Officer of the LAG verifies, approves and submits monthly return to DECLG within 5 working days of the start of each month i.e. 2 working days after completion by the Implementing Partner.

Administrative checks are completed on the expenditure returns by DECLG each month.

DECLG includes expenditure return in Ireland's **quarterly return** to the European Commisison.

Payment of next advance by DECLG to financial partner within 10 working days of **the start of the subsequent quarter**. The level of the advance will take account of the balance of funding remaining from the previous quarter.

LEADER Arrears Payment System – Project Expenditure

> Project promoters submit claims for expenditure to the implementing partner on an ongoing basis.

> The implementing partner engages with the project promoter to ensure that the claim is in order and updates LEADER ICT system with relevant details and back-up documentation.

> The implementing partner forwards the project expenditure claim to the financial partner (via the LEADER ICT system) when satisfied that all required documentation is in order.

> An administrative ("Article 48") check is completed on each project expenditure claim by the financial partner or its contracted agent .

> The financial partner issues payment to project promoter of the eligible amount calculated, following completion of the Article 48 checks, within 10 days of receipt of a valid claim.

> The financial partner claims this expenditure from DECLG at the end of each quarter.

> DECLG will reimburse financial partner upon receipt of quarterly claim, within 10 working days except for any projects selected for on-the-spot control checks by DECLG.

> Following the on-the-spot control checks, the remaining eligible amount for the selected projects will be reimbursed by DECLG to the Financial partner.
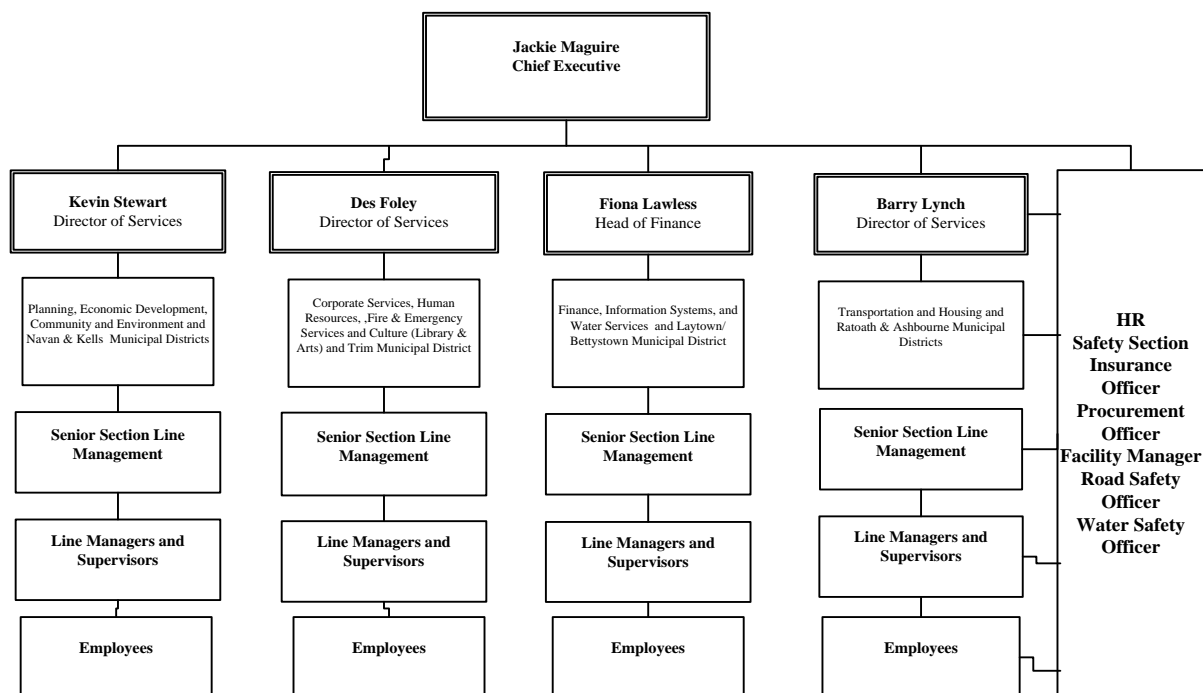
1.8.1 Declarations

At the LCDC meeting of 1st December 2015, it was ratified that Meath County Council would act as the LAG financial partner for LEADER in County Meath for the programme period 2014 - 2020. A signed declaration to this effect is included as Annex 3.

At the LCDC meeting of 1st December 2015, the LAG also confirmed that at a minimum 40% of the Programme Budget for Projects would be allocated through "time-limited" calls for proposals. A signed declaration to this effect is included as Annex 3.

1.9 The Management and Staffing Structure of the Programme Implementing Partner

Meath Partnership was incorporated in June 2006 under the DCRGA's Guidelines on the Governance of Integrated Local Development Companies and Urban Based Partnerships. The composition of the Board of Meath Partnership conformed to the model set out for Rural Local Development Companies under the above mentioned guidelines and comprised representatives from Local Government; National Social Partners, the Community and Voluntary Sector, Statutory Sector, and the Environmental pillar.

The organogram below sets out the operational structure of the company from a governance perspective:
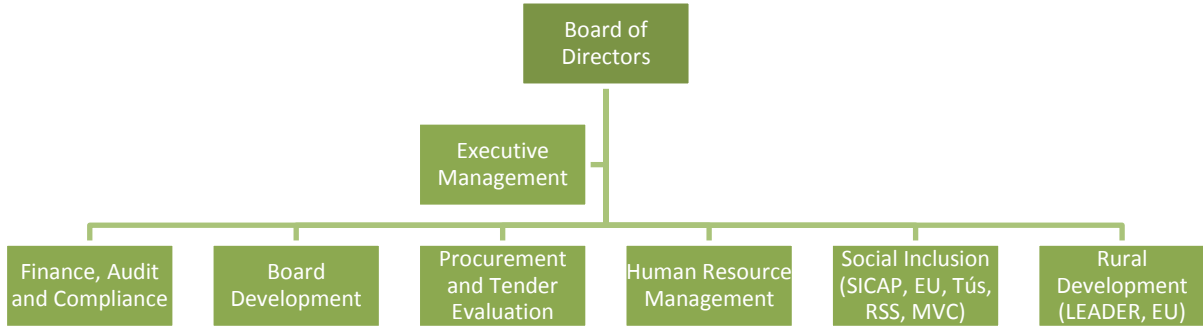
The formation of the LCDC in County Meath and the desire to enhance governance at Meath Partnership to reflect the role of the Company in the period up to 2020 has resulted in the following restructuring of the Board of Management.

Sector	Community Sector (9)	Social Partners + Environment (4)	Public Bodies (5)	Private Sector (5)
Number and Representation	6 municipality 3 PPN (C&V, SI and Gaeltacht)	IFA, SIPTU, Navan Chamber of Commerce, Environment	Failte Ireland Teagasc Youth Work Ireland/Foroige Department of Social Protection and Louth Meath Education and Training Board	Artisan Food Network Elevation Business Network Tayto Park (tourism) Glanbia (agri-business) Deloitte (legal and compliance)
Process for Election and/or Nomination	Nomination and community elections process using PR	Nominations based on skills matrix	Nominations based on skills matrix	Nominations based on skills matrix

1.10 The primary company details are set out below:

Legal Name: Meath Community Rural and Social Development Partnership Limited
Trading As: Meath Partnership
CRO Number: 442254
CHY Number: CHY17324
Address: Unit 7 Kells Business Park, Cavan Road, Kells, Co. Meath, Ireland
Telephone: +353 46 9280790
Email: info@meathpartnership.ie
Website: www.meathpartnership.ie

Meath Partnership is a respected company which has retained the support and trust of the community across County Meath and the territorial agencies and authorities with whom it

collaborates. The individual and collective capacity and reputation of the Board of Directors has been a central factor in achieving and maintaining this status. The board of Meath Partnership is a multi-agency, multi stakeholder Board that blends together key expertise, resources and experience to provide Meath Partnership with the necessary direction to ensure that it delivers all programmes', aims and objectives and utilises the company resources to maximise their impact at community level. The Board of Meath Partnership, representing the four pillars/sectors of the national social partnership model, sets the overall policy and strategic framework for Meath Partnership

The Board meet on a monthly basis, typically 3rd Wednesday of the month, and provides the executive staff with advice, guidance and direction; overseeing the financial and operational management of the Company. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors, assisted by the executive staff, to ensure that the Board is discussing the appropriate issues. Setting the agenda for a meeting of the Board is very important in this context, and as such is developed by the Chairperson and CEO and circulated by the Company Secretary; setting out an agenda which they believe will best serve in the interest of placing on the table information which the Board considers to be of greatest relevance.

It is critical that the Board receives what it needs for effective governance and oversight. In this regard, striking a proper balance is very important and executive staff must provide the Board with enough information to facilitate an active discussion and in such a way that does not stifle discussion or waste the time of directors.

The Board must be able to re-assure itself that it has the proper information required to determine if company operations are being effectively managed, that all contractual terms and conditions are being respected, that the relationship with the funder is strong and that there are no underlying issues in respect of programme delivery which could impact on the wellbeing of the Company.

The Board of Directors are provided with a detailed monthly financial report at each Board meeting and the books of account are available for inspection by all Board members. In respect of non-financial operations reporting, monthly board reports contain performance information relating to key operational issues as defined by the board: the critical success factors (CSFs) and programme statistics and targets. The CEO's reports contain a broader coverage of organisational activities and address qualitative areas of the company's operations.

These reports are used by the Board to monitor and assess the effectiveness of company operations, take account of the company's financial health and make decisions in terms of resource utilisation and company operations.

The Board remains fully accountable for the governance, management and oversight of the Company and as a minimum the functions, listed below, are not delegated; this ensures that the direction and control of the Company is vested in the Board:

- Appointment, remuneration and assessment of performance of Chief Executive
- Proposed variations in the numbers of staff and remuneration of staff
- Approval of terms of major contracts and responsibility for compliance with contract terms and conditions

- Approval of annual budgets and programme plans
- Production of annual reports and accounts
- Significant acquisitions and investments, disposals and the management of the assets of the company
- The appointment and removal of the company secretary

The Board has sole responsibility for the following:

- Ensuring that policies and compliance systems consistent with the Company's objectives are in place and that the Company and its officers act legally, ethically and responsibly on all matters
- Determining the strategic direction of the company and measuring performance of executive staff against the achievement of key objectives and progress indicators
- Determining that satisfactory arrangements are in place for the independent auditing of Meath Partnership's financial affairs.
- Review of the adequacy of resources to properly carry out approved strategies and business plans
- Adoption of programme and capital expenditure budgets at the commencement of each financial year and monitoring the progress by both financial and non-financial key performance indicators
- Monitoring and providing for the company's medium term capital and cash flow requirements

1.11 Financial Position of Meath Partnership

In addition to State and EU contracts, Meath Partnerships financial viability is further supported through the roll out of a multiannual fundraising plan for the company. Historically the company's performance in raising funds has been very strong, in the past such funds have always been utilised as matching funds in support of the delivery of programmes and projects designed to benefit the people of County Meath.

On an annual basis, the Board conducts a review of the effectiveness of the Company's system of internal controls including financial, operational and compliance. The Board is obliged to ensure that each Director is aware of their duties in company law, provided with an opportunity to make a full contribution to the Board and are apprised of their responsibilities.

The Board of Meath Partnership is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of corporate governance policies and procedures having regard to the size and activities of the Company. Delegation of functions to the Chief Executive Officer is permitted and responsibility for day-to-day operations is vested in the company's employees.

The CEO is accountable to the Board for the performance of the staffing team. To ensure clear lines of communication regarding responsibility and accountability the Board has in place written protocols regarding the Chief Executive Officer's duties and responsibilities, and has clearly established the respective roles of the Board and executive staff in order to avoid overlap or duplication of function.

1.12 Overview of Meath Partnership Operations

Meath Partnership currently employs 22 full-time employees and two part-time employees. When considering the operations of Meath Partnership, it is important to consider that all activities entered into by the Board of Meath Partnership advance the theme of either social inclusion or rural development. The principle programmes of Meath Partnership are LEADER, SICAP, Tús, RSS and Meath Volunteer Centre. All other company activities can be aligned to these core operational areas for example our training activities, our European projects, once-off national projects and applications to philanthropic organisations.

At an operational level, meetings of the Senior Management Team take place on a weekly basis. During this meeting the CEO receives reports from the Programme Manager, Senior Financial Officer and Company Secretary/Administrator. Progress reports on programme delivery are considered by the CEO to inform and plan for the application of human resources to ongoing programme delivery, to overcome any matters impeding programme delivery and to properly deal with any unexpected additions to the workload or meet requests for assistance from external organisations. Objectives in respect of staff work plans and programme requirements and deadlines are measured against delivery timelines established by the Board.

Matters arising from such weekly meetings are discussed in person between the CEO and Chairperson of the Board to ensure that all developments are notified to the Chairperson and that where required a meeting of the Board or in exceptional circumstances of the Executive Committee can be called to discuss matters further should this be considered necessary. A decision to call a meeting of the Executive Committee is normally arrived at after discussion between the Chairperson and CEO; the Chairperson's wishes in this regard are viewed as a matter to be complied with. All matters which warrant the attention of the Executive Committee are immediately brought to the attention of the Board and reported on by the Chairperson.

1.13 Staffing of the LEADER Programme in Meath

The following matrix represents the staffing complement within the Implementing Partner and the skills profile relevant to the operationalisation of the LDS in Meath:

Role/Position in Company	Full-Time Equivalent	Animation	Capacity Building	Financial Management	Compliance	Administration – Project File & ICT	Customer Relationship Management	Information Sharing & Dissemination	Monitoring & Evaluation	Management & Oversight	Networking
Chief Executive Officer	0.5	▪	▪	▪	▪		▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Operations Manager	0.5	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Corporate Financial Officer	0.5			▪	▪	▪		▪	▪		
Programme Administrator	0.5	▪				▪	▪	▪			▪
Programme Co-Ordinator	1	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪		▪
Project Officer	1		▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪		

1.13.1 LEADER Staff Job Descriptions

Chief Executive Officer Job Description

Reporting to: the Chairperson and Board

The **role and responsibilities** of the Chief Executive Officer will primarily involve the following activities:

- Collaborate with the board to prepare, define, refine and implement the Company's strategic plan while ensuring that the budget, staff and priorities are aligned with Meath Partnership's core mission
- Provide inspirational leadership and direction to all employees, and ensure the continued development and management of a professional and efficient company
- Support and motivate the company's employees and volunteers
- Establish effective decision-making processes that enable Meath Partnership to achieve its long- and short-term goals and objectives
- Cultivate a strong and transparent working relationship with the Board and ensure open communication about the measurement of financial, programmatic, and impact performance against stated milestones and goals
- To work with and through the Board of the Company and respect and value the Governance responsibilities delivered on by the Board
- In partnership with the Board, assist to build a diverse, skilled and inclusive Board representative of the community that is highly engaged and willing to leverage and secure resources

- Ensure that the flow of funds permits Meath Partnership to make continuous progress towards the achievement of its mission and that those funds are allocated properly to reflect present needs and future potential
- Responsibility for the management and deployment of all public and private funds within the Company
- Oversee the financial status of the company including developing long and short range financial plans, monitoring the budget and ensuring sound financial controls are in place
- Set financial priorities accurately to ensure the company is operating in a manner that supports the needs of its programmes and employees
- Provide effective monitoring and evaluation of the company's performance
- Formulate and execute comprehensive marketing, branding and development strategies that will ensure consistency throughout the company and enhance funding from major donors, foundations, government agencies, and others
- Ensure the delivery of high quality services while managing for current and future growth
- To be proactive in furthering rural and social development in the delivery of the LEADER and SICAP programmes in accordance with the Local Development Strategy
- To secure growth in company operations focused on the provision of increased resources to county Meath's rural communities
- Facilitate cross-programme collaboration and strengthen internal communications with employees throughout the company
- Create and promote a positive and inclusive work environment that supports consistency throughout the company's strategy, operational methods, and data collection needs
- Increase efficiencies and consistency throughout the company by developing and implementing standardised approaches and systems across all marketing media
- Represent the company as a member body of the LAG and accept responsibility for the effective and efficient delivery of the LEADER Programme and the SICAP Programme on behalf of the LCDC, the LAG and Meath Partnership
- Uphold Meath Partnership's civic standing in the community

Key Skills and Competencies

- At least 15 to 20 years of overall professional experience
- Significant board development, fundraising, marketing/branding and fiscal management experience
- A financially savvy and politically astute leader with the ability to set clear priorities, delegate, and guide investment in people and systems;
- Keen analytic, organization and problem solving skills, which support and enable sound decision making
- Excellent coalition building skills with an ability to communicate and work effectively with a variety of internal and external stakeholders
- A persuasive negotiator able to achieve consensus amongst differing opinions
- Outstanding presentation and communication skills and the experience and proclivity to be an outgoing spokesperson, relationship builder, and fundraiser
- Strong commitment to the professional development of staff; successful track record of recruiting and retaining a diverse team

Operations Manager Job Description

Reporting to: Chief Executive Officer and Board

The **role** of the Operations Manager will primarily involve the following activities:

Roles and Responsibilities

- Responsible for the roll-out, delivery and day-to-day management of company operations
- Manage and direct the work of project co-ordinators working on LEADER and SICAP providing appropriate support and supervision
- Oversight of the day-to-day financial management of programmes and associated budgets
- Responsible for human resource management and deployment in conjunction with the CEO
- Contribute to short and long-term organisational planning and strategy as a member of the management team
- Facilitate staff team meetings, skills development programmes and ensure that all employees are sufficiently resourced to fulfil their roles and responsibilities
- Respond to all requests from the Department and/or other managing authorities
- Produce, implement and continuously review programme procedures and operations in line with contracts, regulations and programme handbooks/manuals
- RDP Project Care and follow-up: to ensure the relevant project team maintain project files and associated supporting documentation in line with programme and company procedures and requirements
- Responsible for ensuring that all project work is assigned to the appropriate staff or staff team, managing work flows and resource requirements
- Prepare regular reports and presentations to the Board of Meath Partnership
- Prepare applications for funding and exploit business development opportunities
- Promote LEADER and SICAP in accordance with Meath Partnership's Business Plan
- Conduct initial and animatory consultations with potential project promoters
- Onsite project inspections and evaluations to include liaison with Meath LCDC, Meath LAG, Department and relevant inspectorates
- Contribute to Meath Partnership's policy development process

Administration

- To adhere to the operating rules of the LEADER Programme and operational procedures within Meath Partnership ensuring strict compliance with them at all times
- To develop professional working relationships with all project promoters, stakeholders and customers and to maintain regular communication throughout the project lifecycle
- Prepare project files for presentation to the Board, Department and Inspectorate as required
- Engage with and monitor the RDP IT System as necessary
- Keep appropriate and up to date records of all project activities
- Monitor satisfaction levels of individual project promoters and customers
- Keep up to date with Rural Development, EU policy and social inclusion issues regionally and nationally
- To proactively support community (both business and voluntary) participation in the LEADER Programme to assist these communities in finalising project file material

- To consult and network with community and voluntary groups, keeping them informed and supported with information on good practice with respect to all aspects of the company's activities

Key Skills and Competencies

- Commitment to rural, local and community development and the operational mission of Meath Partnership
- Strong background and work experience in Business Management and Finance,
- Excellent computer skills and proficient in excel, word, outlook, and access
- Excellent communication skills both verbal and written
- Knowledge of government contract management and experience in organizational effectiveness and operations management implementing best practices.
- Demonstrate leadership and vision in managing staff groups and major projects or initiatives.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and a collaborative management style.
- Budget development and oversight experience
- A demonstrated commitment to high professional ethical standards and a diverse workplace
- Excels at operating in a fast pace, community environment
- Excellent people manager, open to direction and collaborative work style and commitment to get the job done
- Ability to challenge and debate issues of importance to the organization.
- Ability to look at situations from several points of view
- Persuasive with details and facts
- Delegate responsibilities effectively
- High comfort level working in a diverse environment

Corporate Financial Officer Job Description

Reporting to: Operations Manager, Chief Executive Officer and Board

The **role** of the Corporate Financial Officer will primarily involve the following activities:

Roles and Responsibilities

- To be comprehensively informed on the requirements of the EU, the LCDC, the LAG financial partner and relevant managing authority on all aspects of financial and administrative obligations in respect of LEADER
- Oversee cash flow planning and ensure availability of funds as needed
- Oversee financing strategies and activities, as well as banking relationships
- Develop and utilise forward-looking, predictive models and activity-based financial analyses to provide insight into the company's operations
- Coordinate the development and monitoring of budgets
- Develop financial business plans and forecasts
- Participate in company policy development as a member of the management team
- Engage the finance committee of the board of directors to develop short-, medium-, and long-term financial plans and projections
- Ensure maintenance of appropriate internal controls and financial procedures

- Ensure timeliness, accuracy, and usefulness of financial and management reporting for the Board, Funders and relevant managing authorities
- Oversee the preparation and communication of monthly and annual financial statements
- Coordinate audits and proper filing of tax returns.
- Ensure legal and regulatory compliance regarding all financial functions
- Develop and maintain accounting procedures and records to be used in the determination of and issue of payments in respect of LEADER administration costs
- Assist if required in the animation and promotion of the LEADER programme throughout Co Meath
- To assist when required with the duties and tasks of Project Officer under the LEADER Programme if required in times of high volume of work
- Be open to take up training opportunities offered by the Company when appropriate and/or deemed necessary to enhance the development of the company and its employees in respect of the delivery of the LEADER Programme

Administration

- Adhere to the operating rules of the LEADER Programme and operational procedures within Meath Partnership ensuring strict compliance with them at all times
- Develop professional working relationships with all project promoters, stakeholders and customers and to maintain regular communication throughout the project lifecycle
- Engage with and administer the RDP IT System as necessary
- Keep appropriate and up to date records of all project and financial activities
- Keep up to date with Rural Development, EU policy and social inclusion issues regionally and nationally

Key Skills and Competencies

- Experience in a senior financial-management role, partnering with executive staff, resulting in the development and implementation of effective financial management strategies
- Significant experience in or knowledge of non-profit accounting, including complex fund and grant accounting, compliance, and reporting
- Deep knowledge and understanding of financial regulations and compliance
- Experience working with finance and accounting software packages
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Demonstrated leadership ability, team management, and interpersonal skills
- Excellent analytical and abstract reasoning skills, plus excellent organisation skills

Programme Administrator Job Description

Reporting to: the Operations Manager and Chief Executive Officer

The **role** of the Programme Administrator will primarily involve the following activities:

Duties and Responsibilities

- Supervising and managing the daily running of the Meath Partnership office
- Responsible for dealing with all new LEADER project enquiries and project promoters

- Member of the Senior Management Team responsible for LEADER
- In-house Excellence Through People standards co-ordinator
- In-house LEADER staff team training co-ordinator
- Company administration duties to include minute taking at board meetings, preparation of documentation for the evaluation committee, LEADER sub group and Board of company meetings
- Public relations support to CEO
- Diary management and co-ordination of all events in respect of LEADER
- Accommodating and facilitating change procedures and supervisory management within the company
- Be open to take up training opportunities offered by the company when appropriate and/or deemed necessary to enhance the development of the company and its employees in respect of the effective delivery of LEADER
- Such other appropriate and relevant tasks as may be designated by the CEO

Administration

- To adhere to the operating rules of the LEADER Programme and operational procedures within Meath Partnership ensuring strict compliance with them at all times
- To develop professional working relationships with all project promoters, stakeholders and customers and to maintain regular communication throughout the project lifecycle
- To assist in maintaining dedicated project files for each project and document all elements as required
- To assist in preparing project files for presentation to the Board, Department and Inspectorate as required
- To engage with and administer the RDP IT System as necessary – training will be provided where required
- To keep appropriate and up to date records of all project activities
- To monitor satisfaction levels of individual project promoters and customers
- Keep up to date with Rural Development, EU policy and social inclusion issues regionally and nationally
- To proactively support community (both business and voluntary) participation in the LEADER Programme to assist these communities in finalising project file material
- To consult and network with community and voluntary groups, keeping them informed and supported with information on good practice with respect to all aspects of the company's activities

Key Skills and Competencies

- Excellent organisational and event management skills
- Excellent knowledge of human resource and company improvement programmes
- Strong facility management and office management capacity
- Excellence in record keeping, note taking and report writing
- Strong interpersonal and people management skills
- Good PR and relationship management skills
- Excellent knowledge of LEADER and associated administrative requirements
- Good capacity to act as staff training co-ordinator
- Strong understanding of rural and social development principles
- Excellence in the application and adoption of ICT technologies

Programme Co-ordinator Job Description

Reporting to: Operations Manager, Chief Executive Officer and Board

The **role** of the Programme Co-ordinator will primarily involve the following activities:

<u>**Roles and Responsibilities:**</u>

- Assist in the development of annual operation plans for the LEADER programme in Meath
- Monitor progress, assure adherence to and evaluate performance against the annual plans
- Assist in design of performance objectives and implement and monitor programming to meet desired outcomes
- Develop yearly animation and capacity building plan and initiatives according to programme needs
- Ensure CRM database maintenance
- Organise and establish meetings on a regular basis with project promoters to assess project ideas for consideration through LEADER
- Supervise RDP Project Officers by articulating expectations, displaying model behaviour, maintaining open lines of communication and being clear about roles and relationships
- Organise in-house training seminars to address staff needs and identify relevant external training opportunities
- Assist in the management of budgetary operations including budget development, modifications, track expenditures. Continually monitor the programme's financial health and make recommendations to the Operations Manager
- Assist with the development of public relations and communications strategies to support programme goals and increase community awareness

Administration

- To adhere to the operating rules of the LEADER Programme and operational procedures within Meath Partnership ensuring strict compliance with them at all times
- To develop professional working relationships with all project promoters, stakeholders and customers and to maintain regular communication throughout the project lifecycle
- Prepare project files for presentation to the Board, Department and Inspectorate as required
- Engage with and monitor the RDP IT System as necessary
- Keep appropriate and up to date records of all project activities
- Monitor satisfaction levels of individual project promoters and customers
- Keep up to date with Rural Development, EU policy and social inclusion issues regionally and nationally
- To proactively support community (both business and voluntary) participation in the LEADER Programme to assist these communities in finalising project file material
- To consult and network with community and voluntary groups, keeping them informed and supported with information on good practice with respect to all aspects of the company's activities

Key Skills and Competencies

- Knowledge of principles and practices related to rural and local development
- Strong and polished interpersonal, written and oral communication skills.
- Creative, strategic and analytical thinker with the ability to manage multiple projects.
- Experienced in developing and managing budgets, training, supervising and assessing personnel
- Must be highly organized and able to work well with others
- Knowledge of Microsoft Office and Windows based computer application and database management
- Database management experience (to be prepared to utilise Salesforce).
- Able to work with a variety of populations, such as youth, enterprise, community organisation
- Familiarity with the National Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 and relevant regulations
- Strong skills in the application of LEADER operating rules and ensuring compliance with same

Projects Officer Job Description

Overall purpose of the Position: To support and facilitate the implementation of the LEADER Programme in County Meath providing assistance, guidance and direction to project promoters engaging with LEADER in order to maximise the impact and benefits of the Programme locally.

Reporting to: Programme Co-ordinator and Operations Manager

The **role** of the Projects Officer will primarily involve the following activities:

Teamwork

- To work as part of the LEADER Team
- To ensure open, professional and honest communication within the team environment
- To demonstrate creativity, innovation and drive within a team dynamic

Administration

- To adhere to the operating rules of the LEADER Programme and operational procedures within Meath Partnership ensuring strict compliance with them at all times
- To develop professional working relationships with all project promoters, stakeholders and customers and to maintain regular communication throughout the project lifecycle
- To maintain dedicated project files for each project and document all elements as required
- To prepare project files for presentation to Project Evaluation Committee, Board, Department and Inspectorate as required
- To engage with and administer the RDP IT System as necessary – training will be provided where required
- To keep appropriate and up to date records of all project activities

- To monitor satisfaction levels of individual project promoters and customers
- Keep up to date with Rural Development, EU policy and social inclusion issues regionally and nationally
- To proactively support community (both business and voluntary) participation in the LEADER Programme to assist these communities in finalising project file material
- To consult and network with community and voluntary groups, keeping them informed and supported with information on good practice with respect to all aspects of the company's activities

Key Skills and Competencies

- Attention to detail with strong mathematical skills is vital for this role
- Ability to handle varied tasks and to switch from one area of focus to another
- Strong office systems competency (Accounts packages, Excel and Word)
- Good organisational skills, time management and excellent command of the English language
- Ability to analyse data including financial statements, financial projections, industry trends and business plans
- Strong problem solving skills and capacity to interpret and apply national and EU regulations
- Customer facing and customer focused
- Excellent communication skills especially written
- Have an understanding of the national and local Rural Development policy context
- Have a good understanding of the compliance procedures and requirements
- Capacity to monitor and evaluate programme progression
- Strong animation and capacity building skills
- Excellent interpersonal and relationship management capacity

Chapter 2: County Meath LDS Area Profile

2.1 Area Selection

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) for the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 has been formulated in the context of County Meath as a sub-regional area within Ireland. There are no census towns as defined for the 2011 Census of Population within county Meath; therefore the entire territory as defined by the county boundary is subject to this LDS.

2.2 Map of County Meath
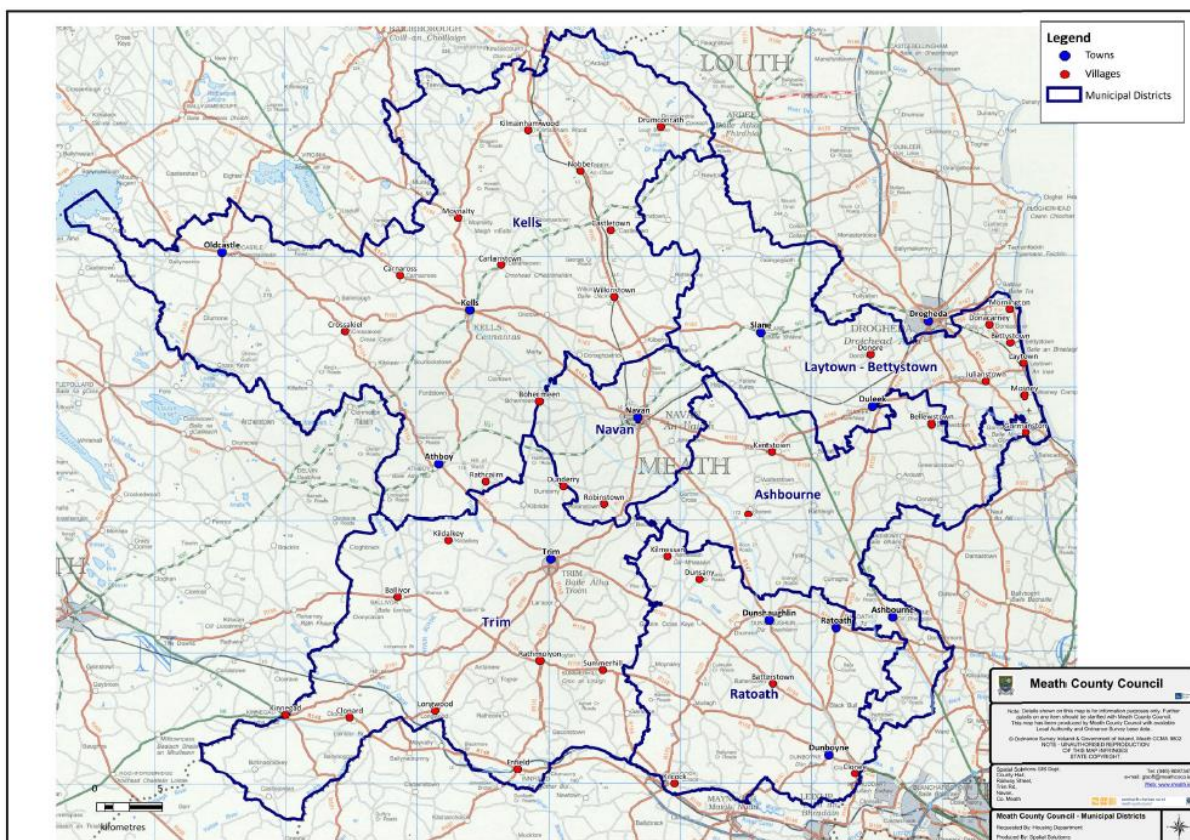
2.3 Overview of County Meath

County Meath covers an area of 234,490 hectares, approximately 3.3% of the total area of the state. Navan is the principal urban centre, the county town and the seat of the main administrative functions of local government. As a county, Meath is located within the Greater Dublin Region and development trends in parts of the county are considerably influenced by the opportunities and pressures emanating from the Dublin metropolitan area. Population growth within Meath has not been evenly distributed across the county and a large percentage of the county footprint still comprises typical rural, agrarian communities particularly in the North and West of the county which borders the Border Midland and Western region.

The county has a diverse low-lying topography that includes extensive rich pastures throughout the Boyne and Blackwater river valleys, some drumlin hills in the north, tracts of peatland and raised bog in the southwest and a short coastline of 12 kilometres in the east. The landscape contains an extremely rich heritage of national monuments, including the internationally renowned passage tombs at Newgrange, Knowth, Dowth and Loughcrew. In addition the landscape includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), - the prime wildlife conservation areas in Ireland, one Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA) – the Boyne Estuary - as well as many Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

While Meath is a fundamentally prosperous location, and the evidence shows this, there is a strong sense that it has not fulfilled its economic potential over the years. This is manifest in the comparatively narrow economic base of the county, in which Meath does well in regard to a small number of activities, including agriculture and traditional manufacturing like engineering and mining. But the extent of market-led knowledge activities is comparatively low in the county and there is a substantial 'leakage' in the form of outbound commuting and retailing.

Moreover, while Meath is host to a number of highly valued foreign-owned employers, located in different parts of the county, FDI remains low (inquiries and site visits by potential inward investors have been very low, and FDI job announcements as well as the proportion of all employment in the county accounted for by foreign-owned firms are small).

The Meath Economic Development Strategy supports this assessment of the local economy and states "that educational attainment is lower in Meath than elsewhere in the country: in particular, the proportion of people with third-level or higher educational attainment is lower in Meath than elsewhere in the GDA and in the State, and this finding applies whether we take all residents, residents of working age or those at work within the county i.e. the relatively low third-level or higher educational attainment rate in Meath is robustly demonstrated by data analysis and may be explained as a function of the narrow economic base characterising the county and the comparative paucity of knowledge-based employment therein".

2.4 Population

In 2011, Meath had a population of 184,135, consisting of 91,910 males and 92,225 females. Between the censuses in 2006 and 2011, Meath's population grew by 13.1%. This figure is higher than for the State (8.2%), the GDA (8.5%) and the Mid-East Region (11.7%). The fastest growing EDs are Newtown (45.5%), Crossakeel (36.4%) and Castlerickard (36.1%).

The map overleaf from the Maynooth University Economic Baseline Study (2013) shows the distribution of population changes between 2006 and 2011 within the electoral divisions (EDs) in Meath. The map reveals varied population change during the period, with strong growth observed on the border with Dublin, along the principal transport nodes (motorways) but also to the west of the county.
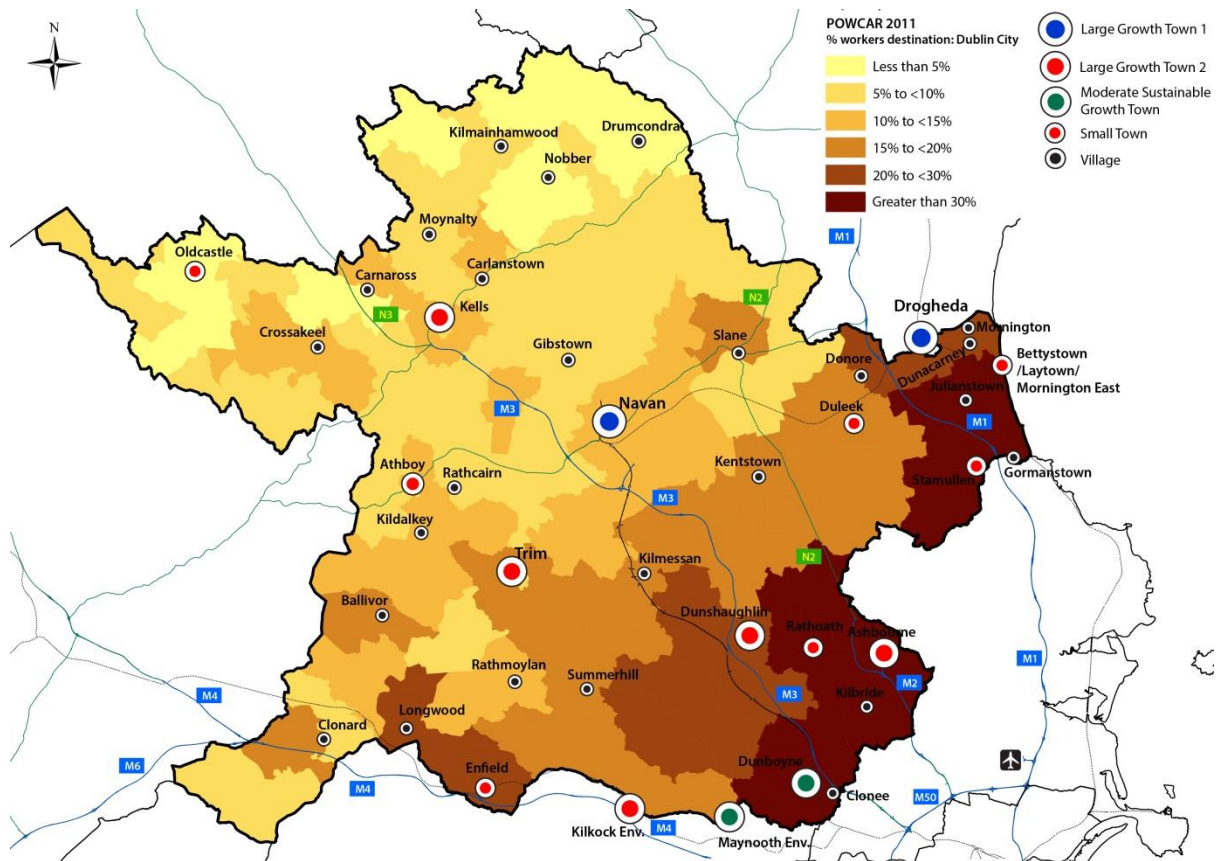
While there has been a continuous decline in the age dependency rate (the proportion of population under 15 years of age or over 64 as part of the total population) in Meath in the period between 1991 and 2006, (39.6% to 31.4%), the age dependency rate for Meath saw a pronounced increase to 34.1%, a rise above the national average of 33% in 2011.

Meath recorded the largest youth population in the State with 53,400 residents (29% of the population) aged 18 years or under. Within Meath, there exists the typical urban-rural differential, with Navan Urban/Rural (Pt.) at 27.2% and Donaghmore at 27.9%. Age dependency rates exceed 40% in six EDs, Ballinlough (46.6%), Kilskeer (42.1%), Killyon (40.9%), Ballyboggan (40.5%), Kilmainham (40.2%) and Kildalkey (40.2%), all of which are more rural in character.

2.5 Social Classes

According to the social class indices used by the CSO and based on occupation just over 52% of the population in County Meath in 2011 were classified in the top three social classes which include professional workers, managerial and technical workers, and non-manual workers. This is slightly higher than the national average.

2.6 Commuter Community

There were approximately 33,000 people living in Meath but working outside the county in 2011. This number of workers exceeded (a) the number of people both living and working in the county in that year (circa. 28,500) and (b) the number of people from outside the county

working in Meath or the 'inbound commuters' (c. 10,500). Thus, the outbound commuters represent the largest part of the local labour market in Meath and these workers represented almost 54% of all residents of the county at work in any location in that year.

The outbound commuters have the strongest educational attainment among the categories of worker in Meath – in 2011, over 41% of the outbound commuters had third-level or higher educational attainment, compared with 25% among those both living and working in Meath and 37% among the inbound commuters to Meath, and the corresponding proportion for the State was 38% in that year.

2.7 Education Profile

In 2011, 22.8% of the population in Meath had achieved a 3rd Level qualification. The degree of higher educational attainment is lower in Meath compared with the rest of the country and this finding is robust to measurement (e.g. whether we are looking at educational attainment relative to the whole population of the county, or relative to those aged over 15 years or on the basis of those at work, the proportion with third-level qualifications is comparably low in Meath). Analysis of CSO statistics demonstrate that the highest percentage of those with primary education only are to be found in the North, Northwest and West of the County. The numbers of people with very low levels of education remain high with over 15,000 people with only primary school or no formal levels of education and over 20,000 with lower secondary level qualification (although a small number of these may still be in the education system).

2.8 Employment Profile

Table 1: Composition of Employment in County Meath, 2011

	2011 - Persons Aged 15 Years and Over at Work							
	Meath		Dublin		Mid-East		State	
Broad Industrial Group	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	3,748	5.0%	2,949	0.5%	9,131	4.3%	94,247	5.2%
Mining, quarrying & turf production	748	1.0%	260	0.0%	1,171	0.6%	5,674	0.3%
Manufacturing industries	7,497	10.1%	36,790	6.8%	22,473	10.6%	193,080	10.7%
Electricity, gas & water supply	481	0.6%	4,257	0.8%	1,504	0.7%	13,116	0.7%
Construction	4,796	6.5%	18,610	3.4%	12,393	5.8%	90,357	5.0%
Wholesale & retail trade	11,836	15.9%	74,627	13.8%	33,749	15.9%	265,751	14.7%
Hotels & restaurants	3,462	4.7%	29,309	5.4%	10,318	4.8%	103,560	5.7%
Transport, storage & communication	5,241	7.0%	38,001	7.0%	12,487	5.9%	97,569	5.4%
Banking & financial services	3,966	5.3%	48,606	9.0%	12,181	5.7%	93,151	5.2%
Real estate, renting and business activities	6,863	9.2%	82,887	15.3%	21,614	10.2%	184,251	10.2%
Public administration and defence	4,978	6.7%	35,152	6.5%	14,431	6.8%	113,521	6.3%
Education	6,160	8.3%	47,528	8.8%	18,735	8.8%	163,728	9.1%
Health & social work	7,521	10.1%	59,885	11.1%	21,474	10.1%	203,379	11.3%
Other community, social and personal service activities	3,480	4.7%	28,927	5.3%	10,996	5.2%	84,665	4.7%
Industry not stated	3,565	4.8%	32,941	6.1%	10,179	4.8%	101,311	5.6%
TOTAL	**74,342**	**100%**	**540,729**	**100%**	**212,836**	**100%**	**1,807,360**	**100%**

In 2011, 74,342 residents of Meath were employed equivalent to an employment rate of 82%. Analysis of these figures indicates higher concentrations of employment in the following sectors in the county:

- Agri-food and forestry – Meath is especially strong in agri-food (beef and dairy farming);
- Mining, quarrying and turf production – Meath benefits from a rich tradition in mining and quarrying;
- Manufacturing – Meath has a higher concentration of residents employed in manufacturing industries compared with Dublin
- Transport, storage and communications – reflecting Meath's favourable geographical location.

There were 121,347 persons aged between 15 and 64 years resident in Meath in 2011, meaning that 65.9% of the county's population were economically active in that year.

However, the economically active rate was lower in Meath compared with Dublin (69.8%), the Mid-East Region (66.6%) and the State as a whole (67%). Of all the local authorities shown in Table 2 below, Meath had the lowest economically active rate in the last census year.

2.9 Unemployment Profile

Table 2: Labour Force Participation in county Meath (2006 – 2011)

Geographic Area	2011			2006			Change (2011-2006)		
	Labour Force	Persons 15+ Years	LFP Rate (%)	Labour Force	Persons 15+ Years	LFP Rate (%)	Labour Force	Persons 15+ Years	LFP Rate (%)
Dublin:	652,178	1,027,817	63.5%	629,001	969,524	64.9%	23,177	58,293	-1.4%
Dublin City	279,128	447,583	62.4%	274,310	430,357	63.7%	4,818	17,226	-1.4%
South Dublin	98,561	168,726	58.4%	92,836	158,794	58.5%	5,725	9,932	0.0%
Fingal	141,916	207,584	68.4%	130,816	187,018	69.9%	11,100	20,566	-1.6%
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown	132,573	203,924	65.0%	131,039	193,355	67.8%	1,534	10,569	-2.8%
Mid-East	260,441	401,881	64.8%	244,008	367,064	66.5%	16,433	34,817	-1.7%
Meath	*90,634*	*137,669*	*65.8%*	*83,920*	*124,681*	*67.3%*	*6,714*	*12,988*	*-1.5%*
Kildare	104,226	158,744	65.7%	97,719	143,326	68.2%	6,507	15,418	-2.5%
Wicklow	65,581	105,468	62.2%	62,369	99,057	63.0%	3,212	6,411	-0.8%
State	2,232,203	3,608,662	61.9%	2,109,498	3,375,399	62.5%	122,705	233,263	-0.6%

The Maynooth University Economic Baseline Study (2013) reveals that, while the unemployment rate in Meath overall was lower compared with the State in the last census year (2011), there were some parts of the county that exhibited very high rates of unemployment. According to the Maynooth University study (p. 15):

> "A move further to the west and north west details significantly higher unemployment rates. This is particularly evident in the main urban centres such as Kells Urban (38%), Navan Urban (29.9%), Athboy (25%) and Trim Urban (24.1%). More peripheral EDs with very high rates are Ardagh (30%), Ardnamullen (27%) and Oldcastle (26%). In total, 6 of the 92 Meath ED's (*sic.*) have unemployment rates in excess of 25%".

2.9.1 Youth Unemployment

The Forfás National Skills Bulletin published in July 2014 points to continuing high unemployment in segments of the labour market including persons previously employed in the construction sector. The bulletin reports 30% unemployment amongst these persons, 19% of these persons are aged 25 and under, in terms of educational attainment 18% are persons holding less than higher secondary education.

At a 30% unemployment rate, construction has the highest unemployment level of all sectors with 15% of the construction workforce holding very elementary occupations, within the sector transitioning between employment and unemployment construction is also at the highest level. Given County Meath's proximity to major centres of development, construction attracted very significant interest amongst younger people in Meath as a provider of well-paid employment and consequently the collapse of the sector has impacted negatively and has caused very significant job losses amongst young people. The number of persons in the 15 to 24 age groups in employment in Ireland is continuing to decline with a continuing shift towards older people being in employment. This trend is also reflected in the figures for County Meath as depicted in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Unemployment Figures for County Meath, 2015

No. of Social Welfare Claimants in Co. Meath	
November 2014	8,339
November 2015	7,520
Difference	819
% Change (since Nov-14)	9.80%
Male	4,224
Female	3,296
>25	6,583
<25	937

Sign-on Locations	
Navan	3,745
Trim	2,429
Kells	1,346

In looking at the period quarter 4 2012 to Quarter 4 2013 the age distribution of those in employment shifted towards the older age cohorts. Figure 1.7 shows only 1.5% of 15 to 19 year olds in employment, 6.5% of those aged between 20 and 24 were in employment and while continuing education is a major factor this does not account for high unemployment levels amongst these age groups. The employment level amongst the 25 to 34 cohort is 26.1% a drop of 1.5% over the previous period.

Employment by Age - Q4 2013
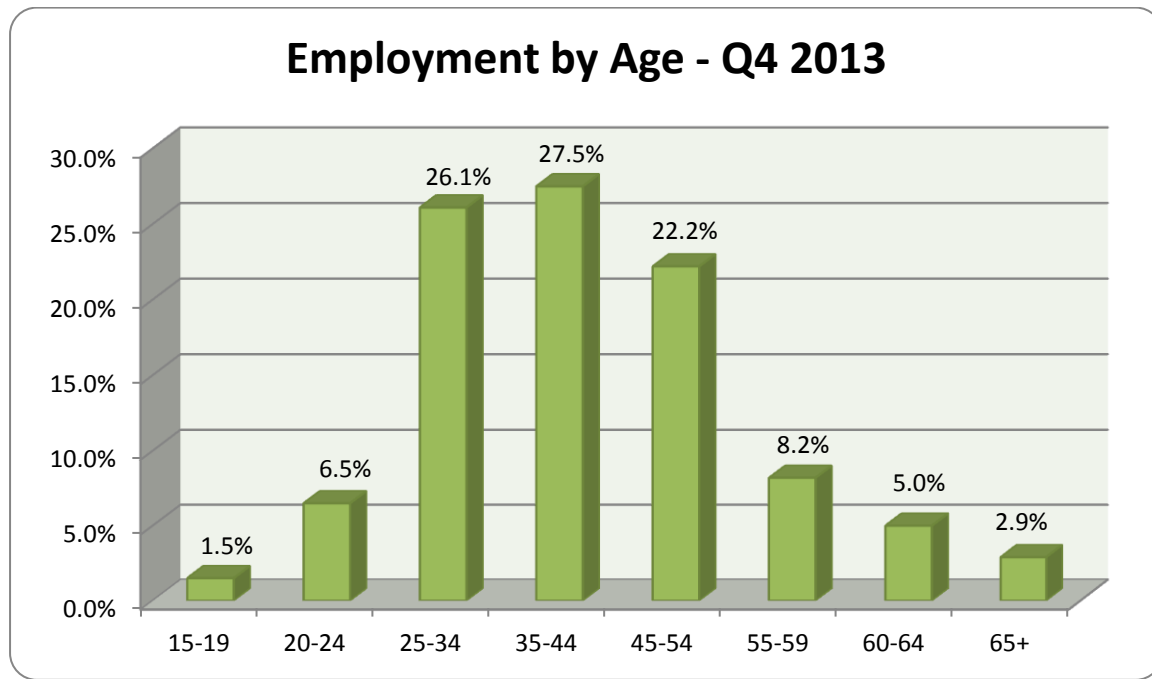
Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO data

By education level those with lower secondary education or below make up 15.6% of the workforce and while this is a factor linked to unemployment for those engaged in elementary occupations the age factor appears to be the greatest determinant of unemployment at present. With one in five unemployed persons being under 25 years of age this issue merits special attention as for example this is three times the unemployment rate for those aged over 55. Within the ranks of the unemployed 63% are male with 37% being female.

While the majority of young people are likely to be on the live register and contactable by or in touch with employment services it can be seen that where youth experience long spells of unemployment or absence from education they risk becoming permanently disconnected from the labour force and marginalised potentially compromising employment and long term career prospects. OECD points out that Job Bridge while a large and expensive scheme is not targeted specifically at the most disadvantaged group, the work experience aspect of this programme needs to target those most disadvantaged. The OECD also points out that Intreo is not sufficiently resourced to purchase training for this target group therefore Momentum is to be welcomed.

The Department of Social Protection are on the verge of announcing a new scheme to place long term unemployed and other unemployed persons in workplace experience with financial benefit for both employer and employee. Unemployed young people must be effectively engaged and supported in maximising this opportunity and to achieve real progression towards sustainable long term employment.

2.10 The Economy

In 2011, there were 38,822 jobs in Meath (as defined in the CSO POWSCAR) and the corresponding proportions in respect of the 28,449 jobs held by Meath residents and the 10,373 jobs held by inbound commuters in that year, is as follows:

The largest sectors for jobs in Meath in 2011 were:
- Wholesale, retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities – 29% of all jobs;
- Education, human health and social work activities – 21% of all jobs (higher proportion than this among the inbound commuters and lower among the local workers);
- Manufacturing, mining and quarrying, electricity, gas, water supply and waste management – 14% of all jobs (higher proportion than this among the inbound commuters and lower among the local workers); and
- Information and communication, financial, real estate, professional, administration and support service activities – 12% of all jobs (slightly higher proportion than this among the inbound commuters and lower among the local workers).

2.10.1 Tourism

Meath's tourism performance in recent years has generally been positive and represents a sector with future growth potential. Meath's tourism strengths include its proximity to Dublin and good roads and transport infrastructure, plus a varied range of visitor attractions, which include the former LEADER project and hugely successful Tayto Park in the south of the county. Around the county, there are also various events and festivals throughout the year. The county is well-suited to *niche tourism* – given the diversity and quality of its social, natural, built and cultural heritage.

In 2014, visitors to East /Midlands region accounted for 982,000 out of state and 911,000 domestic visitors. Of these visitors 28% stayed in self-catering, 18% in hotels and 25% with friends and relatives, only 3% stayed in hostels, 6% in guest houses with 19% making other arrangements and 1% camping. In this context, ongoing investment in 4-star self-catering accommodation units is assisting rural tourism. Remarkably 63.2% of these visitors engaged in hiking and cross country walking, 15.16% cycling, 9.11% golf, 8.32% angling and 4.19% equestrian. Outside of the Dublin region, East and Midlands attracts just 11.89% of out of state visitors. In terms of domestic trips the regions attracts 911,000 which is 12.39% of the total of 7,354,000 visitors to the region. Britain and mainland Europe represents 81.5% of overseas visitors to the region. Tourism now supports 1,972 jobs in Meath per annum.

An analysis of Meath's share of overseas visitor numbers and revenue for 2014 shows that there were a total of 122,000 overseas visitors to Meath, representing 1.2% of the national total with total revenue provided by overseas visitors to the county of €44m, which accounted for a slightly higher proportion of the national total (1.5%).

Within the East/Midland region the hierarchy in terms of the distribution of overseas visitors remains constant with Wicklow capturing the greatest level of interest followed by Kildare and then Meath. Tayto Park can be expected to impact positively on this outcome. Outside

of the main centres of population and interest such as Dublin, Kerry, Cork and Galway, Co Meath ranks 11th in terms of visitor numbers nationally.

Fáilte Ireland's Accommodation Provider Business Sentiment Index forecast strong growth in visitor volumes in 2015 with 77% of providers expecting growth coming from a low of 14% in 2008. After a slow start in 2015, the self-catering sector is showing promising growth with 53% of providers increasing numbers over 2014, for 75% of providers repeat visitors are a very positive factor.

Guest houses reported growth in 2014 while indicators for 2015 are showing steady if somewhat slow growth with 36% reporting growth, 38% remaining static and 26% reporting figures down on 2014. 61% of guesthouses refer to festivals and events as very important to their business.

The B&B sector reports that 52% of providers are experiencing increased visitor numbers over 2014; this sector reports that visitor trails are important to their business.

Results in early 2015 in the self-catering sector were mixed with 38% reporting increased numbers over 2014, 43% static and 20% declining. As the year progressed 53% anticipated increased numbers, 36% static with 11% declining.

Hostel services demonstrated a strong early start with 61% increasing, 25% same as 2014 and 14% declining. In this context the French market is showing the strongest return.

As the booking forecasts hardened throughout the year, 78% of tourism providers were showing increased numbers over 2014 with 22% holding at their 2014 number.

Visitor attractions to May 2015 were reporting a 58% increase with 31% as was in 2014 and 11% declining. As the year progressed 76% experienced increased numbers, 19% as per 2014 and 5% declining. Again domestic visitors are performing well with 71% of visitor attractions anticipating increased domestic visitor numbers.

2.10.2 Artisan Food

Meath now has a significant artisan food production and service sub-sector, supported by innovative and co-ordinated efforts on the part of many public and private stakeholders, and one that is showing significant growth potential through co-ordinated branding, awareness raising, and soft and hard supportive infrastructure. The Artisan Food Producers of Meath is a collective group that provides a network for small scale niche producers and promotes their products and interests under a shared identity, while also co-ordinating training activities and supporting trade shows. Other initiatives include the development of a food hub hosting food innovation and research projects and activities supporting primary producers and specialist food services, and the organisation of showcasing events such as the Festive Taste of the Boyne Valley.

The economic potential of small, specialty and artisan food producing enterprises in rural areas is widely recognised, given the natural advantages Ireland offers in primary food production and current consumer trends. Co Meath is well placed for significant expansion given consumer preferences towards diverse, quality, locally-produced distinctive and differentiated food products. Concerns regarding consumer health and animal welfare that

disfavour mass produced factory-processed food products, and the international reputation the country has for clean and green agriculture and food output is a major plus factor.

In terms of environmental considerations Irish consumers demonstrate good knowledge on carbon footprint issues (77%) and less knowledge (42%) on the facts surrounding sustainable production. In this context Ireland comes last in the listing of Periscope countries with Germany best at 94%, Ireland does however have a very strong focus on food waste. Purchasing food product on an environmentally friendly basis is of interest to 57% of Irish consumers with brand purchasing on similar criteria lower at 54%. The artisan sector will however have to address matters relating to easy to prepare foods and the tendency towards purchasing quick to cook food. In this context local food companies need to be seen as part of the solution and not part of the problem. This as yet is not a crisis issue in the home market where 39% of consumers state they are too busy to cook as against the UK where the figure is 43% and rising. However at purchasing point the position is critical with 77% of purchasers opting for easy to prepare foods and 66% purchasing quick to cook food.

There are challenges facing this sector not least the diffusion of the local brand and the weakening of its core message. It is clear that consumers understand the value based concept of buying local in terms of quality and nutrition therefore the buy local brand needs to be refreshed as it appears to have peaked in 2011 and has been in decline since. The emergence of a significant artisan food sector responding to consumer demands for locally produced hand crafted food products, has brought a new stream of entrepreneurs into the sector with many rapidly developing from micro entities into small and medium sized food companies.

In respect of defining what is local, Irish consumers perform strongly which is very encouraging for Meath's artisan and speciality food sector however the fact remains that this knowledge is not translating into significant brand recognition. In this context the regionalisation of artisan food product beyond local in a county context is damaging to the product image.

In the national context artisan and speciality foods is expected to achieve the circulation of a further €2 billion in the local economy in the period 2016 - 2020. The anticipated increase in output has been valued at €800m and will lead to the creation of an additional 3,500 jobs by 2020. These estimates are based on the top 350 speciality food companies doubling output in the period to 2020 with 325 new companies coming on stream increasing local market share in this sector from 3% to 6%. LEADER is well placed to assist in the achievement of these targets.

The further development of this sector as proposed, embraces the findings of the OECD, Western Development Commission and CEDRA in which they emphasise the key drivers of growth as human capital, entrepreneurship, innovation and supportive infrastructure. These growth factors are very evident in the local artisan food sector and are fully deserving of public support.

Having set aside 16 medium to large food companies in Co Meath who because of scale of operation and turnover are not eligible for LEADER support, we find 57 speciality food and artisan producers who have engaged with LEADER in the past. Local research shows

combined turnover of €14.8m with 156 persons employed directly in these small operations. Over 40% of these operations have good capacity for growth and will be targeted through the Rural Development Programme. Growth potential will be strengthened through collaboration with Bord Bia and the Local Enterprise Office.

The sector's further progress and development over the next five years will depend on the resilience and strategic success of existing producers, the stimulation of new businesses and enterprises, and the existence of a supportive ecosystem of public and private resources and capacities that ensures local businesses have the best products, brands, market outlets and marketing and sales channels, as well as raw material, personnel and training, and wider infrastructure that can ensure their ongoing competitive success. As well as supporting the development and success of individual businesses, there is a unique role for LEADER in networking among producers, in stimulating shared services and co-ordinated approaches (e.g. to marketing and location-associated branding), in distribution and bulk purchasing, and in other processes that allow small producers gain the benefits of scale economies and collective know-how.

2.10.3 Agriculture

Meath's primary agriculture sector is characterised by a mixture of crops, livestock and grassland farm types, with the proportion of land area used for crops above the average. Wheat, barley and potatoes dominate crop production while beef is the dominant livestock enterprise, although the dairy and mixed livestock activity is also significant. The agricultural sector in Meath is likely to actively play its part in contributing to national sectoral goals and growth targets. Food Harvest 2020 set ambitious national targets for the period 2010 to 2020, while Food Wise 2025 has more recently set out a renewed strategy with ambitious objectives for the 2015-2025 period, including agri-food export growth of 85%, increasing the value added in the agri-food, fisheries and wood products sector by 70%, increasing the value of primary production by 65%, and creating some 23,000 additional jobs in the agri-food sector throughout the supply chain.

While agricultural activity itself will remain ineligible for support under LEADER as before, the rural development challenges and opportunities it presents include the need to provide alternative off-farm incomes and economic opportunities, the need to support the social and community engagement and well-being of farm families and farmers, particular those most isolated, the need to encourage new and innovative non-agricultural enterprises that support farming or can provide contemporary intermediary inputs into modern farming practice and have a marketable viability in locations dominated by agriculture, and the need to promote a culture of environmental protection and care, and of sustainability in all economic activities throughout rural areas and among all rural dwellers. Opportunities for farm diversification in Co Meath remain strong with agri-tourism to the fore as a very successful area of development for LEADER resourced interventions. Over the period 2007-2013 twelve operations were supported through LEADER and as a growth sector LEADER will continue to support this important sector in the period 2014-2020. The application of the LEADER methodology coupled with capital grant aid has achieved an investment ratio in agri-tourism of €1,000 of private funds for each €200 unit of public funding invested.
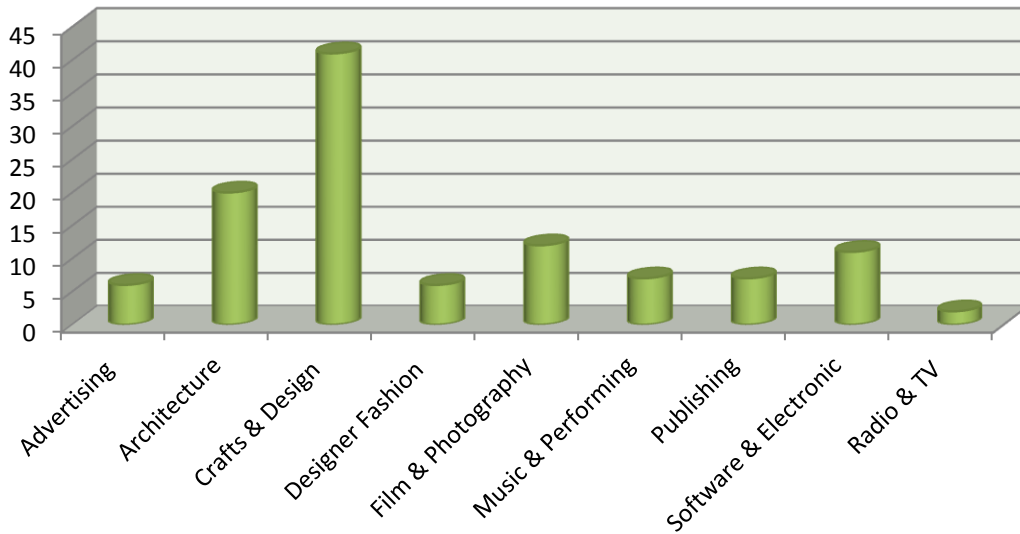
2.10.4 Creative and Craft Industries

Creative industries and enterprises are increasingly recognised as having a major contribution to play in national development and rural development in particular. The most commonly used and widely accepted definition of the creative sector and which is used to estimate the economic performance of this sector is defined by the Arts Council of Ireland as follows:
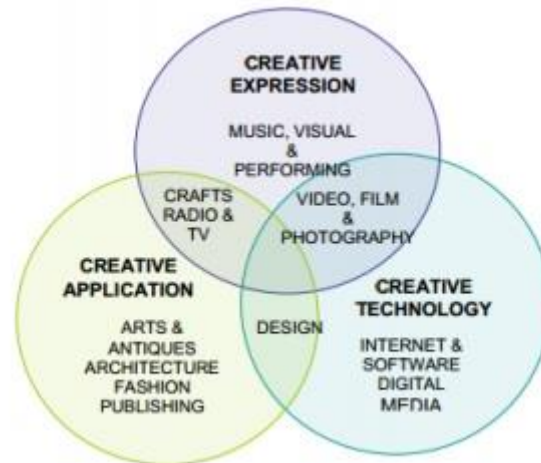
The Arts Council of Ireland which uses this specific definition of the creative sector as its benchmark have estimated that at national level these sub sectors generates 5.5 billion in terms of gross value added. CCI's growing reputation and recognition of its economic potential in Ireland relates to the national importance of culture and heritage and the traditions, skills and capabilities they inspire, and the popular interest in culture and tradition and their creative manifestations and products. The intrinsic value of creative goods and services are disproportionately reflected in the human input to their production and provision, and Ireland is recognised as having a wealth of talent, knowledge and capability in respect of such creativity. At the same time, creative enterprises are now those at the cusp of technological innovation, and much creative output can or does take a technological or digital form. The following table represents a breakdown of the 113 registered businesses in Co Meath that would be considered as belonging to the creative industry sector:
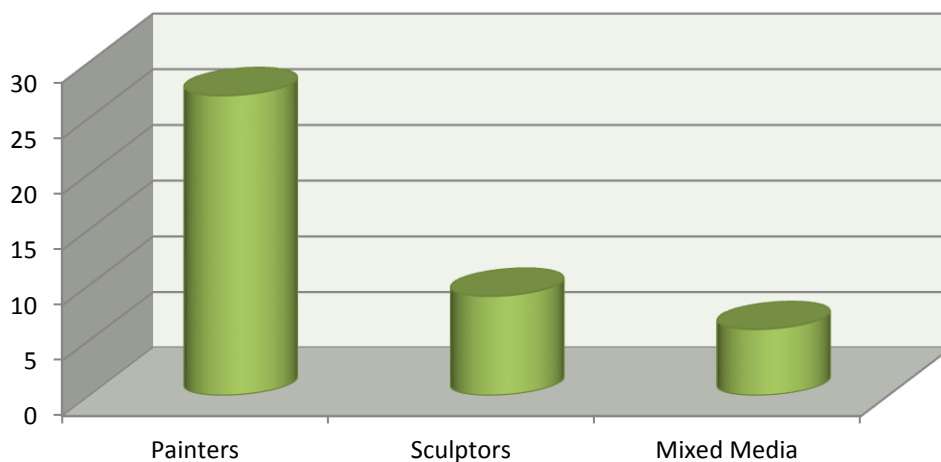
Creative Industry Businesses in Meath

A bar chart titled "Creative Industry Businesses in Meath" with values on the y-axis from 0 to 45. Categories: Advertising (~7), Architecture (~21), Crafts & Design (~43), Designer Fashion (~7), Film & Photography (~13), Music & Performing (~8), Publishing (~8), Software & Electronic (~12), Radio & TV (~2).

This list does not however capture the full extent of the sector as many sole traders are not included or listed in available business directories and the economic downturn has resulted in a significant number of would-be creative entrepreneurs postponing career or business development plans until some economic certainty returns. This has also been the case with many people involved in the performing arts who have seen a dramatic decline in demand for their products and services.

While the number of businesses active in some of the sectors might be low it is perhaps more appropriate to consider the number of free-lance craft workers, artists and film production experts who are living in County Meath and registered with the leading art, craft and media agencies and networks. The following tables provide a snapshot of both the art and craft sector and the media or film production sector.

Number of Registered Visual Artists

A bar chart titled "Number of Registered Visual Artists" with values on the y-axis from 0 to 30. Categories: Painters (~29), Sculptors (~10), Mixed Media (~8).

There is a significant indigenous craft sector in County Meath, with enterprises active in art, pottery, design, textiles, glass, photography, ceramics, jewellery, and woodcraft, which are each deeply embedded and associated with the natural and cultural assets and heritage of rural Meath. The sector is at a modest stage of development with production at a small scale, and relatively recent retail channelling and collaborative effort and networking.

2.10.5 Equine Sector

There is a strong and growing sector of the rural economy in County Meath associated with horses and equine enterprises. As well as the in-county location of Fairyhouse and Navan racecourses, enterprises include equestrian centres that offer horse-riding courses and training, and stabling and livery services, numerous stud farms hosting training, breeding and trading activities, and a collection of specialist traders serving these in areas such as farriery, equine health, feed and equipment.

It is another sector that offers great potential in the county, availing of its natural strengths in terms of land, facilities and access and proximity to Dublin and the national road network.

Increasing and optimising the sector's success, growth and contribution to Meath's rural economic and social development will require building on the success of existing enterprises and facilitating their further growth and development, encouraging more service related enterprises, attracting new businesses to locate in the county, cultivating the numerous support industries and specialisms that service core equine businesses, and diversifying equine activities into new areas that yield wider rural development gains, for example leisure, equine tourism, research, and youth or community education, outreach or engagement.

The sport horse sector in Meath consists of a total of 5,801 animals with 1,749 in the leisure sector, 557 in competition and 3,495 in breeding. Based on the UCD study of the economic contribution of the sports horse industry total sectoral spend in Meath's rural economy is €27.384m per annum. The breeding sector accounts for €12,756,750 with competition standing at €3,035,260 and leisure at €11,942,172. Meath has 3,495 animals of all ages in breeding, 577 in competition and 1,749 in the leisure sector.

2.10.6 Renewable and Green Sector

Policies, activities and enterprises in Meath as elsewhere are embracing sustainability concepts and principles and recognising obligations to comply with environmental regulations, standards and good practices, as well as a desire to in-still a universal culture that promotes environmental protection and an ethos of environmental respect. The challenges associated with (and regulatory, policy and economic responses to) climate change and resource scarcity and depletion have little unique features in county Meath compared to other parts of the country, however the environmental resource base, the nature and location of environmental pressures, and the ability to embrace opportunities which evolving environmental awareness, standards and regulations present, are all specific to the county and its unique characteristics.

The natural environment and natural heritage of County Meath is one of its strongest assets and resources. The county extends across open countryside, coastal areas, major river catchments as well as other inland waters, wetlands and raised bogs, and the rich and varied landscape provides a range of important habitats for flora and fauna. However environmental pressures are also numerous, including in relation to:

- a high-dependency on private cars
- water supply pressure and pollution risk from a number of sources
- wastewater treatment capacity
- the environmental protection of the rich heritage resource-base
- a high reliance on non-renewable energy
- a host of resource pressures associated with housing and other forms of development which the county experiences in periods of national economic and population growth.

A critical determinant of the success of rural development in the county over the medium term is therefore the extent to which it occurs in ways that at best alleviate, or at least does not add to, these pressures. Furthermore, the success of the LDS will be reflected in its achievements and effects in environmental education, awareness raising, opinion and behaviour, but also in how it encourages the embracing of economic opportunities which environmental and sustainability principles are opening. Renewable energy, energy-efficient products, services and processes, environmental technologies, environmental services, innovative and more efficient means of water and waste management, research activities, low-carbon transport, and green tourism are all likely to present economic opportunities in the County that share both a long-term relevance and market need as well as a rural orientation in respect of both delivery setting and benefit.

2.10.7 Foreign Direct Investment

Meath's performance in relation to FDI is less strong when compared with indigenous investment and job creation. Analysis of the Forfás data reveals that less than 3% of all jobs in Meath in 2011 were held by people working in foreign-owned companies, whereas the corresponding proportion for the State was almost 8%. Thus, the *density* of FDI jobs in Meath is relatively low. In addition, during 2011-2013, the number of permanent full-time jobs among foreign-owned agency-assisted (IDA Ireland) companies in Ireland grew by 7%; the corresponding figure for Meath showed shrinkage of 2%.

2.11 Mode of Transport to Work among People Working in Meath

Almost 80% of the 38,822 people at work in Meath in 2011 travelled to work by private transport (typically car). Just over 3,000 workers (8% of the total) were home workers; which probably reflects the importance of primary agriculture in Meath. Overall public transport accounted for less than 2% of the total, while soft modes accounted for 11% of mode of transport to work in 2011 (cycling and walking).

2.12 Quality of Life - Relative Index of Deprivation/Affluence

The Pobal Haase and Pratschke (HP) Deprivation Index is a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area using census data. A

scoring is given to the area based on a national average of zero and ranging from approximately -35 (being the most disadvantaged) to +35 (being the most affluent). The latest relative index focuses on the previous two censuses, 2006 and 2011, and is of relevance given the significant economic changes that have occurred during this period.

Meath was the ninth most affluent local authority area according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index in 2011, with a relative score of 0.9 (the most affluent local authority area was Dún Laoghaire and Rathdown, with a relative score of 10.6, and the least affluent/most deprived was Limerick City, with a relative score of -6.7).

Most significant, however, is the change in the Pobal HP Deprivation Index during 2006-2011, where it emerges that Meath witnessed the largest fall in relative affluence: between these years, the relative scores for Meath fell by 1.8%, which was the highest rate of decline of any local authority in the State. In sharp contrast, the four local authority areas making up Dublin all experienced growth in their relative affluence scores, as did Cork City, Galway City, Waterford City and Limerick City.

As observed in the Maynooth University Baseline Economic Study (p. 9): "In general, cities have weathered the storm best with commuter areas such as Meath experiencing the most significant decline".

The Maynooth University study also observes that the most disadvantaged EDs in Meath are Kells Urban (-12.1) and Kilmainham (-10.1), while the most affluent EDs are Ratoath (8.3), Kilbrew (7.5) and Dunboyne (6.6). Of the 92 EDs in Meath in 2011, 56 (61%) were found to be 'marginally below average' and 34 (37%) were 'marginal above average' and those 2 most disadvantaged EDs (2%).

2.13 Rural Towns

The hierarchy of towns and villages in County Meath is dominated by Navan, which had a population of just over 28,500 in 2011. The next largest town, Ashbourne, had a population some 60% fewer at 11,335, with smaller towns all more comparative to it. The 2011 population of the main towns and villages in shown below

Population of Main Towns and Villages in County Meath (2011)
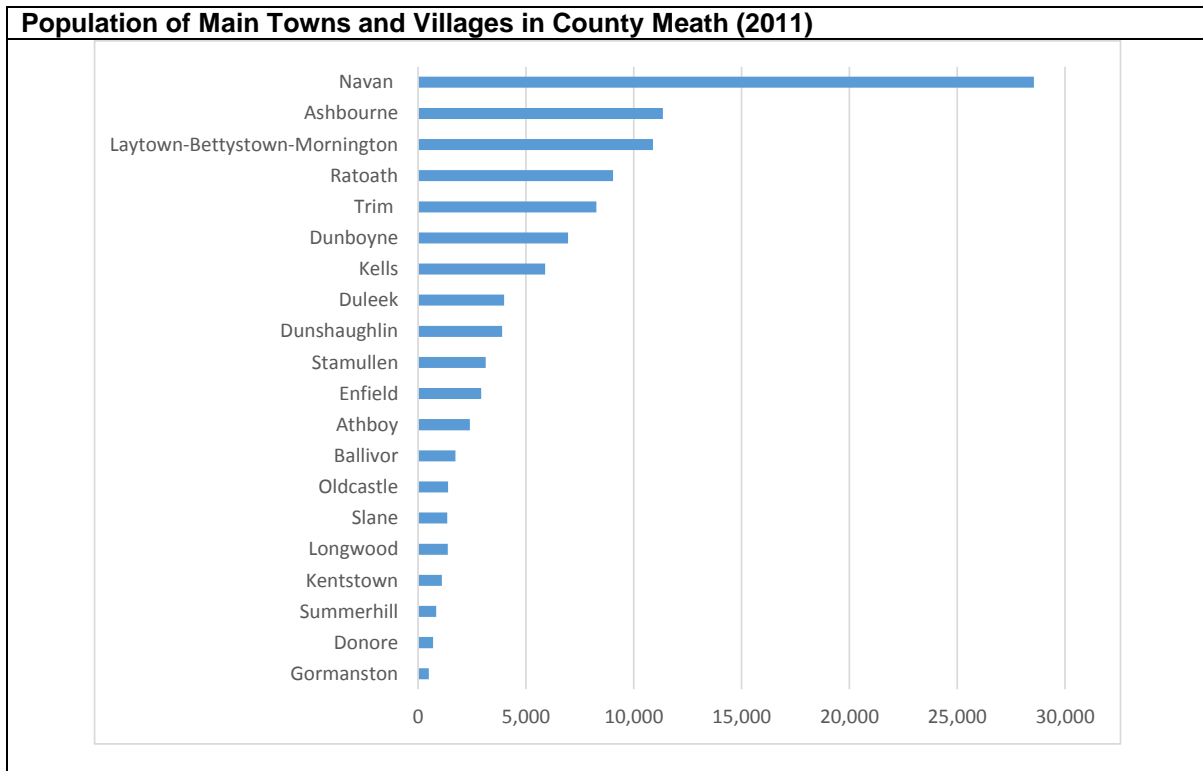
With the single exception of Gormanstown, all of the largest 20 towns and villages in Meath experienced population growth over the 2002-2011 period also, although the absolute levels and rates of growth varied considerably.

Navan had the greatest absolute level of population growth, with an increase of over 9,100, while Laytown/Bettystown/Mornington, Ratoath and Ashbourne also each grew considerably (by approximately 5,000 in each case). Below that another cohort saw populations grow by in or around 2,000 persons, including Trim, Stamullen, Enfield, Duleek, Dunboyne and Kells, while the remaining main towns and villages saw smaller absolute levels of growth.

Absolute Population Change between 2002 and 2011 within Main Towns and Villages in County Meath
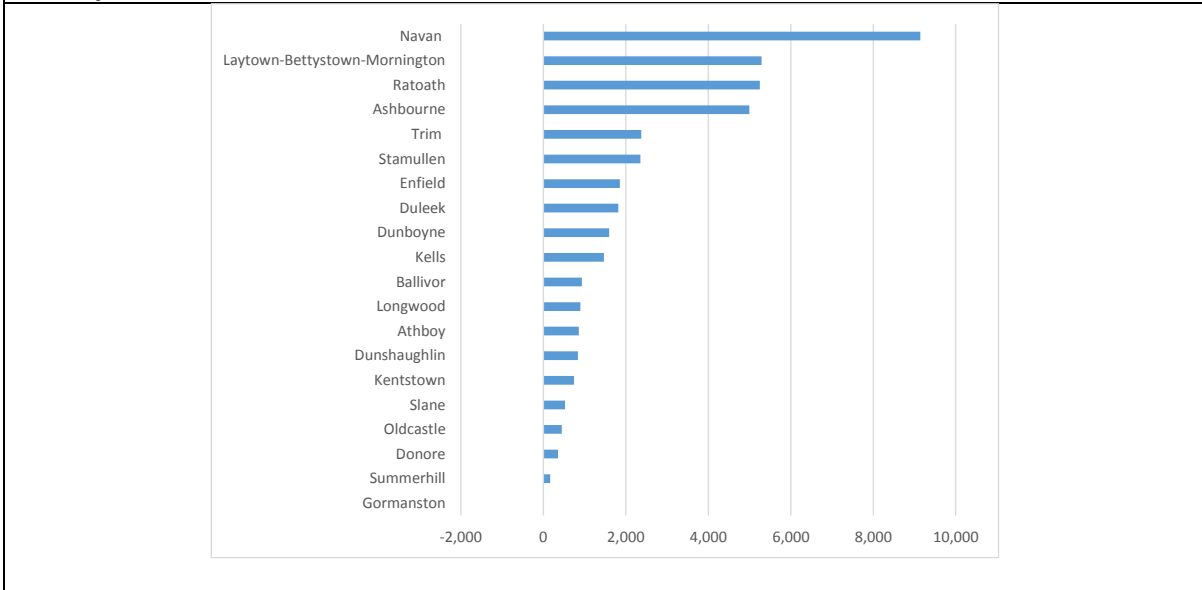
Rates of population growth (relative to their 2002 populations) were varied, with some towns and villages experiencing very rapid and dramatic growth, and others much more modest increases.

Percentage Change in Population between 2002 and 2011 within Main Towns and Villages in County Meath
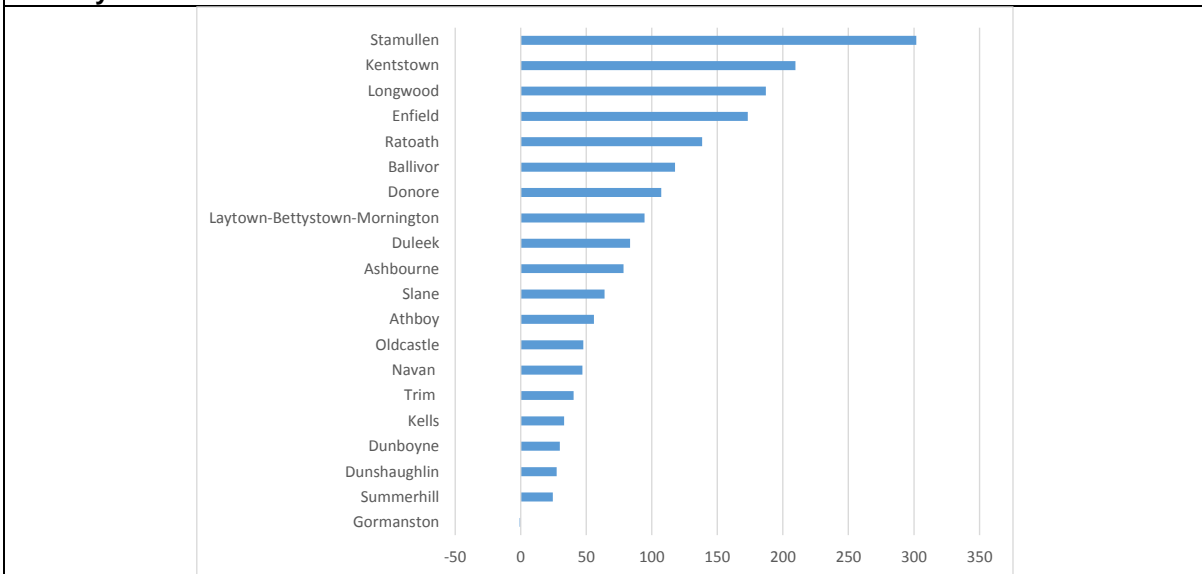
The pattern with respect to relative rates of population growth was one where towns most proximate to the Dublin urban and suburban area, or those offering the greatest road transport links and accessibility to it, were the ones experiencing the greatest growth, although there were exceptions to this general trend. The five towns experienced greatest relative growth (Stamullen, Kentstown, Longwood, Enfield and Ratoath are all in either the southern or eastern areas of the county, and all are adjacent or very proximate to the major motorways and primary routes (M2/N2, M3, and M4). While only a minority of the main

towns and villages are located in the north western half of the county most distant from Dublin, none of these were among those experiencing the higher levels of population growth.

Further evidence of a geographical pattern and typology across the town and village hierarchy in Meath that relates the development and status of towns and villages to their location, and proximity and access to the Dublin region, is present in the socio-economic profile of the settlements detailed in Annex 4, although the data indicate patterns rather than outright realities without exception.

Towns with the greatest populations in working age cohorts include Ashbourne, Enfield and Longwood, as well as some of the larger towns (Trim, Navan and Oldcastle). Those with the highest population of old people include Gormanstown (where elderly residential care facilities skew the population data of what is otherwise a very small settlement), and towns and villages most distant from Dublin (Kells, Oldcastle, Athboy, Trim and Slane).

Household structures also show variability along these geographical lines. The proportion of households that accommodate one person only is highest in Oldcastle, Kells, Athboy and Gormanstown while the main towns and villages where it is lowest as a proportion include those further to the south and west including Kentstown, Ratoath, Stamullen and Dunboyne.

Family structures within households show similar geographical variability. The proportion of households with a co-habiting couple and children is highest in Stamullen, Kentstown, Ratoath, Longwood and Dunboyne, and lowest in Oldcastle, Athboy, Kells and Navan.

The economic profile and status of the population also varies in similar patterns. The towns to the south and east of the County, those closest or with greatest road access to Dublin tend to have the highest employment rates, the lowest unemployment rates, and the lowest shares of the population that are economically inactive. They also accommodate households and people in higher social class classifications (e.g. in professional or managerial rather than semi-skilled or unskilled categories), have higher levels of educational achievement, have the highest proportions of their working population engaged in commerce, professional or public services and the lowest proportions in agriculture, construction or manufacturing.

2.14 Broadband and Connectivity

The same pattern is broadly evident in relation to ICT use and connectivity, where the towns and villages with the highest proportion of households that have personal computers are those to the south and east that share other more developed socio-economic characteristics, and those with the lowest proportions are those most distant from Dublin or with residents in higher age categories. The range is also significant, whereby in Ratoath for example more than 90% of households have a personal computer, compared to just over 60% in Oldcastle. The proportions of PC-using households without broadband connectivity are significant (generally between 5% and 15%) and reasonably consistent across towns and villages.

2.15 Gaeltacht Villages in Meath

Rathcairn village is a rural village located 4km southwest of Athboy, and 10km from Trim in the West Navan Lowlands. The village is approached from Local Roads to the north and south. The village is convenient to the N51 Athboy – Navan National Road, and the Athboy – Trim Regional Road (R154). The historic centre of the village is defined by three distinct

clusters, the industrial cluster to the north, the village centre, focused around the church, community buildings, and shops, and the national school cluster to the south of the village.

Baile Ghib village is a rural settlement located 6km east of Kells, and 8km northwest of Navan in the North Navan Lowlands. The village is characterised by three distinct areas, the industrial and former farmyard buildings of Baile Ghib Demesne to the east, the former entrance to the Baile Ghib Demesne and football grounds to the west and the school and a cluster of residential buildings between. These areas have strong identities informed by positive and negative features. The village of Baile Ghib is defined by a through road, connecting Kells to the west and Kilberry and Slane to the east, (R163 Regional Road), with intersecting local roads to the east and west of the village respectively. The village is convenient to the Dublin-Cavan National Route (N3).

2.15.1 Population

The population of the Gaeltacht areas of County Meath recorded during Census 2011 stood at 1,771 persons (890 males and 881 females). This has risen approximately 5.65% from 1,671 since the 2006 census. County Meath experienced an overall population increase of 21.5% in the 2002-2006 period and an increase of 13% over the 2006 – 2011 period.

2.15.2 Age Structure

The age profiles of both the male and female population of the Gaeltacht areas of Co. Meath are described in the tables below:

Table 1: Combined Gaeltacht Area Male Population breakdown

Age	0 – 14	15 – 24	25 – 44	44 – 64	Over 64
Population	227	118	225	241	70
Percentage	25.77%	13.39%	25.54%	27.35%	7.95%

2011 Census Gaeltacht Area Population Statistics

Table 2: Combined Gaeltacht Area Female Population break-down

Age	0 – 14	15 – 24	25 - 44	44 - 64	Over 64
Population	220	112	230	234	94
Percentage	24.72%	12.58%	25.84%	26.29%	10.56%

2011 Census Gaeltacht Area Population Statistics

As the data above identifies the Gaeltacht areas of Rathcairn and Baile Ghib have high populations in the 0 – 14 Age Category, particularly with reference to the national average of 21.35% for this age category.

2.15.3 Employment Opportunities in the Gaeltacht

The workforce in the Meath Gaeltacht areas is predominately employed in skilled work. Almost 60% of persons over 5 years of age stated travel distances of 0-14km to school, work or college. Approximately 40% of the population that stated distance travelled to school, work or college, travelled over 15km. The nature of employment and travel distances in the

Rath Mór Electoral Area suggests a medium level of employment to population ratio within reasonable proximity of the village area.

There are a number of employment opportunities within Rathcairn village. The main commercial and industrial activities within the village include the Udarás na Gaeltachta Industrial Estate, and the local shop. Employment is generated through work associated with the Irish language and cultural initiatives, including Irish language learning, and associated tourism activities such as Irish music, dancing, walks, festivals, etc.

There are a limited number of employment opportunities within Baile Ghib village. The main commercial and industrial activities within the village include a local shop and post office, *Daybreak*, Engineering 5 Design Services Industrial Unit, *Timoney Technology Ltd*, and *Adtec Aerauto Ltd* located in the village. A number of businesses are located outside the village development boundary, including a local public house at Oristown adjoining St. Catherine's Church, and other various commercial activities. As such, the future development of the village should seek to provide local employment opportunities for a local population.

2.16 Impact of Recession on Rural Towns

Research by O 'Donoghue, Geoghegan, Heanue and Meredith (Teagasc) has shown that small and medium sized towns in Ireland, on average, have been impacted to a greater extent by the economic downturn than cities. They have suffered higher increases in unemployment rates, as well as greater decreases in employment levels. Additionally, jobs in small and medium sized towns and the open countryside are disproportionally reliant on industrial sectors with falling employment such as agriculture, construction and industry. Poverty rates are also higher in small and medium sized towns and the open countryside, with one third of working age households with no one in work, 50% higher than in cities.

The ranking of Meath towns in the Teagasc study shows similar geographical patterns as the other demographic and socio-economic data, with those having experienced least unemployment and emigration generally located to the south and east (e.g. Ashbourne, Ratoath, Stamullen, and Enfield, while those at the other extreme generally in the northern and western half of the county (e.g. Kells, Oldcastle, Athboy).

In rural areas, key issues are the provision of education, employment and training opportunities. Other important issues are health care provision, leisure and recreation facilities and public transport. Access to public transport is particularly significant in the more disadvantaged rural communities, especially for persons and households belonging to the lower social classes. For towns and villages, it is possible to identify a large menu of factors that contribute to a good quality of life. Places that have the majority of the following attributes are regarded as having a good quality of life:

- good income level and distribution,
- high level of personal material assets (e.g., home ownership)
- access to economic, social and physical infrastructure,
- low crime level,
- good quality affordable housing units,
- balanced social mix,
- good community interaction (clubs, organisations, etc.)

- high quality historic heritage
- balanced industrial, service and tertiary employment mix.

The term 'quality of life' is used here in a broad sense to describe the conditions that contribute to a sustainable quality of life experienced by residents of the county. It is a multi-dimensional concept that embraces issues related to cost of housing, the quality of the natural environment and the cultural heritage; the availability of health services and other forms of social supports and protection; provision of recreational and leisure facilities, and parity of access to information. Most of these themes will be relevant to the Local Development Strategy for County Meath especially access to training, range and quality of employment opportunities, community cohesion and infrastructure and initiatives to overcome barriers to social inclusion.

While the demographic and socio-economic hierarchy of the main towns and villages follows quite a distinct geographic pattern linked to their proximity and access to Dublin, the patterns are far from absolute. Similarly, the most socially and economically advanced towns and villages present different rather than few development challenges. For towns and villages most distant from Dublin the challenges relate more to the underling demographic structure, the economic base and the socio-economic functions and facilities in the town, whereas towns and villages that have grown at the highest rates, with a more balanced demographic structure, more young people and young families resident, and with higher employment rates and employment in higher-value activity, the challenges often relate to having community infrastructure, activity and networks keep pace with population growth, having appropriate services and amenities that provide quality of life for residents, and offering local employment opportunity rather than simply residential locations and commuter towns.

2.17 Requirement for Sub Region Derogation in Respect of Population Limit

Given that in 2011 it was established that Meath had a population of 184,135 and that the preferred upper limit for a sub region under the Rural Development Programme is 150,000, the LAG seeks a derogation in respect of this limit for the RDP 2014-2020.

1. The sub-regions as defined by the State are predicated on county boundaries and aligned with local government administrative boundaries. The State in establishing sub regional boundaries for LEADER clearly sets out to provide complete coverage in respect of LEADER outside the main centres of population.
2. No centre of population in Co Meath has as yet attained city status nor indeed have any of Meath's major towns been designated as either a Hub or Gateway. The entirety of the geographical territory is therefore designated as a rural territory and entitled to be included within the geographical area to be covered by the LEADER Programme.
3. Given the position as outlined at 1 and 2 the most obvious pathway to achieving a reduction in population and territory to be covered by LEADER cannot be justified. In this context we are speaking of the possibility of excluding significant urban centres of population from programme coverage thereby reducing the population to be included to the preferred upper limit of 150,000. Given the matter of rurality and the situation in Meath it is simply not possible to establish fair and adequate criterion through which to argue a case for territorial reduction as against the merits of seeking a derogation on the population issue.

4. In respect of population growth the map which forms part of subsection 2.4 population to be found on page 29 of the LDS shows population changes between 2006 and 2011 and evidences strong population growth during this period in areas on the border with Co Dublin, along the principal transport nodes and also to the west of the county. With the exception of the town of Ashbourne these areas of population growth are rural in nature where in many instances more than 30% of the population rely on employment in Dublin city. In reality these territories are in serious need of social infrastructure and increased local employment opportunities and as such require assistance through programmes such as LEADER.

5. In a broader planning context, development plans such as the Local and Economic Community Plan, the Local Authority's Economic Development Plan and the Mid East Regional Development Plan are built on the inclusion of the entirety of Meath's geographical territory. Were the LDS to seek to move out of step with these plans the coordinated delivery of programmes as sought by the State through for example the 'alignment process' could be adversely impacted.

6. Based on all of the facts presented and the rationale advanced the Co Meath Local Action Group hereby seeks a derogation to exceed the population limit of 150,000 inhabitants to ensure the territorial coherence of the sub-region comprising of all of Co Meath as provided for under the Common Provisions Regulations (Article 33 (6)) and trust that the granting of this derogation will be seriously considered and acceded to.

2.18 Review of Key Services and Programmes in Meath

In reviewing key services and programmes we comment on the remit and range of services and activities of stage agencies and organisations active in Co Meath in a local development context, we do not seek to present an analysis of the operations of these many different entities rather we seek to identify areas of common interest, areas where deeper collaboration can be fruitful, interventions by LEADER which can improve engagement with essential services and areas where greater productivity, openness and a desire to reach out can add value to investment in social and economic gain. In this context we are referencing specific agencies and organisations in terms of complementarity and mutual gain which can be derived from a greater desire for integrated developmental operations, service provision and engagement. Service gaps and community need is therefore explored in the context of greater future collaboration.

Overview of key services and programmes operational in Meath in support of LEADER
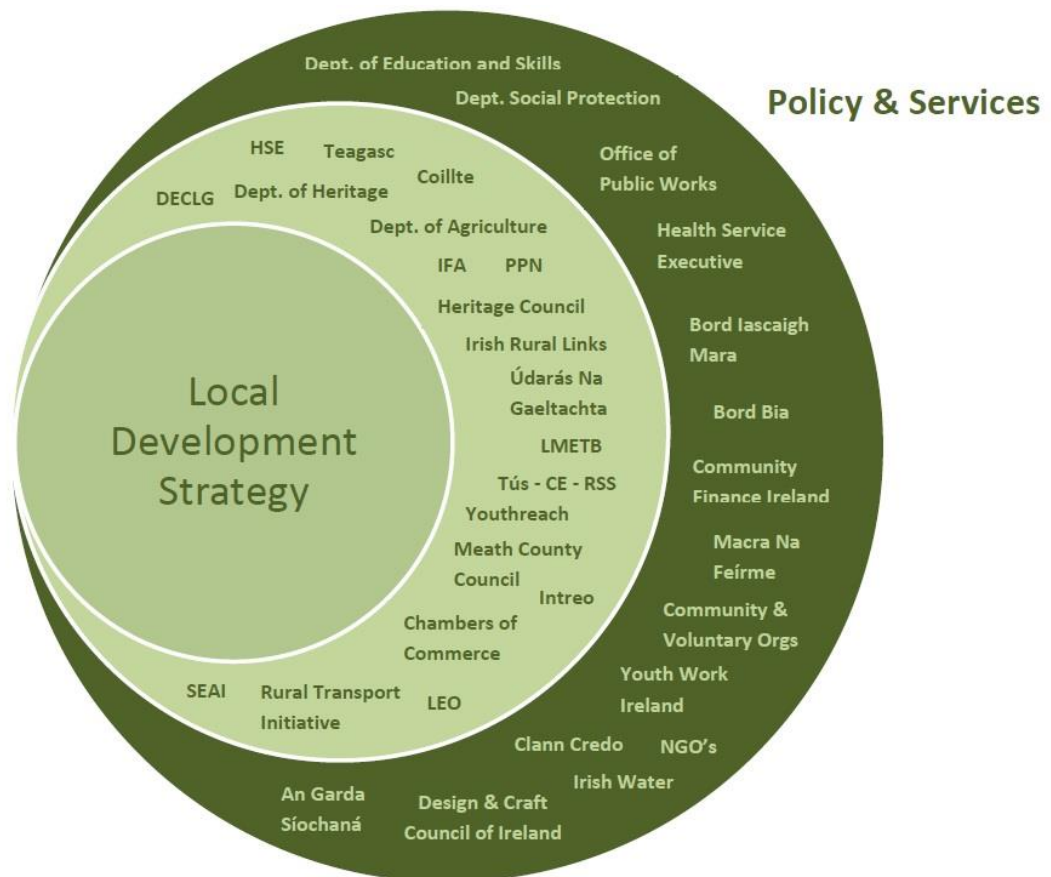
2.18.1 Office of Public Works

The Hill of Tara and Sliabh Na Callaighe are two outstanding features in the Meath landscape. Greater collaboration between the OPW, the Local Action Group and communities of interest can enhance protection, easy yet controlled access, the effective animation of the history of these two exceptional sites, and the long-term respect and support of the local community regarding their local and national heritage significance, importance and value. Co Meath can no longer afford to neglect the potential these exceptional sites offer therefore the LAG will seek to enter into early discussions with the OPW to bridge the gap between virtual dormancy and site development which can make a real contribution to economic and social development, and which balances the needs of conservation, with those of access, promotion, education, cost and local appreciation and impact.

2.18.2 Bord Bia

Bord Bia is very well connected to artisan food development in Co Meath and has been proactive in supporting the Artisan Foods of Meath Network. The LAG will seek to support greater collaboration with Bord Bia in strengthening the marketing of Meaths artisan product which represents a service gap which needs to be filled.

2.18.3 Teagasc

As a driver of agricultural development and the artisan food sector good progress is being achieved, however resource constraints can limit access to service, therefore those who do not chose to engage can lose out on the benefits of good guidance and advice. The LAG believes that LEADER can play a role in facilitating engagement with the hard to reach in farming and through a collaborative and collective approach bring a multi -agency perspective to bear on progress towards improving farm family income and the take up of diversification opportunities within this hard to reach cohort.

2.18.4 Coillte

Coillte continues to demonstrate innovation and cooperation in the management and utilisation of resources under its control. There are however major developments which could be spearheaded by Coillte in Co Meath, external collaboration is the key, therefore the LAG proposes to bridge this gap by seeking to promote developments on woodland properties and at Lough Bracken and other lakes in Co Meath bounded by Coillte properties. Coillte has previously expressed a wish to cooperate and while not possibly being in a position to directly engage community interest in respect of these developments would be amenable to LEADER bridging this developmental barrier.

2.18.5 Garda Síochana

Gaps in capacity due to resource limitations and high levels of criminal and anti-social activity are emerging and are impacting badly on the quality of life enjoyed by rural communities and the health and welfare of the isolated and the elderly. In the main communities are seeking better and more effective means of protecting the vulnerable in society, networking, education and training in the field is required and can be enhanced in terms of quality and reach with LEADER support. LEADER has a proven role to play in energising community cooperation and action, one effect of which is the provision of reassurance and a sense of local security, and a solid platform for the delivery of community policing on the part of An Garda Síochana.

2.18.6 Health Service Executive (HSE)

These are very challenging times for healthcare provision. In consultation with the HSE we find that disadvantaged members of society may be disconnected from the HSE and as a result are losing out on valuable services to which they may be entitled. Rural communities are aware that dissemination of information of public interest by the HSE is moving towards digital communication which the lack of broadband service, non-availability of hardware and lack of training will make access to information even more difficult, this is becoming a growing issue for certain sectors in society. LEADER can do much to bridge this information gap, the HSE is a willing partner, those organisations with community resources are essential partners, and combined these partners can improve on access to information through a community service model wherein the interface between the service provider and the customer can be effectively bridged. The LAG intends to address this need through improved three way collaboration.

2.18.7 Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

The Department of Agriculture has significant resources at its disposal which are of significant benefit to the rural economy. In respect of smaller targeted support programmes, intermediaries such as Local Action Groups can build a much stronger connection between eligible beneficiaries and the rather distant call for proposals engagement strategy employed by the Department. Many such calls can go unnoticed or close before eligible proposals can be prepared. Capacity building on the part of the LAG can include the animation of alternative funding resources which add value to the LDS and result in achieving more with less.

2.18.8 Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

During the period 2007-2013 the funding of local heritage became the preserve of the LEADER Programme. If during the period 2014-2020 the Department intends to resume direct funding of heritage projects this would offer a great opportunity to explore collaborative activities and potentially co-funding of projects of major importance. This approach would eliminate duplication, stretch the capacity of public funds and pool available expertise. On the occasion of the Department's discontinuation of grant aid it was found that the extensive expertise evident within the Department did not travel to engage with LEADER funded projects, greater collaboration would overcome this issue.

2.18.9 Bord na Móna

Bord na Móna is assisting in the provision of facilities to provide protective access to bogland habitats and environments which in turn is facilitating community recreation and rural tourism enterprise. The expertise and knowledge held by Bord na Móna would contribute greatly to the enhancement of Meath's many smaller bogland habitats and could be achieved by an adoptive process involving the Local Action Group, environmental interests, and resident communities. Collaboration of this nature would bridge the knowledge gap and make available the specialised equipment held by Bord na Móna.

2.18.10 Department of Social Protection

Deeply rooted in local communities the Department of Social Protection is strongly inclined towards partnership working at local level with NGOs and community bodies. We note that the OECD advise that those most severely disadvantaged are not engaged to the extent that they should with DSP services, the LAG is well placed to assist in overcoming this service engagement gap and will utilise its deep rapport with rural communities in overcoming this service engagement issue.

2.18.11 Údaras na Gáeltachta

Údaras na Gáeltachta are effectively engaged with the Gaeltacht communities of Baile Ghib and Rathcairn. In consultation with Údaras the LAG has agreed to support these Gaeltacht communities in close consultation with Údaras in order to provide a seamless package of support and eliminate the potential for duplication.

2.18.12 Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI)

The SEAI offers a wide package of supports to communities and enterprises alike. The provision of assistance to community bodies upgrading community facilities and to micro-enterprise is where LEADER has been requested to focus its attention. SEAI have technical and analytical expertise which would greatly assist and reduce the cost of LEADER funded operations. Technical assistance from SEAI in this context would address a specific developmental need. Such collaboration would also provide an information platform through which duplication could be effectively avoided.

2.18.13 Louth Meath Education and Training Bord

Research demonstrates that distance from education and training provision is a barrier for the disadvantaged, therefore there is a need to reach out to these target groups at the very local level. Research also demonstrates that community leaders and those in society with sectoral responsibility be it sporting, environmental, educational or recreational carry great weight, especially with the disadvantaged young and are capable of obtaining positive outcomes where their influence is harnessed. The LMETB is committed to outreach and the LAG working with the community can break through this needs barrier and assist in placing the disadvantaged on a sustainable education or career path.

2.18.14 Meath County Council

The operation of the LCDC and its make-up will lead to the elimination of duplication as between LEADER and the services offered by the Local Authority and other agencies. This will lead to a better understanding of need, eliminate gaps and lead to more focused investment plans.

2.18.15 Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

Historically in Co Meath the relationship between the former CEB and LEADER has been very close, and both LEADER and the LEO are committed to entering into a sectoral agreement and to continuing to operate a shared database of applications for aid as a practical step in eliminating duplication. The major gap in respect of LEADER has been its confinement to assisting micro-enterprise cutting those LEADER enterprises who attain growth adrift without support; a policy change has overcome this gap and the matter of a shared responsibility for SMEs will be managed very carefully. Future co-operation will be framed within the DJEI DECLG protocol for LEADER.

2.18.16 Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)

The most obvious need within the NGO sector is access to resources. This manifests itself as a gap in service provision relating to capacity to serve the numbers of individuals and families requiring assistance. The LCDC as the LAG is well placed to bridge this resource gap through enhanced training and capacity building to enable NGO's gain access to the numerous EU Programmes which specifically target the needs of many NGO clients in Co Meath. Co Meath does not enjoy the benefit of a Local Employment Service Network or Local Training Initiative; these gaps in service remain to be filled.

2.18.17 Community and Voluntary Sector

Service provision by the community and voluntary sector can be greatly extended beyond current levels, from the foregoing and looking to the future better organised communities with a good grasp of the role of community enterprise, can do much to improve the quality of life in rural areas. During the course of our extensive consultation process the people of Co Meath repeatedly pointed out that they are the county's primary resource and should be treated as such in meeting the challenge on delivering on the LEADER mission statement for 2014-2020. Failure to fully realise the potential this resource offers has been cited as a policy gap and societal need during the consultation process.

2.19 Concise Summary of Area Needs Analysis

County Meath has a large population relative to other counties in Ireland, and one that has grown significantly in its recent history. While all of the county's residents live in rural areas as defined for the LEADER and RDP programmes, the population size and growth has in part been the result of the county's proximity and accessibility to Dublin and the capital's strength and growth as an urban centre. The county's relationship with Dublin is a key dynamic affecting many aspects of economic and social life and activity, however alongside many characteristics that are indigenous to the county and reflect its rural status, location within Ireland, and unique history and heritage.

Key socio-economic characteristics of the county include:

- a growing population but with unevenly spread growth, concentrated in a number of towns, in areas closest to Dublin, and in areas most accessible to major road networks;
- a high dependency on the private car for transport, and high levels of outward commuting to Dublin for employment purposes among county residents;
- above-average employment levels among residents in sectors that include agri-food, mining and quarrying, manufacturing, and transport and distribution;
- close to average levels of unemployment throughout the county but with pockets where levels are significantly above average;
- a mixed base of economic assets, activities and sectors located within and employing residents of the county, including many typical of rural areas of Ireland including agriculture, food production and tourism;
- a strong underlying asset base, including with respect to the population and workforce, the agricultural base, the natural environment, a unique history and wealth of heritage assets of national and international standing, and an advantageous location within Ireland with strong linkages into regional and national infrastructure networks.

The county has many towns and villages dispersed throughout its territory, and there is evidence of a geographical relationship between their location relevant to the Dublin suburban area and their level of population growth, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and status. Towns and villages to the south-east of the county tend to have the highest populations of working age and proportions that are economically active, have generally higher levels of educational achievement, and higher proportions employed in

professional and managerial occupations. Family structures in these towns are more balanced with higher numbers of households with children and lower numbers of single-person households.

Towns and villages more distant from Dublin in the north-western half of the county tend to have older populations, a narrower range of sectors employing residents, and lower levels of population growth and the development that accompanies it. While such patterns aren't absolute they are nonetheless quite apparent, and they give rise to different development challenges for the diverse towns and villages of the county and the development of the rural hinterlands which they serve. A similar geographical pattern is evident among the towns and villages with respect to ICT usage within households, and broadband internet connectivity, raising challenges with regard to the capacity of the telecommunications network, as well as those concerning ICT uptake, training, and confidence among different cohorts within the population.

A key weakness of the county has been its relatively poor performance in attracting foreign direct investment relative to other parts of Ireland, and an important aim of the county strategy for economic development prepared by Meath County Council is to rectify this and enhance the county's FDI attractiveness.

There are a number of key sectors indigenous to rural Meath that hold significant local economic potential and that have already begun to emerge as genuine reflections of the underlying resources and advantages with which the county is endowed.

The tourism sector is strong and benefits from the county's proximity to Dublin and its strong transport links, its abundance of historic and heritage attractions, some important contemporary attractions (such as Tayto Park), and its natural environment, river valleys and attractive scenery. Recent and prospective trends are positive in line with the recovery in tourism performance nationally. Notwithstanding this, there is much evidence of the sector failing to reach its potential, with too narrow a set of attractions, too great a dependence on day-trip tourists, and an underdeveloped tourism identity unique to Meath.

The county has a growing artisan food production sector with a wide range of products and producers, as well as processes and networks facilitating shared services, promotion initiatives and showcasing events and festivals. Its further development as a successful indigenous and rural niche sector will require support for existing and new businesses, the further development of supportive downstream and upstream services, and the capturing of economies of scale through collaborative networks and co-ordinated marketing and promotion.

There is also a small but growing indigenous niche in the creative and craft sectors, but one well positioned to emerge as a regional sector of note as creative industries grow as expected nationally. The equine sector in Meath is similarly quite distinct, of significant scale, and deeply embedded in the rural economy, with a growing number of similar businesses and related businesses and specialist providers serving them. Economic opportunities that are emerging from the strengthening focus and priority status of environmental protection and climate change mitigation are also pertinent in rural Meath as throughout rural Ireland. Such opportunities exist in renewable energy, energy-efficient products, environmental services and environmental technologies, as well as many others.

The rural development needs and opportunities of the County for the period 2015-2020 are therefore wide and varied, but also offer much on which to generate lasting impacts and changes that provide rural areas with the economic, social and environmental platform for future prosperity and the realisation of real, indigenous potential.

Chapter 3: Participative Planning

The Local Development Strategy was prepared utilising an open and broadly based consultative process following the bottom-up principle of LEADER, providing residents of the county with an opportunity to engage in the preparation of the LDS, including representatives of public sector organisations, business, voluntary bodies, social partners and local people.

The consultation process was conducted by Meath Partnership throughout County Meath between August and November 2015. It must be stressed that the primary aim of this consultative process was to assess community opinion and sentiment. While measuring community sentiment is not an entirely scientific process it does offer a crucial insight into the everyday reality of life in the various communities. Communities who are positively disposed to their everyday reality are more likely to foster and encourage greater participation; higher levels of volunteerism; and a positive outlook for the future. The consultation process was multi-faceted and comprised the following elements:

3.1 Consultation Process

In order to ensure that the highest possible levels of stakeholder engagement were achieved, the consultation process was advertised extensively in local media, through social media and on noticeboards in agencies and organisations throughout the county. Additionally, direct mailing of community groups, project promoters, public representatives and organisations was used to inform them of upcoming workshops in their area. Every effort was expended to ensure maximum participation at the workshops held throughout the county and in excess of 300 expressions of interest and submissions were completed by Meath-based organisations at or proceeding these events.

Workshops were held in the evening at appropriate local venues. The world café methodology was utilised to ensure maximum engagement and interaction at each session with trained facilitators moderating the workshops. Consultation workshops comprised a general introduction to the LEADER 2014 - 2020 Programme, the parameters for LEADER investment in terms of themes and funding packages followed by an interactive facilitated session assisting participants to responding and put forward ideas and proposals.

The location and date of the major public workshops is set out below:

- Kells - Headfort Hotel – 21st October 2015
- Ashbourne – Pillo Hotel – 22nd October 2015
- East Meath – Glenside Hotel – 27th October 2015
- Trim – Trim Castle Hotel – 28th October 2015
- Enfield – Johnstown House Hotel – 29th October 2015
- Navan – Newgrange Hotel – 24th November 2015
- Dunboyne - Dunboyne Castle Hotel – 26th November 2015

The county-wide consultation process involved a total of 20 workshops and events and was designed to ensure that the voice and opinions of the hard to reach, eligible beneficiaries, project promoters and relevant stakeholders throughout Meath could be animated, documented and collated to inform future investment policy and service provision support within the Local Development Strategy. The process began in earnest in August 2015 and seven large-scale public meetings were arranged across the County. In addition to the workshops organised, a public notice for submissions and expressions of interest was also widely advertised and circulated.

Meetings were by and large well attended with a broad representation of community organisations, community support groups, special interest groups and individuals that comprise rural and urban communities in Meath. The interest in the process at local level was clearly evidenced by the broad range of different organisations who attended and with an average attendance of 60 persons per meeting across the county.

3.2 Sectoral Consultation

Thematic workshops were facilitated in the areas of food, agriculture, business development, tourism, social enterprise, social inclusion and heritage and environment. These workshops were facilitated by staff and board members of Meath Partnership, and existing project promoters were on hand to answer questions and offer advice in the workshop setting. Following the workshops, each facilitation team from Meath Partnership completed a brief report capturing the core themes, issues and future developmental needs under each area addressed and this information has been incorporated into the needs and priorities section below.

With regards to the food and tourism sector we instigated a number of key informant interviews with personnel from the Meath Artisan Food Network, Bord Bia, Meath Tourism and Fáilte Ireland to establish their strategic objectives, identify areas for potential collaboration and establish areas of demarcation to prevent overlap and duplication. Staff within Meath Partnership have also attended various seminars and conferences organised by these agencies to keep informed of the latest sectoral trends and new initiatives launched

in the county; due consideration has been given to this information in the context of the Local Development Strategy.

In relation to agriculture, Meath Partnership attended a workshop with the Irish Farmers Association membership and explored potentially suitable diversification and biodiversity activities in County Meath and the potential for future investment under LEADER whether on an individual or collective basis. Future training needs of the farming sector were also highlighted and have been documented.

In respect of social inclusion workshops targeting the disadvantaged and hard to reach were organised in key locations with the needs and findings emerging discussed in detail with relevant organisations and agencies including the HSE, LMETB and DSP at a consultative event which took place on the 11th November 2015.

Bi-lateral Key Informant Meetings were also held with the following agencies and sectoral interests:

- Members of the LCDC
- Meath County Council
- Meath LEO
- Meath Tourism
- County Heritage Officer
- Fáilte Ireland
- Teagasc
- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)
- Irish Farmers Association
- Bord Bia
- FLAG for East Meath
- Department of Social Protection
- Louth Meath Education and Training Board
- Health Service Executive
- Secretariat of the PPN
- Meath Laterlife Network
- Chamber of Commerce in Meath (including those in Navan, Kells and Ashbourne)
- All councillors, TDs, Senator and MEPs

The consultation methods implemented in the development of the Local Development Strategy were as follows:

- Local community meetings facilitated at municipality level
- Stakeholder workshops with a number of different groups or involving specific sectors on their own
- Consulting stakeholder representatives on the Meath Partnership board and sub-committees
- One-to-one interviews
- Thematic round-table events
- Small focus group interview
- Reviewing written documentation, minutes, research and previous studies

- Policy analysis and research audit
- Advertisements in local papers/ radio for written submissions
- Direct personal contact particularly targeting the hard to reach

3.3 Social Inclusion and the Hard to Reach

The Local Development Strategy formulation guidance provided by Pobal emphasises how important it is that the LAG utilises appropriate methodologies for engaging with 'hard to reach' communities so that opportunities can be created to enhance their participation in strategy development.

The LAG in respecting this important requirement adopted a number of specific methodologies and follow through actions in prioritising the hard to reach including the following examples:

- Generation of a database of 1800 community and voluntary groups and representative networks proofed carefully for the inclusion of groupings representing or working with those experiencing social exclusion or disadvantage including hard to reach communities and those enduring hidden marginalisation.
- The strategic selection of locations for the six very large consultative events to maximise the opportunity to participate for the hard to reach, the disadvantaged and their representative groups and networks. Dedicated marketing of these opportunities directly to these target groups including personal contact and facilitative local transport arrangements.
- These large consultative events were structured to enable a whole of meeting focus on the LEADER themes in a sequential and dedicated format. Facilitators with specialised experience and knowledge were attached to specific target groups in attendance, this assisted greatly in ensuring that issues relating to social inclusion and the voice of the disadvantaged and hard to reach were considered and heard to the greatest extent possible during the course of these major events.

In addition to these major events, a series of localised events dedicated to specific communities of place were held with event location based on demographic data relating to deprivation and the presence of disadvantaged cohorts in the local community. In this context local community leaders and relevant organisations were encouraged to play an important role in reaching out to specific cohorts to secure their participation in these events in addition to standard communication systems. This approach facilitated a direct conservation with disadvantaged communities and the hard to reach.

A further step in this consultation process involved direct thematic engagement with the many organisations and publicly funded NGO's whose remit extends to servicing target groups many of whom could be described as hard to reach. This was a valuable consultative experience as the LAG gained first-hand knowledge of existing engagement methodologies and the level of success attained. This learning pointed to a need for greater local community involvement in the engagement process and the need for capacity building in this context.

The next step in this process involved thematic consultative sessions with State Agencies principally the Department of Social Protection, HSE and Louth Meath Education and

Training Board. This process involved an examination of the communication and outreach policies of these three agencies in which it emerged that DSP and the HSE are moving more towards on line communication technology which due to digital divide issues might further disadvantage the hard to reach. The agencies concerned were most anxious to collaborate on improving engagement with the hard to reach hence the LDS now contains proposals to address this matter. The LMETB wished to extend outreach training provision and again plans have been laid in respect of LEADER actions to service greater LMETB engagement with the hard to reach and disadvantaged communities.

An additional methodological approach included the categorisation of the database of 1800 community and voluntary bodies and representative networks and the targeted issuing of a request for submissions and expressions of interest of which more than 300 were returned. This targeted approach with local community follow up ensured that feedback from disadvantaged communities was quite strong.

This input is strongly evidenced in elements of the LDS including the SWOT analysis where the following is specifically referenced:

- Need to focus on social, recreational and sporting activity, need to provide enhanced childcare facilities, services for disadvantaged youth, facilities for the elderly in society, provision of education and training and associated outreach facilities, improved primary health care, facilitated access to services and entitlements for the disadvantaged and hard to reach, more resources to encourage integration, greater community involvement in enhancing the social environment.

The collective view of LAG members is that the process and the feedback from the marginalised in society has created a strong community and agency focus on the services and supports required. The need for action in this context has been a recurring theme throughout the consultative process which in itself is an indication that the LAG has succeeded in engaging with the hard to reach and Meath's disadvantaged communities.

While the LDS references six major consultative events in reality a total of twenty consultative events actually took place, an examination of the sign in sheets for the events demonstrates their success in engaging hard to reach communities and disadvantaged cohorts in society.

3.4 Strategy Identification of Needs and Priorities

Preparation of the Local Development Strategy was further supported by the commissioning of research activities on the themes of youth, training and skills development, economic gap analysis coupled with the utilisation of studies and audits funded under the previous LEADER programme in the areas of social enterprise and social finance, rural tourism, habitat management, antiquities, culinary tourism, renewable energies, countryside recreation, historic county homes, the creative sectors and festival development.

It is crucial that the Local Development Strategy prepared for County Meath reflects the outcomes of the engagement processes described with both businesses and communities ensuring that the LDS is able to reinforce territorial coherence and contribute to the long term sustainable development of county Meath. As such, it is intended that the Local Development Strategy for Meath will form part of an overall planning process at local level

that is integrated with planning processes at regional, national and European levels thereby addressing the need for a more integrated approach to support for rural development at sub regional (county) level.

Based on the research conducted by Meath Partnership, the following is a synopsis of the needs and priorities for County Meath for 2014-2020.

3.5 Enterprise and employment

Overall there was welcome for Meath County Council's Economic Development Strategy with its potential to attract large-scale FDI-backed employment in certain areas to reduce the level of commuting and increase the quality of life and levels of community participation. The development of an IT and Broadband infrastructure was deemed crucial for future business success, in terms of start-ups and expansion. Moreover it is also believed that an increase in the amount of land zoned for commercial or industrial purposes; an increase in the number of enterprise centres throughout the county; and the provision of additional affordable micro-enterprise and office units would go a long way towards strengthening the economic base and increasing the number of high quality jobs in the county.

Not all community expressed needs relate to physical development. There are repeated requests for better information provision in the following areas:

- Information on supports and services available to enterprise from state agencies and local government
- Business start-up, with an emphasis on providing a comprehensive stimulus package at the key stages of new business development offering financial assistance in the areas of marketing, IPR, prototyping and equipment
- Funding options and supports for business start-ups with a dedicated venture capital fund for the county to support the development of home-grown enterprises
- Growth of business networks and introduction of a Business Ambassador Programme
- Specific training in tele-sales, customer services and technical support could result in establishing call-centre type businesses in some of the more remote locations throughout the county.
- It is consistently emphasised that County Meath now has a highly skilled workforce and more should be done to provide suitable high value employment for these people within the county, reducing the current economic leakage
- Additionally it is felt that the tourism, outdoor adventure and equine industries could be expanded with appropriate resources and supports.

3.6 Artisan Food Sector

Essential needs to progress and further develop this sector include product development support at an early part of the business development cycle. An increase in seed-funding for this sector could also bring about a number of new businesses. The development of a county Food Hub with laboratory and food technician support was seen as a collective initiative that would support all artisan food producers in the county. The continued community support and promotion of local markets would also assist organic growers and

other specialist food producers bring their produce to the attention of the local consumers. Local collaborative marketing initiatives with a focus on culinary tourism, to include community and artisan food festivals are in need of support. Food tourism champions within the context of Meath's tourism product development could have a key role to play in the LDS.

3.7 Craft and Creative sector

While there is some level of activity in this sector around the county, in the opinion of the craft and creative sector there is a need for a package of development and support programmes. A number of existing craft business were acknowledged but information on their products seems to be specific to their own locality due to the lack of any central marketing strategy or support. There is an expressed need for continued support for annual craft fairs and exhibitions to assist craft workers promote their products, also for the creation of a creative and/or craft hub to be developed on a cooperative basis.

The sector requires support and guidance in areas such as market research, marketing, branding, distribution, premises, training, co-operation and collaboration, and strategic planning, that can bring it to its next stage of success, where sales are increased through a combination of marketing and joint distribution means, new enterprises are encouraged to spawn, and enterprises and entrepreneurs from outside the county are attracted in by the strong traditional base, the evident success of indigenous businesses, and the growing association of the county with creative talent, endeavour and reward.

3.8 Agri-diversification

In general, the overall feeling in the community supports the concept of agri-diversification but recognises that there is a need for greater cooperation between those living in the towns and those in the more rural farming communities. This could be manifested by the further development and support of Farmer Markets which would encourage the diversification into more specialist food areas and organic produce. Adding value to farm produce and support for farm shops was also highlighted. The continued promotion of agri-tourism is seen as essential if a successful niche tourism sector is to be fostered and developed. Finally the role of farm families in terms of protecting and maintaining Meath's local biodiversity was referenced throughout the consultation events and greater training, support and awareness raising of this role was called for.

3.9 Tourism

County Meath is steeped in history, heritage and folklore with a most amazing collection of ruins, ancient burial grounds, round towers, castles and artefacts dotted with considerable regularity across its landscape. As a county it has a lot to offer much of which, in the opinion of respondents, is not yet being exploited. What is needed to maximise the tourism potential of the county is an integrated rural tourism strategy that feeds off Failte Ireland's Ancient East Initiative.

There are a number of infrastructural projects that were identified such as festivals, tourist trails, historical walking trails, greenways, bog walks - each to be clearly marked and branded. More benefit could be derived from the range of festivals that take place throughout

the year if proper marketing support was made available to festival committees many of whom operate on a purely voluntary basis.

Recreational and outdoor activity-based tourism is under-developed in the opinion of some respondents with no real development plan in place for fishing and angling which at one time was a significant tourist attraction in the county. Golfing holidays, horse-riding and pony trekking, horse racing and yachting are all listed as areas that could be further developed and capitalised on.

3.10 Traffic and infrastructure

There is an overall demand for a more integrated transport system to co-ordinate bus and train timetables and to provide adequate park and ride facilities to reduce traffic volumes. Suggestions ranged from parking facilities, traffic calming measures, designated pedestrian zones and integrated cycle ways. The provision of properly lit and maintained bus shelters is also highlighted as is the expansion of the bus service in general.

Infrastructural deficits indicated by respondents include sewage capacity, waste management, footpaths, fresh water supplies and electricity, broadband and community-based security systems.

3.11 Village enhancement

There are a wide range of village enhancement needs identified by the community these mainly relate to streetscape improvements, planting schemes, maintenance and planting of grass verges at the entrance into villages, appropriate signage, upgrade of derelict sites/buildings, etc. There is also a need for the development of village greens as focal points in communities with appropriate sculptures, seating and lighting. Feedback also identifies a need to expand footpaths and lighting to new residential estates on the edge of many towns and villages.

Moving away from the physical improvements and enhancement works, local communities indicated a need to support initiatives promoting community spirit and cohesion, local volunteering and active citizenship and creating a sense of identity and sense of place at village or town level.

3.12 Civic amenity areas and children's playgrounds

The demand for additional civic amenity areas and children's playgrounds is county-wide.

In many towns and villages the only real civic areas are existing sports facilities which in many cases are now over-subscribed and need additional pitches and club rooms. Green spaces within the towns and villages are generally of poor quality and need upgrading as is the case with other existing facilities like tennis courts and community buildings.

There is a feeling that if a wider range of small grants were made available to community and resident's groups, significant improvement of public spaces could be achieved with an ensuing sense of ownership among communities to maintain and safeguard the future of these areas. Support for local bio-diversity plans and the creation of bio-diversity parks was identified.

Increase in the usage of existing facilities through wider access to community facilities for all interested groups; investment in youth-related facilities and activities, and properly planned maintenance programmes for existing amenity areas, woodland areas and walkways.

3.13 Culture and heritage

There is a very strong community opinion about the promotion and protection of the local cultural heritage. Almost every community meeting identified specific sites, buildings and artefacts of significant cultural or heritage value and importance.

Priority areas of work include the drafting of action plans to enlist local support for the redevelopment, restoration and sign-posting of key places of cultural or heritage value such as old cemeteries including the interpretation and protection of medieval headstones; restoration of old historical buildings to use as community facilities with cultural and heritage exhibitions; erection of information boards to mark areas of particular importance like battle sites, etc.; branding of local heritage and monastic trails with site maps on village greens.

There are also suggestions for the drafting of a full suite of local histories to include oral histories throughout the county and the training and marketing of local guides to facilitate tourism development. Additional financial support and sponsorship is also needed to continue developing traditional festivals and invest in local bespoke museums. It is suggested that there is also a need for more contemporary culture to be promoted along with other traditions like music, drama, dance and storytelling.

3.14 Community facilities

The range and scope of requests for community facilities is significant. While there are areas throughout the county where there is currently little or no provision in many of the towns and villages there are existing community buildings that could be renovated, upgraded or extended. Additionally a number of old derelict buildings were identified that could be restored and used for community purposes. In some areas existing facilities were operating at full capacity making it difficult for new emerging community groups to access a suitable meeting place. Another key issue for many of the existing buildings is the lack of disability access. Four of the main expressed needs throughout the research were the need for dedicated youth facilities; fully equipped training rooms with an ICT focus; additional childcare facilities and also the need for suitable older people drop-in, meeting and socialising venues.

Overall the needs expressed highlight the demand for quality, multi-modal, multi-purpose and functional community facilities that are an open resource for local communities providing information, training and social networking.

3.15 Social, recreational and sports

There is a strong emphasis on the provision of additional low-budget/affordable sports facilities with respondents indicating consistent need for additional pitches and facilities for all sports and leisure activities with particular emphasis on all weather surfaces to cater for the increased demand. In the area of general recreational amenities there are needs expressed for outdoor amenity and activity centres as suitable activities for teenagers apart from the sports related ones which are in short supply (Scouts, etc.).

Assistance is also required to support those trying to establish new clubs and organisations throughout the county with core training provision for coaches and leaders identified as a high-priority need. It is also clear that the whole area of arts, music and drama is poorly catered for and supported. There is a very strong focus on supports and services needed for marginalised groups and those considered hard to reach.

3.16 Renewable energies

There is significant interest expressed in renewable and alternative energy schemes like wood energy, wind turbines, solar panels and bio-fuels and also the need for community energy awareness, management and implementation. It is also suggested that any refurbishment or development of community facilities should incorporate the demonstration of renewable energy features to improve local knowledge and understanding of potential benefits that could derive from the use of these energy sources.

3.17 Conclusion

There are certain recurring themes that stand out and can act as pointers for moving forward. For example, the need for strategic county wide planning and networking around key areas like youth services, services for the elderly, the provision of adequate affordable childcare, appropriate training provision, the hard to reach, the development and/or refurbishment of community facilities, coordinated information provision, fostering growth of the volunteer base and supporting further economic development, is abundantly obvious from the responses collated.

It is impractical to expect that all the needs identified by those who participated in this research can be addressed by the LEADER Programme but the role of the Local Action Group has the capacity and potential to leverage resources, services and programmes whether additional or mainstream to address the range of needs identified in the LDS. It is hoped that the LDS will act as a stimulus to LAG member agencies to enhance their own service offering thereby addressing other associated persistent issues.

3.18 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis presented below has been informed by the results of the consultation workshops and meetings, analysis of key strategies at local level namely the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), Meath Economic Development Strategy and the County Development Plan combined with business and operational intelligence gathered over the previous LEADER Programme 2007-2013. The SWOT Analysis has been aligned to the core themes of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020.

Strengths	
Enterprise	- Growing and diverse rural economy - Business embracing new technologies, farming, renewables etc. - Robust indigenous business base with strong micro-enterprise interest - Predominantly agricultural county with strong farming sector - Good farms and food producers with varied farming & high quality arable land supporting high quality crops and livestock - Strong Artisan Food sector - Dynamic Equine industry

	• Burgeoning craft brewing & distilling industry • Attractions linked to Artisan Food and Culinary Tourism e.g. Sheridan's Cheesemongers, Lismullin Culinary School • Strong entrepreneurial talent
Tourism & Heritage	• UNESCO World Heritage Site • Strong built and natural heritage sector/Neolithic sites • Attractive contemporary attractions in Tayto Park, Causey Farm and others • Coastline, beautiful beaches and water based recreation • Excellent hospitality sector/local hospitality • Good quality golf courses/race courses/sporting amenities • High quality accommodation and a good mix of provision • The Boyne Valley and Ireland's Ancient East • Excellent network of local festivals within the county
Location	• Proximity to Dublin/Dublin Airport • Excellent transport network • Well serviced population centres (shopping, services etc.)
Environment	• Unspoiled, undeveloped rural areas • Very little large industry in rural areas • Boyne River and associated activities i.e. water sports • Royal Canal • Clean ground water/water resources • Biodiversity and ecological features • Excellent angling in north Meath/Lake network
Community Action	• Strong community sense of pride • Track record and ethos of volunteering • Growing emphasis on social inclusion throughout the county • GAA involvement in local communities
Social	• Well educated populace • Young population • Close to excellent 2nd and 3rd level education • Diverse population • County is affluent in terms of personal wealth
Weaknesses	
Enterprise	• Small enterprise has limited access to capital for R&D • Expanding enterprise tends to move from rural areas to larger urban areas • Poor awareness of funding opportunities available to micro-enterprise and SME's • Chambers of Commerce infrastructure and supports to be improved • Available jobs in county perceived to be low quality and low pay • Limited supports for start-ups/entrepreneurs • No artistic hub & lack of support for craft/creative industries • No rural hubs for industry/enterprise • No cohesive strategy to drive enterprise investment in the county
Tourism & Heritage	• Uncoordinated approach to tourism offering within the County e.g. branding, marketing • Shortage of low cost tourism accommodation e.g. caravan park /campsite • County suffers from 'drive through' tourism • Hidden heritage i.e. built and natural heritage which is being ignored or under utilised

	• Too much reliance/focus on Newgrange • Arts and culture not being properly promoted • No county museum to showcase what the county has to offer given that it is the Heritage Capital of Ireland • Cycle / walk ways not fully developed or used • Gateway potential of the Boyne Valley not explored • Royal Canal not being used to full potential
Location	• Large population centres tend to be dormitory towns • Public transport services for rural areas extremely poor • Local rural roads have suffered from low investment • Poor rural broadband and mobile services – restricts rural enterprise and community activities • Remoteness can lead to social isolation in some areas • Motorway tolls prohibit extensive use by local residents • Lack of Garda/crime prevention resources in the county • Planning process seems to be uncoordinated
Environment	• Underutilised natural resources • Deficient infrastructure for water and sewage disposal leading to pollution of valuable natural resources • Poor environmental care initiatives with serious issues with illegal waste disposal in rural areas • Lack of urban green spaces • Beach maintenance is non-existent, left up to volunteer groups • Extreme wind farms
Community Action	• Lack of local experience of CLLD approach to funding • Support for community & voluntary groups diminishing • Emphasis being placed on social inclusion groups rather than community and voluntary sector as a whole (specifically relating to the PPN structure) • Inequitable distribution of funding for community organisations i.e. MCC, Sports Council funding • MCC not perceived to be proactive enough in supporting rural communities and investing in social inclusion and community development
Social	• Lack of facilities or supports for ageing population • Social integration can present a problem in rural areas • Ageing community facilities in a poor state of repair • Poor accessibility to rural services • No 3rd level education in the county • Lack of youth supports/initiatives • Inadequate primary care/hospital services • Services/facilities for youth not spread evenly throughout the county
Opportunities	
Enterprise	• Collective enterprise marketing has the potential to significantly boost investment / interest in the county • Innovative and dynamic breed of new entrepreneurs that need to be supported • Increased interest in 'buying local' artisan food and drink products • Increased consumer interest in convenience and added value food • Expanding Artisan Food & Craft sector has the potential to provide high quality jobs and further investment in Meath
Tourism & Heritage	• High potential of undeveloped/underutilised heritage sites

	• Significant interest in 'Irelands Ancient East' proposal
	• Provision of lost cost, accessible tourist accommodation/campsites has the potential to significantly increase time spent in the county by visitors
Location	• Proximity to Dublin offers significant opportunities to attract inward investment for Co. Meath • Excellent global links via Dublin Port/Airport
Environment	• Improvement of water quality/usage of water resources • Growing demand for products with a low environmental impact i.e. sustainable food sources, wood, natural products • Increasing demand for sustainable energy actions in both private and community settings e.g. rainwater harvesting, biomass, wind power etc.
Community Action	• Ageing/retired population remaining active for longer has positive impact on voluntary & community involvement
Social	• Increasing population has benefits for increasing spend within the local economy • Growing number of commuters bringing earnings back in to county
Threats	
Enterprise	• Level of education within current workforce - county suffering from 'brain drain' due to lack of highly skilled jobs in manufacturing, IT and tertiary services • Financial institution lending to micro-enterprise & SME's restricts access to match funding for projects • Potential return to economic decline rather than growth • Possible change of government policy/supports after 2016 election • Poor communications/broadband networks acting as an inhibitor for rural micro-enterprise
Tourism & Heritage	• Difficulty accessing funding for heritage projects/red tape/paperwork • Decrease in domestic tourism within the county as economy improves and people consider holidaying abroad • No cohesive, structured approach to tourism/heritage across statutory agencies/actors within the county
Location	• Increased commuting out of county as Dublin continues to grow, leading to more dormitory towns & villages
Environment	• Potential rise in sea level has ramifications for coastal communities and habitats – erosion is a problem in a number of habitats • Continued inaction in respect of river/lake/canal works has the potential to cause irreparable damage • Unmanaged growth of urban areas may exceed the capacity of natural environment actions and eco-system services required to cope with significant impacts on the county • Increase in population in urban population centres resulting in land conversion from productive economic use
Community Action	• Lack of proper community facilities adversely affecting social inclusion activities, community engagement, integration and service provision
Social	• Ageing population puts pressure on services • Lack of impetus on a local level has the potential to cause lethargy in respect of volunteering and community activism • Increasing house prices in commuter belt • Poor local transport infrastructure makes access to rural services/locations more difficult • Reduction in public spending/LEADER funding puts additional pressure on existing community led social services

Chapter 4: LDS Action Plan

4.1   Strategic Framework

The current challenges of rural development in County Meath are not unique to it, nor unique to the 2015-2020 programme period. Enhancing the quality of life and economic well-being of a population living in a predominantly rural county and whose resources and potential are constrained by virtue of relative isolation, remoteness and dispersed communities and economic activity remain the fundamental purpose of rural development policies and programmes in Meath, in Ireland, and elsewhere, and countering both the causes of continual urbanisation and their negative effects on rural areas in ways that provide a sustainable and self-sustaining alternative remains the starting point for rural development aspiration and ambition. Fundamental processes and aspects of effective rural development will continue to centre on the provision of local economic opportunity, the encouragement and support of community action and interaction, the diversification of economic activity from least to most sustainable forms, and the widening of access to and engagement with services, supports and social and economic networks among rural dwellers.

In formulating and articulating the strategic framework within and around which Meath's local development strategy for the period 2015-2020 is positioned, a number of key considerations provide the frame of reference:

- the cycle and phase of national development and the development of all rural areas that will characterise Ireland over the period;
- Meath's location within Ireland, its profile (Chapter 2), its rural structure, its natural and socio-economic asset base, and its unique characteristics;
- the local development objectives of LEADER, at National and EU level for the period 2015-2020, and the LEADER themes and sub-themes within Ireland's Rural Development Programme;
- the wider objectives of Ireland's Rural Development Programme for the period, and national rural development goals, objectives and policies, for example as articulated in the CEDRA report;
- the consultative feedback and findings (Chapter 3) relating to the county's contemporary needs, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and
- the knowledge and experience of the LAG and Meath Partnership regarding rural development processes, capacities and opportunities in the county, and of development initiatives, processes and capacities that are evolving in and throughout the county as the new 2014-2020 programme transitions from its predecessors.

Strategic Framework Model
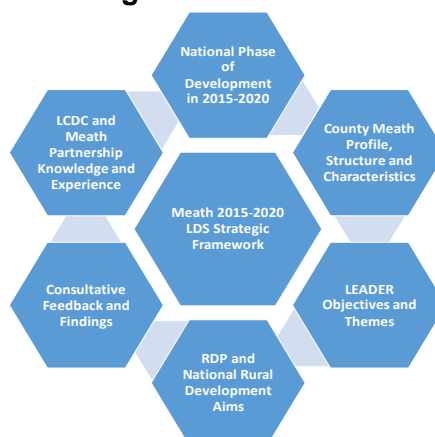
The period of the last programme (2007-13) began with Ireland continuing to experience strong economic growth following the prolonged period of expansion that began in the mid-1990s, and planning for the 2007-13 EU funding and programming round originally took place very much in this benign economic climate. However the international and national economic crisis quickly turned this context around quite comprehensively, and Ireland entered its worst and most dramatic recession, characterised by economic decline, a banking crisis, a national budgetary crisis, a property collapse, a labour market crisis characterised by spiralling unemployment and emigration, and a period of external financial support and national austerity, and these conditions dominated most of the period of the last rural development programme. Only in its final stages did conditions begin to indicate a national recovery was underway, and in very recent times the evidence is of a strong and strengthening national economic recovery that, while still occurring against the backdrop of the most severe recession Ireland has experienced, is nevertheless broadly-based, accelerating, positively and strongly impacting the labour market and the national debt and budgetary position, and surpassing the expectations of most observers and experts.

The national setting for local and rural development is therefore currently pointing towards a new cycle of renewal and optimism, and of opportunity and growth, although the lessons of unsustainable growth, of geographically uneven growth, and of the fragility of economic conditions more generally, are still likely to influence confidence and sentiment to a large extent. Similarly, development and growth that is sustainable in the widest sense, and the need to ensure policies, programmes, plans, and processes have the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions, are inescapable lessons from Ireland's recent experience in both national and rural development.

Meath's status, structure and position within this national setting is also central in framing the strategic approach to the local development strategy. Situated very proximate to Dublin city and forming a substantial geographical part of the Greater Dublin Area, the influence of Dublin is very strong although both positive and negative, and by no means uniform throughout the county. Much of the south and south-east of county Meath takes the form commonly characterised as a peri-urban rural structure[1], characterised by a high proportion of employment outside agriculture, above average levels of education, and employment within more advanced sectors and services, but all of which relates to the strong commuter pull of Dublin with much of the economic activity of residents occurring outside the county.

The rural structure of areas of the county more distant from Dublin to the north and west predominantly constitute relatively strong agricultural areas characterised by a resilient agricultural base but with a propensity for diversification away from agriculture and a transition towards non-agricultural activities. Other specific areas and pockets display weaker socio-economic structures both within small towns and in rural areas where there is a continuing dependence on low-output agriculture, a poor age structure and low levels of self-employment or employment in secondary or tertiary sectors.

These rural structures quite consistently define rural county Meath relative to rural Ireland as a whole, over a timeframe beyond relatively short-term economic cycles. Equally important

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[1] One of a number of rural structure typologies developed as an input to the National Spatial Strategy launched in 2002.

issues that must inform the strategic approach are those relating to Meath's unique experience of the recent economic waves and troughs, the contemporary asset and resource endowment of the county, and the distinct effects of the past five to ten years within Meath on its development capacity and potential over the medium term. Addressing unemployment, underemployment, migration, low levels of investment and entrepreneurship, education, training, upskilling and reskilling, growing age dependency, and limited employment in high-value added industry and services are all challenges for the county emerging from the economic crisis of 2008-2013, while a strong but perhaps underutilised human, historical, natural and tourism resource base combined with an advantageous physical location within Ireland provide significant assets and development enablers.

The local strategic approach must also relate strongly to the EU and national aims of LEADER for the period. Ireland's Rural Development Programme has been designed in a way intended to achieve and complement rural development objectives at EU level as set out in the EU Regulation. The objective most relevant to LEADER is to achieve "a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment."

Under Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-20, LEADER is to be delivered in furtherance of the sixth rural development priority agreed at EU level, namely "promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas, with a focus on the following areas:
- facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises, as well as job creation;
- fostering local development in rural areas;
- enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies in rural areas.

In this regard the LEADER measure within Ireland's Programme is to "fund initiatives emerging from a community led local development approach at local level that aim to address the needs of individual sub regional areas. These local objectives will be specific to each individual area but will contribute to both the aims and objectives of each individual LDS as well as addressing social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development of rural areas as outlined in the programme priority".

As well as these EU and national priorities, the LEADER themes and sub-themes developed at a national level also define the scope of appropriate local activities and define the framework for local strategic planning. The themes and sub-themes are:
- Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
  - Rural Tourism
  - Enterprise Development
  - Broadband
  - Rural Towns
- Social Inclusion
  - Basic Services for hard to reach communities
  - Rural Youth
- Rural Environment

- o Water Resources
- o Biodiversity
- o Renewable Energy
- Support for Food Producers
  - o Artisan Producers
  - o Regional Product Development
  - o Marketing and Processing in Strategic Sectors

Alongside these EU regulatory and policy objectives for rural development supported by the EAFRD over the period, national research and strategies for rural development are important considerations for establishing local aims and goals. With regard to the economic development of rural Ireland, the CEDRA report adopted the following vision statement:

"Rural Ireland will become a dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi-sector economy supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a quality of life with an energised relationship between rural and urban Ireland which will contribute to its sustainability for the benefit of society as a whole"

Major themes of the CEDRA report, and its recommendations to Government, that are relevant to optimum local and county-level strategic development planning, include the following:
- the need for highly-integrated and co-ordinated rural economic development efforts on the part of all agencies and bodies with development responsibilities;
- the important relationship between rural towns and their rural hinterlands, and the need to focus on these geographically-defined areas of identifiable community and economic activity that are functionally- (rather than administratively-) defined locations and areas;
- the need to stimulate rural towns and support their revitalisation as a catalyst for wider economic development of rural areas;
- the appropriateness of a community-led local development model to rural economic development policy and efforts, and the need for a programme of community capacity building to underpin this, including for leadership and governance training, the development of community structures and participative planning, and specific training initiatives, as well as more widely-defined capacity building in rural communities;
- recognition of the role and importance of social enterprise to rural economic development, and the need for policies and programmes to focus on supporting social enterprises at all stages including conception and later evolution;
- the need for enabling processes, supports and services, including broadband, other infrastructure, transport, finance, and education and training; and
- specific programmes to energise and drive the growth of sectors and sub-sectors central to Ireland's rural economic resource base and potential, including food, creative industries, tourism, marine and renewable energy.

The consultative feedback and findings that were described in Chapter 3 provide another important pillar of the strategic framework for the LDS. While not repeated in detail here, they provide a comprehensive and current representation of the county's key development

determinants, assets and opportunities from parties and stakeholders most qualified and informed about them. To be effective, relevant and capable of engendering the utmost community and stakeholder buy-in and support, the LDS will need to be fully-framed within the themes and strategic priorities emerging from this local information, knowledge and perspective.

Finally, the appropriate strategic approach needs to reflect the perspectives and knowledge of those active in spearheading, guiding and managing community and economic development processes already underway in Meath so as to ensure past investments, evolving capacities, and new-formed resources and capabilities are built-upon, enhanced and have their potential realised in the new period, and that developmental processes are not stunted in the transition from the last programme to the current one. Communities at different stages of organisation and definition, towns and villages with different degrees of community co-operation and civic engagement, social and commercial enterprises at different pre-development or development phases, and local niche economic assets, sectors and co-dependent industries at different stages of their development and recognition (e.g. artisan foods, heritage and tourism), are all examples of critical local and rural development resources and processes evolving over the longer term yet requiring the supports and assistance between 2015 and 2020 which are most appropriate to them and their unique development phase. The optimum strategic choices made in the LDS and its later delivery will facilitate supporting all such local development processes according to their unique 2015-20 needs.

4.2   Vision

The long-term strategic vision for County Meath that underlies this LDS is

> "**a county which fulfils its social and economic potential, that is a preferred location for living and doing business, and one that provides its citizens and communities with the highest standards of living and quality of life**".

Over the period 2015-2020 the vision and strategic goal of the LDS is

> "**to drive and embed the economic recovery, renewal and self-sufficiency of the county, to enhance the unique identity of the county and the pride of place of Meath citizens of all ages and backgrounds, to maximise civic and community engagement with inclusive and enduring development processes and activities, and to create and in-still the confidence and means by which the county can continuously achieve its social and economic potential over future generations**".

4.3   LDS Vision and Local Objectives

Starting from the various pillars that make up the strategic framework for the LDS set out above, the strategic approach to fulfilling the LDS vision is one that adopts a relatively small number of local objectives, which individually and in aggregate link the vision statement to, and give it practical expression across, a set of appropriate measures and strategic actions that align with LEADER themes and sub-themes.

The core rationale for this approach lies in the judgement that the LDS vision encapsulates aspirations and goals that are both distinct but also linked and mutually reinforcing. At the same time there are a relatively small number of core strategic objectives that simultaneously reflect the County's rural development context, needs and opportunities, and at the same time give expression to those distinct and mutual elements of the LDS vision.

Six local objectives have been selected, as follows:

1. To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings cementing its reputation, identity, and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the county's exceptional tourism potential
2. To broaden and enhance the enterprise base in the county, and maximise local sustainable economic opportunities in Meath;
3. To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of the towns and villages of County Meath;
4. To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage;
5. To ensure participation in social, economic and community development and engagement from all groups and people of all backgrounds;
6. To promote and progress social, community and economic action supportive of environmental protection, sustainability and good practice.

Each local objective is expected to support the realisation of the LDS vision over the 2015-2020 period. The strength, with which they do so across different elements of the goals and aims the vision addresses, is illustrated in the figure overleaf.

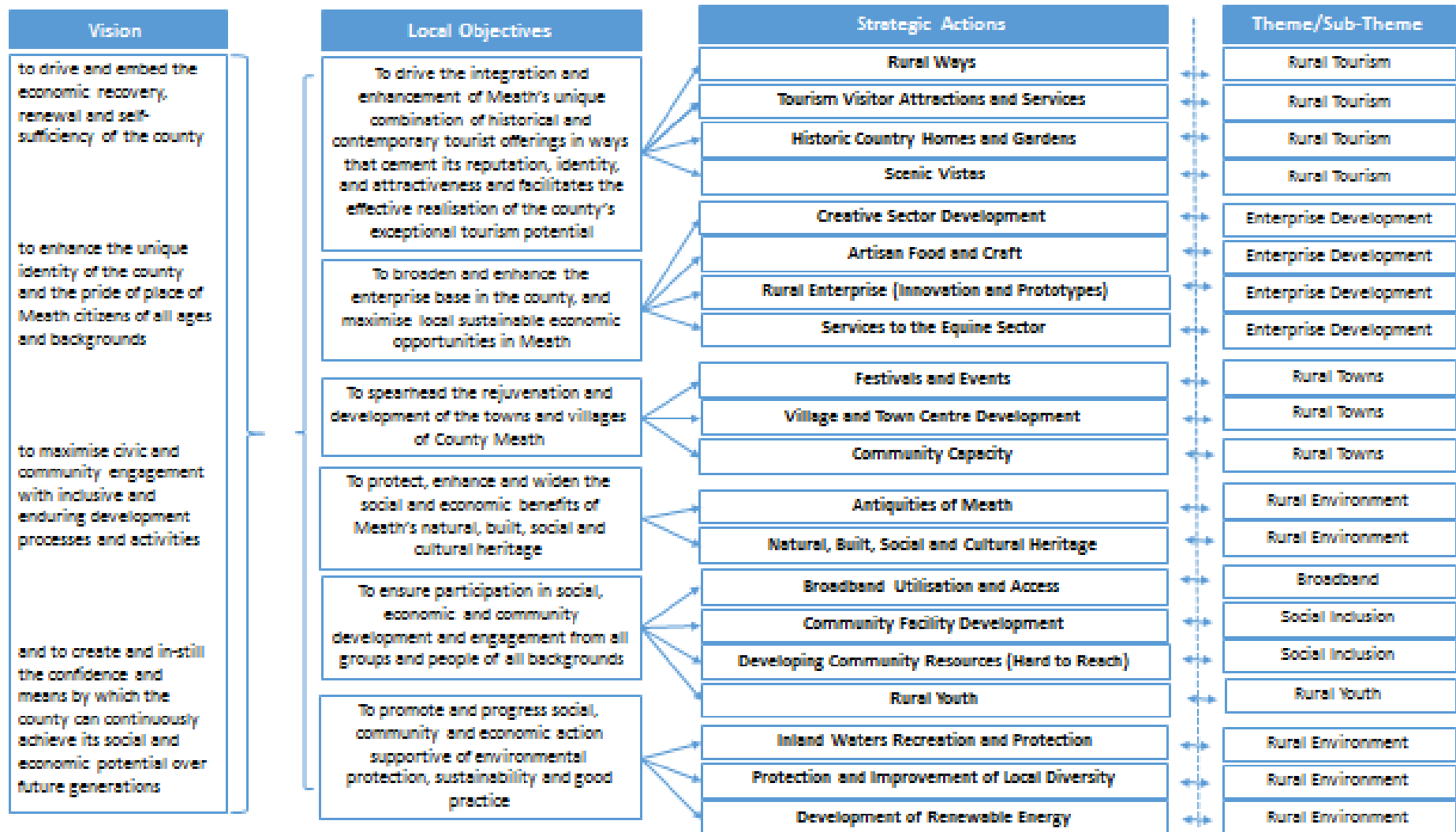| Vision	Local Objectives	Strategic Actions	Theme/Sub-Theme
to drive and embed the economic recovery, renewal and self-sufficiency of the county	To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings in ways that cement its reputation, identity, and attractiveness and facilitates the effective realisation of the county's exceptional tourism potential	Rural Ways	Rural Tourism
		Tourism Visitor Attractions and Services	Rural Tourism
		Historic Country Homes and Gardens	Rural Tourism
		Scenic Vistas	Rural Tourism
to enhance the unique identity of the county and the pride of place of Meath citizens of all ages and backgrounds	To broaden and enhance the enterprise base in the county, and maximise local sustainable economic opportunities in Meath	Creative Sector Development	Enterprise Development
		Artisan Food and Craft	Enterprise Development
		Rural Enterprise (Innovation and Prototypes)	Enterprise Development
		Services to the Equine Sector	Enterprise Development
	To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of the towns and villages of County Meath	Festivals and Events	Rural Towns
		Village and Town Centre Development	Rural Towns
		Community Capacity	Rural Towns
to maximise civic and community engagement with inclusive and enduring development processes and activities	To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage	Antiquities of Meath	Rural Environment
		Natural, Built, Social and Cultural Heritage	Rural Environment
	To ensure participation in social, economic and community development and engagement from all groups and people of all backgrounds	Broadband Utilisation and Access	Broadband
		Community Facility Development	Social Inclusion
		Developing Community Resources (Hard to Reach)	Social Inclusion
and to create and in-still the confidence and means by which the county can continuously achieve its social and economic potential over future generations		Rural Youth	Rural Youth
	To promote and progress social, community and economic action supportive of environmental protection, sustainability and good practice	Inland Waters Recreation and Protection	Rural Environment
		Protection and Improvement of Local Diversity	Rural Environment
		Development of Renewable Energy	Rural Environment

| | LDS Vision | | | |
Local Objectives	to drive and embed the economic recovery, renewal and self-sufficiency of the county	to enhance the unique identity of the county and the pride of place of Meath citizens of all ages and backgrounds	to maximise civic and community engagement with inclusive and enduring development processes and activities	to create and in-still the confidence and means by which the county can continuously achieve its social and economic potential over future generations
To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings, cementing its reputation, identity and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the county's exceptional tourism potential	Primary Driver	Secondary Driver	Indirect Driver	Secondary Driver
To broaden and enhance the enterprise base in the county, and maximise local sustainable economic opportunities in Meath	Primary Driver	Secondary Driver	Indirect Driver	Secondary Driver
To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of the towns and villages of County Meath	Secondary Driver	Indirect Driver	Indirect Driver	Secondary Driver
To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage	Secondary Driver	Secondary Driver	Indirect Driver	Secondary Driver
To ensure participation in social, economic and community development and engagement from all groups and people of all backgrounds	Indirect Driver	Indirect Driver	Primary Driver	Secondary Driver
To promote and progress social, community and economic action supportive of environmental protection, sustainability and good practice	Secondary Driver	Indirect Driver	Indirect Driver	Primary Driver

The figure relates the selected local objectives to each of four different dimensions of the LDS vision statement, by way of a ranking of their likely influence and strength of impact. The integrated and mutually-supportive features of this approach are evident in that, while the strength of impact varies, each local objective is likely to have some impact and role in addressing all elements of the vision, and similarly all the goals and aspirations of the vision will be supported by all local objectives.

4.4 Local Objectives and Strategic Actions

Finally, the overall strategic approach is illustrated in the following figure, which relates the LDS vision to these local objectives, which are then related to more specific strategic actions, which in turn correspond to one (or more than one but with one primary) LEADER theme or sub-theme.

Local Objective 1	
Title of Local Objective	To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings cementing its reputation, identity, and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the county's exceptional tourism potential
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
Sub-theme	Rural Tourism
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The importance of tourism as a source of sustainable economic life in rural Ireland is widely acknowledged and understood, and locations that offer distinctive and marketable tourist attractions and offerings have the opportunity of generating and developing a sustainable and employment-intense source of indigenous economic activity deeply embedded in the rural economy and

	community. The natural, historic and cultural tourism assets and attractions Meath is bestowed with provide it with a unique platform to realise such opportunity for the benefit of its rural population, and the realisation of that potential calls for the development of infrastructure, specific attractions, branding and identity creation, and quality of service.
Financial Allocation (€)	€893,550.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Rural Ways 2. Tourism Visitor Attractions and Services 3. Historic Country Homes and Gardens 4. Scenic Vistas

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 1	Rural Ways - to use cutting edge technology to accurately communicate the authenticity and uniqueness of Meath's rural tourism experience with a strong focus on antiquities, activities and attractions made accessible and intriguing to visitors in search of an authentic rural experience.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	Authenticity, real experiences, interaction with people and place, these are the key themes running through the future of rural tourism in County Meath. Rural Ways will communicate the availability of these experiences and will facilitate visitors to engage and interact with them providing a wide range of options and personal choice, generating a sense of anticipation and interaction with the unexpected. Support will be provided for technological hardware and software development, data recording and upload, associated human resources, digital mapping, high resolution imaging, brand identity linking with the Boyne Valley product and the Ancient East global marketing product. Support will also be provided to market the rural ways brand and the availability of the technology platform.
Rationale	Rural Ways encompasses the application of cutting edge technology designed to extend the reach of Meath's rural tourism product by providing an integrated branded platform that will facilitate interaction with the visitor who wishes or can be persuaded to increase dwell time in the County in order to explore the interior of the county with ease of navigation, enjoying an infinite number of visitor trails of their own choice and creation, interaction opportunities with local communities, access to multi-sectoral visitor interests and activities and guidance in respect of creature comforts and visitor services. Rural Ways represents a move away from linear visitor pathways and towards a model of independent rural tourism clusters offering a variety of choices for those with an interest in driving tourism. Rural

Ways will offer Meath's fledgling tour bus sector an infinite number of potential driving routes from which to draw in marketing services to visitors.

In terms of choosing and planning a holiday by far the highest number at 76% used the internet to plan their holiday with 60% choosing this method to book their holiday. 41% reported assistance from friends and family as a factor in choosing a holiday with 23% using guide books and 12% using travel agents. New and enhanced internet platforms can play a significant role in attracting greater numbers to Meath.

In respect of transport 45% of visitors brought their own car or hired a car on arrival, 63% were on a first visit with 35% on a repeat visit.

Despite its apparent homogeneity, drive tourism is in fact made up of very different segments - people choosing to undertake a drive tourism holiday have widely diverging reasons for doing so. One of the few motivations shared by the diverse segments of drive tourism is a desire for flexibility - they want to determine where they go and when. Even if people plan their route in advance, they want the opportunity to change the itinerary as they go.

This fundamental desire at the core of drive tourism leads to very different patterns of travel behaviour – the ways in which people interact with a region, the length of their stay, what they see and do, the services, infrastructure and information they require – which call into question the value of a linear driving trail if the right conditions do not exist.

The development strategy being pursued sets out to ensure that the right conditions do exist and that the six factors which influence choice can be catered for in the visitor decision making process. Care must be taken not to bring about the potential loss of the 'sense of discovery' as those undertaking drive tourism can view themselves as 'explorers breaking new ground'. Overly groomed and packaged driving trails run the risk of contradicting this sense of discovery.

In principle the overall strategy envisages clusters which consist of a visitor gateway, a main attraction hub and ancillary attractions. Some of the benefits offered by adopting a cluster approach to developing rural tourism in Meath as opposed to a linear trail concept include:
- The linkages between main and ancillary attractions offer opportunities to introduce alternative modes of transport – walking or cycling instead of driving – and increased

engagement with a specified local area.
- Rural tourism clusters can be more effectively linked to the Boyne Valley Driving Route without confusing users or diminishing the profile of either the clusters or the driving route.
- Clusters can be more readily conceptualised and developed to meet the needs and desires of diverse interest groups. They enable visitors with an intense interest in rural life in Meath to link focal points, travelling from cluster to cluster in a trail format. At the same time, they also enable visitors to be more selective, and to focus on just one or two activities/attractions in a specified localised area.

We have identified a set of deep-seated visitor requirements that 'are unique and specific' to the character of a rural holiday experience. These can be described as a desire for serenity, affiliation and stimulation and include:
- Integration with nature
- 'typical experience'
- Meeting people
- Peaceful natural environment
- Isolation with friendliness

Rural tourism clusters in Meath should be developed to meet this interest in authenticity, in experiencing real living culture as opposed to manufactured culture. Each rural tourism cluster in Meath should offer activities, attractions and opportunities covering the complete spectrum of the visitor's desire for serenity, affiliation and stimulation.

Primary Target Group(s)	Organisations involved in marketing Co Meath as a desirable tourist destination and in meeting and greeting visitors.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as lead implementing partner.
Any collaborating Organisations	Meath Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, OPW
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	4 Tourism Clusters 16 Trails opened 1 New and Innovative ICT based tourist service offering 2 Projects Funded 4 FTE Jobs Created - Private Match Funding Investment: €24,000.00 - Improved identification and marketing of rural tourism product - Enhanced inflow of visitors in rural Meath

	• Improved access to Meath's antiquities, attractions, heritage and cultural activities • Increased visitor dwell time

Strategic Action 2	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Tourism – Visitor Attractions, Tourism Facilities and Accommodation: to invest in the enhancement of iconic sites of visitor interest, development of new and significant visitor attractions and support for investment in the direct provision of activity-based offerings by existing tourism providers.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	This strategic action seeks to benefit rural tourism through the creation of new visitor flows by investing in iconic sites whose value has not been fully realised while also investing in locally based visitor activities and attractions. Support will be offered for the following initiatives and developments: • Improved access, parking facilities and visitor comfort facilities and infrastructure • Innovative solutions to visitor transport barriers and access facilities for the disabled • Site interpretation, viewing points, site protection measures and site mapping • Support for provider led investment in activity and recreation based visitor facilities • Support for medium to large scale visitor attractions, priority afforded to new developments • Support for visitor accommodation where need can be demonstrated
Rationale	Having encouraged and part funded the transfer of the Jolly Farm concept from South Wales to what is now Tayto Park in Co Meath as part of a development initiative to create visitor attractions up the central spine of Meath from Ashbourne to Oldcastle, LEADER moved from this success to supporting the development of the Irish Military War Museum at Slane and a feasibility study for a visitor centre at Slane Castle attached to the proposed Slane Castle Whiskey Distillery. In order to build on these successes and increase visitor numbers into the rural reaches of the county, LEADER needs to encourage further development taking in the value of proximity to interesting centres of population such as Navan, Kells and Oldcastle. Taking advantage also of the convergence of access routes such as the M2/N2 and M3/N3 and the excellent linkages between Slane and Navan, developments aligned with the M3 through the Navan, Kells and Oldcastle corridor would feed greater visitor numbers into

central and northwest Meath.

This strategy would align very well with the Boyne Valley and Ireland's Ancient East visitor destination strategy being marketed heavily by Fáilte Ireland.

In terms of the Ancient East concept, both the Hill of Tara and more especially Sliabh Na Calliagh at Oldcastle stand out as an iconic sites of great visitor interest which would contribute significantly to the rural economy of Mid and North West Meath if matters relating to access, parking and interpretation were addressed. These sites represent underutilised gems which if sensitively developed could become sparkling jewels in the ancient treasures of County Meath. The drawing power of such visitor attractions if appropriately enhanced would be very strong and would lend support to the further development of smaller scale visitor attractions and activity based provision. These developments would do much to assist Kells which as a significant heritage town is failing to attract a visitor flow commensurate with what the town has to offer.

The second tenet of this strategy is to continue to encourage tourism providers to add value to existing offerings. In this context accommodation providers have been targeted, the LEADER policy of supporting the creation of four star self-catering accommodation units in rural areas has been very successful and the next step is to encourage the direct provision of activity opportunities to customers in addition to the quality visitor care and interaction with local people so highly valued by these visitors.

Primary Target Group(s)	State agencies, Fáilte Ireland, entrepreneurs with a tourism interest, rural communities, tourism service providers, property owners
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as the LAG implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, OPW, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Meath Tourism
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	10% increase in visitor numbers and/or bed-nights in rural areas 10 projects funded 30 providers engaged in accommodation or activity provision 20 FTE jobs created - Private match funding invested: €700,000.00

	Strategic Action 3
Title of Strategic Action 3	Historic Country Homes and Gardens of Meath - Implementation of Meath's Historic Country Homes and Gardens Initiative
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	This initiative will support actions and operations aimed at increasing the number of homes and gardens open to the public in County Meath and to enhance and upgrade existing properties operating in this tourism sector in order to attract the growing number of visitors to Meath who expressly wish and expect to interact with this tourism product. Support will be provided for the following developmental requirements and associated costs: • External demesne development and improvements • Internal visitor facilities and accommodation • Restoration of historical, internal and external features • Accommodation for visitors including function facilities • Interpretation of historical aspects and historical document viewing • Walled garden restoration and development • Provision of outdoor activities and walks • Technical, archaeological and engineering services • Access, egress and visitor management facilities
Rationale	In recognition of the fact that 35% of visitors to County Meath demonstrate interest in heritage and a desire to visit an historic country home and garden, Meath Partnership engaged Tourism Development International to consult with the sector to establish how this product might be developed and opened in greater numbers to visitors. Feedback from owners demonstrated strong interest in participating in this initiative, the product was described as: • Being sustainable in the long term • An authentic and historic product • Capable of contributing to the local economy • Fits into a particular cultural niche • Part of the local environment It was agreed that if well developed, the product would attract the overseas visitor in addition to significant domestic interest, heritage visitors can make a real difference in Co. Meath as they: • Have greater potential for growth than regular travellers • Stay longer than many other visitors • Are more flexible in travel plans • Spend more in enjoying an authentic experiential holiday • Have a strong desire to interact with different people and cultures

	• Are interested in lifestyle travel • Create their own footsteps – soft footfall • Strong desire to uncover hidden treasures Given that there is a strong domestic and overseas visitor interest in Meath, the proposed new cluster of Meath's Historic Homes and Gardens will offer an exciting new dimension to destination Meath that will appeal to a wide range of visitors particularly sightseers and the cultural interest market. The collective body of interested owners expressed their support for cultural and heritage tourism in respect of its potential to benefit local communities in so far as: • Heritage tourism preserves historic sites, cultural traditions and natural assets • Provides new activities for local residents and builds community pride • Strengthens local economies and communities • Heritage tourism ensures a legacy for future generations • The heritage visitor fits into the local landscape and requires no major environmental adjustment Based on the strength of this rationale, support will be offered for product development across a range of developmental cost headings as laid down in the description of this strategic action.
Primary Target Group(s)	Owners and managers of historical properties and walled garden features, existing garden properties and other stately homes capable of attracting visitor interest
Geographic Area:	Geographical area of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as lead implementation partner
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Meath Tourism, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	• 5 no. of properties newly opened to the public • 3 no. of properties enhanced • 2% contribution to increased visitor numbers • 5 no. of projects funded • 6 FTE jobs created • Private match funding invested: €240,000.00

Strategic Action 4	
Title of Strategic Action 4	Scenic Vistas - developing the economic potential of Meath's scenic vistas through the provision of visitor facilities, improving access and interpretation, addressing health and safety and the creation of attractive and interesting sites.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 4	During the scenic vista and site identification process, a survey was conducted to identify the developmental requirements attaching to each potential site. LEADER support will therefore be offered to assist in meeting the capital cost involved in site development and also with high level interpretation, communication tools and marketing strategies and associated costs. Specifically support will be offered for the following: • Appropriate lay-by development and associated costs • Pedestrian pathways and view arena development • Picnicking, human comfort facilities and seating • Fencing and walling and elevated viewing points • Underground servicing and lighting • Interpretation materials and signage • Landscape works and plantings • Technical support, architectural and engineering costs
Rationale	Meath's scenic vistas could be described as hidden gems in a rural landscape renowned for its past heritage, diverse topology and fertile lands. While deeply appreciated by local communities many or most of these scenic vistas are not frequented by visitors because as a product they do not feature in our tourism marketing programmes to the extent that they should. There is good reason for this in so far as the facilities required to enjoy these vistas do not exist in many instances. The first phase of the scenic vistas initiative was funded by LEADER in 2013 and completed in 2014. This project set out to uncover the ten best scenic vistas in Co Meath, to map these and bring forward detailed proposals for their development to include the nature and value of the vista and specific actions to be taken in developing each chosen site. The output of this initiative has been the identification of ten high quality scenic vistas the development of which will enhance the quality of the rural tourism product in Co Meath. Outline plans for these sites have been completed including: access, parking, surfaces, railings, furniture, interpretation, signage and site markers. Matters relating to planning, ownership and identification of local communities of interest prepared to assist with application support and local funding has been progressed. As part of this process consultation has taken place with Meath County

	Council, Fáilte Ireland, Boyne Valley Driving Route Consultant's BSM, and other bodies engaged in assisting LEADER's tourism product development. It is proposed that the completion of works on these scenic vistas will be carried out during the period 2016-2018 with support provided by LEADER in order to strengthen the rural tourism product and build on the value of Meath's natural environment and landscapes.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, history and heritage groups, tourism bodies, local tourism and development networks
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with lead implementation partner body Meath Partnership
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Meath Tourism, Landowners
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	6 no. of sites developed 18 community bodies participating - Increase in visitors using new facilities - Private match funding invested: €125,000.00 6 projects funded

Local Objective 2	
Title of Local Objective	To broaden and enhance the enterprise base in the county, and maximise local sustainable economic opportunities in Meath
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
Sub-Theme	Enterprise Development
Brief Rationale for the Objective	Growing the quantity and activity range of successful and sustainable enterprises in rural areas in ways that offer local opportunity for local residents, the means to generate household incomes, and local economic vibrancy, is a defining dimension of successful rural development. Processes not only need to deliver economic resurgence and economic activity where it has diminished, but also transition its evolution from activities and sectors with limited future viability to those most relevant to, viable within, and necessitated by, contemporary rural life.
Financial Allocation (€)	€966,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Creative Sector Development 2. Artisan Food and Craft 3. Rural Enterprise (Innovation and Prototypes) 4. Services to the Equine Sector

	Strategic Action 1
Title of Strategic Action 1	Creative Sector Development - to support the future development of the Creative Sector by exploiting opportunities for growth, mitigation of barriers to growth both on the supply and demand side, introduction of supports to enable innovation and business success, the development of sustainable creative clusters, enhanced interaction between cultural and creative entrepreneurs locally, in Ireland and overseas. Support for participation in events and exhibitions concerned with their industry.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	In furthering the development of the creative sector in Co Meath support will be offered for the following initiatives and operations. - The clustering of CCIs and partnership development between CCIs and industry, research, education and other relevant sectors and services. - The setting up and operation of innovation labs. - In co-operation with the European Creative Industries Alliance (ECIA) to assist in guaranteeing appropriate recognition for professional content creators and the protection of intellectual copyright to include licencing, trademarks and brands. - To identify and support new knowledge and creative based enterprise and local development models. - To address underdeveloped entrepreneurial and management skills - To broaden knowledge of property protection issues and support solutions - To enhance local markets and opportunities to market creative goods and services and to exploit creative industries export markets. - To provide support for mentoring enablers to address capacity for experimentation and support required for entrepreneurial success. - To encourage interaction between cultural and creative entrepreneurs working in Co Meath and their overseas counterparts. - To support participation in local, national and overseas events to include seminars and exhibitions concerned with their industry - To enable effective networking and artist led experimentation and innovation - To strengthen entrepreneurial skills through training and capacity building - To support the acquisition of specialised equipment, production facility fit out and shared service and production hubs

Rationale	In addition to being essential drivers for cultural diversity in Europe the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI's) represent highly innovative companies with great economic potential and are one of Europe's most dynamic sectors contributing 2.6% to EU GDP, with a high growth potential and providing five million jobs across the EU. CCI's often contribute to boosting local economies, contributing to the emergence of new economic activities creating new and sustainable jobs and enhancing the attractiveness of rural regions, towns and villages.
	Creative industries are built around individuals with creative skills, some progress alone, more in cooperation with entrepreneurs, managers and technologists, who combine to creative marketable products the economic value of which primarily lies in their cultural or intellectual property, the key component in these enterprises is individual creativity. When technological skills, entrepreneurial vision and business acumen is added the world's fastest growing business sectors emerge encompassing advertising, graphic design, architecture, crafts, designer furniture, designer fashion, film, video, performing arts, computer games and leisure software, music, television, radio, visual arts, writing and publishing. In general creative enterprises which comprise this sector are micro enterprise; they have a limited capacity for innovation using their own resources and rely heavily on business development support agencies and services to move their enterprise to the next level.
	Developing the creative industry sector in rural towns and locations can accelerate growth and lead to a leapfrogging effect in terms of social and economic development. It can also offer an opportunity to re-think rural development strategies which are often constrained within a narrow triangle comprising ecotourism – agri-food – craftsmanship. By introducing the concept of creativity, a new more contemporary idea of rural development can emerge.
	Research shows that the creative industries are more innovative than many other high-innovation sectors, for example professional and business services, and that the creative industries provide a disproportionate number of the innovative businesses in any given country in Western Europe.
	To be successful creative enterprises depend on a high density of creative talents and supportive eco-systems that enable knowledge exchange and open innovation. For CCIs to be able to make the most of the opportunities offered by cultural diversity, globalisation and digitalisation, which are key drivers for the further development of these sectors the challenge is: • To put the right enablers in place by increasing the capacity to experiment, innovate and succeed as entrepreneurs, and

providing easier access to funding and the right mix of skills.
- To help CCIs develop in their local and regional environment as a launch pad for a stronger global presence , including through increased exchange and mobility
- To move towards a creative economy by catalysing the spill-over effects of CCIs on a wide range of economic and social contexts.

As one of the main development, support and funding agents for micro-enterprises in County Meath the focus for LEADER will be on supporting the growth of independent creative businesses and the talent that feeds and sustains them and the development of visible, coherent and sustainable creative clusters in different regions throughout the county. There are a range of specific supports that our research and assessment of international best practice can highlight which would need to be taken into consideration when planning the building of an ecosystem around the creative industry sector in the county. These are:

- Enabling effective networking
- Supports for artist-led experimentation leading to innovation
- Providing access to the right sort of finance
- De-risking innovation
- Develop IPR knowledge, valuation, realisation, & protection
- Offering a programme of relevant events, exhibitions and competitions
- Strengthening entrepreneurial skills through training and effective mentoring
- Building the potential for internationalisation

At the local level LEADER will seek to develop a strategy to de-risk innovation to facilitate investment and support growth in the sector.

Primary Target Group(s)	Rural Entrepreneurs, Creative Sector individuals, partnerships, networks, sole traders and SMEs
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body
Any collaborating Organisations	Arts Council of Ireland, Irish Local Action Groups, European mainland Local Action Groups, Fáilte Ireland, ECIA
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2017-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	• 10 new enterprises created • 15 projects supported • 10 new FTE jobs created • 15 Number of enterprises mentored • Value of match funding invested: €132,800.00

	Strategic Action 2
Title of Strategic Action 2	Artisan Food and Speciality Products – to support the establishment, growth and sustainability of inclusive rural food and speciality product enterprises.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	This strategic action seeks to assist with investments which support: improvements in productivity; new product development and certification; use of new technologies; capital grant aid for the development of infrastructure; purchasing of equipment; further processing and marketing of products; development and sustainability of networks; collective network services and specialised human resource provision; investments to encourage diversified activity; support for analysis and development; industry and sector training; and implementation of quality standards. Support will also be offered for direct and collective marketing, fit out of production facilities, initiatives to drive direct engagement with customers, attendance at showcase events and other measures to enhance visibility and presence in the market.
Rationale	The development of Meath's artisan food sector has been heavily supported by LEADER over the period 2001-2013 with significant growth in the sector and in the value of output. The Meath Artisan Food Network comprises 87 active producers and processors at varying stages of development, leaving the territory poised to take another leap forward similar to that which occurred between 2001 and 2013 during which period Meath's artisan food sector came from a standing start to now match the best Ireland has to offer.

The proposed development of an artisan food production hub outside Navan, the Boyne Valley Food Hub, will address the infrastructural needs of developing artisans, the attached laboratory facilities will further facilitate enhancement of product quality and new product testing. Aligned with LEADER support this new development supported by the LEO and Meath County Council will provide a comprehensive range of services to the sector. The artisan sector also relies on producers of raw product to specialise and diversify into breed type and production methodologies outside the norm in mainstream agriculture. Where aid is not available through the *RDP* as managed by the Department of Agriculture it is proposed that LEADER will offer assistance.

The further development of this sector as proposed embraces the findings of the OECD, Western Development Commission and CEDRA in which they emphasise the key drivers of growth as human capital, entrepreneurship, innovation and supportive infrastructure. These growth factors are very evident in the local artisan food sector and are fully deserving of public support. |

	Having set aside 16 medium to large food companies in Co Meath who because of scale of operation and turnover are not eligible for LEADER support we find 57 speciality food and artisan producers who have engaged with LEADER in the past. Local research shows combined turnover of €14.8m with 156 persons employed directly in these small operations. Over 40% of these operations have good capacity for growth and will be targeted through the RDP. Growth potential will be strengthened through collaboration with Bord Bia and the Local Enterprise Office. The 30 new additional members of Meaths Artisan Food Network will be supported in respect of the needs of new entrants to the industry.
Primary Target Group(s)	Artisan food enterprises, intending artisan producers, artisan networks, farm family members, rural entrepreneurs, production facility owners and developers.
Geographic Area:	Geographical area of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body
Any collaborating Organisations	Teagasc, Bord Bia, Dublin Institute of Technology
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	40 Number of projects supported 8 Number of new business created 5 Number of collective operations 20 Number of new employments created 40 Number of employments sustained - Amount of private capital invested: €398,475.00

Strategic Action 3	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Innovative Manufacturing, Networking, Service Provision and Prototype Development - to continue to support innovation in the manufacturing and services sectors and to encourage research and development and prototype creation.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	Over the period 2007-2013 prototype development in Meath performed well with initiatives emerging in the forestry timber recovery sector, soft fruit and vegetable transportation and handling, sustainable roofing solutions, transformer multi-use farm equipment, new era wood chip dryers fuelled by waste timber and reduced power self-sustaining information transmission systems and new banking security software applications. There is every indication that these innovations will continue to emerge therefore support will be offered for analysis, research and development, 3D printing, manufacturing and material costs, marketing and showcasing of new products, patent registration, licencing, branding and protection

	of knowledge know how and hard and software designs and systems. Progression to full scale production and/or operationalisation will also be supported.
Rationale	In terms of the greatest levels of employment provision in Co Meath, rural enterprises fall into four distinct categories including, agri-food and forestry; mining, extractive sector and turf production; mainstream manufacturing and transport, storage and communications.

This strategic action is seeking to support innovation in the enterprise sector progressing beyond mainstream activity and attached to research on future technological requirements and prototype development. New enterprise opportunities exist in the green sector and in the processing of sustainable resources to meet fabrication, energy, insulation and environmental protection demands. Meeting the needs of a 21st century enterprise base and protecting knowledge, intellectual property, emerging technologies and prototypes can help retain value and support the application of such resources in a localised enterprise development context.

LEADER is about innovation and looking to the future and is ideally suited for this role. Networking and research are key elements of enterprise development, multi-sectoral enterprise networks can stimulate and strengthen links for economic gain and mutual benefit, and in turn provide a platform through which enterprise creation and business expansion can be supported through an array of tailored supports funded by the RDP. Networking fosters a culture of collaboration, resource sharing, strategic alliances and clustering among members in key enterprise development areas.

The creation of such networks based on productive sector membership quickly attracts the interest of the service sector, the Meath experience with the Elevation Enterprise Network has seen the service sector request membership, the rationale being that the service sector had much to learn in developing services to meet the 21st century needs of enterprise. This relationship has introduced both innovation and reality in respect of service sector offerings designed to support economic growth and is a welcome development. It is proposed therefore that networking as a tool will be applied to support this strategic action and to assemble the resources required for sustainable progress. |
Primary Target Group(s)	Rural entrepreneurs, equipment designers and manufacturers, SME's, farm family members, IT Specialists, designers and manufacturers.
Geographic Area:	Geographical area of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating	Colleges of Engineering, IT development Institutions and

Organisations	organisations
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	6 Number of projects supported 3 Mainstream manufacturing prototype investments 10 FTE employments created 6 Innovations demonstrated - Private resources invested: €319,000.00

Strategic Action 4	
Title of Strategic Action 4	Sport Horse Industry – To exploit the potential of Meath's sports horse industry to generate employment, support the growth of sustainable service enterprise, grow equine tourism, attract oversees visitors, provide for recreational and leisure activity, support breeding standards and contribute to star rating objectives.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 4	- To support rural enterprise in servicing the equine sector through the provision of improved information, training and access to technologies such as AI, embryo transfer and advanced reproductive technologies coupled with access to AI technicians for equines. - To assist in the progress of equestrian centres and livery yards towards star rating in respect of quality of husbandry, facilities, horse instruction and other services capable of being addressed by service provision enterprise. - To promote and foster a range of equine tourism and recreationally focused initiatives to promote increased participation in equine tourism across the sector in Co Meath. - To support the further development and growth of Meath's Royal Equine Hospital which was constructed with aid provided by the NRDP LEADER Programme 2001-2007. - To create opportunities for the exposure of primary and secondary school children to the sport horse industry. - To invest in the development of equine facilities linked to equine tourism and service related initiatives and enterprises.
Rationale	The sport horse industry is envisaged as a vibrant, dynamic sector contributing significantly to the economic and social life of Co Meath. The development and growth of the sport horse sector can do much to encourage job creation and sustainable enterprise development. A sport horse can be defined as a riding horse intended to be used for recreational and competitive activities other than racing while providing the foundation of a leisure and recreation industry in Co Meath.

| | The industry is worth over €700m to the Irish economy, it employs 12,512 people directly and indirectly with approximately 73,000 registered sport horses from a total of 124,000 equines. The leisure sector accounts for 36,000 registered sport horses and contributes €119m to the rural economy.

The sport horse sector in Meath consists of a total of 5,801 animals with 1,749 in the leisure sector, 557 in competition and 3,495 in breeding. Based on the UCD study of the economic contribution of the sports horse industry total sectoral spend in Meath's rural economy is €27.384m per annum. The breeding sector accounts for €12,756,750 with competition standing at €3,035,260 and leisure at €11,942,172. Meath has 3,495 animals of all ages in breeding, 577 in competition and 1,749 in the leisure sector.

Leisure performs very strongly with expenditure of €11,942,172, competition stands at €3,035,260 with breeding at €12,756,750. Direct employment in leisure is 301 FTE's, 113 in competition and 105 in breeding. This however is just part of the picture as involved family member's amount to 279 principally in breeding giving an overall total of 798 FTE's. Given the scale of the spend on services those indirectly employed represent the largest body of employment standing at 3,373 giving a grand total of 4,171 full time equivalent employments.

LEADER investment to date has been focused both on direct and indirect employment with the latter being the greatest priority in terms of enterprise development focused on providing essential services to the sector. Across counties Meath, Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow, the spend in the sport horse industry has risen to a total of €69,335,454.00 creating a growing potential for further expansion in related service enterprise. The return on the investment of public funds is stated by UCD to be very strong at €23,600.00 for each €100 of public funding invested. |
|---|---|
| Primary Target Group(s) | Sports horse service providers, equine tourism providers, the equine leisure sector |
| Geographic Area: | Geographical territory of Co Meath |
| Organisation who will deliver the Action: | Meath Local Action Group, with Meath Partnership as the LAG implementing partner |
| Any collaborating Organisations | Sports Horse Ireland |
| Timeframe for Delivery of Action | 2016 – 2019 |
| Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets | • 8 Projects Funded
• 4 Number of new enterprises supported
• 4 Number of existing enterprises enhanced
• 15 number of new employments created
• Private match funding invested: €212,520.00 |

Local Objective 3	
Title of Local Objective	To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of the towns and villages of County Meath
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
Sub-theme	Rural Towns
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The need to revitalise rural towns and villages for the benefit of both their residents and the rural hinterlands they serve and function within has been widely recognised, and very recently by CEDRA where it featured as a key strategic recommendation. While critical in a development phase of economic recovery following a severe national recession, it is also a constant rural development prerequisite given the enduring relationships between towns and their hinterlands through all stages of economic cycles. The towns and villages of Meath have many strengths, opportunities and capabilities to enhance the development of the wider rural areas in which they act as a natural social and economic juncture. The opportunities and challenges cover infrastructure, community and economic features, and all towns and villages have unique strengths, capabilities and needs.
Financial Allocation (€)	€623,875.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Festivals and Events 2. Village and Town Development 3. Community Capacity

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 1	Festival Development and Support
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	To provide capital assistance to support further growth and development of festival activity in Meath. Investment will be guided by feedback on needs provided by festivals and will address sustainability, diversity and growth. Collective initiatives will be supported such as to address sharing of facilities and equipment, marketing based on a shared identity, collective purchasing, enhancement of visitor facilities and services, human resource provision and training and support to equip/re-equip with essential equipment and rental of same. The introduction of new activities and attractions will also be supported.
Rationale	An analysis of festival activity across Co Meath demonstrates that there are in excess of 36 such events held across the county during the period April to mid-October of each year. The majority of festivals are one day events however sixteen are held over two days or more with the number in this category growing. Of the one

day events, a further five have the capacity to become two day events with finance and human resources being cited as the main constraining factor.

In respect of finance, analysis shows that local funding invested in festivals and events amounts to €998,000 with combined income standing at €1,079,000.00. The estimated combined profit at €81,000 is low and is largely retained for re-investment and for distribution to local charities. In the main, these events are run by totally committed volunteers who in the majority of cases make other significant contributions to their communities.

The economic value of volunteer contribution can be measured and is very considerable. Analysis demonstrates that 1110 volunteers are involved in running festivals with 310 volunteers actively planning and managing as committee members of the responsible bodies. Based on the number of days volunteered and differentiating between committee members and other volunteers the input value has been calculated at €975,000 per annum.

The estimated attendance at these events is 173,000 at a minimum; spend for attendees' ranges from €15 to €25 with a midpoint value of €20. Spend for attendees' ranges from a total of €2,595,000 to €4,325,000 with a mid-point figure of €3,460,000. This outcome, when taken together with expenditure on festivals of which 90% is invested locally, results in a total spend of €4,358,200.00 in the local economy. Activity measured does not include racing, golfing or events such as Slane Castle concerts, only community driven festival activity has been included.

The importance of tourism to the future economic development of County Meath cannot be understated and in a local context festival activity plays a very important role in this respect. Across the towns and villages of rural Meath festival endeavours by local groups also serve to promote the origination of economic and developmental actions built around a self-help ethos and fuelled by the application of the skills of local people.

In this context the delivery of a successful festival event is capable of enhancing economic growth and by successfully stimulating and revitalising community interest and participation can act as a catalyst for wider economic development. This developmental approach is in keeping with policy as laid down in the CEDRA report and is particularly supportive of the LDS Local Objective 3.

In respect of value for money, the annual spend in the rural economy resulting from festival activity has been established at

€4,358M. In contrast the public investment in achieving this outcome has been established at approximately €200,000.00 per annum. This represents a return of €1,935.00 for every €100.00 of public funding invested.

Building on successful project delivery and benefitting from associated capacity building initiatives many festival groups have broadened their remit to include social enterprise and wider economic development. Such groups for example are now engaged in running local tourism offices, community facilities and local service provision, more are involved in marketing their local town or village and enhancing the environment in order to attract enterprise and provide employment.

With 36 such active groupings now in operation across the County, Meath is well placed to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the future growth potential of festivals and events. Fundamental to the successful exploitation of the opportunities presenting will be a redefined vision and understanding of what constitutes a rural festival or event. The key requirement in this respect will be the delivery of an event with potential to benefit all sectors of the local economy and which seeks and secures the participation and engagement of all sectors of society and the economy.

For example the retail sector in Ireland's towns and villages is in need of new and progressive strategies to meet increasing competition from large urban shopping centres and commodity suppliers operating from large retail parks, increased customer mobility adds to the depth of this challenge.

As a result of research in this area we now have a greater understanding as to how festivals and events can influence local retail survival in towns and villages and while retailers acknowledge such events as important factors with the potential to confer a competitive advantage the challenge to be addressed is the lack of communication between retailers, service providers, event and festival management groups and local governance.

In future, redefined events and festivals will need to incorporate a whole of community approach, the retail sector will need to become part of the event through special sales, on street trading, weekend trading, promotional pricing and the stocking of goods to match the immediate market presenting. Service sectors such as auctioneering could run special events such as antique auctions or the auctioning of goods appropriate to the season or to the individual event. The festival event should be seized on by local goods manufacturers to exploit the market for their products as all

too often purchasers are not even aware of their existence, at present we only witness this promotional activity on such as St. Patrick's Day and even then in a very limited manner. Festivals therefore have an opportunity to celebrate the existence of their community in a way which promotes key elements of sustainability in respect of their own local area or town. This developmental approach is supportive of Local Objective 3.

The LDS through its proposed support for local festivals and events targets not only the development of tourism per se but also wider economic development through the evolution of existing festival and event groupings into collective stakeholder co-operative bodies with the capacity to deliver integrated events while respecting the core driving factors associated with the central festival theme. Such broader community and business participation will serve to strengthen the financial viability of rural festivals. This developmental approach supports the targeted outcomes of Local Objective 4.

The engagement process required to plan such integrated events and festivals provides the opportunity to bring together and harness the interest, skills and knowledge of a wide range of local actors in the community, the opportunity to enhance the capacity of local actors and to demonstrate to the wider community just how much can be achieved through collective action at the local level. This engagement process is heavily supportive of Local Objective 5.

Given the above rationale for prioritising festival and event development in Co. Meath it is believed that the provision of aid for such activity as detailed under Local Objective 3, Strategic Action 1: Festival Development and Support is justified and will yield a strong return on investment and achieve long lasting positive outcomes.

Festival Development is also referenced under Strategic Action 2: Village and Town Centre Development and linked to Local Objective 3, this is in respect of the broader impact of festivals and events on the commercial life of town and village centres and in this respect is supportive of CEDRA's town and village development policy.

Linkages to Other Initiatives or Activities

In respect of linkages to other activities or initiatives the festival and event support programme and its planned evolvement is supportive of tourism development policy generally in County Meath and provides local communities with a manageable developmental starting or expansion point capable of attracting large scale support and delivering an immediate economic uplift. With regard to the

	Local Objectives as laid out in the LDS, festival and event development primarily supports Local Objective 1 but also makes an important contribution to Local Objectives 3, 4 and 5 by virtue of the developmental approach involved and the broader economic value of such events. These Local Objectives are as follows;
	Local Objective 1: To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings cementing its reputation, identity and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the County's exceptional tourism potential.
	Local Objective 3: To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of towns and villages of County Meath.
	Local Objective 4: To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage.
	Local Objective 5: To ensure participation in social, economic and community development and engagement from all groups and people of all backgrounds.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community development organisations, festival committees, sectoral interests, tourism organisations, private promoters, sporting, recreation and leisure bodies, heritage and cultural bodies.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Festival groups, Meath Festival Committee, Meath Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, cultural, preservation and sporting bodies.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	15 towns and villages engaged 15 Number of projects supported 10% Increase in visitor numbers - Enhanced diversity of offering 20 no. FTE jobs created or preserved - Private funding invested: €95,000.00

Strategic Action 2
Title of Strategic Action 2	Village and Town Centre Development - Strategic actions to support the development of rural villages and towns through the enhancement and exploitation of local resources including human capital, the physical environment, historical and heritage based

	resources and employment generation potential
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	Support will be offered to operations which address the following: • Tourism operations designed to attract and facilitate visitors with an emphasis on authentic experiences • Town and village regeneration plans which focus on local resources and built on self-help methodologies • Conservation and enhancement operations based on the preservation of local heritage and the enhancement of historic streets, monuments and other public spaces • Operations which seek to enhance the village and town environment and amenity and recreational interests of residents, business and visitors • Operations and initiatives that address the economic development of the area • Operations and initiatives which support social development, integration, social service requirements and community facilities • The delivery of festivals and events to build visitor numbers, profile the village or town and capable of generating economic activity • Support for new enterprise developments and or expansion and development of existing enterprise
Rationale	At the core of sustainable village and town centre enhancement and development lies a number of objectives which resonate strongly with the needs identified by these communities including: • The creation of vibrant mixed centres that serve as a focal point for the community • Contributes to the provision of engaging and interconnected public spaces • Provision of enhanced amenities to meet community needs • Developments supportive of local employment opportunities • Improved pedestrian, cycle and transit conditions • Planning for a more balanced and diverse population • The creation of more compact, complete and connective communities Further examples of what works and what catches the interest of village and town communities is laid out in a Heritage Council Report compiled in association with the Irish Walled Town Network titled 'A Proposal for Regenerating Ireland's Historic Towns and Villages'. Some interesting aspects of this report include proposals for such as: • Town regeneration plans based on a self-help approach and a local sense of ownership, the binding and promotion of the towns historical and cultural attributes together with sights and activities. Benefits are stated as job creation, enhanced

- visitor experience, increased numbers, improved town attractiveness and improved local knowledge of heritage
- The exploitation of festivals and events to build visitor numbers and profiles and generate economic activity and visitor spend. Benefits are stated as improving destination awareness, job creation , good economic return, increased level of visitor spend
- The carrying out of conservation works to prominent monuments and buildings and smaller conservation and maintenance operations to structures on historic streets. Benefits are stated as a resulting economic stimulus, job creation and retention, preservation of national heritage, enhanced use of historic structures, improved access and attractiveness and enhanced experience for shoppers and visitors
- The message being communicated at local level is that attracting people and investment to village and town centres requires a focus on the provision of high quality public realm including street furniture, traffic calming and quality townscape. Any village or town which does not have a strong residential community is facing major difficulty therefore they must be seen as attractive places in which to live. Irish policy in respect of village and town regeneration has been consistent over the past two decades, the policy objectives have been strong and resonate firmly with our 2020 objectives and remain worthy of consideration.
- To increase the attractiveness of the village or town as a place to live in and to stabilise its resident population in line with its carry capacity.
- Promote the village or town as a local commercial or social centre and thereby increase its sustainability as a place in which to live in and work and stem the loss of shopping and other facilities to larger centres of population
- To promote villages and towns as centres for culture and local heritage and thus enhance the sense of identity physically and socially
- Enhance the village and town environment and amenity in the interests of residents, businesses, visitors and the promotion of tourism; and
- Promote more sustainable development patterns

In the process of village and town renewal it will be important to include the economic development context and to provide support for the formulation of local economic development strategies to build on progress in enhancing the physical and social environment in order to be fully inclusive in respect of the six priority activities which REDZ believes should be supported. These priorities include the

following:

- Projects that can enhance employment or be shown to enhance employment potential on scale up from pilot initiative
- Projects that can display realistic and achievable targets and proposed outputs and outcomes
- Projects that display a coordinated effort from all members of the community in line with the aims of Putting People First.
- Projects that display learning opportunities to facilitate scale up and increased activity within the context of the REDZ areas identified
- Projects that are integrative in their approach to identifying potential synergies between different economic opportunities and meeting the social and economic needs of the community

It is very evident that common ground exists across the spectrum of opinion as to how regeneration can be achieved, it is equally clear that this is an objective that requires multi-agency, governmental community and private sector input if it is to be achieved. It is equally apparent that the LEADER methodology despite limited capital resources can do much to progress this objective. In this context the Renaissance Programme rolled out during the 2009-2014 LEADER Programme offers a proven toolkit and methodology through which positive intervention can be progressed leading to well-planned initiatives and operations which can be funded by LEADER.

Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, property owners, rural enterprises, rural entrepreneurs, historical and heritage based groups, local tourism interests, local businesses and the general public
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath with a focus on the more deprived towns and villages
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as lead implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	Meath County Council, LEO, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs and C&V Organisations
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	5 Number of villages and towns assisted 25 Number of entrepreneurs supported 7 Number of historic and heritage operations assisted 7 Number of tourism development steps initiated 50% Level of community and business engagement 10% Increase in visitor numbers 12 New jobs created and 15 jobs preserved

	• Private match funding invested: €350,000.00

Strategic Action 3	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Community Capacity - to enable specific communities of place in county Meath to work in partnership to create more resilient communities, thriving local economies and better places in which to live and work.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	This action will support local development, networking and capacity building to empower local communities to develop the skills and experience that the community can draw on in developing a sustainable future and harnessing the potential of LEADER. An emphasis will be placed on enabling communities' to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills required to lead or contribute to the development of their community with LEADER assistance; improving partnership working between communities, business, public agencies and third sector organisations. Community capacity resides in a community's individuals, formal organisations and associations, and the relational networks among them and linking those to the broader systems of which they are a part. It is our intention that building community capacity under this strategic action will focus on these components and will act as a priming action to facilitate capital investment through other strategic action budgets.
Rationale	To promote participation is to empower the people and can be summarised into three areas. The first relates to community capacity building through the expanding leadership base, strengthening of individual skills, sharing of understanding and vision, setting of community agendas and goals, the development of more effective community organisations, institutions and use of resources. The second is indicative of personal growth through skill development, relationships and networks within the community, confidence and leadership. Research concludes that community participation can lead to the existence of a number of grassroots organisations, alliances among organisations, a level of community trust, involvement of existing organisations in broader community initiatives, building on previous community development efforts, development of new networks among groups, ability to leverage funds for new projects. These characteristics are all factors that contribute to the build-up of social capital within communities. Therefore, the outcomes that can be derived from community participation can be very beneficial to the long term wellbeing of a community.

Through the consultation process and key informant interviews it is |

apparent that certain communities of place have significant community assets, but they are not always leveraged to the fullest extent possible to collectively address local issues and needs. Networking across and within local communities is often weak and historically these communities have not leveraged the existing human, organisational, and social capital necessary to maintain the well-being of the given community.

This strategic action will therefore focus on the following elements of support:

- building the capacity of local communities to engage and assume leadership in the process of collaborative and participative planning and bottom-up local development
- providing communities with a clear sense of identity, sense of purpose, sense of place and sense of direction.
- support these specific rural communities through a series of capacity building workshops and animation activities to engage village populations in forward planning through the participatory process to stimulate the emergence of developments eligible for funding under the LEADER Programme
- create awareness, understanding and motivation amongst the rural communities so as to enable their full participation and input into the development of their rural villages and communities.
- Social well-being arises from a sense of security, belonging, familiarity, support, neighbourliness, cohesion and integration of different social groups, based on respect for different cultures, traditions and backgrounds.

Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, SMEs, social enterprises, young people, third sector organisations and hard to reach communities.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	All organisations with a local development, social inclusion and economic development remit
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2017
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	8 no. of area based communities engaged; 16 no. of collaborative operations or initiatives emerging; 8 no. of local area enhancement and economic development plans created and activated 6 no. of hard to reach communities engaged - Private match funding invested: €50,000.00

	Local Objective 4
Title of Local Objective	To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage.
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation
Sub-theme	Rural Tourism
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The tremendously rich heritage of County Meath is perhaps its most distinctive resource and asset. As well as offering a fundamental source of social, community and cultural identity, and enhancing pride of place and kinship amongst its residents, there is recognition of the enormous potential heritage can play in furthering economic prosperity and the quality of life of residents. Responsible and sustainable development of the heritage assets of the county must balance conservation with promotion, and protection with use and enjoyment, but such balances can be struck in ways that generate tangible and intangible gains in rural communities and neighbourhoods throughout the county.
Financial Allocation (€)	€611,800.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Antiquities of Meath 2. Natural, Social and Cultural Heritage

	Strategic Action 1
Title of Strategic Action 1	The development of a network of inter-connecting mix and match heritage based visitor trails throughout rural Meath built around the hidden and historic antiquities of the County.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	To support actions designed to preserve and animate the historical value of Meath's hidden and historic antiquities, enhance awareness of and access to such antiquities. Support will be offered to improve access while also supporting measures to support preservation, site protection, health and safety and site interpretation. Support will also be offered for clustered trail development, appropriate signage, safe viewing points and technical services required for appropriate site development.
Rationale	Antiquities of Meath Multi-Choice Visitor Trail Development – The Antiquities of Meath strategic action is built around the identification of heritage sites that have the potential to contribute to rural visitor trail development. At the core of the objective is the clustering of antiquities and historical features that would attract visitors to the locality and contribute to increased dwell time. Actions to identify and engage local community organisations who wish to be involved in improving access to, interpretation of and animation of these sites has been undertaken with the next step incorporating capital works in respect of access, interpretation and viewing.

| | The clustering of sites is designed to create a critical mass that will not only attract visitors but also encourage them to spend more time in the locality, in this context the trails will represent a half a day to a day's worth of activities. These trails can incorporate additional sites of natural heritage and habitat and can be incorporated into the Rural Ways technology platform which is designed to support rural and community based tourism and which supports the multi-choice concept, i.e. create your own personal trail.

Nine heritage based trails have been researched supported by a strong information base on each site and also including mapping, access actions required and viewing potential. A number of these sites are located close to farmland therefore information obtained can be pooled with that available through the Meath Fieldnames Study providing the visitor with a greater level of historical background on the locality. In total over sixty sites have been surveyed and researched and can be marketed to visitors when site specific issues have been addressed. |
|---|---|
| Primary Target Group(s) | Heritage and historical societies, Meath Tourism, community based heritage interests, local tour guides/site interpreters, local tourism interests, touring service enterprises. |
| Geographic Area: | Geographical territory of Co Meath. |
| Organisation who will deliver the Action: | Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body. |
| Any collaborating Organisations | OPW, Meath County Council, Meath Tourism, Department of Heritage, Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland |
| Timeframe for Delivery of Action | 2016-2020 |
| Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets | 5 Number of trails opened for visitor appreciation 10 Number of sites with improved access 10 Number of projects funded Amount of match funding invested: €167,400.00 5,000 Visitor numbers increase 8 Number of community managed sites opened |

Strategic Action 2	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Natural, Social and Cultural Heritage - To support operations designed to support the rural economy through the exploitation of the economic value of Co Meath's unique natural, social and cultural heritage while simultaneously supporting operations designed to support the preservation, conservation and animation of these valuable resources.
Brief Description of Strategic	Investments in rural heritage have to be conceived as part of broader programmes in favour of social and economic development.

Action 2	In that regard, the integration of rural heritage in other developmental sectors as a crosscutting theme opens the way for a new generation of investments. Institutional co-ordination and community involvement within a gradual process of economic improvement and physical rehabilitation must be viewed as the necessary ingredients for taking on the manifold conservation and revitalisation needs. In the long run community involvement is the best means of achieving lasting results.
Rationale	Heritage is a broad concept which includes Natural, Historic, and Cultural inheritance. It is the whole variety of things that are passed down from generation to generation, from traditions to landscapes, industrial, recreational, domestic, agricultural, flora and fauna to name but a few.

Heritage reflects all that we value of our past. Heritage re-enforces our community sense of belonging and worth - who we are and how we got here. Heritage is also an authentic sense of place, expressed through our customs, traditions, landscape and other heritage resources, that visitors seek out both to share and celebrate. Heritage has contributed significantly to local economic growth across rural Ireland. Rural Heritage, classic and contemporary, contributes to the identity and branding of territory, so relevant in an age of globalisation and fierce competition. This identity constitutes the base for sustainable and endogenous development. The link between culture and tourism is the most visible aspect of the contribution of culture to rural development: 37% of the global tourism has a cultural motivation. When tourism is identified as part of an overall development strategy, the identification, protection and enhancement of historic resources is vital for any sustainable effort. Heritage visitors stay longer, visit twice as many places, and so spend 2.5 times more than other visitors. Worldwide, wherever heritage tourism has been evaluated this basic tendency is observed: heritage visitors stay longer, spend more per day and therefore have a significantly greater per trip economic impact. Therefore cultural heritage tourism will also be one of the main economic contributors of the LDS.

Our main focus is to support local people in taking pride in the distinctiveness of their own communities through development and celebration of the special skills and knowledge of local people, traditions, social history, environment, culture and local products thus giving the community a feeling of belonging and pride.

It is necessary to improve awareness of rural heritage and the ethics of its care in study curricula and to identify tools that can be developed to help communities to better understand and conserve rural heritage. Heritage education needs to be developed through |

formal and informal processes. Preservation can be the tool to create a future in which a stable community core is enlivened and sustained by a widespread system of small workshops and tailored activities, supported by essential infrastructure and community facilities and made more attractive by well-maintained open spaces and monuments.

This initiative will create an interest in local culture, heritage and history, it seeks to involve young people together with new and old rural dwellers in a process designed to encourage integration, sense of place and historical and cultural research.

Within this strategic action capital support for cultural and heritage networks to encourage collective inter-organisational actions where such actions can promote the interpretation and animation of our rural heritage through publications such as local histories, brochures, websites, podcasts and through avenues including branded interactive information panels, site markers, heritage trail animation and heritage guides.

New opportunities for rural communities to generate income through the utilisation of their own cultural knowledge will be fostered facilitating them to employ their diverse social, cultural and heritage resources and matching them with LEADER funding to progress local level development.

The strategic action will support the introduction of capacity building programmes, through knowledge-based clusters, in order to provide support for local publishing initiatives, museums and archive services and research actions.

Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, Meath's historical and heritage groups and local member bodies, local tourism organisations, tourism enterprise providers, cultural and performing groups, literary societies and sporting organisations.
Geographic Area:	The geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, OPW and cultural and performing arts organisations.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	5 Number of projects funded - Level of private investment: €75,000.00 15,000 Number of visitors facilitated 5 Number of jobs created 10 Number of new cultural heritage based initiatives developed

	• 5 Associated enterprises supported/created

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center"><u>Local Objective 5</u></td></tr>
<tr><td>Title of Local Objective</td><td>To provide support for improved access to and utilisation of broadband services to increase connectivity across rural communities and with the disadvantaged and hard to reach. To enable ICT driven interaction between rural communities, relevant state agencies and service providers while also enabling access to broadband for local business and new era community enterprise.</td></tr>
<tr><td>LEADER Theme</td><td>Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sub-theme</td><td>Broadband</td></tr>
<tr><td>Brief Rationale for the Objective</td><td>As much as lack of economic opportunity does, social and community disconnection, isolation and seclusion feature as the conspicuous symptoms of rural decline over generations, and directly result from the remoteness and distance that distinguish rural from urban living. To fulfil its promise, rural development must fully embrace the challenges these raise, which are multifaceted and diverse, and vary for people of different backgrounds and circumstances, and a variety of processes, supports, infrastructure, and services including ICT require targeted deployment so that all rural dwellers are given opportunities to engage and participate in social, economic and community life.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Financial Allocation (€)</td><td>€86,940.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective</td><td>1. Broadband Utilisation and Access</td></tr>
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<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Strategic Action 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Title of Strategic Action 1</td><td>Broadband Utilisation and Access - Improving connectivity to enable improved utilisation, service delivery and access.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Brief Description of Strategic Action 1</td><td>This action will provide rural communities with assisted connectivity to information and services through developing new community services to be located in community or state agency facilities situated within rural communities. Increased access and know-how to reliable and high-speed broadband is vital for the economic and social development of rural areas and communities. High-quality broadband enables businesses to set-up or continue to be based in rural areas, by overcoming barriers relating to access to markets and services. There is also a potential to create additional employment as access to broadband can support businesses to grow. Individuals and communities will have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to develop and access digital connectivity and make more use of it.</td></tr>
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Rationale	The use and application of ICTs as the basic instrumentalities of the Information Society go much beyond discussions of the digital divide. They include examining how and under what conditions Broadband and ICT access can be made usable and useful i.e. how effective use can be achieved by, among others, marginal or excluded populations and communities. Developing strategies and applications for using ICTs to support local economic development, social justice and civic engagement; ensuring local access to education and health services; enabling local control of information production and distribution; and, ensuring the survival and continuing vitality of local cultures are among the most significant possible applications within this strategic action. Defining access to ICT is difficult for several reasons. While access is consistently identified as a key principle in policy discussions, it is not an end in itself. Access only enables further activities that can only partially be specified beforehand. Therefore the proposed model of access under this strategic action will include: support for a multiplicity of usage roles involving creation and dissemination as well as retrieval of existing information; encompass both conventional and new media; recognise the interplay of social and technical dimensions in the development of infrastructure; define what services are essential; identify access gaps particularly for those groupings in our communities who are excluded and marginalised. This access model will take an e–readiness approach which includes the training, technical, legal and regulatory infrastructures which ensures access to the use of technology. Examples may also include, basic ICT training to priority groups, skills development for installing broadband, feasibility studies in relation to community broadband and funding for small scale equipment, such as boosters, for local businesses and community facilities.
Primary Target Group(s)	Hard to reach target groups and communities including disadvantaged youth, older people and time poor sectors of society such as home carers and rural enterprises as primary employment generators.
Geographic Area:	The geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Broadband providers, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	• 300 no. of Individuals assisted • 10 no. of facilities engaged in projects • 350 no. engaged in training to enable effective use • 10 Broadband, internet and social media equipment

installations
- 5 no. FTE jobs created
- Private match funding invested: €30,000.00

Local Objective 6	
Title of Local Objective	To provide support for community facility development to counteract the withdrawal of essential services, to provide for social and economic interaction at the local level, to promote community enterprise, provide for service provider outreach and to operationalise community action in support of the hard to reach and disadvantaged in rural society.
LEADER Theme	Social Inclusion
Sub-theme	Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities
Brief Rationale for the Objective	As much as lack of economic opportunity does, social and community disconnection, loss of essential services, lack of community facilities, isolation and seclusion feature as the conspicuous symptoms of rural decline over generations, and directly result from the remoteness and distance that distinguish rural from urban living. To fulfil its promise, rural development must fully embrace the challenges these raise, which are multifaceted and diverse, and vary for people, rural communities or people of different backgrounds and circumstances, and a variety of processes, supports, community infrastructure and services require targeted development so that all rural dwellers are given opportunities to engage, avail of essential services and participate in social, economic and community life.
Financial Allocation (€)	€869,400.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Community Facility Development 2. Developing Community Resources (Hard to Reach)

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Community Facility Development – Developing community facilities to enhance quality of life, educational opportunity and address local service loss.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	Community assets are those which include social capital, physical assets leased, owned and managed by the community and may include a wide range of buildings, facilities, land or environmental spaces and features. An emphasis will be placed on operations which promote the benefits of assets for building community life, addressing social inclusion, enhancing opportunities for progression, supporting lifelong learning and training, are attractive to residents, businesses and visitors and capable of providing

	essential services.
Rationale	Rural communities have experienced a gradual rural decline over the last couple of decades. Changing agricultural practices and the more recent economic crisis have contributed to rural unemployment, which has led to outward migration, reduced rural services, and to the marginal economic viability of many rural communities. The loss of public services, high unemployment levels and the consequential outmigration of younger, better educated members of rural communities has collectively endangered the social fabric and structure of rural areas. This has resulted in the run down or withdrawal, at a local level of many essential services such as transport, medical, education and policing, as well as the closure of small shops, post offices, garages and small locally based trading concerns. The enhancement of community facilities as a means of addressing these gaps is a significant imperative.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, village and town communities, local service providers, social economy interests.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co. Meath with a focus on disadvantaged EDs
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Faith organisations, Clann Credo, Community Finance Ireland, GAA, Community Resource Holders, Social Enterprise and Small Business Organisations.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	10 no. of community projects funded 10 buildings restored or enhanced 25% Increase in community usage and service provision 10 no. of services provided or restored 10 FTE jobs created - Private match funding invested: €584,800.00

Strategic Action 2

Title of Strategic Action 3	Developing Community Resources targeting the Hard to Reach
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	Examples of potential activity include feasibility studies and business plans for resource and asset based development; investment in development and refurbishment of local community resources; purchase of equipment to enable additional economic development and social inclusion objectives to be achieved; review of community resources to maximise usage; developing resource sharing management initiatives; reviewing and developing ways to overcomes barriers to resource utilisation e.g. integrating local services with community transport initiatives; developing and

	supporting resource sharing networks and knowledge sharing in respect of community resources and facilities across community groups and organisations. It is also important to note that where resources are being placed in community ownership or control, the LAG if providing support has an obligation to ensure that the future of these resources and their utilisation is sustainable. Business planning will play a key role in resource transfer, community management policy and control.
Rationale	Village communities across Co. Meath hold significant resources in the form of people, land, buildings and facilities which are available for community activity and service provision. In the majority of cases the physical resources are owned or managed by community organisations and there is a long history of local groups using resource-based development to achieve long term social, economic, and environmental improvements in their local area. However, the community consultation process highlighted the fact that community resources, principally the people, remain under-utilised with their skills and knowledge not put to use in addressing community needs or working on behalf of deprived sectors or disadvantaged members of the community.

In the early stages of the new programme, it is intended to undertake an audit to establish location, capacity, current use, local demands and potential for future resource development in terms of supporting the hard to reach. This knowledge will enable the LAG and the communities it serves to be better informed about funding decisions relating to the utilisation of community resources and to ensure that any funding used for this purpose is invested strategically in order to engage hard to reach target groups in County Meath.

The hard to reach can be defined as the underserved, the elderly, the young, minorities, those slipping through the net and the service resistant. To support our work with the hard to reach, our strategy will include five operational approaches:
- Connecting with people in their own environment
- Developing outreach components to projects/initiatives
- Partnership working with other bodies and agencies
- Target agents for change in the community, sports body leaders, groups that people divide into for common, social, political, economic, cultural, business and education purposes
- Work with community organisations with an existing rapport with the hard to reach

LEADER support will enable groups to plan better for investment in community resources, subject to both need and longer term impact |

	being demonstrated. It is expected that LEADER funding will operate alongside other sources of national exchequer finance to meet demand within this strategic action and maximise the benefit to local communities. Taking service provision to the hard to reach is a fundamental objective of this strategic action, LEADER will assist in creating the local circumstances in which this can be facilitated.
Primary Target Group(s)	Young people, older people, migrants, people with disabilities, small farmers, carers in society, minority groupings, the unemployed and disadvantaged.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of County Meath with a focus on deprivation and hard to reach communities.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Laterlife Network, Foroige, Irish Farmers Association, GAA, sporting bodies, Teagasc, communities of interest, relevant NGO's and community bodies. Relevant state agencies and NGO Networks.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	15 Number of service provision initiatives planned and supported 1,500 Number of persons engaged in capacity building 20 Diversity of opportunity options provided 5 no. FTE jobs created - Private match funding invested: €109,000.00 - Localised support offered to 15 hard to reach communities

Local Objective 7	
Title of Local Objective	To support the development of a strategic framework and community planning in addressing the issues facing rural youth. Support will be provided for the assimilation of rural youth into the social economy to provide essential work like experience, promotion of creative endeavour, improvement of employability and action to address skills deficits and ease the increasingly difficult journey into employment.
LEADER Theme	Social Inclusion
Sub-theme	Rural Youth
Brief Rationale for the Objective	As much as lack of economic opportunity and employment does, disadvantaged rural youth and social issues arising feature as the conspicuous symptoms of rural decline over recent generations. To fulfil its promise, rural development must fully embrace the challenges raised by this issue, which are multifaceted and diverse. This will require the provision of supports to the target group, the development of the social economy, community infrastructure and service provision to ensure that rural youth is given opportunities to

	engage in training and the work life environment to underpin future employment prospects.
Financial Allocation (€)	€163,802.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Rural Youth

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 4	Addressing the needs and advancing the interests of rural youth.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 4	In developing a strategic framework to address the issues facing rural youth in the county, the LAG is proposing to encourage and support the development of the social economy with a specific youth focus. According to a report of the Social Enterprise Task Force 2010, the social enterprise sector in Ireland has the potential to grow significantly to represent 5 % of GDP and to generate at least 65,000 jobs. It recognises that the sector is underdeveloped and that growth is hindered by a number of historical factors including a lack of policy focus and direction and limited access to support structures similar to those available to the SME sector. Employers across all sectors continue to identify the lack of customer facing skills as one of the key issues in filling job vacancies while for job seekers it is the insistence that applicants have 2 to 3 years' experience for almost every position advertised that presents a problem. Developing the social economy with a youth focus in County Meath can simultaneously address these issues. One of the key elements of the proposed social economy model will be ensuring that the young people who participate achieve an appropriate recognition for the skills they have developed. Meath Partnership as a QQI accredited body will assist participating organisations and project promoters to provide the necessary skills recognition.
Rationale	There were approximately 21,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 25 years living in County Meath at the last census. Foreign nationals account for almost 11% with Poland and England the most common countries of origin. Throughout Europe youth have been disproportionally effected by the economic downturn and while we in Ireland are experiencing a genuine economic recovery young people today still face a number of key challenges not least of these being the unprecedented uncertainty and change in contemporary worlds of work. Many of those on the margins of society face an increasingly difficult journey into employment and

	even those in work face insecurity as the required skill-sets continue to change in response to the evolving marketplace. For today's young people the notion of a career scarcely resembles that of previous generations.
	At present County Meath has a vibrant and sustainable third sector economy. Meath can boast a vast array of community organisations working to deliver services and supports to local communities throughout the county. All type and manner of sports are also widely represented and available, and there are a considerable number of bodies supporting all type of creative endeavour. Throughout the year the county provides festivals and events to suit all tastes. The level of volunteer activity necessary to support all of this activity is considerable and most of the groups or organisations responsible for the management and delivery of these diverse programmes are not-for-profit associations or NGOs. Over the years, through successive LEADER programmes, many of these organisations have benefited from the available funding and support that the programme offers. With funding from central government sources still in short supply as we continue on the road to economic recovery it is anticipated that many of these groups will once again turn to LEADER to further develop their services to the community. It is within this context that the LAG will encourage project promoters to harness the potential of the social economy to support the development of key skills and competences among youth across the county.
	The proposed social economy engagement model will provide valuable work experience for young people enabling them to build impressive curriculum vitae of desirable skills and competences. The LAG will put a considerable emphasis on ensuring that the soft skills so readily sought by business are supplemented by key skills essential to the employability and entrepreneurship.
	To support the achievement of this strategic action LEADER will, as part of its animation programme, host several workshops under the title "Developing The Social Economy for Youth Employment". It will also collate and disseminate best practice social economy development models from Ireland and abroad to act as a reference tool for project promoters interested in this approach.
	Young people will play a significant role in the future development of society and economy in County Meath and the social economy model proposed will help to sustain and develop the third sector throughout the lifetime of the current LEADER programme and beyond.
Primary Target Group(s)	The primary target group are rural youth throughout County Meath.

	The proposed strategic action is such that it can be expected that the youth engaged will be representative of a wide range of youth profiles. LEADER will ensure that all sectors of the rural youth target group are engaged particularly those at risk of long-term unemployment and the hard to reach.
Geographic Area:	The geographic territory of County Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as the Implementing Partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Existing social economy enterprises, community facility management committees, festival organising committees, cultural event organisers, training organisations, social care providers and community service interests, relevant state bodies and community transport providers.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2017-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	15 social enterprises engaged 250 youths will develop new skills and competencies 200youths will achieve experiential accreditation 15 service providers with youth included in service provision 150 youth progressing to employment, self-employment or further education and training - Private match funding invested: €30,000.00

Local Objective 8	
Title of Local Objective	To support the sustainable development of County Meath's water resources, to improve the recreational use of inland waters, to realise the significant health, economic and environmental benefit arising from such development and to foster a better understanding of the need to care for and protect our environment.
LEADER Theme	Rural Environment
Sub-theme	Protection and sustainable use of Water Resources
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The natural environment is the lifeblood of rural Ireland, and the protection and sustainable utilisation of water resources is where rural development must have its starting point. While sustainable development principles are cornerstones of this and previous local development strategies in the county, there is a recognition that not just environmental, but social, community, and economic opportunity exists for rural people where the challenges of sustainable development of water resources are understood and embraced.
Financial Allocation (€)	€313,950.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Inland Waters Recreation and Protection

	Strategic Action 1
Title of Strategic Action 1	Inland Waters Recreation and Protection - To support the conservation focused development of lakes and rivers as recreational resources which contribute to quality of life while offering opportunities for water based enterprise creation
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	This strategic action will support the sustainable development of Meath's water resources through the provision of aid to Blue Way development proposals, foreshore facilities, improved access, angling facilities, boating, kayaking, canoeing, bird watching and other forms of water based recreational activity.
Rationale	Recreational use of inland waters and adjacent land enhances the quality of people's lives and fosters a better understanding of the environment. Recreation provides economic, social, health and environmental benefits to individuals and communities alike. LEADER in county Meath will work with communities and the private sector to seek to realise the recreational potential of county Meath as a driver of rural enterprise and wellbeing. There is a clear need emerging from the community and stakeholder consultation process for improved strategic planning in providing for water-based sport and recreation in county Meath. This process will identify existing recreational resources to be utilised and protected, and opportunities to cater for unmet recreational demand. LEADER will address the lack of packaging of blueway recreational activity in Meath, the lack of networking of existing facilities and operators and the need to strengthen the vision of Meath as a recreational destination in this context. Meath's potential to provide a full range of water based recreational activity is very strong given the diversity of the county's rivers, coastline, lakes and waterbodies. Sustainable management and development of these water resources requires closer collaboration between local authorities, public agencies, riparian owners and water resource users in all their diversity, greater collaboration and collective development will be facilitated through LEADER funded actions. The LDS will seek to identify characteristics that contribute to the tourism value of a waterbody and enable the development of knowledge of good practice in this respect and will support properly conceived proposals with targeted capital investment packages. Support will also be offered towards the restoration of navigation upon historic inland waterways, and the construction of new navigations where this enhances the use of existing waterways, contributes to amenity improvements, permits the mitigation of any adverse effects on nature conservation, and promotes economic regeneration.

	The LAG's inland waterway recreation development plan will seek the expansion of recreational facilities to fill gaps for defined demand such as whole of family, niche activities, active retired and young people and facilities that benefit residents and visitors alike.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community development organisations, conservation societies, entrepreneurs, recreation and water based sporting interests, tourism networks, rural society organisations.
Geographic Area:	Entire area of Co Meath with a specific focus on larger rivers, estuarine environments, and the lakes of North and North West Meath.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Inland Waterways, Regional Fishery Authorities, Coillte
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2017-2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	3 no. lakeside operations 2 no. coastline developments 4 no. enterprises assisted 3 no. riverside operations 10 no. FTE jobs created - Private match funding invested: €266,000.00 1 inland waterways development plan

Local Objective 9	
Title of Local Objective	To support actions to combat the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems through engagement with agencies, organisations, communities and individuals with specific interest in biodiversity in respect of County Meath's farmlands, bogs, lakes, rivers, coastal sites and wildlife habitats.
LEADER Theme	Rural Environment
Sub-theme	Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The natural environment and its associated flora and fauna is the lifeblood of rural Ireland, and its protection and sustainable growth are where rural development must have its starting point. While sustainable development principles are cornerstones of this and previous local development strategies in the county, there is a recognition that not just environmental, but social, community, and economic opportunity exists for rural people where the challenges of sustainable development are understood and embraced.
Financial Allocation (€)	€303,125.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Protection and Improvement of Local Diversity

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Protection and Improvement of Local Diversity - To support conservation and restoration of biodiversity through actions to combat the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems by strengthening the knowledge base for the conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity as a rural resource.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	Biodiversity in Meath is rich and abundant, and the landscape provides numerous areas and forms of natural habitat. River valleys, particularly those of the Boyne and Blackwater, the county's coastal zone to the east, rolling farmland, lakelands, bogs and upland areas (many defined by historical and pre-historical significance), provide a breadth and depth of landscape types and a multiplicity of habitats that represent both resources, assets, and attractions but also obligations and responsibilities for citizens, developers and for environmental policy more generally. As such, support will be provided to initiatives and projects such as: • small-scale and local biodiversity research initiatives that form part of wider development projects or plans; • wider research into new forms of biodiversity protection, recovery or enhancement services in local settings that have long-term scope to be commercial or offer "public good" benefits; • local biodiversity interest groups, community actions, or local improvement projects; • tourism projects and initiatives that place significance on biodiversity protection, enhancement, celebration or education; • recreational amenities that seek to enhance, protect or raise awareness about and experience of local biodiversity and its importance; • projects and initiatives seeking to enhance young people's understanding and appreciation of biodiversity; • training programmes for local communities, interest groups or individuals that centre on biodiversity protection, enhancement or promotion; • programmes to enhance biodiversity knowledge and appreciation among tourism, recreation and sporting service providers (e.g. in hunting/shooting, fishing, cycling, equestrian, walking, water sport or water-based recreation). • initiatives designed to facilitate or improve community-based biodiversity management.
Rationale	Meath has a rich and varied landscape with historic features dating back to prehistory, the county retains a strong connection with

traditional agriculture and the landscape supports a wide range of ecological habitats. Hedgerows are considered to be a prominent feature of the landscape; a recent survey estimated there are over 22000km of hedgerow in the county. Many have grown tall and form an extensive network of tree lines, which gives the intensive agricultural landscape a wooded appearance from the ground level.

The Boyne and Blackwater Rivers dissect the county and are considered to be of international importance in terms of nature conservation. The Boyne and Blackwater Special Area of Conservation was designated because these rivers contain populations of species protected under Annex II of the European Habitats Directive (Atlantic salmon, otters, and lamprey – an ancient, jawless fish) and the wetlands associated with the rivers include habitats protected in Annex I of the same directive (fen and wet woodlands).

Meath contains several small lakes, a few of which are designated for nature conservation because they are hard-water marl lakes (e.g. Lough Bane and Lough Glass). These hard water lakes occur mainly on the Meath/ Westmeath border. The only medium-sized lake, is Lough Sheelin (SPA 4065), located on the north-western boundary of the county and home to several important populations of birds. It should be noted that lakes in County Meath have a particular fishery value as they contain valuable salmonid and course fish species.

Meath's short coastline is home to internationally important populations of wintering birds at the Boyne estuary (SAC 1957), as well as protected habitats of high nature conservation importance. A total of eight habitats listed under Annex I of the European Union Habitats Directive exist at this site including estuary, tidal mudflat, embryonic shifting dunes, marram dunes, fixed dunes, *Salicornia* mud, and both Atlantic and Mediterranean salt meadow. Other important coastal sites include the Laytown Dunes and Nanny estuary (pNHA 554) consisting of a mosaic of habitats including freshwater marsh, salt-marsh, sandy beach and muddy estuary.

In Ireland, peatlands have accumulated 1,200 million tons of carbon that would otherwise be released and contribute to global warming. Peatlands contain about 90% water and act as vast water stores safeguarding ecosystems downstream. They also have a vital role in the supply of drinking water in catchments that are largely covered by peatlands. Ireland contains over 50% of all raised bog habitat remaining in Europe. Meath represents the north eastern limit of raised bog distribution and in total seven sites are designated for nature conservation. Raised bogs are a rare habitat

in an international context and therefore are of high nature conservation value.

Urban areas are not necessarily wildlife deserts and a wide range of plants and animals can be found in public green spaces, town parks, old stone walls, hedgerows, graveyards, bridges, rivers, canals, gardens and waste ground. Towns such as Navan and Trim have many old stone walls and bridges that are important habitats for bats and birds in particular. Old graveyards can be wildlife hotspots too if they have not been managed too intensively. Certain species such as foxes have become increasingly visible in urban areas.

Meath is home to several protected mammals. All bats are protected under the Wildlife Acts. At least eight of the ten species known to occur in Ireland have been recorded in Meath. Several protected bird species appear among Meath's bird fauna. There are two nature reserves in county Meath managed by the Irish Wildlife Trust namely *Golashane Farm* and *Newcastle Lough.*

The LDS will therefore assist in delivering on the following national vision for biodiversity;

"That biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally."

Primary Target Group(s)	Farming community, rare breed societies, gun clubs, game bird breeders, bird watch groups, conservation societies, and young people in education, Flora and Fauna linked organisations and community bodies.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	IFA, NARGC, Bird Watch Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, Coillte, Bord Na Mona, OPW
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	50 Farmers engaged in training on application of new conservation technologies; 2 Gun clubs engaged in breeding to conserve endangered species; 15 Landowners and communities engaged in habitat preservation and improvement; 3 Breed society programmes for protection of rare breeds, 5 Training and education programmes delivered to young people in education,

	• 4 Lakeland, estuarine environments and bog lands engaged in biodiversity protection actions
	• Private match funding invested: €230,000.00

Local Objective 10	
Title of Local Objective	To promote and progress social, community and economic action supportive of environmental protection, sustainability and good practice in environmental care.
LEADER Theme	Rural Environment
Sub-theme	Development of Renewable Energy
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The natural environment is the lifeblood of rural Ireland, and its defence and protection in respect of carbon emissions and climate change is where rural development must have its starting point. While sustainable development principles are cornerstones of this and previous local development strategies in the county, there is a recognition that not just environmental, but social, community, and economic opportunity exists for rural people where the challenges posed by climate change are understood and embraced.
Financial Allocation (€)	€304,902.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Development of Renewable Energy

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Development of Renewable Energy - To drive community engagement with and investment in energy conservation, renewable energy utilisation and new sustainable energy technologies
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	This strategic action seeks to secure investment in improving the thermal, electrical and energy efficiency of community buildings and facilities while also encouraging investment in the retrofitting of new sustainable energy technologies. The methodological approach will involve innovative collective and partnership approaches in delivering cost effective capital investment operations. Support measures will include, building fabric upgrade including insulation ventilation and heat recovery systems, systems upgrades, energy saving control technology, energy generation systems passive and active.
Rationale	Community buildings are often the hub of community life, but remaining financially viable in these challenging times is always a concern, For some community facilities energy can be one of the biggest costs they face therefore monitoring and conserving energy consumption is critical.

	There are a range of energy efficiency actions that can be taken, however it is important to understand your current and future energy needs before investing in renewable energy technologies. The benefits that energy generation and conservation bring are greater than ever before and are predictable in terms of cost and good financial return.
	Both heat and electricity feature strongly in terms of energy related investments, however, heat as the greatest energy consumer and biggest cost in community facilities is most often the cost heading which should first be tackled in combination with insulation and conservation. Accordingly LEADER will focus on providing assistance to communities in addressing this issue.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations controlling and managing community buildings and facilities in the rural environment
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	SEAI
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	11 no. projects funded 7 no. facilities engaged in upgrade operations 4 no. facilities generating sustainable energy 11 communities involved in collective developments - Private match funding invested: €100,000.00

CHAPTER 5: Strategic Integration

5.1 Cross-cutting themes

There are three cross-cutting themes that permeate the LEADER Programme in Ireland namely; innovation, climate change and environment. These themes inform and guide the development and delivery of the programme and have a significant influence on the aims and objectives of the County Meath LEADER programme and on the individual measures that will be developed to ensure that those aims and objectives are achieved.

5.1.1 Innovation

It is widely accepted that rural communities are characterised by a strong attachment to traditional values. For some commentators this is understood to mean that there is an inherent lack of initiative, creativity and innovation in rural areas and that it is for this reason that rural communities are lagging behind their urban counterparts where development is concerned. In reality, the experience of LEADER in County Meath tells an entirely different story, along with the experience of those who work closely with rural communities throughout Ireland, points to an existing and growing paradigm of rural innovation.

Rural innovations are not the result of chance. On the contrary, rural areas are discovering new opportunities that practically did not exist only one generation ago and which reflect the changes that society as a whole is today undergoing. Consumers are increasingly seeking out products, quality services and new social links that the rural environment is able to offer and rural communities are developing new products and services to meet these emerging needs.

Rural communities are innovative places and in many cases it is their ability to innovate that accounts for their continued prosperity. Rural communities have acquired and nurtured key skills in three major areas that collectively ensure sustainable development:

    i)   making productive use of their natural environment;
    ii)   managing their economic development;
    iii)   structuring their social organisation;

In rural communities innovation is embraced as a holistic reality with rural dwellers continually formulating novel organisational or institutional arrangements to meet the challenges of adapting to, and satisfying, the evolving demands of consumer society and economy.

Innovation is a major driver of wealth creation and socio-economic development and while it has always been present in rural communities the intensity of innovation has varied according to the different social, economic or political circumstances that pertained at any given time. Faced with the challenges that the financial crisis of 2008 brought, rural dwellers, businesses and service providers in County Meath rolled-up their sleeves and met these challenges head-on helping them to mitigate the impact of the severest recession in the history of the State. It is this in-built capacity for innovation that Meath LEADER will help to further develop in the period to 2020.

While many of the innovations that have occurred in rural communities in previous eras might be characterised as innovation more by necessity than by opportunity, the foundations for many of the more recent innovations in County Meath can be found in the scientific research laboratory; in the growing networks of rural entrepreneurs throughout the County or the community councils and local groups that work tirelessly to sustain the rural way of life and harness emerging social and economic opportunities as they arise. Development literature uses the term 'radical activists' to describe members of rural communities who actively seek to create innovative solutions to enhance and sustain their community[2]. The fact is that people living and working in Meath have improved their skills and competences during the last decades and through this programming period considerable effort will be expended to promote the LEADER funding as the latest opportunity for radical thinking.

Innovation in County Meath is broad-based and multi-faceted encompassing everything from new niche-market focussed rural tourism enterprises to mainstream food technology enhancements. Innovation has not just focussed on the economic elements of rural life but also included significant social innovations and these are the trends that the LAG will be looking to develop and further enhance in the coming programme period. Across each of the six investment priorities project promoters will be encouraged to look for new responses to address persistent problems to ensure that innovative actions are developed to achieve the required added value on the ground.

Innovation is fundamental to achieving the objectives of LEADER and in animating the local community and businesses to engage with the new programme there are 10 forms of innovation that LEADER in Meath will look to support:

1. Profit Model Innovation – which primarily focuses on how businesses or service providers make money and finding new ways to challenge tired old assumptions about what to offer, what to charge, or how to collect revenues.

2. Network Innovation – looks at how businesses or communities connect with others to create value, allowing them to capitalise on their own strengths while harnessing the strengths of others. Network innovations can be brief or enduring.

3. Structure Innovation – results from actions that consider and redefine how the talents and assets of a business or community are organised and aligned and how they can be reconfigured to maximise returns and create added value.

4. Process Innovation – these types of innovations are generally characterised by a rejection of the "business as usual" approach to support increased capacity to capitalise on unique capabilities, function more efficiently and adapt more quickly to market changes or opportunities.

5. Product/Service Performance Innovation – revolves around the development of distinguishing features and functionality and these types of innovations are equally relevant for existing and new products or services.

6. Product System Innovation – looks at how businesses or communities develop complementary products and services to create a robust and scalable offering. These

[2] Fishbourne, S. Derounian, J. & Vincent, P. (2009) Skills and knowledge needed in the near future by English rural communities

types of innovations help to build ecosystems that captivate customers and defend against competitors.

7. Service Innovation – primarily considers how to amplify the value of a product or service by making it easier to try, use, or enjoy. By addressing problems or issues that arise for end users they can elevate even bland and average products or services into compelling experiences.

8. Channel Innovation – revolves around the delivery of services or products to customers and users and tries to identify multiple but complementary ways to bring products and services to customers to ensure that users have access to what they want, when and how they want.

9. Brand Innovation – looks at how businesses or communities present and represent the products and services on offer to ensure that customers and users recognize, remember, and prefer your offerings to those of competitors or substitutes. Brand innovations can transform products or services into prized products, and confer meaning, intent, and value.

10. Customer Engagement Innovation – the best innovations of this type provide broad avenues for exploration with a view to enhancing the customer experience and finding ways to make that experience more memorable, fulfilling and rewarding.

In a County Meath context the focus on innovation will be evident throughout all aspects of the programme and will be a key element in the capacity building work of LEADER staff who will strive to promote and foster the philosophy of innovation that exists within stakeholder groups and communities throughout the County.

In supporting innovation in the rural communities of County Meath to try and find new responses to old and persistent issues we will;

- encourage the prototyping of new products and services;
- place a significant emphasis on collaborative innovation;
- encourage the establishing of cross-sectoral partnerships; and
- endeavour to introduce new flexible business models that respond to the trends in the current marketplace

Innovation within project proposals will be rigorously assessed as part of the project appraisal process.

5.1.2 Climate Change

Climate Change is recognised as today's most serious and threatening global environmental problem and alongside the sustainability crisis they represent the issues of our times. Two hundred years of ever-intensifying human impacts have left the biosphere in a perilous state. The oceans are warming, glaciers disappearing, and the natural world is in sharp decline[3]. Meanwhile, the global population is growing by 80 million a year, and the high-consumption

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[3] www.oecd.org/environment/

lifestyles we in Ireland and the 'developed' world enjoy are accelerating the pressure on our planet.

Research and analysis conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concludes that the impacts of climate change will increase in the coming decades. While the greatest uncertainly lies in how effective global actions will be in reducing greenhouse gas emissions the predicted adverse impacts for Ireland include a rise in sea levels; more intense storms and rainfall events; increased likelihood and magnitude of river and coastal flooding; water shortages in summer in the east of the country with adverse impacts on water quality; changes in distribution of plant and animal species; effects on fisheries sensitive to changes in temperature.

Climate change mitigation actions are now essential to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases. Mitigation can mean using new technologies and renewable energies, making older equipment more energy efficient, or changing management practices or consumer behaviour. It can be as complex as a plan for a new city; or as a simple as car-pooling, the provision of bicycle paths and walkways. Protecting natural carbon sinks like forests and oceans, or creating new sinks through silviculture or green agriculture are also elements of mitigation.

Establishing a sustainable pattern of development is a key challenge for Ireland, and improving resource efficiency is a top priority to achieve this goal. Resource efficiency is also one of the key environmental priorities at EU level and is one of the seven flagship initiatives within the Europe 2020 Strategy. The challenge is to utilise resources in a sustainable manner throughout their lifecycle, avoiding over-exploitation and reducing the environmental and social impacts of their use. Transforming the economy onto a resource-efficient path will bring increased competitiveness and new sources of growth, through cost savings from improved efficiency, commercialisation of innovations and better management of resources. This requires policies that recognise the interdependencies between the economy, wellbeing and natural capital and the removal of barriers to improved resource efficiency. To achieve a resource-efficient and green economy, there is a need to make a transition across all sectors of the economy and, in particular, the energy, agricultural and transport systems, as well as changing behaviours of producers and consumers.

Global emissions of carbon dioxide have increased by over 50 per cent since 1990. Addressing the unabated rise in greenhouse gas emissions and the resulting likely impacts of climate change, such as altered ecosystems, weather extremes and risks to society, remains an urgent, critical challenge for the global community. Developing renewable energy is an integral part of Ireland's sustainable energy objectives and climate change strategy. Renewable energy contributes to meeting all three energy policy goals, namely: energy security, cost competitiveness and protection of the environment through the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. LEADER in Meath will adopt a multifaceted approach towards climate change mitigation in its efforts to help businesses and communities move towards a low-carbon society.

The LEADER Programme can play a significant role in mitigating the impacts of climate change in County Meath by ensuring that the key concepts of reduce; reuse and recycle are enshrined in LEADER project actions. As part of the project animation process Meath Partnership will support project promoters to think about their projects and ideas in a more environmentally friendly and sustainable way. Every project or action leaves an

environmental footprint and the focus of LEADER staff will be to ensure that this footprint is minimised.

Project promoters will be required to demonstrate how their proposal complies with the guidelines set out by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and within the parameters set out by EPA. Promoters will be assisted to develop and apply environmentally friendly policies and procedures and in some cases an in-depth cost benefit analysis will be required as part of the project appraisal process.

5.1.3 Environment

The protection of the environment is one of the primary aims of the LEADER programme and in a County Meath context the term environment needs to be considered from a variety of perspectives. The heritage of Meath is one of, if not the, defining quality and asset of the county, and alongside its built and cultural heritage, its natural heritage, assets and endowments are what mark the county and its residents' identity with it.

The landscape of County Meath is a fascinating museum in which the history and heritage of Ireland down through the ages can be experienced. Home to one of only three properties in Ireland that has been inscribed onto the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO, County Meath's cultural heritage is its legacy from the past. The inclusion of *Brú na Bóinne* on the World Heritage List means increased cultural tourism and the associated economic benefits that derive. It is incumbent on those who live in the county today to protect and preserve this cultural heritage for future generations. Meath is a county rich in cultural heritage with an abundance of significant monuments located throughout its landscape. Meath's cultural heritage environment includes some of the most important buildings and sites in Ireland from an historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological and anthropological perspective.

For many people, the foundations of a sustainable community can be found in a shared cultural heritage which bonds people together and builds community confidence.
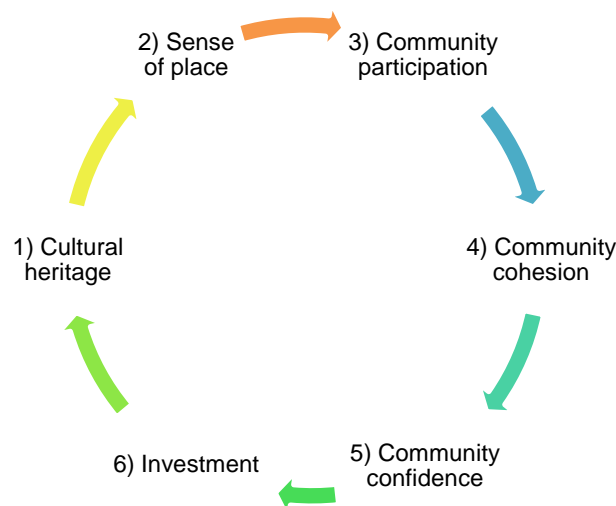
"Our heritage is inextricably linked to our identity as people, communities and as a nation. Over the millennia Meath's physical environment has moulded its natural and cultural heritage. From the spiritual resonance of Brú na Bóinne to Tara's symbolism of political sovereignty and freedom and

from the beauty of the Boyne to medieval structures and eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture. This is a landscape which perpetually invites us on journeys of exploration: of nature, of history, of literature, of architecture, of mythology and saga, of the elusive mysteries of creation itself. Our heritage, although dynamic and constantly evolving, is a non-renewable asset and resource that requires careful and informed management. Heritage plays an essential role in maintaining a high quality of life and is the basis of our tourism industry".[4]

The sustainable management of this rich, robust and diverse cultural heritage environment plays an important role in rural development in the county and there is considerable scope to increase the impact on local communities with appropriate LEADER funded interventions.

Consideration of the strategic approach to biodiversity protection, enhancement or respect and awareness, and the role these can play in the rural development process, must begin with fundamental recognition of its importance in all its forms, and the universal human dependence on it. The role of biodiversity in processes as elementary as food production, climate control, crop pollination, nutrient cycles, and water hygiene and quality is established and recognised, and its appreciation and protection are both public policy priorities and increasingly socially and personally held principles and convictions.

Given the predominance of grassland-based agricultural land use, grassland and hedgerow habitats are of great significance in Meath, and support a wealth of plant and animal species. While Meath has smaller land areas under forestry or woodland than many counties in Ireland, its woods and wooded areas are of high nature and habitat importance, and often in unique or more scenic settings that were historically of low agricultural value (e.g. river margins or floodplains, Lakelands etc.). Watercourses, wetlands, bogs and peatlands, and coastal topography all provide additional and unique habitats that accommodate important species and exemplify natural landscape forms.

Biodiversity in Meath is rich and abundant, and the landscape provides numerous areas and forms of natural habitat. River valleys, particularly those of the Boyne and Blackwater, the county's coastal zone to the east, rolling farmland, Lakelands, bogs and upland areas (many defined by historical and pre-historical significance), provide a breadth and depth of landscape types and a multiplicity of habitats that represent both resources, assets, and attractions but also obligations and responsibilities for citizens, developers and for policy more generally.

Biodiversity policy, at national level, centres on protection, enhancement and public awareness and support. The National Biodiversity Action Plan ("Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016"), the second such national plan, sets out the following national vision for biodiversity:

"That biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally."

Underlying the vision, the plan sets an overarching target:

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[4] County Meath Heritage Plan 2007 – 2011

"That biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystems are reduced by 2016 and progress is made towards substantial recovery by 2020."

The plan also has seven core objectives:

1. *"to mainstream biodiversity in the decision making process across all sectors;*
2. *to substantially strengthen the knowledge base for conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity;*
3. *to increase awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystems services;*
4. *to conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside;*
5. *to conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine environment;*
6. *to expand and improve on the management of protected areas and legally protected species;*
7. *to substantially strengthen the effectiveness of international governance for biodiversity and ecosystem services".*

Meath's County Development Plan 2013-2019 also sets out a number of core policies and objectives relevant to biodiversity and natural heritage in the county, including the following overarching aims:

- *to protect, conserve, and seek to enhance the County's biodiversity;*
- *to promote measures to protect biodiversity in the development management process by creating and improving habitats, where possible;*
- *to raise public awareness and understanding of the county's natural heritage and biodiversity;*
- *to promote increased public participation in biodiversity conservation by supporting and encouraging community-led initiatives.*

Different forms and results of rural development can have or risk having harmful effects on biodiversity, including all building and infrastructure development, different forms of agriculture, forestry and deforestation, transport, tourism and industry. The strategic approach to biodiversity within the LDS is to fully adopt national and local biodiversity objectives, and to support, explore and stimulate that space in which those national priorities and objectives, and local social, economic and community development processes and aims, strategically overlap and complement each other. As such, support will be provided to initiatives and projects such as:

- small-scale and local biodiversity research initiatives that form part of wider development projects or plans;
- wider research into new forms of biodiversity protection, recovery or enhancement services in local settings that have long-term scope to be commercial or offer "public good" benefits;
- local biodiversity interest groups, community actions, or local improvement projects;
- tourism projects and initiatives that place significance on biodiversity protection, enhancement, celebration or education;
- recreational amenities that seek to enhance, protect or raise awareness about and experience of local biodiversity and its importance;
- projects and initiatives seeking to enhance young people's understanding and appreciation of biodiversity;

- training programmes for local communities, interest groups or individuals that centre on biodiversity protection, enhancement or promotion;
- programmes to enhance biodiversity knowledge and appreciation among tourism, recreation and sporting service providers (e.g. in hunting/shooting, fishing, cycling, equestrian, walking, water sport or water-based recreation).
- initiatives designed to facilitate or improve community-based biodiversity management.

Finally, it is important to consider the built environment in County Meath. Towns throughout the county are well served by community buildings and many have benefitted from LEADER investment over the past decade. In today's energy conscious society, it is imperative that appropriate measures are in place to ensure that community buildings demonstrate best practice and leadership where energy conservation and efficiency is concerned. Meath Partnership will ensure that any project promoter proposing a community building project is fully compliant with energy conservation rules and regulations and that they are also aware of supports available through the various grant schemes run by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

5.2 Policy Context

LEADER is a relatively small intervention its effectiveness depends on it being carefully targeted to achieve 'best fit' and avoid duplication or overlap with other strategies and initiatives. Careful consideration and planning of how the LAG can add value to both local and wider initiatives will considerably strengthen the effectiveness and added value of the LDS and the work of the LAG to the local community. The new CLLD approach in 2014 brings with it a much stronger focus on achieving the benefits of complementarity and synergies between all the EU funds and instruments. As such we now consider the policy context in which the LDS has been developed firstly taking into account the high level EU strategies and instruments and align the Six Principal Local Objectives to the LDS to these in the Diagram below:
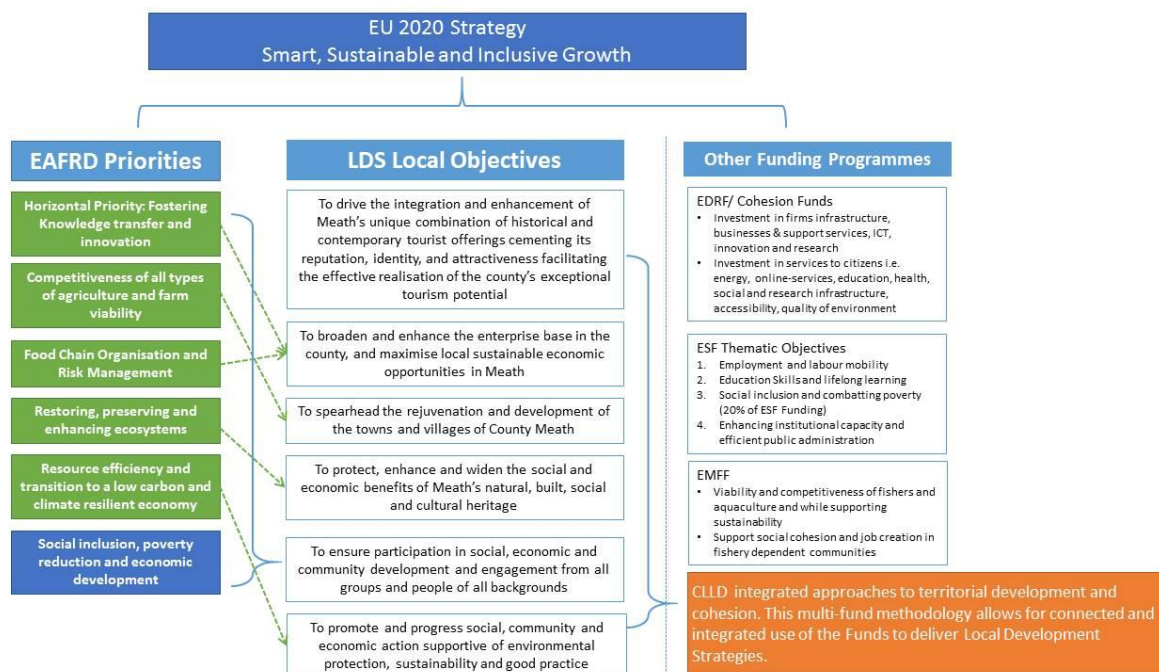
Alongside the EU regulatory and policy objectives for rural development supported by the EAFRD over the period, national research and strategies for rural development were important considerations for establishing local aims and goals. The LDS for Meath is set within an Irish policy context with due consideration given to the draft Meath Local Economic and Community Plan. In preparing the LDS for County Meath, extensive policy analysis and contextualisation was undertaken, and is referenced throughout the Strategy particularly in the rationales in the Local Objective Statements.
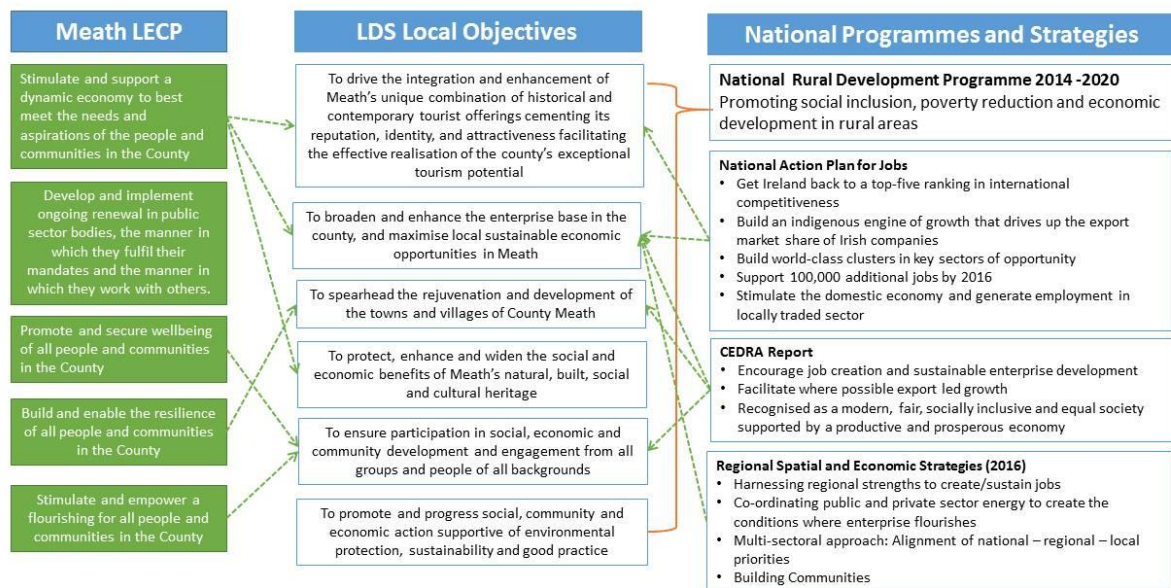
The Meath LECP presents as an immediate developmental and policy framework with which the LDS is designed to complement and action. At the same time there are a range of national programmes, policy initiatives, and activities which the LDS will need to support, comply with, complement, and avoid duplication with. The figure illustrates how both the LECP and a range of the main wider national initiatives and programmes will together relate most strongly to the LDS local objectives and the channels where complementarity and strategic fit will be most important to ensure.

Chapter 6: Networking and Co-operation

Networking and cooperation are fundamental to the successful delivery of the Rural Development Programme across the European Union. LEADER within the RDP is built on the Community Led Local Development approach which as a developmental process relies on the natural tendencies of rural communities to co-operate and learn from each other. Meath LCDC's objective in this respect is to:

- Increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development activity to achieve economic and social progress
- improve the quality of implementation of the RDP by reinforcing the quality and level of resources available to guide and support implementation
- inform and involve the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities
- bring together local actors at a territorial, national and transnational level to support innovation and knowledge sharing

At national level networking and co-operation will be led by the National Rural Network in accordance with Article 54 (3) of RDR 1305/2013 which sets out as a strategic task 'networking for advisors and provision of innovation support services'. The NRN action plan will also cover 'the search of partners for the co-operation measure, Article 35'. Networking and cooperation support to be provided through NRN needs to be substantially improved on the 2007-2013 performance.

For increased effectiveness, the NRN needs to plan and carry through a quarterly series of networking events at national and regional level focussing on each of the three themes of LEADER in turn. This activity should commence early in the lifetime of the programme. Specific events should target the needs of managers, coordinators, project development officers and those with compliance and financial management responsibilities.

The NRN also needs to focus strongly on the needs of LAG members in maximising their understanding of and capacity to govern and control programme delivery. Specific requirements in this respect include project evaluation and decision making, programme oversight and monitoring and individual and collective capacity in respect of delivering on opportunities for cooperation and networking.

Networking and cooperation must also address opportunities for cross border exchange of information about projects, innovative approaches, research initiatives, thematic networks and collaborative funding possibilities. Regional cooperation in a cross border or transnational context does have a political, socio economic and integration dimension, especially between near neighbours.

Regional cooperation and networking is not an objective to be confined to the actions of governments alone. Experience has demonstrated that NGO's, local government, voluntary bodies and associations can and do play a major role in promoting cross border and intra-sectoral cooperation in addressing the sustainable development agenda at regional, national and international level. Such activity raises awareness of the benefits of cooperation and networking and can lead to a better understanding and wider application of sustainable development principles under the LEADER Programme.

Networking therefore includes the exchange of achievements, knowledge and experiences between Local Action Groups, rural areas, administrations and organisations involved in rural development both locally and across the EU. Networking is a means of transferring good practice, of disseminating innovation and of building on the lessons learned from rural development. Networking forges links between people, projects and rural areas and can stimulate local actors into progressing rural development through the LEADER methodologies.

Cooperation goes a step beyond networking and provides opportunities for the Local Action Group to undertake joint projects with another Local Action Group or with a group taking a similar approach or trying to address similar issues in another region, Member State or even a third country. The Meath Local Action Group has received interesting expressions of interest in transnational cooperation from the Czech Republic, Portugal and Italy.

The establishment of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) as a new instrument under the Rural Development Pillar may offer further networking and cooperation opportunities in areas of significant importance to Co Meath. The EIP is seen as a driver for innovation in the primary agriculture and food sectors with the latter being of significant importance to Co Meath. Added value is a priority focus and LEADER can play a significant role in building EIP operational groups amongst interested actors in the County.

Networking remains one of the key features of the LEADER approach, it is not just about collective activity across Local Action Groups. It includes for example Institutional Networks which are funded by the European Commission, the European Network for Rural Development and ELARD which represents Local Action Groups and also the National Networks operating in each Member State whose meetings including those of national administrations are facilitated by the European Network for Rural Development.

During the 2007-2013 LEADER programming period networking and cooperation at the local level advanced very considerably with the establishment of networks in developing sectors critical to the enhancement of the rural economy.

The Elevation Business and Enterprise Network is a multi-sectoral network established with LEADER support and which in turn networks with the banking, insurance, state agency and legal and professional services sectors. This led to significantly increased cooperation and networking between the Local Action Group and these providers of enterprise support and led to new and innovative enterprise support packages being developed with multi-partner involvement.

The Meath Eco Tourism Network established by LEADER has now been in operation for over three years with the emergence of fully accredited eco-tourism enterprises being established in Co Meath for the very first time. This is a rapidly developing sector which networking with advanced establishments both in Ireland and the UK has produced very beneficial outcomes.

The Artisan Food Network in Co Meath was established by LEADER in 2004 and has grown from strength to strength. Currently consisting of 87 members, this network now collaborates with the South Wales Artisan Food Group, the Food Hub in Drumshambo, Co Leitrim, Bord Bia, Bloom, Fáilte Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office.

The activities of these three LEADER supported networks have led to greater cooperation within these development sectors in terms of how growth and progression is advanced and in how interagency cooperation has led to the closing of gaps in the support regime and in how each agency strives to give of its best in progressing enterprise development.

It is proposed that the LAG will continue to work with and invest in these networks in order to underpin collective activity and cooperation across these enterprise sectors as a means of sharing best practice and encouraging inter-sectoral trade and acquisition of services in order to encourage the circulation of capital in the local economy.

At regional level past networking and cooperation has included regular meetings of the twelve Local Action Groups in the Leinster area involving both Board and staff members to promote cooperation, share knowledge and engage in collective animation and capacity building projects, it is the intention of the LAG to maintain this level of regional networking and project development. Networking with regional authorities has increased in recent years, the inter-territorial capacity of LEADER aligns productively with the remit of Regional Authorities.

At national level the LAG policy has been that involvement in all Departmental, National Rural Network and ILDN events be treated as obligatory and considered extremely important in respect of being fully informed on policy development, emerging best practice, EU and National Programme requirements and the opportunity to feed local learning into the networking and policy development framework. The LAG intends to remain very active in this area and believes that its multi-sectoral make up will enable it to strengthen its contribution to rural policy development and to the enhanced integration and application of rural policy at national level.

During the 2007-2013 period the LAG entered into cooperation projects involving six partner LAGs outside the Leinster area, developmental projects included, green enterprise, eco-tourism and the impact of the economic downturn on agriculture and rural communities. Successful initiatives rolled out by the LAG were shared with and adopted by two further LAG's as examples of best practice.

During the course of the preparation of the Local Development Strategy the LAG has received cooperation outline proposals from LAG Posumavi in the Czech Republic and from ADRAT in Portugal. The areas of common interest from which transnational project proposals may emerge include the following.

- LAG Posumavi has been very successful in monetising the value of the natural built social and cultural heritage and is interested in the sharing of best practice, joint developmental initiatives and human resource exchange.
- The ADRAT Local Action Group in Portugal has signalled an interest in entrepreneurship in rural areas and protection of the environment and natural resources, both areas are of significant interest to Co Meath as potentially providing for valuable transnational cooperation projects.

The Meath LAG is interested in developing existing connections with Bobbio in the Emilia-Romagna region of Northern Italy. Bobbio has strong historical linkages with Ireland particularly through the Columban Fathers who are resident at Dalgan Park outside Navan. The museum at Bobbio contains a 7th Century Irish reliquary thought to have been taken

directly to Bobbio by St Columbanus who died at Bobbio in AD 615. Bobbio is well known for its history, art, culture and antiquities. Areas of transnational interest include Bobbio's successful film festival, its artisan food sector and the medieval celebration of St Columbanus.

Chapter 7: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

7.1 Overall Objectives and Approach

Monitoring, review and evaluation are fundamental to effective programme delivery and organisational performance. Monitoring activity and performance provides the information on which the day-to-day direction and achievement of the LAG's work can be gauged and understood, review facilitates backward- and forward-looking reflection that can enable change to occur when needed, while evaluation ensures consideration of results, of long-term impacts, and of the ultimate effects of its work not always immediately visible from the position from which it is procedurally and routinely delivered. While related and all a function of good governance and management, they are also each distinct with a unique role to play.

From the outset they will be given a central role and position in the Programme, in the LAG's operation, and in the collaborative ethos and culture which the LAG will engender in its functioning and activity.

7.2 Monitoring and Review

Programme Indicators

The obligations of the LAG in respect of capturing and maintaining monitoring data are clear and understood. With respect to programme monitoring indicators, the method of collection will generally fall into one of a number of categories for different types of indicators:

- collection from project application and appraisal files held by the LAG for those projects that receive funding (e.g. types of projects funded or numbers within different categories);
- collection through follow-on surveys with funded project promoters at subsequent points post-approval and drawdown (e.g. jobs resulting);
- collection through data research on the part of the LAG from published secondary sources (e.g. population indicators);
- collection through activity reporting by promoters during the roll-out of funded projects (e.g. numbers of attendees/participants at training events, or numbers availing of a service).

Some indicators relating to the number and category of projects will be collected constantly as new projects are funded. Those requiring follow-on survey will be collected annually at a minimum, the frequency of collection of other indicator data will depend on the indicator in question, and may involve a frequency that is specific and appropriate to the project in question (e.g. indicators relating to training participant numbers will be collected at appropriate phases aligned to the roll out of training events).

Collection responsibility will fall on the LAG participant or partner most suited and equipped for it, as will responsibility for data maintenance and security.

Across programme indicators, the breakdown of collection methods, frequencies and responsibilities is illustrated in Annex 8.

As well as these standard Programme Indicators, a range of indicators of activity, outputs and results set out with respect to individual Strategic Actions will be routinely collected and maintained, and all Programme and Strategic Action indicators will be reported to, and at, LAG Meetings, in End of Year Reports and at other appropriate points.

7.1.2 Periodic Review

Half-yearly periodic reviews will be undertaken throughout the period of programme delivery and implementation. Their purpose will be to:

- consider any issues, events, or trends that call into question the ongoing appropriateness of the overall Strategy, its aims and its specific activities;
- examine incremental achievements and outcomes at the level of Local Objectives and Strategic Actions relative to those anticipated in the Strategy;
- identify remedial actions or initiatives required to ensure the ongoing appropriateness and effectiveness of the Strategic approach and the specific approach to particular Strategic Actions.

These reviews will take the form of a standardised pro-forma written template completed by parties implementing the Strategy and its various components, which would be fed upwards to the overall LAG for its consideration and response. The template will address:

- external issues, events or developments since the preceding review of relevance to the overall Strategy and the continued relevance and strategic merit of its overall approach or more detailed objectives;
- judgement on whether and how the Strategy or approach of the LAG should be amended or altered in light of these;
- specific proposals regarding remedial actions and initiatives that should be taken;
- succinct statements of progress relative to original objectives under each Strategic Action, backed up with relevant quantitative indicator data;
- short- to medium-term statements of progress likely to be achieved in relation to specific Strategic Actions;
- agreement on action to be taken to ensure the ongoing strategic appropriateness of Strategy implementation as well as the medium-term effectiveness of that implementation work.

7.2 Evaluation

7.2.1 Evaluation Objectives

The LAG is committed to embedding the principles and ethos of evaluation in all aspects of its work over the period 2016-2020 and to give evaluation a central role and importance in the implementation of the LDS. Evaluation will take numerous forms, be carried out by numerous entities both internal and external, focus on a range of issues and subjects, occur both continuously and at points in time, and adopt different methods and approaches, however all evaluation will have the following shared objectives:

- to provide objective evidence and information about the results and impacts of the work being undertaken in implementing the LDS;
- to inform the LAG about the factors affecting success and achievement or the lack thereof;

- to allow the LAG to understand the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of its work, and react, adapt or respond accordingly;
- to inform wider stakeholders about Programme and organisational performance;
- to feed a process of continuous organisational improvement and development; and
- to facilitate learning and sharing of and best practice.

7.2.2 Evaluation Governance and Co-ordination

Following Programme approval the LAG secretariat will prepare a multi-annual evaluation plan which will set out the detailed proposals for ongoing and point-in-time evaluation of the LDS, including the number, objectives, thematic focus and delivery and dissemination proposals for all evaluation throughout the period of the Strategy. This will be put forward to the LAG for approval before adoption.

In addition an annual evaluation plan will be put to the LAG at the start of each year setting out more detail regarding evaluation activities to be undertaken that year, which will dovetail with the multiannual plan but elaborate on it for the year ahead. These annual evaluation plans will also be adopted by the LAG prior to their implementation. In addition, individual evaluations will each have a Terms of Reference specific to them approved by the LAG.

7.2.3 Thematic Evaluation

A range of subjects and issues will be considered for individual thematic evaluations, including:

- work processes such as animation, capacity building, community engagement, and training;
- cross-cutting themes such as partnership, integrated development, innovation and mainstreaming;
- individual LEADER themes and sub-themes;
- targeting and the effectiveness of supports for different target groups; and
- networking, co-operation and co-ordination activities.

7.2.4 Evaluation Data and Methods

Core data serving evaluation needs will include programme indicators, specific quantified indicators associated with individual strategic actions, and indicators of financial activity and progress, all monitored in relation to periodic and programme-related targets.

Wider secondary data that will be utilised in evaluation include socio-economic, demographic and enterprise data published by the CSO, tourism data published by Fáilte Ireland and others, environmental and biodiversity data published by organisations such as the EPA and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and other data from sources such as the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc, The Department of Education and Skills, IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, Pobal, Meath County Council.

Programme indicator data and secondary published data will be complemented by specific activity data generated by the LAG and Meath Partnership in implementing the programme, such as data on numbers of and participation at events, training uptake and throughput, the scale of buildings and facilities grant-supported, the extent of private co-financing of projects,

numbers and membership of community networks, users of supported services, new businesses in supported sectors, and numbers of publications, newsletters, reports, etc.

Further evaluation data will take the form of survey data routinely collected or data gathered in surveys undertaken specifically in the context of individual evaluations. These may include surveys of internal staff as well as external stakeholders, members of the public, specific communities, training participants, customers of supported businesses, tourists, or users of supported services.

Evaluations will adopt a range of methodologies tailored to the specific objectives, purpose and context in which they will be undertaken. Methods will include desk research, documentary and literature review, data research and analysis, quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, focus groups, structured consultations, benchmarking, resource auditing, expert review and case studies.

7.2.5 Evaluation Schedules and Dissemination of Results

The strategy for disseminating evaluation results will be an integral part of their delivery, and a plan that addresses what results will be disseminated, to whom, at what stage, and by what means, will be documented prior to individual evaluations being undertaken. The objective will be that evaluations fulfil their objectives by being accessible and accessed, that their lessons are internalised by those best placed to learning from them, that lessons are applied in new efforts, activities and initiatives, that the stakeholders are considered and identified in advance of an evaluation commencing, and that an ethos of continually improving standards and practices is established and maintained both internally and externally to the Local Action Group.

Chapter 8: Financial Plan

Summary Sheet

	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total
Preparatory Support for the Development of the LDS	€40,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€40,000.00
Implementation of operations/projects under the LDS							
Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation	€0.00	€326,911.00	€698,822.00	€893,468.00	€886,262.00	€376,702.00	€3,182,165.00
Theme 2: Social Inclusion	€0.00	€103,320.00	€309,961.00	€267,350.00	€241,920.00	€110,651.00	€1,033,202.00
Theme 3: Rural Environment	€0.00	€119,293.00	€212,333.00	€255,123.00	€219,810.00	€115,419.00	€921,977.00
LAG Administration & Animation Costs	€0.00	€346,356.00	€381,872.00	€379,872.00	€344,356.00	€273,325.00	€1,725,781.00
Total	€40,000.00	€895,879.00	€1,602,987.00	€1,795,813.00	€1,692,348.00	€876,097.00	€6,903,124.00

	Cost (€)	% of Total Budget Cost	Validation
Total Administration & Animation Costs:	€1,725,781.00	25%	Okay

Implementation of Operations/Projects under LDS

	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total
Preparatory Support for the Development of the LDS							
Preparatory Costs for the LDS	€40,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€40,000.00
Sub-Total	€40,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€40,000.00
Theme 1: Economic/Enterprise Development & Job Creation							
Rural Tourism and LO1	€0.00	€89,355.00	€178,710.00	€268,065.00	€268,065.00	€89,355.00	€893,550.00
Enterprise Development and LO 2	€0.00	€96,600.00	€193,200.00	€289,800.00	€289,800.00	€96,600.00	€966,000.00
Rural Towns and LO3	€0.00	€62,388.00	€187,164.00	€187,161.00	€124,775.00	€62,387.00	€623,875.00
Rural Tourism and LO4	€0.00	€61,180.00	€122,360.00	€122,360.00	€183,540.00	€122,360.00	€611,800.00
Broadband and LO5	€0.00	€17,388.00	€17,388.00	€26,082.00	€20,082.00	€6,000.00	€86,940.00
Sub-Total	€0.00	€326,911.00	€698,822.00	€893,468.00	€886,262.00	€376,702.00	€3,182,165.00
Theme 2: Social Inclusion							
Basic Services and LO6	€0.00	€86,940.00	€260,820.00	€217,350.00	€217,350.00	€86,940.00	€869,400.00
Rural Youth and LO7	€0.00	€16,380.00	€49,141.00	€50,000.00	€24,570.00	€23,711.00	€163,802.00
Sub-Total	€0.00	€103,320.00	€309,961.00	€267,350.00	€241,920.00	€110,651.00	€1,033,202.00
Theme 3: Rural Environment							
Sustainable Use of Water Resources and LO8	€0.00	€30,000.00	€51,395.00	€94,185.00	€94,185.00	€44,185.00	€313,950.00
Local Biodiversity and LO9	€0.00	€30,313.00	€90,938.00	€90,938.00	€60,625.00	€30,312.00	€303,125.00
Renewable Energy and LO10	€0.00	€58,980.00	€70,000.00	€70,000.00	€65,000.00	€40,922.00	€304,902.00
Sub-Total	€0.00	€119,293.00	€212,333.00	€255,123.00	€219,810.00	€115,419.00	€921,977.00
Total Budget Cost	€40,000.00	€549,523.00	€1,221,115.00	€1,415,941.00	€1,347,992.00	€602,772.00	€5,177,343.00

Administration & Animation Costs

	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total (€)
Rent and Rates	€0	€14,945	€14,945	€14,945	€14,945	€14,945	€74,725
Office Costs	€0	€12,500	€12,500	€12,500	€12,500	€12,500	€62,500
Insurance	€0	€2,500	€2,500	€2,500	€2,500	€2,500	€12,500
Recruitment	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0
Staffing - Salaries	€0	€233,630	€233,630	€233,630	€233,630	€233,630	€1,168,150
Staff Training	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0
Communications/Publicity/Advertising	€0	€0	€0	€0	€2,000	€0	€2,000
Evaluation							€0
Financial/Professional Fees	€0	€1,750	€1,750	€1,750	€1,750	€1,750	€8,750
Travel & Subsistence	€0	€12,000	€13,000	€11,000	€8,000	€8,000	€52,000
Animation Costs	€0	€69,031	€103,547	€103,547	€69,031	€0	€345,156
Other							€0
Total Budget Cost	€0	€346,356	€381,872	€379,872	€344,356	€273,325	€1,725,781

Staffing Costs

Title of Staff Role / Position	Full Time Equivalent	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total (€)
Chief Executive Officer	0.5	€0	€57,945	€57,945	€57,945	€57,945	€57,945	€289,725
Operations Manager	0.5	€0	€44,350	€44,350	€44,350	€44,350	€44,350	€221,750
Financial Officer	0.5	€0	€31,335	€31,335	€31,335	€31,335	€31,335	€156,675
Company Administrator	0.5	€0	€22,470	€22,470	€22,470	€22,470	€22,470	€112,350
Project Officer	1	€0	€38,765	€38,765	€38,765	€38,765	€38,765	€193,825
Project Officer	1	€0	€38,765	€38,765	€38,765	€38,765	€38,765	€193,825
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
Total:	4	€0	€233,630	€233,630	€233,630	€233,630	€233,630	€1,168,150

In respect of the staffing allocation to the delivery of the LEADER programme, detailed in the matrix on Page 25 of the Local Development Strategy, a total of six members of staff have been allocated responsibility for programme delivery equivalent to four full time equivalents.

The staffing matrix also specifies the roles and responsibilities of each of the six staff members and it can be seen that those in management positions are expected to carry out similar duties in regard to programme delivery as compared to the duties of a project officer.

The same situation applies to the Programme Administrator and Corporate Financial Officer with some exceptions, for example the Programme Administrator acts as the first point of contact for all intending programme beneficiaries and effectively manages all communication with such individuals and bodies. The Corporate Financial Officer has an audit, review and compliance function in respect of each and every LEADER project file and this also involves working directly with beneficiaries in addition to three (3) other areas of responsibility as outlined in the matrix.

In regard to the Office of Chief Executive, the CEO will be involved in nine (9) areas of LEADER programme delivery, only one (1) of which relates to a management function. Concerning the Operations Manager, this staff member will be involved in ten (10) areas of programme delivery, only one (1) of which relates to a management function.

In reality the successful delivery of the LEADER programme demands a heavy and sustained input from all staff members who have been allocated a delivery role, in this context there is no scope for any staff member to occupy a purely management based role in either financial or practical delivery terms.

In respect of management costs the information provided in the staffing matrix and in this section makes clear that the costs attaching to management functions are very low indeed. It should also be noted that in regard to management staff only 50% of these personnel costs are attached to LEADER with in reality less than 10% of these actual costs attributed to the LEADER programme in respect of pure management functions. The remaining 90% is used in meeting actual programme action delivery costs.

Form of Declaration

Please read carefully:

By submitting the Local Development Strategy (LDS), the Local Action Group (LAG) authorises the submission and declares that the information provided in relation to the organisation described in this LDS is true and complete to the best of its knowledge and belief.

The LAG acknowledges that any funds awarded must be used for the purpose stated and not used to replace existing funding. The LAG also understands that information supplied in, or accompanying this application may be made available on request under the Freedom of Information Acts 2014. The LAG accepts, as a condition of the award of a grant, that it involves no commitment to any other grants from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government or Pobal.

The LAG is agreeable to ongoing programme monitoring by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and/or its agents and to allowing access to premises and records, as necessary, for that purpose. The LAG also accepts that Pobal may contact other public funding organisations or Government Departments to discuss this application and previous funding awarded, as part of the appraisal process. Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Pobal wish to remind LAGs that the information contained in the LDS and supporting documentation may be released, on request, to third parties, in accordance with all obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

You are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by you in applying for funding under the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, should not be disclosed because of sensitivity. If this is the case, you should, when providing the information, identify same and specify the reasons for its sensitivity. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/ Pobal will consult with you about sensitive information before making a decision on the release of such information. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/Pobal will release, on request, information to third parties, without further consultation with you, unless you identify the information as sensitive with supporting reasons. If you consider that some of the information is sensitive, you are required to clearly identify such information when submitting your LDS.

If you do not identify any of the information supplied in the LDS and supporting documentation as being sensitive you are acknowledging that any, or all of the information supplied, will be released in response to a Freedom of Information request. Disclaimer Please read carefully: It will be a condition of any application for funding under the terms and conditions of the LEADER element of the RDP (2014-2020) that the Local Action Group (LAG) has read, understood and accepted the following:

- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/Pobal shall not be liable to the LAG or any other party in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from:

- The Local Development Strategy or the subject matter of the Local Development Strategy;
- The rejection, for any reason, of any application.
- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, its servants or agents shall not at any time in any circumstances be held responsible or liable in relation to any matter whatsoever arising in connection with the development, planning, construction, operation, management and/or administration of individual projects.

By submitting this Local Development Strategy application the LAG acknowledges that it has read, understood and accepted the above points.

The Declaration and Disclaimer should be signed by the Chairperson of the LAG.

Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

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Verdantix & WWF UK, *Green Game Changer: Insights for mainstreaming business innovation*

Meath Partnership 2014, *Rural Development Programme Procedures Manual*

James Burke & Associates 2013*, Kells Indoor Farmers Market Feasibility Study*

Meath County Enterprise Board and Meath Partnership 2007, *Meath Sectoral Agreement 2007-2013*

Annex 1 – Composition of Meath Local Action Group

LCDC Composition			
Member Body	**Acronym**	**Representative**	**Sector**
Meath County Council	MCC	Ms. Jackie Maguire, CEO	Public Sector
Meath County Council	MCC	Cllr. Noel French	Public Sector
Meath County Council	MCC	Cllr. Sinead Burke	Public Sector
Meath County Council	MCC	Cllr. Sharon Keoghan	Public Sector
Údaras na Gaeltactha	UD	Mr Tadhg Ó Conghaile	Public Sector
Meath Local Enterprise Office	LEO	Mr. Joe English	Public Sector
Department of Social Protection	DSP	Mr. Des Henry	State Agency
Louth Meath Education & Training Board	LMETB	Ms. Liz Lavery	State Agency
Health Service Executive	HSE	Mr. Tom Oxley	State Agency
Meath Partnership	MP	Mr. Michael Ludlow	Private Sector
Cultúr	CR	Ms. Sinead Smith	Private Sector
Chambers of Commerce	CoC	Mr. John V. Farrelly	Private Sector
Public Participation Network	PPN	Mr. John Higgins	Private Sector
Public Participation Network	PPN	Mr. Eamon Cassells	Private Sector
Job Matters	JM	Ms. Sheila Comiskey	Private Sector
Environmental Pillar	EP	Mr. Ian Carey	Private Sector
Irish Farmers Association	IFA	Mr. Seamus McGee	Private Sector
Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union	SIPTU	Mr. Anton McCabe	Private Sector
Youth Work Ireland Meath	YWIM	Ms. Geraldine Hogarty	Private Sector

Annex 2 – Meath County Council Tax Clearance Certificate

In all correspondence please quote:
Registration No: 0017277O

Notice No: 00017277-31096M

Patrick Faughnan
Office of the Revenue Commissioners
East & South East Region, Meath District
Abbey Buildings, Abbey Road
Navan, Co. Meath

loc V459   1 625 1 625 152601TCCEE   Dist. 046

MEATH CO COUNCIL
COUNTY HALL
NAVAN
CO MEATH

Enquiries: 1890 24 04 24

27th Jan 2015

Tax Clearance Certificate

Tax Certificate Number: 00017277-31096M
Valid Until : 22/1/2016

This Tax Clearance Certificate is issued to the person named above to confirm that the persons tax affairs are in order.

Apart from the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001 (for which a separate Certificate is used), this Certificate may be used in any circumstances where production of a Tax Clearance Certificate is required.

Patrick Faughnan
Office of the Revenue Commissioners

W 070955

Revenue
Cáin agus Custaim na hÉireann
Irish Tax and Customs

TC 2
TC2

Annex 3 – LAG Declarations

Form of Declaration

Please read carefully:

By submitting the Local Development Strategy (LDS), the Local Action Group (LAG) authorises the submission and declares that the information provided in relation to the organisation described in this LDS is true and complete to the best of its knowledge and belief.

The LAG acknowledges that any funds awarded must be used for the purpose stated and not used to replace existing funding. The LAG also understands that information supplied in, or accompanying this application may be made available on request under the Freedom of Information Acts 2014. The LAG accepts, as a condition of the award of a grant, that it involves no commitment to any other grants from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government or Pobal.

The LAG is agreeable to ongoing programme monitoring by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and/or its agents and to allowing access to premises and records, as necessary, for that purpose. The LAG also accepts that Pobal may contact other public funding organisations or Government Departments to discuss this application and previous funding awarded, as part of the appraisal process. Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Pobal wish to remind LAGs that the information contained in the LDS and supporting documentation may be released, on request, to third parties, in accordance with all obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

You are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by you in applying for funding under the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, should not be disclosed because of sensitivity. If this is the case, you should, when providing the information, identify same and specify the reasons for its sensitivity. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/ Pobal will consult with you about sensitive information before making a decision on the release of such information. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/Pobal will release, on request, information to third parties, without further consultation with you, unless you identify the information as sensitive with supporting reasons. If you consider that some of the information is sensitive, you are required to clearly identify such information when submitting your LDS.

If you do not identify any of the information supplied in the LDS and supporting documentation as being sensitive you are acknowledging that any, or all of the information supplied, will be released in response to a Freedom of Information request. Disclaimer Please read carefully: It will be a condition of any application for funding under the terms and conditions of the LEADER element of the RDP (2014-2020) that the Local Action Group (LAG) has read, understood and accepted the following:
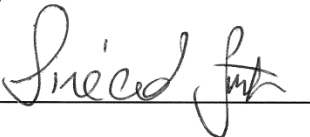
- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/Pobal shall not be liable to the LAG or any other party in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from:

- The Local Development Strategy or the subject matter of the Local Development Strategy;
- The rejection, for any reason, of any application.
- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, its servants or agents shall not at any time in any circumstances be held responsible or liable in relation to any matter whatsoever arising in connection with the development, planning, construction, operation, management and/or administration of individual projects.

By submitting this Local Development Strategy application the LAG acknowledges that it has read, understood and accepted the above points.

The Declaration and Disclaimer should be signed by the Chairperson of the LAG.

Name (Print): Sinead Smith

Signature: _____

Position: Chairperson

Date: 17th December 2015
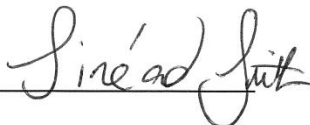
ANNEX 3

17th December 2015

Declaration of behalf of Meath Local Community Development Committee

At the LCDC meeting of 1st December 2015, the LAG agreed the following:

- Meath County Council will act as the Financial Partner for the LCDC (LAG) in respect of LEADER in County Meath for the programme period 2014-2020

- Meath County Council will be responsible for carrying out Article 28/48 Administrative Checks for third party external projects only

- Meath Partnership will act as the LCDC (LAG) Implementing Partner for LEADER in County Meath for the programme period 2014-2020

- 40% of the project budget for County Meath under LEADER 2014-2020 will be allocated through time-bound calls
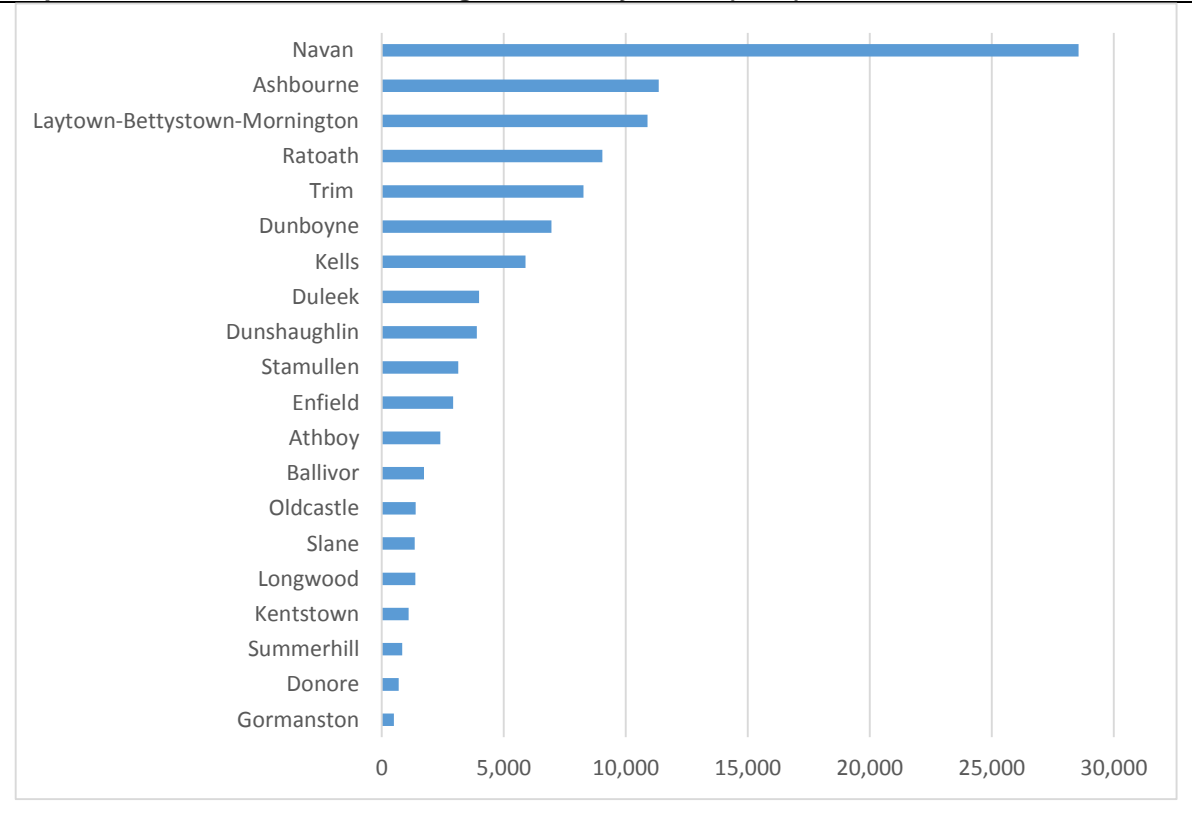
Name (Print): Sinead Smith

Signature: _Sinéad Smith_

Position: Chairperson

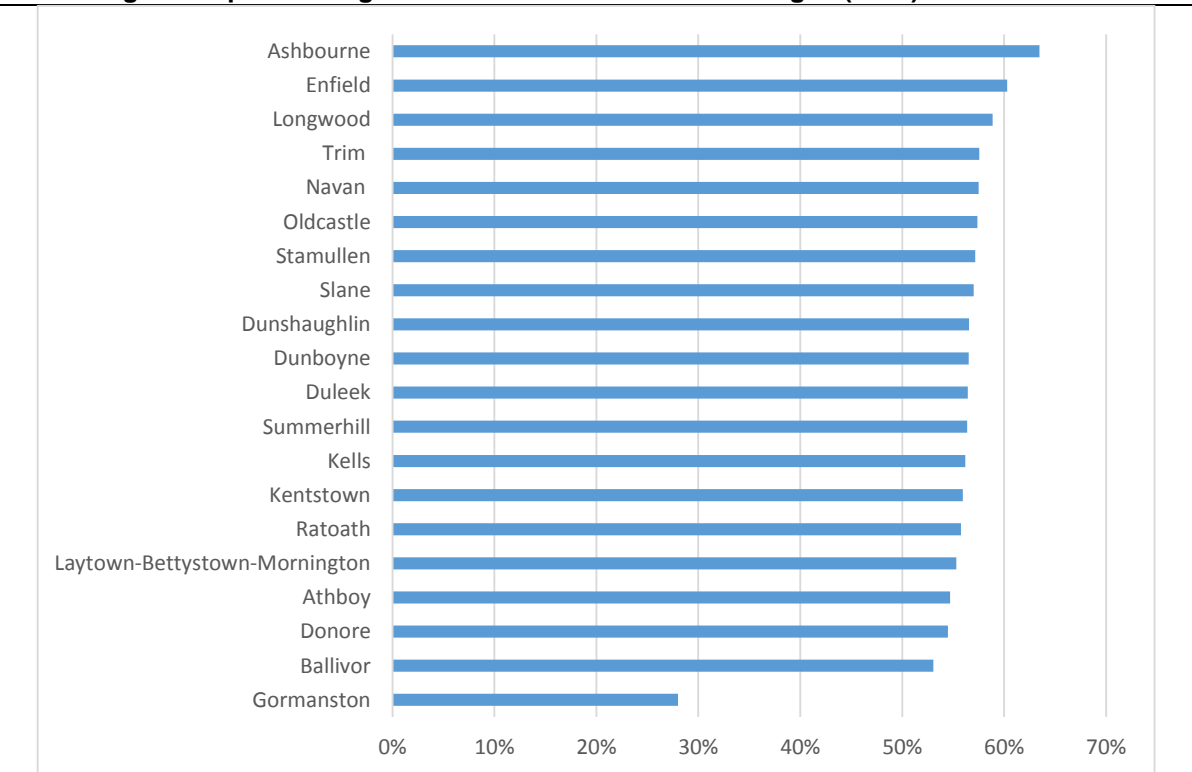**Date:** 17th December 2015

Annex 4 – Profile of Rural Towns in County Meath

Population of Main Towns and Villages in County Meath (2011)

Bar chart showing population of towns:
- Navan
- Ashbourne
- Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington
- Ratoath
- Trim
- Dunboyne
- Kells
- Duleek
- Dunshaughlin
- Stamullen
- Enfield
- Athboy
- Ballivor
- Oldcastle
- Slane
- Longwood
- Kentstown
- Summerhill
- Donore
- Gormanston

Horizontal axis: 0, 5,000, 10,000, 15,000, 20,000, 25,000, 30,000

Percentage of Population Aged 20-59 in Main Towns and Villages (2011)

Bar chart showing percentage:
- Ashbourne
- Enfield
- Longwood
- Trim
- Navan
- Oldcastle
- Stamullen
- Slane
- Dunshaughlin
- Dunboyne
- Duleek
- Summerhill
- Kells
- Kentstown
- Ratoath
- Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington
- Athboy
- Donore
- Ballivor
- Gormanston

Horizontal axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%

Percentage of Population Aged 60+ in Main Towns and Villages (2011)

Town/Village	%
Gormanston	33%
Kells	14%
Oldcastle	13%
Athboy	13%
Trim	12.5%
Slane	11%
Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington	11%
Donore	11%
Navan	10%
Duleek	9%
Dunshaughlin	8.5%
Kentstown	8%
Dunboyne	7.5%
Ashbourne	7%
Summerhill	7%
Ballivor	7%
Longwood	5.5%
Enfield	5%
Ratoath	5%
Stamullen	5%
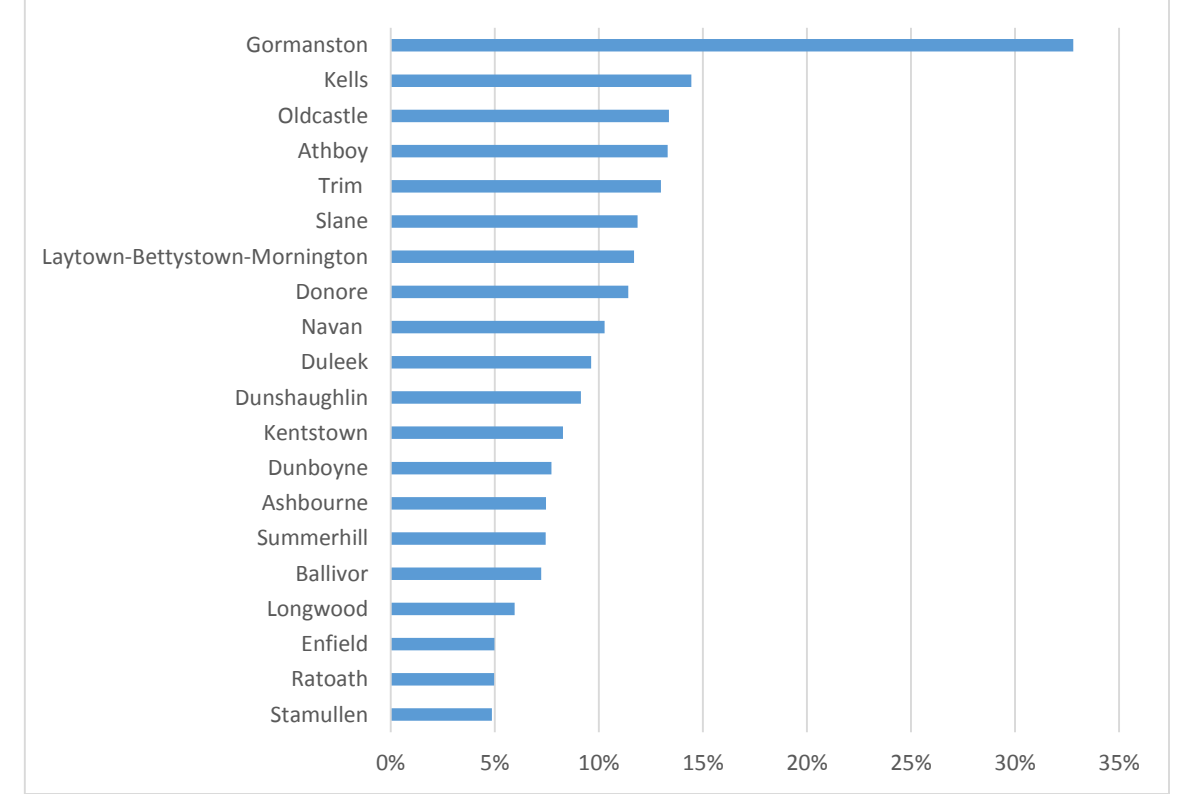
Percentage of Households with One Person only in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)

Town/Village	%
Oldcastle	27.5%
Kells	25.5%
Athboy	23.5%
Gormanston	22.5%
Navan	20.5%
Trim	20.5%
Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington	20%
Ballivor	19.5%
Summerhill	19%
Donore	19%
Slane	19%
Dunshaughlin	17%
Ashbourne	17%
Enfield	16%
Duleek	14.5%
Longwood	14%
Dunboyne	13.5%
Stamullen	12%
Ratoath	12%
Kentstown	10.5%
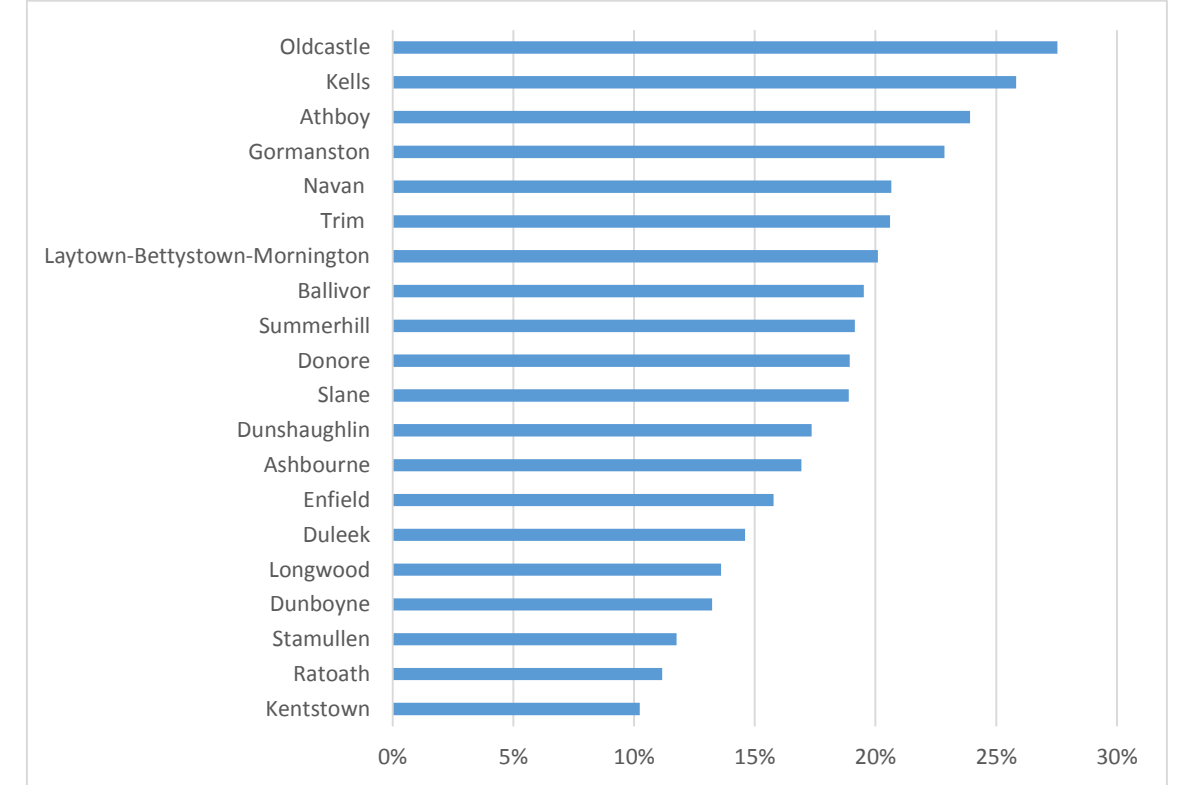
Percentage of households with husband and wife (or cohabiting couple) with children in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)
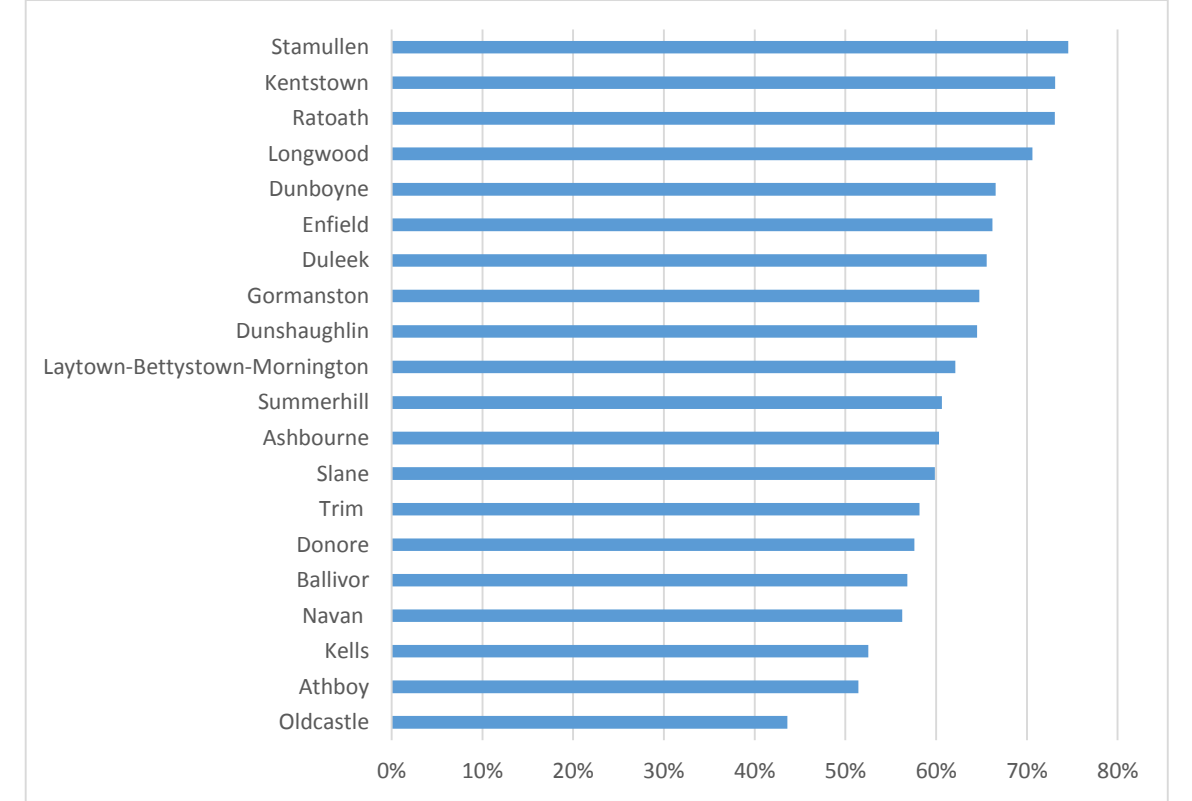
Employment Rate in Main Towns and Villages of County Meath (2011)
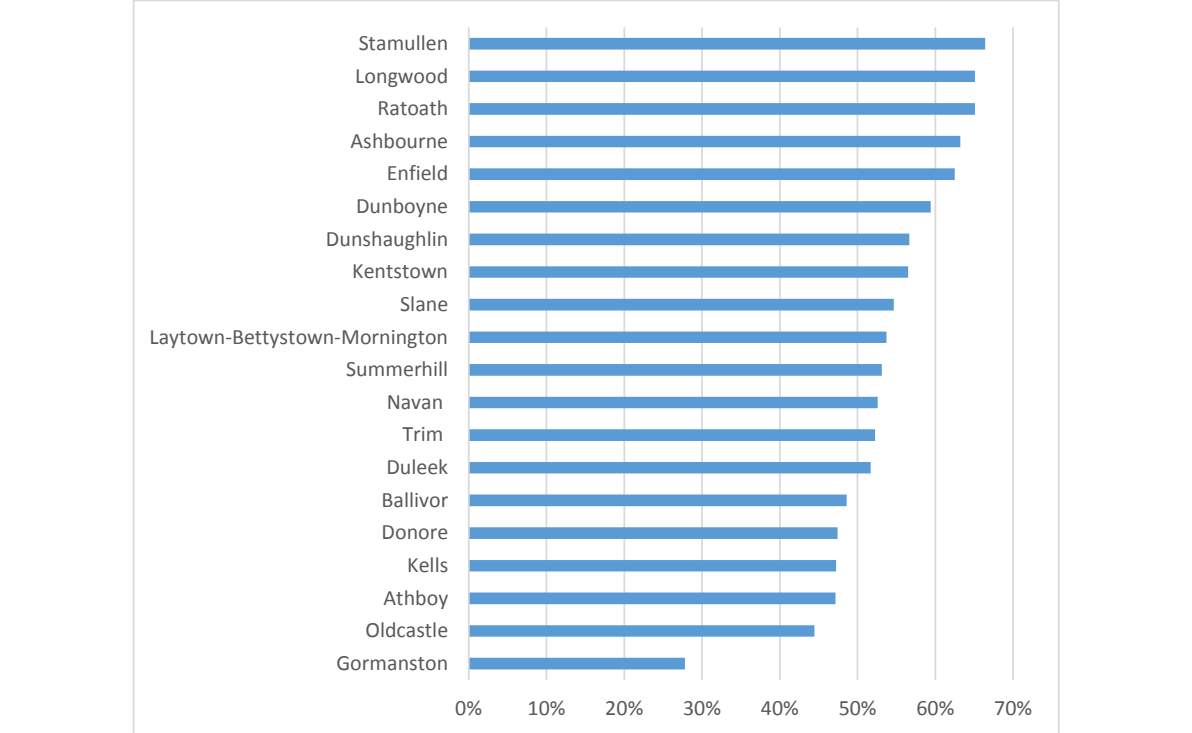
Percentage of population economically inactive in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)
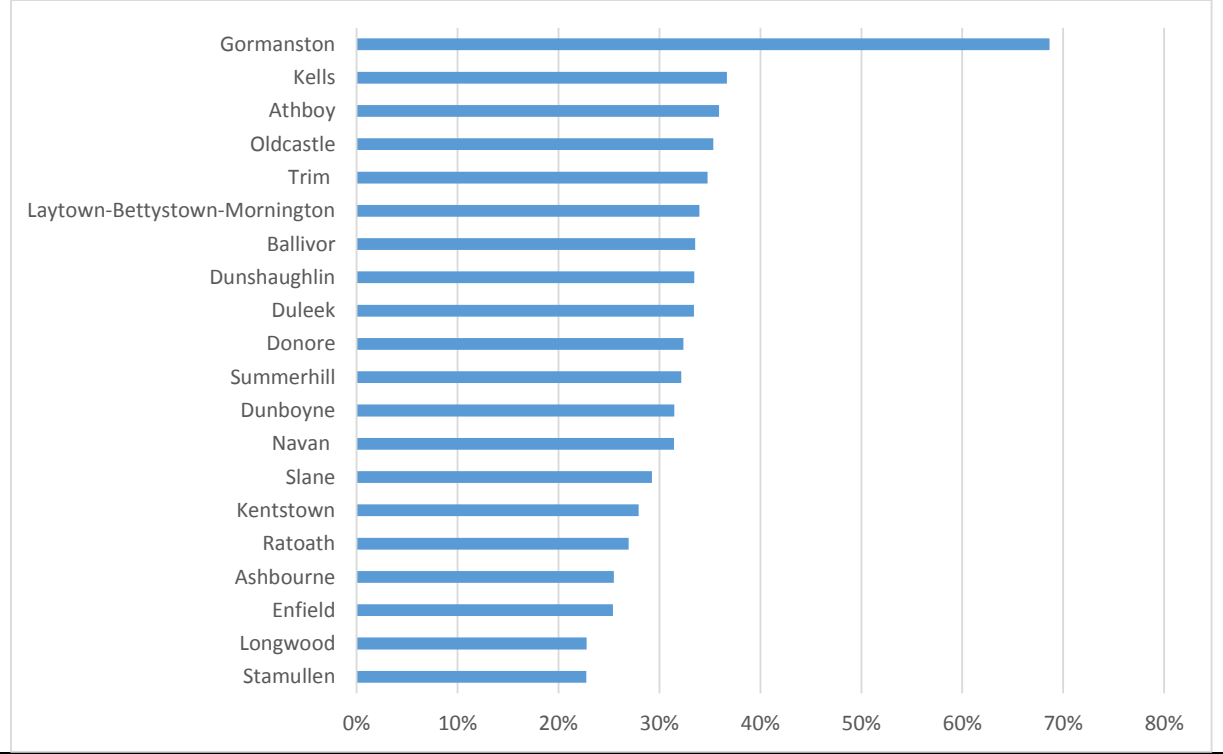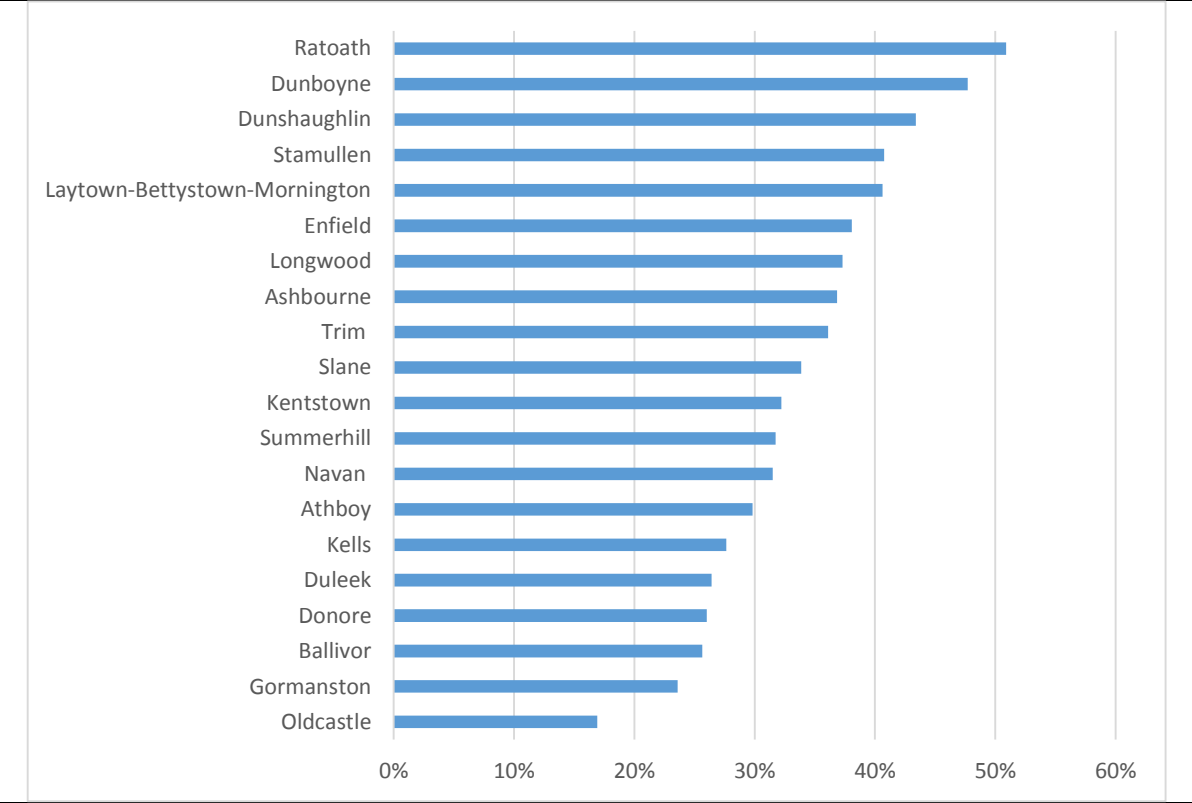

Bar chart showing percentage of population economically inactive:
- Gormanston
- Kells
- Athboy
- Oldcastle
- Trim
- Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington
- Ballivor
- Dunshaughlin
- Duleek
- Donore
- Summerhill
- Dunboyne
- Navan
- Slane
- Kentstown
- Ratoath
- Ashbourne
- Enfield
- Longwood
- Stamullen

X-axis: 0% to 80%

Percentage of population in professional or managerial/technical social class in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)

Bar chart showing percentage of population in professional or managerial/technical social class:
- Ratoath
- Dunboyne
- Dunshaughlin
- Stamullen
- Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington
- Enfield
- Longwood
- Ashbourne
- Trim
- Slane
- Kentstown
- Summerhill
- Navan
- Athboy
- Kells
- Duleek
- Donore
- Ballivor
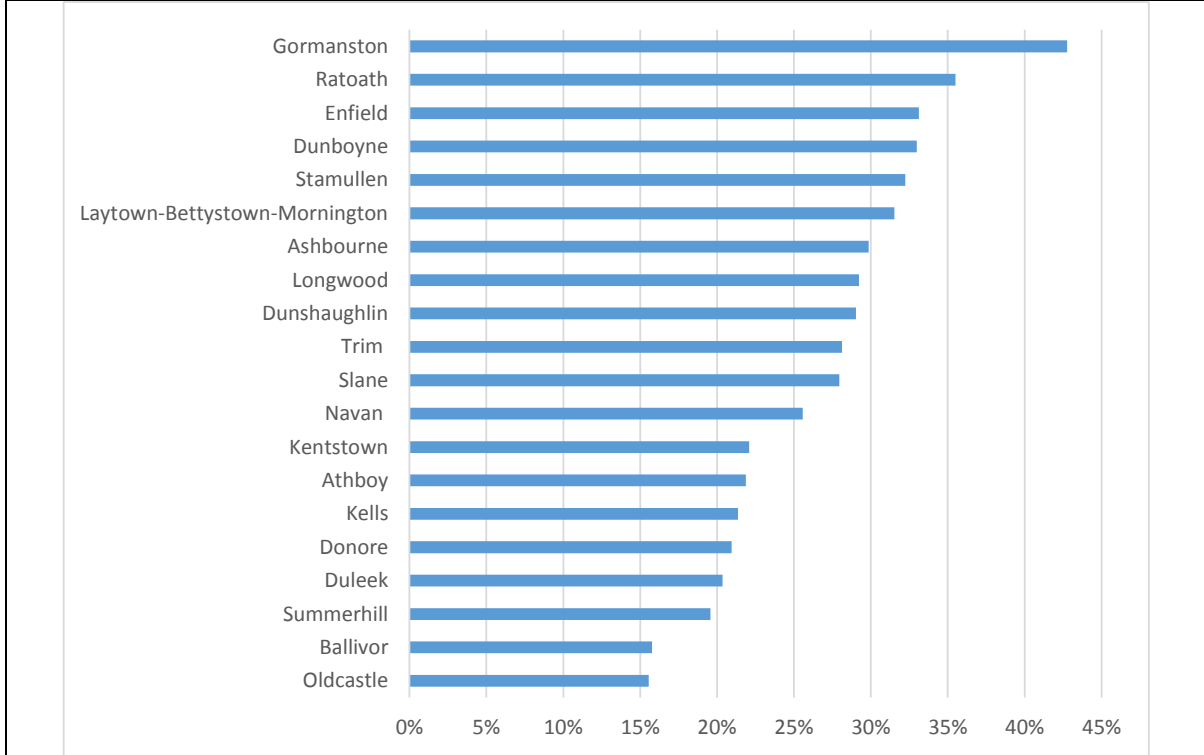- Gormanston
- Oldcastle

X-axis: 0% to 60%

Percentage of population in semi-skilled or unskilled social class in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)
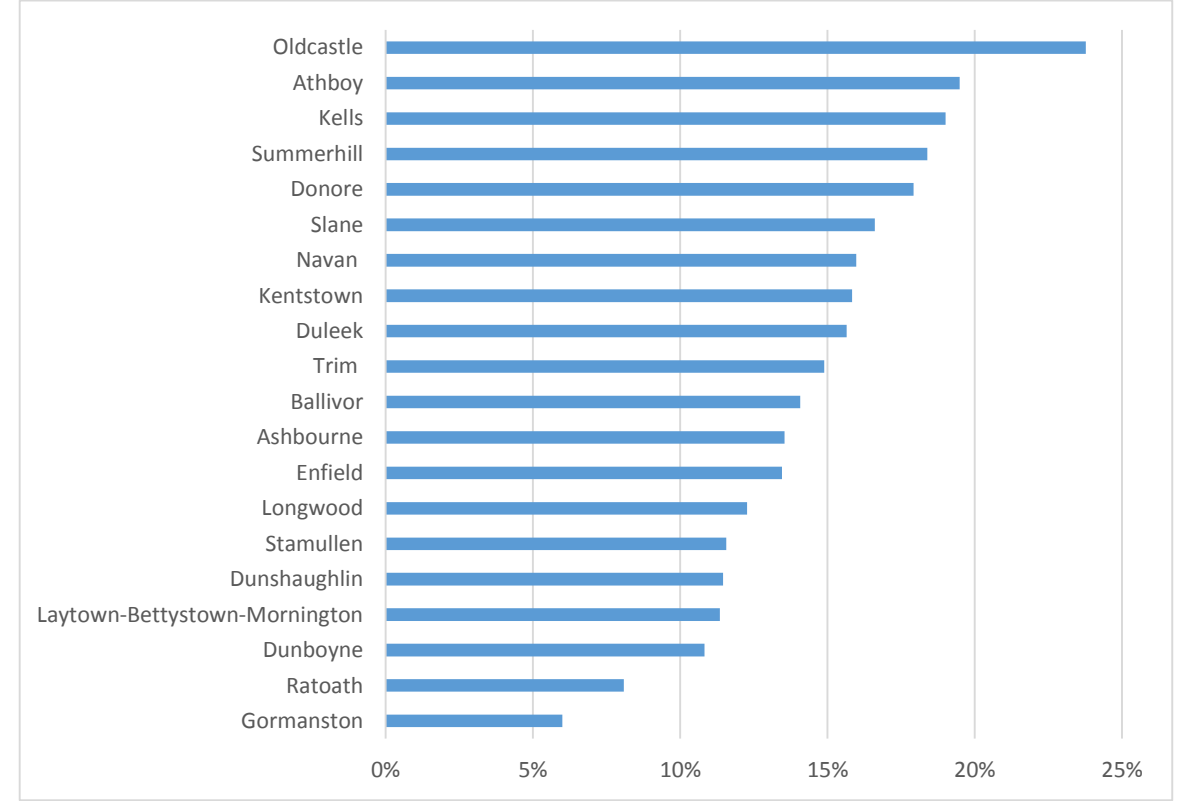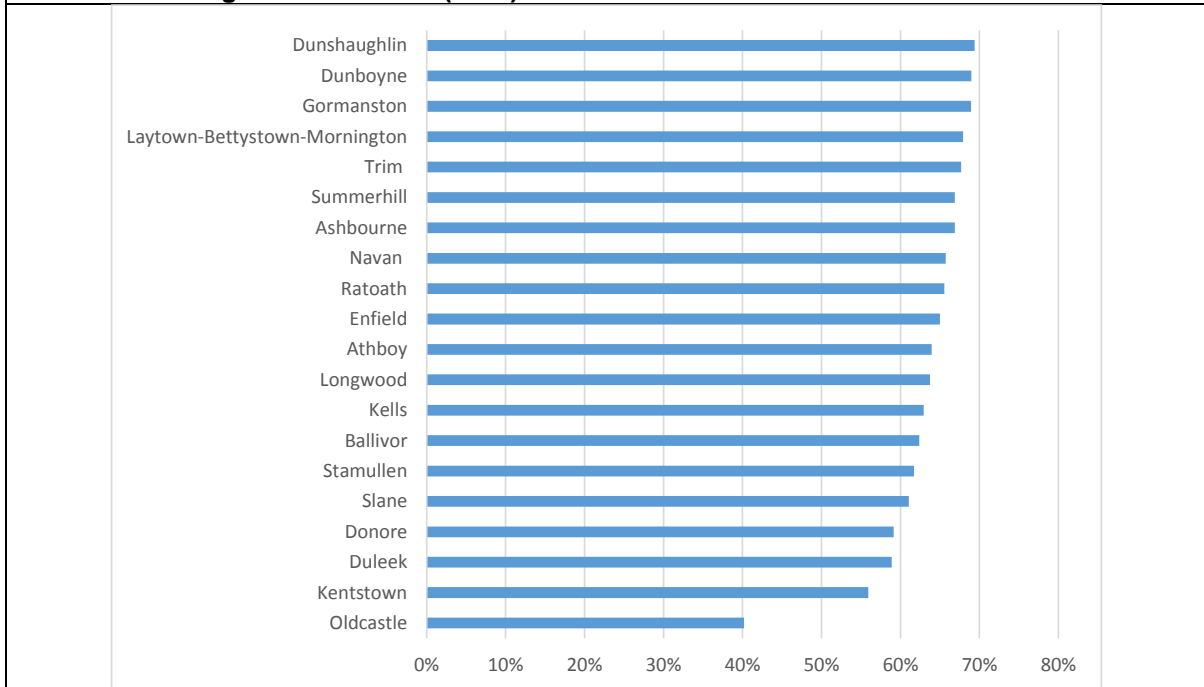

Percentage of population aged 15+for whom upper secondary or below was the highest level of education completed in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)
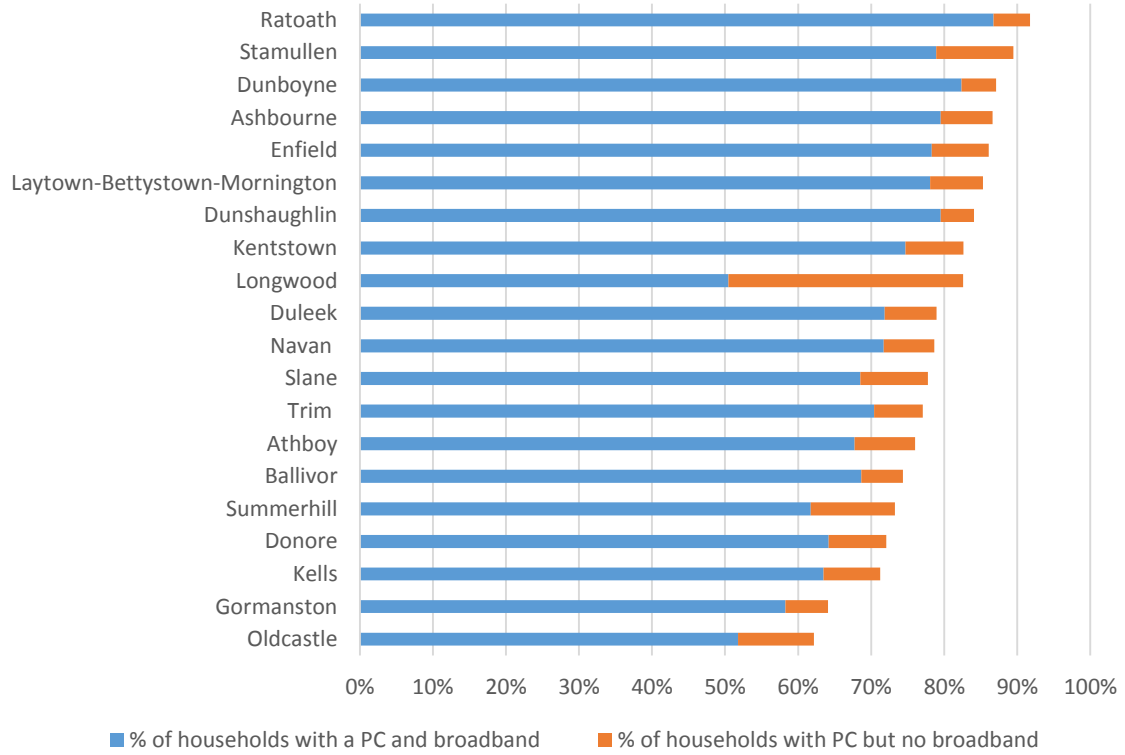

169
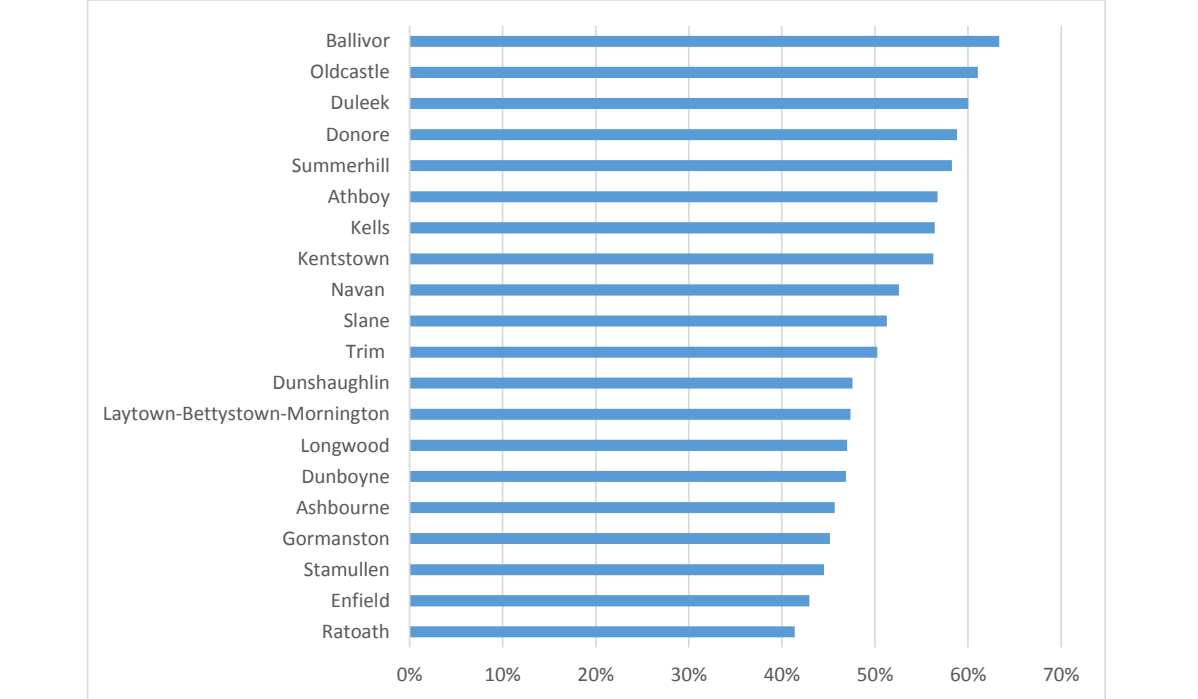
Percentage of population aged 15+ for whom a Bachelor Degree or higher was the highest level of education completed in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)

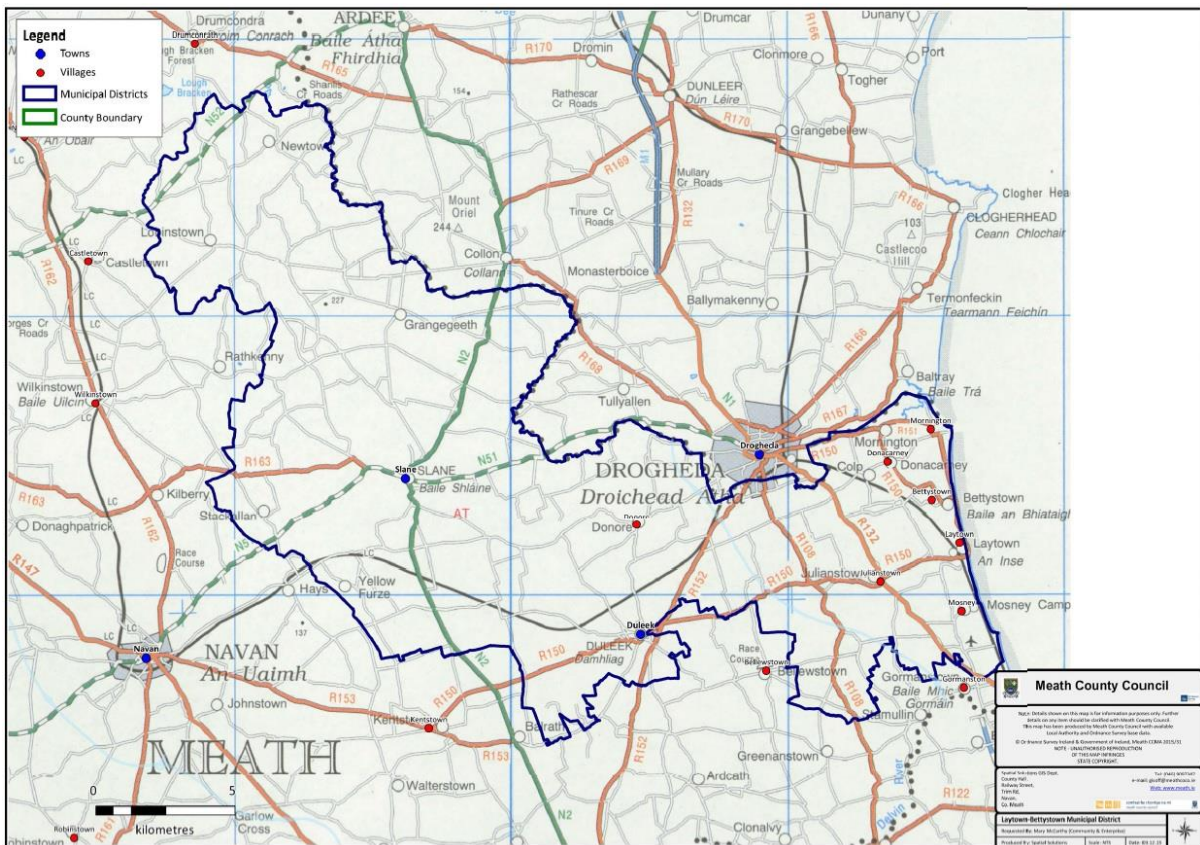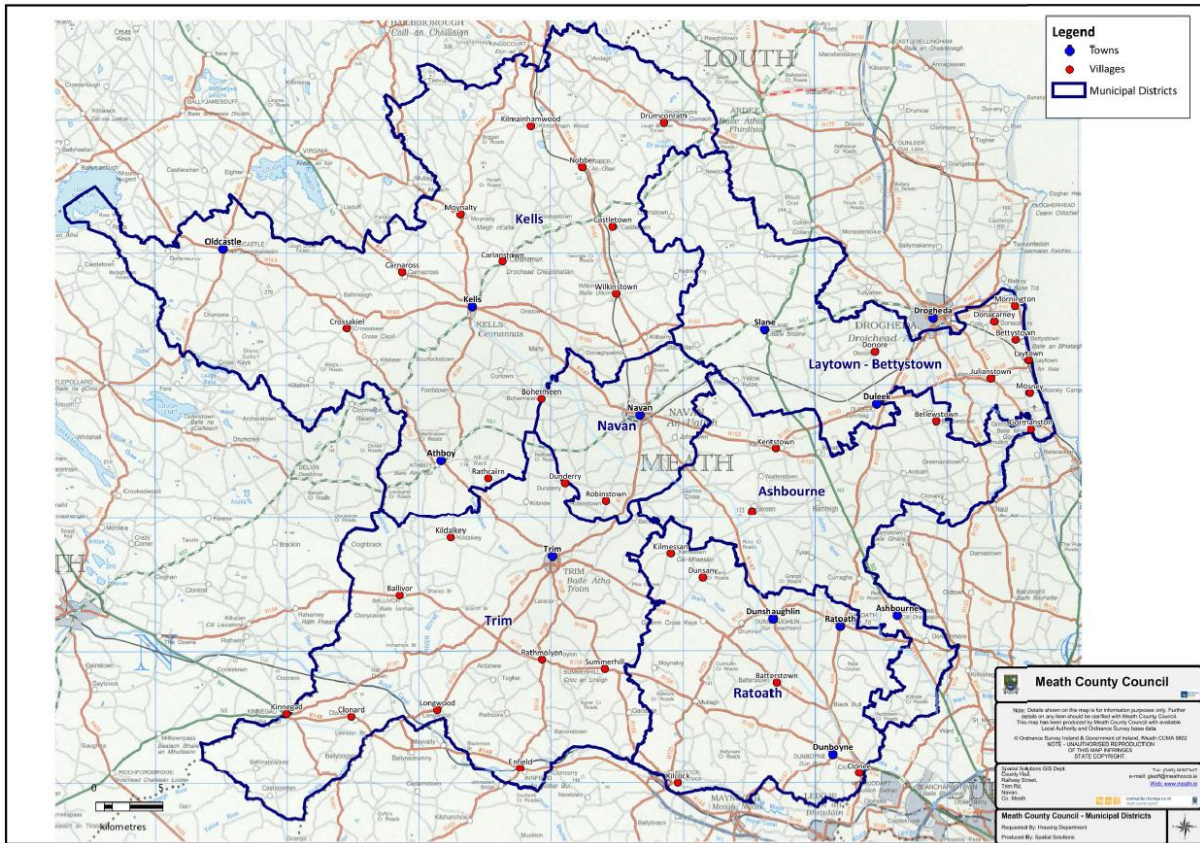| Town/Village	Percentage
Gormanston	~43%
Ratoath	~35%
Enfield	~33%
Dunboyne	~33%
Stamullen	~32%
Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington	~31%
Ashbourne	~29%
Longwood	~28%
Dunshaughlin	~28%
Trim	~27%
Slane	~27%
Navan	~25%
Kentstown	~22%
Athboy	~21%
Kells	~21%
Donore	~20%
Duleek	~20%
Summerhill	~19%
Ballivor	~15%
Oldcastle	~15%

Percentage of Workforce Working in Commerce, Professional or Public Services in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)

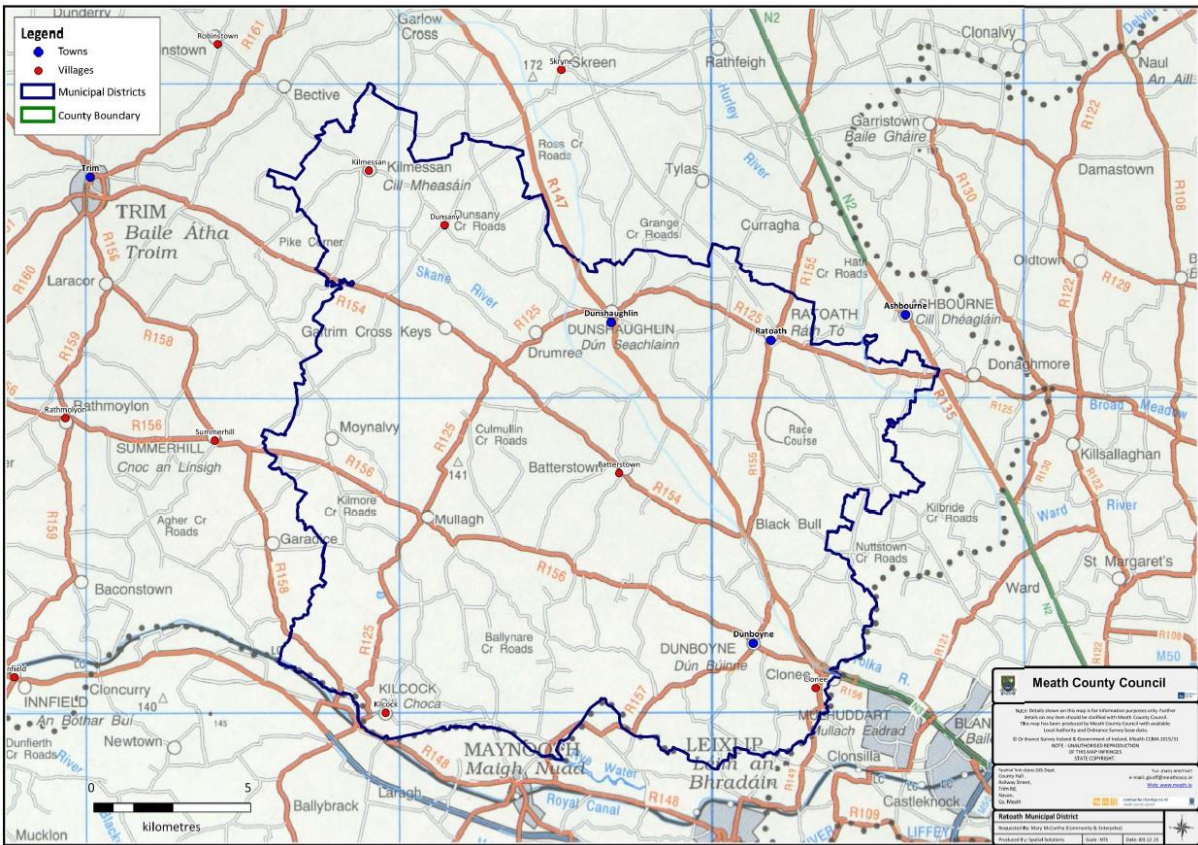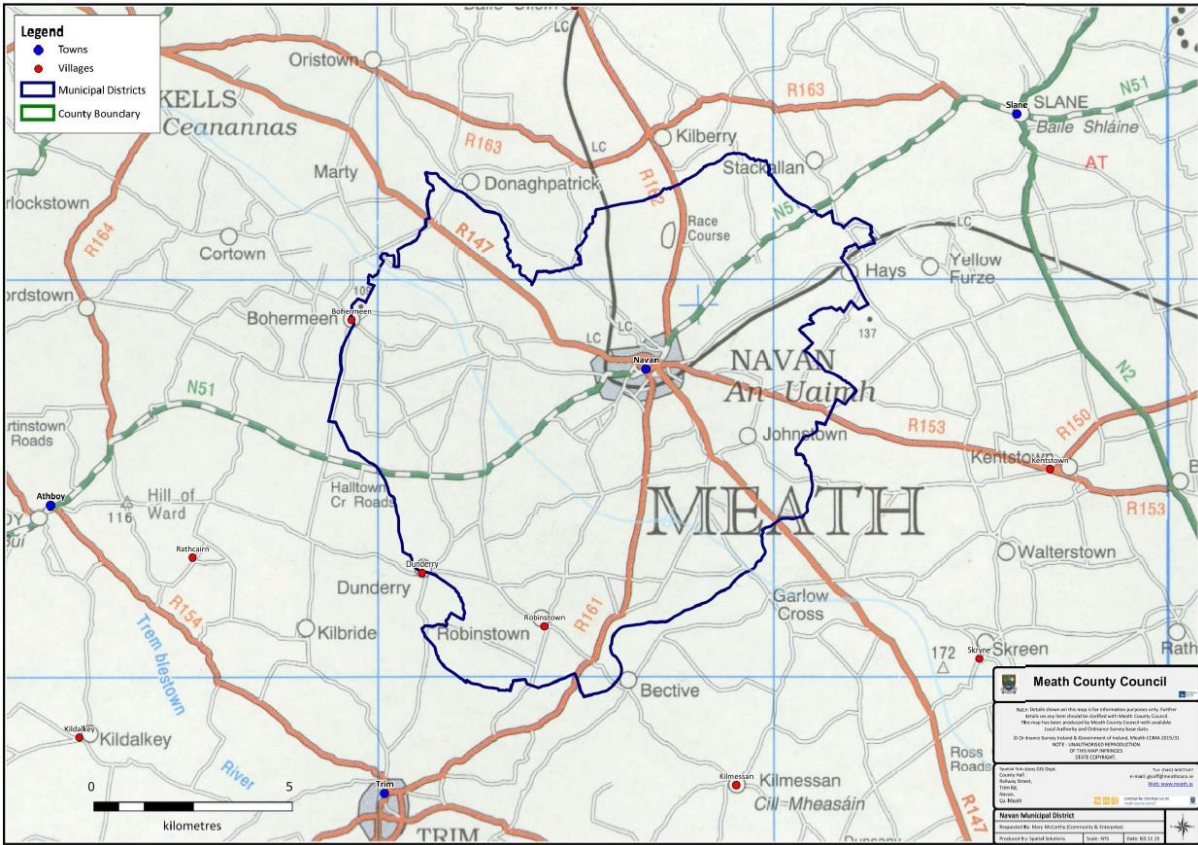| Town/Village	Percentage
Dunshaughlin	~69%
Dunboyne	~69%
Gormanston	~69%
Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington	~68%
Trim	~67%
Summerhill	~66%
Ashbourne	~66%
Navan	~65%
Ratoath	~65%
Enfield	~64%
Athboy	~63%
Longwood	~63%
Kells	~62%
Ballivor	~62%
Stamullen	~61%
Slane	~60%
Donore	~59%
Duleek	~59%
Kentstown	~56%
Oldcastle	~40%

ICT in Households in Main Towns and Villages of Co. Meath (2011)

Town/Village	% of households with a PC and broadband	% of households with PC but no broadband
Ratoath		
Stamullen		
Dunboyne		
Ashbourne		
Enfield		
Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington		
Dunshaughlin		
Kentstown		
Longwood		
Duleek		
Navan		
Slane		
Trim		
Athboy		
Ballivor		
Summerhill		
Donore		
Kells		
Gormanston		
Oldcastle		

- ■ % of households with a PC and broadband
- ■ % of households with PC but no broadband

Annex 5 – Area Maps of County Meath

Trim Municipal District

Ashbourne Municipal District

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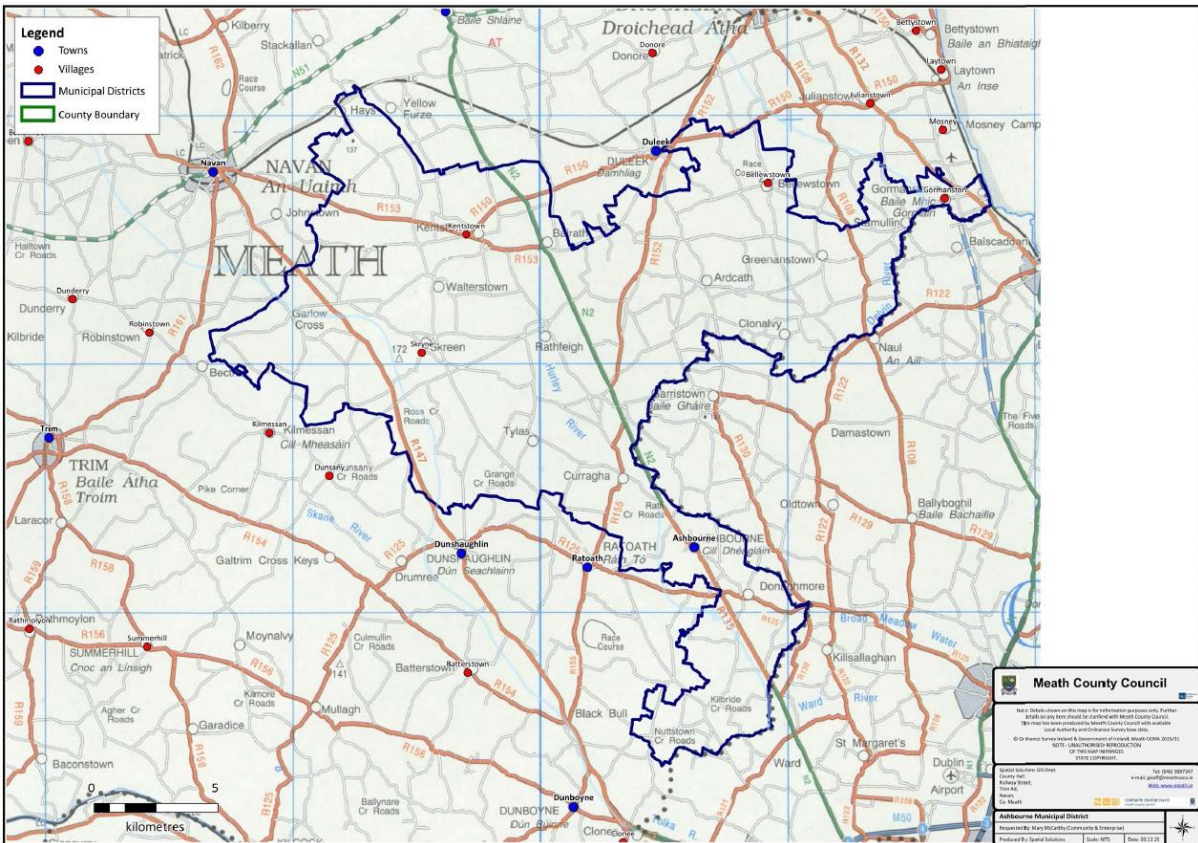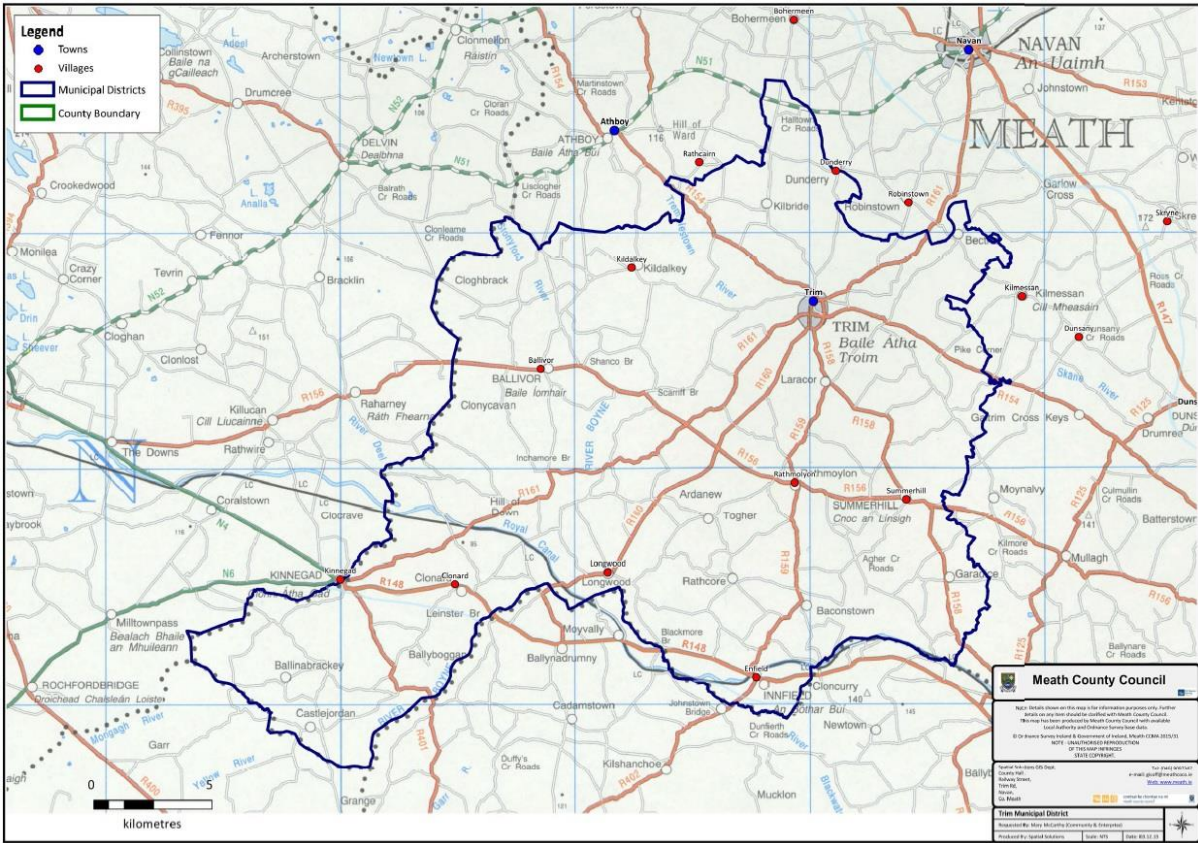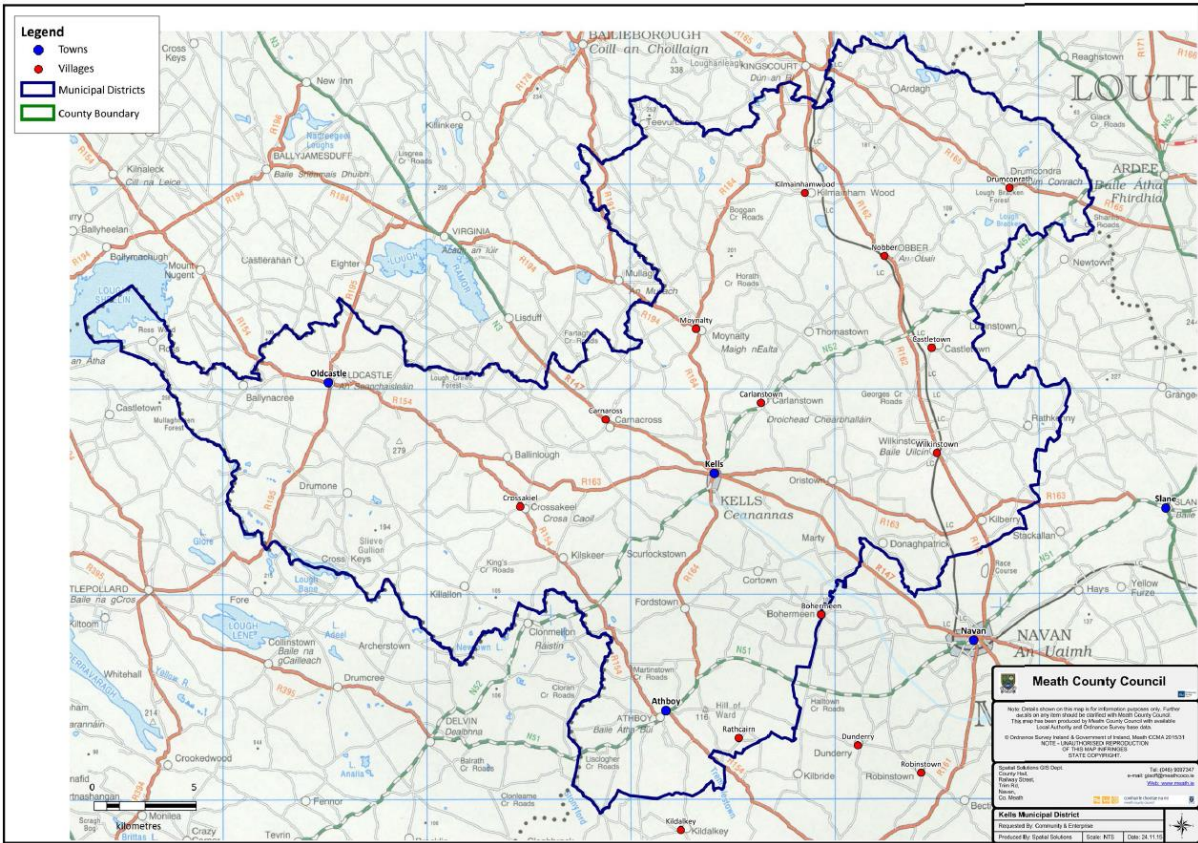
Annex 6 – Project Locations NRDP 2001-2006

○ = Areas identified for targeted LEADER investment
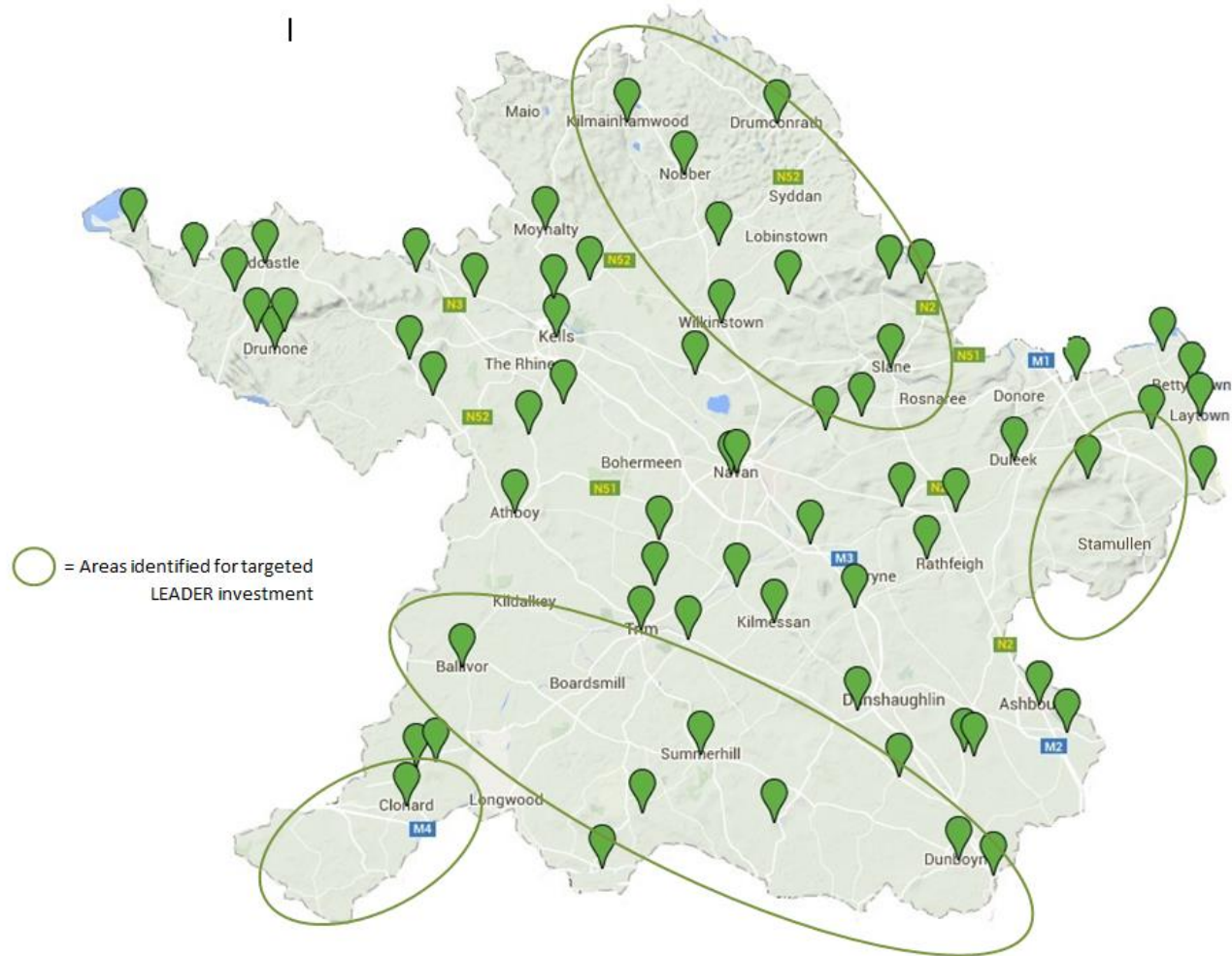
Annex 7 – Project Locations RDP 2007-2013

○ = Areas identified for targeted LEADER investment
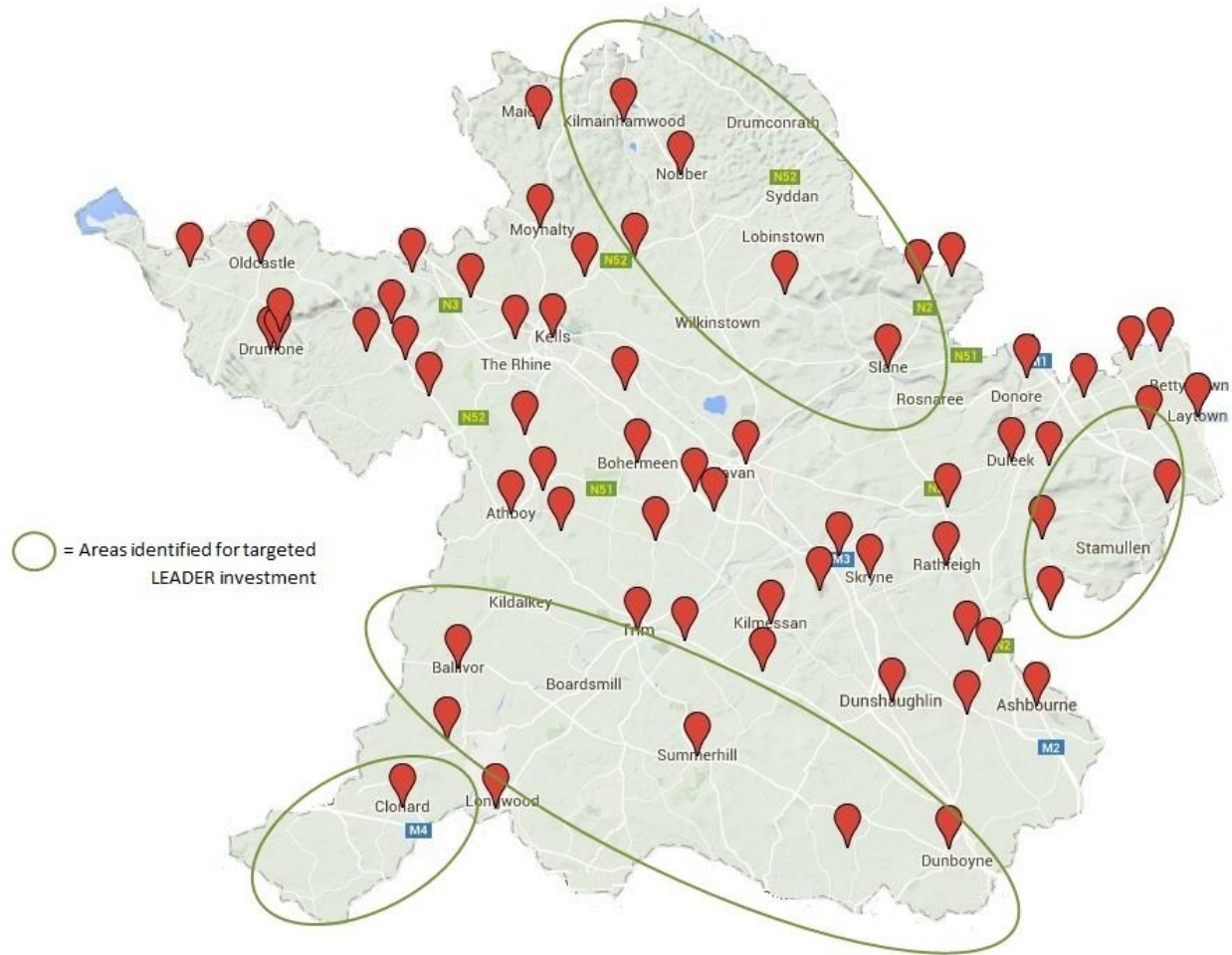
Annex 8 – Sample Programme Indicators

Programme Indicator	Collection Method	Collection Frequency	Collection Responsibility	Secure Maintenance Responsibility
Theme 1 Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation				
1.1 Rural Tourism				
Number of enterprises funded – start ups	Project Files	Constant		
Number of enterprises funded – existing (and when founded)	Project Files	Constant		
Number of jobs created – new (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of projects funded per type of service	Project Files	Constant		
Nature of services provided	Project Files	Constant		
Number of projects funded that have the following as primary or secondary target groups	Project Files	Constant		
Numbers of people availing of the services provided (by type of service)	Project Activity Reports	Project-Specific		
Number (and value) of funding under the following headings	Project Files	Constant		
1.2 Enterprise Development				
Number of enterprises funded – start ups	Project Files	Constant		
Number of enterprises funded – existing (and when founded)	Project Files	Constant		
Number of jobs created – new (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of enterprises funded in each sector	Project Files	Constant		
Number (and value) of funding under the following headings	Project Files	Constant		
1.3 Rural Towns				
Number of projects funded	Project Files	Constant		
Population in towns receiving funding	Project Files/LAG Research	Post-Census		
Number of projects funded by type	Project Files	Constant		
Number (and value) of funding under the following headings:	Project Files	Constant		
Number of jobs created – new (FT/ PT/ seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of existing jobs supported (FT/ PT/ seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		

Programme Indicator	Collection Method	Collection Frequency	Collection Responsibility	Secure Maintenance Responsibility
1.4 Broadband				
Number of small scale equipment projects funded	Project Files	Constant		
Population benefiting from enhanced broadband as a result of equipment funding	Project Files/LAG Research	Post-Census		
Number of capacity building/training/information projects funded	Project Files	Constant		
Number of individuals participating in capacity building/training/information activities in relation to broadband	Project Activity Reports	Project-Specific		
Number of new jobs created (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Theme 2 Social Inclusion				
2.1 Provision of basic services targeted at hard to reach communities				
Number of services funded – new	Project Files	Constant		
Number of services funded – existing (and when founded)	Project Files	Constant		
Number of jobs created – new (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of projects funded per type of service:	Project Files	Constant		
Nature of services provided	Project Files	Constant		
Number of projects funded that have the following as primary or secondary target groups	Project Files	Constant		
Numbers of people availing of the services provided (by type of service)	Project Activity Reports	Project-Specific		
Number (and value) of funding under the following headings	Project Files	Constant		
2.2 Rural Youth				
Number of projects funded	Project Files	Constant		
Number of projects funded by type of initiative	Project Files	Constant		
Nature of services provided	Project Files	Constant		
Number of young people directly participating	Project Activity Reports	Project-Specific		
Number (and value) of funding under the following headings	Project Files	Constant		

Programme Indicator	Collection Method	Collection Frequency	Collection Responsibility	Secure Maintenance Responsibility
Theme 3 Rural Environment				
3.1 Protection and sustainable use of water resources				
3.2 Protection and improvement of local biodiversity				
3.3 Development of renewable energy				
Number of projects funded – new	Project Files	Constant		
Number of projects funded – existing (and when founded)	Project Files	Constant		
Number of jobs created – new (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Number of existing jobs sustained (FT/ PT/ Seasonal)	Follow-On Survey	Annual		
Type of project funded	Project Files	Constant		
Number (and value) of funding under the following headings:	Project Files	Constant		