



Westmeath Local Development Strategy 2014 - 2020

Rural Development Programme (LEADER)

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1. The Local Action Group (LAG)

1.1 LAG Organisation Details

Westmeath Local Community Development Committee,
Westmeath County Council,
Áras An Chontae,
Mullingar,
Co Westmeath.
N91 FH4N
Phone: 044 9332000
Email: info@westmeathcoco.ie
Website: <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/communitydevelopment/>

1.2 Primary Contact

Hugh O Reilly, Chief Officer,
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N91 FH4N
Phone: 044 9332194.
Email: horeilly@westmeathcoco.ie

1.3 Legal Description:

The proposed structure for the LEADER programme for the County of Westmeath is:

- Westmeath Local Community Development Committee as Local Action Group (LAG);
- Westmeath County Council as Lead Financial Partner;
- Westmeath Community Development Ltd as Lead Implementation Partner.

The LAG and Financial Partner

DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF LAG	30th June 2014
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CRO NO:	Not applicable
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TAX CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE NO:	Westmeath County Council TCC No. 06517963-32053D Expiry date: 30/06/2016
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LEGAL STRUCTURE:

Westmeath County Council, is a Local Authority in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended). Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is a Committee of Westmeath County Council in accordance with Section 49 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).

OPERATIONAL ETHOS:

The primary role of Westmeath LCDC is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The LCDC was established for the purpose of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development in County Westmeath.

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACTIVITIES:

To date the main activities of the LCDC has been:

- To advance the implementation of the Leader Programme 2014-2020,
- Co-ordinate the implementation of the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme 2015-2017.
- Prepare the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

See also Appendix 1: Westmeath LCDC Constitution and Standing Orders

The Implementing Partner: Westmeath Community Development Ltd	
DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF LAG	28/03/1994
CRO NO:	215187 and Charity No: CHY 12061
TAX CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE NO:	08215187-28670Q Expiry Date 30.06.2016
LEGAL STRUCTURE:	Company Limited by Guarantee without share capital
OPERATIONAL ETHOS/MAIN ACTIVITIES: Westmeath Community Development Ltd is a Local Development Company which seeks to empower people and communities to overcome disadvantage and enhance the quality of their lives. Established as the LEADER Company for Westmeath it has provided assistance and finance to communities and businesses for projects in Westmeath through the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and has administered the previous successive LEADER Programmes in the 20 year period up to 2015. The company currently delivers the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2015-2017 on behalf of Westmeath LCDC. It has also delivered previous Social Inclusion type Programmes aimed at tackling poverty and social exclusion in the county since 1996. The company also implements the Rural Social Scheme and the TUS Programme. It also provides a number of supports to assist unemployed persons to get back to work through the following Programmes and Schemes: Business Development Programme, Local Training Initiatives, Jobs Club and the Back to Work and Short Term Enterprise Allowance (BTEA/STEA) schemes. The Company also manages the Westmeath Volunteer Centre and runs a Community Mothers Programme, a Traveller Health Programme, a Food and Health Programme and an Integration and Diversity Project. It also runs 7 community childcare centres in the County.	

1.4 LAG Composition and Decision Making

Selection and rotation of members:

The selection, nomination, and replacement process for membership of the LCDC is provided for in the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended), guidelines issued by the DECLG, and as set out in the Constitution and Standing Orders of the LCDC per Appendix 1 attached. In accordance with the legislation and Guidelines, 9 No. of the 17 No. Westmeath LCDC Members are drawn from the non-statutory sector. This membership, and LCDC and Standing Orders, will ensure that more than 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by Members which do not represent statutory agencies. In accordance with the DECLG Guidelines, gender balance is a consideration in LCDC membership selection. The membership of the LCDC is outlined as follows:

List of current LAG members: name; organisation;

Sector	Agency	Name
Statutory Agency	Westmeath Co. Council Elected Member	Cllr Tom Farrell
	Westmeath Co. Council Elected Member	Cllr Aengus O'Rourke
	Westmeath Co. Council Elected Member	Cllr. Avril Whitney
	Westmeath Co Council Chief Executive	Pat Gallagher
	Head of Local Enterprise	Christine Charlton
	Dept of Social Protection	Des Henry
	Education and Training Board	Christy Duffy
	Health Services Executive	Joe Whelan

Sector	Agency	Name
Non Statutory Sector	PPN Community & Voluntary	Des Sheridan
	PPN Community & Voluntary	Bob Morrison
	PPN Social Inclusion	Hugh Maguire
	PPN Social Inclusion	Joyce Furlong
	PPN Environment	Dave Raftis
	Westmeath Community Development	Joe Potter
	Farming / Agriculture	Paddy Donnelly
	Business / Employers	Denis Hogan
	Trade Union	Denis Rohan

See **Appendix 1: Westmeath LCDC Constitution and Standing Orders**
Appendix 2 – LAG members Area of Expertise

Description of decision making structures/procedures including sub-committees and advisory groups

The Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) and regulations under this act sets out the basis for decision making including establishment of sub-committees etc. These are outlined in Appendix 1 at section 7.5 and 7.6.

Frequency of LAG committee meetings.

The Committee currently meets approximately 6 times per year. To date the LCDC has met more frequently than this with 11 No meetings held to date. The frequency of meetings is under ongoing review relative to the workload of the committee.

1.5 LAG Roles and responsibilities

The LAG for Westmeath will be Westmeath Local Community Development Committee with Westmeath County Council (WCC) as lead financial partner and Westmeath Community Development Ltd as the lead implementation partner. When the Local Development Strategy submission is approved, it is proposed that agreements will be completed between the relevant parties for the implementation of the LDS. This will involve agreement between the DECLG and Westmeath LCDC and WCC as lead financial partner. The LCDC will have Service Level Agreements/ Memorandums of Understanding with WCC and Westmeath Community Development Ltd, the Lead Implementation Partner for the carrying out of their respective roles.

Roles & responsibilities of LAG members for LEADER regarding	
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	Westmeath County Council on behalf of WLCDC
ADMINISTRATION	Westmeath LCDC administration of LAG role. Westmeath Community Development administration of Programme Implementation.
ANIMATION AND CALLS FOR PROPOSALS	Westmeath Community Development
MANAGEMENT OF STAFF;	Westmeath LCDC of LAG Staff Westmeath Community Development of Programme Implementation staff.
MONITORING/ EVALUATION.	Westmeath Local Community Development Committee and Westmeath Community Development

The LCDC as LAG will have ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the LEADER programme. It will have overall responsibility for identifying and agreeing LDS priorities. The role of the LAG will be to –

- a) Set the overall strategic direction and the LDS priorities
- b) Agree tasks for LAG partners in the implementation of the LDS i.e. lead financial partner and implementation partner roles
- c) Approve parameters for calls for proposals in accordance with the priorities and objectives set out in the LDS
- d) Give ultimate approval for project applications in accordance with Art. 34(3)(f) of Regulation 1303/2013
- e) Monitor and review performance of the implementation partner as per service level agreement with the LCDC
- f) Monitor and review the performance of the LA as lead financial partner
- g) Monitor and review on an ongoing basis progress under the LDS, and agree corrective action, where required

Westmeath County Council as 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
- d) Requesting quarterly drawdown of monies from DECLG

Westmeath County Council will also 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 verification process..

Westmeath Community Development Ltd will have responsibility for the preparation of Local Development Strategy in consultation with, and for the approval of Westmeath LCDC. As the implementation partner, the LDC will deliver the project and animation related actions associated with the implementation of the LDS. They will carry out all work from the issuing of calls for proposals up to, and including, submitting project recommendations to the LAG for 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 checks
- (h) Submitting files for Article 28 checks
- (i) Project development, management and monitoring work with project promoters
- (j) Developing and implementing LDC - led projects
- (k) Submission of projects to the Evaluation Committee
- (l) Recommending applications to LCDC for final approval
- (m) Submission of proposals to reject project applications for decision
- (n) Preparing and issuing contracts with project promoters on behalf of the LAG
- (o) Quarterly report of activity to LAG
- (p) General file management, audit compliance and administration related to the above actions

1.6 LAG's Financial Management

1.6.1 LAG Lead Financial Partner Financial Control

Westmeath County Council will be the Lead Financial Partner for the LEADER programme in Westmeath. In terms of local government finance, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government oversees the financial well-being and effective financial management and accountability of local authorities and the promotion of value for money principles in the sector. The Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) sets out the legislative basis for local authority financial control. Expenditure by Local Government falls into two main categories, Capital and Current.

Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure is expenditure that results in the creation of an asset beyond the year in which that asset is provided e.g houses, swimming pool, library etc. It is financed largely by State grants with the balance being funded from development levies and borrowings and own internal resources and property sales. In the case of some projects (e.g. local authority offices) they may be funded entirely by local authority own resources and borrowing. In recent years capital expenditure by Westmeath County Council has been of the order of €30m per annum.

Current Expenditure

A local authority's annual budget represents current expenditure (sometimes referred to as revenue expenditure) which covers the day-to-day running of the local authority (including staff salaries, housing maintenance, pensions, operational costs of treatment plants etc.). The annual budget is adopted by the elected council at its budget meeting. Current expenditure is funded from a variety of sources. At the end of each year the local authority prepares an Annual Financial Statement. Current expenditure by Westmeath County Council is of the order of €65m per annum.

Expenditure Control Policies

The two key Westmeath County Council policies to provide robust financial management are:

- a) Westmeath County Council procurement policy
- b) WCC Budget holder manual.

Audit and Oversight of Local Authorities

The accounts of local authorities, both current and capital, are audited by local government auditors who are independent in the performance of their functions and are under the general control of a Director of Audit. Local authority staff and elected members have a statutory duty to co-operate with them. An auditor may disallow illegal or unfounded payments, surcharge such payments on the persons responsible whether on members or the manager, and charge on the person the amount of any loss or deficiency incurred through misconduct or negligence.

Following receipt by the local authority of the audited Annual Financial Statement, and any auditor's report, the Chief Executive must submit both for consideration by the Elected Council. The audit of Local government financial statements is undertaken in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, published by the Local Government Audit. Westmeath County Council also has an Internal Audit system whose work is overseen by an external Audit Committee.

Value for Money (V.F.M) reports covering a broad area of local authority activities have been issued promoting efficiency and cost effectiveness in local authorities. Where appropriate, the implementation of the recommendations contained in the reports are monitored at the annual audit of the individual local authority annual financial statements.

Westmeath LCDC as a committee of the Council operate under the same financial control system

1.6.2 Lead Implementation Partner Financial Control

Westmeath Community Development Ltd, the lead implementation partner is established as a Company Limited By Guarantee with Charitable Status. It is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors. Management personnel, financial and administration staff are employed to carry out operational and financial management. Financial Management is monitored by a Finance Committee drawn from Board Members. The company produces Annual Financial Statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, and are audited by external auditors and are approved by the Directors and also by the members of the company at the Annual General Meeting. Procedures laid down by the Company in relation to the overall operation of programmes are contained in the Company's Procedures Manual. Procedures comply with accreditation requirements as referenced in EU and Government Regulations and act as a guide to employees and the company on the procedures laid down in relation to the overall operation of the company and its programmes. The accounting administration for programmes as laid down in the Manual are based on:

- Recognised accounting principles, which have been translated into clear practical procedures
- Public accountability
- EU and State funding conditions including EU Commission Regulations

The Procedures are updated from time to time to reflect changing circumstances.

Accounting Books and Records

Westmeath Community Development Ltd maintains a complete audit trail in relation to all funding received. All accounting books and records pertaining to all programmes, schemes and initiatives operated by Westmeath Community Development Ltd are maintained. All records are maintained and reviewed on a monthly basis and all records are kept for a minimum period of seven years. All assets and debtors are also monitored on a monthly basis. It is the responsibility of the Finance Committee to review the accounting records on a regular basis.

Budgetary Controls

Budgets are prepared annually and authorised by the Board, in accordance with procedures set down by the respective funding bodies. Revised budgets are operated on approval of the Board and funders. Monthly reports are prepared and circulated to the Board indicating progress to date, i.e. levels of allocation, expenditure, outcomes etc.

Income

The following arrangements pertain to Company income:

- Sources of income are identified and listed.
- Adequate security arrangements are made to safeguard keeping cash and cheque books.
- Lodgements are made with minimum delay.

Registers

The following registers are maintained by the Company:-

- Fixed asset register
- Register of Board membership
- Declaration of interests register
- Banks / Bank accounts and signatories
- Personnel list

Procurement

From time to time the implementation partner, Westmeath Community Development, will seek the services of external providers to aid in delivering programmes. In all instances of tendering and procurement, Westmeath Community Development adheres to the guidelines for Public Procurement. When appointing consultants, fees will be paid for a fixed amount for a specified period and task as set out in a signed contract. It is the policy of Westmeath Community Development Ltd when entering into contracts for services, such as consultancy, training, services etc. to ensure that the contracts are fully adhered to.

Financial Returns

Returns are submitted as required by the funding Dept's or agencies. A rationale for overhead costs and salaries being apportioned from other sources is analysed and clearly shown.

See Also Appendix 3: Implementing Body Key Operational Procedures/Policies

1.6.3 IT Systems

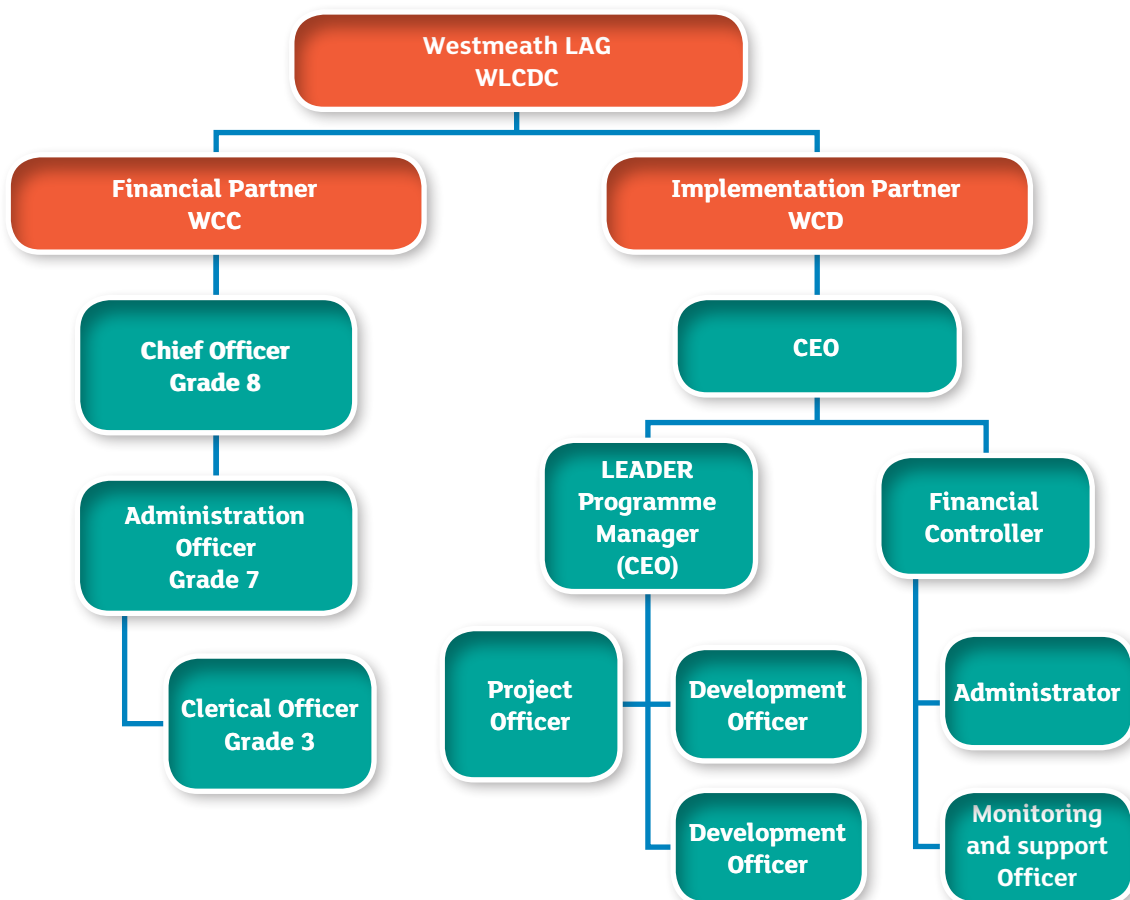
Westmeath Local Community Development Committee, as LAG, Westmeath County Council, as lead financial partner, together with Westmeath Community Development Ltd, the implementation partner, will operate the proposed IT System being drawn up nationally to manage the LEADER programme implementation. All LAG partners have a range of existing support ICT systems in place and these systems are seen as critical to the daily operations of the programme.

1.7 LEADER Staffing

Westmeath Local Community Development Committee under the guidance of the existing Chief Officer will assign appropriate staffing within the Community Development Section of Westmeath County Council to ensure the role of the LAG is fully implemented.

Westmeath County Council as financial partner will assign competent staff to ensure effective financial administration of the programme.

LEADER Staffing Organisational Chart



LEADER Staffing	
PROPOSED NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS IN THE LAG / WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL AS FINANCIAL PARTNER	1 Full-time Equivalent provided by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 8 0.2 • Grade 7 0.2 • Grade 3 0.6 Full Time Equivalent = 1 FTE
PROPOSED NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTING PARTNER – WESTMEATH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	4.3 Full time equivalents provided by WCD the Implementing Body; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Manager 0.50 • Financial Controller 0.15 • Administrator 0.50 • Monitoring and Support Officer 0.15 • 1 Project Officer 1.00 • 2 Development Officers 2.00 Full Time Equivalent = 4.3 FTE
TOTAL FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS	5.3 FTE

As regards the lead implementation partner, Westmeath Community Development, the CEO is responsible for the management of the company and all of its functions including the delivery of all programmes being implemented. Day to day management and co-ordination of programmes is carried out by programme managers, programme coordinators and supervisors as appropriate. Financial Control and Company Secretarial functions are the responsibility of the Financial Controller, who reports to the CEO. The contract for the Programme will be managed by the CEO, reporting to the Board of Directors. Financial Control of the programme will be the responsibility of the Financial Controller, who will be assisted by administration staff. For purposes of internal management, the overall Company has a Human Resources Committee, which is comprised exclusively of Board members, charged with responsibility for dealing with personnel procedures and issues. Full details in relation to all human resources issues including recruitment, grievance procedures, annual leave, maternity leave, sick leave etc. for Westmeath Community Development Ltd are set out within the Human Resource Manual. (Staff Handbook).

Implementation Partner Management Structure

Including the Management Structure outlined above, the Company employs a total of approximately 50 staff (excluding trainees and people on employment schemes).

The Company will dedicate sufficient resources to the Rural Development Programme as will ensure that the programme meets its objectives, in terms of targeting, implementation, complementarily with other programmes, avoidance of duplication, administration and reporting. The Company's Development and Administration staff has gained considerable experience from implementation of LEADER Type programmes.

As the Company allocates costs across programmes this ensures efficient use of resources in implementing the LEADER programme. In that context Community Development Officers working with Young people, Older people, Women's Groups and Unemployed people will also contribute to the programme.

Job Descriptions

Job Descriptions for LEADER Staff members based on the priorities for the programme are included as an Appendix to the LDS. **(See Appendix 4: Job Descriptions)**

1.8 Project Selection Procedures

LEADER Operating Rules dictate to a large extent the project selection procedures which apply to the LEADER programme.

The selection of projects will be invited from potential project promoters through both time-limited calls and rolling calls for proposals under the Themes/Sub-themes of the Programme. Calls for proposals will be advertised in the local media and on the websites of both the LAG and the Implementing Body and at Information Meetings. An intensive animation campaign targeted at the areas/communities which are in greatest need of funding as identified in the LDS will precede the calls for applications. It is proposed that 40% of the project budget will be allocated to time limited calls for proposals (or other % dictated by the operating rules). The Call for Applications will include the proposed budget for each proposal, the themes for which the proposals are being called for, the qualifying criteria and marking scheme to be used, and the closing date for the receipt of such applications.

Project selection criteria:

The following criteria will be used to determine the suitability of project proposals. Projects must therefore demonstrate:

- Consistency with the objectives of the Rural Development (LEADER) Programme 2014-2020
- Compliance with the Operating Rules of the LEADER Programme
- Contribution to achieving the objectives of the Local Development Strategy.
- Project promoters' capacity in terms of finance and experience.
- Innovation and Sustainability of proposal
- A need for grant support &
- That Displacement does not occur.

An initial examination of proposals will be carried out to determine whether or not other funding streams may be more appropriate to the proposal other than LEADER. Project assessments will be prepared and submitted to an Evaluation Committee. This Evaluation Committee will be established by the LCDC and membership will have expertise in project evaluation. The Evaluation Committee will examine the project proposals to determine their eligibility.

The Evaluation Committee will make recommendations to the LAG for approval (or refusal) of funding. An Evaluation Scoring Record will be maintained for each proposal and projects must score 60% prior to receiving a recommendation for funding. The LAG will make the final decision as to whether or not the proposal will be awarded funding. (Sample Scoring Record sheet is attached in Appendix 5)

In order to ensure transparency in the decision-making process, the LAG will ensure that neither the public sector nor any single interest group will represent more than 49% of the voting rights. In addition a minimum of 50% of the members who are voting in any project selection decision will come from non-public sector partners. The LAG will ensure that a minimum of 60% of the membership is present to make a decision on project funding after any Conflict of Interest issues have been addressed. Decisions made by the LAG will meet the requirements of Article 34 of 1303/2013 which states that at least 50% of the votes in the selection decisions are cast by partners who do not represent public authorities. The Chairperson of the LAG will ensure that the requirements are met for each funding decision approved by the LAG.

An annual Conflict of Interest declaration and a register of Interests declaration will be completed by LAG members, LAG Evaluation Committee, Administration Unit as well as all staff of the implementing body working on the Programme. In addition prior to each Evaluation and LCDC meetings, members will have an opportunity to declare any interest in relation to projects before the meetings. If any conflict of interest arises then the member will absent themselves from the meeting for the duration of the evaluation and/or decision making on the particular project in which they have declared an interest in accordance with the Standing Orders. Their absence will be recorded in the minutes of the relevant meeting(s).

Project Selection and Evaluation Process		
Action		By
1	Programme animation	WCD
2	Develop open call and call for proposals	WCD
3	Define selection criteria and approve calls for proposals	LCDC
4	Manage call for proposal process	WCD
5	Develop proposals with project promoters	WCD
6	Receive and process applications incl. file management	WCD
7	Article 48 checks	LCDC
8	Project evaluation and recommendation.	Evaluation Committee
9	Approval /Rejection of project applications	LCDC
10	Issue of contract offers	WCD
11	Project development	Project Promoter
12	Management and monitoring of projects	WCD
13	Project grant payment recommendation	WCD
14	Article 48 checks	LCDC
15	Making payments to promoters on behalf of the LAG	WCC

1.9 Relevant Experience

Westmeath Community Development Ltd (WCD) has over 20 years experience in the delivery of EU and Exchequer Funded Programmes which have benefited community groups, voluntary organisations and rural enterprises throughout the county.

Managing and Administering Calls for Proposals

Calls for proposals formed a significant part of the implementation of the company's Programmes since its inception. This has applied to LEADER and Social Inclusion Programmes. As LAG for the previous LEADER Programmes, WCD managed and administered the calls for projects throughout the lifetime of the various Programmes. Although primarily undertaken on an open call basis, specific calls were issued for particular sectors including festivals and events, equine, community energy audits, tidy towns' enhancements under the LEADER Programme and Community Grants under Social Inclusion Programmes. Calls for proposals were communicated via the local media and on the company's website with information sessions also forming part of the process in engaging with local project promoters.

Over 300 projects totaling in excess of €6.5m were brought forward for approval by WCD during the lifetime of the RDP 2007-2013. These projects have contributed to enhancing the quality of life of communities and individuals in Westmeath.

Developing an area based approach to economic development in rural areas

WCD has extensive experience in developing an area based approach to economic development in rural areas. This has been achieved through the development and delivery of specific initiatives which has stimulated and supported economic activity in rural Westmeath. Key to this success has been the provision of animation, training, mentoring, capital and marketing supports to new and existing rural enterprises. Supporting the development of networks in specific sectors such as the rural tourism, craft and food sectors has contributed to developing the rural economic activity.

Delivering interventions that support social inclusion and poverty reduction

WCD works with community groups and organisations including the Public Participation Network (PPN). It also has strong, vibrant and productive links to other agencies and strong partnership arrangements in addressing a range of issues. Using the Area Based approach, the company has successfully delivered the various LEADER Programmes implemented since 1995, the various Social inclusion programmes implemented since 1996 and also delivered a range of other community based programmes aimed at promoting social inclusion and reducing long term unemployment and disadvantage. In implementing the above programmes, WCD has worked with large sections of society in Co Westmeath including:

- Community And Voluntary Organisations throughout the county.
- The Farming Community
- Tourism Providers
- Arts And Culture Groups
- Enterprise And Business Support Organisations
- Small Business Owners
- Crafts Producers
- Specialist Food Producers
- Unemployed People
- Young People
- Immigrants
- Disability Organisations
- Rural Transport Groups

Outcomes and learning from this work and in particular learning from the implementation of the previous LEADER and Pobal managed Social Inclusion programmes formed a key part of the process carried out in preparing the LDS. The consultation process involved all of the above communities. The consultation process carried out in preparing the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) fed into the LEADER Consultation process, particularly as it relates to disadvantaged areas and key target groups. During the preparation of the SICAP Strategy, Disadvantaged and Very Disadvantaged areas and target groups within those areas, were identified and are being targeted with special actions to alleviate long term unemployment in particular.

1.10 Management/Leverage of Funding

Westmeath Community Development was reconstituted in 1996 to become the Area Partnership for Co Westmeath and funding was secured for local development programmes concerned with social inclusion. The company was further reconstituted in 2008 in order to accommodate the cohesion process being put in place at that time and this allowed for the takeover of programmes, and projects, including staff under Transfer of Undertakings, first from Athlone Community Taskforce in 2009 and, later from Harmony Community Development in 2011. The company has leveraged and managed funding from Exchequer and EU Sources including:

- Department of Agriculture for LEADER programmes
- Department of Environment Community and Local Government for LEADER programmes
- Pobal for Social Inclusion programmes
- Department of Social Protection/FAS for Employment Services
- Health Service Executive for Traveller and other programmes
- Department of Education for Early Childhood Education programmes
- Department of Children for Childcare Facilities
- Department of Justice for refugee resettlement
- EU Interreg Programme for EU funding.
- EU Intelligent Energy Programme for renewable energy programme
- Statutory Agencies at local level.

Over the three year period 2012-2014 WCD has administered in the region of €15.4m over the various EU and National Exchequer funded Programmes.

2.0 Local Development Strategy Area Profile

This socio economic profile provides a strategic overview relating to demography, economic activity, education and social deprivation at county level, which will inform the proposed LEADER programme 2014 – 2020. For the purposes of the RDP 2014-2020, the Geographical area concerned is the administrative area of County Westmeath including Athlone and Mullingar, all areas of which are considered rural for the purpose of this programme.

2.1 LDS Area

County Westmeath, known as the “Lake County”, is situated in the centre of Ireland. It has borders with counties Meath, Longford, Cavan, Roscommon and Offaly. The area of the county is 1,756 square kilometres. Mullingar, the principal town and administrative headquarters for the county is located on the River Brosna. Athlone is the largest town and is located on the River Shannon.

The Westmeath landscape is distinctive in that it comprises of rich pastureland with rolling hills, lakes, rivers, woodlands and bogs. The Royal Canal traverses the county encircling Mullingar. A section of the Esker Riada exists in Westmeath stretching from Kilbeggan to Tyrrellspass, contributing to the uniqueness of the area. The highest point of the county standing at 258m is located in Mullaghmeen Forest in the north of the county.

Westmeath has good road and rail networks which connect it with the rest of the country. The M4/N4 traverses the county in a north-westerly direction giving it close proximity to the greater Dublin area, with Dublin Airport just one hour’s drive from Mullingar. The M6 runs from Kinnegad, through Athlone on to Galway and the west. An important national secondary route, the N52, connects the north east with the Munster region and also traverses the county. The Dublin-Sligo railway line serves Mullingar and the Dublin-Westport/Dublin-Galway line serves Athlone.

The two main towns of Mullingar and Athlone form the main population centres and provide much of the economic and commercial activity for the county. Other towns and population centres include Castlepollard, Moate, Kilbeggan, Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge, Killucan/Rathwire, Clonmellon and Tyrrellspass.

The county has three electoral areas, Mullingar-Coole, Mullingar-Kilbeggan and Athlone which in turn form the Mullingar and Athlone Municipal Districts through which many of the local services are delivered by Westmeath County Council.

2.2 Socio-Economic Profile

2.2.1 Demographic

Population

In the 2011 census Westmeath had a population of 86,164, consisting of 42,783 males, which equates to 49.6% of the overall population, and 43,381 females (50.3%), which is consistent with national trends. It is both the largest county and most populated in the Midlands region, comprising 30% of the overall population of the Midlands in 2011, down from 31% in the 2006 census. Its population density is 49 inhabitant/km². The population of the county has been increasing with a 38% increase since 1991. The increase in the population in the 2006 - 2011 intercensal period of 8.6% is above the state increase of 8.1% and below the Leinster increase of 9%. The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the Midlands Region 2010-2022 contain regional population targets up to 2022 for the county of 109,623, of which 32,722 is for Mullingar and 26,203 for Athlone. It is envisaged that both towns will be the focus of the bulk of the Midlands Region target population up to 2022.

(Source: Westmeath County Council Development Plan 2014-2020).

In the 2011 census there were 20,103 (23%) living in Mullingar and its environs. 15,596 people (18.1%) lived in Athlone Town. There were 30,739 private households in Westmeath in April 2011, of which 7,128 were single person households. There were 3,314 Lone Parent households in the county. The average number of children per family is the same as the national average of 1.4. Outside of the towns of Mullingar and Athlone, the most notable trend in population is the higher concentration of middle aged people and fewer 25-29 year olds residing in rural areas. This may be attributable to the lack of employment opportunities in the settlements and rural areas beyond the principal towns. Non-Irish nationals accounted for 13% of the population which is broadly comparable with national trends. Polish (2,345 persons) were the largest group, followed by UK nationals (1,929 persons). There are 839 travellers in Westmeath, comprising 236 households, approximately 1% of the population of the county (CSO). 11,303 persons, or 13%, had a disability in April 2011, of whom 3,762, (or 33%) were aged 65 years and over.

Education

The Census 2011 highlighted that 16.6% of the population were educated to at most primary level only. The rate increases significantly in the disadvantaged areas, which also reflects the higher levels of unemployment in these areas.

In 2012, there were 74 Primary Schools in the county with 10,851 pupils and an average class size of 24.5 pupils. There were 15 Secondary Schools with 8,629 pupils. Of those over 15 years of age and over, whose education had ceased, 16.6% were educated to at most primary level; a further 56.4% had attained second level, while 27.0% were educated to third level. There is one 3rd Level Institution in the county, Athlone Institute of Technology. Westmeath has a slightly lower percentage of graduates than the national rate of 30%.

Small Area Analysis

Pobal Maps were used to carry out an Analysis of the area from the point of view of Hard to Reach Communities in disadvantaged areas and amongst specific target groups. Much of this information was collected and analysed in preparing the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan and also in developing the SICAP Action Plan for Co Westmeath.

Westmeath is divided into **337** small areas under the POBAL Maps. Of these, 51 are classified as disadvantaged or very disadvantaged, having a 2011 Deprivation Score ranging from -10 to -26.60. 33 of the 51 disadvantaged or very disadvantaged areas are within the Athlone and Mullingar Towns areas. In the period from 2006 to 2011, the 5 areas showing the greatest increase in deprivation are all rural areas – Kinnegad, Finea, Clonfad, Ballykilmore and Moate. There are a number of geographically disadvantaged communities outside of the Very Disadvantaged areas, particularly e.g Finea, Clonmellon, Rathowen, Lismacaffrey, Tang, and Rochfortbridge.

(See Appendices 6 & 7 Maps). (See Appendix 8 Disadvantaged Areas)

Priority Target Groups

- People with Disabilities - 11,303 persons, or 13%, had a disability in April 2011. Of those over 15 years, 4% were classified as unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability, thus 9% of people with a disability in the county are available for work.
- Lone Parents - Lone Parent families account for 10% of households in Westmeath. This rises significantly in the disadvantaged areas.
- New Communities - As per the Westmeath Integration and Diversity Strategy 2013 -2017, there are 1,594 unemployed non-Irish nationals in County Westmeath, representing 18.6% of unemployed people.
- Travellers - There are 839 travellers in Westmeath, comprising 236 households, approximately 1% of the population of the county. Educational disadvantage is particularly acute among the Traveller community, with high rates of early school leaving and illiteracy.
- Older People – The County Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2013 highlights that 11,807 people in Westmeath are over 65 and this figure is increasing yearly.

Youth

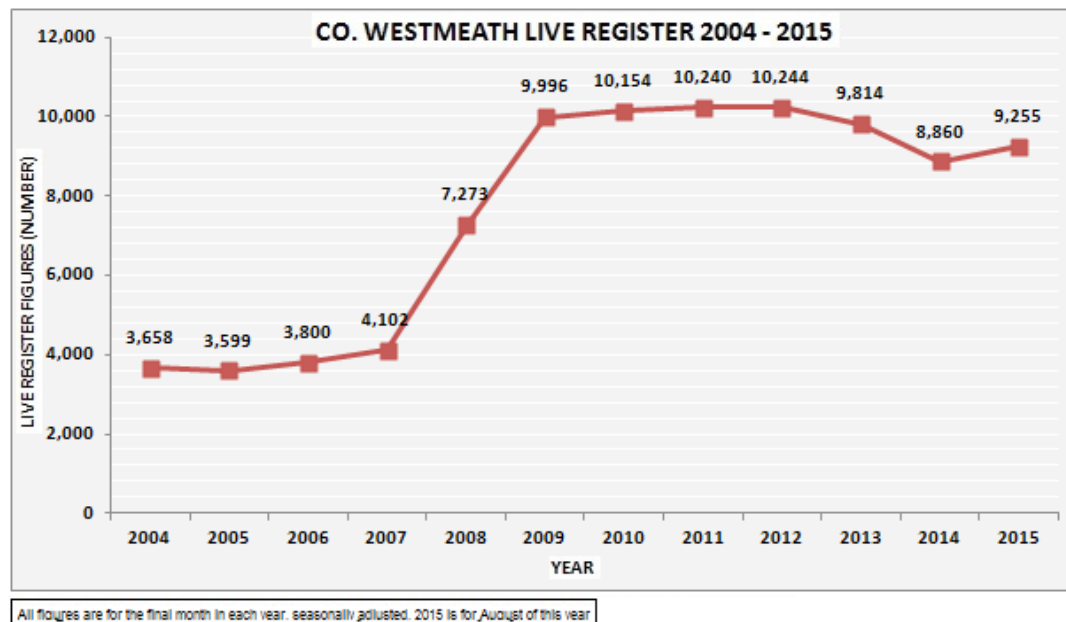
In August 2015, there were 1688 people under 25 years of age on the live register in Westmeath. The Pathways to Work Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2014, highlights the fact that the youth unemployment rate, having averaged about 9% in 2005-2007, nevertheless rose sharply to reach a peak of 33% in mid-2012, before falling slightly. The national average Retention Rates for students from DEIS schools is 80.4%, which is 10% below the overall national average rate. (Source: Dept of Education and Science, 2014 Retention Rates Report). Based on the figures for Westmeath, 130 young people per year leave school early. The WCD/HSE/MRYS Suicide Prevention Strategy identifies access to work placement and education/training options as a significant suicide prevention tool. WCD has identified the need to “work with children, young people and people with low educational levels to enable them to access SICAP and other services to enhance their Life Long Learning opportunities” and “Continued supports for Youth, in conjunction with youth service providers”. SICAP provides supports to children and young people from targets groups who are at risk of early school leaving and/or not in education, employment or training (NEETS).

2.2.2 Labour Market

Live Register

There were **8295** people on the live register in Westmeath in October 2015, of which **1227** were young people under 25. This has fallen from **9009**, of which **1415** were under 25, for the corresponding month in 2014 – a decrease of approximately 8%. The number of women on the live register in October 2015 was **3651** which is a decrease of only 4% from the October 2014 figure of **3803**. This shows that the decrease in unemployment is not impacting as much on women. The most significant statistic however is the increase from only **4,102** people in total on the Live Register in 2006. **Source; DSP**

Fig. 1: Live Register Westmeath 2004-2015



2.2.3 Economic Activity

Westmeath's economy traditionally depended on strong agricultural and manufacturing sectors. In recent times, the county's industrial base has broadened and diversified to host a diverse range of employment opportunities in sectors such as the knowledge economy, life sciences, logistics and distribution, internationally traded services, tourism and hospitality, professional services and retail.

Employment

According to the 2011 census there were 40,956 people aged 15 years and over in the labour force in the county and of these, 78.9% (32,319 persons) were at work. The labour force in the county has increased by 6% since the previous census. The district to the East of Mullingar is now part of the commuter belt serving the technology parks on the western side of Dublin proving popular with people who wish to work in the Dublin area.

Fig. 2: Distribution of the Working Population by Industry in Westmeath and the State

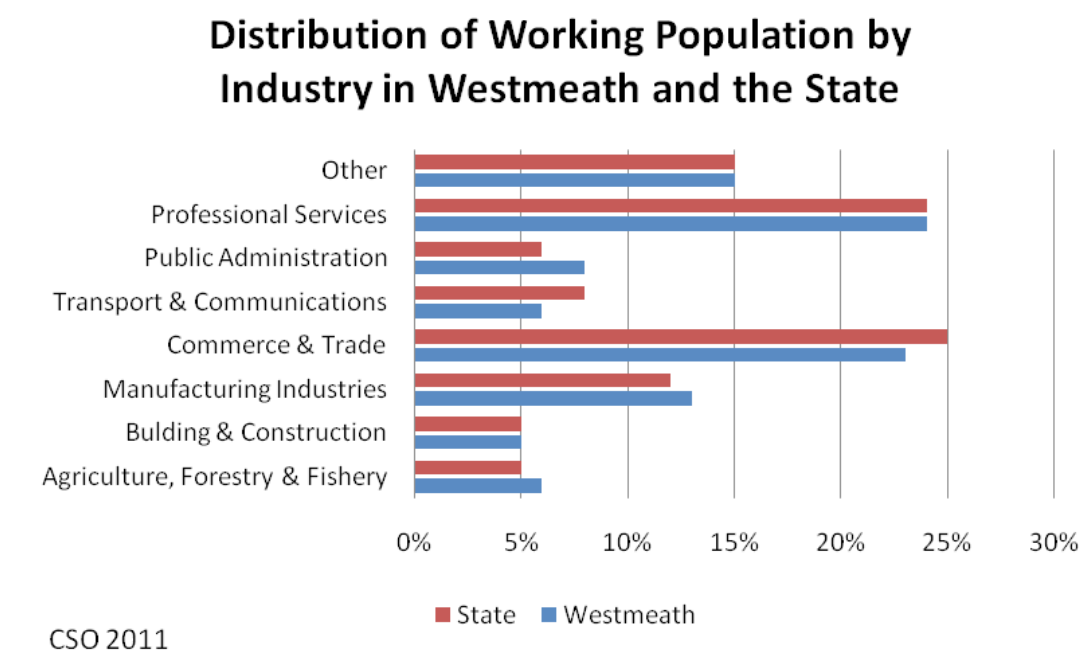


Fig. 2 illustrates the nature of employment of people at work in Westmeath and the State. The majority of workers in the county (24%) work in professional services, followed closely by 23% of workers employed in the commerce and trade sector. A higher proportion of the labour force in Westmeath is engaged in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (6%) and manufacturing (13%) than in the state. Of the 32,319 workers enumerated in Westmeath, 7,320 worked outside the county. Numbers employed in the Building and Construction Sector has decreased to 1,696 in 2011 from 4,641 in 2006. This has contributed hugely to the current unemployment rate in the county.

Agriculture

County Westmeath is a largely rural county, with agriculture being the primary land use. According to the Census of Agriculture 2010, there are 3,459 farms in the county covering a total land area of 128,371 hectares, which equates to 70% of the total land area of the county. The average size of a farm in the county is 37.1 hectares, which is slightly larger than the national average. There are fewer small farms of less than 10ha and an increasing number of larger farms in the county; in particular the county has 5% of farms greater than 100ha, compared to 3% in the state.

Fig 3. No of Farms in Westmeath and the State classified by farm size as a percentage of the total number of farms

Number of farms classified by farm size as percentage of total number of farms						
	County 1991	State 1991	County 2000	State 2000	County 2010	State 2010
Less than 10 ha	23%	25%	17%	20%	14%	18%
10 ha to less than 20 ha	25%	28%	22%	24%	22%	24%
20 ha to less than 30 ha	19%	18%	17%	18%	18%	18%
30 ha to less than 50 ha	18%	17%	22%	21%	23%	22%
50 ha to less than 100 ha	11%	9%	17%	14%	18%	15%
Greater than 100 ha	3%	2%	4%	3%	5%	3%
Total Farms	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Agriculture in Westmeath supports thousands of jobs in the rural economy, both directly in food and drink processing and also in the wider agri-industry, including input suppliers, agricultural contractors, jobs in auctioneering, transport and engineering and in accountancy, legal, veterinary and other advisory services. In 2014, the IFA estimated that the value of agricultural output in the county was €178.2m, and the value of agricultural exports arising from agricultural output in the county was €245.4m. The number of food and drink processing jobs supported by agricultural output of county is 1,260, which represents 31% of the food and drink processing jobs in the Midlands region.

Notwithstanding this high volume of agricultural activity, the 2011 census shows that only 6% of the working population in Westmeath are full-time employed in agriculture or forestry. Although the agriculture sector is providing increasingly less employment over the years, it still remains a significant source of income and employment in rural areas. It is considered that this sector will be a crucial driver in restoring Ireland's economic growth and creating employment over the next number of years.

Tourism

Tourism has become an increasingly important sector in the Westmeath economy. In 2013, overseas tourists generated 43m to the economy in the county. Figures show that Westmeath is the most popular and profitable tourist destination of the four midland counties. 95,000 tourists visited the county in 2013; the majority were from Britain and mainland Europe with visitors from North America accounting for 20% of the total. In terms of domestic visitors for the same year regional figures, where Westmeath is amalgamated with neighbouring counties Roscommon and Longford, shows that there were 226,000 trips by Irish residents to the three counties accounting for 37m in expenditure to the region. **(Source: Fáilte Ireland Tourism Facts 2013)**

County Westmeath is rich in natural resources with many lakes, rivers, particularly the River Shannon, and the Royal Canal. The county's major lakes include Lough Ennell, Owel, Derravaragh, Lene, and Sheelin which have been traditionally popular for Angling. Lough Ree, also popular with anglers also attracts water sports enthusiasts as well as leisure cruiser traffic. Golf, Angling and Equestrian activities have traditionally been important pursuits for the visitor to the county and will continue to be important activities in the future as the county has a good product base in these categories.

Though not traditionally key activities for the visitor to Westmeath, there have been significant developments in recent years to cater for the walking and cycling markets. These are growing markets for Ireland as over 1.2m overseas visitors were engaged in hiking/cross country walking in 2014, an increase of over 62% on the previous year's figure of 742,000 for these activities. **(Source: Failte Ireland Tourism Facts 2013 & 2014).** The county has a waymarked way walking route known as the Westmeath Way, a 33km linear route from Kilbeggan to Mullingar. Through the National Cycle networks initiative, Mullingar has been designated as a Cycling Hub and has two looped cycle routes of 30kms and 49kms in distances taking visitors through scenic parts of the County. The increase in demand for walking and cycling activities has led to the development of Greenways in many parts of the country. A Greenway has been created along the tow path of the Royal Canal providing suitable terrain for cyclists and walkers. The Mullingar to Athlone cycleway has been recently opened along the line of the disused railway. This is a key part of the overall Dublin to Galway first national Greenway that is planned to be completed by 2020.

Westmeath is steeped in heritage and history and hosts significant visitor attractions in Belvedere House, Athlone Castle and Kilbeggan Distillery. It also contains important Heritage Sites such as Fore Abbey in the north of the county and the Hill of Uisneach, one of the Royal sites which has great historical significance and is often considered the Centre of Celtic Ireland. The county's heritage offerings are well positioned to fit with Failte Ireland's themed branding initiative *Ireland's Ancient East* where there are 4 distinct pillars i.e. Ancient Ireland, Early Christian Ireland and Anglo Ireland aimed at the *culturally curious* market. Such themed initiatives are estimated by Failte Ireland to bring an additional 600,000 overseas visitors to Ireland, and increase visitor revenue by 25% to 950m.

The county also possesses other attractions in Dun na Si Heritage and Amenity Park in Moate which encompasses ecology, heritage, arts genealogy and folklore. Tullynally Castle and Gardens and Mullaghmeen Forest in the north of the county are also popular with visitors to the county.

Westmeath hosts a number of Festivals and Events which draw on the county's natural and cultural resources. These include drama and literary festivals, agricultural shows, music festivals, river and food festival, vintage shows etc. all of which contribute to the tourism offering in the county. Family fun days/field days are increasingly popular in most communities in the county playing a key role for local social interaction, celebrating a particular cultural and natural resource or as a fund-raising mechanism. Though fledgling in nature these events too have the potential to attract visitors outside of their immediate areas.

Westmeath's accommodation base is mainly in the hotel, B&B, and self-catering sectors. The majority of which is concentrated around the two main towns of Mullingar and Athlone with limited accommodation in smaller towns and villages or countryside. In total there are 54 accommodation premises comprising of 16 hotels, 28 Guesthouses/B&BS and 10 self-catering units. The capacity of the 54 accommodation providers is 2,707 beds. The county does not possess a hostel nor does it have any Failte Ireland registered caravan and camping parks. **(Source: Failte Ireland Accommodation Capacity by County 2015).**

Equine

The Equine industry is important economically and culturally in Westmeath. According to the Directory of the Turf, there are 19 stud farms in the county. Bloodstock generates employment directly across many spectrums but also indirectly through other associated enterprises and sectors such as tourism. Kilbeggan Racecourse is Ireland's only all National Hunt Racecourse and it hosts eight race meetings each year, contributing significantly to the local economy. The Equine industry in the county has been significantly boosted under the previous LEADER programme with the development of a number of Equestrian Centres and training facilities throughout the county. This includes the development of a cross country trail in Athlone and the further development of riding schools and breeding facilities. Horse Sport Ireland, Teagasc, and the RDS have produced a strategy document that clearly identifies pathways for the development of the industry.

Forestry

Westmeath has forestry coverage of approximately 6%, which is one of the lowest percentages of forest cover in the country. In 2012, County Westmeath had 13,874 ha of forestry of which 8,631 ha are in private ownership. The value of forestry output to the county in 2014 was €2.3m. The County possesses a significant stock of renewable energy resources including forestry products.

Food

There is a developing Artisan Food sector in the county. Research carried out by Westmeath Community Development under the EU Interreg funded Anatole project in 2014 into the status of food producers in the county identified a number of areas for development. These include website development, collective branding, research visits and product research into more value added areas. Training has been completed in a range of topics including Business Planning, Funding Opportunities, Branding and Social Networking. Westmeath Food Network was established by WCD in 2007. As of August 2015 it has a current membership of 18 and a dedicated website. The group has participated in collective mentoring, training and marketing including a number of high profile events with celebrity chefs. These events allowed the producers to showcase their produce and have led to many of the members gaining access to markets.

Crafts

Westmeath may not be as well known for craft as the more established counties in Ireland but with support over the past number of years by WCD through the Rural Development (LEADER) Programme it has made considerable progress in this area. An analysis carried out in 2015 showed that there are now 43 Westmeath based craft persons registered with the Design and Craft Council of Ireland (DCCol), an increase of over 40% since 2010. Craft makers are working full or part time in a variety of disciplines including jewellery makers, textile and knitwear makers, ceramists and wood turners. An important factor of the sector is that it witnesses emerging new makers who move from being hobbyists to becoming employed on a part-time basis in their craft.

Contributing to the sectors development over the past 5 years has been the establishment of a network known as “Made in Westmeath” which has 25 members, almost 50% of which are in the jewellery, knitwear and textile category. The network has provided a platform for crafters to meet to discuss common issues. As the typical crafter tends to work in isolation and tend to be located in the more rural areas, the network has been valuable in counteracting this isolation. Over the past number of years, Made in Westmeath has focused on building a brand synonymous with quality handmade craft, marketing and promotion of their crafts as well as training and development for the members. Traditionally craft was sold through galleries locally and across the county, through studios and directly from crafters own workshops, many now also sell directly at craft fairs locally, nationally and internationally as well as on-line through various portals having required the necessary skills and business confidence to do so through the various training programmes provided by LEADER. Participation in collaborative and clustering initiatives with neighbouring crafters in County Offaly and with crafters in mid-Finland has opened up additional possibilities for new product development and new markets for Westmeath craft.

There is a strong connection between craft and the tourism sector. Events such as “Experience Westmeath” and other craft related festivals are initiatives that build on this connection. The “story” of craft and its links with our culture and heritage are integral to the sector’s continued enhancement and holds potential for future development and growth.

Cultural Assets

Westmeath is a county with a wealth of creative people, cultural amenities and resources. There are many writers, artists, musicians and film makers now living in Westmeath and there is a new found interest by the people of the county in these areas. The county has attracted interest among these cohorts as a location for developing projects under the theme of culture. The county has association with important historical and literary figures. Folklore and mythology are also part of the cultural fabric of the county with many of the lakes forming the backdrop for well known legends such as the “Children of Lir”. Arts and Cultural venues in the county include the Mullingar Arts Centre, Aras an Muilleann, the Luain Gallery in Athlone, Tuar Ard Theatre in Moate and Dun Na Si Heritage Park, also in Moate.

Rural Areas

Outside of the two main population centres of Mullingar and Athlone, other population centres include Castlepollard in the north of the county, Moate to the southwest and Kinnegad to the east on the Meath border.

Castlepollard and north Westmeath

The north of the county's distinctiveness is formed by the many picturesque villages dotted on the unspoilt landscape accompanied by rolling hills, bogs, lakes and forest.

Castlepollard is the main town in north Westmeath. It has a good retail base, a post primary school, a hotel, and the local authority offices for the Coole area. Mergon International, a manufacturer of moulded parts for the Automotive, Industrial and healthcare sector is one of the main businesses in the town. The population stands at 1241 (2011 CSO) a small increase of just 1% on the previous census. The area is considered to be disadvantaged with a score of -9.95 up from -5.76 in 2006. Located nearby are important tourist attractions for the area including Tullynally Castle & Gardens and Fore Abbey, and early Christian site associated with St. Fechin in the village of **Fore**. The town also serves other nearby villages of **Coole** and **Collinstown**, home to C&F Automotive. The village of **Crookedwood** is situated at the south of Lough Derravaragh while **Mutyfarnham**, which caters for the hospitality sector is located on the west side of the lake.

Further north from Castlepollard is **Finea** located on the border with Co. Cavan. Located on the river Inny and close to Lough Sheelin, the village has traditionally been popular with angling visitors. Mr. Crumb, a long established food business is also located in the village. Finea has suffered a population decline of almost 14% over the past ten years and coupled with that it has a disadvantage score of -10.8, one of the highest in the rural areas. 28% of males and 22.5% of females in 2011 were unemployed representing increases of over 20% and over 17% respectively on the previous census figures.

Rathowen, Streete, Boherquill/Lismacaffrey

Rathowen is located on the Dublin Sligo N4 national route. There is a large volume traffic passing through the village on a daily basis which has had a negative impact on the quality of life on the people in the village. Rathowen has a good level of service provision with shops, hotel, post office as well as community facilities and organisation as well as recreational amenities. Greene Farm Foods a leading producer of cooked and ready-to-eat poultry and beef products is located nearby employing 160. Nearby **Streete** too has a good community organisation with community centre and recreational amenities. Streete also hosts an annual Vintage Festival while Boherquill has an active walking club and hosts an annual walking festival. The population of Rathowen has remained the practically the same at 317 over the period from 2006 to 2011, with levels of disadvantaged at -9.88 in 2011 slightly less than the 2006 figure of -10.31. Streete has witnessed a population decline by 10% from 334 in 2006 to 303 in 2011 and has seen an increase in disadvantage from -3.43 to -8.59 over the same period. Boherquill's population has increased from 129 to 155 a 20% increase while disadvantage increased slightly from -7 to -7.24.

Ballynacargy lies to the west of the county and is located on the Royal Canal. Community activities are centred round village enhancement initiatives led by the Tidy Towns Group. The village has good service provision with community facilities and recreational amenities as well as cultural and heritage resources. The population in the area has witnessed a small increase of 2% from 599 to 612 (2011 CSO) and is considered a disadvantaged area with a score of -9.65 a slight increase from the 2006 figure of -9.27. Unemployment rates for males stood at over 34% and 23% for females in 2011, increases of 21.5% and 10.5% respectively on the previous census figures.

Delvin/Clonmellon

The village of Delvin is located at the intersection between two main national routes the N52 and the N51, close to the Meath border. The population of the village has increased by 36% from 751 to 1024 in 2011 as per the CSO figures for that year. The area is also deemed disadvantaged with a score of -4.97 increased from -1.25 in 2006. It is rural in character with good service provision with community structures. Employment is provided in local industries and agriculture. The only remaining livestock mart in the county is located here and also provides employment. Given its location to the east of the county and with improvements to motorways networks, Delvin also serves as a commuter area for people travelling to work in the greater Dublin area. Pobal statistics show that in 2011 almost 30% of males and 20% of females were out of work in the area, increases of 21% and 15% respectively on the 2006 figures.

Clonmellon is located on the Meath border and functions as a service centre for the rural hinterland providing retail, financial and some financial and commercial activity. Like Delvin Clonmellon also serves as a commuter area. The population has increased by 9% from 916 in 2006 to 1011 in 2011 with a disadvantage score of -4.24. There are a number of historical and heritage features in the locality including Delvin, Killua & Ballinalough Castles. There are also two golf courses in the area.

Kinnegad is the largest population centre outside of Mullingar and Athlone with 2827 inhabitants, many of whom moved to the area while continuing to work in the greater Dublin area. The population growth (over 400% in 20 years to 2011) has not been accompanied by the requisite supporting social and community infrastructure to meet residents' needs. Other population centres in the east of the county included **Killucan/Rathwire** and nearby **Raharney**. These areas serve also as commuter areas. The Canal is a particularly important amenity in Killucan, being used for fishing, walks, boating and canoeing.

Ballymore is located between Mullingar and Athlone. The population here has increased by 35% from 486 in 2006 to 668 in 2011. The village serves the rural hinterland with community, recreational and sporting facilities. The area too has cultural and heritage assets with the historic site of Uisneach located nearby. Agriculture remains strong in the rural hinterland of Ballymore.

Castletown Geoghegan lies southwest of Mullingar and close to Lough Ennell. The population in the area is 749 in 2011, has increased by 8%. In recent years the village has witnessed a growth in visitors due to the establishment providers in the hospitality sector. The new greenway which passes adjacent to the village offers opportunities for the future growth in the tourism sector. Other communities in the vicinity of the new greenway are **Streamstown/Horseleap** and the town of Moate.

The towns and villages of **Moate**, **Kilbeggan**, **Tyrrellspass**, **Rochfortbridge** and **Milltownpass** are located on the N6 previously the main route from Dublin to Galway and now by-passed by the M6 motorway.

Moate is located 16kms east of Athlone. The town's population has increased by 23% from 2361 to 2,909 in 2011. Like other rural towns Moate has suffered losses of business during the economic downturn. Pobal small area analysis shows varying levels of disadvantage within the Moate area with -18.10 being the highest here. This is one of the highest levels of disadvantage outside of the two main towns. However it has many active voluntary groups who are at the heart of community activity which include arts culture and heritage facilities. The town has a post primary school and a third level business college. The rural hinterland includes the villages of **Rosemount** and **Mount Temple**.

Kilbeggan is located on what was the main Dublin Galway route the N6 and is renowned for its association with Locke's whiskey distilling. It is a service town with many architectural merits. The town has a broad range of community structures including organisations and facilities. From 2006 the population of the town has increased by over 23% to 1,523 in 2011. It is unique amongst other towns and villages in the area in that it attracts in excess of 100,000 visitors per annum between the Kilbeggan Distillery and the Kilbeggan Races. Pobal statistics showed that in 2011 over 20% of males and almost 20% of females were unemployed, up from 9% and 5% respectively from 2006.

The picturesque village of **Tyrrellspass** on the N6 has good retail and hospitality functions with many heritage and architectural features. The population here is 708 as per the 2011 census, showing a small increase of 2%.

Rochfortbridge provides retail, social, educational services for the village and the wider rural hinterland. The population has increased marginally from 1690 in 2006 to 1718 in 2011. In the late 90's the village became a commuter area for people who moved to live here while continuing to work in the greater Dublin area which saw the population grow by over 90% in the 5 year period to 2002.

Milltownpass provides a number of social and community facilities for the village and surrounding rural area. It has a well established community development structure. The population here has declined by 6% to 300 in the 5 year period to 2011.



Rural Economic Development Zones or REDZ

The evidence presented in the CEDRA report demonstrates that in general, there is a clear beneficial relationship between towns and the surrounding rural areas, i.e. the rural hinterland, and similarly between towns and larger towns and cities in close proximity. These hinterlands are local, i.e. with few exceptions they are smaller than counties, and they reflect Ireland's actual economic geography. These areas are classified within the CEDRA report as Rural **Economic Development Zones** or **REDZ**. There are two such areas located in Westmeath. One is centred on Athlone and incorporates the south of the county and parts of County Roscommon and other counties. The other is centred on Mullingar and incorporates North Westmeath and small parts of Co Meath and other counties.

Information and Communication Technology

Achieving universal access to high speed broadband is a key target under the EU Digital Agenda for Europe which envisages that by 2020 all EU citizens will have access to speeds of 30Mbps and that 50% of citizens will be subscribing to speeds of 100Mbps. The delivery of high speed broadband is challenging especially in rural areas due to population density. Ireland is one of the lowest in Europe at 67 people per km². In Westmeath the population density is 40.9 per km². There is significant Broadband infrastructure in the county which is provided by a number of commercial operators. The National Broadband Plan, Ireland's Broadband Intervention Strategy aims to deliver high speed broadband to all areas in Ireland not covered by commercial investment. The ambition is to achieve 100% access to high speed broadband by 2020.

2.2.4 Environment

Water Resources

An average of 33,000 m³ (7.5 million gallons) per day of drinking water are produced in Westmeath from four public water supply sources (Lough Owel, Lough Lene, the River Shannon and a borehole at Ballinderry in Moate) to serve the population in all of the major towns and villages in the County as well as a wide rural area through an extensive network of public water mains and public group water schemes. On behalf of Irish Water, Westmeath County Council operates the public supply systems and carries out regular water quality monitoring which are submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Local Biodiversity

County Westmeath supports a wide range of diverse and species rich habitats including wetlands, eskers, peatlands, lakes canals, which are documented in the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020. There is little research and indeed knowledge of local biodiversity sites within the county however, the Midlands Amenity Park Moate, provides an excellent example of how the local community capitalised upon the potential of existing biodiversity in their locality. This plan led approach has ensured that a framework is in place for the protection of this resource for future generations. Three quarters of food plants and flowers are insect pollinated, mainly by bees and also hoverflies. The estimated value of this work is €53 million annually in Ireland.

Renewable Energy

Demand is growing for renewable energy solutions and County Westmeath is now witnessing an increase in the number of potential producers and potential customers for renewable energy. Local groups and individuals are also taking an interest in their local environment with keen interest in recycling and reusing initiatives. Westmeath Community Development and a group of key stakeholders have produced a number of studies containing recommendations that will allow for the development of the Renewable Energy Sector. This has resulted in the publication of reports such as the 'Bioregions action plan' in 2012 and 'Renewable energy in County Westmeath' in 2009. This work has shown that County Westmeath has considerable natural resources built up by farmers investing in forestry and renewable energy crops such as miscanthus and willow. Of the 13,874 ha of forestry, 87ha of bioenergy/biomass crops in 2012. This is backed up by the fact that between March 2006 and May 2011, 215 biomass boilers were installed in the county.

2.3 Review of Key Services/Programmes

2.3.1 Statutory Services

Westmeath County Council (WCC)

Westmeath County Council (WCC) is the statutory Local Authority for Co Westmeath. In addition to its core functions providing services in Planning, Housing, Roads and Transport, Environment, Water Services and Library Arts & Recreation, WCC has significant involvement in Economic Development including:

- Tourism in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and the LEADER Programme.
- Support of Foreign Direct Investment indigenous enterprise initiatives.
- Westmeath Local Enterprise Office which is part of WCC service delivery in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland

WCC provides appropriately zoned land for enterprise and employment uses to cater for the industrial, manufacturing, technological and service needs of the county. Collaborative working arrangements are in place with various enterprise agencies to encourage, support, promote and advance business and employment opportunities, enterprise creation, entrepreneurship and innovation. The Council has provided a number of enterprise units and serviced sites in Mullingar, Athlone, Ballynacargy and other centres. Westmeath planning policy is set out in the County Development Plan and the various town and village plans.

Westmeath County Council also has significant involvement in Community Development including:

- The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) which is the designated LAG for the new LEADER Programme
- The Public Participation Network (PPN) to which many community groups supported under the LEADER programme are affiliated
- Community grants and awards, Pride of Place, Tidy towns grants, and a range of other supports which are coordinated with the LEADER Programme
- Comhairle na n-Og to which many youth groups are affiliated.
- The RAPID Programme which operates in severely disadvantaged areas in Mullingar and Athlone in conjunction with The SICAP programme.
- The Age Friendly Strategy.
- A Support Fund for Festivals and Events which is coordinated with the LEADER programme support for similar initiatives.

The Westmeath Heritage Forum is a key component in the Heritage Planning process. The Forum is a non-statutory group established by the Council which provides advice on the preparation and implementation of the County's Heritage Plan. Heritage projects under the LEADER programme have formed part of the county's Heritage Plan.

WCC is the designated financial partner for the Rural Development (LEADER) programme 2014 – 2020. A strong collaborative working arrangement exists between WCC and WCD in implementing rural development and social inclusion programmes.

Westmeath Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

Westmeath Local Enterprise Office provides entrepreneurs with advice on starting and growing small businesses, business training and financial support. Specifically:

- Start Your Own Business Guides and Workbooks are available from Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Westmeath
- Specific guides are available on setting up a Retail Business, Food Business, Coffee Shop / Restaurant or a Craft Business.
- Seminars are provided on Getting Started in Business; Tax Registration; Raising Finance; are held throughout the year.
- Business Advisors plan and develop business ideas and inform clients of all supports that are available.

Westmeath LEO is represented on the LCDC and the implementation partner, Westmeath Community Development, coordinates its work under the LEADER programme with the LEO under a Sectoral Agreement. SICAP and BTWEA Enterprise clients are referred to Westmeath LEO for SYOB Courses.

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. It works in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales on global markets. The Midland's office for Enterprise Ireland which includes Westmeath is located in Athlone.

Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority. Its role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. Fáilte Ireland provides a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services. It also works with other state agencies and representative bodies, at local and national levels, to implement and champion positive and practical strategies that will benefit Irish tourism and the Irish economy. It promotes Ireland as a holiday destination through their domestic marketing campaign (DiscoverIreland.ie) and manages

a network of nationwide tourist information centres that provide help and advice for visitors to Ireland. Two of these centres are located in Westmeath, one in Mullingar and the other in Athlone. Failte Ireland has developed an umbrella destination brand to market the East of the Country, called Ireland's Ancient East, which includes Westmeath. Tourism Development under the LEADER Programme is coordinated with Failte Ireland and is generally implemented by following strategic policies being pursued by Failte Ireland. Failte Ireland is consulted before projects are approved for funding.

Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of inland navigable waterways principally for recreational purposes. Two of the seven waterways under the remit of the body that are in or have connections to Westmeath are the Royal Canal and the Shannon Navigation system. Waterways Ireland has offices located at Thomastown, on the Royal Canal near Killucan and also in Athlone. Development under the LEADER Programme along Waterways is coordinated with Waterways Ireland.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the agency responsible for the conservation, protection, management, marketing, development and improvement of Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources. In the Westmeath area IFI has responsibility for the management and development of some of the largest angling lakes in Ireland such as Sheelin, Derravaragh, Glore, Owel, Ennell and Lough Lene, and some of the best river channels in the country in the River Inny, Brosna and the Deel. IFI works closely with angling clubs and other interested groups in the Westmeath area to promote and develop the fisheries in the area. Development under the LEADER Programme with regard to lakes and rivers is coordinated with Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Teagasc

Teagasc, the Agricultural and Food Development Authority in Ireland, provides further education in agriculture, food, horticulture, forestry and equine studies. Courses incorporate management practices and technologies on the home farm, supervised project work and discussion groups. Westmeath is in Teagasc's Regional Unit of Westmeath/Offaly/Cavan/Monaghan. A Teagasc options course will be delivered in one of the 4 counties annually. The Teagasc Options Programme is specifically designed to assist farm families in looking at all options for growing farm profit and other possibilities for the future. Teagasc advisers are trained to discuss all aspects of the farm business, succession, inheritance and lifestyle issues to ensure the long term viability of the household. Teagasc is setting up equine discussion groups within the County to assist promoters developing equine enterprises. There is currently no rural development or Artisan Food specialist covering the region. The newly established forestry producer group is facilitated by a Teagasc forestry specialist. LEADER staff regularly brief Teagasc and its clients on the programme and this has resulted in project promoters being referred to the programme for assistance. Teagasc has two equine specialists covering the entire country. They run information sessions, group training, one to one advice and help prepare policy documents. The areas in the equine industry that need support are AI facilities, sand rings, stables and training on sales, marketing and on-line selling. The equine projects that were supported under the National Rural Development Programme were very successful and have benefitted the industry.

Forestry Service

The Department Of Agriculture Forestry Service is responsible for implementing Irelands Forestry Programme 2014 -2020. The Strategic Goal of the programme is to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society and which accords with the Forest Europe definition of sustainable forest management. This includes optimising the environmental and social benefits of new and existing forests and providing support for forest holders to prepare management plans for their forest holdings.(Source: Department of Agriculture Forestry Service: Irelands Forestry Programme 2014 -2020).

Health Service Executive (HSE)

Westmeath forms part of the HSE Midlands region. In addition to its core services, HSE provides support for a range of community initiatives in the county. Initiatives include:

- Funding for Traveller Health and Primary Care Strategy under which WCD employs a Development worker and two Traveller Health Workers who are members of the Traveller community and also 5 traveller women who implement the Primary Care Programme.
- Funding for Food and Health programme, a substantial food nutrition and health programme run in for disadvantaged communities. In 2014, 602 people attended 46 courses delivered under the programme in Longford and Westmeath.
- Funding Midland Regional Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce. The Midlands Regional Drugs Taskforce is the agency with responsibility for alleviating substance misuse in the area. WCD works closely with the agency.

The HSE participated strongly in developing the WCD Integration and Diversity Strategy, particularly in relation to the Roma community and has committed to further actions.

Tusla

The Child and Family Agency is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. The Child and Family Agency's services include a range of universal and targeted services including Child protection and Welfare services, Educational Welfare Services, Psychological Services, Family and Locally based Community Supports, Early Years Services and Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence Services. Tusla provides funding for the Community Mothers Programme and the Triple P parenting programme in Longford and Westmeath which is implemented by WCD as well as the Triple P Parenting Programme.

Department of Social Protection – (DSP)

In conjunction with to its core service, there are a number of DSP initiatives in relation to employment and job seeking. These include the new Intreo service, Job Initiative Projects, Tus, RSS, Community Employment Schemes, Business Development Programmes, Back to Work and Short Term Enterprise Allowance Schemes (BTEA/STEA) and the Jobs Clubs. Other DSP Job Seeking and Training Supports include Job Bridge, Jobs Plus and the new Job Path and Youth Guarantee programmes.

Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB)

The principal objective of LWETB is to promote the development of education, training and youth work in the region. It has a remit for second level and adult education and training services and runs a number of programmes including the VTOS Programme in Mullingar and Athlone, Youthreach Programmes and is responsible for the School Completion Programme. In addition to this, LWETB is also responsible for Local Training Initiatives in the region.

National Learning Network

National learning Network, with Centres in Athlone and Mullingar, provides a range of Flexible training courses for people who need specialist support including job seekers and people with an illness or disability.

Citizens information Board

Westmeath Citizens Information Services has two main centres in the County, in Athlone and Mullingar and also provides outreach services in Castlepollard and Kilbeggan.

2.3.2 Community and Voluntary Services

The following is a summary of services being delivered by the Community and Voluntary Sector in the county.

Congress Information and Development Centres

Dr Stephens Centre Athlone and Mullingar Congress Information and Development Centre provide advocacy & information on a wide range of topics including, Social Welfare, Redundancy, Job Seekers/ Benefit Allowance and Back to Education Allowance.

South Westmeath Education Employment and Training Services (SWEETS)

South Westmeath Education Employment and Training Services (SWEETS) is a community based initiative providing support to unemployed people in the Kilbeggan and surrounding area.

Mullingar Employment Action Group (MEAG)

The Mullingar Employment Action Group is a support group for unemployed people in the Mullingar and surrounding areas. Their supports include a Business Advice Service, Incubation Units for Small Businesses, and a Recycling Project which is funded under the Community Services Programme (CSP). MEAG works closely with WCD and the Credit Unions in assisting clients to access funds under a Revolving Loan Scheme. Clients of this Scheme are also briefed on opportunities available for support under the LEADER Programme.

Athlone Community Taskforce (ACT)

Athlone Community Taskforce is a support group for unemployed people in Athlone and surrounding areas. Their supports include a Business Advice Service and Incubation Units for Small Businesses. ACT also works closely with WCD and the Credit Unions in assisting clients to access funds under a Revolving Loan Scheme.

Other Community Services Projects (CSPs)

There are twelve Community Services projects in total in the county, operating under the Community Services Programme, delivering a range of services and providing employment. There are opportunities for CSPs to progress to social enterprise. The LAG is investigating opportunities that may exist within these groups for the development of social enterprises

Youth Services

The Midland Youth Service (MRYS) and Foroige are the two most active youth organisations in the area and operate clubs in Mullingar and in some rural areas. The SICAP supports this work in order to develop additional services for disadvantage young people in prioritised areas. The consultation process indicated a need to support young people in this way in more disadvantaged areas.

Women's Community Projects (WCP)

The Women's Community Projects, Mullingar is the most established women's groups in the area. This project delivers employment focused training to women and has also established a community enterprise. It provides extensive childcare facilities and personal development programmes. 350 to 400 people benefit from its supports each year.

Age Friendly Alliance

The Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy has been launched, having been developed under the National Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme. WCD facilitates the Older Persons Forums and also provides a Care and Repair Service for Older People in association with Westmeath Volunteer Centre. 95 Older People in Westmeath availed of the Care & Repair service in 2012.

Westmeath County Childcare Committee (WCCC)

WCCC provides supports to Childcare Service providers who wish to avail of the government funding under the National Childhood Investment Programme, Community Childcare Subvention Scheme, Childcare Education & Training Support Scheme and the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme.

Family Resource Centres

There are two Family Resource centres in the county, Msgr McCarthy Centre in Battery Heights Athlone and also Cara Phort Family Resource Centre in Ballynacargy. Both Family Resource Centres provide a focal point for social activities as well as hosting training and support initiatives in those disadvantaged areas.

Longford Westmeath Community Transport (LWCT)

Longford Westmeath Community Transport Ltd is developing an effective, sustainable and accessible rural transport service for rural dwellers in counties Longford and Westmeath. LWCT operates 36 door-to-door weekly scheduled services between 9.30am and 2.30am and within school runs. Scheduled runs are used by people wishing to access essential services, such as shopping, pension collection, medical, banking and post office.

2.3.3 Local Development

Westmeath Community Development is the Local development company for Co Westmeath. The company delivers a range of EU and Exchequer funded programmes addressing rural development and social inclusion issues.

LEADER

Westmeath Community Development has implemented three consecutive LEADER Programmes from 1995 to 2015 including LEADER II, National Rural Development Programme/LEADER + and the Rural Development (LEADER) Programme 2007-2013.

Other Rural Development Programmes

Westmeath Community Development implements other EU Programmes and initiatives.

- The company was the Irish partner on a “Bioregions Project”. The Bio-Regions consortium comprises of 13 partners from 10 European countries and was funded by Intelligent Energy Europe 2009. A Renewable Energy Strategy was produced with funding under this Programme in 2012. A number of Actions in the strategy continue to be implemented under the LEADER Programme.
- Support for the Artisan Food sector was provided by WCD through the Anatole (Atlantic Network Abilities for Towns to Organise Local Economy) an EU initiative with partners in France, Spain and Portugal. A number of Actions being supported under the LEADER programme have emerged from this work.

SICAP

Westmeath Community Development is the Programme Implementer for the **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)** in Westmeath. In this role it works in consultation with target communities, particularly in the 51 disadvantaged areas and in partnership with statutory agencies including WCC, DSP, HSE, and LWETB. The programme is delivered under the 3 Goals:

Goal 1 – Empowering Disadvantaged Communities. Actions being delivered under this Goal include:

- Early stage Pre- Development Work with target groups particularly in Disadvantaged and Very Disadvantaged areas.
- Supporting inclusion of disadvantaged communities in Decision Making Structures.
- Development of Networks and Collaborations
- Supports for Older People

Goal 2 – Lifelong Learning. Actions being delivered under this Goal include:

- Education Supports
- Measures to Combat Early School Leaving
- Supports for young people who have left school early
- Supports for Primary School Aged Children

Goal 3 - Employment. Actions being delivered under this programme include

- Employability Services
- Self-Employment Supports for Unemployed People. Some supports for new enterprises has been provided by the LEADER Programme.
- Labour market policy and delivery activities
- Promoting Social Enterprise

As part of the programme WCD works with:

- Unemployed people;
- Individuals and groups representing people with disabilities;
- Individuals and groups representing lone parents;
- Individuals and groups representing new communities;
- Individuals and groups representing Travellers;
- Organisations and groups representing Older People.

Rural Social Scheme

Westmeath Community Development implements the Rural Social Scheme, an income support programme for the farming community with 33 participants.

Labour Market Programmes include TUS, CE and JI

Approximately 200 people are placed in Co Westmeath by WCD under these programmes. This is an important training initiative that provides assistance to unemployed persons.

Business Development Programme

The WCD Business Development Programme works with unemployed people; including those not on the live register, considering self-employment. The Business Development Programme is run over six months. Approximately 30 people complete this programme each year. Approximately 70% establish businesses during the programme. There is an objective to target people from disadvantaged areas to participate in this programme. Clients of this programme are briefed on opportunities available for support under the LEADER Programme.

Back to Work & Short Term Enterprise Allowance (BTEA/STEA)

The BTEA/STEA schemes encourage people getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. WCD plays a role with the DSP in this scheme, meeting with, advising, assisting and registering people for these schemes. The company is currently targeting this service to disadvantaged areas. Clients of this programme are briefed on opportunities available for support under the LEADER Programme.

Job Club

Job Clubs funded by DSP are part of WCD services for the unemployed, assisting job ready individuals to this service. WCD manages the Westmeath Job Club, providing services in Mullingar and Athlone. The company is currently targeting this service to disadvantaged areas.

Local Training Initiatives.

WCD is the delivery agency for two Local Training Initiative (LTI) programmes each year, the Horticulture programme in Belvedere, Mullingar, (in partnership with WCC) and the Training for Employment programme in Athlone. Delivered over a 10 month period, 35 people benefitted from these programmes in 2014. Clients of this programme are briefed on opportunities available for support under the LEADER Programme.

Westmeath Volunteer Centre

The Westmeath Volunteer Centre is a county-wide project managed by WCD in partnership with a number of other organisations including WCC, the PPN, Westmeath Sports Partnership and the Citizens Information Service. The Centre plays a key role in mobilising volunteers in communities which ultimately benefits the implementation of rural development and social inclusion programmes including the LEADER programme.

Community Mothers Programme

WCD runs the Community Mothers Programme in Longford and Westmeath which is funded by TUSLA. Having trained in delivery of Triple P parenting programmes, WCD staff members regularly deliver Triple P courses.

Traveller Health Programme.

WCD employs a Development worker and two Traveller Health Workers who are members of the Traveller community and also 5 traveller women who implement the Primary Care Programme.

Integration and Diversity Strategy

WCD is committed to a number of actions from the Integration and Diversity Strategy published in 2013, particularly those related to unemployment. WCD also committed to carrying out pre-development work with the Roma Community.

Food and Health Programme

Funded by the HSE, WCD runs a substantial food nutrition and health programme for disadvantaged communities. In 2013, 622 people attended 46 courses delivered under the programme in Longford and Westmeath.

Childcare Facilities

WCD runs 7 community childcare centres in Westmeath, funded via CCSS, and 185 children are attending services currently.

2.4 County Westmeath Area Needs Analysis

There is a need to further develop the economy and create employment opportunities, particularly for young people in the county, through investment in job creation projects. This would assist in continuing to reverse the trend established during the recession when the Live register rose from 4,012 in August 2006, to a peak of 10,240 in the same month in 2012. More recently, there has been a reduction in Live Register numbers. The IDA and Enterprise Ireland, and the particularly the LEO at local level, continue to provide significant supports for enterprise development. The new Intreo Service established by the DSP, the BTEA/STEA Schemes operated by the DSP in collaboration with the SICAP programme, and other programmes such as the Business Development Programme and Local Training Initiatives, continue to support unemployed people to gain employment and/or start new businesses.

Arising from the socio economic profile and the consultation process, there is a need for further funding, mentoring and marketing supports in niche areas such as tourism, farm diversification, crafts, food, renewable energy and the creative industries. For example in relation to tourism:

- There is a need to improve the visitor numbers to the county given that the county attracted 95,000 overseas visitors in 2013, this figure represents only 1.4% of the total number of overseas visitors to the country in the same year.
- The new Dublin Galway Greenway along with the recent improvements to the Royal Canal for walking and cycling provide an opportunity to work with communities and individuals to create employment along this route which including villages and towns such as Streamstown, Castletown Geoghegan and Moate, areas which are experiencing levels of disadvantage. Given the huge increase in interest from overseas visitors in walking and cycling in recent years, Westmeath can position itself to attract some of this growing market into Ireland which in 2014 saw over 1.2m overseas visitors engaged in hiking/cross country walking. There is also a need to support the development of loops or spurs off the main arteries such as the Westmeath Way Marked Way which will ensure that the most rural parts of the county can attract visitors thus providing economic gain for more rural areas.
- There is a need to support projects which further enhance the visitor experience at heritage sites such as Fore and Uisneach as well as a need to actively encourage communities and individuals to develop such projects. Such sites have the capacity to fit with Fáilte Ireland's Ancient East branding initiative where the agency estimate that such themed initiatives have the capacity to deliver an additional 600,000 visitors to the country.
- There is a need for tourist accommodation and activities/attractions in more rural areas to complement the variety of accommodation in the hotel, B&B and self-catering sectors, the majority of which is concentrated in or close to the two main towns of Mullingar and Athlone. Less than 20% of the accommodation providers are located in the smaller towns and villages or countryside.
- As the county lacks a dedicated tourism marketing officer there is a need for coordinated destination marketing initiatives with tourism providers in marketing their businesses to foreign and domestic markets. Marketing initiatives need to be driven by the trade with support from the LEADER programme and the Local Authority.

As alluded to earlier, in order to create conditions for economic development, there are a number of niche areas which, with support, could provide opportunities for job creation on the one hand and increased incomes for people in some sectors:

- There is a need to respond to the decrease in farm incomes and the difficulties for the farming community stemming from this. This need is particularly acute in a county with a large farming community based on drystock farming. While diversification is an option for some people, there is no longer a dedicated advisory service available from Teagasc to address this need. In summary, there is a strong farming sector in the county with significant opportunities for growth and diversification but a need for strong support to develop the sector. For example many farmers have significant forestry resources as outlined, and although the percentage of land under forestry in Westmeath is relatively small, this could help Ireland meet its 30% co-firing target in peat stations by 2020. Others may have opportunities to add value to primary agriculture products to sell directly to markets and others still may wish to develop entirely separate enterprises to generate additional income to support the family farm or as an alternative to farming..
- The study carried out with Westmeath Food Network has shown that in order for the small (artisan)food sector to grow to its potential, it needs to be supported with Training on marketing, logistics, taxation, law, promotion and the branding of local food, showcasing products, networking and further research on best practice in the industry nationally and internationally.
- The county now has a vibrant craft sector. As craft makers tend to work in isolation and are rurally based, they need continued support with networking, product development, collaborative marketing and encouragement of Innovation.
- The potential to develop economic opportunities in the Arts and Culture Sector has been recognised. This sector can be enhanced through teaching of the Arts, Culture and Heritage and the development of projects fashioned by entrepreneurs utilising their unique skills to create an economic market for this sector.

As outlined, in addition to the main population centres, Mullingar and Athlone, in the north and south of the county respectively, there are a number of medium sized towns with significant population numbers, each of which are part of a separate Rural Economic Development Zone as outlined in the profile. Each also has the potential, with support, for considerable economic and social development. In addition, almost all of the smaller towns and villages continue to require support to develop aesthetically, socially and economically. The type of support that has been required historically and continues to be required has included:

- Animation and Capacity Building and Training of Community groups in order that they can have the capacity to develop projects.
- Assistance with developing local plans for village enhancement, including tidy towns projects and in some cases broader planning which includes economic and social development, provision of facilities for activities, social interaction and training.
- Financial support for village enhancement projects, community facilities and facilities for young people.

In addition, working on the concept of the Rural Economic Development Zone there are opportunities to work with communities in the medium sized towns in developing pilot rural towns stimulus programmes.

Opportunities to develop micro enterprises based on remote working are dependent on broadband connectivity, and having economic and environmental benefits for the county, has been identified as a particular challenge for the business community. There is a need for accessible ICT training for communities and businesses to enable all sectors to fully benefit from broadband roll out. In the more remote areas people's ability to avail of such training which is more readily available in the larger urban centres is compounded by a lack of transport.

The area profile highlights that, while disadvantage is spread throughout the county, there are areas that are more marginalised and socially excluded than others. The cumulative nature of disadvantage in urban local authority housing estates and in some rural areas, suggests that targeted area-based strategies are required to work with communities which are hard to reach. This applies particularly to the 51 disadvantaged areas but also to areas which, though not showing up in the statistics, are disadvantaged by being geographically remote and often peripheral to development initiatives. In addition, as outlined in the profile, there are significant numbers of people, for example, New Communities, Travellers, People with Disabilities, Lone parents and Older People who find themselves in need of intensive support in order to participate fully in society. Inadequate transport services in some urban and rural areas of the county compound the disadvantage. As also outlined earlier, the number of young people out of work in Westmeath is equivalent to the national average, which itself is proportionately high. There is a need to improve services available for young people and women to help them avail of education, training and employment opportunities. These issues are being addressed in the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and also by other agencies such as the HSE and DSP. While it would not be appropriate to duplicate this work, there is a need and also an opportunity to add value to it. Intensive predevelopment work is required to bring hard to reach communities to the stage where they, also, can also avail of Animation, Capacity Building and Training, assistance with developing local plans for economic and social development and financial support for projects.

Local strategies are required to enable communities to promote environmental issues:

- Water conservation awareness programmes and projects are necessary to assist in conserving this valuable natural resource.
- There is an important role for communities in conserving local biodiversity. Identifying local biodiversity areas will raise awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of the biodiversity in each locality. Planting native wildflowers and allowing wildflowers to grow along roadside verges across the county will help get native species back on track to recovery. Its preservation also offers a tourism opportunity.
- There is a need to support the region becoming active in the renewable energy sector. Further work needs to be done to encourage local consumers to increase their use of locally produced renewables.

3.0 Participative Planning

3.1 Consultation Process

The process of preparing the Local Development Strategy was agreed in mid 2015 as set out in **Appendix 9**. This process provided for an extensive consultation process with a range of stakeholders. This included consultation at the initial stage of development of the LDS in accordance with the bottom up principal, and concluding with a final publicly advertised consultation process on a draft of the LDS.

3.1.1 Initial Consultation process

The initial consultation process consisted of:

- 2 workshops were held with the PPN, one in Athlone and the other in Mullingar. Approximately 120 people representing 85 organisations including geographic and issue-based groups as well as Youth Services participated in workshops.
- A call for submissions was also made in the local press inviting parties to make submissions under the proposed three themes of the Programme. A total of 65 written submissions were received from groups and organisations throughout the county.
- In all over 100 groups and organisations participated in the Public Consultation Process by way of participating in the PPN Workshops or by making a written submission or both. 60% of these groups were from the hard to reach communities within the sub-regional area. These groups were representative of people that are particularly at risk of social exclusion i.e. People living in disadvantaged areas, people living in remote areas, women, older people, youth, migrants/new communities (including refugees/asylum seekers), people with disabilities, lone parents and Travellers. A list of the groups that participated in the process is included in Appendix (See Appendix 10: List of Groups).
- Facilitated consultation and planning sessions were held with particular sectors including Tourism providers, craft and food producers.
- Workshops were organised with:
 - **Communities in North Westmeath**
Irish Rural Link facilitated a public workshop in order to elicit the views of people in that area on development priorities for the area. The report on the workshop and conclusions form part of the consultation process for the Local development strategy. The Report also forms part of the consultation process for the pilot project proposed for Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ).
 - **Community Sector Board Members of Westmeath Community Development** in relation to Rural Development issues from previous LEADER programmes.
- Individual consultations were held with:
 - **Westmeath Community Development** in relation to:
 - Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).The consultation process carried out in preparing the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme has informed the LEADER Consultation process, particularly as it relates to disadvantaged areas and key target groups.
 - Review of previous LEADER programmes
 - The Renewable Energy Strategy for County Westmeath commissioned by WCD
 - Strategies for Tourism, Food and Craft Sectors.
 - The Hill of Uisneach Feasibility Study commissioned and carried out in 2014/2015.
 - **Midland Regional Youth Services** - to elicit their views on the role LEADER could play in working with rural youth and collaboration with youth services in this work. Difficulty in getting community leaders was identified as a significant issue.
 - **Mullingar and District Chamber of Commerce.** - An individual submission was received from Mullingar and District Chamber of Commerce.

- **Westmeath County Council Meetings** with Council officials with regard to key rural development priorities and opportunities for collaboration with the Local Authority and local communities in respect of;
 - Westmeath County Development Plan
 - The North Westmeath Strategy, 2006
 - Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ)
 - Westmeath Biodiversity Plan 2014-2020
- **Faillte Ireland** in relation to the following:
 - Failte Ireland's Tourism Development Strategy, its strategies and plans for the region, identified gaps, and on key development work which could be carried out as part of the LEADER programme.
 - Failte Ireland's programmes especially its marketing plan for the Ireland's Ancient East
- **Waterways Ireland**
 - Initiatives on the Royal Canal and in the Athlone area
- **Inland Fisheries Ireland**
 - The conservation, protection, management, marketing, development and improvement of the county's fishing resources such as rivers and lakes.
- **Coillte**
 - Forest recreation
- **Teagasc**
 - Options Programme
 - Farm Diversification
 - Artisan Food production
- **Westmeath Local Enterprise Office**
 - Key rural development work which could be carried out in collaboration with the Local Enterprise Office under Sectoral Agreement.

3.1.2 Final Consultation Process

When a draft Local Development Strategy was completed, a final public consultation process was undertaken, this included:

- Public advertisement of Draft LDS in local press,
- Consideration of draft LDS by Westmeath Local Community Development Committee
- Consideration of draft LDS by WCC Economic Development SPC

3.2 Summary of Outcomes from the Consultation Process

The development and marketing of **Rural Tourism** particularly in the areas of outdoor recreation such as walking, cycling and angling and this along with the enhancement of heritage attractions, and support for marketing were seen as paramount for the future. The new Dublin Galway Greenway was seen as a very positive development in terms of potential spin-off for communities and individuals in its vicinity. The Greenway allows public access to the 40 km section which will connect cyclists and walkers to the urban centres of Mullingar, Moate and Athlone. The opportunity exists for small businesses in the area to benefit from this major piece of infrastructure including food businesses, activities such as cycle hire etc., and for communities in developing and enhancing their areas along the route. It was also felt that there were further opportunities to create spurs to facilitate linkages with existing attractions such as the Hill of Uisneach and the creation of new ancillary services to support the users of the Greenway. Recent improvements to the Royal Canal were also cited as positive and the potential of the canal to deliver additional economic benefits to communities and individuals along its corridor was recognised. Aside

from capitalising on these developments community groups also mentioned the need for the further development of walking routes, town trails and cycling routes. The “Camino Way” from Fore to Mullingar and the rich monastic heritage associated with the county was also considered as having potential for development. Signage in general was considered to be an issue with signage of heritage attractions mentioned in particular.

It was felt that there is considerable scope to develop the **lakes and waterways** in the county for tourism. Small scale boat enterprises providing tours of the lakes, the development of water sports, the enhancement of the angling product and amenity areas such as Portlick Forest Park were cited as possibilities. Consultation with tourism providers and communities also highlighted the need to promote Westmeath as a tourism destination. There is potential to promote the county and its offerings to different market segments under culture, heritage, outdoor recreation etc. with area based cluster groups cited as a possible mechanism to carry out marketing activities.

The production of a guide to the **historic sites** and attractions of Westmeath, the maintenance of historical monuments, redevelopment of heritage buildings such as the Market House in Castlepollard were seen as initiatives that could contribute to the enhancement of the county’s heritage. The restoration of old graveyards was also seen as activity which was highlighted by groups which could contribute to heritage and genealogy tourism.

Other general conclusions from the consultations were that more information and support was required around the setting up of new enterprises particularly in the area of:

- **Artisan food** production and support for farmers markets as outlets for local producers. Food producers felt that the work with food producers including Westmeath Food Network which should be continued. The Co-operation dimension of this initiative with groups in France, Spain and Portugal and the other countries was also seen as productive and producers felt it should be continued.
- The encouragement and provision of support for new entrants to the **Craft Sector** was seen to have potential for job creation. Also, the cooperation dimension with groups in neighbouring counties like Offaly and Longford as well as with groups in Finland was something that would be very productive to continue.

It is also clear from the submissions that communities and individuals living in rural areas require **training** across a variety of topics which include enterprise development, training for young people to assist in getting employment and starting business, developing hobby crafts into businesses and also in the area of renewable energy.

From the consultation process it is clear that communities in **rural towns** across the county are very conscious about the surroundings in which they live. The availability of **basic services** and **facilities** was considered vital for people living in rural areas. The importance of the work of the various tidy town groups across the county was recognised and continued support of this activity was cited as being essential going forward. The preparation of village plans and environmental plans was also considered a requirement in planning future tidy town’s activity. Groups felt that there was scope for such committees to expand the areas they cover and also to look at engaging with younger people in areas through a Junior Tidy Towns initiative. Specific issues mentioned which are of concern include litter, illegal dumping, lack of litter bins in towns, unkempt estates and derelict houses and buildings. Some community groups do undertake regular clean ups but it was felt that these should be more frequent with individuals taking responsibility for cleaning up outside their own properties.

The provision of recreational facilities was also widely mentioned by community groups specifically around the need for children’s playgrounds in certain areas, recreational infrastructure for older children such as skate parks. The provision of amenity areas with seating, bowls facilities for older people as well as other facilities such as outdoor gym equipment, walking tracks as well as indoor sporting and recreation facilities were also mentioned as requirements to meet the needs of rural communities.

While there are education and training facilities located in the county, these facilities are not available to everybody, particularly people living in remote rural areas due to the location of these facilities in the major towns and lack of adequate transport to take people there. Communities in North Westmeath expressed concern that there is a lack of accessibility to jobs because of the lack of creation of jobs in Mullingar and surrounding areas. Neither was it perceived as a destination for visitors to the county or to the country. The concept of Mullingar Rural Economic Development Zone was seen as having huge potential to grow.

The absence of **broadband** in rural areas was seen as having a negative impact on the lives of people living in rural areas. The potential to create rural enterprises as well as the ability to offer individuals the opportunity to work from home or local hubs was lacking due to the unavailability of broadband. While the National Broadband Scheme sets out to deliver HSB to all areas by 2020 there is a view that these targets may not be reached in relation to all households by this date. Whether or not this is achieved, communities are anxious to have the required ICT skills that will enable them to take full advantage of possibilities that can be opened up through the availability of broadband.

During consultation for the SICAP Strategy, **Disadvantaged and Very Disadvantaged areas and target groups within those areas**, were identified and are requiring special actions to alleviate long term unemployment in particular. This was also evident in the LDS Consultation process. There is also a need in those areas for the provision of adequate Community facilities such as meeting centres. Although most areas do have community halls, many are in a very poor condition and require upgrading. This lack of appropriate facilities is seen as being a reason for limited social and recreational activity in many areas particularly those communities who are hard to reach.

It was recognised that support was required for the development of facilities for **young people** such as youth cafes. Provision of support and encouragement of volunteers to work with young people, encouraging them to get involved with community activities was necessary. Measures that could have potential for creating employment locally for young people included the development of arts and culture activities.

It is also clear from the submissions that communities and individuals living in rural areas require training across a variety of topics which include committee skills training, leadership, fundraising, making funding applications, project management, community development, media skills training and becoming involved in programmes about local areas via local community radio including volunteers training, festival and events training and management.

Consultation with Longford Westmeath Community Transport indicates that the group plans to expand its services to provide transport for youth services, disability groups, pre-School, after school, and day care centres.

It is further clear from the submissions that communities and individuals living in rural areas require training across a variety of topics like **water conservation**. Communities and the Local Authority are concerned about biodiversity, the loss of habitats such as flower rich meadows and grassland and from excessive tidying up of wild areas in our landscape, areas like roadside verges or field margins. Recently both wild bees and commercial honey bees have suffered huge declines as a result.

Consultation with Teagasc Equine specialist indicated that Teagasc will be setting up cluster discussion groups with 15 members in each group. These groups can be used as a means of disseminating information about leader supports to equine farmers. Teagasc would be interested in holding joint information meetings on leader supports when the programme is launched.

In the consultation process, Coillte indicated that it is interested in working with the Rural Development Programme in developing walkways such as the Westmeath Way also, improving the recreational aspect of their existing woodlands such as Mullaghmeen. Other areas of interest include boardwalks that would allow the public to experience different habitats working with local community groups in a “neighbourhood watch” way of patrolling local forests and avoiding pollution.

3.3 SWOT Analysis

An Analysis of the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats was undertaken as part of the consultation process to assist in informing the preparation of the Local Development Strategy. The following WCD Board Members participated as a focus group in a SWOT Analysis:

- Dermot Leavy Irish Farmers Association (IFA).
- Liam Cahill Lakeland Dairies (IBEC).
- Patrick Boyce SIPTU.
- Hugh Farrell Irish Wheelchair Association.
- Geraldine Lacey Midland Regional Youth Services.
- Mary Lennon Athlone Community Radio (PPN).
- Emily Wallace Environmental Pillar (PPN).
- Paddy Corcoran Mullingar Area (PPN).
- Marion Garry Clonmellon Community Group (PPN).
- Seamus Browne Drumraney (PPN).
- Laura Leonard Mullingar Chamber of Commerce.
- Frank Murtagh WCD SICAP.
- Joe Potter WCD LEADER Programme.
- Bernie Leavy WCD LEADER Programme

This SWOT analysis is also supported by information gleaned from an area profile and the participative planning carried out by the LAG and the implementation partner with agencies, interest groups and community and voluntary groups and organisations. The results are outlined below:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Excellent strategic location at centre of Ireland	Failure to achieve the potential of Gateway status in NSS.
Proximity to Dublin	Current low level of household income
Growing population	Level of employment in Mullingar
High quality natural environment	Level of Educational attainment
High quality education provision	Range of Rural Transport
AIT/ Athlone R&D facility in Athlone	Level of unemployment
Athlone FDI cluster	Continued reliance on traditional industrial sectors
Available workforce	Higher levels of youth unemployment
Strong PPN network	Low levels of connectivity
Good recreation and amenity infrastructure	No change in numbers of local authority housing provided
Good Sports facilities	Continuing depopulation of rural areas
Good road and rail links to main towns	Low levels of services in rural areas
Well educated population	Poor transport services in rural areas
Wide range of tourism attractions: outdoor pursuits, heritage and cultural attractions	Absence of broadband in rural areas
Good manufacturing base	Higher percentage of age dependent people in the county
Well developed community infrastructure	
Good local networks among statutory, voluntary and community sectors	

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Positive national economic trends Tourism development assets incl. unspoilt landscape and heritage Available Business and Technology Park in Mullingar Regional Action Plan for Jobs Waterways and water based recreation and tourism. Cooperation with Roscommon in respect of Athlone. Walking and cycling route development. Tourism potential of county Increasing education and skills levels of population Farm Diversification Alternative energies Recycling New business development Expansion of existing business base Enhancement of community and voluntary sector Village enhancement Artisan Foods	Services for increasing population Rationalisation of local services outside of Mullingar and Athlone. New national planning framework Continued decline in agriculture Population growth in number of towns and villages without supporting infrastructure Higher percentage of age dependent people in the county

3.4 LDS Priorities and Objectives

3.4.1 Process of Agreeing Priorities and Objectives

In agreeing the priorities and objectives the LAG undertook a process which included a number of stages from initial consultation through to completion of the LDS for approval at local level prior to submission to DECLG for approval. The first stage involved the initial consultation where the proposed themes of the Programme were presented to the relevant stakeholders. This involved consultation with members of the public, community and voluntary groups as well as relevant agencies through workshops, face to face interviews and through invitation for submissions advertised in the local media. An Area profile for the sub regional area was compiled through in-house desk research and consultation with relevant documents and reports. Gaps in provision were identified through examining current works and programmes being undertaken by other key statutory providers in the area. A draft LDS was then prepared and agreed with the LAG. The next stage involved the invitation of comments on the draft LDS through advertising in the local media. Following this second consultation phase the draft LDS was completed with a final draft submitted to the LAG for approval.

The process followed in agreeing LDS Priorities and Objectives is presented as follows:

Date	Stage completed	Participant (s)
June 2015	Working Group Meeting	LAG/ Implementation Partner WCD / Financial Partner WCC
1st July 2015	Facilitated Workshop Mullingar completed	Community Groups/ General Public
2nd July 2015	Facilitated Workshop Athlone completed	Community Groups/ General Public
16th July 2015	Public advertising to general public Inviting interested parties to make submissions for inclusion in the draft LDS completed.	Working Group

Date	Stage completed	Participant (s)
16th July 2015	<p>In-house desk research completed to review of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midlands Planning Guidelines • FORFAS Sharing Our Future 2025 • CEDRA Report • Westmeath LEO Enterprise Strategy • Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 • The Renewable Energy Strategy for County Westmeath commissioned by WCD • National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016 • Survey of Food Producers in Westmeath undertaken by WCD • Midlands Region Action Plan for Jobs • Solas/LWETB Training programmes • Food Wise 2025 • Teagasc Programmes • Failte Ireland's programmes especially its marketing plan for the Irelands Ancient East • Enterprise Ireland Programmes • The Hill of Uisneach Feasibility Study commissioned and carried out in 2014/2015. 	Westmeath Community Development
17th July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Community and Voluntary Sector Provision completed • Review of Statutory Provision completed 	Westmeath Community Development
26th July 2015	Needs Analysis for inclusion in LDS completed.	Working group
30th July 2015	<p>Meetings with Statutory Sector organisations completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westmeath County Council • Failte Ireland • Local Enterprise Office • Teagasc • Waterways Ireland • Inland Fisheries Ireland 	Agency Staff
30th July 2015	<p>Meetings with Community Sector organisations completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westmeath Community Development • Mullingar Chamber of Mullingar • Coillte • Youth Organisations • Westmeath Food Network • Craft Network – Made in Westmeath • Heritage Forum • Tourism Providers 	Staff and Voluntary members
7th Aug 2015	Public submissions received	General Public

Date	Stage completed	Participant (s)
30th Aug 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public submissions collated Feedback received from PPN Meetings and Agency meetings collated Outcomes collated 	Working Group
10th Sep 2015	SWOT Analysis completed	Implementation Partner (WCD) Board members
10th Sep 2015	Review of relevant High Level Goals and Objectives in the Draft LECP completed	Working Group
10th Sep 2015	Meeting to consider Draft set of objectives for the Plan and a series of Actions with Targets and Outputs	Board Members of Westmeath Community Development
15th Sep 2015	Draft set of objectives for the Plan and a series of Actions with Targets and Outputs completed	Working Group
25th Sept 2015	Draft prepared and submitted to LCDC for approval	Working Group
2nd Oct 2015	Comments and views requested in the Draft Local Development Strategy	LCDC
23rd Oct 2015	Comments and views received for the Local Development Strategy	General Public
25th Oct 2015	Final draft prepared and submitted to LCDC for approval	Working Group
6th Nov 2015	Local Development Strategy finalised and approved for submission.	LCDC

3.4.2 Rationale for proposed Themes/Sub-Themes and Priorities

In selecting the proposed themes/sub-themes the LAG took cognisance of local, national and EU Strategies. EU 2020 has set out particular targets to be achieved throughout Europe in relation to employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate change. At a national level Enterprise 2025 and the government's Action Plan for jobs have set targets to move towards full employment by 2020 with 2.1 million expected to be in employment by 2018. The Midlands Action Plan for Jobs too aims at delivering 10-15% employment growth in the region over the period 2015-2017 where key sectors to be targeted in the plan include manufacturing, tourism, food and energy. The Westmeath County Development Plan sets out a vision for the county for the coming years and this too has also helped to form the content of the Local Development Strategy.

Based on the consultation process, the area profile, and the requirement locally to help achieve county, regional and national and EU targets for 2020, it was concluded that there was a need to advance all of the Themes and Sub-themes of the programme. In supporting the decision to focus on the particular Themes and Sub-Themes, the LAG was informed through the needs analysis of the Area Profile and by the outcome of the consultation process. This indicated that a stronger focus was required on initiatives that will develop the local economy and reduce the levels of unemployment which is currently in excess of 8,000. A total of 26 Actions are proposed during the lifetime of the Programme, 16 of which will be undertaken under the Theme of Economic Development, Enterprise and Job Creation. These 16 actions will be undertaken across the 4 sub-themes thus: 5 under the sub-theme of Rural Tourism, 5 under Enterprise Development, 4 under Rural Towns and 2 under the Broadband sub-theme. Approx. 65% of the Project budget will be dedicated to these Economic measures.

Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

The Area profile highlights the fact there is a need to further develop the economy and create employment opportunities, particularly for young people in the county, through investment in job creation projects which would reduce the numbers on the Live register. In order to achieve this, in consultation with the trade and statutory agencies working in the area, a need has been identified for further funding for mentoring and marketing supports in niche areas such as tourism, farm diversification, crafts, food, renewable energy and the creative industries. Key sectors targeted in the Midlands Action Plan for Jobs also include manufacturing, tourism, food and energy. New cycling, walking and other recreational trails along the waterways of the region are proposed as is a Regional Energy Hub for the Midlands.

Rural Tourism

During the consultation process tourism providers and community groups pointed to potential of tourism to create badly needed employment and additional income for existing providers in particular. The enhancement of rural tourism has been prioritised with 28% of the project budget dedicated to this local objective. The area profile shows that there is significant scope to develop the rural tourism product in Westmeath through drawing on the county's natural resources in this area. This need aligned with the outcome of the consultation process has informed the LAG around the proposed Actions of the Rural Tourism sub-theme where there will be a focus on the use of the natural resources to develop outdoor recreation including walking cycling, angling as well as heritage tourism. The consultation process also highlighted the need for a co-ordinated approach to marketing together with the up-skilling of tourism providers and local entrepreneurs to drive tourism in Westmeath.

Rural Tourism has accordingly been identified as the first priority for the programme. Objectives and actions are based on the views of tourism providers and local communities as outlined in the results of the consultation process shown above and set in consultation with Failte Ireland with particular reference to the Ireland's Ancient East branding initiative, Waterways Ireland and Inland Fisheries Ireland. They are also designed to build on the county's existing tourism infrastructure as outlined in the Area Profile using the potential of the lakes, the River Shannon, the Royal Canal and the new National Cycle Route with a focus on developing outdoor recreation, promoting walking and cycling activities enhancing the county's rich heritage offerings, supporting new innovative promotion initiatives in local communities and the provision of training and marketing supports to the Tourism Sector. The Hill of Uisneach Feasibility Study carried out in 2014/2015 contains proposals for the development of that resource and some of its recommendations are being proposed in this strategy. The Area profile and the consultation process highlighted the fact that trade driven marketing of tourism in the county is lacking and that this should be addressed under the LEADER Programme. Strategic objective 1.6 for the Westmeath LECP is for a thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county. A priority is therefore is to make the county more attractive to tourists with a focus on improving the tourism product, marketing the product and improving the capacity of private providers and communities to develop and deliver tourism services. The LAG has agreed that this objective can be pursued under Rural Tourism.

Enterprise Development

Taking cognisance of the role of the local LEO in supporting enterprise development, the Enterprise Development local objective focuses on creating opportunities for farmers and farm families through agri-diversification, supports for the artisan food and craft producers as well as the creative sector as these areas also show further potential for growth as demonstrated by the needs analysis of the area profile. These sectors also have the potential to create synergies with Rural Tourism. Westmeath LAG, in consultation with existing and potential producers, has identified a specific role for the LEADER programme in working with Farm Families, Craft producers, Artisan Food Producers as well as people involved in Art, Film, Music and Heritage Activities, using local resources to create enterprises. The focus is on enhancing these sectors through private and community enterprises that will create employment especially for young people and also for groups such as travellers and new communities. While the CEDRA Report recommends the coordination of enterprise support under one

service provider, namely the Local Enterprise Office, it also recommends the development of a strategy for the Creative Industries and also for the food industry. Previous LEADER Programmes have contributed very significantly to these areas. The local objective is to build on this and in the process to develop and enhance the SME sector in consultation and collaboration with Westmeath LEO with a focus on the provision of capital and other supports to the artisan food and craft sectors and creative industries and supporting innovation including the development of the renewable energy sector and diversification into non-agricultural activities by farmers. Some Objectives and actions are based on findings and recommendations from the Renewable Energy Strategy for Co Westmeath prepared and launched in 2012 and also on Food Wise 2025 launched in 2015. The LAG has prioritised this work under Enterprise Development.

Rural Towns

Rural Towns have suffered considerable decline as a result of the recent recession. The creation of opportunities for communities and individuals to enhance their towns and hinterland was expressed as being a priority. Communities in towns and villages who took part in the consultation process confirmed their willingness in many cases to take part in Tidy Towns initiatives at local level. The CEDRA Report (Recommendation 6) proposes stimulating rural areas by focusing on rural town/villages and their hinterlands, set in the context of Rural Economic Development Zones and “facilitating a collective approach to identifying, valuing and building towns` resources and distinctiveness”. Communities in towns and villages took part in the consultation process facilitated by the PPN and in the course of that confirmed their willingness in many cases to take part in initiatives at local level. The LAG believes that a pilot rural town stimulus programme is required including support for the development of community capacity with initiatives that develop skills in community leadership, governance, community development planning and rural economic development. The programme would bring together private enterprise and relevant public bodies (local authorities, municipal districts and development agencies) to identify critical planning steps required to ensure that a rural town is an attractive place to invest in, visit and live. In preparing such plans local communities would be supported to improve the physical architecture and the appearance of the town including unoccupied properties.

Strategic Objective 1.5 of the LECP is for “towns and villages of the county to be attractive and vibrant retail centres and economic hubs providing employment and a wide range of services to their hinterland”. A priority is therefore to improve the fabric of Rural Towns and villages and their hinterlands through improvements to streetscapes, creation of recreational spaces and the re-generation and upgrading of heritage and other buildings for the economic and social benefit of communities living in and around Rural Towns and villages. The LAG also believes it is important to also continue to support the creation and development of community facilities under the Sub-Theme of Rural Towns.

Broadband

The consultation process highlighted the need for ICT Training to enable communities, individuals and businesses to benefit from the roll out of broadband. Therefore actions are proposed to ensure people living in rural areas do not get left behind as a result of not having ICT skills. A priority is to assist the economic and social development of rural areas in the county through the provision of ICT training and other supports to communities and enterprises. The need for Broadband connectivity and the inability of people to access the internet in the more remote areas of the county was a constant theme in consultation meetings. The requirement for continued IT Training was highlighted as a huge issue by rural communities also. The CEDRA Report recommends that the Government address this issue. The report also recommends that a multi-agency approach to re-skilling and up skilling of rural dwellers should be employed taking into consideration availability of, and access to opportunities; and that all skills strategies should actively consider the needs of rural dwellers. Strategic Objective 2.3 in the LECP is for critical physical infrastructure in place including broadband and other necessary services to facilitate economic development. There is an opportunity to address this under Sub-Theme 3: Broadband

Theme 2: Social inclusion

The needs analysis and the outcome of the consultation process have pointed out gaps in the provision of community facilities, recreational amenities and the lack of opportunities for rural youth in the county especially in areas which have experienced the most deprivation in recent years. This has informed the LAG as to the need to undertake the actions proposed for those most at risk of social exclusion. The actions proposed under Theme 2 in Basic Services for Hard to Reach Communities and for Rural Youth will complement the programme of work being carried out under the SICAP.

Basic Services for Hard to Reach Communities

Consultation processes for the SICAP Programme, the LECP and the LDS all point to the need to support marginalised groups and disadvantaged communities to engage with relevant local and national stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues. The CEDRA Report recommends “the development of a programme of capacity building for rural communities initiated and implemented by local government in partnership with local development structures in line with the proposals in PPF. Such a capacity building programme should include support for leadership and governance training, for development of community structures and participative planning, as well as support for specific training initiatives”. LECP Strategic Objective 3.1 is the implementation of co-ordinated Community Development initiatives throughout the county including measures to address the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation. Strategic Objective 3.2 aims for the availability and utilisation of good quality social, recreational and amenity facilities.

The more intensive work under SICAP is being carried out in the Very Disadvantaged areas. Under Goal 1 of the SICAP– Empowering Disadvantaged Communities – marginalised groups and disadvantaged communities are being supported and resourced to engage with relevant local and national stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues. Actions being delivered under this Goal include:

- Early stage Pre- Development Work with target groups particularly in Disadvantaged and Very Disadvantaged areas
- Supporting inclusion of disadvantaged communities in Decision Making Structures.
- Development of Networks and Collaborations
- Supports for Older People

It is proposed that the LEADER programme in Westmeath add value to this process while avoiding duplication of service delivery. The priority is to improve access to basic services for people living in disadvantaged and remote areas to counteract social exclusion through the provision of animation, capacity building, training supports and capital grant aid for community and recreational facilities under Sub-Theme 1: Provision of Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities

Rural Youth

Lack of services and facilities for young people was a constant theme in consultations, particularly in more remote rural areas. In as much as young people are socially excluded in this way, LECP Strategic Objective 3.2 aims to address this issue. There is a need to support young people in this way in more disadvantaged areas. A priority is therefore to improve the pathways for rural youth that will lead to employment, better access to services and an improved social structure for young people in the county. As stated in the area profile, SICAP supports the work of youth organisations and Comhairle na nOg in order to develop additional services for disadvantaged young people in prioritised areas. Adding value to this work is a priority for the LEADER programme under Sub-Theme 2: Rural Youth

Theme 3: Rural Environment

Under the Rural Environment Theme, the LAG's objectives for the Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources are identified as a need on the basis of environmental sustainability. The Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity was an issue that was raised as being of importance during the consultation process and its conservation for future generations. It was also recognised that local biodiversity preservation also offers tourism opportunities. In developing the Renewable Energy sector in Westmeath, the county's resources in this area, previous work undertaken together with the interest shown during the consultation process, points towards further opportunities in this sector for the county. It is clear from the Area profile that local strategies are required to assist enable communities to promote these environmental issues.

Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources

Protection and sustainable use of water resource has significant environmental and economic benefits such as reducing energy consumption and deferring the need for capital investment projects. One of the key strategic objectives identified in the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan is the preservation of our natural environment. Sustainable use of resources such as water is a primary element of this objective. It is further clear that communities and individuals would welcome training and awareness programmes across a variety of environmental topics like water conservation. The objective is to promote the conservation of water and raise awareness of water conservation to secure a community led response.

Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity

Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 clearly identifies priorities and sets out clear timelines and objectives. Diverse and species rich habitats including wetlands, eskers, peatlands, lakes canals are documented in the Plan. Communities and the Local Authority are concerned about biodiversity, the loss of habitats such as flower rich meadows and grassland and from excessive tidying up of wild areas in our landscape, areas like roadside verges or field margins. Recently both wild bees and commercial honey bees have suffered huge declines as a result and need to be replaced. The LAG believes that supporting communities to plant native wildflowers and allow wildflowers to grow along roadside verges in rural villages will help get native species back on track to recovery and that its preservation also offers a tourism opportunity. LECP Strategic Objective 3.3 aims for the preservation of the natural environment and a county rich in heritage and culture. Protection and improvement of Local Biodiversity is therefore consistent with this objective. It is proposed to protect, maintain and enhance local biodiversity in Westmeath by encouraging, schools, community groups and volunteer bodies to prepare local biodiversity plans including habitat surveys for their respective areas.

Development of Renewable Energy.

As outlined in the Area profile, Westmeath possesses a significant stock of renewable energy resources such as forestry products. At the same time demand is growing for renewable energy solutions and County Westmeath is now witnessing an increase in the number of potential producers and potential customers for renewable energy. Objectives and actions here are also based on findings and recommendations from the Renewable Energy Strategy for Co Westmeath prepared and launched in 2012. The local objective is to promote the efficient and rationale use of energy and the use of renewable energy by both community groups and individuals. Westmeath Community Development and its partners have already carried out work in both the private and community renewable energy sectors. The consultation process has identified strong public support for the development of renewable energy.

4.0. Westmeath LDS Action Plan

4.1 Vision

The vision of Westmeath Local Development Strategy is:

A county with an active and inclusive society, supported by strong communities and a vibrant economy, with equal access to basic services and an environment which is cherished and protected by everyone.

4.2 Theme/Sub Theme Budgets

The indicative budget for Co Westmeath is €7,384,205. The table below shows the Draft Budgets allocated to Actions (excl, Animation and Administration, and LDS Preparatory Costs).

Theme	Sub Theme	Indicative Budget Allocation per Sub-theme (€)	Indicative Budget Allocation per Theme (€)
1. Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation	1.1 Rural Tourism	1,575,000	3,668,465
	1.2 Enterprise Development	575,000	
	1.3 Rural Towns	1,343,625	
	1.4 Broadband	174,840	
2. Social Inclusion	2.1 Basic Services for hard to Reach Communities	1,200,000	1,469,030
	2.2 Rural Youth	269,030	
3. Rural Environment	3.1 Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources	50,000	426,000
	3.2 Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity	126,000	
	3.3 Development of Renewable Energy	250,000	
Total			5,563,495

4.3 Action Plan Summary

Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation	
Sub-Themes/Objectives	Actions
1.1 Rural Tourism To make the county more attractive to tourists with a focus on improving the tourism product, marketing the product and improving the capacity of private providers and communities to develop and deliver tourism services.	1.1.1 Support for the development of water-based tourism on the county's lakes, rivers and along the Royal Canal.
	1.1.2 Support for development of outdoor recreation activities and amenity areas capitalising on the County's wealth of natural resources.
	1.1.3 Support for the development of Heritage Attractions and Facilities
	1.1.4 Animation, training, mentoring and marketing supports to the Tourism Sector.
1.2 Enterprise Development To develop and enhance the SME sector in consultation and collaboration with Westmeath LEO with a focus on the provision of capital and other supports to the artisan food and craft sectors and creative industries and by supporting innovation including the development of the renewable energy sector and diversification into non-agricultural activities by farmers.	1.2.1 To further develop the artisan food sector in County Westmeath with a key focus on further expanding and developing the Westmeath Food Network both in terms of the product range and the capacity of its members
	1.2.2 To increase the numbers of farm family members diversifying into non-agricultural activities.
	1.2.3 To fund the development of renewable energy projects in the private sector.
	1.2.4 Support for the development of the Craft sector in Westmeath.
	1.2.5 Support for the development of the creative industries in Westmeath.
1.3 Rural Towns To improve the fabric of Rural Towns and their hinterlands through improvements to streetscapes, creation of recreational spaces and the re-generation and upgrading of heritage and other buildings for the economic and social benefit of communities living in and around Rural Towns and villages	1.3.1 Support for Tidy Town/Village Enhancement Projects
	1.3.2 Support to stimulate action planning in Rural Towns.
	1.3.3 Support for improvement of community facilities for social economic, recreational and training activities
	1.3.4 Support for creation and expansion of new innovative community- led local area promotion initiatives.
1.4 Broadband To assist the economic and social development of rural areas in the county through the provision of ICT training and other supports to communities and enterprises	1.4.1 To assist in the provision of training in ICT for communities
	1.4.2 To assist in the provision of ICT supports for new and existing businesses

Theme 2: Social Inclusion	
2.1 Basic Services for Hard to Reach Communities To make the county more attractive to tourists with a focus on improving the tourism product, marketing the product and improving the capacity of private providers and communities to develop and deliver tourism services.	2.1.1 The provision of Animation, Capacity Building & Training supports for Hard to Reach Communities
	2.1.2 Support for the provision of sustainable community facilities and services in Hard to Reach Communities
	2.1.3 Support for the provision of recreational infrastructure and facilities for hard to reach communities
2.2 Rural Youth To improve the pathways for rural youth that will lead to employment, better access to services and an improved social structure for young people in the county.	2.2.1 Provision of capital grant aid for the improvement of youth cafes/clubs involved in social, recreational and educational activities for youth.
	2.2.2 To support the development of young people through training animation and capacity building programmes

Theme 3: Rural Environment	
3.1 Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources To promote and raise awareness of water conservation to secure a community led response.	3.1.1 Support for Water Conservation Programmes
	3.1.2 Financial support for Water Conservation Projects
3.2 Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity To protect, maintain and enhance local biodiversity in Westmeath by encouraging, schools, community groups and volunteer bodies to prepare local biodiversity plans including habitat surveys for their respective areas.	3.2.1 Delivery of Biodiversity Awareness Programme.
	3.2.2 Promotion and support for Wildflower conservation
3.3 Development of Renewable Energy To promote the efficient and rationale use of energy and to increase the use of renewable energy by both community groups and individuals.	3.3.1 To implement a Renewable Energy Education and Information Programme
	3.3.2 Support for the improvement of community facilities through use of Renewable Energy

4.4 Action Plan Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

Local Objective 1.1 Rural Tourism	
Title of Local Objective	To make the county more attractive to tourists with a focus on improving the tourism product, marketing the product and improving the capacity of private providers and communities to develop and deliver tourism services.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation
Brief Rationale for the Objective	<p>There were 8295 people on the live register in Westmeath in October 2015. Taken together with a decline in family incomes, including farm families, a strong focus is required on initiatives that will develop the local economy and create additional jobs which would also support the country in meeting its EU 2020 employment targets. Additional income sources for low income families particularly in the more remote parts of the county are also necessary. 95,000 overseas tourists visited the county in 2013 and there is significant potential to increase this figure as well as developing the home market. There are opportunities for existing family based tourism businesses, new operators, and local communities collectively, to avail, with support, of opportunities presented by the county's tradition in rural tourism and the recent investment in tourism infrastructure in the county. In areas like Ballynacargy, for example, priorities include continuing to build the capacity of the community to further enhance the area and to assist then to harness the potential of the canal for local benefit and job creation.</p> <p>County Westmeath is rich in natural resources with many lakes, rivers such as the River Shannon and the Royal Canal. This together with the county's terrain of rich pastureland and rolling hills makes it suitable for the development of water based tourism as well as outdoor recreation. The county already has a Way Marked Way Walking Route and a number of looped cycle routes in place which take in scenic views of the lakes and countryside. A major development recently opened is part of the new Dublin-Galway National Cycle Route which traverses Co. Westmeath, along the disused railway line. This is a major tourism infrastructural project and the 1st National Cycle route to be developed in the country. The county possesses some rich heritage offerings in Fore Abbey, the Hill of Uisneach, Athlone Castle and Belvedere House. Failte Ireland's branding initiative Ireland's Ancient East which is supported by 4 distinct thematic pillars, namely Ancient Ireland, early Christian Ireland, Medieval Ireland and Anglo Ireland therefore holds potential for Westmeath's Heritage attractions. There is also potential to increase the range of tourist attractions and activities available in the rural environment of the county. This includes building on the potential of the 'Children of Lir Country' designation of the North Westmeath area by Europa Nostra as a focus for development of the tourism product. Consultation undertaken with the Tourism trade in the county has highlighted the need for more training and up-skilling for people and communities involved in Tourism in Westmeath. Critical to the future success of Tourism in the county will also be the Marketing of Westmeath and its Tourism products.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	€1,575,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	4

Strategic Action 1.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Support for the development of water-based tourism on the county's lakes, rivers and along the Royal Canal.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>This Strategic Action will support the development of tourism activity on the county's lakes, rivers and along the Royal Canal. The county's rivers in particular the Shannon and Inny together with the county's lakes which include Loughs Ennell, Owel, Lene and Derravaragh, Sheelin and Ree have the potential to deliver additional tourism benefits to the area. A strategy will be devised to outline how such benefits will be delivered.</p> <p>An Animation and Training Programme for communities will be carried out. Projects including the development of a Blue way along a stretch of the Royal Canal, improvements to infrastructure to allow access to the water at strategic locations and the upgrading of disused buildings for use by community for enterprise associated with the canal will be supported. Training Programmes around Environmental awareness associated with the canal and other water resources aimed primarily at young people will be developed. Canal communities will be encouraged to network and co-operate with Canal communities in other LAGs both within Ireland and outside for best practise and knowledge exchange. A study will also be undertaken with neighbouring LAG in Co. Offaly around the feasibility of creating a greenway linking the Royal and Grand Canals.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	The primary target groups will be tourism providers, community groups and rural dwellers.
Geographic Area:	Towns, villages and their hinterland adjacent to the Royal Canal including Thomastown, Killucan, Mullingar, Coolnahay and Ballynacargy as well as areas adjacent to the county's lakes and rivers.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	WCD will collaborate with Waterways Ireland, Westmeath County Council, Failte Ireland, Offaly LDC.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>1 Canal animation project with 10 persons</p> <p>1 environmental training project with 20 persons, 50% youth</p> <p>3 new recreational initiatives with capital investment</p> <p>6 new P/T jobs</p> <p>5,000 visitors</p>

Strategic Action 1.1.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for development of outdoor recreation activities and amenity areas capitalising on the County's wealth of natural resources.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>This strategic action will support the development of outdoor recreation activities incl. walking, cycling, etc., as well as Angling and Equestrian pursuits. The enhancement of existing walking routes and the development of new looped walks will be supported. Community groups and individuals will be supported to develop projects that provide ancillary services along such routes. Animation and training programmes will be undertaken to support communities to develop projects adjacent to the Greenway which follows the disused railway line from Mullingar to Athlone.</p> <p>Local initiatives aimed at improving the angling product on the River Shannon and the county's lakes through river enhancement schemes, enhancement of ghillie services, capital supports for jetties and slipways, boat hire, drying/tackle storage rooms and purchase of equipment will be supported. Training and animation in developing the sector will be provided. Collective marketing initiatives promoted by local entrepreneurs and the tourism trade will also be supported.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Communities, local entrepreneurs and tourism providers.
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-region area of Westmeath with a focus on the "greenway communities" – Mullingar, Castletown Geoghegan, Streamstown, Moate as well as communities adjacent to lakes and rivers including Finea, Castlepollard and Rathowen.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Faite Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, WCC
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>1 animation and training programme for 20 persons</p> <p>6 new activity/adventure tourism projects</p> <p>6 existing activity tourism projects supported</p> <p>6 new FT and 8 PT jobs</p> <p>10 jobs sustained (5FT 6PT)</p> <p>10,000 visitors</p>

Strategic Action 1.1.3	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for the development of Heritage Attractions and Facilities
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>This strategic action will support the enhancement of County Westmeath's rich natural, built and cultural heritage. Support will be provided for the development of the visitor experience at the county's heritage attractions including Fore and the Hill of Uisneach. Community groups and individuals will be supported to develop innovative projects around bringing heritage to life by capturing knowledge around the wealth of famous literary and historical connections with Westmeath. Community groups and individuals will be supported to further develop the Fore to Mullingar Pilgrim Camino Way and a Programme supporting the development of the rich monastic heritage associated with the county. Training and animation and information awareness will be carried out around the heritage and mythology associated with the county's lakes with a view to realising projects that will bring economic benefits for their surrounding communities.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Local entrepreneurs and tourism providers
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-region area of Westmeath with a focus on Fore and its hinterlands and villages in the vicinity of Uisneach
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council, Failte Ireland
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>4 new tourism heritage initiatives funded</p> <p>2 existing initiatives supported</p> <p>10,000 visitors</p> <p>4 FT and 6PT jobs sustained</p> <p>4 new FT and 4 PT jobs created</p>

Strategic Action 1.1.4	
Title of Strategic Action :	Animation, training, mentoring and marketing supports to the Tourism Sector.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	This strategic action will support Training and Mentoring to the Tourism sector for both existing and new entrants. The latter will be provided with a specialised programme and mentoring support to getting started in Tourism. Animation and marketing support will also be provided to groups (geographic based or product based) who wish to come together to promote the area or their sector on a collective basis. Support will also be provided for business planning and feasibility studies for new ventures and the expansion of existing enterprises. Community groups and local entrepreneurs will also be supported to develop projects and expand their areas of tourism offerings especially in areas in key areas and locations that have significant heritage and tourism offerings e.g. Fore, Uisneach as well as communities along the Greenway from Mullingar to Athlone.
Primary Target Group(s):	Tourism providers, local entrepreneurs and community groups
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Faite Ireland, Westmeath County Council
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>2 tourism animation programmes with 40 persons participating</p> <p>2 training programmes with 40 persons with enhanced business skills</p> <p>4 initiatives by collectives/cluster groups supported</p> <p>4 marketing campaigns by cluster groups funded</p> <p>10 FT and 20 PT jobs sustained</p>

Local Objective 1.2	
Title of Local Objective	To develop and enhance the SME sector in consultation and collaboration with Westmeath LEO with a focus on the provision of capital and other supports to the artisan food and craft sectors and creative industries and by supporting innovation including the development of the renewable energy sector and diversification into non-agricultural activities by farmers.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation Enterprise Development
Brief Rationale for the Objective	<p>As alluded to earlier, there were 8295 people on the live register in Westmeath in October 2015, of which 1227 were young people under 25. The Needs Analysis identified a need to further develop the economy and create employment opportunities, particularly for young people in the county, through investment in job creation projects to continue to reverse the trend in unemployment established during the recession and support the achievement of EU 2020 targets and those in the Governments Action Plan for Jobs. The consultation process particularly identified a need for further funding, mentoring and marketing supports in niche areas such as tourism as alluded to earlier in the strategy, farm diversification, crafts, food, renewable energy and the creative industries. In addition, the Area profile outlines a large number of rural areas based in the hinterlands of rural towns where the focus for these rural communities for the future lies in the creation of job opportunities utilising local resources where possible. Enhancing the SME sector in particular creating opportunities and supports for artisan craft and food producers, providing supports to farmers and farm families to enable them to diversify and through the provision of opportunities in the development of enterprises in the whole area of the Arts and Culture is a priority for the LEADER programme. There is a growing demand for Culture through arts, film, music and heritage in Westmeath. It is a county steeped in history and mythology and the county has attracted interest among these cohorts as a venue for developing projects under the theme of culture. There are many writers, artists, musicians and film makers now living in Westmeath and there is a new found interest by the people of the county in these areas. This need to be nurtured through teaching of the Arts, Culture and Heritage and the development of projects fashioned by entrepreneur's utilising their unique skills to create an economic market for this sector of enterprise.</p> <p>Farmers and farm families need to be assisted to diversify and look at opportunities to create enterprises using local resources. Communities also need assistance to develop community or social enterprises, including community cooperatives, that will create employment locally especially for rural youth.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	€575,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	5

Strategic Action 1.2.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	To further develop the artisan food sector in County Westmeath with a key focus on further expanding and developing the Westmeath Food Network both in terms of the product range and the capacity of its members.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>It is planned to foster the interest that food producers have in producing locally traceable food and help them to make their businesses succeed through a range of actions that will make them more competitive.</p> <p>A detailed baseline study will be commissioned to document all County Westmeath's food producers' product ranges, size of businesses and future plans. New start up food businesses will be provided with information and advice that will help them make informed decisions on starting a food business. Capital grant aid will be available for existing and new food producers. There will be a focus be on further expanding and developing the Westmeath Food Network in terms of the product range, online presence, promotional events and the number and capacity of members.</p> <p>The LAG will coordinate its supports with existing and new proposed supports for this sector and also with Government policy guidelines outlined for the sector in Foodwise 2025. Any duplication of funding or noncompliance with policy will be avoided by the LAG by complying with the protocol being agreed with other agencies including the Local Enterprise Office.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Food producers and entrepreneurs, farmers
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council, the Local Enterprise Office and Teagasc.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A baseline database on all food producers established • 2 animation initiatives/information meetings • 8 existing food businesses supported with capital grant • 5 new food businesses supported capital grant • 20 food businesses will avail of training. • 30 jobs sustained in industry (10 FTs and 20PTs) • 5 new FT jobs created

Strategic Action 1.2.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	To increase the numbers of farm family members diversifying into non-agricultural activities.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	The farming community will be made aware of opportunities for diversification through workshops, seminars and direct advice. WCD will contribute to the Teagasc options course. This course provides WCD with a platform to meet with farm family members who are interested in developing farm diversification projects. Farmers interested in diversification will be provided with advice, information and other supports either individually or in a group setting on the viability, cost, profitability etc. of the development of their proposed project. Financial support will be provided for viable projects.
Primary Target Group(s):	Farm Families
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath with a focus on low income farm families in north of Westmeath.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council, Teagasc and the Local Enterprise Office.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>2 animation initiatives /information meetings on farm diversification</p> <p>10 agricultural diversification projects with capital investment</p> <p>4 existing, 6 new</p> <p>4 existing FTs and 4 PTs sustained</p> <p>12 new PT jobs created</p>

Strategic Action 1.2.3	
Title of Strategic Action :	To fund the development of renewable energy projects in the private sector.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>The general public will be made aware of opportunities for development of businesses using locally available biomass resources through workshops, seminars and direct advice.</p> <p>Entrepreneurs planning to develop businesses will be provided with advice, information and other supports either individually or in a group setting on the viability, cost, profitability etc. of the development of their proposed project.</p> <p>Financial support will be provided for viable projects.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Low income farmers and entrepreneurs with specialist skills in the renewable energy sector.
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath especially areas in north Westmeath and disadvantaged areas in the south east of the county e.g. Rochfortbridge & Milltownpass
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Teagasc, and the Local Enterprise Office
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>2 Animation initiatives/Information seminars engaging 30 farmers and entrepreneurs</p> <p>10 PT jobs created</p> <p>4 existing FT jobs sustained</p>

Strategic Action 1.2.4	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for the development of the Craft sector in Westmeath
Brief Description of Strategic Action	Westmeath has a vibrant craft sector nurtured over the past years which has led to there now being 40 craft makers in the County and an active network “Made in Westmeath”. A comprehensive Business Development Training Programme taking cognisance of the different needs of craft producers within the sector, from new entrants/hobbyists to established producers seeking new markets, will be provided. Support will be provided for collaborative marketing initiatives and the creating of networking opportunities both within the territory and externally through inter-territorial and transnational co-operation. Market research and feasibility studies will be encouraged specifically around the establishment of collaborative testing hubs and in seeking new markets for craft products. Events such as the “Experience Westmeath” initiative which afforded locals and visitors alike to experience the wealth of craft on offer will be expanded. Craft road shows will also be piloted to include inter-territorial and trans-national partners.
Primary Target Group(s):	Existing Craft makers and local entrepreneurs interested in the sector
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Design and Craft Council of Ireland, Local Enterprise Office
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>Sustaining of 40 (10 FT 30 PT) jobs in the craft sector.</p> <p>8 new PT jobs created</p> <p>2 training initiatives with 20 craft persons with enhanced business skills</p> <p>2 craft roadshows/events with 1,000 visitors</p>

Strategic Action 1.2.5	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for the development of the creative industries in Westmeath
Brief Description of Strategic Action	The LEADER programme will facilitate an integrated approach to cultural enterprise development. The new found interest in Culture through arts, film, music and heritage by the people of the county in these areas will be nurtured by encouraging the teaching of the Arts, Culture and Heritage and the development of projects fashioned by entrepreneur's utilising their unique skills to create an economic market for this sector of enterprise. The creative arts community will be made aware of opportunities for diversification through workshops, seminars and direct advice. Potential promoters will be provided with advice, information and other supports either individually or in a group setting on the viability, cost, profitability etc. of the development of their proposed project. Financial support will be provided for viable projects.
Primary Target Group(s):	Creative entrepreneurs and organisations and groups including groups such as travellers, migrants/new communities
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	WCC, Local Enterprise Office.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016 – Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>2 animation initiatives/ seminars with 20 persons and organisations engaged</p> <p>A Strategic Plan produced for the development of Cultural Enterprise</p> <p>3 new creative initiatives resourced with capital</p> <p>3 initiatives resourced with marketing supports</p> <p>1 training programme with 20 persons trained</p> <p>6 PT jobs sustained</p> <p>6 PT jobs created</p>

Local Objective 1.3	
Title of Local Objective	To improve the fabric of Rural Towns and their hinterlands through improvements to streetscapes, creation of recreational spaces and the re-generation and upgrading of heritage and other buildings for the economic and social benefit of communities living in and around Rural Towns and villages.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation <i>Rural Towns</i>
Brief Rationale for the Objective	<p>Finea in North Westmeath with a population decline of almost 14% in ten years, a disadvantage score of -10.8% and unemployment figures of 28% for males and 22.5% for females is representative of the kind of area in need of targeting under the LEADER programme. Likewise, Kilbeggan in the south of the county, though located along the N6, but having an unemployment rate of 20% in 2011 is one of a large number of rural towns where further enhancement of community activity is required by continuing to build community capacity to enable them to undertake projects. Community groups in such areas require assistance with developing local plans for village enhancement, including tidy towns projects and in some cases broader planning which includes economic and social development, provision of facilities for activities, social interaction and training. They also require financial support for village enhancement projects, community facilities and facilities for young people.</p> <p>Significant work is being done by Tidy Towns Groups and local development groups throughout the county in improving the landscape in towns and villages. The LEADER programme provides an opportunity to build on this work.</p> <p>During the consultation process communities expressed a willingness to take part in initiatives at local level facilitating a collective approach to identifying, valuing and building towns` resources and distinctiveness aimed at making towns and villages attractive and vibrant retail centres and economic hubs providing employment and a wide range of services to their hinterland.</p> <p>Huge developments have taken place in building and refurbishing community facilities, particularly community centres. This work needs to build on so that communities can build their capacity to provide more services in their respective areas.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	€1,343,625
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	4

Strategic Action 1.3.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for Tidy Town/Village Enhancement Projects
Brief Description of Strategic Action	While Rural Towns and villages require significant investment in terms of enhancement there are a number of Government and Local Authority initiatives in place to achieve these objectives. The Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Agenda 21 Funding, Heritage Council Grants and Westmeath Local Authority Tidy Towns Grants are all available. However, there are particular roles for The LEADER programme in providing Animation, Capacity building, and development support to communities proposing to develop Village Enhancement/Tidy Towns projects. In order to ensure that this work is done on a planned basis, support will also be provided for development of Tidy Towns plans on which projects can be based. Grant aid will be provided for projects which have been identified as a result of local planning in collaboration with the Local Authority. In this way the work is supported on a planned basis and duplication of funding is avoided.
Primary Target Group(s):	Tidy towns/residents groups
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath with a focus on the following areas: Mullingar, Athlone, Moate, Rochfortbridge, Castlepollard, Finea, Rathowen, Ballynacargy, Raharney, Kinnegad, Tyrrellspass, Kilbeggan and Milltownpass.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath Co Co
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>2 Tidy Towns animation initiatives/Seminars with 25 groups engaged</p> <p>6 Tidy Towns Plans completed</p> <p>15 Tidy towns projects completed</p> <p>Population in towns receiving funding 40,000</p>

Strategic Action 1.3.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support to stimulate action planning in Rural Towns.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	This strategic action will support a pilot initiative aimed at stimulating action planning in Rural Towns. Work will be undertaken to identify the towns that could participate in this project. The initiative will then be carried out in the identified towns through raising awareness amongst communities of what is possible by organising seminars, meeting local stakeholders and organising study visits to other communities. Assistance will be provided to undertake local development plans including community audits. Assistance will also be provided for work identified as a result of the preparation of development plans.
Primary Target Group(s):	Residents in Rural Towns and their hinterlands
Geographic Area:	Towns in Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath Co Co
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016 – Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>2 Towns animated in Westmeath</p> <p>4 public meetings held</p> <p>2 Development Plans completed with Audits of building</p> <p>2 upgrading of built environment projects completed with capital funding</p> <p>2 streetscape projects completed</p> <p>Population in towns receiving funding 3,000</p>

Strategic Action 1.3.3	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for improvement of community facilities for social economic, recreational and training activities
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>This action will be delivered through Animation work in communities throughout the county and building the capacity of community groups to undertake development projects. Grant Aid will be provided for improvement of facilities including community centres and other facilities which can be used for social, economic, recreational and training activities.</p> <p>Partnering and twinning programmes to enable the sharing of knowledge and skills through linkages with other communities with similar challenges both at home and abroad through inter-territorial and trans-national linkages will be supported.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Rural Communities
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath Co Co
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>4 community training programmes completed 40 people engaged</p> <p>16 projects completed (8 maintenance/restoration/upgrading of the built environment & 8 recreational spaces projects completed.</p> <p>Population in towns receiving funding</p>

Strategic Action 1.3.4	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for creation and expansion of new innovative community- led local area promotion initiatives.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	This strategic action will support the creation and development of new and innovative community projects which showcase the work of local communities and entrepreneurs. It will also support projects which contribute to the expansion of such initiatives. Capital grant aid and marketing support will be provided to organisers on a one off basis to create and market new activities. Animation and training supports will be provided to community groups which undertake such initiatives. Networking events will be supported to undertake collaborative and collective actions.
Primary Target Group(s):	New and developing community groups and organising committees.
Geographic Area:	This action will cover the entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Faillte Ireland, Westmeath County Council
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>1 animation initiative</p> <p>10 festival/event initiatives supported with capital and marketing</p> <p>10 PT jobs sustained</p> <p>8,000 additional visitors</p>

Local Objective 1.4	
Title of Local Objective	To assist the economic and social development of rural areas in the county through the provision of ICT training and other supports to communities and enterprises.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation Broadband
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The percentage of households with broadband connectivity in Westmeath is 64%. The Area Profile, and more particularly the consultation process, pointed to the need for accessible ICT training for communities and businesses to enable all sectors to fully benefit from broadband roll out to other areas. The vision for accessibility to, and use of, high speed broadband is a major issue in these and other communities as is the growing dependence on ICT not only for delivery of services but in how it affects how people can live and work in rural areas. Increased capacity to access and use high speed broadband is therefore vital for the economic and social development of these rural areas and communities throughout Co Westmeath. The objective is to ensure that the people living in rural areas do not get left behind and that they can embrace the digital era where more and more public services, financial transactions and other aspects including social and leisure activities are dependent on on-line capabilities.
Financial Allocation (€)	174,840
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	2

Strategic Action 1.4.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	To assist in the provision of training in ICT for communities
Brief Description of Strategic Action	This strategic action will support a number of initiatives aimed at providing training in ICT for communities with a focus on engaging with communities in remote areas and targeting young people and elderly people. Animation and Training will be provided to communities to ensure that they are ready to embrace the digital era. For older people living in isolation communicating through technology is becoming increasingly important. Basic training in the use of the Internet, Email and Skype and other new forms of communication to ensure the people can stay connected with family and friends away from home is important for people living in remote areas. Facilitating and training people to have the ability to conduct financial transactions and purchase goods and services on line will be an important part of this initiative.
Primary Target Group(s):	Local Community with a special emphasis on older people and young people living in hard to reach communities
Geographic Area:	This action will cover the sub-region of Westmeath initially, with a focus on more hard to reach areas for further training.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	ETB/Solas, Westmeath County Council
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	2 training programmes with 40 people with improved ICT skills, 50% of which will be youth/older people.

Strategic Action 1.4.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	To assist in the provision of ICT supports for new and existing businesses
Brief Description of Strategic Action	This Strategic Action will assist new and existing businesses to establish, grow and access markets through ICT training programmes on developing on-line capabilities. The provision of capital grant aid to businesses for small scale equipment related to ICT will be provided. A feasibility study around examining the possibility of a pilot tele-working centre/hub for people to enable them to work from the area they live in as oppose to travelling to urban areas to work.
Primary Target Group(s):	New and existing rural businesses in County Westmeath
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	15 businesses with improved on-line capabilities 10 businesses with capital grant assistance Sustaining 10 FT jobs and creation of 5 new PT jobs 1 feasibility study

4.5 Action Plan Theme 2: Social Inclusion

Local Objective 2.1	
Title of Local Objective	To improve access to basic services for people living in disadvantaged and remote areas to counteract social exclusion through the provision of animation, capacity building, training supports and capital grant aid for community and recreational facilities.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Social Inclusion Provision of Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities
Brief Rationale for the Objective	<p>As outlined in the Area Profile, 51 small areas of the county are classified as disadvantaged or very disadvantaged, having a 2011 Deprivation Score ranging from -10 to -26.60. Most are located in Mullingar and Athlone with some in Kinnegad, Finea, Clonfad, Ballykilmore and Moate. In addition there are a number of geographically disadvantaged communities outside of the Very Disadvantaged areas, particularly e.g Finea, Clonmellon, Rathowen, Lismacaffrey, Tang, and Rochfortbridge.</p> <p>The SICAP programme focuses on Pre-development work in Disadvantaged and Very Disadvantaged areas. Animation, capacity building and training for communities is provided to help communities engage further in activity at local level. However, there is a lack of the basic services such as community facilities, recreational infrastructure (incl. playgrounds), arts/culture activities and facilities which contribute to the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion. Training on community involvement, committee skills, project development and management also needs to be provided to enable people in those areas to participate in society and avail of opportunities for the improvement of their areas.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	1,200,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	3

Strategic Action 2.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	The provision of Animation, Capacity Building & Training supports for Hard to Reach Communities
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>This strategic action will support Animation, Capacity Building & Training aimed at assisting communities to engage in activity and develop projects to improve the economic and social fabric of their areas. A focus will be given to communities living in Very Disadvantaged areas, remote areas and communities on the periphery of the county.</p> <p>Building resilient communities that are capable of controlling the future sustainability of their areas will be key in going forward. Training Programmes that aim to empower people and give them the skills and confidence to get involved in their local areas will be undertaken.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Hard to Reach communities
Geographic Area:	Disadvantaged areas in Mullingar, Athlone, Moate and Castlepollard and also areas such as Finea, Clonmellon, Rathowen, Lismacaffrey Ballynacargy, Rochfortbridge, Kinnegad, Milltownpass, Tyrrellspass & Kilbeggan.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath Co Co
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>3 community animation programmes engaging 60 persons</p> <p>3 community training programmes engaging 60 persons</p>

Strategic Action 2.1.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for the provision of sustainable community facilities and services in Hard to Reach Communities
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>This Strategic Action will support communities in the provision of essential facilities such as the upgrading and enhancement of community buildings with a focus on creating multi-functional spaces for community and other uses e.g. enterprise/shared space arts/cultural uses or hubs for community activity on a shared basis with other neighbouring communities.</p> <p>Local communities will be supported to undertake Audits on the availability of suitable community facilities, usage and under or over capacity. They will also be supported through feasibility studies around co-location of organisations providing services such as local transport, credit union access, local health services, post office services, youth services, sports facilities, library services, shop etc. thus ensuring the overall sustainability of facilities and ensuring no duplication of facilities.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Hard to Reach communities
Geographic Area:	Disadvantaged areas in Mullingar, Athlone, Moate and Castlepollard as well as areas such as Finea, Clonmellon, Rathowen, Lismacaffrey Ballynacargy, Rochfortbridge, Kinnegad, Milltownpass, Tyrrellspass & Kilbeggan.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>10 audits completed</p> <p>10 areas with improved community facilities</p> <p>10 Social Amenity projects (community facilities)</p>

Strategic Action 2.1.3	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for the provision of recreational infrastructure and facilities for hard to reach communities
Brief Description of Strategic Action	This strategic action will support the provision of leisure and recreational facilities for communities such as children's playgrounds, outdoor gym equipment and other infrastructural improvements aimed at enhancing the recreational infrastructure. The re-use of disused facilities will be encouraged.
Primary Target Group(s):	Hard to Reach communities
Geographic Area:	Disadvantaged areas in Mullingar, Athlone, Moate and Castlepollard as well as areas such as Finea, Clonmellon, Rathowen, Lismacaffrey Ballynacargy, Rochfortbridge, Kinnegad, Milltownpass, Tyrrellspass & Kilbeggan.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	7 capital projects (recreational/physical amenities) Benefitting Children, young people, migrants/new communities, older people.

Local Objective 2.2	
Title of Local Objective	To improve the pathways for rural youth that will lead to employment, better access to services and an improved social structure for young people in the county.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Social Inclusion Rural Youth
Brief Rationale for the Objective	<p>In October 2015, there were 1227 people under 25 years of age on the live register in Westmeath. Based on the figures for Westmeath, 130 young people per year leave school early. Research carried out in the county by WCD has identified the need to work with children, young people and people with low educational levels to enable them to access services to enhance their Life Long Learning opportunities and continued supports for Youth, in conjunction with youth service providers. It is necessary to support the work of SICAP in providing supports to children and young people from the 51 Disadvantaged areas who are at risk of early school leaving and/or not in education, employment or training (NEETS) mindful of the EU 2020 target of 40% of 30 – 34 yr olds completing Third Level Education .</p> <p>However, the consultation process consistently raised the problems facing young people in more rural areas with regard to accessing employment and the lack of social and educational activities especially in hard to reach rural communities. In order to improve the life chances of rural youth in County Westmeath, a collaborative multi-agency approach is required in consultation with young people through forums such as Comhairle Na nOg and in collaboration with Youth Services providers.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	€269,030
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	2

Strategic Action 2.2.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	Provision of capital grant aid for the improvement of youth cafes/clubs involved in social, recreational and educational activities for youth.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>Under this action, in collaboration with Comhairle Na nOg, and other youth service providers, capital funding will be provided to assist in the provision of facilities and services for young people.</p> <p>Facilities and services provided by youth clubs and youth cafes will be upgraded and expanded where required. Groups and organisations will also be supported to upgrade and/or provide new recreational facilities for young people.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Rural Youth
Geographic Area:	All of County Westmeath but with a specific focus on disadvantaged areas of Mullingar and Athlone as well as Castlepollard, Rathowen, Ballynacargy, Raharney, Kinnefad, Rochfortbridge and Clonmellon.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council through Comhairle na nOg, Foroige and MRYS.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>10 projects receiving capital funding:</p> <p>6 Youth clubs/cafes</p> <p>4 Sport/recreation</p> <p>No. of young people participating in activities 1000</p>

Strategic Action 2.2.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	To support the development of young people through training animation and capacity building programmes
Brief Description of Strategic Action	In collaboration with Comhairle na nOg and youth service providers, training, animation and capacity building measures will be undertaken with young people with a focus on identifying and creating additional youth leaders. A Youth Development Programme aimed at providing young people with skills for working in and advancement in the creative industries of music, film and theatre will be devised and carried out. A Community Youth Engagement capacity building programme will also be undertaken which will encourage young people to become more active in their communities especially around environmental and tidy towns initiatives.
Primary Target Group(s):	Rural Youth
Geographic Area:	The sub-regional area of the county but with a particular focus on County Westmeath especially in Hard to Reach rural areas.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council through Comhairle na nOg, Foroige and MRYS.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>2 Leadership Training Programmes with 30 youth trained</p> <p>20 young people receiving training in the Arts.</p> <p>30 young people participating in capacity building measures around the community.</p>

4.6 Action Plan Theme 3: Rural Environment

Local Objective 3.1	
Title of Local Objective	To promote, raise awareness, and support the protection and water conservation through a community led response that will minimise environmental impact.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Rural Environment Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources
Brief Rationale for the Objective	Approximately 7.5 million gallons of water are required each day to maintain supply to Co Westmeath. Protection of the natural environment is an objective of Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan. The LAG has identified the protection and sustainable use of water resources as a priority for the LDS on the basis of environmental protection and ensuring sufficient water resources are available for sustainable economic and community development requirements.
Financial Allocation (€)	€50,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	2

Strategic Action 3.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support programmes to raise awareness for the Protection and Conservation of water.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	In order to build an appreciation of the need to protect our natural water quality and help reduce loss and wastage of our water, the general public will be made aware and educated. Capacity building and general education and awareness on natural water quality and reduction of water loss and wastage and recycling options will be commissioned and delivered. An awareness programme will be commissioned and designed with a local focus.
Primary Target Group(s):	Householders and Communities
Geographic Area:	The entire sub Regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	The LAG will collaborate with Waterways Ireland, Westmeath County Council, the farm organisations, Teagasc and Failte Ireland.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	2 Education and Awareness Programmes benefitting 20 communities.

Strategic Action 3.1.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	Financial support for Protection and Conservation of Water Projects
Brief Description of Strategic Action	In order to protect out natural environment and minimise the impact on the environment it is proposed to support projects which protect and conserve water. This will involve financial support to community groups in the county. Groups will also be supported to undertake feasibility studies around developing innovative measures on protection and conservation of water.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community groups
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council, the farm organisations, Teagasc
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	8 projects to protect and conserve water.

Local Objective 3.2	
Title of Local Objective	To protect, maintain and enhance local biodiversity in Westmeath by encouraging, schools, community groups and volunteer bodies to prepare local biodiversity plans including habitat surveys for their respective areas.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Rural Environment Protection and improvement of local biodiversity
Brief Rationale for the Objective	<p>The Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 clearly identifies and outlines the measures for the protection of these habitats, plants and animals. It also emphasises the importance of the role of communities in conserving local biodiversity. A detailed submission received in the course of consultation for the LDS identified areas of the county which support a wide range of diverse and species rich habitats including wetlands, eskers, peatlands, lakes canals. The protection of local biodiversity is an issue that has proved very emotive among the residents of County Westmeath during our consultation process.</p> <p>It is known that the loss of biodiversity reduces an ecosystem's ability to recover from natural or human impacts and therefore needs to be conserved. Its preservation also offers a tourism opportunity in the county.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	€126,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	2

Strategic Action 3.2.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	Delivery of Biodiversity Awareness Programme.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	An awareness campaign of important conservation issues such as hedgerow management, invasive species, herbicide use, including preparation of guidance notes in relation to best practice. The production of literature on the various local biodiversity habitats and the dissemination of the information on these publications will be the main focus of this action. Support of biodiversity projects will also be provided. This will be confined to community and residents groups and will not duplicate schemes such as AEOS.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups, Residents groups
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	WCC
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	2 education and awareness programmes 12 capital projects supported – nature conservation initiatives

Strategic Action 3.2.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	Promotion and support for Wildflower conservation
Brief Description of Strategic Action	Financial support for community/tidy towns groups to develop areas within parks, gardens and village areas for the growth of wild plants and flowering trees, in order to promote pollinator conservation such as planting a native wildflower meadow creating an ideal forage source for bees and other insects and allowing wildflowers to grow along roadside verges across the country which will help get native bee species back on track to recovery.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community groups with an interest in conserving and protecting local habitats.
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath Co Co
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q22016-Q42020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	1 training project 20 nature conservation projects supported with capital funding

Local Objective 3.3	
Title of Local Objective	To promote the efficient and rationale use of energy and to increase the use of renewable energy by both community groups and individuals.
LEADER Theme/ Sub Theme	Rural Environment Development of Renewable Energy
Brief Rationale for the Objective	<p>Westmeath Community Development published the 'Bioregions Action plan' in 2012 having published a report entitled 'Renewable Energy in County Westmeath' in 2009. Based on data extrapolated from national figures at the time the consumption of energy in the county from renewable sources was 2.35%. The European Union has committed itself to increase the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 20% by 2020 and also to increase energy efficiency by 20%. All EU Member states have their own individual targets with overall renewables targets for Ireland set at 16% of total final consumption to come from renewable energy by 2020. Local Authorities including Westmeath Co Co encourage the development of renewable energy resources and have two key policy objectives of i) promotion of renewable forms of energy where it is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of an area and (ii) favouring the use of renewable energy as a contribution to the energy demand of all new buildings.</p> <p>The consultation process has identified strong public support in the development of this sector. This is backed up by the fact that between March 2006 and May 2011, 215 biomass boilers were installed in the county. The consultation process has also identified a number of entrepreneurs who wish to develop projects in this area. Further work needs to be done to encourage local consumers to increase their use of locally produced renewables, help renewable energy producers access local markets and encourage energy conservation.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	€250,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	2

Strategic Action 3.3.1	
Title of Strategic Action :	To implement a Renewable Energy Education and Information Programme.
Brief Description of Strategic Action	<p>This action will result in the provision of courses of education and information to community groups and individuals on renewable energy options and local sources of supplies.</p> <p>WCD will commission research to design a locally suitable course on the use of renewables in consultation with Westmeath County Council's environmental section.</p> <p>An education curriculum will be delivered to local groups and individuals. It will deal with the benefits of using renewables, its cost benefit and how to access local sources of renewables.</p>
Primary Target Group(s):	Community groups and individuals
Geographic Area:	All of County Westmeath but there will be more of a focus in areas with more mature forestry such as Ballynacargy, Rathowen and Streete
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	The LAG will collaborate with Teagasc, Westmeath County Council and the Local Enterprise Office
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>1 Animation programme engaging 10 communities</p> <p>2 Education and Awareness Programmes for communities</p> <p>100 people better informed around renewable energy</p>

Strategic Action 3.3.2	
Title of Strategic Action :	Support for the improvement of community facilities through use of Renewable Energy
Brief Description of Strategic Action	This Strategic Action will support community initiatives that will contribute to an increase in the usage of green technologies in Westmeath. Community groups and organisations wishing to undertake feasibility studies regarding the production and use of renewable energy technologies for local energy consumption will be supported. Capital projects emanating from these studies will also be supported. Groups will also be supported to install renewable energy technologies to community facilities for the benefit of the rural environment.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community/voluntary groups.
Geographic Area:	The entire sub-regional area of County Westmeath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Westmeath Community Development
Any collaborating Organisations:	Westmeath County Council.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<p>4 Feasibility studies undertaken</p> <p>2 communities using locally sourced renewable energy</p> <p>4 Capital Projects funded installation of renewable energy</p>

5.0 Strategic Integration

The LAG promotes a Community Led Local Development (CLLD) approach that involves the participation of rural communities in developing responses to the key economic, environmental and social challenges present in Co Westmeath. The composition of the LAG is made up of public and private partners with representatives from the economic, social, cultural and environmental sectors. The Local Development Strategy (LDS) has identified the social, economic and environmental needs and potential of the area. The LDS has been designed through active consultation with the rural community. A series of local objectives and actions have been developed to address these local priorities, solutions have been tailored accordingly and cross cutting objectives have been set out. These actions have taken cognisance of EU national, regional, and local strategies together with a number of cross cutting objectives.

5.1 Cross-Cutting Objectives

This Section outlines how the Cross cutting objectives have been addressed in the Local Development Strategy and how actions proposed promote these objectives.

Innovation

In establishing priorities for the LDS the LAG has researched innovative solutions to identified needs and also innovative approaches to exploiting the potential of the area for social and economic development.

Taking a planned approach to tourism development with communities along the Royal Canal represents a new and innovative approach to utilising this important resource. Similarly, working with communities and individuals along the newly built Dublin Galway Greenway has not been attempted before in that kind of way. Marketing the county's heritage attractions are part of an innovative plan by Failte Ireland to create Ireland's Ancient East. Westmeath LAG will be a significant partner in this.

Utilising the creativity of artists and musicians in a planned and structured way represents a new and innovative approach to economic development. Westmeath LAG also proposes a Rural Towns Stimulus programme which is based on an innovative approach to the development of towns suggested in the CEDRA Report.

In proposing to improve access to basic services for people living in remote rural areas, the LAG proposes to work with the Social Inclusion and Activation Programme to add value to the work of that programme in collaboration with those communities. This is a new and innovative approach and a targeted intervention which is new to the county under the LEADER programme.

Community responses to environmental issues are rare and untried. Westmeath LAG is willing to be innovative in this regard and to engage with local communities to address issues such as water conservation, biodiversity and renewable energy. Supporting communities to preserve biodiversity by encouraging the creation of new habitats for birds and insects locally is particularly innovative.

Environment

Westmeath LAG is not only aware of the need to preserve the environment asset for future generations to enjoy but also of the opportunity to promote natural resources and heritage as a tourism opportunity. Natural resources in this context include rivers, lakes, the Royal Canal, and forests. In attempting to make the county more attractive to tourists the LAG is aware of the benefits that will accrue to tourism providers and rural communities but also aware of the need to ensure that natural resources are preserved and protected. Projects being supported will be evaluated on this basis.

Creating jobs through renewable energy represents a perfect opportunity to use natural resources such as timber and once done in a controlled way this is a perfect environmentally sound way of creating economic value for timber producers and farmers. Pilot projects aimed at stimulating rural towns and villages are a part of the Local Development Strategy. Improvements to streetscapes, creation of recreational spaces and the re-generation and upgrading of heritage and other buildings represents an environmentally sound approach to rural development.

In pursuing objectives under **Theme 3 Environment**, the LAG is committed to a series of Actions which promote community responses to environmental issues. Westmeath LAG is committing to engage with local communities to addresses issues such as water conservation, biodiversity and renewable energy. Supporting communities to preserve biodiversity by encouraging the creation of new habitats for birds and insects locally will contribute substantially to the Environment.

All projects being supported will be evaluated on the basis of the use of sustainable materials and best practice from an Environment point of view.

Climate Change

The LAG has taken a lead from The FORFÁS SHARING OUR FUTURE: IRELAND 2025 Report in relation to the issue of climate change. The Report states that climate change is one of the most significant changes affecting global and national economies and economic systems and that this is likely to accelerate further over the coming decades. Extremely demanding reductions of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have been allocated to Ireland and foremost amongst the challenges from a rural development point of view is access to water and food security. The LAG is aware of this and of the business opportunities that may also arise from this in the areas of environmental and energy related goods and services. There are a number of actions in the Strategy, particularly under Theme 3 which will contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Under Theme 1 there are actions which are designed to create employment in the renewable energy sector.

5.2 Policy Context

In preparing the Local Development Strategy the LAG has studied and taken account of some relevant national, regional and local strategies and plans. These are outlined below.

EU 2020

The LAG is mindful of the fact that following the public consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy held in 2014, Europe 2020 is seen as a relevant overarching framework to promote jobs and growth at EU and national level. Aligning the Local Development Strategy is seen as useful and important in that it provides guidance and comfort that the delivery of this important EU funded programme is in line with EU priorities and that objectives and priorities are meaningful in the light of current and future challenges. The strategy of enhanced community involvement on the ground as outlined in the LDS also complies with the EU strategy of community involvement to enhance outcomes.

Sharing Our Future 2025

Westmeath LAG very much identifies with the fact that in developed countries quality of life is becoming a major driver of change as identified in the **FORFÁS Sharing Our Future 2025**. The report states that, in future, communities could be more physically and geographically concentrated with a greater emphasis on self-reliance and on using local resources such as energy, food and leisure to best effect. But there are signs that the changed pace of economic growth has placed demands on scarce resources and that the quality of life has suffered as a consequence, in particular in relation to commuting and access to amenities and public services. The priorities established for the Westmeath Local Development Strategy are very much aligned with addressing these issues by proposing to work with local communities, particularly more remote and hard to reach communities, building their capacity to address their own concerns and improving access to social and recreational facilities as well as supporting the creation of employment and enterprise.

CEDRA Report.

One of the key recommendations in the CEDRA Report is that rural economic development should also include support for the development of community capacity with initiatives that develop skills in community leadership, governance, community development planning and rural economic development in order to support the participation of all communities in the preparation of local strategic economic development plans using the Community Led Local Development model (CLLD), the model being proposed in the LDS. The report also recommends the development of a Rural Town Stimulus Programme that focuses on rural towns/villages and their hinterlands as well as recommendations for the development of tourism, food, crafts, renewable energy and a broad range of creative industries. While the CEDRA Report recommends the coordination of enterprise support under one service provider, namely the Local Enterprise Office, it also recommends the development of a strategy for the Creative Industries and also for the food industry. In that context Westmeath LAG, in consultation with existing and potential producers, has identified a specific role for the LEADER programme in working with Farm Families, Craft producers, Artisan Food Producers as well as people involved in Art, Film, Music and Heritage Activities, using local resources to create economic value..

Westmeath County Development Plan

Westmeath County Development Plan sets out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development for the County for a period of 6 years. Some of the strategies in the plan find expression in the Local Economic and Community Plan, which in turn, together with further public consultation, form the basis for most of the objectives being followed in the Local Development Strategy.

Draft Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan.

Westmeath Local Community Development Committee has agreed draft High Level Goals for

1. Local Economic Development.
2. Integrated Economic and Community Development
3. Local Community Development

The Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan also set on the objectives to achieve these goals - **(See Appendix 11: LECP High Level Goals and Objectives)**

The LECP goal for Local Community Development has outlined objectives for coordination of community services, avoidance of duplication in the provision of such services and specific measures to address the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation. It has also set out objectives for the creation of good quality social, recreational and amenity facilities, preservation of the natural environment and development of the county's heritage assets and services to facilitate rural development. The priorities established for the LDS are closely aligned with these objectives and the LAG through its implementation partner Westmeath Community Development is the agreed Lead Agency for the delivery of a number of the LECP Strategic objectives under Local Community Development.

The LECP goal and objectives for **Local Economic Development and Employment** are concerned with training, job creation, entrepreneurship and micro enterprise, research, critical infrastructure, tourism and town and village enhancement. These issues are also central to the Local Development Strategy for the LEADER programme and actions outlined clearly reflect this. Actions being implemented by the LAG will be delivered in cooperation and coordination with other agencies involved in similar rural development initiatives. For example, Strategic objective 1.6 for the Westmeath LECP is for a thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county. Objectives and actions in the LDS are fully aligned with this.

Action Plan for Jobs Midlands Region.

The Government has launched the Midlands Action Plan for Jobs, aimed at delivering 10-15% employment growth in the region over the period 2015-2017. Co Westmeath is part of this region and the key sectors targeted in the plan include manufacturing, tourism, food and energy. New cycling, walking and other recreational trails along the waterways of the region are proposed as is a Regional Energy Hub for the Midlands. Actions in the LDS will support the strategy by animating rural communities to develop projects in those development areas. The Action Plan proposes a series of actions to promote 25% more start-ups in the midlands, including extra funding, mentoring programmes and establishing new incubator spaces for entrepreneurs. Westmeath LAG proposes to coordinate its work in this area with other agencies involved in order to create synergy and avoid duplication.

Ireland Ancient East – Fáilte Ireland Branding Strategy.

Fáilte Ireland has developed an umbrella destination brand called Ireland's Ancient East, that offers visitors a compelling, motivating reason to visit the East of the Country. Westmeath is part of the area covered by this branding strategy. The purpose of the branding is to ensure that the area is presented in a cohesive and unified manner. Actions, particularly in the area of heritage tourism in the Westmeath Local Development Strategy are designed to contribute to this strategy. Development and marketing of particular sites such as Fore and the Hill of Uisneach are part of common strategies in the respective development plans.

Food Wise 2025.

Food Wise 2025 identifies a number of areas that require strategic action if the industry is to capitalise on, deliver and maximise the growth opportunities in the years to 2025. The plan, to replace Food Harvest 2020, also sets out an additional 23,000 jobs in the sector, with an 85% increase in food exports from their 2012 level to €19bn. In particular, it highlights the need for the attraction, retention and development of talent along the supply chain, a greater focus on market development that is consumer driven, productivity improvements that are driven by innovation and adding value to sustainably produced primary materials, which will support local employment growth, ensure the viability of local producers and protect the environment and natural resources. The Local Development Strategy highlights areas and proposes actions which will add further value to this work.

Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020.

Westmeath Co Council has launched the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020. The Plan identifies the unique natural heritage that exists in the county and sets out an ambitious framework to protect and enhance the wide range of habitats, plants and animals in Westmeath. The plan recognises the importance of, and places an emphasis on, encouraging community involvement and raising awareness of the value of Westmeath's natural heritage and the importance of biodiversity at a local level. It also proposes coordinating and initiating actions to ensure effective conservation and enhancement in the county and raising awareness of biodiversity in partnership with local communities. The LDS strategy for biodiversity as outlined is set in the context of this Plan in collaboration with the forward planning section of Westmeath Co Co.

National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016.

One of the High Level Goal of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016 is the building of viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital. The Westmeath Local Development Strategy is very much aligned to the achievement of this goal across its themes, particularly with regard to its objectives for animation and capacity building amongst rural communities and also the inclusion of initiatives to support hard to reach communities.

Youth Guarantee

In 2013 the EU adopted a council Recommendation to provide a Youth Guarantee. The aim is to provide young people under 25 with a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a short time of becoming unemployed. This is significant and will contribute the objectives of the LDS, while working with youth organisations, and avoiding duplication of effort and funding

The Renewable Energy Strategy for County Westmeath.

Westmeath Community Development and a group of key stakeholders produced an Action Plan for the development of the Renewable Energy Sector in the county under the Bioregions project funded by The EU Intelligent Energy Programme. A particular finding was that Westmeath could use its biomass resources to help Ireland meet its 30% co-firing target in peat stations by 2015. Among the recommendations in the Plan were that the LEADER programme should provide training courses to support the region becoming a leader in the renewable energy sector. The plan also proposes an information publication promoting the bioregions vision and bioenergy solutions and the distribution of this as part of an information campaign, supporting workshops on energy efficiency and supporting community initiatives that raise awareness and support engagement of rural communities on this issue. It also proposes capital grant aid for projects which support renewable energy solutions. Objectives set and Actions proposed reflect these recommendations.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

Under Goal 1 of the SICAP in Westmeath – Empowering Disadvantaged Communities – marginalised groups and disadvantaged communities are being supported and resourced to engage with relevant local and national stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues. The more intensive work under SICAP is being carried out in the Very Disadvantaged areas. It is proposed that the LEADER programme in Westmeath add value to this process while avoiding duplication of service delivery.

Other National Policies

In implementation of the LDS, WCD will deliver and work in line with the national policy and programmes that are being rolled out to support individuals and groups from disadvantaged areas achieve social inclusion overcome poverty and create opportunities for social, civic and cultural inclusion. These are just some of the policies and programmes that provide the backdrop to the effective collaborative implementation of the LEADER programme:

- National Broadband Plan
- National Women's Strategy 2007-2015
- Pathways to Work Strategy 2013
- Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government
- Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019
- Enterprise Ireland Strategy
- Forfás Report on Social Enterprise

6.0 Networking and Co-operation

6.1 Networking

Westmeath Local Action Group will enhance its delivery of the LEADER programme by participating in local regional, national and international networking structures in order to share learning and good practice and influence rural development policy. The implementation partner, Westmeath Community Development participates in such networks as follows:

Public Participation Network

The Public Participation Network (PPN) has very significant representation on the Westmeath LCDC, the composition of which is outlined in Section 1. The PPN facilitates participation in local decision making. It acts as a hub around which information is received and distributed thereby contributing to good practice learning amongst communities in the county. The LAG will make use of this network to enhance the LEADER programme. Westmeath Community Development (WCD), the implementation partner for the LEADER programme, also works with community groups and organisations including also through the PPN. The LAG has worked with the Westmeath PPN in the Public Consultation for the development of the LDS. This type of arrangement will continue during the implementation phase of the Strategy. From a policy perspective the Westmeath PPN has been effective in strengthening the capacity of communities to influence decision making in the county which in turn contributes to the areas in which they live and facilitates the participation and representation of communities on the Local Action Group (LAG) and other decision making structures.

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) is the representative body of Local Development Companies (LDCs) in Ireland. It operates within a legal co-operative framework, underpinned by a co-operative philosophy and mission. Its mission is to promote and support the work of the members in the areas of social inclusion and local and rural development. The membership currently stands at 49 companies with all members delivering the SICAP and in rural contexts, the LEADER Rural Development Programme. While these two programmes are the core programmes delivered by members, there are a range of other initiatives at national and European level that companies leverage funding from to support and enhance the development of their communities. ILDN supports its members to achieve this. Activities include:

- Monthly meetings, Organising Seminars on topical issues, exchange of Information and good practice,
- Representing members with the DECLG and European Commission on the guidelines and rollout of the LEADER.
- Representing LDC's on a number of Management / Monitoring Committees promoting the LEADER programme at National and International level.

ILDN also works through its regional structures in developing policies and programmes regionally including Cooperation Projects. WCD is a member of the ILDN East Region.

ELARD (European LEADER Association for Rural Development)

ELARD consists of national, regional and local associations active in the LEADER method in the following 23 countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Spain and United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland & N. Ireland). Presently ELARD represents 1075 Local Action Groups. Members of ELARD are usually the voluntary National or Regional Networks of LAGs; however, individual LAGs are also admitted where national networks haven't been established. The organisation works with representative networks of Local Action Groups and LEADER type organisations as well as any other entity that works for the development of their area and that shares the objectives of ELARD. ELARD pursues rural development as a vitally important policy area and sees the strengthening of rural development policy as a significant platform for economic diversification in rural communities.

City and County Managers Association.

The Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council represents Westmeath Co Council on this Association. It has an interest in the programme from the point of view of Local authorities being significant members of the LCDC, financial partners for the programme, and contributors to rural development policy at Local Authorities level.

Directors of Community and Enterprise Network (DCEN).

Westmeath is represented on this network by the Director of Community and Enterprise who is responsible for the LCDC, and by extension, the LEADER programme.

LCDC Chief Officers Network.

The Westmeath Chief Officer who works with the LCDC and who is responsible for the LEADER programme participates in this Network.

6.2. Co-operation.

Implementing Co-operation Projects

In prioritising areas for development under the LEADER programme the LAG has identified a number of areas where Co-Operation projects would help to achieve the objective. The implementation partner, Westmeath Community Development, has a significant track record in working with other Local Action Groups in the Republic of Ireland on Inter-territorial projects, Local Action Groups in Northern on Cross Border projects, and other Local Action Groups in Europe on Transnational dimensions which have added value to LEADER programme outcomes. In addition, Westmeath Community Development has worked with organisations in other countries on programmes which were concerned with rural development in areas such as Artisan food production and use of renewable energy with funding from other EU programmes including Interreg and the EU Intelligent Energy Programme. There are a number of areas in the LDS where Actions lend themselves to cooperation with other areas by building on previous achievements and using best practice learned. In terms of the broader vision for rural development in the county the LAG views co-operation projects as being particularly productive in contributing to the development of a vibrant economy.

- In terms of improving the tourism product, Lough Ree on the River Shannon has been profiled as a significant resource around which projects will be supported in order to raise its profile and provide opportunities for new and existing tourism providers to gain extra income. Westmeath Community Development has worked with the Local Action Groups in Longford and Roscommon in supporting the production of a research project examining the economic potential of the islands on Lough Ree. It is proposed to continue that relationship and to continue to support the development of that resource inter-territorially under the LEADER programme.
- There are further opportunities to explore inter-territorial co-operation with Roscommon in the context of developing and marketing Athlone. A new marketing group of tourism and business providers, Destination Athlone, has recently been established in the area under the destinations initiative undertaken by Fáilte Ireland. This group is tasked with marketing the town and surrounds under the “Destination Athlone” brand.
- The possibility of creation of a walking route from Athlone to the monastic site at Clonmacnoise in neighbouring county Offaly will be explored with the LAG in Co. Offaly. Clonmacnoise is an Early Christian site founded by St. Ciarán in the mid-6th century and is located on the eastern bank of the River Shannon. It is a major tourist attraction in the area receiving in the region of 150,000 visitors in 2014.
- As outlined in other sections of the Strategy a number of actions are proposed with a view to exploiting the potential of the Royal Canal for tourism purposes. Another possible dimension to this is a proposal to link the Royal and Grand Canals through a local greenway. This will be explored inter-territorially with Offaly LAG and possibly with other LAGs based along both canals. There may also be a transnational dimension with other canal communities in Europe.

- In developing the crafts sector to date considerable progress has been made and added value achieved by working inter-territorially with the LEADER programme in Co Offaly and also with colleagues in Finland. It is proposed to continue these working relationships as they have been extremely beneficial in terms of sharing best practice and expanding markets. Co Longford may also be included in future initiatives.
- In developing the Artisan food sector, a large amount of work in the area of policy development has been carried out in collaboration with colleague organisations in France, Spain, Portugal and the UK. These links will be maintained with a view to enhancing the outcomes from the LDS in this area
- Similarly, with regard to Renewable Energy the implementation partner, Westmeath Community Development, has established links with other countries such as Germany Sweden and Austria in acquiring good practice. These links will be continued in order to share further good practice and learning.
- In working to improve the fabric of Rural Towns and taking account of the creation of Rural Economic development Zones which cross county boundaries, efforts will be made to encourage communities to work with neighbouring towns to develop facilities which may serve communities in entire areas. In doing this Westmeath LAG will work with other LAGs in surrounding areas and if possible create inter-territorial projects.

7.0 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The LAG will be responsible for the monitoring, review and evaluation of implementation of the Local Development Strategy. The LAG will monitor and review the LDS in order to measure progress to determine if local objectives are being met. Monitoring and review also allows the LAG to deal with any challenges that arise in the course of implementing the strategy. It will allow for any adjustments that are required to meet these challenges and agree new action steps should they be required.

7.1 Monitoring and Review

The LAG will maintain records for each project on the basis of the indicators provided for Monitoring purposes. Both Quantitative (Programme Indicators) and Qualitative Methods will be used to enable the LAG to monitor progress and undertake reviews of the Strategy.

- The monitoring and review process begins with the production of the Local Development Strategy. Actions are proposed with Anticipated Outputs, Indicators and Targets and Timeframe for Delivery of each action.
- The prescribed Programme Indicators as per the LEADER Monitoring Framework for each sub-theme/local objective will be used to gather the required quantitative data. The LAG may also use Qualitative means to monitor progress as in some instances the level of activity being undertaken under a particular action cannot always be adequately captured by quantitative means. Such means may include interviews with project promoters, surveys to garner information around a particular support funded by LEADER.
- Promoters will be informed at the outset of the application process that there will be a requirement for them to provide performance indicators for their projects. These indicators will be in line with the Programme Indicators set out under each Local Objective/Sub-theme. E.g. Jobs sustained/created, additional number of visitors, population benefiting from actions etc.
- The LAG will monitor progress during the implementation of the project, immediately after completion of the project and on an on-going basis. The promoter will be required to provide a report upon completion of the project detailing the project outcomes, outputs and impacts.
- Annual in operation letters will also be issued to promoters each year. The letter will request the promoter to confirm that they are still operating as funded. In addition the letter will request that the promoter update their previously submitted Performance Indicators.
- Monitoring and review of the programme will be the responsibility of the programme manager assigned by the implementation partner on commencement of the programme.
- An experienced member of staff from the implementation partner will be assigned to assemble and input data in the system.
- An Annual Plan will be produced with Outputs, Indicators and Targets and Timeframe for Delivery of each action in accordance with proposed IT management system. This will be repeated annually for the duration of the programme. Each Annual plan is approved by the LCDC and by Pobal/DECLG.
- Quarterly reports will be prepared in respect of achievement of output targets and also in relation to expenditure.
- An Annual Report will be produced at the end of each year. This report will form the basis for an Annual Review and preparation of the following year Annual Plan.
- The LAG will use performance indicators to provide meaningful information to internal and external stakeholders so that they better understand the work of the organisation and to ascertain whether it is delivering value for money.
- All project monitoring and reviews by the LAG and project promoters will be recorded and retained on file.

7.2 Evaluation

LAGs objectives for the Evaluation of the Strategy:

The Evaluation of the Strategy will allow the LAG to determine the overall effectiveness of the Strategy in addressing the needs and priorities as set out by the LAG. The Evaluation process will provide data on the effectiveness of actions in meeting the local objectives. It will provide data to help with future planning of resources under actions and to determine if some actions require revision in order to meet the objectives.

Governance and Co-ordination:

The Evaluation process will be governed and co-ordinated by the LAG and require participation by the beneficiaries under the Actions of the Programme, including the LAG, the financial partners and the Implementing Partner.

Particular topics requiring evaluation:

The LAG will be particularly interested in evaluating certain actions or activities supported including new training programmes and new approaches or methods employed to engage with a particular target group. Programmes of work undertaken with a new or emerging sector within the area e.g. the creative industries will be evaluated to determine the overall effectiveness of the supports under this action. The LAG will engage external evaluators to ensure greater objectivity in the evaluation process. External evaluators will be engaged where internal projects are concerned.

Sources of data and frequency of collection:

The sources of data required for evaluation purposes will be gathered by the LAG from the outset of the Programme including the Expression of Interest stage and throughout the Project Lifecycle including the following stages: full application, evaluation, project implementation, project completion and on through to the Payment stage. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered for all projects from promoters at the various stages. The sources of data will include Application Forms, Business and/or Marketing Plans, Accounts, financial statements, project site visits and meetings with promoters and other potential beneficiaries.

At the application stage the required project information such as type of funding applied for, new/existing project, no. of employees etc will be captured and entered into the LEADER ICT system. As the project progresses to the assessment stage information will be recorded on the ICT systems as per the prescribed indicators. At this stage it will be linked to an objective which in turn will relate to a sub-theme building up a profile of activity under each action, sub-theme and theme. The Programme Indicators will include number of projects funded both new and existing per sub-theme, no. of full and part-time jobs created and sustained, types of funding awarded whether capital, training, marketing or animation. The types of initiatives funded e.g. whether water-based tourism, cultural & heritage tourism or cluster/network of businesses for tourism or enterprises per sector whether in agricultural diversification, creative industry or ICT will also be recorded. The number of projects funded per service type including target groups benefiting from support, types of enhancement initiatives and numbers of areas and people benefiting will also be captured. In addition to quantitative indicators, promoters will be required to provide specific qualitative data including a final report on the project at completion stage. A progress report will also be required where phased payments are also being drawn down.

At the project completion stage, outputs and outcomes will be reported on to provide information on what has been delivered with funding support. In the case of Training Programmes, sign in sheets will provide records for attendance of trainees, gender, age bracket, and no. of days/hours training undertaken. Application forms, performance Indicator sheets (both initial and final) and evaluation documentation will also record the required performance indicators per required theme and sub-theme of the Programme as set out under the LEADER Monitoring Framework.

Tools and Methods to be employed:

The LAG will undertake self-evaluation employing qualitative techniques such as interviews with promoters, surveys, case studies and/or focus groups. The quantitative data (Performance indicators) provided from project promoters will also form part of the evaluation process.

Time-lines for Evaluation:

An annual evaluation will also be carried out following completion of the Annual Action Plans. A mid-term independent review of the Programme will be undertaken and there will also be a final external independent evaluation. The LAG will also co-operate with and contribute to the on-going evaluation of the Programme and the specific mid-term and final evaluations of the Programme as required.

Communication of Findings/Resources Available:

The findings of any Evaluation process will be provided by way of written report and will be communicated to the LAG, Pobal, DECLG and other relevant stakeholder as and when required.

Evaluations will be carried out using the existing resources available to the LAG and Implementing Partner. The resources required for Evaluation are included in the Administration Budget of the LDS with budgets allocated annually for this task. Additional resources have been proposed for the mid-term review and for a final evaluation at the end of the Programme.

- LAGs should include a response to each of the questions included under the 'evaluation' sub-heading. (below)
- Approximate timeframe for evaluation (based on years).

7.3 Compliance with Data Protection Acts

The implementation partner Westmeath Community Development is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals and compliance with the Data Protection Acts. The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 (the "Data Protection Acts") lay down strict rules about the way in which personal data is collected, accessed, used and disclosed. The Data Protection Acts permit individuals to access their personal data on request, and gives individuals the right to have their personal data amended if found to be incorrect. Inquiries about this Data Protection Policy can be made to The CEO, Westmeath Community Development, Enterprise Technology and Innovation Centre, Clonmore Business Park, Mullingar, County Westmeath.

Collecting and Processing of Personal Data. In collecting and processing of personal data and/or sensitive personal data the LAG will comply with the requirements under the Data Protection Acts. A "Form of Consent" will form part of the Application. This will outline that the LAG will maintain records with promoters details. It will outline the purposes for which the information will be use (e.g. processing applications, compiling statistical information and analysing information) and the entities to which this information will be disclosed. Project promoters and potential promoters will be advised at Expression of Interest stage and at application stage that the information provided in Expression of Interest Forms and Application Forms together with any subsequent date will be used only for the purposes registered by the LAG under the Data Protection Acts. The promoter will be required to sign the Form of Consent declaring that they understand its content and that they consent to the use and disclosure of data and information outlined in same.

See Appendix 12: WCD Protection of Personal Data Policy

8.0 Financial Plan

The proposed financial Plan for the programme is attached to this document on the Template supplied. **(See Appendix 13: Financial Plans)**. It includes the following:

- Preparatory support for the Development of the Local development Strategy – Budget €25,500. Development of the LDS was carried out by the proposed implementation partner, Westmeath Community Development and funding was paid to this organisation for this work.
- Funds for Implementation of the Strategy – Budget €5,588,995.
The LAG has provided for funds to support the Strategy under all 3 Themes in the programme. Approximately 76% of the indicative Budget is proposed.
The funding is further divided amongst Sub -Themes as outlined on the Template and also in Section 4 of the Strategy.
A Total Budget of €3,668,465 is provided under Theme 1 Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation, covering Sub-Themes in Rural Tourism, Enterprise Development, Rural Towns and Broadband
A Total of €1,469,030 is provided for Sub-Theme 2 Social Inclusion, reflecting the importance the LAG attaches to working with Hard to Reach Communities and Rural Youth.
A Total of €426,000 is provided under the Sub Theme 3 Rural Environment with a strong emphasis on the Renewable Energy Sub-Theme but also providing funds for Water Conservation Measures and addressing Local Biodiversity.
- **Funds for Animation and Administration Costs** including Staffing – Budget €1,795,210.(24.4%).
5% of this amount, (€89,760 or 1.22% of the programme budget) is provided for the work of the LAG/financial Partner under the heading of “**Other**” in the Appendix 13 table. This amount will be utilised for the salary of the Grade 3 (0.6 FTE) in the LAG/Financial partner ref: Appendix 4. It is envisaged that the LAG/Financial partner will provide for the remuneration of the Grade 7 (0.2 FTE) and Grade 8 (0.2 FTE) from their own resources.
- Within the remaining 95%, a Budget is provided for 3 people who will work on the ground animating the programme and developing projects with promoters and also dealing with Calls for Proposals and LAG and partner led projects. Funds are also provided for other Animation and Administration costs which will be incurred by the Implementation Partner in managing the implementation of actions and administration work related to projects as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the programme including Performance Indicators. These costs are allocated in accordance with the Implementation Partner`s apportionment policy.
- All salaries are linked to the relevant Salary Scales historically applied in agreement with Pobal. Development Officers salaries proposed for the LDS are on Point 4 p.a plus PRSI to reflect the experience required for people who may be recruited to work on the programme. Pensions are not funded for new staff. Projects Officer Salary is on Point 19 plus PRSI and Pension Contribution. This is to reflect the point on the scale reached by an experienced existing employee who has worked on the LEADER programme since 1995, and the terms and conditions attaching to that employee`s Contract Of Employment. Additionally, the role of Projects Officer entails additional responsibilities including managing calls for proposals, coordinating the preparation of projects for evaluation, dealing with eligibility issues and, in the case of the LDS 2014 -2020, liaising on a day to day basis with the LAG and the DECLG.

Appendix 1:

Westmeath LCDC Constitution and Standing Orders



CONSTITUTION And STANDING ORDERS



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil
na hIarmhí
Westmeath Local Community
Development Committee

WESTMEATH LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Date: 7th November 2014

1 Introduction

The Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is established pursuant to Section 36 (1) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 for the purpose of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development in County Westmeath.

2 Guiding Principles

The work of the LCDC will be guided by the following general principles:

- 2.1 A developmental 'bottom-up' approach is a key feature of local and community development.
- 2.2 The democratic mandate of the local elected members on the LCDC should be recognised and respected.
- 2.3 The experience and contribution brought by all LCDC members should be recognised and respected.
- 2.4 A clear focus on social inclusion.
- 2.5 The promotion of enterprise and employment development, and training and education.
- 2.6 Recognition of the strengths and experiences of all local actors.
- 2.7 The integration of sustainable development considerations in policy development and implementation.
- 2.8 Voluntary activity and active citizenship will be pursued as vital elements of flourishing communities.
- 2.9 There should be a clear focus on making the best use of available resources and achieving value-for-money.

3. Role of the Local Community Development Committee

The role of the LCDC shall be as follows:

- 3.1 Have primary responsibility for Co-ordination; planning and oversight of local development spend.
- 3.2 Bring a more coherent approach to the implementation of local and community development programmes and interventions.
- 3.3 Drive meaningful citizen and community engagement in scoping, planning, delivery and evaluation of local and community development programmes.
- 3.4 Ensure a more efficient administration of local and community programmes and delivery structures.
- 3.5 Develop approaches that focus on learning and feedback.
- 3.6 Explore and pursue opportunities for additional funding resources.

4. Functions of the Local Community Development Committee

The functions of the LCDC shall be:

- 4.1 Prepare community element of 6 year local economic and community plan.
- 4.2 Implement community elements of plan.
- 4.3 Review plan.
- 4.4 Monitor and review implementation of plan.
- 4.5 Input into economic element of plan.
- 4.6 Co-ordinate, manage and oversee implementation of local and community development programmes.
- 4.7 Ensure effectiveness, consistency, co-ordination and avoid duplication of public funded programmes.
- 4.8 Pursue co-ordination of all community development programmes.
- 4.9 Prepare annual report.

5. Performance of Functions

In accordance with legislation, the LCDC may enter in written agreements with any agency or person for the carrying out functions which an LCDC considers appropriate in furtherance of the performance of its functions. In performing its functions the LCDC shall have regard to:

- Resources available
- Need for co-operation and co-ordination to achieve efficiency and economy
- Need for consultation with other bodies
- Need for consistency
- Sustainable development considerations
- Promotion of social inclusion

6. Membership of Local Community Development Committee

6.1 Membership of LCDC

The LCDC will comprise a range of statutory and non-statutory socio-economic partners drawn from the Westmeath County Council administrative area. The LCDC membership will be constituted so as to ensure an appropriate representational balance between public and private interests, while also facilitating an appropriate mix across the broad range of actors across the territory. The membership of the LCDC will consist of:

Sector	Agency	No. of Reps	
Statutory Sector	Westmeath County Council Elected Members	3	8
	Westmeath County Council Chief Executive	1	
	Westmeath County Council Head of Local Enterprise	1	
	Department of Social Protection	1	
	Education & Training Board	1	
	Health Services Executive	1	
Non Statutory Sector	Public Participation Network– Community & Voluntary Interest	2	9
	Public Participation Network – Social Inclusion	2	
	Public Participation Network – Environment	1	
	Westmeath Community Development Ltd	1	
	Farming / Agriculture	1	
	Business / Employers	1	
	Trade Union	1	
Total			17

6.2 Selection of Membership

The Membership of the LCDC shall be selected/ nominated in accordance with legislation and Guidance issued by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government and the establishment of the LCDC shall be subject to the approval of the local authority.

As far as possible, within the member selection procedures, obtaining an equitable gender balance will be an objective of the LCDC.

6.3 Duration of membership

In the case of statutory members, Elected Members of Westmeath County Council shall cease to be a member of the LCDC if they cease to be a member of Westmeath County Council. Similarly, Westmeath County Council officials and representatives of statutory agencies shall cease to be members of the LCDC when they cease to hold the position which merited their nomination to the LCDC.

In the case of the non-statutory members, members will be nominated initially for a 3 year term and will be eligible for re-nomination for a further 3 years. The maximum tenure of membership of the LCDC shall be 6 years. Each member shall serve a minimum 3 year term in the first instance. Thereafter, mechanism will be put in place to allow for rotation of non-statutory LCDC members. This shall commence with 2 of these members retiring at the 3rd AGM, a further 2 at the 4th AGM, a further 2 at the 5th AGM, and 3 at the 6th AGM. The order of retirement is determined by the length of office or, where this is equal, by random selection unless otherwise agreed.

All members of the LCDC shall cease to be members of the LCDC when they cease to hold their respective positions which rendered them eligible for election /nomination to the LCDC.

6.4 New Appointments

Upon retirement, the member should be replaced from within the sector he/she represented on the LCDC. If a member retires and is not eligible for reappointment, the Chief Officer shall make the necessary arrangements for that member to be replaced, as may be appropriate for the sector represented. The balance of representation should be retained throughout the replacement/rotation process.

6.5 Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

A chairperson and vice-chairperson shall be elected from among the members of the LCDC. Where there is more than one candidate for a position, the chairperson, or vice-chairperson, shall be decided by a poll of members present.

The chairperson shall serve for a maximum period of three years, where upon he or she shall retire as chairperson. A person may not serve two consecutive terms as chairperson.

The vice-chairperson should be determined in the same manner and will serve for a maximum period of three years and there is no limit on the number of consecutive periods that may be served by the vice-chairperson.

Members should note that there is no allowance attached to the office of chairperson or vice-chairperson of the LCDC.

If chairperson is not present at a meeting, or the position of chairperson is vacant, the vice-chairperson shall chair the meeting, but shall leave the chair upon the arrival at the meeting of the chairperson, or immediately following the election of a chairperson.

6.6 Review of Membership

The Chief Officer in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group of the local authority will regularly review the membership of the LCDC in order to account for the changing objectives – provision should be made for the ‘standing-down’ of members, where this is appropriate e.g. where the strategic need for members has been satisfied or new members are required to meet a specific strategic need. Arrangements may be made with nominating bodies for the rotation of Members.

Attendance at LCDC meetings will be monitored and any poor attendance record will be brought to the attention of the nominating body and the nominating body will be requested to review nomination and either, confirm that nominee can participate, or submit an alternative nominee. Nominating bodies are free to deselect their representatives if circumstances require this.

No substitution of members for LCDC meetings shall be allowed.

6.7 Disqualification from Membership

A person is disqualified from membership of LCDC where:

- they are adjudicated bankrupt
- on sentencing to prison following conviction.
- convicted of an offence of fraud
- disqualified or restricted from being a director of a company.
- Failure to comply with LCDC conflict of interest requirements.

6.8 Responsibilities of Members

LCDC members will be expected to:

- Attend and participate in LCDC Meetings. In the event of unavailability to attend, they should advise the Chief Officer in good time.
- Act bona fide in the interests of the LCDC.
- Take decisions jointly with the other LCDC members.
- Work with other LCDC members, in a spirit of constructive co-operation and trust.
- Articulate the views of their nominating organisation at LCDC level or at sub-structure level.
- Abide by good debating protocol and the Chairman direction at LCDC meetings.
- Report back to their organisation or sector regarding LCDC activities.
- Share information and organisational resources with the LCDC.
- Participate in sub-structures established by the LCDC to examine and report on particular
- policy areas or issues. This may involve chairing and resourcing such sub-structures.

7. Meetings of the Local Community Development Committee

7.1 Meetings Arrangements

- The LCDC should meet at a minimum of 6 times per calendar year.
- An AGM of the LCDC will be held for the purpose of reviewing membership of the LCDC.
- Meetings should be convened in the offices of Westmeath County Council, unless otherwise agreed by members. A policy of rotating locations can be considered, especially where this creates opportunities for localised community engagement by the LCDC.
- A schedule of LCDC meetings will be agreed, insofar as practical, in advance on an annual basis.
- The Chairperson, in consultation with the Chief Officer, may at any time reschedule, or call a special meeting of the LCDC as particular circumstances dictate.
- The address of the principal offices for the purposes of these Standing Orders is Westmeath County Council, County Buildings Mullingar, County Westmeath.
- Meeting arrangements (to include place, date and time) should be notified to members no less than 5 days in advance of the meeting.
- Notification of a meeting should include an agenda listing the business of the LCDC.
- If a Member wishes to have a specific item discussed at an LCDC meeting, he should submit the proposed agenda item to the Chief Officer at least 14 days in advance of the meeting.
- The primary mode of communication with members of the LCDC will be via email (unless otherwise agreed by Members of the LCDC).
- A quorum for a meeting is 50% of the members, rounded up, plus one, which is 10. The quorum should also ensure that the representation from the statutory and non-statutory sectors are such, that a minimum of 3 from each sector is represented.
- Where a quorum cannot be achieved, the meeting should be postponed and rescheduled.
- A quorum is required in order to commence a meeting however, it is a matter for the Chairperson to decide if a full quorum is required at all times during a meeting.
- Members of the public and the media shall not be permitted to attend meetings of the LCDC. The Chair of the LCDC may issue press statements or other communications as agreed by the members as required.

7.2 Administrative / Secretariat Support

Administrative support shall be provided to the LCDC by Westmeath County Council and the Chief Executive of the Council shall appoint a Chief Officer (and supporting staff) to assist the LCDC and manage the business of the committee. This support shall include all necessary functions to ensure the efficient operation of the LCDC, such as but not limited to:

- Arrange for meetings of the LCDC to be convened.
- Provide or arrange for the provision of accommodation for the holding of meetings.
- Making necessary preparations for LCDC meetings, including drafting and circulating meeting agendas, taking, drafting and circulating meeting minutes, and generating or circulating LCDC notices and other documentation.
- Preparation of policy/position papers etc.
- Other logistical, organisational and support activities.

7.3 Minutes

Minutes should be taken of all meetings of the LCDC. The minutes should include:

- Date, time and place of the meeting.
- Names of the members present at the meeting.
- Conflicts of interest notified to the meeting and particulars of the steps taken.
- Particulars of all decisions/votes taken at the meeting.
- Other matters considered appropriate.

Minutes of meetings should be:

- Circulated to all LCDC members 5 days in advance of the next meeting.
- Submitted for agreement at the next meeting.
- When agreed, with or without amendment, the minutes shall be signed by the chairperson to whom they shall be submitted for confirmation and minutes claiming to be so signed shall be received in evidence without proof.

The secretariat should make appropriate arrangements for retaining the minutes.

The local authority will be responsible for maintaining all official records relating to the management and operation of the LCDC.

7.4 Expenses

In general, any expenses arising for a LCDC member should be met by the organisation the member is representing. However, those non-statutory sector members whose expenses cannot be met in this manner, may be entitled to travel expenses for attendance at LCDC meetings and such expenses will be met by the local authority. The Chief Officer will determine the persons whose expenses should be met in this manner.

7.5 Decisions of the LCDC

All decisions of the LCDC shall be reached by consensus of the LCDC members. In the event that consensus is not reached it is open to the Chairperson to request a vote, in the form of show of hands, from those members who are present. Every member present shall have a vote unless prohibited by an enactment. The Chairperson shall have the casting vote. Notwithstanding this, decisions of the LCDC shall be made by consensus if possible.

Neither public authorities nor any single interest group should represent more than 49% of the voting rights of the LCDC. A vote taken or decision reached where any single interest group or public authority represents more than 49% of the voting rights is invalid

In the event of a decision by way of a vote and the Public Sector membership represent more than 49% of the total membership present, public sector member(s) must “stand down” from the vote to ensure appropriate balance of representation in LCDC decision. The Chairperson will initially seek volunteer(s) from within to public sector representatives. If sufficient volunteer(s) are not achieved then lots will be drawn to determine member(s) to “stand down”, excluding the Chairperson.

Given the LCDC will be responsible for managing and disbursing public monies, there is a need for transparency in dealings involving the members and the decisions of the LCDCs.

7.6 Sub-Committees

The LCDC may establish sub-committees / task groups or other sub-structures to effectively carry out its functions. As far as possible the sub-structures should be kept to a minimum, have a clear remit and lifespan and should be wound up when the required task is completed. Sub-committees may include members who are not LCDC members in order to facilitate the broadest possible engagement with the range of interests locally. Sub-committees shall be subject to the terms of these standing orders in regard to conduct of business.

7.7 Engagement with other Agencies and Citizens

In pursuit of a collaborative approach and coherent response to local priorities, the need to bring local actors together in partnership will be important. In the implementation of the 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan the LCDC may identify structures and committees where a collaborative, partnership, co-ordinated or shared approach is required and appropriate mechanisms may be put in place by the LCDC to facilitate this.

Similarly, there may be a need for the LCDC to put arrangements in place to facilitate citizen and community engagement with the work of the LCDC and the preparation and implementation of the community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan

8. Conflicts of Interest

8.1 Register of Members Interests

A Register of Members Interests will be maintained by the local authority. Upon appointment, each member will provide the Chief Officer with details of all interests, including employment and business interests and community involvement that might involve a conflict of interest or might materially influence a member in relation to the performance of his or her functions as a member of the LCDC.

8.2 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

Each member should declare at the relevant meeting of the LCDC any interest they have in:

- An application for funding or other support for decision by the LCDC.
- Any initiative taken by the LCDC.
- Any contract [service level agreement] or proposed contract that the member, or a person connected with the member may be directly or indirectly involved; or
- Any matter from which the member, or anyone connected with the member, might benefit directly or indirectly from as a member of the LCDC.

Where a conflict of interest is declared by a member, that member will leave the meeting and will not be entitled to vote on the matter in which they have an interest. Upon returning to the meeting the member will be notified of the decision by the Chair and no further discussion will take place.

8.3 Ethics in Public Office

LCDCs shall comply with the requirements of the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 & 2001. It is intended to prescribe LCDCs as public bodies under the Acts.

8.4 Disclosure of Information

A member shall not disclose any commercially sensitive or confidential information obtained by that member while performing his/her role as part of the LCDC or any sub-committee.

9. Disorderly Conduct

If in the opinion of the chairperson, any member of the LCDC has been or is disorderly by persistently disregarding the ruling of the chair, or by behaving irregularly, improperly or offensively, or by otherwise obstructing the business of the meeting, and the Chairperson has conveyed his/her opinion to the members present by naming the member concerned, then the chairperson, or any member may move 'that the member named leave the meeting' and the motion, if seconded, shall be determined without discussion.

Where the LCDC decides in accordance with the above that a member leave a meeting, that member shall immediately leave the meeting and shall not be entitled to speak or to take any further part in that meeting on that day.

Where in the opinion of the chairperson –

- (a) There is general disorder which impedes the orderly transaction of the business of the meeting, or
- (b) Where a member against whom it was resolved that he/she leave the meeting, by virtue of this paragraph, and refuses to do so.

The chairperson may adjourn the meeting for such period as he/she considers necessary in the interests of order.

10. Interpretation and Suspension of Standing Orders

The Chairperson's ruling on any question of the Standing Orders shall be final.

Standing Orders may, with the consent of the majority of members present, be suspended on a proposal made for the purpose of any specified business. Prior notice of any such proposal shall be given to the Chairperson.

Appendix 2:

LAG Members Area of Expertise

Cllr Tom Farrell: Public Representative. A former senior employee with Dept. Agriculture. Ex County Chair of Westmeath GAA, Member of Westmeath Heritage Forum, Community Activist. Involvement in LEADER transnational Project to Finland.

Cllr Aengus O'Rourke: Public Representative. CEO of printing company in Westmeath. In the last LEADER programme made representation on behalf of community groups applying for funding.

Cllr. Avril Whitney: Public Representative. Primary School Teacher. Community and Sport activist.

Pat Gallagher: Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council. Chairperson of the Westmeath LCDC. Current Chair of The County and City Management Association. Previously in his capacity as Director of Service of Westmeath County Council was a member of the board of the Local Development Company i.e. Westmeath Community Development Ltd.

Christine Charlton: Presently the Head of LEO in Westmeath. In her capacity as CEO of the formerly known Westmeath County Enterprise Board was a member of the board of the Local Development Company, Westmeath Community Development Ltd.

Des Henry: Presently is the Principal Officer, Divisional Manager, Midlands-North of the Department of Social Protection. DSP have been involved in identifying beneficiaries for Leader Funding in consultation with Local Partnership Companies in the Past and will continue to do so going forward.

Christy Duffy: CEO of the Longford/Westmeath Education Training Board.

Joe Whelan: HSE Community Manager Westmeath. A former public representative. Formerly a board member of the Local Development Company Westmeath Community Development Ltd.

Des Sheridan: Community/PPN representative, Retired Bank Official. Formerly a board member of the Local Development Company Westmeath Community Development Ltd. Board member of Westmeath LEO.

Bob Morrison: Presently a tax consultant. Formerly a board member of the Local Development Company i.e. Westmeath Community Development Ltd. A member of the Westmeath Heritage Forum, A member of Mullingar Employment Action Group. A member of the secretariat of the Westmeath Public Participation Network. Community activist.

Hugh Maguire: Formerly a longstanding board member of the Local Development Company i.e. Westmeath Community Development Ltd. Founder of the Westmeath Independent People with Disabilities. A member of the secretariat of the Westmeath Public Participation Network.

Joyce Furlong: Vice Chairperson of the Westmeath LCDC. Chairperson of the Young People's Facilities and Services Development Group in Athlone, who approved funding of over half a million to projects in Athlone under this scheme. Board member of Streetwise Athlone. Over 20 years experience working with Young People in Athlone.

Dave Raftis: Formerly a board member of the Local Development Company, Westmeath Community Development Ltd. A strong community activist. A member of the secretariat of the Westmeath Public Participation Network.

Joe Potter: CEO of Westmeath Local Development Company i.e. Westmeath Community Development Ltd., Manager of the LEADER Programme for over 20 years, a board member of the International Fund for Ireland. Community activist.

Paddy Donnelly: A Fulltime Farmer and vice chair of the IFA Livestock Association. Formerly a longstanding board member of the Local Development Company i.e. Westmeath Community Development Ltd.

Denis Hogan: The Manager of Harbour Place Shopping Centre and Member of the Mullingar Chamber of Commerce.

Denis Rohan: Retired Assistant General Secretary of Impact Trade Union.

Appendix 3:

Implementing Body Key Procedures/Policies

Contracts and Service Level Agreements for the implementation of Programmes are managed by the Board of Westmeath Community Development. The company was established as a Company Limited by Guarantee in 1994. The current Board membership allows for the appointment of Directors drawn from the Statutory, Community, and Social Partner sectors. The company is governed inter alia by the following:

1. Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The specific powers and duties of the Board of Westmeath Community Development are set out in the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association. The strategic role of Board is described below:-

- To maintain a long-term overview of Westmeath Community Development Ltd and its work;
- To make strategic, major and often difficult decisions about the Company's objectives, policies and procedures;
- To ensure that the Company's Strategic Plans are implemented in accordance with the Company's mission statement;
- To ensure that adequate resources (particularly people and funding) are available to implement the Strategic Plans;
- To guarantee that the expenditure of allocated funds will accord strictly with funding guidelines;
- To regularly monitor the implementation of the Company's Strategic Plans;
- To adjust the Strategic Plans in response to changing circumstances;
- To oversee and communicate with the committees, working groups and associated special project working groups;
- To accept legal responsibility for the Company's strategy.

The Board's Meeting and rotational policies are set out in the Memorandum and Articles.

The Board has established a number of Subcommittees:

- Finance Committee. The Finance Sub-Committee has been established to oversee the finances of the Company and decisions made are ratified by the main Board.
- Human Resources Committee. For purposes of internal management, the overall Company has a Human Resources Committee, which is comprised exclusively of Board members, charged with responsibility for dealing with personnel procedures and issues
- LEADER Evaluation Committee
- SICAP Working Groups

2. Procedures Manual

The purpose of the procedures manual is to comply with accreditation requirements as referenced in EU and Government Regulations and to guide employees and the employer on the procedures laid down by the Company in relation to the overall operation of Westmeath Community Development Ltd. The Procedures outlined in the manual are updated from time to time to reflect changing circumstances

3. Human Resource Manual. (Staff Handbook)

Full details in relation to all human resources issues including recruitment, grievance procedures, annual leave, maternity leave, sick leave etc. for Westmeath Community Development Ltd are set out within the Human Resource Manual. (Staff Handbook).

4. Company Codes Of practice.

The following are some company codes of practice which have been adopted by the company:

- Client charter
- Equality statement
- Community Development standards
- Health and safety statement
- Child Protection Policy
- Community Development Policy & Practice
- Healthy Ireland A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing
- The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures'.

5. Validated Programme of Learning/Industry Certified Training

WCD is a QQI certified Training Centre, since February 2011, Provider Number PEO 1207.

The maintaining of our QQI Accreditation is central to the organisation`s plans for the future with regard to the provision of training. In order to ensure that it remains at the core of the organisation`s work, a QQI Coordinator has been appointed, with responsibility for management of the application process and subsequent implementation and monitoring.

6. Training/Education Provision

It is the policy of the company that it does not and will not provide training courses that are currently provided in the same locality by another provider except where there is sufficient demand for additional courses or there is a need for training tailored to the needs of our specific target groups.

7. Communication Policy

It is the policy of WCD to communicate effectively with learners, staff and stakeholders to ensure they receive relevant, accurate and up to date information in relation to the programmes and services offered. Staff and learners are given the opportunity to provide feedback in order to monitor and enhance the programmes and services offered on a continuous basis.

8. Equality Policy

It is the policy of WCD to promote equality and accommodate diversity amongst all staff and learners within the organisation. We ensure equality and freedom from harassment in terms of access to and participation in employment and service provision. The company committed to combating discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, membership of the travelling community, marital or family status, gender, religion, social class, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality or ethnic origins.

9. Staff Recruitment and Development Policy

WCD seeks to recruit staff following fair and consistent recruitment criteria processes to ensure each staff member has the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to perform their role accordingly. WCD is committed to ensuring all new staff receives induction training. WCD will provide access to support for all staff and ongoing development where appropriate enabling them to fulfil their designated roles.

Appendix 4:

A. Job Description for Lead Implementation Partner

Job Title: CEO/Programme Manager

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

- To manage the company ensuring that all programmes are delivered by operating proper management standards and reporting procedures.
- To ensure that all programmes are implemented and that they meet all of their targets
- To manage the day to day implementation of the Rural Development Programme.
- To implement actions of the Rural Development programme
- To ensure that all policies and procedures approved by the board, and/or as required by funding agencies are implemented fully.
- To prepare and present monthly /quarterly/annual reports for the Board .
- To ensure that Corporate Governance requirements are delivered.
- To manage staff attached to programmes.
- To represent WCD on designated bodies.
- To ensure that the Company's Human Resources are developed allowing effective line management in the organisation in keeping with policies.
- To improve and develop the Company s public profile ensuring that all media being used are appropriately dealt with.

Principal Qualifications & Experience:

- Third level Degree in Business, Agriculture/Rural Development or Social Studies or other relevant qualification.
- Five years experience in Senior Management, or five years experience in the community and voluntary sector, with Management responsibilities.

Essential (Knowledge/Skills/Experience):

- Knowledge of corporate governance requirements.
- Experience of dealing with community and voluntary organisations at the highest level.
- Experience of dealing with funding agencies at the highest level.
- Excellent organisational skills.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and oral.
- Strong leadership and motivational skills.

Desirable (Skills/Ability/Experience):

Experience of working in the Community and Voluntary sector.

Job Title: **Financial Controller**

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

- To manage the Company's Finance and Administration ensuring that sufficient funds are available to meet the company's needs..
- To ensure that all programmes are delivered by operating proper accounting standards and reporting procedures.
- To prepare monthly /quarterly/annual reports.
- To provide company secretarial services to the board and liaise with the Finance Sub-committee to ensure full compliance with legislation.
- To provide full administration support to the company ensuring the proper and secure retention of material documents relating to the company's business.
- To ensure that the company has adequate facilities to perform its work efficiently including:
- Management and Maintenance of Headquarters and Outreach Offices
- Management and maintenance of the Company's Information Technology requirements.
- To ensure proper facilities and routines exist for the keeping of records and that compliancy issues regarding project/grant files are fully implemented.
- To ensure that proper books of account are kept by the company.
- To ensure that all returns to agencies are made on time thus insuring the earliest possible drawdown of funds.
- To establish strong cash flow management reports/routines.
- To prepare budgets for programmes/projects and company reporting on major variations to actual results.
- To liaise with Banks, auditors, government agencies and government departments to ensure proactive management of financial resources.
- To ensure that Annual Return Dates are advised and delivered on.
- To ensure that Ethics in Public office returns are issued and collected from board members and that the required returns are registered on time.
- To ensure that all policies and procedures approved by the board, or as required by funding agencies are adhered to including:
 - Company's own policy and procedures handbook.
 - Government Departments and statutory Agencies

Principal Qualifications & Experience:

- Full Accountancy Qualifications
- Three years experience in a similar capacity
- Knowledge of corporate governance requirements.
- Excellent organisational skills.
- Good communication skills both written and oral.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Experience of dealing with community and voluntary organisations
- Experience of dealing with funding agencies.

Job Title: Administrator

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

- To provide support to the finance and administration department in the maintenance of programme/project files.
- To provide support in order to maintain an efficient and effective front office
- Compiling Project files.
- To provide necessary cover for the Financial Controller.
- Verifying contents of, and maintaining program/project files.
- Ensuring all files are of a standard to meet audit requirements.
- Carrying out inspections where necessary on projects in preparation for grant payments.
- Maintaining the company database on program/project and resource tracking
- Assisting staff with information quires in relation to file progression, complying contract of services, setting up of meetings or events.
- Providing secretarial support to the company when required.
- To act as the company's interface with the maintenance company to ensure maximum up-time and the efficient operation of the IT system.
- To ensure proper facilities and routines exist for the keeping of records and that compliancy issues regarding project/grant files are fully implemented.
- To ensure that proper books of account are kept by the company.
- To ensure that all returns to agencies are made on time thus insuring the earliest possible drawdown of funds.
- Ensuring that all payments processed are properly authorised.
- Ensure that both weekly and monthly payrolls are processed on time
- Supporting the financial control of all programmes/projects within the company, monitoring them in line with their agreed budgets.
- Prepare bank reconciliations on all associated bank accounts

Principal Qualifications & Experience:

- Accounting Qualifications
- Knowledge of accounting & payroll packages.
- Knowledge of payroll operations.
- Ability to operate and knowledge of databases and Microsoft office products
- Good organisational skills.
- Good communication skills both written and oral.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Experience of dealing with community and voluntary organisations.
- Experience of dealing with funding agencies.

Job Title: **Monitoring and Support Worker**

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

- To Monitor and evaluate the RDP programme in consultation with the Programme Manager
- To prepare Performance Indicators for the RDP Programme and the SICAP programme.
- To implement the RDP Performance Monitoring Systems for The RDP and the SICAP programme
- To prepare monthly /quarterly/annual reports for the Rural Development Programme and individual projects being delivered within it.
- To accept queries concerning Rural Development Projects and record details of same.
- To manage files for individual projects in preparation for evaluation.
- To carry out inspections on projects where necessary in preparation for grant payments
- To assist Management with the following:
 - Board Meetings
 - Recruitment
 - Public Relations
 - Appointments
- To assist the programme Manager in preparing monthly /quarterly/annual reports for the Board

Principal Qualifications & Experience:

- Relevant qualifications
- Three years experience of Rural Development Programmes
- Excellent IT skills
- Excellent organisational skills.
- Good communication skills both written and oral.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Experience of dealing with community and voluntary organisations
- Experience of dealing with funding agencies.

Job Title: **RDP Projects Officer**

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

- To co-ordinate actions of the Rural Development Programme.
- To initiate and carry out programmes and projects which contribute to the strategy under **Rural Tourism and Enterprise Development**.
- To respond to queries concerning projects and record details of same.
- To assist, advise and secure assistance for project promoters in the area of management, marketing, finance and grant assistance
- To assist project promoters in obtaining grants under the Rural Development Programme and from other sources.
- To prepare monthly /quarterly/annual reports for the Rural Development Programme and individual projects being delivered within it.
- To create files for individual projects in preparation for evaluation.
- To present project proposals for evaluation and LCDC Approval
- To carry out inspections on projects in preparation for grant payments

Principal Qualifications & Experience:

- Third level Qualifications.
- 5 years experience in a Rural Development/Community Development Environment
- Excellent organisational skills.
- Good communication skills both written and oral.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Experience of dealing with community and voluntary organisations
- Experience of dealing with funding agencies.

Job Title: **Development Officer**

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

- To implement actions in the Local Development Strategy for the LEADER programme 2014 – 2020
- To carry out animation activities in **Rural Towns** to encourage involvement in a broad range of social and economic activities.
- To carry out pre development and animation activities with **Hard to Reach Communities** to encourage involvement in social and economic activities
- To carry out pre development and animation activities with **Rural Youth** to encourage and support involvement in social and economic activities.
- To implement development and training programmes aimed at people living in disadvantaged areas and amongst particular target groups of the RDP.
- To assist, advise and secure assistance for project promoters in the area of management, marketing, finance and grant assistance
- To respond to queries concerning projects and record details of same.
- To assist project promoters in obtaining grants under the Rural Development Programme and from other sources.
- To create files for individual projects in preparation for evaluation.
- To present project proposals for evaluation and LCDC Approval
- To carry out inspections on projects in preparation for grant payments

Principal Qualifications & Experience:

- Community Development or other relevant qualification
- At least 3 years Community Development experience
- Experience of dealing with community and voluntary organisations..
- Experience of dealing with funding agencies.
- Excellent organisational skills.
- Good communication skills, both written and oral.
- Ability to work as part of a team.

Job Title: **Development Officer**

Main Duties & Responsibilities:

- To implement actions in the Local Development Strategy for the LEADER programme 2014 – 2020
- To carry out animation activities with rural communities to encourage involvement in environmental activities such as creating awareness of :
 - Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources.
 - Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity.
 - Development of Renewable Energy.
- To implement development and training programmes on Rural Environment issues.
- To develop and implement **Broadband and IT** training programmes.
- To assist, advise and secure assistance for project promoters
- To respond to queries concerning projects and record details of same.
- To assist project promoters in obtaining grants under the Rural Development Programme and from other sources.
- To create files for individual projects in preparation for evaluation.
- To present project proposals for evaluation and LCDC Approval
- To carry out inspections on projects in preparation for grant payments

Principal Qualifications & Experience:

- Third Level degree in Rural Development or other relevant qualification
- At least 3 years Rural Development Experience
- Experience of dealing with community and voluntary organisations.
- Experience of dealing with funding agencies.
- Excellent organisational skills.
- Good communication skills, both written and oral.
- Ability to work as part of a team.

B. Job Descriptions for LAG Financial Partner for LEADER

Job Title: **Chief Officer** – Senior Executive Officer (FTE 0.2)

Main Objective relative to LEADER:

- To support Westmeath LCDC in its role regarding the implementation of the LEADER Programme

Main Duties relative to LEADER:

- To coordinate the role of the LAG and the Financial Partner of the LEADER programme
- To organise meetings of the LCDC to enable their role as LAG and approve LEADER projects

Experience:

- 27 years working in Local Government in various engineering and management roles which include various community development initiatives.
- 2 years on the board of Westmeath Community Development Ltd.
- Community Activist

Job Specification for Administration Officer

Job Title: Administration officer - (FTE 0.2)

Main Objective relative to LEADER:

- To support the implementation of the LEADER Programme by the LAG (Westmeath Local Community Development Committee) and the financial partner (Westmeath County Council)

Main Duties relative to LEADER:

- To manage the administration process associated with the LEADER programme

Experience:

- 9 years working in the Local Government in Westmeath including 6 years in Community Development and 3 years in Housing.
- 19 years experience in the private sector, in the medical, horticultural, food and agricultural sectors. 6 of those years working on the LEADER programme and the Local Development Social Inclusion Programmes in Westmeath.

Job Specification for Clerical Officer

Job Title: Clerical Officer (FTE 0.6)

Main Objective relative to LEADER:

- To administer the implementation of the LEADER Programme on behalf of the LAG and financial partner.

Main Duties:

- Undertaking the Article 28/48 checks
- Administer project evaluation process.
- Process the payment of Administration, Animation and staffing costs to implementing partner.
- Process the payments to the project promoters.
- General ongoing administrative duties associated with LAG and Financial partner in the LEADER programme.

Experience:

- 10 years working in Local Government in Westmeath in the finance section, including 2 years in Community Development.

Appendix 5: Scoring Sheet. (Secton 1.8)

Westmeath – RDP Evaluation Committee Scoring Record

Date:

Time:

Project Reference no:

Project Title:

Assessment Criteria	Objective	Issues raised by Evaluation Committee	Weighting	Score
Compatibility with Local Development strategy	Do the project proposals meet the criteria set out in the LAG business plan for the relevant measure?		20	
Innovation	Is the product innovative in its nature and does it displace existing enterprises?		15	
Promoter experience	Does the promoter have the Training/skills, track record or experience to deliver?		20	
Financial Viability	Are the project costs justifiable and is adequate funding available to co-fund the project?		20	
Sustainability	Is the project viable and will the service continue to be delivered?		10	
Requirement	Does the proposal target a specific need or address a specific gap in the market?		15	
Total			100	

N.B. Projects must receive a minimum score of 60% prior to being recommended for approval.

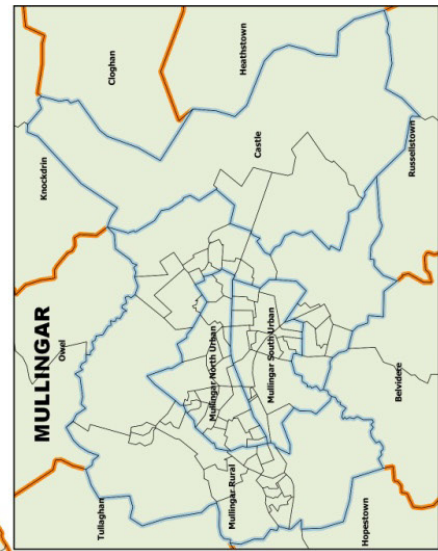
Recommendation of the Evaluation Committee:

Evaluation Committee

Evaluation Committee

Date:

Westmeath Map - 2011 Small Areas and Electoral Districts



List of Small Areas and EDs in Westmeath

Mullingar Small Areas

ED Name	Small Area	ED Name	Small Area
Castle	237022001	Mullingar Rural	237079021
Castle	237022002	Mullingar Rural	237079016
Mullingar North Urban	237106001	Mullingar Rural	237079019
Mullingar North Urban	237106002	Mullingar Rural	237079017
Mullingar North Urban	237106003	Mullingar Rural	237079020
Mullingar North Urban	237106005	Mullingar Rural	237079022
Mullingar North Urban	237106004	Mullingar Rural	237079025
Mullingar North Urban	237106006	Mullingar Rural	237079030
Mullingar North Urban	237106007	Mullingar Rural	237079023
Mullingar North Urban	237106008	Mullingar Rural	237079024
Mullingar North Urban	237106009	Mullingar Rural	237079028
Mullingar North Urban	237106010	Mullingar Rural	237079027
Mullingar North Urban	237106011	Mullingar Rural	237079026
Mullingar North Urban	237106012	Mullingar Rural	237079029
Mullingar North Urban	237106013	Mullingar Rural	237079031
Mullingar North Urban	237106014	Mullingar Rural	237079033
Mullingar North Urban	237106015	Mullingar Rural	237079034
Mullingar North Urban	237106019	Mullingar Rural	237079035
Mullingar North Urban	237106016	Mullingar Rural	237079036
Mullingar North Urban	237106018	Mullingar Rural	237079037
Mullingar North Urban	237106017	Mullingar Rural	237079032
Mullingar North Urban	237106022	Mullingar South Urban	237080001
Mullingar North Urban	237106020	Mullingar South Urban	237080002
Mullingar North Urban	237106023	Mullingar South Urban	237080003
Mullingar North Urban	237106021	Mullingar South Urban	237080005
Mullingar Rural	237079010	Mullingar South Urban	237080006
Mullingar Rural	237079001	Mullingar South Urban	237080007
Mullingar Rural	237079008	Mullingar South Urban	237080008
Mullingar Rural	237079002	Mullingar South Urban	237080009
Mullingar Rural	237079003	Mullingar South Urban	237080010
Mullingar Rural	237079007	Mullingar South Urban	237080011
Mullingar Rural	237079004	Mullingar South Urban	237080012
Mullingar Rural	237079005	Mullingar South Urban	237080004
Mullingar Rural	237079006	Mullingar South Urban	237080013
Mullingar Rural	237079009	Mullingar South Urban	237080014
Mullingar Rural	237079013	Mullingar South Urban	237080016
Mullingar Rural	237079014	Mullingar South Urban	237080015
Mullingar Rural	237079015	Mullingar South Urban	237080017
Mullingar Rural	237079011	Mullingar South Urban	237080019
Mullingar Rural	237079012	Mullingar South Urban	237080020
Mullingar Rural	237079018	Mullingar South Urban	237080018

Athlone Small Areas

ED Name	Small Area	ED Name	Small Area
Athlone East Rural	237004001	Athlone East Urban	237003013
Athlone East Rural	237004023	Athlone East Urban	237003017
Athlone East Rural	237004002	Athlone East Urban	237003018
Athlone East Rural	237004003	Athlone East Urban	237003008
Athlone East Rural	237004004	Athlone East Urban	237003010
Athlone East Rural	237004005	Athlone East Urban	237003012
Athlone East Rural	237004030	Athlone East Urban	237003011
Athlone East Rural	237004006	Athlone East Urban	237003016
Athlone East Rural	237004010	Athlone East Urban	237003015
Athlone East Rural	237004007	Athlone East Urban	237003019
Athlone East Rural	237004008	Athlone West Urban	237005011
Athlone East Rural	237004009	Athlone West Urban	237005001
Athlone East Rural	237004011	Athlone West Urban	237005002
Athlone East Rural	237004012	Athlone West Urban	237005003
Athlone East Rural	237004013	Athlone West Urban	237005004
Athlone East Rural	237004015	Athlone West Urban	237005005
Athlone East Rural	237004017	Athlone West Urban	237005006
Athlone East Rural	237004022	Athlone West Urban	237005008
Athlone East Rural	237004024	Athlone West Urban	237005009
Athlone East Rural	237004025	Athlone West Urban	237005010
Athlone East Rural	237004026	Athlone West Urban	237005013
Athlone East Rural	237004027	Athlone West Urban	237005014
Athlone East Rural	237004028	Athlone West Urban	237005012
Athlone East Rural	237004018	Athlone West Urban	237005007
Athlone East Rural	237004019	Moydrum	237077003
Athlone East Rural	237004021	Moydrum	237077008
Athlone East Rural	237004020	Moydrum	237077001
Athlone East Rural	237004029	Moydrum	237077002
Athlone East Rural	237004016	Moydrum	237077007
Athlone East Rural	237004014	Moydrum	237077009
Athlone East Urban	237003001	Moydrum	237077006
Athlone East Urban	237003014	Moydrum	237077005
Athlone East Urban	237003002		
Athlone East Urban	237003003		
Athlone East Urban	237003004		
Athlone East Urban	237003005		
Athlone East Urban	237003006		
Athlone East Urban	237003007		
Athlone East Urban	237003009		

Rural Small Areas

ED Name	Small Area	ED Name	Small Area	ED Name	Small Area
Ardnaglew	237001001	Derrymore	237036001	Kinturk	237069001
Ardnagrath	237002001	Doonis	237037001	Kinturk	237069002
Auburn	237006002	Drumraney	237038001	Kinturk	237069003
Auburn	237006003	Dysart	237039001	Kinturk	237069004
Auburn	237006001	Emper	237040001	Kinturk	237069005
Ballinalack/Lackan	237007001	Enniscoffey	237041001	Kinturk	237069006
Ballinalack/Lackan	237007002	Faughalstown	237042001	Kinturk	237069007
Ballinalack/Lackan	237072001	Finnea	237043001	Knockarrow	237070001
Ballinlough	237008001	Fore East	237044002	Knockdrim	237071001
Ballybroder	237010001	Fore East	237044001	Knockdrim	237071002
Ballyhealy	237011001	Fore West	237045001	Lauree	237073001
Ballykilmore	237012003	Gaybrook	237046001	Middleton	237074001
Ballykilmore	237012002	Glassan	237047003	Milltown	237054001
Ballykilmore	237012001	Glassan	237047001	Moate	237075001
Ballymore	237013002	Glassan	237047002	Moate	237075002
Ballymore	237013001	Glassan	237047004	Moate	237075004
Ballymorin	237009001	Glenlough	237048001	Moate	237075003
Ballynagore	237014001	Glore	237049001	Moate	237075005
Ballynagore	237014002	Greenpark	237050001	Moate	237075008
Ballynaskeagh	237015001	Griffinstown	237051001	Moate	237075006
Bellanalack	237016002	Griffinstown	237051002	Moate	237075007
Bellanalack	237016001	Heathstown	237052001	Moate	237075009
Belvidere	237017001	Heathstown	237052002	Moate	237075010
Belvidere	237017002	Heathstown	237052003	Moate	237075011
Boherquill	237018001	Hilltown	237053001	Moate	237075012
Bracklin	237019001	Hopestown	237055002	Mount Temple	237076002
Carn	237020002	Hopestown	237055001	Mount Temple	237076001
Carn	237020001	Huntingdon	237056001	Moydrum	237077004
Carn	237020003	Jamestown	237057001	Moydrum	237077010
Carrick	237021001	Kilbeggan	237058005	Muckanagh	237078001
Castle	237022003	Kilbeggan	237058003	Multyfarnham	237081002
Castledaly	237023001	Kilbeggan	237058002	Multyfarnham	237081001
Castledaly	237023002	Kilbeggan	237058001	Newtown	237082001
Castledaly	237023003	Kilbeggan	237058004	Noughaval	237083001
Castlelost	237024001	Kilbixy	237059001	Owel	237084001
Castlelost	237024005	Kilbixy	237059002	Owel	237084002
Castlelost	237024006	Kilcumny	237060001	Piercetown	237085001
Castlelost	237024002	Kilcumreragh	237061001	Portloman	237086001
Castlelost	237024003	Killare	237062001	Raharney	237087002
Castlelost	237024004	Killinure	237063001	Raharney	237087001

Castletown	237025001	Killua	237064002	Rahugh	237088001
Castletown	237025002	Killua	237064001	Rathconrath	237089001
Castletown	237025003	Killua	237064003	Rathowen	237090001
Churchtown	237026001	Killua	237064004	Rathowen	237090002
Cloghan	237027001	Killucan	237065003	Riverdale	237091001
Clonarney	237028002	Killucan	237065001	Riverdale	237091002
Clonarney	237028001	Killucan	237065002	Rosmead	237092001
Clonfad	237029001	Killucan	237065004	Russellstown	237093002
Clonfad	237029002	Killucan	237065005	Russellstown	237093001
Clonlost	237030001	Killucan	237065006	Skeagh	237094001
Clonlost	237030002	Killulagh	237066001	Sonna	237095001
Collinstown	237031002	Killulagh	237066002	Stonehall	237096001
Collinstown	237031001	Kilpatrick	237067001	Streamstown	237097001
Coole	237032001	Kinnegad	237068001	Street	237098001
Coolure	237033001	Kinnegad	237068002	Taghmon	237099002
Copperalley	237034001	Kinnegad	237068003	Taghmon	237099001
Delvin	237035004	Kinnegad	237068004	Templepatrick	237100001
Delvin	237035001	Kinnegad	237068005	Tubbrit	237101001
Delvin	237035002	Kinnegad	237068006	Tubbrit	237101002
Delvin	237035003	Kinnegad	237068008	Tullaghan	237102001
		Kinnegad	237068007	Umma	237103001
		Kinnegad	237068009	Winetown	237104001
				Woodland	237105001

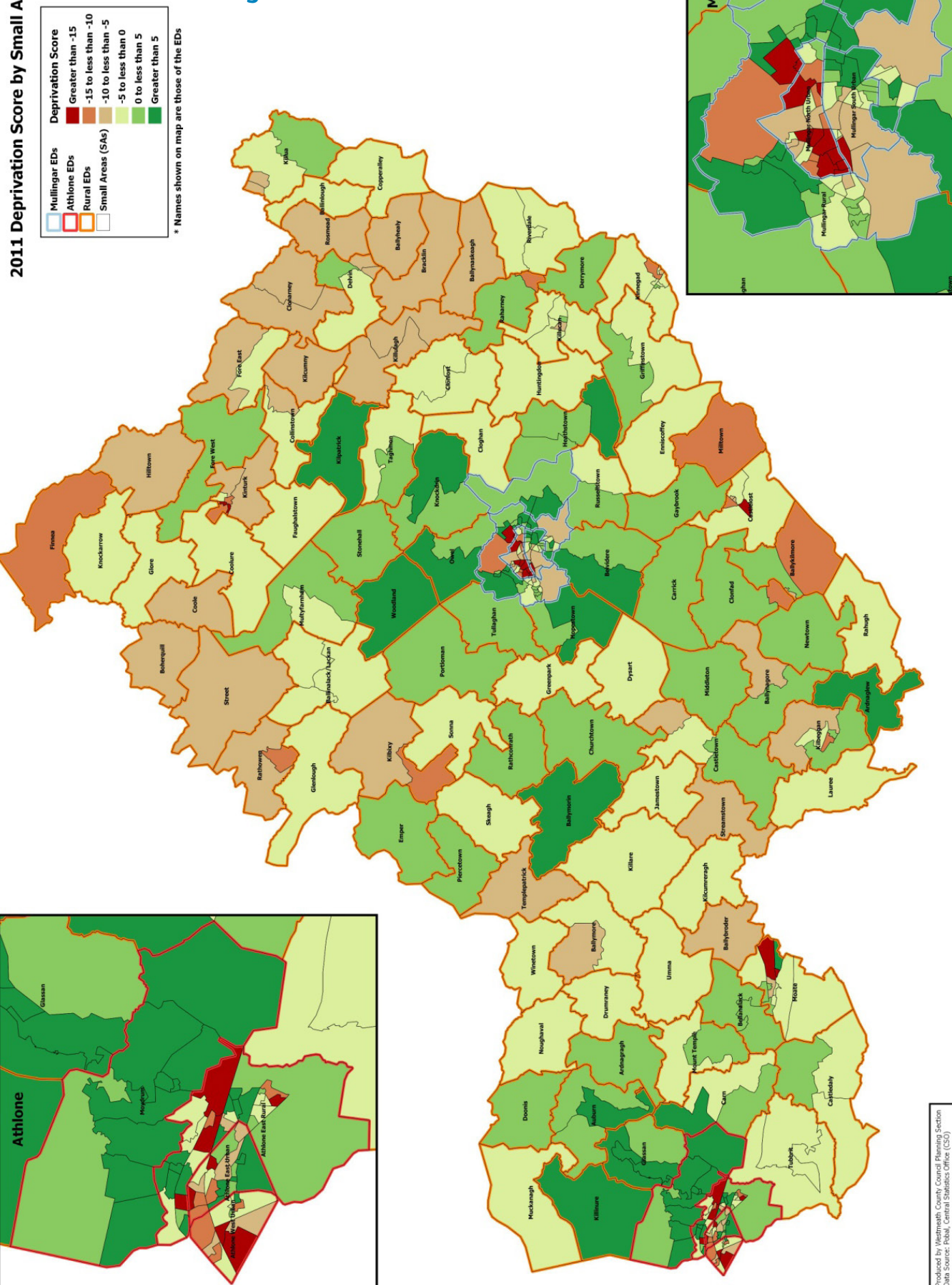
Mullingar EDs
Mullingar Rural
Mullingar North Urban
Mullingar South Urban
Castle

Athlone EDs
Moydrum
Athlone East Urban
Athlone West Urban
Athlone East Rural

Rural EDs				
Ardnaglew	Castletown	Fore West	Killulagh	Rathconrath
Ardnagragh	Churchtown	Gaybrook	Kilpatrick	Rathowen
Auburn	Cloghan	Glassan	Kinnegad	Riverdale
Ballinalack/Lackan	Clonarney	Glenlough	Kinturk	Rosmead
Ballinlough	Clonfad	Glore	Knockarrow	Russellstown
Ballybroder	Clonlost	Greenpark	Knockdrin	Skeagh
Ballyhealy	Collinstown	Griffinstown	Lauree	Sonna
Ballykilmore	Coole	Heathstown	Middleton	Stonehall
Ballymore	Coolure	Hilltown	Milltown	Streamstown
Ballymorin	Copperalley	Hopestown	Moate	Street
Ballynagore	Delvin	Huntingdon	Mount Temple	Taghmon
Ballynaskeagh	Derrymore	Jamestown	Muckanagh	Templepatrick
Bellanalack	Doonis	Kilbeggan	Multyfarnham	Tubbrit
Belvidere	Drumraney	Kilbixy	Newtown	Tullaghan
Boherquill	Dysart	Kilcumny	Noughaval	Umma
Bracklin	Emper	Kilcumreragh	Owel	Winetown
Carn	Enniscoffey	Killare	Piercetown	Woodland
Carrick	Faughalstown	Killinure	Portloman	
Castledaly	Finnea	Killua	Raharney	
Castlelost	Fore East	Killucan	Rahugh	

Appendix 7:

Westmeath Map - 2011 Deprivation Score by Small Area



Appendix 8:

Disadvantaged Areas in Westmeath

Small Area Name	With ED	Total Population 2011	Deprivation Score 2006
Clonbrusk Estate, Athlone	Athlone East Rural	295	-23.10
Altown, Athlone	Athlone East Rural	327	-18.80
Brawney Crescent, Athlone	Athlone East Rural	206	-16.70
Willow Park, Athlone	Athlone East Rural	198	-6.60
Athlone, Glenwod, Ireland	Athlone East Rural	212	-15.30
Castlemaine Street, Athlone	Athlone East Rural	165	-12.30
Athlone East Urban	Athlone East Urban	242	-8.70
Lissywollen, Athlone	Athlone East Urban	191	-18.60
Collegeland, Athlone	Athlone East Urban	246	-10.30
Auburn Villas, Athlone	Athlone East Urban	292	-21.70
Tormey Villas, Athlone	Athlone East Urban	239	-20.50
Baylough, Athlone	Athlone West Urban	230	-17.50
Parnell Square, Athlone	Athlone West Urban	374	-25.30
Cushla, Athlone	Athlone West Urban	222	-18.40
Bellaugh, Athlone	Athlone West Urban	256	-16.20
St. Joseph's Villas, Athlone	Athlone West Urban	315	-4.60
Castle Avenue, Tyrellspass, Westmeath	Ballykilmore	321	-2.30
Brookfield, Rochfortbridge	Castlelost	221	-13.00
Derrygreenagh Park, Rochfortbridge	Castlelost	347	-12.20
Tyrrellspass, Westmeath	Clonfad	305	-3.80
Finnea, Westmeath	Finnea	272	-1.90
Brosna View, Kilbeggan	Kilbeggan	292	-10.10
Ballynacarrigy, Westmeath	Kilbixy	281	-13.50
Bun Daire, Kinnegad, Westmeath	Kinnegad	277	4.60
Kinturk, Castlepollard	Kinturk	117	-11.00
Kinturk, Westmeath	Kinturk	145	-10.50
Kinturk, Castlepollard	Kinturk	134	-6.80
Kinturk, Westmeath	Kinturk	227	-12.20
Milltownpass, Westmeath	Milltown	300	-8.50
Moate, Station Road	Moate	189	-12.10
Ave Marie Park, Moate	Moate	283	-9.90
Canal Avenue, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	122	-16.80
Dominick Street, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	84	-11.40
Spoutwell Lane, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	133	-19.80
O'Growney Drive, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	157	-21.50

Dalton Park, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	211	-22.60
Ginell Terrace, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	237	-14.00
Green Road, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	262	-14.40
Columb Drive, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	196	-18.30
Woodlands Avenue, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	249	-21.20
Patrick Street, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	315	-18.00
Grange Meadows, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	421	-35.30
Rathin, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	227	-11.70
Valley Bungalows, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	236	-14.90
Raithin, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	256	-13.20
Dalton Park, Mullingar	Mullingar Rural	362	-28.50
Assumption Villas, Mullingar	Mullingar Rural	331	-15.20
Dalton Park, Mullingar	Mullingar Rural	276	-23.00
Ennell Court, Mullingar	Mullingar South Urban	234	-24.30
Raharney	Raharney	245	-10.80
Rathowen, Westmeath	Rathowen	146	-16.00

Table 5 Very Disadvantaged Areas in Westmeath

ID	Small Area	ED	Deprivation Score
237079032	Dalton Park, Ginnell	Mullingar Rural	-26.60
237079033	Dalton Park, Mullingar	Mullingar Rural	-25.90
237005001	Parnell Square, Athlone	Athlone West Urban	-25.10
237080005	Ennell Court, Mullingar	Mullingar South Urban	-24.60
237106019	Dalton Park, Springfield	Mullingar North Urban	-23.40
237003002	Auburn Villas, Athlone	Athlone East Urban	-22.10
237106006	O'Growney Drive, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	-21.90
237004021	Clonbrusk Estate, Athlone	Athlone East Rural	-21.20
237106005	Grange Meadows, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	-20.90
237106004	Woodlands Avenue, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	-20.50
237106002	Patrick Street, Mullingar	Mullingar North Urban	-20.00

Appendix 9:

Process of Preparing the Local Development Strategy 2014-2020

Task	Task Implementation	Indicative Timeline
Process Commences	Working Group established to commence process of overseeing the Compilation of the Local Development Strategy 2014-2020.	June 2015
Consultation with the Public Participation Network (PPN)	Consultation with PPN Colleges of Community, Social Inclusion and Environmental, through facilitated sessions/workshops.	PPN Meetings 1st and 2nd July 2015 in Mullingar and Athlone respectively
Consultation with LCDC	Approval of proposed process of preparing Local Development Strategy	Meeting of LCDC 17th July 2015
Consultation with Agencies and other relevant stakeholders 8 weeks	Face to Face interviews with relevant Agencies and stakeholders including but not exclusively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westmeath County Council • Westmeath Community Development • Failte Ireland • Local Enterprise Office • Teagasc • Waterways Ireland • Inland Fisheries • ETB/Solas Ireland • Chambers of Commerce(Mullingar & Athlone) • Coillte • Youth organisations (Foroige, MRYS) • Westmeath Food Network • Craft network – Made in Westmeath • Heritage Forum • Other stakeholders as appropriate 	June/ July 2015
Consultation cont'd		
Public Advertising 3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting interested parties to make submissions for inclusion in the draft LDS. To be undertaken by advertising in the local media and on relevant websites (westcd.ie and westmeathcoco.ie) 	July 2015

Task	Task Implementation	Indicative Timeline
In-house Desk Research 8 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a detailed Socio-Economic Profile of the Area • Conduct an analysis of current services being provided by statutory agencies • Conduct an analysis of the community sector and its contribution and future potential • Conduct a SWOT Analysis • Review progress under previous LEADER Programmes • Review of other programmes • Review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westmeath Draft Local Economic and Community Plan • Westmeath County Development Plan • CEDRA Report • Failte Ireland's Tourism Development Strategy • Westmeath LEO Enterprise Strategy • National Development Plan • The Renewable Energy Strategy for County Westmeath commissioned by WCD • The North Westmeath Strategy, 2006 • Survey of Food Producers in Westmeath undertaken by WCD • The Hill of Uisneach Feasibility Study commissioned and carried out in 2014/2015. 	June-July 2015
Prepare Draft Local Development Strategy 6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate submissions received • Review feedback received from PPN Meetings and Agency meetings • Devise a set of objectives for the Plan and a series of Actions with Targets and Outputs 	August/September 2015
Approval of Draft LDS	Meeting of LCDC to consider Draft LDS	September 2015
Public Consultation on the Draft LDS 3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments and views requested in the Draft Local Development Strategy 	September 2015
Finalise Local Development Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final draft prepared and submitted to LCDC for approval 	October 2015
Approval of LDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting of LCDC to consider Final LDS 	October 2015
Submission of LDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Development Strategy submitted to DECLG 	October 2015

Appendix 10:

List of Groups participating in Consultation Process including groups and individuals making written submissions.

- 1 Active Friends 08 Retirement Group
- 2 Ashdale/Woodlands Grove residents Association
- 3 Athlone Community Radio
- 4 Athlone Community Taskforce
- 5 Athlone Heritage Group
- 6 Athlone Women's Network
- 7 Athlone Women's Forum/African Connection
- 8 Ballinagore Tidy Towns
- 9 Ballymore GAA
- 10 Ballynacargy Tidy Towns
- 11 BCDL Friendship Club
- 12 Birdwatch Ireland (Midlands Branch)
- 13 BMB Active Retirement Association
- 14 Brawny Homes Association, Athlone
- 15 Brotenstown Ballinea ICA Guild
- 16 Cairde Nua - Supporting people who parent alone
- 17 Castlepollard Tidy Towns
- 18 Clonmellon Senior Citizens
- 19 Clonmellon Gets Tidy
- 20 Clonmore Heights Residents Association
- 21 Cluid Housing
- 22 Cluain Duilleog Residents Association, Moate
- 23 Collinstown/Fore ICA
- 24 Collinstown Tidy Towns
- 25 Cullion Amenity Development Group
- 26 Dalton Park Gardens
- 27 Dalton Park Group, Mullingar
- 28 Dalton Park Women's Group, Mullingar
- 29 Derrynagreenagh Park residents Association. Rochfortbridge
- 30 Drumraney Heritage Society
- 31 Emper Community Development
- 32 Forus Training, Mullingar
- 33 Gneevebawn Residents Association, Tyrrellspass
- 34 Grange Women's Group, Mullingar
- 35 Heart of Ireland Festival, Mullingar
- 36 Hillview Residents Association, Mullingar
- 37 Horseleap Streamstown Community Association
- 38 Hughes, Vera, Cartrontreel, Moate
- 39 ICA Clonmellon

40	ICA Westmeath Federation
41	Independent People with Disabilities
42	Inland Fisheries Ireland
43	Killucan Raharney Community Games
44	Kilkenny West Group, Glasson
45	Lir Historical Society, Castlepollard
46	Lismacaffrey Abbeylara Rural Development
47	Loughnavalley Community Development
48	Loughnavalley ICA
49	Lynn Heights Residents Association, Mullingar
50	Manorfield Kinnegad Residents
51	Maryland Walking Club
52	Mental Health (F. Gallagher)
53	Midland Camera Club
54	Midland Regional Youth Service
55	Milltownpass Community Action group
56	Milltownpass Social Services group
57	Moate Action Group
58	Moate Active Retirement
59	Moate Museum and Historical Society
60	Montree Residents Association, Athlone
61	Monsignor McCarthy FRC, Athlone
62	Mount Temple Active Age
63	Mount Temple Holy Trinity Graveyard Group
64	Moydrum Residents Association, Athlone
65	Moyvoughley Community Centre
66	Mullaghmeen Enterprises Ltd. Castlepollard
67	Mullingar Bowls
68	Mullingar Chamber of Commerce
69	Mullingar Charity Variety Group
70	Mullingar ICA
71	Mullingar EYE Youth Project
72	Mullingar Tidy Towns
73	Mullingar Town Band
74	New Horizon, Athlone Refugee and Asylum Seekers Support Group
75	Newbrook Grove/Drive Residents Association
76	O'Brien, Seamus, Westmeath
77	O'Dornan, Paula, A/County Librarian WCC
78	Portlick Scouts Athlone

79	Rahanine Manor Residents Committee, Rochfortbridge
80	Renew Kilbeggan
81	Rochfortbridge Men's Shed
82	Rochfortbridge Pitch and Putt
83	Rochfortbridge Social Services
84	Rosemount Community group
85	Rosemount Cycling Club
86	Rosemount GAA Social Initiative
87	Solon, Bernadette, Conservation Architect, Westmeath County Council
88	St. Mary's Active Age, Athlone
89	St. Peter's & Paul's Active Age, Athlone
90	Shannonside Stealers Wheelchair Basketball Club
91	Streamstown Tidy Village
92	Taughmon-Turin Women's Group
93	Talbot Avenue Residents Association
94	Tonnata Ltd Street Theatre, Athlone
95	The Elms Residents Association, Athlone
96	Turin Community Development
97	Valley Court Residents Association, Athlone
98	Walsh, Aidan, Castlepollard
99	Walshestown Cemetery Committee
100	Westmeath Archaeological & Historical Society
101	Westmeath Citizens Information
102	Westmeath Rural Arts Network
103	Westmeath Environmental Group
104	Willow Park Residents Association, Athlone
105	Woodlands Residents Association, Mullingar
106	WCP (Women's Community Project) Mullingar
107	WSPCA

Appendix 11:

Westmeath Local and Community Plan - High Level Goals and Objectives

Mission

To enhance the well-being and quality of life of the people of Westmeath through sustainable economic and community development

Goal 1: Economic Development

To create employment opportunities through sustainable economic development in Westmeath

Goal 1 Objectives

1.1	A strong culture of entrepreneurship in the county with an increase in the number of business start-ups and measures in place for the development and support of micro enterprise opportunities throughout the county.
1.2	Effective Research and Development facilities in place, to meet the needs of the business sector in Westmeath.
1.3	Increase employment through Foreign Direct Investment in the county of Westmeath.
1.4	Increase employment in indigenous businesses in the county of Westmeath.
1.5	To improve the competitiveness of Westmeath as a location for enterprise and economic development.
1.6	A thriving tourism sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of the county.

Goal 2: Integrated Economic and Community Development

To secure sustainable economic and community development through the maximisation of educational opportunities and the provision of essential social and physical infrastructure.

Goal 2 Objectives

2.1	Provision of affordable early childhood and educational services and programmes to address educational disadvantage.
2.2	Universal access to comprehensive third level opportunities and the availability of a range of training and development opportunities consistent with the needs of participants and employers.
2.3	Critical physical infrastructure in place including energy, water, broadband, transportation and other necessary services to facilitate economic development.
	Increase employment in indigenous businesses in the county of Westmeath.
2.4	A vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives including development of the agriculture, creative and food sectors.

Goal3: Community Development

To secure the creation of vibrant communities in County Westmeath through community development and quality of life initiatives.

Goal 3 Objectives

3.1	Co-ordination of community development initiatives including the socially excluded and enabling their active public participation.
3.2	Availability and utilisation of good quality community, recreational and amenity facilities.
3.3	Preservation of the natural environment, heritage and culture of Westmeath.
3.4	Provision of accommodation and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.
3.5	A safe and secure environment for all, in both urban and rural areas.
3.6	Availability of an adequate range of community health services and well-being supports.

Appendix 12:

Protection of Personal Data

The implementation partner Westmeath Community Development is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals and compliance with the Data Protection Acts. The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 (the “Data Protection Acts”) lay down strict rules about the way in which personal data is collected, accessed, used and disclosed. The Data Protection Acts permit individuals to access their personal data on request, and gives individuals the right to have their personal data amended if found to be incorrect. Inquiries about this Data Protection Policy can be made to The Manager, Westmeath Community Development, Enterprise Technology and Innovation Centre, Clonmore Business Park, Mullingar, County Westmeath.

Data Protection Principles

The company carries out its responsibilities under the Data Protection Acts in accordance with the following eight Data Protection principles:

1. Obtain and process information fairly. WCD will obtain and process personal data fairly and in accordance with statutory and other legal obligations.
2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes. WCD will keep personal data for purposes that are specific, lawful and clearly stated to you. Personal data will only be processed in a manner compatible with these purposes and as outlined to you.
3. Use and disclose only in ways compatible with these purposes. WCD will only disclose personal data that is necessary for the purpose/s or compatible with the purpose/s for which Westmeath Community Development collects and keeps the data as outlined to clients.
4. Keep it safe and secure. WCD will take appropriate security measures against unauthorised access to, or alteration, disclosure or destruction of personal data and against its accidental loss or destruction.
5. Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date. WCD will adopt procedures that ensure high levels of data accuracy, completeness and that data is up-to-date.
6. Ensure it is adequate, relevant and not excessive. WCD will only your personal data to the extent that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive.
7. Retain for no longer than is necessary. WCD has a retention policy for personal data.
8. Give a copy of his/ her personal data to that individual, on request. WCD adopt procedures to ensure that data subjects can exercise their rights under the Data Protection legislation to access their data when permitted by law.

Responsibility. The Data Protection Coordinator in Westmeath Community Development coordinates the provision of support, assistance, advice, and training throughout Westmeath Community Development Ltd to ensure that Westmeath Community Development is in a position to comply with the legislation. The Co-ordinator liaises with the Data Protection Commissioner’s Office for guidance on specific cases.

Security of Data. Westmeath Community Development takes seriously its security obligations in respect of your personal data under the Data Protection Acts to prevent unauthorised access to, or alteration or destruction of personal data in it’s possession.

Right of Access. Where a client has provided the company with personal data he/she has a right to be given a copy of his/her personal data in accordance with section 4 of the Data Protection Acts subject to certain exceptions. To request a copy of personal data please read Westmeath Community Development Access Request Policy before completing an Access Request Form and sending it to the Data Protection Coordinator.

Right of rectification or erasure. If the company holds incorrect information about a client which was originally submitted by the client, the client has the right to have the data amended. To request right to rectification and/or erasure please send your request to us in writing at Data Protection Coordinator, Westmeath Community Development, Technology, Innovation and Enterprise Centre, Clonmore Business Park, Mullingar, County Westmeath

Procedures and Guidelines. This Data Protection Policy is supplemented (and may be amended) by specific policies and procedures adopted by the Board of Westmeath Community Development Ltd. anybody can request copies of policies from the Manager of Westmeath Community Development.

Review. This Data Protection Policy will be reviewed regularly in light of any legislative or other relevant developments.

Appendix 13: Financial Plan

Guidance Notes

1 There are four sheets in the Financial Plan Template:

(i) Implementation of operations/projects under the LDS: these costs relate to the development of the LDS and the implementation of the strategy e.g. calls for projects and the award of funding to local promoters. This template must be consistent with the information provided in the LDS Action Plan (See Section 4 -

(ii) Administration and Animation Costs: this template includes costs relating to animation of the LDS in the sub-regional area through promotion, stakeholder engagement and capacity building activities targeting project promoters and the wider community. It also includes all operational and management costs

(iii) Staffing: this template provides a breakdown of the LAG's salary costs in relation to delivering the LDS.

(iv) Summary: this sheet is automatically populated by information entered in the other templates.

2 The financial plan covers the lifetime of the LEADER programme.

3 N.B. The total administration and animation costs must not exceed 25% of the total budget cost.

4 You are required to read the explanatory notes at the end of the sheet before completing the template.

5 Any cells that are white must be filled out. Shaded cells are automatically populated and are locked.

6 The template should not be altered in any way as this will render the template invalid.

7 All four sheets must be fully completed.

Implementation of Operations/Projects under the LDS

	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total €
Preparatory Support for the Development of the LDS							
Preparatory Costs for the LDS	€25,500						€25,500
Theme 1: Economic / Enterprise Development & Job Creation							
1.1 Rural Tourism		€157,500	€236,250	€315,000	€393,750	€472,500	€1,575,000
1.2 Enterprise Development		€57,500	€86,250	€115,000	€143,750	€172,500	€575,000
1.3 Rural Towns		€129,362	€194,044	€258,725	€343,406	€418,088	€1,343,625
1.4 Broadband		€20,000	€30,000	€35,000	€35,000	€54,840	€174,840
							€0
Sub-Total	€0	€364,362	€546,544	€723,725	€915,906	€1,117,928	€3,668,465
Theme 2: Social Inclusion							
2.1 Basic Services for hard to Reach Communities		€120,000	€180,000	€240,000	€300,000	€360,000	€1,200,000
2.2 Rural Youth		€26,903	€40,355	€53,806	€67,257	€80,709	€269,030
							€0
							€0
							€0
Sub-Total	€0	€146,903	€220,355	€293,806	€367,257	€440,709	€1,469,030
Theme 3: Rural Environment							
3.1 Protection & sustainable use of water resources		€5,000	€7,500	€10,000	€12,500	€15,000	€50,000
3.2 Protection & improvement of local biodiversity		€10,000	€15,000	€20,000	€25,000	€56,000	€126,000
3.3 Development of renewable energy		€25,000	€37,500	€50,000	€62,500	€75,000	€250,000
							€0
							€0
Sub-Total	€0	€40,000	€60,000	€80,000	€100,000	€146,000	€426,000
Total Budget Cost	€25,500	€551,265	€826,899	€1,097,531	€1,383,163	€1,704,637	€5,588,995

Explanatory Notes

- Preparatory Support:** this cost relates to preparatory supports for the development of the LDS for 2015 as referenced in the Expression of Interest (Stage 1 of the LDS Selection Process).
- Sub-Themes:** LAGs are required to provide an estimated annual breakdown of expenditure against each LDS local objective, which is aligned to a sub-theme. NB: actual expenditure will not be monitored against this estimate. It is acknowledged that the financial estimates will change over the course of the programme.
- The details provided under each Sub-Theme and Local Objective number above should correspond with the information provided in Appendix 1: LDS Action Plan Template (Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines)
- Please contact Pobal if an additional number of objectives are required.

Administration & Animation Costs

	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total (€)
Rent and Rates		€13,830	€14,703	€15,144	€15,598	€16,066	€75,341
Office Costs		€16,280	€16,768	€17,271	€16,697	€17,198	€84,214
Insurance		€9,126	€9,400	€9,682	€9,972	€10,271	€48,451
Recruitment		€2,000		€2,000			€4,000
Staffing - Salaries	€0	€240,738	€264,875	€270,935	€278,822	€284,781	€1,340,151
Staff Training		€2,500	€1,500	€2,500	€1,500	€1,500	€9,500
Communications/Publicity/Advertising		€7,000	€7,000	€7,000	€6,500	€6,000	€33,500
Evaluation		€1,000	€1,000	€5,000	€1,000	€5,000	€13,000
Financial/Professional Fees		€3,500	€4,000	€4,000	€4,500	€5,000	€21,000
Travel & Subsistence		€9,500	€10,500	€11,000	€11,500	€12,000	€54,500
Animation Costs		€5,500	€5,500	€5,753	€3,500	€1,540	€21,793
Other		€17,960	€17,960	€17,960	€17,960	€17,920	€89,760
Total Budget Cost	€0	€328,934	€353,206	€368,245	€367,549	€377,276	€1,795,210

Explanatory Notes

- The total cost for animation and administration cannot exceed 25% of the Total Budget Cost.** See Summary Sheet for validation.
- Rent and Rates:** This cost refers to the rental cost of LEADER office; electricity and heating costs; service charges; and any Local Authority rates.
- Office Costs:** This cost includes but is not confined to other overhead costs such as: postage and couriers, mobile, landline, fax, broadband, printing and office supplies, IT maintenance, repairs and maintenance, purchase / lease of equipment, sundry expenses.
- Insurance:** This cost covers insurance for both premises and staff.
- Staffing:** This covers the entire LEADER salary budget for each year including Employers PRSI and pension contributions. See staffing sheet for more information.
- Communications/Publicity/Advertising:** This includes the animation costs involved in raising awareness of the LDS strategy and other communication costs that relate to LEADER.
- Evaluation:** This cost may include the fees of external evaluators and any other costs involved in the implementation of an evaluation strategy (e.g. data collection, surveys, focus groups)
- Financial/Professional Fees:** These costs include legal costs; audit and accountancy costs. NB: Bank interest or loan interest is not an eligible cost.
- Travel & Subsistence:** These costs refer to T&S incurred in the management or administration of LEADER by the staff of the LAG.
- Animation Costs:** These are any costs incurred in promoting the LDS in the sub-regional area such as capacity building and training and technical support for potential project promoters. Costs may include venue hire, materials, sub-contractors with expertise in specific areas (e.g. facilitation, training, enterprise, economic development etc.). This cost does not include any salary costs relating to LEADER staff or any publicity / awareness raising costs. These are covered by other budget lines. Any costs associated with the preparation of the LDS is not to be included as animation costs.
- Other:** Provide details of any other costs that may be associated with the administration or animation of LEADER.

Staffing Costs

Title of Staff Role / Position	Full Time Equivalent	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total (€)
Programme Manager	0.5		€47,891	€49,502	€50,430	€52,058	€53,689	€253,570
Financial Controller	0.15		€11,459	€11,459	€11,459	€13,790	€14,271	€62,438
Administrator	0.5		€29,437	€30,179	€31,041	€31,904	€32,767	€155,328
Monitoring and Support Officer	0.15		€10,800	€11,072	€11,408	€11,743	€12,079	€57,102
Projects Officer	1		€76,621	€76,621	€76,621	€76,621	€76,621	€383,105
Development Officer	1		€32,265	€43,021	€44,988	€46,353	€47,677	€214,304
Development Officer	1		€32,265	€43,021	€44,988	€46,353	€47,677	€214,304
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
								€0
Total:	4.3	€0	€240,738	€264,875	€270,935	€278,822	€284,781	€1,340,151

Explanatory Notes

1 The total staffing costs outlined above must equal the staffing costs in the Administration/Animation Budget Sheet.

2 When including the salary costs, only include the amount of costs being allocated for work completed on Leader. i.e. if 0.6 of an FTE is being allocated to Leader only 60% of the total salary costs should be charged to the programme. The salary cost for each member of staff must include Employers' PRSI and any pension contributions.

3 The full-time equivalent is the actual time that funded staff will allocate to LEADER activities. This takes into account staff who may be funded to work part-time on

LEADER and part-time on other programmes. Where staff time is apportioned to LEADER and other funding programmes, the amount of public funding cannot exceed 100% of the total salary cost. Please indicate the full-time equivalent as follows:

5 day week = 1 FTE

5 day week = 1 FTE

4 day week = 0.8 FTE

3 day week = 0.6 FTE

2 day week = 0.4 FTE

1 day week = 0.2 FTE

4 As part of the LDS, a job description must be provided for each member of LEADER staff (see Section 1 of the LDS Framework).

Summary Sheet

	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	Total (€)
Preparatory Support for the Development of the LDS	€25,500	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0	€25,500
Implementation of operations/projects under the LDS							
Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation	€0	€364,362	€546,544	€723,725	€915,906	€1,117,928	€3,668,465
Theme 2: Social Inclusion	€0	€146,903	€220,355	€293,806	€367,257	€440,709	€1,469,030
Theme 3: Rural Environment	€0	€40,000	€60,000	€80,000	€100,000	€146,000	€426,000
LAG Administration & Animation Costs	€0	€328,934	€353,206	€368,245	€367,549	€377,276	€1,795,210
Total	€25,500	€880,199	€1,180,105	€1,465,776	€1,750,712	€2,081,913	€7,384,205

	Cost (€)	% of Total Budget Cost	Validation
Total Administration & Animation Costs:	€1,795,210	24%	Okay

Explanatory Notes

- 1 The total cost for animation and administration cannot exceed 25% of the Total Budget Cost. If administration and animation costs exceed 25%, the budget must be revised.
- 2 This sheet should be automatically filled in with figures from the other templates. Please contact Pobal directly if this is not the case.

Appendix 14:

Declaration and Disclaimer

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):	PAT GALLAGHER
Signature:	
Position:	CHAIRMAN, WESTMEATH LCDC (and Chief Executive, Westmeath Co. Council)
Date:	20/11/15