

Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (LEADER) County Leitrim Local Development Strategy

in partnership with...



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Glossary

BTWEA	Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
CEDRA	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas
CLLD	Community Led Local Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DECLG	Department of Environment, Community & Local Government
DSP	Department of Social Protection
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ED	Electoral Division
EoI	Expression of Interest
ISS	Inspection Services Section
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAG	Local Action Group
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LCC	Leitrim County Council
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LDC	Leitrim Development Company
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Developement de L'Economie Rurale or Links between actions for the development of the rural economy
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
MANS	Metropolitan Area Networks
MD	Municipal District
NEETS	Not in Education, Employment or Training
REDZ	Rural Economic Development Zones
RDOC	Rural Development Operational Committee
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SAP	Small Area Population
SICAP	Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme
SILC	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SME	Small & Medium Enterprises
TCC	Tax Clearance Certificate
WDC	Western Development Commission

Chairperson's Foreword

We are pleased to commend to you the County Leitrim Local Development Strategy (LDS) for the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (LEADER). This plan has been prepared based on consultation with communities across County Leitrim specifically on the Rural Development Programme priorities as well as building on and taking cognisance of the consultation and outcomes which informed the Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan.



The vision for this LDS is:

"Through a coherent strategy, we strive towards a vibrant, healthy rural economy in County Leitrim delivering actions that will transform rural communities into stable, thriving socio economic hubs of inclusive community spirit, environmental best practice and superior quality of life"

The budget for the Leitrim Local Development Strategy priorities and actions set out below is €5,990,686. The plan sets out the management structure proposed for the programme which involves Leitrim Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) acting as the Local Action Group (LAG) and having responsibility for all decisions on all expenditure including grant funding actions and awards under the LDS. Leitrim Development Company, a partner organisation will be the implementing partner with responsibility for implementing actions in the county on behalf of the LAG through a Service Level Agreement. Leitrim County Council, another partner organisation will be the lead financial partner also through a Service Level Agreement. Both Leitrim Development Company and Leitrim County Council have extensive experience of working together to deliver successful programmes and projects in the past.

The Leitrim LCDC met five times during the development of the LDS at which they guided and directed the development of the strategy. LAG members attended all of the consultation events and contributed to the development of the strategy. The LCDC also reviewed, discussed and approved the priorities and drafts of the LDS as it developed. The LCDC has agreed that this vision for Leitrim in the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 programme will be delivered through the following priorities.

- Priority 1 - Thriving Authentic Tourism Sector with the aim to increase the numbers of tourists and visitors to the county by investing in and developing products and services, infrastructure, accommodation, festivals and events
- Priority 2 - Dynamic and Diversified Rural Economy focusing on the development and enhancement of the microenterprise and SME sector in the county in collaboration with Leitrim Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland
- Priority 3 - Vibrant Towns and Villages which enhance our towns and villages to become hubs of economic and social activity and services
- Priority 4 - Enhanced ICT Awareness and Knowledge so as to assist in the development of Leitrim through the provision of ICT training and supports
- Priority 5 - Sustainable Inclusive Communities to be built by improving services and access to services and community activities for hard to reach and disadvantaged/isolated community members.

- Priority 6 - Protection, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Local Biodiversity and Water Resources which will promote community led actions for the conservation of our natural environment and water resources within County Leitrim.
- Priority 7 - Harnessing Our Natural Resources which aims to promote the efficient use of energy and the uptake of renewable energy by community groups, businesses and individuals.

The Plan sets out the detail of how these priorities will be achieved and we look forward to focusing on the implementation as our work will ultimately be judged on the basis of what we all jointly achieve for County Leitrim.



Frank Curran,
Chairperson, Leitrim LCDC

1 The Local Action Group/Governance Model

This section of the Local Development Strategy will provide a concise overview of how the Local Action Group (LAG) partnership will operate in terms of management, finances and organisational capacity. Details of the LAG along with roles and responsibilities will be outlined. The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in County Leitrim is the Local Action Group with ultimate responsibility for the delivery, implementation, finances and the monitoring and review of the Rural Development Programme (LEADER) 2014-2020 through this Local Development Strategy (LDS). The LCDC will have responsibility for all decisions on all expenditure including grant funding actions and awards under the LDS.

Leitrim Development Company, a partner organisation has been delegated the role of lead implementing partner with responsibility for implementing actions in the county on behalf of the LAG through a Service Level Agreement. Leitrim County Council, another partner organisation has been delegated the role of lead financial partner also through a service level agreement. Both Leitrim Development Company and Leitrim County Council have extensive experience of working together to deliver successful programmes and projects in the past.

1.1 Organisation Details & Primary Contact

The legal name and contact details of the Local Action Group (LAG) for County Leitrim will be; Leitrim Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), Aras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim

The primary contact person for RDP LEADER is Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services Planning and Economic Development, Chief Officer LCDC, Aras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, tel: 071 962 0005, email: lcdc@leitrimcoco.ie

1.2 Legal Description of the LAG

The Leitrim LCDC is a sub-committee of the Local Authority which was formally constituted in June 2014 in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001, as amended in January 2014. The Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) number for Leitrim County Council is 00035121-30449R and the expiry date is 31/03/2016.

The work of the LCDC will be done on the basis of constructive co-operation between all LCDC members, and active participation based on a partnership approach. All members of the LCDC have equal status. The LCDC as the LAG will recognise and respect the important role that other organisations and agencies play in economic and social development. They will also seek to ensure that strong partnerships are maintained with these organisations to ensure collaboration and reduce duplication of efforts and resources.

The primary role of the LCDC is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. This involves:

- Co-ordination of local development spend;
- Oversight of local and community development programmes;
- Greater citizen and community engagement in local and community development programmes;
- Exploring and pursuing opportunities for additional funding resources.

1.3 LAG Composition

The legislation and guidelines define the LAG (LCDC) composition. There are 17 members on the LCDC. Nine of the 17 members are drawn from the non-statutory sector. This membership and the LCDC Standing Orders will ensure that more than 50% of the votes in decisions are cast by members which do not represent statutory agencies. The membership of the LCDC is outlined as follows: (Biographies indicating the skills and experience of the LCDC (LAG) members are outlined in **Appendix 1**).

Table 1.1: LAG Composition

Sector	Name	Agency, Organisation, etc.
Local Government – 5 Places Minimum Minimum 3 members of the Local Authority (LA). Minimum of 2 persons employed by the LA	Mr Frank Curran (LCDC Chairperson) Mr Joe Lowe Cllr Finola Armstrong Maguire Cllr Felim Gurn Cllr Paddy O'Rourke	CEO, Leitrim County Council (LCC) Manager LEO, LCC Elected Rep. Carrick-on-Shannon MD Elected Rep. Manorhamilton MD Elected Rep. Ballinamore MD
State Agencies – 2 Places Minimum Minimum 2 places representing public authorities with responsibilities for providing services to or within the administrative area of the committee	Mr Ben Wilkinson Mr Eugene Walsh Mr Frank Morrison	Teagasc, Area Management Unit (AMU) Manager Department of Social Protection (DSP) Health Service Executive (HSE)
Private sector - Members of the Committee include: A minimum of 2 persons representing community and voluntary (C&V) interests:	Mr Des Quinn Ms Maureen Martin	Elected by the PPN from the C&V college (Rep Aughawillan Area) Elected by the PPN from the C&V college (Rep Ballinamore Area)
Private sector - a minimum of 2 persons representing social inclusion interests within the administrative area of the Committee.	Mr Greg Turano Ms Ita Flynn	Elected by the PPN from Social Inclusion College (Rep Intercultural Forum.) Elected by the PPN from Social Inclusion College (Rep. LAPWD / People with Disabilities)
Private sector - a minimum of 1 person representing environmental interests within the administrative area of the Committee	Dr Aedin McLoughlin	Elected by the PPN from the Environmental College (Rep Good Energies Alliance Ireland (GEAI))
Private sector Max. of 3 persons representing local/community development bodies operating within the administrative area of the LCDC subject to a max of 1 representative per development body.	Ms Assumpta Kelly Mr Pat Monahan	Nominated by Family Resource Centres/Community Development Projects. (Rep. North Leitrim Women's Centre). Nominated by the Board of Leitrim Development Company

Sector	Name	Agency, Organisation, etc.
Private sector - such number of persons representing local and community interests and social partners as may be considered appropriate by the Chief Officer in consultation with the CPG	Ms Bernadette Gallagher Mr Pat Gilhooley	Nominated by representing the Business pillar. Nominated by the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and representing the Farming Sector.

The Chief Officer in so far as is practicable will ensure an equitable gender balance on the committee (Currently at 35% (6 of the 17 members)). The LAG (LCDC) will endeavour to move towards 50% gender balance during the lifetime of the programme. Membership of the Committee will be reviewed every three years (from the establishment of the LCDC), or upon instruction to do so by the Minister or the Department of Environment Community and Local Government (DECLG). Arrangements and structures will be set out as in the LCDC standing orders, the LAG procedures manual and RDP operating rules and actioned at Local Authority level for rotation of members representing; community and voluntary interests, social inclusion interests, environmental interests, statutory agencies, local community interests and social partners. When retirement or other vacancy arises, the members shall be replaced from within the pillar the retired member represented on the LCDC. If a member retires and is not eligible for reappointment, the Chief Officer of the LCDC shall make the necessary arrangements for that member to be replaced as appropriate from and by the sector which they represented. All other information in relation to the selection/nomination process is outlined in the Standing Orders of the LCDC September 2014 (**Appendix 2**).

1.4 Decision Making

The decision making by the LCDC as the LAG will operate on an open partnership structure where every member will have the opportunity to contribute to and influence all decisions. At decision making level neither public authorities nor any single interest group shall represent more than 49% of the voting rights of the Committee. Any vote taken where any single interest group or public authority represents more than 49% of the voting rights on the Committee at that meeting shall be deemed invalid. In addition, a minimum of 51% of the members who are voting in any project selection decision must come from non-public sector partners. To ensure the LAG decisions are representative and support a CLLD approach, a minimum of 60% of LAG members must be present during decisions on project funding. This requirement applies to decisions validated by the LAG membership after all relevant and possible conflicts of interest have been addressed. Recognising the largely voluntary nature of the individuals involved in RDP LEADER decision-making, the requirement for a 60% quorum for decision making can be supported by a written decision making procedure which will allow flexibility and makes it easier to meet the 60% requirement. This will be in line with the operating rules (ORs) and the standing orders (**Appendix 2**).

The LCDC has established a Rural Development Operational Committee (RDOC) which is a partnership working group (subcommittee) of the LCDC with three representatives from the LCDC (the decision making LAG), three from Leitrim County Council (the Lead Financial Partner) and three from Leitrim Development Company (the Lead Implementing Partner). The RDOC is supported by staff from Leitrim County Council and from Leitrim Development Company. This Rural Development Operational Committee will report directly to the LAG (LCDC) and makes recommendations, presents information and options to the LAG (LCDC)

The RDOC will also discuss, formulate, agree and draft all LAG policies, procedures etc. as appropriate and as directed by the LAG (LCDC) so that the LAG can make considered decisions. A list of key procedures/policies of the LAG (implementing body) that are currently in place for the operation of the organisation are outlined in **Appendix 3**. The Terms of Reference and operating procedures etc. for the RDOC will be detailed in the Procedures Manual for the LAG and the roles and responsibilities of the partners will form part of the Service Level Agreements between the LAG and each of the partners. Figure 1.1 below represents the structures and various information and decision pathways which the Leitrim LCDC has adopted to ensure smooth development of the LDS and implementation, delivery and oversight of the RDP 2014-2020 LDS.

In the development of the RDP programme for Leitrim and its ongoing implementation there are now three bodies/organisations (The LCDC, LCC and LDC) with different roles, responsibilities, functions and different levels of authority in the processes. The RDOC will allow these different and independent bodies to develop a common, unified and single understanding of and approach to the LEADER programme. The RDOC will enable these three bodies to establish, develop and integrate systems and processes across the three entities which will be timely in seamlessly supporting applicants from expression of interest, to application, evaluation, approval, payment and through inspections, etc. These organisations also have to embed a deep understanding of the LDS and its smooth, correct and consistent implementation and reporting to various Government Departments and other organisations. There are gaps and possible risks between and among these entities to leave all of the work required to the monthly or bimonthly LCDC meetings. These LCDC meetings cover a wide range of topics and programmes and therefore the work of the RDOC will support the LCDC in its role. It is consequently not possible in the LCDC meetings to give adequate time for the detailed discussions on the various policies, procedures and day to day issues with the RDP programme which will allow it to arrive at solid and considered decisions.

Considered and detailed recommendations, draft procedures, draft documents, policies and draft call details, etc. can be put together through and by the RDOC sub-committee which can be recommended and presented to the LCDC for their further consideration, amendment and the ultimate decisions.

Other roles of the Rural Development Operational Committee will be as follows

- The RDOC provides the various parties involved and contributing directly to the LDS and the LAG a forum where the day to day issues of implementation, communication, understanding, etc. can be established.
- The RDOC also allows the practitioners as in the staff (LCC and LDC) who are working on the programme to meet each other and develop a common understanding of the various and many aspects to the programme, to tease out any issues, situations, etc. and also to inform the process of decision making and the LCDC with their experiences and knowledge.
- The RDOC provides a less formal forum than the LCDC for the exchange of views, approaches, concerns, etc. so as to improve communication between the various parties (LAG, Implementing and Financial Partners) involved in the Leitrim RDP 2014-2020

- To tease out all of the detailed issues which may arise in developing policies (tourism, festivals, enterprise, etc.), the procedures manual, defining calls and discussing the detail for scheduling of calls, compiling reviews and reports for the LCDC etc.

It is expected that the RDOC sub-committee will be much more active at the early stages (first year or two) of the development, establishment and implementation of the programme rather than later on when the understanding of the systems, processes, procedures, interactions and communication become much more embedded between the various parties, personnel and structures. The RDOC as a sub-committee of the LCDC recognises that the LCDC is responsible for decision making on all items relating to the LEADER Programme 2014-2020. Furthermore, the RDOC is very aware that the independent evaluation committee will be assessing and evaluating all of the applications and proposals which come forward for grant aid and that it will not have any role in this.

The Evaluation Committee will be established by the LAG (see also Section 1.8.4) to evaluate projects applications submitted under RDP LEADER 2014-2020 and to make recommendations to the LCDC (LAG) on the eligibility, suitability etc. of projects for funding. The LAG Procedures Manual and Operating Rules (OR) will detail how it will address potential conflicts of interest. The LAG meets monthly and it is expected to continue to meet monthly throughout the programme period.

The Chairperson of the LCDC will endeavour to ensure meaningful, focused and inclusive participation by all LCDC members in the decision-making process. The Standing Orders and operational issues may be amended in line with the operating rules by the LCDC from time to time. At the LCDC meetings all acts of the Committee and all decisions will be determined in line with the operating rules and circulars or other referenced associated National/EU regulations or requirements in the following manner;

- (1) by a consensus of those members present and eligible to vote, or
- (2) where consensus cannot be achieved, by a majority of the votes of the members present and eligible to vote.

Figure 1.1: Decision Making and Information Sharing Pathways



1.5 LAG Roles and Responsibilities

1.5.1 Role of LCDC as the LAG

The Leitrim LCDC as LAG will have ultimate responsibility for the overall delivery of the RDP 2014-2020 LEADER programme. Within this broad outline the following roles are included:

- (a) Set the overall strategic direction and the LDS priorities;
- (b) Agree tasks for LAG partners in the implementation of the LDS including the lead financial partner and implementation partner roles and agree the SLA which will define these tasks, requirements, etc. with the partners;
- (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 and any changes or alterations;
- (e) Monitoring and review performance of partners and progress under the LDS and agree corrective action where required.

In County Leitrim, the LCDC as the proposed LAG has decided that two members on the LCDC will take operational roles as partners in the delivery of RDP LEADER 2014-2020; Leitrim Development Company as lead Implementing Partner and Leitrim County Council as lead Financial Partner. Further details of the roles and responsibilities within the LAG member organisations are set out in **Appendix 4**.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) will be drawn up between the LCDC (operating as the LAG) and Leitrim Development Company, the local development company for County Leitrim with regard to its role as Implementing Partner and between the LCDC and Leitrim County Council in relation to its role as Financial Partner for the RDP 2014-2020 LEADER programme.

1.5.2 Role of Leitrim Development Company as Lead Implementing Partner

The Leitrim LCDC as the LAG for RDP LEADER 2014-2020 has built a close and effective working relationship with Leitrim Development Company who has extensive experience as the LAG in implementing and delivering the RDP LEADER 2007-2013 Programme and other EU and national funding programmes. Leitrim Development Company as lead Implementing Partner will be responsible for all expressions of Interests (EOI), project development, project level monitoring, animation, administering all projects, calls for proposals, applications, assessments, presenting projects to the evaluation and the LCDC (LAG), processing claims and acting as the main communication point for the programme. It will have responsibility for the implementation and successful conclusion of the programme on behalf of the LAG. Leitrim Development Company will manage its own staff who will work on all aspects of the programme implementation.

1.5.3 Role of Leitrim County Council as Lead Financial Partner

Leitrim County Council will be responsible for the overall administrative and financial management of the LAG. As lead Financial Partner it will account for the budget and finances of the programme. They will take responsibility for maintaining and retaining records of all financial aspects of the programme, providing an audit trail for each project and ensuring projects payments are correct and up to date. The Chief Officer (and supporting staff) was appointed by the Chief Executive to assist the LCDC and manage the business of the LCDC (LAG). Leitrim County Council will provide administrative and secretariat support to the LCDC. Such supports will include, arranging and accommodating LCDC meetings including drafting

and circulating minutes and agendas, notifications of information and documentation to the LCDC members, etc. They will also be responsible for the preparation of Local Authority policy and position papers and for organisational and support activities for the LCDC.

The lead Financial Partner's role will include the following;

1. Providing advance administration and animation funding to the implementation partner;
2. Approving the issuing of contracts following Article 28 administrative checks;
3. Making payments to promoters on behalf of the LAG;
4. Requesting quarterly drawdown of monies from DECLG.

The lead Financial Partner will underwrite/indemnify the LAG and its members for all actions taken in implementing the LDS. It 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 48 verification process. Additional verification processes can be implemented if agreed between the LAG and the Financial Partner.

This partnership approach to programme delivery will offer economies of scale and will seek to streamline the delivery of the programme as far as possible. The LAG will clearly outline in the detailed Procedures Manual the separation of duties between it and the partner organisations and to the different levels and separation of duties within the partners providing a statement outlining the roles and responsibilities of the LAG and the partners with specific implementation tasks.

1.6 LAG Financial Management

Leitrim County Council, the Financial Partner, in collaboration and partnership with Leitrim Development Company, the Implementing Partner, will operate through the EU RDP IT System (developed by DECLG/Pobal) to manage the programme. The administration, information and communications technology systems of both partners will be critical to the day to day operations of the programme. Procedures for input and sign off on the RDP IT system will also be agreed between the LAG and its partners and will be documented in the LAG Procedures Manual.

1.6.1 Financial Management - Procedures Manual

Leitrim County Council's financial management and reporting system operates through the principals of accrual accounting, which represents best financial practice both nationally and internationally. The Council use the Agresso financial management system for General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Purchasing, Bank Reconciliation, Integrated Cash Receipting, Billing and Financial Reporting. This system is supported by the LGMA to assist Local Authorities in managing significant annual budgets and to aid Local Authorities to provide an online environment for their customers and suppliers.

Leitrim County Council has a proven capacity to comply with rigorous EU, INTERREG and SEUPB financial requirements in the delivery of infrastructural projects and programmes over the last ten years. In this regard, the Council maintain procedure manuals across the financial disciplines and processes listed above. These manuals are reviewed periodically to reflect changes in process, regulation and policy. The relevant items from these manuals related to the lead Financial Partner role will be incorporated to form part of the LAG's Procedures Manual to take account of the EU RDP requirements and the Operating Rules of the RDP LEADER 2014–2020. The purpose of the LAG Procedures Manual is to comply with

accreditation requirements as referenced in EU and Government Regulations and to guide the LCDC on all relevant procedures in their decision making.

Leitrim County Council maintains an Internal Audit function to monitor internal control and financial compliance within the organisation, while the council is also audited externally on an annual basis by the Local Government Audit Service. The procedures outlined in the LAG manuals will be updated from time to time to reflect changing circumstances and will be in accordance with the Operating Rules (OR) and any circulars or changes therein.

1.6.2 Public Procurement

The LAG and all partners will ensure that the correct procurement procedures will be used for RDP LEADER 2014-2020. All public procurement will be in line with the EU Public Procurement Directives and the National Public Procurement Guidelines. The LAG and all implementing partners will ensure that all project files contain an audit trail for all actions undertaken for procurement. These will contain, where relevant, copies of:

- i. Request for Tender;
- ii. Evidence of publication;
- iii. Responses to those tender requests;
- iv. Tender scoring sheets used and evidence to back up the reason why the successful tender was chosen;
- v. Copies of letters notifying unsuccessful tenders of the result of the tender process;
- vi. Copy of letter notifying the successful tender.

All projects involving construction works must adhere to the requirements of www.constructionprocurement.gov.ie.

Leitrim Development Company as lead Implementing Partner will provide information to the LAG and all project promoters about the requirements relating to procurement. The lead Implementing Partner will prepare and produce a detailed guidance note (or aide Memoir) on procurement (including both low value and high value processes) which will be approved by the LAG (LCDC) and provided to all partners and project promoters. This guidance will also be adhered to by the LAG and its partners in all of their RDP activities and expenditure. This will form part of the LAG procedures manual for RDP LEADER 2014-2020.

1.6.3 Financial Partner

Leitrim County Council will be the lead Financial Partner in County Leitrim. As Financial Partner ensuring that the RDP funds will be filed in a separate suite of codes on the Agresso Financial Management System. This data and information will be subject to the range of RDP audits, Article 28 checks, Article 48, Inspection Services Section (ISS), Certification Audits and the EU Court of Auditors. Local Government audits will also be conducted on the expenditure. A financial procedures document for the LAG incorporating the processes and procedures for each partner and between the various parties, including the LAG, the Financial Partner, the Implementing Partner and the project promoters will be developed and approved by the LAG once the LDS is approved.

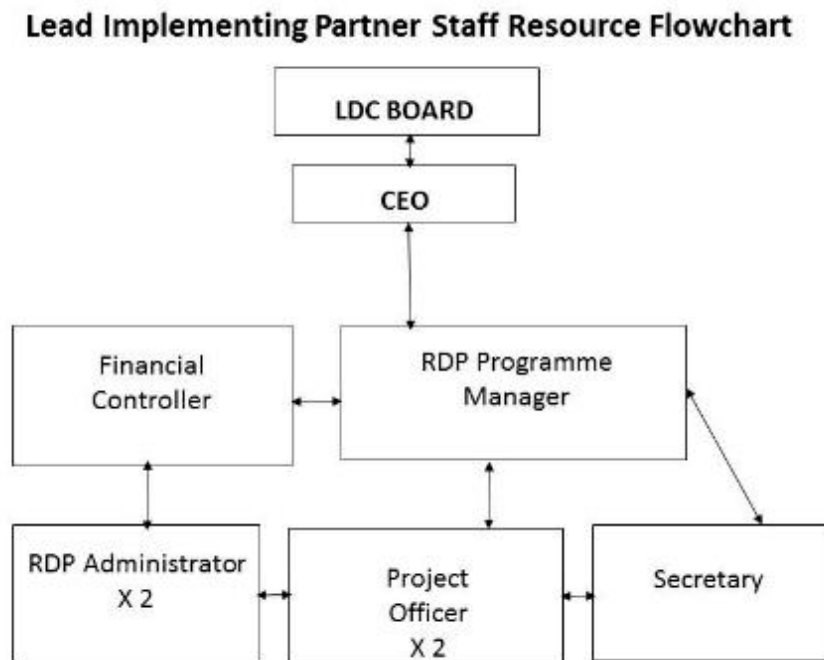
1.7 LEADER Staffing

The LCDC has no staff members and Leitrim County Council provides executive administrative and secretariat support to the LCDC from its own staff compliment as outlined previously.

1.7.1 Lead Implementing Partner

The staff team of 3.89 FTE (Full Time Equivalent including 8 individual staff in various roles) from the lead Implementing Partner, Leitrim Development Company will deliver the RDP LEADER 2014-2020. Figure 1.2 below illustrates the planned staff resources;

Figure 1.2: Lead Implementing Partner Staff Resources Flowchart



Leitrim Development Company retains qualified, well trained and very experienced staff who have a very strong commitment to the company and also to the development of the county and its citizens. These staff have a proven track record over six years to a high quality of work and standards in the delivery of the RDP LEADER 2007-2013. Leitrim Development Company operated as the LAG since 2009 and the staff who worked to support project promoters and to animate the territory and to deliver on RDP 2007-2013 will work on the implementation of the RDP LEADER 2014-2020. The Company pay rates are on the Pobal scale, recognises the qualifications, experience and length of service of the staff members, are similar to other LAGs and also favourably comparable to similar positions in Local Authorities and to staff on other EU funded programme such as PEACE. Four staff which amounts to 3.07 FTE (79% of the FTE RDP staffing) will work directly on the delivery of the actions in this LDS. The other staff (CEO and Financial Controller) will also contribute to the delivery of actions from time to time. The LAG (Leitrim LCDC) recognises that Leitrim Development Company has contractual arrangements and other employment obligations to their staff. The staffing requirements, pay rates, apportionment, etc. and the administration budget for RDP 2014-2020 was framed and developed as part of the preparation of the LDS and was fully approved by the LAG taking into account value for money, reasonableness of cost, experiences and contributions of the two partners and other such considerations, rules and regulations of the programme.

In Leitrim Development Company, the CEO is responsible for the oversight and management of the company and all of its functions and this will include oversight of the delivery (implementation functions) of the RDP LEADER 2014-2020. Day to day management and co-ordination of the RDP LEADER will be carried out by the RDP Programme Manager (Deputy CEO) with the project officers and the project administration staff. Five of the staff (Brian Smyth, James Duffy Ashling Cartwright, Ann Curneen and Kathleen Flanagan) will work on a day to day basis engaging directly with project promoters or/and in the animation and support roles. These are the same staff members who worked with and supported over 350 project promoters and who implemented and managed the RDP LEADER 2007-2013 as the LAG from 2009. These people have a very detailed knowledge of the programme and its requirements and they have a deep understanding and knowledge of the various sectors (business, tourism, recreation, farming, services, etc.) and of the community/voluntary and environmental sector and their needs throughout the county. The financial control and company secretarial functions are the responsibility of the Financial Controller, who reports to the CEO and the Board. The SLA Contract for implementation functions of the RDP will be managed by the CEO, reporting to the Board of the Company. Financial oversight of the implementing budget will be the responsibility of the Financial Controller, who will be assisted by other (RDP) administration staff. The company has an executive committee, for purposes of internal management which is comprised of board members, with delegated responsibility for dealing with personnel, procedures and financial issues. Table 1.2 outlines the staff that will work on the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 and their time and pay which will be apportioned to the RDP. Timesheets recording their activity will be retained for verification purposes. The job descriptions for these RDP staff are included at **Appendix 5**.

Table 1.2: Lead Implementing Partner Staffing

Name	Role
Donal Fox	CEO
Brian Smyth	Deputy CEO/RDP Programme Manager
Orla Blessing	Financial Controller
James Duffy	Project Officer
Ashling Cartwright	Project Officer
Ann Curneen	RDP Administrator
Sharon Casey	RDP Administrator
Kathleen Flanagan	Secretary

1.7.2 Financial Partner

Leitrim County Council as Financial Partner will nominate competent administration staff to provide supports for the programme and the LCDC in its financial functions and responsibilities. These staff will work closely with the lead Implementing Partner to ensure effective and efficient processing of payments takes place. Leitrim County Council also intends to engage the services of a contractor(s) through a national public tender to deliver on their responsibilities to complete Article 48 Checks on all RDP project applications. Local authority staff will conduct all remaining checks and sign off on the Article 48 checks.

Table 1.3: Financial Partner Staffing

Name	Role
Vincent Dwyer	Senior Executive Officer
Michelle Reynolds	Administrative Officer

1.7.3 Other Staffing

The LCDC (the LAG) is supported in its executive functions by staff from Leitrim County Council. These local authority staff provide administrative and secretariat support to the LCDC as the LAG. The following roles have been allocated. These roles are fully funded from the resources of Leitrim County Council in their statutory role in supporting the LCDC. The details of the tasks and responsibilities for each of these roles will be defined in the SLAs (Service Level Agreements) and Procedures Manuals of the LAG.

Table 1.4: Other Staffing

Name	Role
Chief Officer & Director of Services	Joseph Gilhooly
Administrative Officer (Economic)	Nollaig Whyte

1.8 Project Selection Procedures for LEADER

Project applications will be sought on both a rolling basis and also through various targeted open and closed calls which will be time limited. The purpose of the time limited calls is to ensure funding is available in all areas for the duration of the LEADER Programme and that there is a reasonable and transparent process of assessing and evaluating projects which will ensure that those most aligned with the LDS priorities and objectives will be funded. *A minimum of 40% of the programme budget will be allocated to time limited calls.* The LDS will give an indicative timeframe for open and closed calls but the LAG will reserve the right to alter the timescales and the range of open/closed calls to allow for effective and efficient implementation of the programme.

1.8.1 Expression of Interest & Eligibility

All those wishing to make an application for RDP LEADER 2014-2020 funding, must in the first instance complete an EOI Form. This will be developed by the lead Implementing Partner. All EOI forms will then be reviewed and checked for eligibility collectively by the RDP LEADER team of the lead Implementing Partner. Eligibility criteria will be in line with the requirements as set out in the Operating Rules of the programme. Eligibility assessment will also ensure that projects are in line with the priorities and objectives as set out in the LDS. If any issues are identified, the applicant is informed and advised as to how the project can best proceed (or not as appropriate). Where a project is clearly ineligible and cannot be funded, advice, information and signposting will be given to the promoter on alternative funding sources or supports where possible. A list of all EOIs to the RDP LEADER will be submitted regularly to the LAG and will be recorded as required on the RDP IT System and on the Implementing Partner files.

1.8.2 Application Process

Eligible projects which contribute to the RDP LEADER and the LDS priorities will proceed to a full application, or be advised to undertake further development work if required. Those with eligible projects as per their EOI form will be notified and details of requirements for a full project application will be outlined. In cases where there is a time limited call for projects, workshops on requirements and on the various aspects for a complete application will be delivered by Leitrim Development Company to all those with eligible projects. This animation process will build the capacity of the promoters to make an application for funding and ensure transparency in the process. If a member of the RDP LEADER team has any conflict of interest with a project, a declaration of interest will be made and that member of staff will not be involved in the appraisal, claims or monitoring process pertaining to that project.

1.8.3 Initial Project Assessment/Evaluation

Project Officers individually (and as a team) will complete and review evaluation reports of each and every completed application. Assessment reports, with the recommendations from the RDP implementing team on these projects will be completed and presented to the Evaluation Committee for their appraisal, assessment and for a recommendation to be agreed and forwarded to the LCDC. The LCDC will receive the evaluation reports with the recommendation and commentary from the Evaluation Committee at least one week in advance of the LCDC meeting. The report will assess the viability of the project and take account of such matters as innovation, displacement, procurement, deadweight, availability of other sources of funds, financing, private matching funds, statutory approvals, etc. All applications will be subject to a comparative assessment through the evaluation committee scoring system and through open and closed calls; projects of greatest need and potential impact will be prioritised. There will be a clear rationale for the marks awarded and the level of funding granted. Evaluation Committee members will complete both an annual conflict of interest declaration and a register of interests declaration and this will be reviewed annually. The Evaluation Committee's recommendation will include the formal Evaluation Scoring Record which will be set out in the Operating Rules of the programme and based on the various policies and procedures which the LAG develops and agrees subsequent to LDS approval. The criteria for scoring will be developed by consultation through the RDOC and the lead Implementing Partner based on the experience of delivering the previous RDP LEADER. A clear and transparent record of the Evaluation Committee's assessment and recommendations will be maintained on file. Evaluation Committee members will complete individual scoring records for each project which shows their scoring under a series of pre-defined headings as per the scoring record sheet. They must then sign and date their record. The total scores of the Evaluation Committee will then be calculated and the average score recorded. All original copies of the scoring will be kept along with minutes and sign in sheets of the meeting. A project must score a minimum of 65% of the total marks in order to be recommended for approval by the Evaluation Committee.

1.8.4 Evaluation Committee

The LCDC as the LAG will proceed to put in place an Evaluation Committee (EC) once the LDS has been approved. This will be made up of experienced, qualified people who can contribute various expertise from different sectors and perspectives in conducting the assessment, evaluation and scoring of applications to the RDP LEADER 2014-2020. There will be a process agreed which will include a call for expression of interests through the PPN structure with regard to the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental pillar members for the evaluation committee. A public call will also be made to find and recruit appropriate expertise and evaluation committee members from across a wide spectrum of experience (financial, governance, business, planning, etc.) and sectors (tourism, farming, rural development, microenterprise and SME, heritage, environmental, etc.). The Implementing Partner will bring proposals on the development of the EC to the LCDC through the RDOC, while the establishment and operation of the evaluation committee will be a matter for agreement by the LAG (LCDC) and which will also be set out in the ORs and the procedures manual for the LAG. A comprehensive induction process led by the Implementing Partner will take place for all evaluation committee members.

1.8.5 LAG Decision Making

The formal recommendations from the Evaluation Committee relating to each and every project application will be brought before the LAG (LCDC) for their consideration. They assess

the recommendations brought before them paying particular attention to the impacts of the project in delivering on the LDS and the requirements of the RDP. The LAG minutes will indicate the criteria used by the LAG to establish the amount and rate of aid offered and all other matters related to the project. As detailed previously the LAG will have decision-making procedures in place to ensure that neither the public sector nor any single interest group represents more than 49% of the voting rights. In addition, a minimum of 51% of the members who are voting in any project selection decision must come from non-public sector partners. The requirement for a 60% quorum for decision making will be implemented and supported by a written decision making procedure. As per the Operating Rules, decisions should be made by consensus where possible. The Chairperson of the LAG will not have a casting vote. In instances where there is a tied vote on a motion, the motion is deemed not to be carried. Decisions taken where the above governance procedures have not been met will be invalid. Clear procedures will be put in place to ensure that the above governance procedures are adhered to and recorded fully for the project file. It is important that the programme is not compromised by undeclared or unmanaged conflicts of interest. Therefore, the LAG Procedures Manual will also detail how the LAG will address potential conflicts of interest and make provisions to enable LAG members to declare and have recorded conflict of interests. Where a LAG decision is deemed invalid due to a conflict, all associated approved funding will be ineligible and must be repaid by the LAG.

LAG members, LAG Evaluation Committee members and the staff of LAG's implementing partners must complete annual conflict of interest declarations and a register of interest declaration which will also be reviewed and updated yearly. Conflict of interest matters will also be included on the agenda of all LAG and Evaluation Committee meetings. The LAG will ensure that any potential conflicts of interest are dealt with and record all such items.

All projects will be submitted to the LAG for decision even if the project is not recommended for funding by the Evaluation Committee. Only the LAG members can make the ultimate decision on whether to approve or refuse the project. In cases where the LAG refuses funding, a letter will issue to the proposed promoter detailing the refusal and reasons and the decision will also be recorded on the RDP IT System.

The Procedures Manual will set out in detail all elements of project selection for RDP LEADER 2014-2020 with all requirements in relation to site visits, project claims and payments.

1.9 Relevant Experience

The LCDC members (LAG members) have a wide range of experience and expertise and this is detailed in short biographies of the LAG members in **Appendix 1**.

The LAG partners have a range of relevant expertise and experience to deliver the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 programme as outlined below;

1.9.1 Leitrim Development Company - The Lead Implementing Partner

Leitrim Development Company has a wide range of relevant expertise and experience built up through its role as the LAG for RDP LEADER 2007-2013;

Managing and administering call for projects to promoters

Leitrim Development Company has a strong professional staff, with a recognised track record in managing and administering funding calls to local promoters. RDP LAG staff dealt with over 400 individual applications of which 253 projects were funded under RDP 2007-2013. Thirty

nine of these were LAG led and a number were engaged directly through open calls to various sectors. This called for careful management and administration of the process. There were very minimal audit issues in the range of control audits, certification checks, post payment and EU checks which were carried out on projects and administration payments and processes in Leitrim. The Company also has past experience in managing and administering funding calls under the Social Inclusion Programme and INTERREG IIIA and INTERREG IV to the community sector. Leitrim Development Company has a very strong ethos and track record in engaging with the citizens across the county. This is reflective in the success and extent of the consultation process carried out as part of this LDS.

Developing an area-based approach to economic development in rural areas

Leitrim Development Company has considerable experience in developing area-based approaches to economic development. As the LAG for RDP LEADER 2007-2013, Leitrim Development Company in consultation with communities, target groups and statutory agencies developed an integrated area action plan. This plan was delivered in a coherent and cost effective way throughout the county. There was significant investment in small businesses, tourism and farm diversification which all enhanced economic activity and created jobs in Leitrim. The Company has also delivered the various social inclusion programmes which were and are area based and focus on particular disadvantaged target groups and communities. These social inclusion programmes continue to have a strong impact on the creation of employment and self-employment opportunities and in other economic developments such as social and community enterprises throughout the county. Currently Leitrim Development Company implements the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) on behalf of the LCDC in Leitrim.

Delivering interventions that support social inclusion and poverty reduction, in particular those that target “hard to reach communities”

Leitrim Development Company, as the Implementing Partner for RDP LEADER 2014-2020 has a strong track record, since 1996, in delivering programmes to support social inclusion and especially those in hard to reach communities. The Company has successfully delivered the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), the Local Community Development Programme (LCDP) and now the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP). This latter programme is being implemented on behalf of the LCDC. These programmes were and are specifically designed to support social inclusion. The company has reached and in many cases surpassed, all of the targets set in these programmes and the interventions have been successful in poverty reduction and in breaking down barriers to inclusion. Leitrim Development Company is recognised as being an innovator in developing tailored responses to the needs of people and communities particularly those who are hard to reach and excluded. The company has always stepped beyond the defined requirements of these programmes to add value to its work in tackling inequality and poverty. This means that over the years LDC has added significant levered initiatives and resources to its dedicated programme of work in these areas to improve the quality of life there and to enhance community inclusion and the involvement of excluded groups in the economic social and cultural life of the county and also in decision making fora.

Management of relevant Exchequer and EU funding in the past three years

Leitrim Development Company operates a wide range of programmes on behalf of a variety of funders. These include the already mentioned SICAP, the Rural Development Programme LEADER, the various labour market activation programmes, two Local Training Initiatives, the

Warmer Homes Programme, the Social Farming Project and the Traveller Development Programme. All these programmes are managed in accordance with the requirements of the funders and in accordance with good governance. Details of the funds secured and managed by Leitrim Development Company are included in **Appendix 6**.

1.9.2 Leitrim County Council the Lead Financial Partner Relevant Experience

Leitrim County Council as Financial Partner has extensive experience of dealing with a large number of inter-agency partnerships, community and sectoral interests and other stakeholders as a result of operating on regional, national, cross-border and international platforms.

This engagement has resulted in the delivery of significant investment in infrastructural development, under a number of INTERREG VI and other EU programmes and initiatives, most notably, Border Uplands, Harnessing Natural Resources and Harnessing Creativity. These programmes were project managed and delivered through multi agency collaboration across a number of counties on a cross border basis.

Leitrim County Council have successfully managed the delivery of Peace Programmes within the county over the last number of years. This involved collaboration with the community sector to maximise engagement with the programme, while ensuring that all project expenditure was eligible for funding under the Peace Programme. Details of the funds secured and managed by Leitrim County Council are included in **Appendix 6**.

In addition, Leitrim County Council engages with funders on a daily basis, across the functionality of Local Government, in the areas of housing, roads, environment, community, economic development and water services through their service level agreement with Irish Water.

Leitrim County Council has considerable experience in developing area-based approaches to economic development in Leitrim. Leitrim County Council has a statutory remit for the completion of the County Development Plan and the Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan. In line with National Policy and Legislation Leitrim County Council administers monthly Municipal District Meetings namely, Carrick on Shannon, Ballinamore and Manorhamilton. Leitrim County Council in 2015 was successful in securing funding under The Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) Programme for the following project Manorhamilton REDZ Programme. The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project has been allocated €209,692 towards the development of the Blueway in counties Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon which is an area based project.

2 Area Profile

2.1 Overview

This Local Development Strategy represents the needs and aspirations of the rural communities within the administrative area of County Leitrim which is defined by the boundaries of Leitrim County Council. County Leitrim is located in the north west of Ireland in the province of Connaught.

Key Facts to note are;

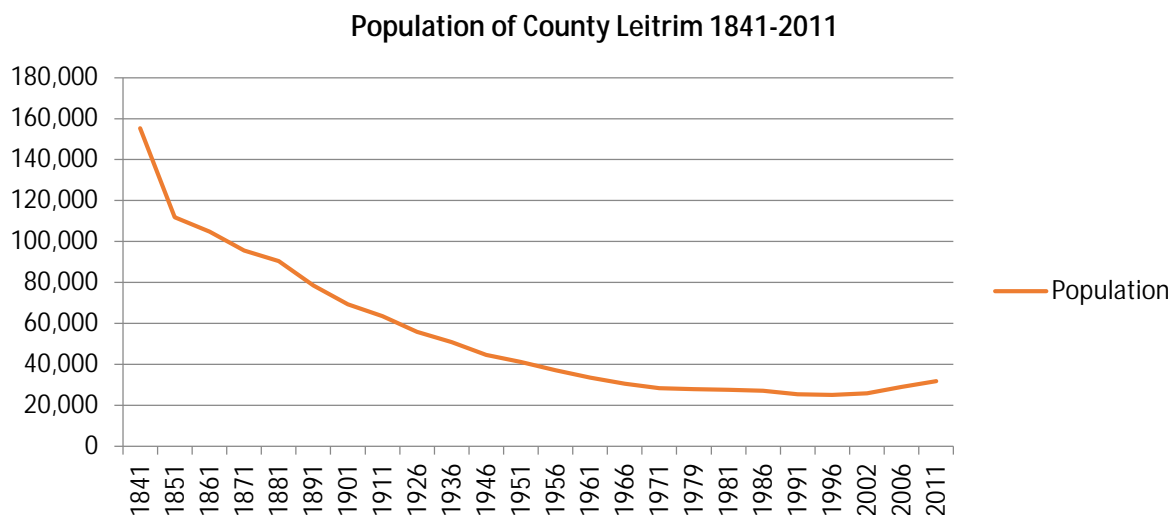
- The county covers an area of 1,896 square kilometres bordering Counties Cavan, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo, Donegal and Fermanagh.
- Leitrim is largely an inland county with a small coastline with the Atlantic Ocean (approx. 2.5km) at Tullaghan in the north of the county. Lough Allen the largest lake in the county divides the county into two distinct topographical areas; the north of the county is characterised by mountains and large lakes while the south of the county is characterised by rolling drumlin hills and small lakes. The River Shannon with its associated lake systems lies in the south of the county.
- The County is traversed by three main arterial routes- the N4, N16 and the N15. The Sligo to Dublin railway line runs through the southwest of the county serving Carrick on Shannon and Dromod.
- County Leitrim is defined as the most rural county in Ireland with fewer than one-in-ten people in the county living in an urban area. Only one town in the County has a population of more than 1,500; Carrick on Shannon accounting for 10.4% of the total population.
- Leitrim is one of the most forested counties with approximately 17% of the county planted, which is well above the state average of 11% (Leitrim County Council: 2014).

2.2 Demographic Characteristics

2.2.1 Population and Distribution

Census 2011 identified that County Leitrim had a population of 31,798 consisting of 16,144 males and 15,654 females. This is the lowest population of any county in Ireland. Historically the population of the county was in decline for much of the last century; however since 2002 this trend has been reversed with the county experiencing population growth above the national average.

Figure 2.1: Population of County Leitrim, 1841-2011



Source: CSO (2011) Population by County 1841-2011

The population density is very low with just 21.2 persons per square kilometre compared to the national average of 67 persons per square kilometre. This is the lowest population density of any county in Ireland and therefore County Leitrim can be characterised as the most rural

county in Ireland. There are three Municipal Districts in County Leitrim; Carrick on Shannon, Ballinamore and Manorhamilton. The main towns in the county are outlined in Table 2.1 below which also depicts the change in population from 2006-2011. Carrick on Shannon is the only town with over 1,500 people. Population Change in the towns has not been distributed evenly. The greatest proportionate change in population between 2006 and 2011 occurred in Leitrim Village while the largest actual increase between 2006 and 2011 took place in Carrick on Shannon and Kinlough.

Table 2.1: Population of the Main Towns in County Leitrim, 2011

Town	Population 2006	Population 2011
Carrick on Shannon	2595	3314
Manorhamilton	1158	1336
Kinlough	690	1018
Mohill	931	928
Ballinamore	805	889
Drumshanbo	665	857
Dromahair	503	748
Carrigallen	303	384
Leitrim	258	485
Drumkeerin	249	252
Dromod	210	432
Tullaghan	216	228

Source: CSO (2011) Population of Towns Ordered by County and Size, 2006 and 2011

Other villages in the county include Ballinaglera, Cloone, Dowra, Drumcong, Drumsna, Fenagh, Glenfarne, Jamestown, Keshcarrigan, Kilclare, Killarga, Kiltycogher, Lurganboy, Newtowngore and Roosky. Leitrim County Development Plan has also identified a range of 'Graigs' in the county as places with at least one community/social facility and some housing and which act as important community hubs. The County Development Plan states that graigs are vital to the community fabric of Leitrim.

The largest urban setting in the county is Carrick on Shannon with a population of 3,314 in 2011, which represents 10.4% of the population of the county. This is the only town in the county with a population of over 1,500. Areas that experienced highest population increase

TARGET GROUP: RURAL REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Due to the low population density and the rural nature of the county, this in turn leads to a marked sense of physical and social isolation for many communities in the county. Closure of local shops and vital services such as health centres, post offices and Garda stations have exacerbated the remoteness of parts of the county. This has implications for access to and the delivery of services to people and communities across the county. It also has implications for the provision of infrastructure including community services and facilities, as well as access to and the delivery of services to people and communities across the county.

include small towns and villages while areas that experienced the lowest increases were more remote and less accessible areas of the county. The majority of the people in County Leitrim are living in rural areas. This shows that although the majority of people live in rural areas, there is an increase in the number of people moving to urban centres in the county.

2.2.2 Age Profile and Age Dependency

County Leitrim had the largest proportion of the population aged under 4 years and aged over 65 of all the counties in Ireland in 2011. This reflects the high age dependency rate in the county. In terms of people over 65 years, the county has above the national average with 14% of its population over 65 years. This is also evident in the number of people living alone. County Leitrim has the highest number of elderly people living alone with one in three of the elderly population living alone. The number of males exceeds the number of females in every age group apart from the 80-84 age cohort and the 85+ age cohort. Source: CSO (2011) Population by Age Co. Leitrim

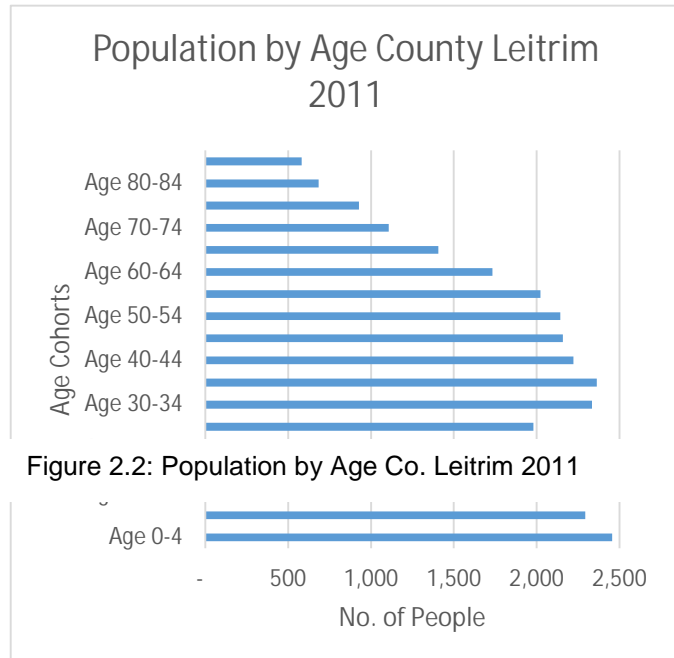


Figure 2.2: Population by Age Co. Leitrim 2011

The only age category experiencing a declining population in the last census was the 15-24 year old. This is more than likely due to young people leaving the county to take up third level education or seeking employment elsewhere.

TARGET GROUP: YOUTH PARTICULARLY THOSE AGED 15-24 YEARS OLD

22% of the population of County Leitrim in 2011 was under 15 years of age. With a low population density, it is important that young people in the county do not feel isolated. In contrast there is a decline in the population aged 15-24 years old. This is more than likely due to young people leaving the county to take up third level education or seeking employment elsewhere. Both social and economic Interventions need to be put in place to target the youth.

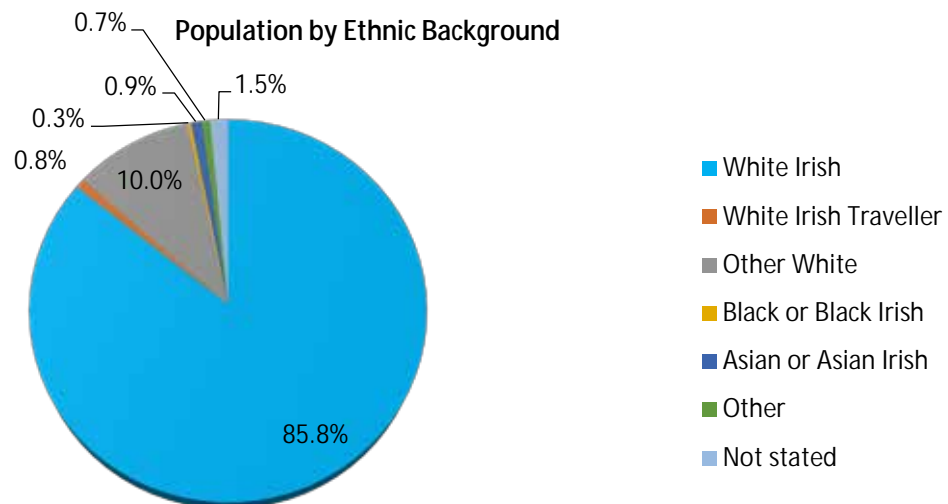
2.2.3 Migration, Nationalities, Ethnic & Cultural Backgrounds

Migration was the main factor in population growth in County Leitrim as it had the highest average annual net migration rates in the country. The 2011 Census indicated that people born in Leitrim were the most likely to have moved to another county to live. Those originally from Leitrim were also the most likely to have relocated to live in Dublin city or county with one in ten usually resident in Dublin city or county (CSO: 2011). Non Irish nationals accounted for just over 11% of the population in Leitrim, the largest proportion of these were UK Nationals, followed by people of Polish origin. The proportion of people from the Travelling Community in the county is above the national average.

TARGET GROUP: OLDER PEOPLE

County Leitrim has the highest old dependency ratio at 23.3% in the country (CSO:2011) The provision of services and supports for older people particularly in more rural locations will become more challenging in the future. More joined up approaches will be required in order to meet the needs of the growing population of older people.

Figure 2.3: Population by Ethnic or Cultural Background County Leitrim 2011



Source: CSO StatBank (2011) Profile 7 Religion, Ethnicity and Irish Travellers

In terms of ethnicity, similar to the state as a whole the majority of people are categorised as 'white Irish'. In 2011 there were 264 Travellers in Leitrim in two settlements in Mohill and Carrick on Shannon, across 63 households. This was above the national average. More than half of the Traveller population are aged 24 and under. Less than 10% were aged 45 and over. To date in Leitrim, no member of the Travelling community has completed the Leaving

TARGET GROUP: ETHNIC MINORITIES- NEW COMMUNITIES/ MIGRANTS/ TRAVELLERS

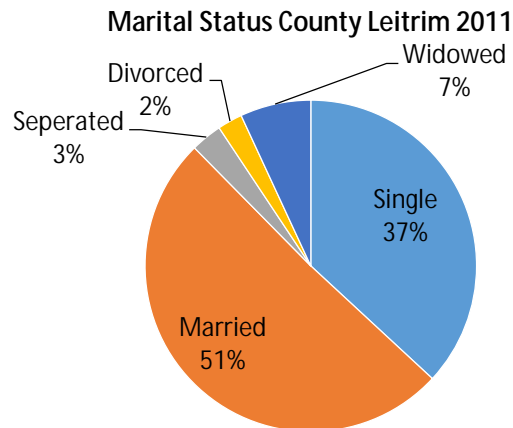
Ethnic minorities will require ongoing supports to ensure their access to social, education and training opportunities. Travellers remain one of the most disadvantaged target groups in Leitrim with no children having progressed beyond a junior certificate education. Travellers fare poorly in every indicator to measure disadvantage including unemployment, poverty, life expectancy, education, and access to decision making.

Certificate. In 2014, 41 Traveller children were attending primary school and 17 were attending secondary school. Seven Travellers were in part-time employment and one was on a labour market scheme.

2.2.4 Marital Status, Families, Households and Housing

Of the 24,919 persons aged 15 years and over, more than half were married, 37% were single, 3% were separated, 2% were divorced and 7% were widowed.

Figure 2.4: Marital Status County Leitrim 2011



Source: CSO (2011) Population by Sex, Age and Marital Status, County Leitrim.

A high proportion of households in Leitrim were single person households. Of the 8,180 families in the county, approximately one third were couples with no children. The average number of children per family was the same as the national average of 1.4.

A total of 347 people were receiving the one parent family payment in Leitrim in 2014. The Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2012 indicated that individuals living in households where there was one adult and one or more children under 18 continued to have the highest consistent poverty rate in 2012 at 17.4%.

The majority of householders in Leitrim owned their own home, half of whom are mortgage free. One third of households were a single person household which was well above the state average. The average household size in the county was 2.6 compared to 2.7 nationally.

County Leitrim has one of the highest vacancy rates in the country along with County Donegal. This is related to the number of holiday homes influenced by the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme. Holiday homes represented over one quarter of the housing stock in the county which is above the national average. The highest proportion of local authority housing is located in the EDs containing towns and villages, Drumkeeran, Kiltyclogher, Belhavel, Cloonclare and Mohill.

TARGET GROUP: PEOPLE LIVING ALONE

Over one third of households in County Leitrim were single person households. As identified previously there are also a significant number of older people living alone with 1 in 3 people over 65 years old living alone and the majority of which are men. It is important that those living alone do not feel isolated and have access to supports, services and facilities.

2.2.5 Health and Disability

In terms of health, County Leitrim as a county has a healthy population slightly above the national average, however according to the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention, Leitrim has the second highest rate of suicide in the country in 2012 with the majority of deaths by suicide being males. The total number of persons with a disability in Leitrim was on par with the national figures (13%). 40% of those with a disability were over 65 years and 14% were under the age of 24. According to the Disability Federation of Ireland in 2011 of the number of people with a disability in Leitrim of working age, only 32% were at work compared to 63% of people without a disability. 13% of people with a disability did not progress beyond primary education compared to 4% of people without a disability. Increasing numbers of people are providing unpaid personal help for a friend or family member with long term illness, health problem or disability in the county.

TARGET GROUP: PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY & MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

People with disabilities will require ongoing supports to ensure their access to social, education and training opportunities in the county. There is an increase in mental health related problems in the county in recent years. It is therefore important that we aid in promoting, protecting and investing in good mental health. Recent research has found a clear link between isolation, stress and suicide in rural Ireland (Walsh and Harvey, 2013).

2.2.6 Deprivation Index and Disposable Income

In 2011, the deprivation score was -2.57 categorising County Leitrim as marginally below average on the HP deprivation index where the average for the state was 0.24 marginally above average. Less than one quarter of the electoral divisions in the county is on par with the national average. The most disadvantaged areas are adjacent or close to the border with Northern Ireland and County Cavan and are rural areas with no large towns or villages.

At a local level, the most disadvantaged ED's are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| · Kiltyclogher | 14.3 (border with Northern Ireland) |
| · Drumreilly South | 13.9 |
| · Corrala | 11.4 |
| · Greaghglass and Stralongford | 11.4 (border with County Cavan) |
| · Killarga | 10.7 |
| · Rowan | 10.6 |

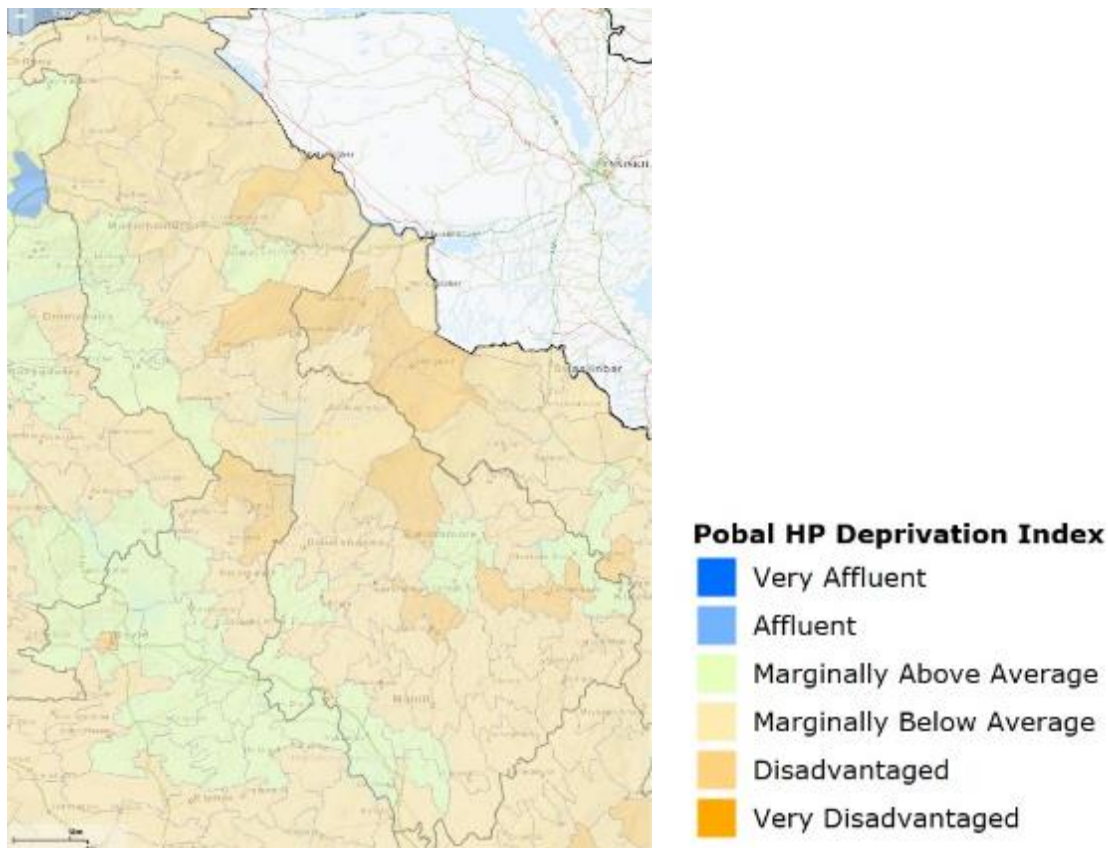
All of these EDs fall into the 'disadvantaged' category. All other EDs are, at the most marginally below the national average.

The most affluent EDs in Leitrim which record marginally above average comprise;

- Killygar 7.2
- Sramore 3.4
- Annaduff 3.3

None of the EDs in the county fall into the affluent category. Please see **Appendix 7** for a map outlining the Electoral Divisions in the county.

Figure 2.5: Deprivation in County Leitrim, 2011



Source: Pobal (2011) HP Deprivation Index

Analysis of the 2011 Small Area Population Statistics allow for a more concentrated focus on and targeting of particular parts of the ED where disadvantage levels are higher than for the ED as a whole. This allows us to explore levels of disadvantage within urban EDs in the county. The deprivation scores for these smaller areas with urban EDs highlight high unemployment rates particularly in areas where there is a high proportion of local authority housing including Mohill, Manorhamilton and Drumkeerin and one area in Carrick-on-Shannon. One area in Manorhamilton fell into the very disadvantaged category with a relative deprivation score of 24.60.

Table 2.2: Deprivation Index Scoring-Small Area Population Statistics Co. Leitrim and State, 2011

Source: Haase and Pratschke (2012) The Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

Just over 10% of the people in Leitrim were residing in areas identified as disadvantaged and very disadvantaged in the HP Deprivation Index. In total, there were 630 family units in disadvantaged/very disadvantaged areas, one third were one parents families. A total of 923 children live in disadvantaged/very disadvantaged areas within Leitrim. According to the Department of Social Protection, 291 families were in receipt of Family Income Supplement while 1,340 were in receipt of Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. (Department of Social Protection www.welfare.ie).

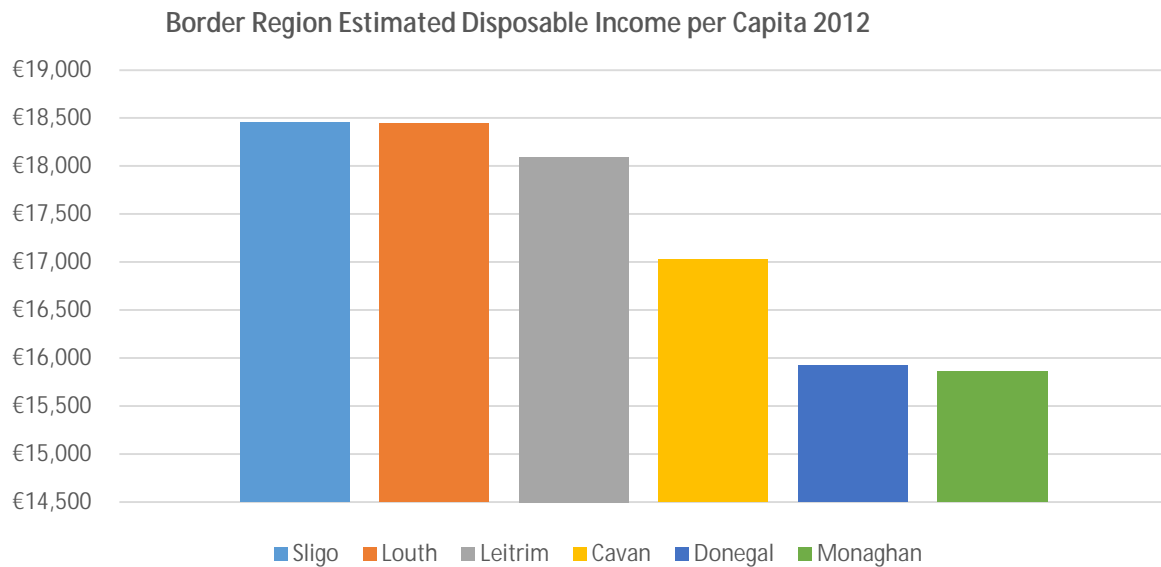
Research, proposed developments and regeneration priorities for the people and communities

	Electoral Division	Dep. Score 2011	Age Dependency	Lone Parents	Primary Education Only	Unemployed Male	Unemployed Female	Local Authority Housing
	State	.24	33.00	21.6	16.0	22.3	15.0	7.9
	County Leitrim	-2.57	36.43	16.2	18.5	24.93	14.3	7.7
Small Area	Within ED							
117035007	Drumshanbo	-13.90	33.30	30.80	32.10	38.70	17.90	24.00
117015002	Carrick on Shannon	-11.40	39.70	27.00	17.00	50.90	40.50	46.90
117015004	Carrick on Shannon	-14.00	28.70	0.00	28.30	38.50	27.60	6.70
117016002	Carrigallen East	-12.10	37.10	17.60	22.90	35.70	21.10	12.50
117029001	Drumkeerin	-12.00	45.30	36.80	31.60	31.00	16.70	41.80
117063008	Manoramilton	-24.60	40.20	80.00	50.00	52.20	31.80	45.00
117063004	Manorhamilton	-14.40	55.20	0.00	30.60	40.00	11.80	23.90
117066001	Mohill	-11.80	34.10	25.00	29.50	51.50	15.20	32.40
117066005	Mohill	-15.00	40.00	15.40	33.30	44.40	23.50	31.00
117066007	Mohill	-13.80	36.70	38.90	28.10	47.20	29.00	29.10
117066004	Mohill	-11.30	41.50	30.00	30.50	27.10	22.00	36.90

in isolated geographic and border areas of Leitrim including Rossinver, Kiltyclogher, Glenfarne and Kinlough which were set out in work carried out by Broadmore Research under the Peace III partnership in 2011 are still valid.

In 2012 the estimated disposable income per capita in County Leitrim was €18,096 which was below the state average of €19,468. As Figure 2.6 below illustrates in comparison to the rest of the Border Region, County Leitrim had a higher disposable income than Counties Monaghan, Donegal and Cavan. County Sligo had the highest disposable income at €18,456 per capita. County Leitrim also had a higher disposable income than neighbouring counties of Longford and Roscommon (CSO Estimates of Disposable Income per Person by Region and County, 2003-2012).

Figure 2.6: Estimated Disposable Income per Capita, Border Region, 2012



Source: CSO (2011) Estimates of Disposable Income per Person by Region and County, 2003-2012

TARGET GROUP: PEOPLE LIVING IN MOST DISADVANTAGED AREAS

From analysis of the data it is clear that people living in the most disadvantaged areas of the county generally experience higher unemployment rates, particularly in areas where there is a high proportion of local authority housing. There was also a high level of children living in disadvantaged areas from lone parent families. It is important that these communities are not excluded and that the provision of services are targeted at these hard to reach communities.

2.2.7 Transport, Community Assets and Broadband

Leitrim is poorly served by public transport. As previously mentioned the Dublin - Sligo railway line runs throughout the south western boundary of the county serving Dromod and Carrick on Shannon. Otherwise the county is served by the Bus Eireann Dublin-Sligo Expressway service and local services and the Ulster Bus Derry-Cork service.

Public transport outside the main towns of Carrick on Shannon and Manorhamilton is limited. Therefore car ownership is higher in rural counties like County Leitrim. There is a reliance on the private car as public transport is concentrated around the main town of Carrick on Shannon. However for those living in the remotest areas of the county, access to services can be a challenge, especially for those without access to private cars. Over 13% of households in the county did not have a car in 2011 and 44% of the population aged 5 years and over relied on motor car to travel to work, school or college (CSO:2011)

Community facilities in County Leitrim particularly community centres and community recreation facilities support a broad range of community activity, including activities for young people. According to Muintir na Tire (2014) 'Community Centres/village halls provide civic

space where different groups can meet, community celebrations held and significant events marked. In smaller communities without shops, schools or other significant communal buildings, they may be the only place that communities can come'. The two Community Networks and Leitrim Development Company carried out an audit of community buildings (Community Centres/Halls) in County Leitrim in 2015. These valuable community resources underpin community vibrancy and cohesion in the county. In total there are approximately 72 community centres/halls in the county. Information was collated on their management, activities, their usage and maintenance. These community buildings were used for a wide range of activities and by a large number of community groups including youth groups, women, farmers, active age groups, disability groups, sporting clubs, residents' association, tidy town groups and educational classes. The research found that 71% of community centres/halls required renovation, enhancement or expansion within the next five years. The main challenge identified in running the community centres, was the ongoing running costs and maintenance/repair costs.

Leitrim Sports Partnership indicates there are approximately 125 formal sports clubs in the county. Of the 61 sports recognised by the Irish Sports Council, 24 are played formally in County Leitrim. The County has 50 public sports facilities which are dominated by the GAA, community centres and public playgrounds. The 2013 Council sponsored PEACE III project 'Pitching for Peace' which received feedback from 52 sports clubs in Leitrim with 41 pitches concluded that the vast majority of such organisations / clubs (80%) have a facilities deficit.

In 2011 County Leitrim had the lowest percentage of households in the country with a PC (64.6%). Some 36% of households in the county did not have internet access. Broadband is available for high speed heavy use industry through the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANS) in Carrick on Shannon and Manorhamilton; whilst broadband is available in most parts of the county, there are major issues in terms of its type, speed and quality. This in turn increases the difficulty to access or develop e-services. The challenges for the commercial sector to deliver broadband are set out by Leitrim County Council in the report "Overview of Broadband Services in County Leitrim" (Oct 2014) and includes issues related to topography, rural and dispersed settlement and low population base.

2.2.8 Educational Trends

There are 39 primary schools and 7 secondary level schools in the county. There is no third level institute in the county. Leitrim has historically fared poorly in terms of educational attainment compared to the national figures. Particular groups are more at risk of leaving school early, including children living in disadvantaged areas, Travellers and children from lone parent households. Early interventions are required with these communities and areas. In more recent years, Leitrim shares joint top position in terms of the numbers of students attending third level education in Ireland based on 2012/2013 enrolment figures produced by the Higher Education Authority in 2014 (Leitrim County Council Economic Strategy: 2014). This also highlighted that more than half of those attending third level education in this period were women which was above the national average. In contrast, a large number of rural areas

have a significant proportion of their population with primary education only and some of the most rural areas have low levels of population with third level education; Corrala (11.7%), Drumreilly South (12.1%) and Greaghglass/ Stralongford (12.7%).

2.2.9 Socio-Economic Group and Labour Force

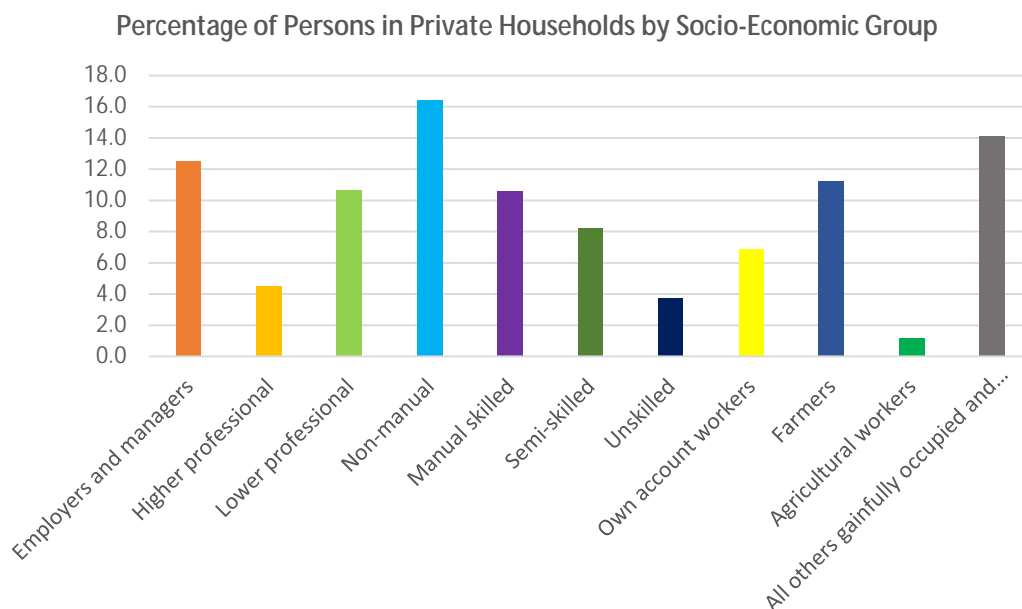
In terms of numbers at work, Leitrim was below the national average. The largest socio economic group in County Leitrim in 2011 as shown in Figure 2.7 below is the Non-manual Workers, followed by Employers, Managers and Farmers. Leitrim has significantly lower numbers of people in the higher professional and lower professional classes compared to the

TARGET GROUP: PEOPLE WITH LOW LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Historically Leitrim has fared poorly in terms of educational attainment. Particular groups are still more at risk of leaving school early, including children living in disadvantaged areas, Travellers and children from lone parent households. Early interventions are required with these communities and areas.

national average. Females dominated in terms of working in professional services. According to the Local Economic and Community Plan for County Leitrim there was a particularly dramatic growth in public sector jobs between 2002 and 2011, the total increasing by 53%. The number of persons retired was higher than the national average reflecting the high numbers of elderly persons in the county.

Figure 2.7: Percentage of Persons in Private Households by Socio Economic Group, Co. Leitrim, 2011



Source: CSO (2011) Census of Population, County Leitrim.

Labour market participation figures show that the numbers of persons involved in agriculture, forestry and fishing was double the national average. This indicated the strong dependence on agriculture in the county while only one in ten of the labour force was involved in manufacturing services in 2011. This shows that agriculture dominates economic life in Leitrim but capacity and output are low with very few full time commercial farmers. This is reflected in the number of farmers participating on the Rural Social Scheme in the county. The Rural Social Scheme is a scheme providing income support for farmers who are in receipt of long

term social welfare payments. (100 people were in receipt of support - figures from Leitrim Development Company, 2015).

2.2.10 Unemployment

In line with the national statistics, the unemployment rate rose as a result of the economic downturn. It is clear that male unemployment rates in the county are higher than female unemployment rates; however this is also in line with the national statistics where female unemployment rates tend to be below male unemployment rates.

A significant number of areas in the county have high male unemployment rates. Two small areas in Manorhamilton, three in Mohill, three in Carrick on Shannon, two each in Drumshanbo and Carrigallen have a male unemployment rate above 40%. The small area statistics for Leitrim show a significant number of areas above the county female unemployment rate with some areas well over twice the county rate (see Table 2.2).

The latest live register figures show a decrease in unemployment rates, with 2,747 people on the live register in May 2015. (Live Register Analysis, CSO 2015).

TARGET GROUP: PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING (PARTICULARLY YOUNG PEOPLE)

There are high levels of employment in County Leitrim and it is important that those who are unemployed, not in education or training are targeted. It is important that a mechanism is put in place to upskill these people. A collaborative approach with other agencies will be required.

2.2.11 Employment by Sector

The highest proportion of people employed in the county were working in professional services (26%), the majority of whom were women. Just 19% of workers were involved in commerce and trade and 10% were involved in agricultural, forestry and fishing. Only 10% of the labour force was involved in manufacturing industries. The numbers working in construction more than halved between 2006 and 2011.

Job losses have also been pronounced in the county. Bank of America one of the largest employers in the county has cut large numbers of jobs in recent years.

Leitrim has a strong private sector economy which is dominated by micro enterprises but which also has a number of major employers. In 2011, Leitrim had the third highest share of micro enterprises in the State (CSO Business Demography Data). Declining employment opportunities over the crises years has resulted in local people taking steps to start their own businesses which in turn generates income for the wider rural area.

The County Leitrim Economic Development Strategy 2015 states that small business growth is envisaged to occur throughout the county in various sectors including agri-food, tourism and in activities such as the creative, arts and digital content sector, where Leitrim has a tradition. As a result an analysis of these key sectors is outlined below;

Agriculture, Forestry and Food

The Agriculture sector contributes to the economic life of the majority of Leitrim's citizens but capacity and output are low with few full time commercial farmers. The majority of the farms in the county are less than 20 hectares in size focusing on beef production and sheep farming in the more remote and upland areas. There is a small number of farms approximately 60 in the dairy sector. The majority of the farms are owned by farmers over 65 years old. Younger farmers and their spouses work off the farm either full time or part time as a necessary support for the household income. This is also evident with the one hundred farmers participating on the Rural Social Scheme. This is a countywide scheme providing income support for farmers who are in receipt of long term social welfare payments (Leitrim Development Company: 2015). In November 2015 (according to DSP figures) there were 361 farmers in Leitrim receiving Farm Assist which is a means tested income support. Farms are essential to the local economy and maintenance of the landscape in County Leitrim. There is also significant potential for farm businesses to improve income from diversified activities.

Figures for afforestation show that 17% of the county is forested compared to the national average of 11%. In 2010 there were 700 private forestry owners. The proportion of privately owned forestry is growing steadily from 2.4 hectares in 1982 to 278 hectares in 2012 (Leitrim County Council: 2015). As a result Leitrim has a very active forestry sector and according to Leitrim County Council 2015 private timber production in Leitrim is forecast to increase to 87,000m³ by 2022.

There are numerous artisan and speciality food producers based throughout the county. The Food Hub in Drumshanbo is a state of the art food production and education facility providing 26,000 square feet of premium food production space across 14 independent units, all of which are occupied by a range of innovative established and new food businesses.

TARGET GROUP: FARMERS/SMALLHOLERS & FARM FAMILY MEMBERS

Agriculture plays a crucial role in County Leitrim with 10% of the workers in the county involved in agriculture; however farm sizes are small, with aging farming populations and low economic output. As a result many farmers and farm families rely on additional employment outside the farm. Working in collaboration with other agencies supports and assistance are required to enable farmers to diversify and utilise their farm resources for non-agricultural activities.

Tourism

Due to the rural nature of County Leitrim, there is significant potential in the tourism sector in the county. There are a number of hotels in the county and also a growing number of micro enterprises in the tourism sector focused on the key assets of the county, The Shannon Erne Waterway, The Blueway and the Glens of North Leitrim. The Local Economic and Community Plan (2015) states that tourism is one of the County's most important sectors and it has the potential to play a key role in the economic development of the county. On the other hand

County Leitrim achieves the least visitor numbers and earnings from overseas tourism of any county in the North West. Local hotel data highlights the importance of domestic tourism to the county. There is a very low level of approved accommodation in the county with estimates that over 70% (LDC baseline research RDP 2013) of the available accommodation is uncertified.

Leitrim's Tourism Growth Alliance (LTGA) recognises that there are significant opportunities to further develop the county as a high quality destination for overseas and domestic holiday and business visitors. As a result the LTGA acknowledges that there are challenges but also that there are plenty of opportunities to double the size of the tourism sector in the county. The Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim 2015 - 2021 is working towards doubling the visitor numbers to the county by 2021 to 296,000, which in turn will substantially increase revenue and the number of jobs in the sector. The plan states that Leitrim has particular advantages in terms of high quality visitor experience in cruising, angling, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, visitor attractions, accommodation and easy access to Knock and Dublin airports. The county also possesses other facilities which indicate significant opportunities to further develop the county as a high quality destination for overseas and domestic holiday and business visitors. The Leitrim Recreation Strategy developed by Leitrim Recreation Forum in 2014 outlines a roadmap for the future development of recreation in the county. The Recreation Strategy outlines that a significant amenity base is already in place for land and water based outdoor recreation, although there is much scope for further enhancement and development. The recreation forum and strategy are integrated with the LTGA and the Growth strategy for tourism.

Creative Arts & Digital Content Sector

The Western Development Commission's report *Creative West: The Creative Sector in the Western Region* (2009) outlined that Leitrim along with the other western counties enjoys a rich and varied creative legacy. It also highlighted that there is a considerable pool of creative talent in the region which can be difficult to identify. According to their survey of all the western counties, County Leitrim had the highest proportion of people working in the creative sector (4.4% of the total employment in the County).

The county has great resources for the creative sector including The Leitrim Design House in Carrick on Shannon. The Leitrim Design House has been operating successfully for over twelve years and is firmly recognised as a national model of best practice by the Crafts Council of Ireland. The Leitrim Sculpture Centre based in Manorhamilton is a national resource organisation and an acknowledged centre for excellence in the production of contemporary visual arts and crafts. According to Leitrim Design House creative enterprises and crafts practitioners have been drawn to Leitrim in large numbers over the past 20 years and they now boast designers and craft makers with a range of talents and skills, including, textiles, jewellery, print, glass, ceramics, wood, photography, metal work, stone/bronze as well as many visual artists and designers including fashion. Leitrim Design House alone represents over 300 artists and designers working in Ireland, many of which are based in County Leitrim. The FABLAB based in Manorhamilton established in 2014 is a collective of designers, engineers and makers. The FABLAB is a digital fabrication facility providing enterprises, creatives, schools and hobbyists access to a wide range of fabrication technologies which allow them to turn their ideas into prototypes and products. The FABLAB is a service for the whole of the North West of Ireland.

2.3 Review of Key Services/ Programmes

This Local Development Strategy is intended to complement and integrate with other existing economic and social services and programmes in the county, the wider region and nationally. This in turn avoids duplication of resources and proposed activity, rather it seeks to complement and add value by addressing the identified specific needs of rural County Leitrim. This has been achieved through consultation with representatives of the local authority, other statutory agencies and services providers in the county. Throughout the delivery of the LDS, the LAG will collaborate with other rural development delivery partners to ensure projects and initiatives etc. are complimentary and add value to other initiatives. This strategy links directly with the Local Economic and Community Plan for the county. The development of this strategy has included a review of all relevant programmes and services that will have a direct impact on the formulation and delivery of the strategy.

Programmes and services of most relevance to County Leitrim are detailed below;

Leitrim County Council: Leitrim County Council is the elected administrative body governing County Leitrim, delivering a wide range of services necessary to the physical, economic, social and cultural life of the county. It has both a representational and operational function. The County Council makes its decisions by resolution at its monthly meetings. The representational role is preformed directly by 18 elected members of the Council. There are a number of agencies and organisations associated with Leitrim County council which operate in various sectors and which contribute to the economic, social and cultural activities in Leitrim.

Leitrim Local Enterprise Office (LEO): The Leitrim LEO supports a spirit of enterprise and entrepreneurship in Co. Leitrim. This spirit of enterprise is the theme of the work carried out by the Local Enterprise Office through the Student Enterprise Awards, National Enterprise Awards and through training, mentoring and other programmes available. Funding and other services are available to established and start-up businesses including advice, information, enterprise events, financial support and mentoring and support for local business networks.

Leitrim Tourism: Leitrim Tourism is a company limited by guarantee supported by Leitrim County Council to market and promote tourism in County Leitrim. Its aim is to develop and promote Leitrim as a tourist destination using various marketing activities. These include: attendance at trade fairs, advertising, public relations, direct mail and website development. The aim of Leitrim Tourism is to create awareness of Leitrim as a tourism destination, increase visitor numbers to the area and encourage visitors to travel around the county.

Leitrim Development Company (LDC): Leitrim Development Company is a community led Local Development Company delivering a range of rural, social and economic programmes at local level across County Leitrim. They support communities, individuals and businesses to increase their economic sustainability and improve their quality of life. Leitrim Development Company is responsible for delivering the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) on behalf of the Local and Community Development Committee. The aim of this programme is to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration. Leitrim Development Company is also responsible for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme. Other initiatives operated by Leitrim Development Company include the Job Club, Community Services Programme, Local Training Initiatives, Leitrim Volunteer Service, Traveller Programme, Social Farming Programme, Rural Social Scheme and Tús Scheme and Community Employment Schemes.

Leitrim Development Company were also the LAG responsible for delivering RDP LEADER 2007-2013 in County Leitrim.

Teagasc: Teagasc is the agriculture and food development authority in Ireland supporting science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and the broader bio economy that will underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability. They provide an advisory service and educational programmes to farmers in Leitrim and have two offices/facilities in the county in Mohill and Manorhamilton which form part of the Sligo/Leitrim Donegal Advisory Region.

Public Participation Network (PPN): The role of the PPN is to facilitate and support the participation and representation of communities and volunteers from three distinct sectors, communities, those representing social inclusion interests (hard to reach groups) and the environmental interests on the various decision making bodies. They will act as the vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies and plans being developed in the county by various bodies and statutory agencies including the County Council. Currently there are 166 groups registered with the PPN in Leitrim.

Fáilte Ireland: Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority. Their role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. They provide a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services. They also work 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.

Enterprise Ireland: Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. They work in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales on global markets. Their aim is to support sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment. The services they provide are geared towards helping Irish companies win international trade and include; funding supports, export assistance, supports to develop competitiveness, incentives to stimulate in company R&D, assistance with R&D collaboration and connections and introductions to customers overseas.

Western Development Commission (WDC): The Western Development Commission is a statutory body set up to promote social and economic development in the Western Region (Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare) by: ensuring that government policy is directed at improving the social and economic situation in the region, developing projects in tourism, industry, marine, renewable energy, technology and organic agri-food, and operating the €32 million Western Investment Fund (WIF) to provide loans and equity to business and local communities in the West.

Department of Social Protection: The Department of Social Protection serves a wide and diverse group of clients including families, people in employment, the unemployed, people with disabilities, carers and pensioners. Their main services include social welfare payments, assistance and advice on employment, training and personal development opportunities and information on income supports and the provision of funding for Community Employment and other labour market programmes. The Intreo Offices provide a single point of contact for all employment and income supports and 2 such offices are based in Manorhamilton and Carrick

on Shannon. The Ballyconnell Office in Co. Cavan also covers parts of South Leitrim and the Ballyshannon Office in Co. Donegal covers parts of North Leitrim.

Health Service Executive (HSE): The HSE provides public health and social care services in hospitals and communities across the region in four areas. Each of the HSE's four administrative areas has a Regional Health Forum, which includes representatives from county councils within that area. County Leitrim is based in the Western Area. There are two hospitals in Leitrim and seven day care services for older people. Other agencies work closely with the HSE and have service level agreements in place for work with older people and travellers in the county.

Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB): This statutory authority has responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other functions in County Leitrim. The ETB manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes. Other supports and services include the provision of adult and community education, back to education and post leaving cert courses, advice and guidance, English language training, literacy skills, second level education and youth work grant support. The local office of MSLETB is located in Carrick-on-Shannon.

TUSLA: The Child and Family Agency is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. Services provided by Tusla include child protection and welfare, educational welfare, psychological, alternative care, family and locally based community supports, early years, domestic, sexual and gender based violence services.

Leitrim County Childcare Committee: The Leitrim County Childcare Committee based in Drumshanbo is composed of representatives of the key stakeholders in childcare in Leitrim. The committee is part of a nationwide framework to promote a strategic approach to childcare development. They provide support, training, advice and capital funding (as available) to 36 childcare services, 55 child minders, 12 parents and toddler groups and 21 summer camps in Leitrim.

Waterways Ireland: Waterways Ireland is one of the six all Ireland North/South implementation bodies established under the Belfast Agreement in 1999. It is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of inland navigable waterways primarily for recreational purposes these include the Shannon Erne Waterway and the Shannon Navigation and as a result they operate in County Leitrim. The Regional Office of Waterways Ireland is based in Carrick on Shannon.

The Heritage Council: The Heritage Council is a statutory body established under the Heritage Act, 1995. Its vision is that the value of our heritage is enjoyed, managed and protected for the vital contribution that it makes to our identity, well-being and future. The Heritage Council complements and builds on the work of other state heritage bodies which have primary responsibility for the care of property in the state ownership and the designation of protected areas. Their priority is to support jobs, education and heritage tourism in local communities. The Heritage Council also support the role of Heritage Officers in Local Authorities who assist in the development of County Heritage Plans.

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS): The NPWS is part of the Heritage Division of the Department of Arts, Heritage. Their role is to secure the conservation of ecosystems to maintain and enhance populations of flora and fauna in Ireland. They also designate and advise on the protection of habitats and species identified for nature conservation (Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). They make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of National and EU legislation and policies for nature conservation and biodiversity. Part of their role also involves promoting awareness of natural heritage. There is a District Conservation Officer covering counties Donegal, Leitrim West and Sligo.

Office of Public Works (OPW): The OPW is a State Agency of the Department of Finance. Its chief responsibility is the ownership, upkeep, and maintenance of Government of Ireland and historic buildings in Ireland. Their remit covers two main areas - Estate Portfolio Management including Heritage Services and Flood Risk Management (all areas are supported by Corporate Services).

Inland Fisheries Ireland: Inland Fisheries Ireland is the national agency responsible for the conservation, protection, management, marketing, development and improvement of our inland fisheries and sea angling resources. Their mission is 'to ensure the valuable natural resources of inland fisheries and sea angling are conserved, managed, developed and promoted in their own right to generate a positive return for the community and the environment'.

Sligo Leitrim and Roscommon Transport Coordination Unit: The Sligo Leitrim and Roscommon Transport Co-ordination Unit has responsibility for planning, development and delivery of sustainable local and rural public transport solutions in this region which includes all of County Leitrim. The unit is based in Carrick-on-Shannon.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI): The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland was established as Ireland's national energy authority. Their mission is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. To fulfil this mission SEAI aims to provide well-timed and informed advice to Government, and deliver a range of programmes efficiently and effectively, while engaging and motivating a wide range of stakeholders and showing continuing flexibility and innovation in all activities. SEAI also operate a number of funding programmes focusing on energy efficiency, vulnerable homeowners, low carbon technologies and other renewable energy projects for schools, communities and businesses.

SOLAS: SOLAS is the new Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland responsible for funding, planning and coordinating training and further education programmes. SOLAS has a mandate to ensure the provision of 21st century high-quality programmes to jobseekers and other learners. SOLAS works closely with a wide range of stakeholders including learners, employers, Education & Training Boards, Government Departments, state bodies, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Institutes of Technology (IOTs) and representative organisations. The aim is to build a clear, integrated pathway to work for learners through Further Education and Training.

There are a wide variety of other important local service providers and programmes in the County which includes Leitrim Citizens Information Service, North Leitrim Women's Centre,

Leitrim Heritage Centre, Leitrim Sports Partnership, Leitrim Arts Office, Leitrim Recreation Forum, North Leitrim Men's Group, North Connaught Youth and Community Services, Foróige, Leitrim Intercultural Forum, Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities (LAPWD), Cairde Liatrioma, National Learning Network, Rehabcare, Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), Leitrim Residents Network, Breffni Family Resource Centre, Social farming Support Office, Mohill Family Resource Centre, Leitrim Organic Farmers Co-op Leitrim Design House, Leitrim Sculpture Centre, The Organic Centre among many others.

2.4 Area Needs Analysis

This area needs analysis is informed by the detailed information and trends in the socio-economic profile, through the identification of the key target groups and review of the key services and programmes relevant to LEADER that are being delivered in the area. The area needs analysis outlines the challenges as well as the proposed priorities/areas for development taking into consideration the cross cutting themes of environment, climate change and innovation. It also focuses on the development needs arising from the priorities and some priorities relating directly to the specific target groups identified.

The Challenges and Priorities which will form the basis of this strategy are outlined below;

Challenge: Highly dispersed rural communities with an aging population, living in rural locations coupled with an increasing lack of transport and services.

Priorities:

1. **Sustainable Inclusive Communities**
2. **Vibrant Towns and Villages as Hubs of Activity & Services**
3. **Enhanced ICT Awareness & Knowledge**

As County Leitrim is one of the most rural counties in Ireland, a target group outlined in the area profile is the remote communities. These communities are reliant on their local **community infrastructure and services** and also on their local towns and villages which service the larger rural hinterlands. The areas identified in section 2.2.6 Deprivation Index and Disposable Income (pg. 24) have very low population densities which are highly dispersed. Greaghliss, Stralongford, Killarga and Kiltyclogher have extensive upland, mountainous and remote areas. Others such as Drumreilly South, Rowan, and Corrala are heavily forested lowlands. Additionally the vast majority of the people living in these areas, are more likely to be older, in single person households and in receipt of income support such as the pension, farm assist etc. They also have lower levels of formal education, are likely to be more dependent on low income, extensive farming systems as the land in all of these areas is extremely poor. The higher proportion of these characteristics / factors along with significant structural issues gives rise to the analysis which defines these area as most disadvantaged in Leitrim. Since they are all very rural there are few businesses (apart from small farms) or economic drivers in these areas and few applications for funding come forward in the economic themes. Social inclusion actions and capital investments supported by RDP 2014-2020 LEADER will target the people living in these areas by building capacity and delivering support programmes and access to sustainable services near-by and in the surrounding villages and towns. Currently SICAP staff and activities are targeting supports and assistance towards these people. Most of these areas in themselves do not have the critical mass of population, many active community groups, businesses or sustainable village /community hubs as they are remote. However they are all close to surrounding gaigra, villages and towns through which investment into these areas will be targeted. Unlike many of the other EDs in

Leitrim which are “most disadvantaged” the village of Kiltyclogher does act as a focal point for the very rural and remote community which surrounds it. (The community is now very concerned about its primary school with just 19 students enrolled.) Significant investments were made in Kiltyclogher under the previous RDP 2007-2014 LEADER programme and a continued focus through the Leitrim LDS on supporting and developing Kiltyclogher village and the surrounding area will remain in this programme. Other disadvantage EDs of Aughnasheelin, Gortvagh and Corawallen are similar hubs which have all lost their local shop and post office in recent years. Similar targeting of investment and support in such areas will be through LAG or IP led projects and also in the animation process. The animation process will encourage all project promoters particularly from communities and groups in and around these EDs to address such disadvantage in their proposals and action plans.

Many of the initiatives and strategic actions which are proposed in this LDS will be targeted and will help the people in these areas to improve the quality of their lives, to access services, supports and training and also to access jobs and economic opportunities even though they may not specifically be delivered in the named geographic Electoral Divisions (EDs).

The creation of sustainable inclusive communities and vibrant towns and villages is vital for communities in the county. **Basic services in the form of community services and facilities targeted at hard to reach communities** will prove beneficial in combating isolation. Shared and multi-use facilities are important as well as intergenerational services and activities. Improving and extending the range, scope and quality of community facilities and services to meet the needs of rural residents is important. Outreach services and supports are important to more rural locations as well as **social enterprises** in rural communities in the county. It is important to work collaboratively with other agencies and service providers to ensure that there are **sufficient facilities, activities & services to cater for vulnerable people** in the county. Infrastructure such as **transport and broadband** can play a key role in providing access to social and educational facilities and employment. For rural residents basic tasks such as completing forms, accessing information and opportunities to work from home are limited due to the availability of quality broadband. As identified through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) for the county there is a very strong and active **volunteering culture** in County Leitrim and as a result the Volunteering in Leitrim website (www.volunteerinleitrim.ie) was established. Volunteering is not restricted to any one type of group or activity; there is however a strong interest and involvement in community facilities and services, particularly community centres and halls. It is important that **capacity building** takes place with these volunteers.

Many of Leitrim’s smaller towns, villages and rural settlements (graigs) and including all of the most disadvantaged Electoral Divisions, are experiencing issues related to the ongoing closures/removal of Garda stations, Post Offices, schools and shops. Towns, villages and smaller rural settlements are of themselves assets of significant social, cultural and economic value. There is a need to **revitalise our rural towns and villages** using innovative and collaborative approaches. It is important that our village/town businesses and communities take ownership of the process to ensure they are inviting places for those who live, work, or visit. The towns and villages should have **vibrant shared community and public spaces as focal points for both economic and social interaction** to be enjoyed by all. **Public spaces should be accessible to all.** Many of the towns and villages in County Leitrim are distinctive in terms of their character and focus on key sectors which could potentially become “hubs” of economic activity. The Town of Mohill has been designated as an Age Friendly Town and also a Green Town, this is an area that can be expanded on and supported. Carrick on Shannon

has been designated as a Purple Flag Town and again this is an area where support can be focused. The Purple Flag is the international accreditation for town centres in the evening and at night from 5pm to 5am. Purple Flag destinations distinguish themselves by being vibrant and well-managed.

Challenge: High unemployment rates, migration of educated young people out of the county to seek employment elsewhere, reliance on agriculture dominated by small farms and low incomes coupled with low levels of educational attainment in rural areas.

Priorities:

4. **Dynamic & Diversified Rural Economy**
5. **Thriving Authentic Tourism Sector**

Increased jobs and economic growth is a key focus for LEADER in County Leitrim. Creating and maintaining strong rural economies is critical to supporting sustainable and vibrant rural communities. Strong rural economies offer those living in rural areas better work opportunities while helping to mitigate outmigration of younger people. It is important that **local entrepreneurship is stimulated** and this in turn will create jobs and add economic value to the county and at the same time keep scarce resources within the community. Entrepreneurs and businesses require support to take advantage of **new opportunities to develop, expand or diversify** in order to sustain and grow their businesses in the longer term. Economic growth will be driven by increased productivity in new and existing small and medium sized businesses in the county. The focus will be on **capital and asset investment, innovation, skills and enterprise**. Innovation is a cross cutting theme of the programme and therefore it will be encouraged and supported. The potential to develop rural enterprises and to engage with customers and potential new customers relies heavily on **broadband quality** which is somewhat limited in the county. **Support for social enterprise** that tackles social, economic or environmental issues in rural areas is important. Small and medium enterprises in the county could benefit from the introduction of new technologies, investment in work space, specialist equipment and energy saving measures. While capital investment is important, intangible investments such as the acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks could also be focused on. **Investment in human capital** is also important. From the area profile it is clear that there is a large proportion of the population aged 55+ in the county along with a large percentage of retired people. There could be scope to tap into the tacit knowledge- experience and expertise of the retired. This in turn will contribute to the overall performance of our workplace and indeed the broader economy.

In the CEDRA Report, Energising Ireland's Rural Economy a number of specific sectors of the rural economy emerged as having particular potential to contribute to the economic development of rural Ireland to 2025 including Food and Beverage, the Creative Industries, Renewable Energy and Tourism and Recreation in Rural Areas. Similarly the County Leitrim Economic Development Strategy focuses on key sectors which can be targeted which include **agri-food, forestry, the creative, arts & digital content and tourism sectors**.

Agriculture Diversification

The numbers of persons involved in agriculture and forestry in Leitrim, is double the national average. This indicates the **strong dependence on agriculture** in the county and shows that agriculture dominates the economic life of people living in Leitrim but capacity and output are low with few full time commercial farmers. These **farms are essential to the local economy**

and maintenance of the landscape. There is potential to support farm businesses to improve income from multifunctional **diversified activities** such as;

- **Energy Production**
- **Food Processing**
- **Agri-tourism, Social farming etc.**

Improvement in skills levels will help farmers and farm family members to innovate, make cost savings and to invest in meaningful physical assets which can help them to diversify.

Food

The strength of the food and drink sector was identified particularly in relation to prestige and quality products being produced in the county. There is a need and an opportunity to strengthen local marketing & supply chains including for example, the promotion of local or specialist produce. There is scope to build on the green image of Leitrim and the success of food sector assets, such as the Food Hub and the Organic Centre which are unique to Leitrim through further expansion to meet growing needs. This in turn will increase the numbers employed in the food sector in the county by 2020. The networking and further development of the food sector could also be supported by the Artisan Food Initiative of the RDP.

Creative Sector

There is potential for increased growth and employment in the creative sector in County Leitrim. As noted previously WDC highlighted that there is a considerable pool of creative talent in the region which can be difficult to identify. A major finding of WDC highlighted that creativity was not being sufficiently stimulated and that adopting business skills creates a challenge for creative people. The county has great resources available for the creative sector with Leitrim Design House and Leitrim Sculpture Centre. With the establishment of the FABLAB in Manorhamilton, there is great scope for a range of innovative creative sector businesses to develop in the county. There is also potential in the creative sector for possible co-operation projects.

Tourism

Tourism has multiplier effects on other sectors of the rural economy benefiting retail, food and drink as well as stimulating regeneration and infrastructure improvements. Fáilte Ireland believes that for tourism to thrive, vibrant communities and healthy landscapes are essential pre-requisites. The most **significant advantage for tourism** in County Leitrim; is the **spectacular natural environment** with a variety of towns and villages and an abundance of lakes, rivers and canals. Leitrim is also within easy access to Knock and Dublin airports. Leitrim County Council has **identified that there is potential for tourism in Leitrim to perform better.** There are plenty of opportunities for the tourism sector to grow in the county and therefore the Tourism Growth Alliance have set out to work towards **doubling the size of the tourism sector in the county by 2021.** There is a need to build on the added value and to be innovative in thinking around product development. Priority areas identified for development in the Tourism Strategy are; The Shannon Blueway, North Leitrim Glens, Cruising, Angling Adventure Tourism, Lough Rynn Rowing Facility, Eco Tourism, Genealogy, Festivals, Events, Heritage and Culture. There will be a focus on projects which link with Fáilte

Ireland's brand propositions in the region which include the Wild Atlantic Way in North Leitrim and the Lakelands and Inland Waterways in the rest of the county. The Leitrim Recreation Forum complements the Tourism Strategy as the Forum focuses on the **development of recreational infrastructure**. In terms of marketing, there is a need to **focus on collaborative marketing** and selling **experiences** rather than products. Building on Leitrim **as a destination** will also be important. While tourism may be seasonal; it important that facilities and **products that extend the tourist season are supported**. Apart from hotels in the county, the tourism sector in the county is dominated by micro enterprises which are mainly working in isolation. Support should also focus on projects which develop **collaboration between the tourism enterprises in the area**. According to Fáilte Ireland the new Fáilte Ireland Tourism Development Strategy 2016-2020 does not have a 'non- capital' element and therefore **human capital support such as training and capacity building within business and community networks** is necessary to ensure that the full intended impact of any capital funding is achieved.

There are also potential opportunities to build on the existing Rural Economic Development Zones pilot initiatives in the county and also work with other proposed Rural Economic Development Zones.

Challenge: maintaining our unspoilt natural environment, high dependence on agriculture and monoculture forestry and underutilisation of our natural resources

Priorities:

- 6. Conservation of our Natural Environment**
- 7. Harnessing our Natural Resources**

Due to the low population density and remoteness of County Leitrim; it is a county with a **relatively unspoilt natural environment and landscape** ranging from the Tullaghan coastline through the Uplands of North Leitrim, through to the Lough Allen Basin and Sliabh an Iarainn, to the drumlin and lakelands belt in the South. Leitrim is a county of lakes, rivers and canals. Conservation of our natural environment is important across all sectors and activities in the county. This includes the sustainable use of our natural resources and conservation and protection of our local biodiversity. Biodiversity has important direct and indirect health and economic benefits. Currently Leitrim does not have a Local Biodiversity Action Plan and as a result there is a **need to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity** and conservation of our natural environment for future generations. **Projects that celebrate and enhance the natural environment will be encouraged**. With our array of **wetlands** in the county it is vital that water **resources are protected** and conserved. Clear linkages with the Heritage Officer in Leitrim County Council will be required in relation to conservation projects.

Being one of the most forested counties in Ireland, forestry has been identified as a key area where added value products can be developed. Forestry can help to diversify the rural economy and **reduce the carbon footprint of local communities**. Reducing the carbon footprint of local communities and businesses is a cross cutting theme of the programme and therefore it will be encouraged and supported. There is **scope to test and pilot new supply chains** and jobs which at the same time restore regular management to local woods and encourage a greater degree of added value processing. Rural areas provide us with essential resources of food, water and energy. **Our natural resources can be utilised to develop the green economy in the county. Raising awareness of the importance of alternative**

energies to local residents and communities is also a key component identified for this strategy.

There is a need to **raise awareness** and promote the importance of our natural environment, sustainable use of our natural resources and development of renewable energy. **Capital investment projects relating to native species, conservation and renewable energy will be supported.**

2.5 Target Group Analysis

The rural nature of the county and prolonged out migration has given rise to spatial and social isolation with some rural areas still experiencing population decline. There are particular disadvantaged communities in Leitrim including older people, people with disabilities, young people, ethnic minorities, people living alone, unemployed, not in education or training, those living in the most disadvantaged communities and farmers/smallholders. Many of these target groups are at risk of increased isolation and exclusion from economic and social life. Some groups living in rural areas can for various reasons such as lack of access to transport, lack of disposable income and lack of accessible peer support network, find themselves very stressed and isolated.

The entire County of Leitrim including, the town of Carrick-on-Shannon is considered rural in any and all of the National or EU definitions of rural. The CSO following the 2011 census indicated that “Leitrim is the most rural county in the country with almost 90 per cent of the population living in a rural setting”. Leitrim also has the lowest population density of any county in Ireland and with only 19 people per sq km and is among the most sparsely populated areas in Europe.

The Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 identifies 27 centres of population which includes the many small villages and towns including Carrick-on-Shannon and in addition 23 Graigs (established nodes usually consisting of community facilities and a number of one off houses) which are dispersed around the county. These are the centres from which the citizens receive services, supports, conduct their business and where they naturally congregate for various events and for social, cultural and economic activities. Business and commercial activity is focused mainly in the towns and villages but some also occurs in the Graigs where some rural post offices and other such services continue to operate.

Due to the very low population density and in some cases the topography in the county there is not sufficient population, community capacity or financial capacity in some geographic areas and particularly in those which are most isolated to develop projects or interventions to support, develop or enhance their own circumstances. The levels of funding available to Leitrim through the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 will not allow for funding to be invested in facilities and projects where there will be very low levels of use, uptake or engagement. However there are different type of communities across Leitrim as follows

- **Interest** - Communities of people who share the same interests or passions
- **Action** - Communities of people trying to bring about change
- **Place** - Communities brought together by geographic or other defined boundaries
- **Practice** - communities of people who undertake the same activities

- **Circumstance** - communities of people brought together by external events or situations

These different types of communities allow people to come together in different ways and for different purposes and to pursue their activities and to meet their own needs. The fact that Leitrim has among the highest levels of voluntary activity in Ireland among its population is testament to this. It was also obvious to us during the consultation process that all of these types of groups are active right across the county and they all have proposals and need for investment from the RDP. These groups, networks and communities were engaged in the consultations and they identified multiple projects, initiatives, proposals and ideas which can support them in their activities.

There is limited scope in the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 to carry out any significant developmental support projects by, with or on behalf of these various types of communities since stand-alone animation projects are not possible.

Consequently this LDS is developed to allow a wide range of diverse applicants including private/commercial businesses, farmers and the various communities from across the county to avail of the supports which will be available through the LAG, its partners and the RDP LEADER funding. Naming and focusing on particular geographic areas, particular sectors or particular communities could easily lead to exclusion. Balancing the needs of all, across the county, can be best achieved by examining the detail in each and all proposals which come forward under the various themes, objectives and strategic actions. It will be important that the LAG is clear and specific in the detail and the requirements in the various calls (and in the scoring matrix) for funding about the targeting of supports and the objectives, the expected impacts and what will be considered strong proposals in the various calls.

The various calls for funding will be defined by the LAG and will take account of the needs of all of the citizens particularly those most in need as set out in the target groups which have been identified. The calls will also require all applicants to define in detail how they will address the needs of at least some of the target groups, the requirements and expectations of the call and also the needs of their community, the various sectors and the county as a whole.

Targeting of the LDS supports through the actions will be conducted at the evaluation and decision/approval stages by the LCDC when the needs, the impacts, the outcomes and the outputs of various project applications will be assessed and scored against the LDS, its target groups, objectives and also across and among the proposals which are put forward. The LAG is very aware of the requirement to focus the RDP investment on those who most need it, to where it will be most beneficial and to where best value for money can be achieved and also to achieve the highest level of impact from the programme.

Table 2.3 outlines the target groups as identified in the area profile and proposed areas/priorities for development for these target groups;

Table 2.3: Targets Group Identified and the Areas/Priorities for Development

Target Group	Areas/Priorities for Development
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<p>Youth- particularly those aged 15-24 years old</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Actions supporting intergenerational activities; -Investment in initiatives that focus on key areas of potential employment; -Entrepreneurial youth programmes; -Youth led initiatives to engage young people and get them involved in their local community; -Interventions need to be put in place to link with educational establishments outside the county (While the county may not have the capacity and population for the location of a third level educational establishment, there are opportunities in terms of outreach and online courses from Sligo IT, Galway IT, NUI Galway and Cavan Institute); -Create an economic environment for young people to take up employment in Leitrim enticing them back to the county; -Ensuring that there is sufficient facilities, activities & services to cater for vulnerable people in the county; -Maintenance of the services, facilities and opportunities that make County Leitrim an attractive place to live and to work now and in the future; -Infrastructure such as transport and broadband can play a key role in providing access to social and educational facilities and employment.
<p>Older People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There is scope to invest in actions supporting intergenerational activities. It is important that the older people feel part of their community and are involved in the development of their rural communities; -Interventions to ensure older people are included in their community; -Maintenance of the services, facilities and opportunities that make County Leitrim an attractive place to live now and in the future; -Infrastructure such as transport and broadband can play a key role in providing access to social and educational facilities and employment; -Support the development of Age Friendly Towns in the county; -Awareness of safety, crime and health.
<p>Ethnic Minorities- new communities/migrants /travellers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support projects which directly target ethnic minorities; -Create awareness of the different ethnic groups in the county; -Maintenance of the services, facilities and opportunities that make County Leitrim an attractive place to live and to work now and in the future; -Promote equal opportunities and diversity of ethnic minorities in the county.
<p>People living alone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support projects and initiatives which target those that live alone -Awareness of safety, crime and health; -There is scope to invest in actions supporting intergenerational activities.
<p>People living in most disadvantaged areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interventions across the life cycle are required to assist this target group; -Initiatives to engage people to get them involved in their local community; -Ensuring that there are sufficient facilities, activities & services to cater for vulnerable people in the county.

<p>People with low levels of educational attainment</p>	<p>-Accessible courses on an outreach basis is important to target those with low levels of education in the county; -Need to facilitate specific training to meet the low level of educational attainment in a number of rural areas in the county; -Practical skills, confidence building and niche training areas could be focused on including lifelong learning; -Potential to upskill people in key growth areas as identified;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Energy supply and the Green Economy · Agriculture and food · Services, manufacturing and ICT · Creative, arts and culture · Tourism.
<p>People with disabilities & mental health issues (PWD)</p>	<p>-Raising awareness of the importance of health and wellbeing for all ages and inclusion in all community setting and activities for PWDs; -Providing employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities. (particularly after school leaving and post training); -Inclusive and accessible community towns and villages as well as community infrastructure and facilities; -Support for preventative work and promotion of mental health and wellbeing within communities; -Active engagement of those at risk of mental health problems in everyday social activities e.g. Men's Shed, Women's Group, Community Gardens, Social Farming.</p>
<p>People who are not in employment, education or training</p>	<p>-Initiatives that increase employment, raise earnings, offer opportunities for young people and women and help to increase working hours will be prioritised; -Potential to upskill people in key growth areas as identified;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Energy supply and the Green Economy · Agriculture and food · Services, manufacturing and ICT · Creative, arts and culture · Tourism.
<p>Farmers/ Smallholders & farm family members</p>	<p>-Develop and promote initiatives to support agricultural diversification businesses e.g. Social Farming, Agri-tourism, Energy Production, Food Processing etc.</p>

3 The Participative Planning Process for RDP 2014-2020

The planning process for RDP 2014-2020 in Leitrim has been ongoing comprehensive and inclusive, engaging with all the stakeholders, statutory, representative, social partners, communities, businesses and “hard to reach” groups. It has also been multi sectoral with economic, social, cultural and environmental interests having been a part of the planning process for RDP LEADER 2014-2020.

3.1 Review of RDP LEADER 2007-2013 Programme

During the delivery of the RDP LEADER 2007-2013 Programme Leitrim Development Company as the LAG gained significant insights into the range of issues and challenges which face the various sectors, stakeholders and groups of people in County Leitrim. In many cases the animation activities of the LAG and many of the LAG led projects attempted to deal with these challenges using a strategic and planned approach. An analysis of the RDP LEADER Programme 2007-2013 has been completed and the insights, the reports and outputs (from the animation projects) are now useful in all of the relevant sectors e.g. economic, social, cultural and environmental in informing and helping to define the priorities for RDP 2014-2020. A listing of the reports from this work is included in **Appendix 8**.

The following is a summary of the main points from these

- There are gaps in the developmental supports and ongoing support services and funding to some sectors such as tourism, recreation, festivals and events;
- There are capacity issues within and among the community and voluntary sector particularly related to engaging and supporting hard to reach groups within their communities;
- Small businesses have difficulties raising funding for start-up and expansion and they can find it difficult to navigate the requirement of funders;
- Businesses also indicate a need for continuous support, networking and training once they are established as they are not expert across the range of issues which challenge them;
- There are poorly developed or poorly performing networks in some sectors which have potential with support to add value to a range of economic and community activity;
- There are infrastructural deficits around the county for basic services to meet the needs of communities particularly for those who can be socially excluded for one reason or another;
- There is significant interest and activity across the county in cultural and natural heritage and in the great variety of festivals and events which take place on an annual basis around the county;
- There are very significant benefits of working through a strategic, collaborative partnership approach and this is evident from the work of the Leitrim Recreation Forum and its five working groups, in implementing the Leitrim Recreation Strategy all of which were developed and established under the RDP 2007-2013;
- 14 towns and villages around the county expressed their needs and requirements for funding and support in tidy towns plans which they completed in an “umbrella” project during RDP 2007-2013. An extensive range of issues were raised from vacant and derelict properties, town centre decline and the need for enhancement of public and community spaces;
- Significant resources, interest and opportunities exist in Leitrim both among the businesses and communities to develop renewable energy resources and projects;

- Community organisations are providing a wide range of services, activities and supports, through community owned and operated buildings (mainly community centres) around the county and they have a range of challenges and needs to help with their sustainability for the future. Many of their supports and activities are vital for the excluded and hard to reach groups in these communities.

3.2 Review of Strategies, Plans, Documents

The LCDC and many of its members and other agencies, organisations have been conducting consultation processes and developing their strategies and plans during 2014 and 2015. When the recommendations and proposals set out in the Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan, Carrick Vision 2020, the Urban Framework Plans for Ballinamore, Mohill, Manorhamilton, Drumkeerin, Dromahair and Drumshanbo and the Retail Strategy developed by Leitrim County Council are combined there is a comprehensive background and views on the County's towns and villages. These plans and strategies set out the needs and proposals for development in many areas including infrastructure, public realm, access and their economic focus and strengths. The new Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 was completed and adopted by Leitrim County Council in January 2015. The Leitrim Arts Strategy 2012-2017 seeks to "work to further develop and grow the creative sector of the County" through raising awareness, access and participation, professional development and linkages. The LCDC has been conducting and completing the economic and community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) which has involved extensive and multiple consultations across the various sectors and among a wide range of stakeholders. Other examples include The Leitrim LEO which launched its strategy to assist small and microenterprises in 2015, while Teagasc launched their strategy for the Area Management Unit (AMU) including Leitrim, in mid-2015. Leitrim's Tourism Growth Alliance and the Leitrim Recreation Forum have developed comprehensive strategies for the county (in 2014-2015) and again both involved co-ordination, consultation and collaboration with stakeholders, businesses and the community sector. In 2015 the Leitrim LCDC adopted the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) plan for engaging and supporting hard to reach groups in Leitrim over the next three years, to the end of 2017 and which is being delivered by Leitrim Development Company. There are many such strategy documents and plans for Leitrim and the wider region which were reviewed and which have a very important bearing on the LDS priorities, objectives and strategic actions for RDP 2014-2020. Those which were included in this review are listed in **Appendix 9**. There were extensive discussions among and between a wide range of statutory bodies and other agencies in all of these activities and the LDS takes account of the conclusions and recommendations of these plans and strategies. The LCDC agreed that there was no need to duplicate these extensive consultations conducted by the LCDC and its members in developing the LDS.

The review of these documents leads to the following points

- The county has many strengths and opportunities to expand and develop niche or unique aspects which can lead to job creation and economic development including the unique aspects of the creative sector, the strength of Carrick-on-Shannon in drawing tourist and visitors to the county, the developing Blueways in the region, the focus on food which is centred on the Food Hub, the recreation activities and unique landscape character of North Leitrim including proposed Greenways, etc.

- Job creation and business growth is important in the county and will be reliant on micro enterprise and SME start-up and expansion. Building on inherent assets and skills will be important.
- Tourism including recreation in the county provides a wide range of opportunities and significant potential for growth in employment and economic activity.
- Towns and villages can offer and develop “place related” locally driven economic activities based on proactively building on their unique assets, particular strengths and character and the capacity of the people and communities therein.
- Maintaining community services and capacity, lifelong learning opportunities, and a strong active community and voluntary sector are vital for the citizens of the county particularly those at risk of poverty, exclusion or marginalisation.
- Significant challenges exist in regenerating and retaining and sustaining employment, young people, services, facilities and community activity in the more isolated rural communities in Leitrim.
- Opportunities exist for the development of renewable energy particularly in the area of biomass supply from forestry (timber) and micro-hydro generation. Policy change (climate) and regional projects and activities are driving innovation in the renewable energy sector and businesses and communities in Leitrim are contributing to this.

3.3 Public Consultation

There was a comprehensive participative, public consultation process specifically focused on the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 conducted by Leitrim Development Company during the completion of the LDS. This was entitled “Have your Say”. During the development of the LDS it was agreed by the LCDC that a direct consultation process with four distinct strands would take place. These strands were

1. Area based consultation events (x 10),
2. Focus groups with hard to reach groups (x 10),
3. Online survey promoted and supported through a variety of media platforms including communications and invites from the LCDC members,
4. Written submissions by post or email

There was a series of advertisements regarding the events and also features explaining and detailing the RDP 2014-2020 LEADER programme in the local newspaper the Leitrim Observer over a five week period from mid-August to mid-September 2015. Staff members from Leitrim Development Company also spoke about the RDP 2014-2020 and the consultation process on both Shannonside and Ocean FM, the local radio stations which cover the County. There was almost daily social media posts on the LDC Facebook and Twitter accounts (and on others - members of the LCDC) regarding the RDP 2014-2020 consultation process and invites were posted to followers for the various community events. Posters informing the public about the events and inviting people to complete the survey or to make submissions were posted on public notice boards across the county, in community/public buildings, libraries, supermarkets, and other such spaces. Invites were also placed (over the five weeks from mid - August '15) in church newsletters and the local area notes in the Leitrim Observer. These also carried information on the events and the process. The wide range of contacts which Leitrim Development Company has on its database were contacted via email and post and provided with the details of the consultation and the various ways of making their views and needs known.

Many of the LCDC member organisations also provided this information and invites to their members, clients, groups/networks, customers through email and social media and also inviting them to have their say. Examples include circulation of the information through the Public Participation Network (PPN) database to all registered members. Copies of this material and evidence of all this activity is available and a summary of examples are included in **Appendix 10**.

3.3.1 Area Based Consultation Events

The ten area based consultation events took place during August and September 2015 and a total of 382 people attended them. The locations ensured a wide geographical spread across the entire County.

Table 3.1: List of Area Based Consultation Events

Venue	Date	No's attended
Lough Allen Hotel, Drumshanbo	Tuesday 25th August	25
Community Hall, Carrigallen	Wednesday 26th August	24
The Depot, Dromahair	Thursday 27th August	22
Canon Donohue Hall, Mohill	Tuesday 01st September	50
Community Centre, Drumkeerin	Thursday 03rd September	23
Community & Holiday Centre, Kiltyclogher	Tuesday 08th September	19
Bee Park, Manorhamilton	Thursday 10th September	84
Bush Hotel, Carrick on Shannon	Monday 14th September	52
Community Centre, Kinlough	Tuesday 15th September	25
Community Centre, Ballinamore	Wednesday 16th September	58
	TOTAL	382

The format of this series of events consisted of an introduction by a member of the LCDC (or the Chief Officer) followed by a presentation on the background to the EU RDP LEADER programme and its policy context, the RDP achievements in recent times (2007-2013) and an outline of the themes and sub-themes of the RDP 2014-2020. The presentation also outlined the objectives of the events in allowing people, businesses and the community to have their say in the development of the priorities for the Local Development Strategy in Leitrim.

Following an opportunity to network, those in attendance were then divided into four groups relating to the four general themes of the RDP including Economic Development, Social Inclusion and Hard to Reach Groups (including Young People), Rural Towns and Basic Services, and the Environment (including Water and Renewable Energy, etc.). Facilitated workshops dealt with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats under these headings and for the local area. People were asked for their opinions of what they felt their needs were and where any gaps in supports etc. existed. They were asked to identify the priorities for the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 and how they saw these priorities being progressed and delivered. Feedback was given from each group and following the events it was further recorded and analysed by Leitrim Development Company. See copy of feedback given to attendees in **Appendix 11**.

3.3.2 Focus Groups

There were focus group meetings with a range of stakeholders and particularly the hard to reach groups and their representatives which it was felt may not travel or be heard clearly at the public events. Below is a list of these focus groups.

Table 3.2: List of Focus Groups

People with disabilities	Young people & youth services
Older people	Local Authority estate residents
Community Networks	Leitrim County Council
The Leitrim PPN	LCD SICAP staff and volunteers
The Board of LDC	SICAP Community development Sub-committee

The focus was generally similar to the public events with a short presentation on the RDP 2014-2020 and the areas relevant to the particular group and their feedback, needs and opinions were then sought.

3.3.3 Online Surveys

The online survey was developed using Survey Monkey (a copy is included in **Appendix 12**). The survey was open from August 11th until Friday 25th September 2015 and was directly accessible through the Leitrim Development Company website. Links to it were also widely circulated and promoted through all of the various channels and media alongside the public events as described above. In total 219 people completed the survey. The survey asked people to indicate whether or not they received support from the RDP previously, to give some details on this, to indicate their preferences and their weighting on the various priorities on a list of possible priorities for the LDS. They were given the opportunity to provide more details on their priorities and to include any which they felt were not included in the list. They were also asked if they had any particular projects or proposals in mind and to give some details in relation to this. There was also the opportunity to record any additional relevant comments they might have on the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 Local Development Strategy development. The respondents were also asked to include their contact details if they wished. The results of this survey was collated and analysed.

3.3.4 Submissions

There was also an open invitation to the public to make written submissions on the RDP 2014-2020. Thirty eight written submissions were received. Some of the submissions were comprehensive detailed plans, proposals or research regarding particular projects. Others were comments about or support for various and specific projects (proposals) and some were providing information and detailing various needs. A list of those who made submissions and the topic of the submissions are included in **Appendix 13**.

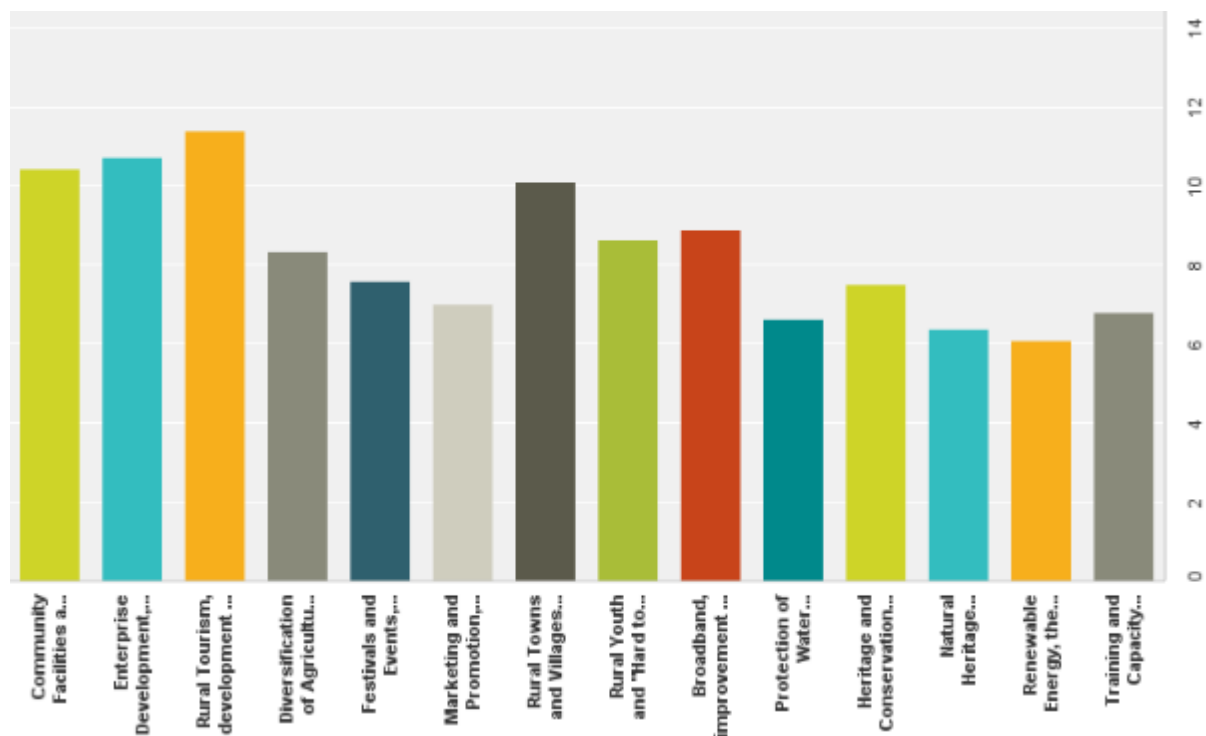
3.4 The Results of the Consultations

The variety of public consultation methods ensured as wide a cross section of the public were consulted as possible along with hard to reach communities and the various sectors in the county. The consultation process resulted in significant amounts of information and material identifying the priorities, needs, opportunities and areas /sectors for development. There were a lot of specific projects initiatives, ideas and proposals, identified and named across the county. All of the quantitative and qualitative data was collated, analysed and utilised in the development of this strategy. Summaries of the material and the analysis of the consultations are included in **Appendix 14**.

Priorities in this strategy were defined following review of the area profile and the comprehensive public consultation process which identified the key areas where funding is most needed in the county. The priorities identified through the consultations are very much in line with those as set out in the Area Needs Analysis.

The survey included a question ranking areas for priority and support under the RDP 2014-2020. The results are outlined in Figure 3.1. Rural Tourism Development ranked as the top priority followed closely by Enterprise Supports and the Development of Community Facilities. Town and Villages were clearly ahead of other priorities for the communities and the public. The same priorities were clearly followed through at the consultation events and in the analysis of the feedback from all of the people and groups who contributed to the public consultation. The details of this analysis can be found in **Appendix 15**.

Figure 3.1: Analysis of Priorities from Online Survey



There was unanimous agreement on the need to create sustainable employment opportunities across the county through investment in projects which create jobs or strengthen and sustain existing employment. There was a need to aid in the development of new part time, seasonal, or temporary employment or ultimately full time employment. Supporting micro-enterprises, SMEs and entrepreneurs through start-up, development and expansion was also identified as a significant need in the consultations.

3.4.1 Developing a Thriving Authentic Tourism Sector

The main focus of much of the discussions in the area of economic development during the consultations was on the possibilities, right across the county, for developments in the tourism sector. This was also in line with the results of the survey which identified rural tourism development as the top priority for support and investment of the RDP funding.

It was clear from the consultations that the tourism sector can contribute greatly to the economy of the county. An increase in the number of tourists and visitors to Leitrim has the greatest potential to offer jobs and to improve the economic prospects of the county. Individuals and the community groups are aware that the county has a lot to offer a wide range

of tourists and visitors but that investment and development support is needed. Among the items highlighted for further improvements were tourism facilities and infrastructure (particularly in relation to recreational opportunities). It was highlighted in the consultations that accommodation stock is not available in certain areas and that there are low numbers of tourism providers registered with Fáilte Ireland. There was discussion relating to the requirements for niche accommodation to target specific segments of the market relevant to particular areas of the county. There was also a clear need identified for collective promotion and marketing (including signage) along with the development of tourism experiences in the county. Co-ordinated destination marketing initiatives with tourism providers in marketing their businesses to foreign and domestic markets is seen as being essential in the future. The consultations identified that marketing initiatives need to be driven by the trade with support and funding from the RDP LEADER programme and guidance from the Local Authority.

Ongoing supports in terms of networking, capacity building and training are essential. Closer and increased collaboration and networking between projects, initiatives, agencies and businesses were also cited as requirements to strengthen tourism in the County. The consultations called for a focus on developing more linked activities/attractions to complement the variety of established and certified accommodation around what are perceived as the developed tourist areas such as Carrick-on-Shannon and Ballinamore. Heritage was identified as a major asset for the promotion of tourism in the county. There were also references to the many festivals which help generate economic activity and contribute to visitor and tourist experiences. Festivals rely on volunteers and continuing support and investment from the RDP is required. Investment in a wide range of tourism (and eco-tourism) products, services, accommodation and marketing were all suggested as ways to increase the economic benefits to the county from tourism.

The consultations revealed Leitrim's varied and rich cultural, heritage and arts sectors which are in many cases led and supported by community and voluntary groups and initiatives. The need to support and develop these in different ways was repeated across the county. It was also felt that they can add significantly to the tourism and microenterprise sectors by nurturing connections between tourists and visitors, the diaspora and the unique stories/experiences, performances and crafts.

3.4.2 Dynamic & Diversified Rural Economy

From the consultations it is clear that County Leitrim relies on micro, small and medium indigenous enterprises to generate jobs and economic development. It was felt that there was a need for a supportive environment and a range of services both at the start-up stage and for those enterprises already established. This also includes access to finance such as loans, grants and venture capital which is prepared to take a risk on smaller and start-up enterprises. Many suggestions were made at the consultations about innovative ways of providing start-up and development finance and other supports to businesses. Many also felt that the RDP application/approval process is very cumbersome and that reducing the burden of bureaucracy should be a priority. Particular niche sectors were identified for further development in the county including the artisan agri-food sector, creative sector and green/energy sector. The Food Hub was cited as an example of successful clustering, collaboration and networking in the enterprise sector. Learning from best practice, mentoring and sharing of resources were highlighted as key for the enterprise sector in the county and this is an area where the RDP Artisan Food Initiative may be utilised for such supports.

The consultations highlighted that farm incomes are declining and as a result fewer young people are taking over farms in the County. There was concerns that farming incomes will

continue to decline. As a result some farm family members felt that diversifying the farm/family income is an option for some farm families. However it was felt that many do not have the capacity and have difficulties with sourcing of appropriate information, advice and support. It was also felt that funding for diversification projects is limited. Farms can also provide other economic benefits to their community such as social farming and the emerging need for renewable energy particularly biomass was cited as ways farmers and landowners can contribute to economic development. There were comments and suggestions at all the events about farming and the need for the RDP in Leitrim to support farmers, particularly young farmers and their families to diversify.

Leitrim's vibrant creative and artistic sectors are still building their capacity and scale and since many of these microbusinesses and community initiatives are dispersed throughout the rural areas they require continued support with training, networking, product development, collaborative marketing and encouragement of innovation.

Social/community enterprises are an important element of the economy in Leitrim. With a low and dispersed population base many communities must rely on alternatives to the commercial or state sector for services. The consultations revealed a very vibrant and varied social enterprise sector with varying needs which include sourcing of investment capital, governance, enhancing their facilities, investment in equipment, transport and staffing. Many of them indicate a willingness to work with other such organisations and to collaborate and network locally and regionally if the resources are available. These social enterprises provide vital services to people who are excluded, isolated and from the hard to reach groups across County Leitrim.

3.4.3 Enhanced ICT Awareness & Knowledge

Opportunities to develop micro enterprises based on remote working are dependent on broadband connectivity. The absence, availability and poor quality of broadband, (including mobile phone coverage) was a universal talking point at all of the consultations. It was widely considered that there were missed opportunities for enterprise development in some areas due to this. Many communities and sectors identified a need for ICT training for communities and businesses to enable them to fully benefit from broadband roll out under the proposed National Broadband Scheme (NBS). The report "Overview of Broadband Services in County Leitrim" October 2014 was referred to and there was a view during the consultations that the NBS targets may not be reached in Leitrim particularly in more isolated communities. There is also an interest in some parts of the county to investigate, examine opportunities and collaborate on community broadband initiatives which have been successful in other EU countries.

3.4.4 Sustainable Inclusive Communities

The third priority identified in the consultation was for support for community capital infrastructure including facilities and basic services focused on engaging and supporting hard to reach communities. As mentioned in the Area Profile a comprehensive audit including a survey was carried out in 2015 by Leitrim Development Company and the Community Networks on community owned buildings in the county. Fifty two groups completed the survey and the results were analysed. Over 40 of these groups indicated willingness or need to invest in their buildings and services. This also highlights and indicates the level of social enterprise activity in the communities around Leitrim. The report is attached at **Appendix 16**.

The focus groups and the written submissions allowed various hard to reach groups to have their say and it is clear that these groups require various supports. The consultations indicated

that this requires a significant focus on developmental initiatives and capacity building with investment in animation and direct support programmes. This will require a considerable degree of integration from the LAG and RDP staff in working closely with the many and varied initiatives, actions and supports under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). In order to develop the capacity of these excluded hard to reach groups collaboration with other organisations (including other LAG members) and support groups and programmes will be required.

The area profile highlights that, while disadvantage is spread throughout the county, there are areas that are more marginalised 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 tackle disadvantage, particularly in the disadvantaged areas profiled and also some of the remote rural areas.

The area consultation analysis showed that the key target groups identified in the county include youth, older people, those with mental health issues, new communities and men. The focus groups and the written submissions were in line with this and also included ethnic minorities and women in the hard to reach groups. People living in more geographically isolated areas were also identified as a target group.

There is a need to improve services available for hard to reach groups to help them avail of education, training and employment opportunities. It was recognised that the provision and development of facilities and supports for such groups including youth cafes, encouragement of volunteers (particularly young people) and other integration actions and initiatives are required. Many young people complete their second level education and then move away from Leitrim to third level but do not return. There were concerns expressed during the consultations about the availability of skills based training, apprenticeships, etc. for hard to reach groups and young people who do not leave or go to college. Providing young people in the county with opportunities for training, employment and self-employment locally particularly in farming and the various trades were also discussed and raised as significant needs.

3.4.5 Vibrant Towns & Villages as Hubs of Activity & Services

The importance of the rural towns and villages to the citizens and the communities in their hinterland was obvious from the consultation both in terms of economic and social activities.

It is clear that local communities felt that many of the small towns and villages are declining and require investment to entice traders and visitors back into the town centres to create vibrant, sustainable economic and social hubs for those who live, work, do business or visit the area. By attracting more people to the town centres this will generate more business.

There was general consensus that enhancement to the public realm, making town and village centres more inviting would prove beneficial. It was noted that many of the towns and villages have green areas, market squares and open space, however these spaces are not always suitable or utilised for a range of activities or to their full potential. It is important that these spaces are multi-functional, accessible and allow for social interaction and can be used for various events and festivals. The townscape/streetscape is run down in many areas and requires a face lift in some cases and in others more innovative uses and approaches could be considered. Suggestions given at the consultation events for use of vacant buildings/premises ranged from community uses, to locations for events such as farmer's markets or local fairs, showcasing local arts, crafts & food from the local area, displaying local community information or pop up shops and studios. Approach roads and landscaping along,

in and around the towns were also mentioned with innovative signage and interpretative displays in the town to add interest and entice visitors to dwell in the area. Safety and accessibility were also paramount for all those in attendance at the consultations. It was felt that many of community facilities and buildings are located on the outskirts of the towns and villages and that adequate and safe footpaths and walkways accessible for all were required to connect and link these community facilities (e.g. community centres, recreation pitches, graveyards, heritage sites, etc.) with the economic core of the villages/towns. By attracting more people to the town cores this in turn will generate more business.

During the consultations in some of the towns and villages it was obvious that there were many and sometimes conflicting projects, proposals and ideas about how the particular town or village should develop. It was also clear that the benefits of limited and reduced funding could be maximised where there is a community umbrella group and an agreed local led socio-economic plan which prioritises investment needs and focuses on the assets and strengths of the particular area. A number of towns indicated in different ways that they were interested in and in need of support to go through the process of integrated socio-economic planning. In Carrigallen closer collaboration between a wide range of local groups and various community buildings to get optimum use and value from these community assets were highlighted. In Dromahair identifying and defining the niche areas and unique assets of the village and its people could be focused on. People in Ballinamore also indicated that there is at least five empty public buildings in the town which may be suitable for community projects. Coupled with this there are a multiplicity of dedicated community groups all working hard but separately and as a result the community efforts and funding could become stretched and ineffective. They felt that a process to cohesed the focus of development in the town and to bring together the efforts and resources available could be helpful and effective in the future development of the town.

3.4.6 Conservation of Our Natural Environment

From the consultations, it was clear that communities are aware of the overall importance of our natural environment; however knowledge levels were low in terms of biodiversity and the various elements it entails. 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. It was noted that planting native wildflowers, plants and trees will help encourage native species to increase in numbers. Understanding invasive species and the threats they pose was also noted. It was thought that awareness raising on biodiversity was vital for all sections of the community and particular for the youth as they will be the custodians of the landscape and natural environment in the future. The economic value of conserving and protecting our local heritage (natural, built and cultural) was recognised particularly in terms of tourism.

Our water resources were also recognised as being of great importance to the county with our many lakes, rivers, streams, canals and the Atlantic Ocean at Tullaghan. In order for communities to benefit from and enjoy these water resources it was felt that sustainable use of the waters in the county is important. Safe, accessible and sustainable access for recreation was cited as being important for angling, swimming, boating, etc. A balance needs to be considered to ensure that the waters of the county are protected and sustainably used. Training initiatives and awareness raising of the various species and their role in the various water eco systems is important in order for communities and residents to aid in the protection of the water resources. Various initiatives in relation to promoting our natural heritage can be

developed in collaboration with Leitrim County Council and include raising more awareness of the importance of our natural environment (e.g. Celebrating World Wetland's Day, National Biodiversity Day, Heritage Week, etc.). Local strategies to aid water conservation are necessary to assist the Local Authority in raising awareness of the value of conserving the resource.

3.4.7 Harnessing our Natural Resources

At the consultations a number of businesses, groups, communities and individuals were interested in energy use, conservation, production, supply chain support and management. Various existing and new technologies which contribute to clean safe, sustainable, energy production and use in the future were discussed. It was noted that there is scope and opportunities in Leitrim to innovate, develop businesses, economic activity, jobs and also to remodel the use and provision of energy for and by communities. There is some good expertise in the county but the wider public seems to be less informed about energy issues locally and largely unaware of the broader issues which need to be addressed with regard to climate change proposals. Suggestions and proposals were put forward for the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 programme in Leitrim to deal with many of these issues. Engagements and proposals may need a regional dimension as Leitrim is becoming more active in the renewable energy sector. Further work needs to be done to raise awareness and to facilitate and encourage individuals, consumers and communities to understand the issues and to respond appropriately. The consultation also indicated that training initiatives in the sector are also likely to be very important to contribute to change and development in the county. Support for investment in new technologies and supply chains is also required.

3.4.8 Other Items from the Consultations

There were large numbers of individual projects, initiatives and ideas identified through the consultations events and they are recorded in the material and information from the consultation. Many potential promoters continue to engage after the consultation phase with Leitrim Development Company and are anxious to proceed to application at the first possible opportunity. It is worth noting that there were also a number of projects and proposals for which there were significant numbers of individuals and groups at the events (or submissions) advocating and supporting them. These projects included two developments in Dromahair the DARC development in the park and the access to the park, the Cavan Leitrim Rail trail project in South Leitrim, the SLNCR in North Leitrim and the regional sports campus in Carrick-on-Shannon. Two projects in Manorhamilton; the re-development of the community athletics facility and the community recreation facility on the Carrick road also saw very significant support. Advocates for The Glens to Sea Initiative also featured strongly at a number of the events.

There were also a number of overarching or universal issues which came back strongly from all of the consultations. Many of these are items and concerns which the RDP 2014-2020 LEADER programme may not be able to address directly but in some cases partnership working and other support through the LCDC may be available.

They are as follows:

1. Broadband coverage and broadband quality; Communities, businesses and individuals at the consultations were convinced that the county as a whole has poor broadband services or none at all and that it is certainly creating a significant disadvantage to the people and businesses of Leitrim.

2. Mobile phone coverage and the quality of the service; Like broadband many people felt that mobile phone services were poor and that the service quality and coverage seemed to be declining.
3. Transport provision and access; The lack of public transport services and access to alternative transport services was raised at every single consultation event. Transport is critical for inclusion of hard to reach groups, however it is a real challenge and can be very costly to provide and to retain transport service in areas with low and dispersed populations.
4. Reductions in services such as post offices, banks, retail, small schools, Garda stations and some health services; The reduction of various and multiple services were raised as serious concerns. These relate to wider national budgetary and political decisions and in many ways providing direct solutions to these issues is outside the remit and scope of the RDP 2014-2020 programme.
5. All communities raised the issues of dereliction, unfinished developments, closed retail units and vacant residential buildings in towns and village centres as significant problems which need to be addressed. Engaging with the legal and beneficial owners of such properties and developing proposals to deal with these issues can be very difficult and in many cases the RDP 2014-2020 programme may not be able to support such proposals due to these significant challenges.

3.5 SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT Analysis was produced from the consultation process. SWOT analyses have also formed part of the plans and strategies reviewed as part of the development of this LDS (Leitrim LECP, The Tourism Growth Strategy, the SICAP tender and the Recreation Strategy) and from a review of these plans and strategies it is clear that this SWOT Analysis shows a lot of consistency with all of them.

Table 3.3: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Natural Environment: Unspoilt natural landscape with diversity of habitats, peaceful setting and scenic beauty.</p> <p>Community Spirit: Close knit community with good ethos. Great range of community groups within the county. Active and dedicated community actors.</p> <p>Location: County is strategically located with good connectivity by road and rail to Dublin/Sligo. Close proximity to iconic attractions e.g. Shannon Erne Waterway, Wild Atlantic Way, Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark.</p> <p>Community Facilities/Buildings: Wide range of community facilities in the county. Community Centres acting as hubs of activity particularly in rural areas and for excluded groups.</p> <p>Heritage: Strong local heritage. Array of heritage features-natural, built & cultural.</p> <p>The People: Great diversity of highly skilled & willing people. Support groups for various networks of people e.g. Men's Group, Women's Group, Multi-cultural Groups, etc.</p> <p>Older People: Large number of older people involved in community activity. Range of supports for elderly e.g. Feel Good Clubs, Befriending Scheme, Care & Repair, Social Car, etc.</p> <p>Recreation: Wide range & diversity of existing water & land based recreation facilities e.g. Lough Rynn Rowing Facility, Lough Melvin Eco Park, Shannon Blueway, Shannon Erne Waterway.</p> <p>Lakes: Numerous lakes in the county acting as amenities for both locals and visitors. Range of activities taking place throughout the year e.g. angling, swimming, adventure activities, etc.</p> <p>School Education: Good education establishments- preschool, primary and secondary level.</p>	<p>Broadband: Poor access to broadband and quality of service including phone coverage. Limits home working and potential for investors and tourism in the area.</p> <p>Transport: Limited public transport & poor access to rural areas of the county.</p> <p>Tourism: Underdeveloped & underutilised with lack of coherent development & business supports.</p> <p>Employment: Lack of employment opportunities for all ages particularly young people.</p> <p>Local Services: Closure of local services & shops. People leaving town centres to shop at out of town centre stores resulting in weakening of town core.</p> <p>Access: Lack of safe access to community facilities on outskirts of towns/villages. Disability access poor in some towns.</p> <p>Isolation: Low population leading to isolation with particular groups at risk; e.g. People with disabilities, people with mental ill health, single men, new communities, older people, etc.</p> <p>Monoculture Forestry: Focus too strong on monoculture techniques. Existing plantations not sustainably managed or utilised.</p> <p>Natural Heritage: Lack of awareness of importance of natural heritage. Loss and damage to natural environment. Natural heritage not accessible to the public/visitors</p> <p>Vacant Premises: Vacant commercial and residential units-unsightly when unoccupied, thereby detracting for the overall appearance of towns/villages.</p>
Opportunities	Threats

<p>Tourism: Potential to capitalise on existing land & water based resources as tourism products. Collective & collaborative approach to marketing & networking required. Need for niche accommodation and enhancement of accommodation certification.</p> <p>Recreation: Focus on walking and cycling facilities and products. Potential to develop recreation/tourism hubs capitalising on existing recreational facilities e.g. Lough Allen, Lough Rynn, Lough Melvin, Shannon Blueway, etc.</p> <p>Natural Environment: Awareness and access to natural environment. Need for community owned natural areas. Conservation of flora and fauna.</p> <p>Heritage: Further development & promotion of existing heritage features. Initiatives to promote heritage of the area to wider audiences. Potential to use heritage buildings/structures for community use.</p> <p>Community Spirit: Engaging wider community involvement in existing groups. Groups collaborating & working collectively on projects. Need to harness & encourage new communities to participate.</p> <p>Youth: Additional youth services & facilities required. Niche training targeted at youth. Development of youth leadership skills.</p> <p>Training: Specialised & innovative training required. Training developed to focus on practical skills & key sectors; traditional skills, natural environment, ICT, etc.</p> <p>Water Resources: Raise awareness & conserve our water resources. Support the installation of rain water harvesting initiatives.</p> <p>Transport: Examine more integrated options for transport within the county targeting areas with lack of transport services e.g. Rural Lift, Social Car, etc.</p> <p>Vacant Premises: Examine sustainable uses for vacant premises in consultation with communities & businesses e.g. Pop up shops, markets, event space.</p>	<p>Vacant Premises: Continued closure of businesses lead to vacant premises. This in turn leads to unsightly & derelict buildings over time.</p> <p>Community Spirit: Decline in community spirit due to burn out of community leaders. Decline in youth involvement.</p> <p>Isolation: Further closure leading to a lack of services thereby contributing to an increased sense of isolation and issues relating to mental health.</p> <p>Broadband: Delays in the roll out of high speed broadband will result in the stagnation of development in existing businesses and the emergence of new businesses.</p> <p>Natural Environment: Threat of fracking & its negative effects on both the landscape and natural environment. Loss of natural habitats and biodiversity as a result of increased invasive species.</p> <p>Community Buildings: The sustainability of our community buildings was a concern particularly the cost of upgrading & maintenance. Lack of financial resources in areas with lower populations could result in closure of much needed community facilities.</p> <p>Outmigration: Continued outmigration of young people in the county could result in a generation gap and exacerbate the sense of isolation in rural areas.</p> <p>Employment: Continued lack of employment opportunities and limited number of large employers was a concern for many. Risk of closure of further larger employers in the county.</p> <p>Agriculture & Forestry: Continued decrease in farm incomes not sustainable. Intensive agricultural practices including monoculture impacting on wildlife.</p> <p>Bureaucracy: Lack of innovation in projects & processes due to high level of regulations required to make applications for funding.</p>
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4 Priorities

The vision for this LDS is as follows;

“Through a coherent strategy, we strive towards a vibrant, healthy rural economy in County Leitrim delivering actions that will transform rural communities into stable, thriving socio-economic hubs of inclusive community spirit, environmental best practice and superior quality of life”

The Leitrim LCDC met five times during the development of the LDS at which they guided and directed the development of the strategy. LAG members attended all of the consultation events and contributed to the development of the strategy. The LCDC also reviewed, discussed and approved the priorities, the various sections and drafts of the LDS as it developed. The Rural Development Operational Committee (RDOC) also met regularly to support and guide the LCDC in the process.

Table 4.1: List of LCDC & RDOC Meetings

LCDC meetings	RDOC meetings
16 th September 2015	28 th July 2015
22 nd October 2015	9 th September 2015
18 th November 2015	19 th October 2015
16 th December 2015	16 th November 2015
13 th January 2016	

The LCDC has agreed that this vision for Leitrim in the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 will be delivered through the following priorities.

Priority 1 - Thriving Authentic Tourism Sector

Priority 1 focuses on creating a thriving authentic tourism sector. The aim is to increase the numbers of tourists and visitors to the county by investing in and developing products and services, infrastructure, accommodation, festivals and events. Improving the capacity of tourism providers (private and community) is vital in order to develop and deliver high quality tourism services in the county. There will also be a focus on targeted and innovative marketing and promotion to create a thriving authentic tourism destination and to highlight all the county has to offer to tourists and visitors.

Objectives and actions will be collaborative and are in line with the objectives set out in the LECP, Leitrim Tourism Growth Strategy and Leitrim Recreation Strategy. Ongoing communication and support will be sought from the relevant tourism agencies and organisations including Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Coillte, the tourism trade, local communities and those who took part in the consultation process. The priority will focus on innovation and high quality development of the county's existing tourism services, facilities, products including infrastructure and experiences. The LCDC believes that there are very strong possibilities for growth in economic activity and for job creation in the tourism sector which can be spread right across the rural communities, towns and villages. There will be a strong focus on developing and supporting outdoor recreation, including the county's waterways (blueways), land and water based activities, (angling, rowing, cruising, etc.) cycling, walking and rail to trail proposals (greenways). Leitrim's rich heritage, cultural offerings, festivals and events will also be supported. There will be new and innovative promotion initiatives for tourism to help increase the numbers of people visiting and staying in

Leitrim. Enhancing the capacity of the sector (people and communities) through networking, the provision of capacity building and training will also be a part of this priority. The LCDC has agreed that this priority will be pursued under Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation. Sub-Theme: Rural Tourism.

Priority 2 - Dynamic & Diversified Rural Economy

Priority 2 will focus on supporting a dynamic and diversified rural economy in County Leitrim. This will include the development and enhancement of the microenterprise and SME sector in the county in collaboration with Leitrim LEO and Enterprise Ireland. Supports will focus on a range of sectors including but not limited to the food, creative, renewable energy industries and adoption of new technologies. Innovation will be key to the development of the enterprise sector. This priority will also include supports for farmers and farm family members wishing to diversify into non-agricultural activities. Assistance will also focus on sustaining, expanding and diversifying existing and emerging social enterprises.

Leitrim LCDC, in consultation with existing and new businesses, has identified that job creation, innovation and investment is required in order to increase economic activity. Therefore RDP LEADER 2014-2020 will support farm families, creative businesses, renewable energy and food producers, as well as those using and sharing local resources, assets and expertise. The focus is on enhancing these sectors through private and social/community enterprises which will create employment especially for young people. Previous Rural Development Programmes in the county have contributed very significantly to these sectors. There are numerous social enterprises in the county and the LCDC considers that there is a gap in the funding and support structures for these businesses. A relatively small number of farmers and farm families are interested in using their skills and assets in developing innovative non-agricultural activities and enterprises. While the focus on these areas will not be exclusive, the LCDC has agreed that other enterprise projects which lead to job creation and increased economic activity can be considered as long as it is clear and agreed by the LEO and EI that they are not supported or funded by other agencies or funds. This activity is prioritised under Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation, Sub-Theme; Enterprise Development.

Priority 3 - Vibrant Towns & Villages as Hubs of Activity and Services

Priority 3 relates to enhancing our towns and villages to become hubs of economic and social activity and services. The aim is to improve the fabric of rural towns and villages and their hinterlands through improvements to streetscapes, creation of recreational spaces, regeneration and upgrading of heritage and other buildings. Creating vibrant towns and villages throughout the county will have wide ranging economic and social benefits for both the local communities and businesses in the area.

In order to remain attractive and vibrant the towns and villages of the county require investment in two distinct ways. The first relates to the provision of hard infrastructure, facilities, access and general enhancements to the public realm. The second is in the area of stimulating, supporting and focusing on the inherent capacity, assets and leadership within the people (community) and businesses of these towns and villages. This will include collaborative working to link the various supports and public bodies in order to focus on encouraging and retaining significant economic and social activity in these towns and villages. With significant challenges in the future, towns and villages need assistance to concentrate their efforts and to utilise their resources in innovative and creative ways so that they can

develop a clear vision for the future. It is important that towns and villages focus on their unique selling points or assets in order to entice traders and visitors. This could include towns or villages promoting themselves as specialist hubs with distinct themes or appeal. This can also be used to lever in other resources and commitments and is in line with the concepts and recommendations of the CEDRA Report on Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ). Some of the pilot REDZ may also seek support from the RDP.

The funding under RDP LEADER 2014-2020 is limited but it is expected that there will be a range of projects, enhancements and development of public and community infrastructure by communities (Tidy Town groups, town business groups, community/town development associations, tourism groups, etc.). There will also be collaborative infrastructural projects with public bodies to enhance a number of towns and villages. Leitrim's LCDC believes that it is important for the RDP to continue to support these developments, enhancements and access to community facilities to ensure that Leitrim's towns and villages are attractive places to live, to invest in and to visit.

The LCDC has agreed that these activities will be supported under Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation. Sub-Theme; Rural Towns.

Priority 4 - Enhanced ICT Awareness & Knowledge

Priority 4 centres on enhancing ICT awareness and knowledge. The focus is to assist in the development of Leitrim through the provision of ICT training and supports. Access to high speed broadband is essential in the modern world in order for communities to benefit from the "digital age" and take advantage of the great variety of online opportunities for business and social interaction.

While the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) sets out to deliver broadband up to 30MBS to all areas by 2020 there was a view during the consultations that these targets may not be reached in Leitrim and particularly in more isolated communities. Whether the NBS delivers or not, communities, businesses and various sectors are anxious to have the required ICT skills to enable them to take full advantages of the possibilities that broadband can provide.

There is also an interest in some parts of the county to investigate and examine the opportunities provided by community broadband initiatives which have been successful in other EU countries. There is an opportunity to address these issues under Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation. Sub-Theme: Broadband.

Priority 5 - Sustainable Inclusive Communities

Priority 5 centres on building sustainable inclusive communities. This priority will involve improving services and access to services and community activities for hard to reach and disadvantaged/isolated community members. This will counteract social exclusion through the provision of supports, animation, capacity building, training and capital grant aid for community and recreational facilities.

The SICAP Programme, the LECP and the LDS all identified the need to support hard to reach, disadvantaged and isolated communities/groups by engaging with relevant local services/stakeholders in order to address social exclusion and equality issues. Again the LCDC believes that there are two main approaches under this priority. The first is to ensure that capital support is available to communities and organisations around the county who are developing, enhancing and providing a range of accessible facilities where hard to reach groups can engage, interact and avail of services and supports. The second area is to provide

funding and developmental resources through training and capacity building at a community level for a range of groups and people who have challenges in their lives. This may include but is not limited to older people, those with mental ill health, unemployed, youth, disabled, isolated and excluded. The LAG believes that the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 can support a wide range of hard to reach groups through much needed projects under this priority while improving accessibility and ensuring that any duplication of supports or service delivery is avoided.

Young people are vital for the future of communities around the county and this strategy will also prioritise aid in improving the accessibility of supports and services for young people in Leitrim which will lead to enhanced education and skills, better employment opportunities, better access to services, improved social structures and engagement for young people. The SICAP programme in Leitrim implemented by LDC supports the work of youth organisations and others who engage with young people. LDC engages with many young people mainly through community development activities and in supporting education and training initiatives. Leitrim County Council engages young people through Comhairle Na nOg and the Sports Partnership. The RDP LEADER 2014-2020 can add value to this work and provide additional services and supports for young people through training, engagement, focusing on employment and inclusion in community and voluntary activities for disadvantage young people in prioritised areas. Adding value to this work is a priority for the LCDC under the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 and any possible duplication (with the Peace Programme (Peace Partnership) and others) will be avoided. This priority will be funded under Theme: Social Inclusion Sub-Theme: Provision of Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities.

Priority 6 - Conservation & Sustainable Use of Local Biodiversity & Water Resources

Priority 6 will provide support for the protection, conservation and sustainable use of our natural environment including water resources for future generations. This priority aims to promote community led actions for the conservation of our natural environment and water resources in Leitrim. This will include raising awareness in both the business and the community sector through training on our natural environment. Learning from best practice will form part of this priority.

County Leitrim has a rich and diverse range of unique habitats including mountains/uplands, wetlands and waterways. Many community groups are actively engaged in their local area in the preservation of their local environment, however there is no strategic county plan focusing on biodiversity and the environment. The consultation process indicated that there is a significant deficit in the understanding and awareness of water quality and conservation issues. The LCDC (LAG) has identified the conservation of water resources as a priority for the LDS. The LAG will be a partner in the development of a Local Biodiversity Plan and supports will also be offered for training and capital investment. Priority 6 will be funded under Theme: Rural Environment Sub-theme: Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity and Theme Rural Environment Sub-Theme: Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources.

Priority 7 - Harnessing Our Natural Resources

This theme relates to the use of renewable energy. It aims to promote the efficient use of energy and the uptake of renewable energy by community groups, businesses and individuals. Climate change is dictating that all people and communities change how they consume and use finite resources. This priority will contribute to climate change mitigation in the county. There is scope for communities, businesses and farmers to engage in renewable energy

projects, adopt new technologies and to develop energy solutions. The consultation process has identified strong public support but a low level of knowledge and understanding of the sector. There were a small number of entrepreneurs, however, who wished to develop projects in this area. This priority will include innovative actions in awareness raising, capital investment in community owned renewable technology, biomass supply chain development and training under Theme: Rural Environment Sub-Theme: Development of Renewable Energy.

4.1 Rural Tourism

<u>Local Objective 1A</u>	
Title of Local Objective	1A Develop existing and support new tourism assets and infrastructure which in turn will increase opportunities for local people and visitors to explore and enjoy County Leitrim.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation- Rural Tourism
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	There is significant potential for growth in the tourism sector in the county. One of the weaknesses identified in the consultation was that the tourism sector was underdeveloped, however it was also identified that one of the main strengths of the county was the unspoilt natural landscape with diversity of habitats and scenic beauty. The Area Profile Analysis outlined that the most significant advantage for tourism in County Leitrim; is the spectacular natural environment with a variety of towns and villages and an abundance of lakes, rivers and canals. Leitrim is also within easy access to Knock and Dublin airports. Throughout this LDS it has been identified that there is potential for tourism in Leitrim to perform better. In order to increase the numbers of tourists and visitors to the county there is a need to invest in the development of key tourism assets and infrastructure. This in turn will enhance visitor services, improve visitor facilities and create new visitor attractions. Overall this will improve the quality of the tourism offering in the county.
Financial Allocation (€)	€400,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 1A(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	1Ai To develop sustainable rural tourism facilities, products and services focusing on the unique assets of the county.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This strategic action will support individual tourism businesses to develop existing and new products, services and facilities and support the wider tourism sector including local communities to develop projects that draw on the features of the area in order to attract visitors. There will be a strong focus on developing and supporting outdoor recreation including the county's waterways (Blueways), land and water based activities (cycling, rowing, cruising, etc.), angling, walking and rail to trail proposals (greenways). There are also opportunities to develop high quality recreation & tourism enterprises which build on the area's communities, culture, heritage and environmental resources. Facilities and products that extend the tourist season will be supported. This will lead to growth in economic activity and job creation which can be spread right across the rural communities, towns

	and villages of Leitrim. Umbrella projects to support investments by tourism micro-enterprises will also be a possibility in this action.
Primary Target Group(s):	Existing and new tourism operators and providers, community groups, local entrepreneurs.
Geographic Area:	County wide. Targeting of support will be towards areas in the county where the projects will have maximum impact and which can also develop sustainable economic activity and job opportunities.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Private tourism operators and providers, Community Groups.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Fáilte Ireland, Leitrim County Council, Leitrim Tourism, Waterways Ireland, Coillte, Western Development Commission, Leitrim Development Company, Inland Fisheries, The Heritage Council.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2017 - Q2 2019
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 x new tourism businesses supported • 5 x existing tourism businesses supported • 2 x experiences supported • Number of new jobs created 6 x FTE and 6 Seasonal • Number of existing jobs sustained x 6 • Number of visitors 10,000.

Local Objective 1B

Title of Local Objective	1B Develop a range of high quality tourism accommodation in the county focusing on the overall visitor experience.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation-Rural Tourism
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	The accommodation varies considerably across the county; however from consultation it is clear that there is limited tourism accommodation provision in areas of the county. While this is a reflection of market demand there is a need to ensure appropriate accommodation is developed in areas of need.
Financial Allocation (€)	€400,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	Two strategic actions

Strategic Action 1B(i)

Title of Strategic Action:	1Bi To enhance and develop new and existing tourism accommodation in the county in areas of particular need and to provide capital support to increase accommodation capacity in areas of weak supply.
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Brief Description of Strategic Action:	Priority will be given to filling accommodation gaps in areas with a weak accommodation base. There are potential accommodation shortages in areas of the county if demand is further stimulated. There is also room to improve the range and quality of accommodation to ensure that it is value added and not just standalone accommodation. Accommodation focusing on a particular market and the provision of additional products or services to that market will be encouraged.
Primary Target Group(s):	Tourism Accommodation Providers, Local Entrepreneurs.
Geographic Area:	In areas of defined need in the county. Some geographic areas have significant gaps in provision and in approved accommodation availability. Particularly North Leitrim (Rossinver, Kiltyclogher,) and the rural areas of South Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Tourism Accommodation Providers, Local Entrepreneurs.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Fáilte Ireland, Leitrim County Council.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q4 2017 - Q4 2019
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 x new tourism accommodation supported • 3 x existing tourism accommodation supported • Number of new jobs created 3 x FTE and 4 Seasonal P/T • Number of existing jobs sustained x 3 • 4,320 bed nights per annum.

Strategic Action 1B(ii)

Title of Strategic Action:	1Bii To encourage the development of niche or specialist accommodation in the county to encourage visitors to stay for longer periods of time.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	This strategic action will focus on the creation of diversity in tourism accommodation focusing on niche or specialist accommodation. These could include but are not limited to outdoor pursuits, adventure activities, wildlife, heritage and culture, etc. This accommodation should diversify the product, minimise the effects of seasonality and distribute tourists to lesser visited areas of the county.
Primary Target Group(s):	Tourism Accommodation Providers, Local Entrepreneurs.
Geographic Area:	In areas of defined need in the county. Businesses operating near or in the most disadvantaged EDs will be prioritised for supports.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Tourism Accommodation Providers, Local Entrepreneurs.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Fáilte Ireland, Leitrim County Council.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q4 2017 - Q4 2019

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4x new tourism accommodation supported • Number of new jobs created 4 x FTE and 4 Seasonal P/T • 1920 bed nights per annum.
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<u>Local Objective 1C</u>	
Title of Local Objective	1C Promote and progress Leitrim as a tourism destination. Development of collaborative and innovative promotion initiatives for tourism to help increase the numbers of people visiting and staying in Leitrim.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation-Rural Tourism
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	The composition of tourism businesses in Leitrim is populated mainly with small and owner operated businesses. Small tourism enterprises are competing firstly in a competitive national market place and secondly in a global market place. They must compete with large businesses which have more resources, staff and expertise. In order for tourism marketing in the county to achieve economies of scale and create a greater impact there is a need for strong co-operation and collaboration in marketing. Collective marketing with strong co-operation, collaboration and innovation with a number of tourism operators and businesses will reach markets in a way that is not possible for individual rural enterprises. Destination marketing and marketing of relevant experiences is also vital for the tourism sector in the county.
Financial Allocation (€)	€175,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	Two strategic actions

<u>Strategic Action 1C(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	1Ci To support marketing and promotion of experiences within the county and also marketing County Leitrim as a destination.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This action involves relevant promotional and advertising actions to influence visitor perceptions, awareness and destination choice. Development of co-operative marketing programmes with tourism organisations and businesses would prove beneficial. This could involve collaborative projects which build on tourism experiences and a destination brand for County Leitrim.
Primary Target Group(s):	Tourism Providers, Leitrim Tourism Network Members, LTGA.
Geographic Area:	County wide.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Leitrim Tourism, Tourism Providers, Leitrim Tourism Growth Alliance, Tourism Providers Network Members.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Trade, Leitrim Tourism Growth Alliance, Leitrim Tourism Network, LCC and LDC.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q4 2017 - Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x destination marketing initiatives • Number of jobs sustained: 265 FTE • Number of visitors: 30,000.
<u>Strategic Action 1C(ii)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	1Cii To support collective & innovative marketing projects and activities which enable tourism businesses and communities to work together to promote products and services in the county *(three or more tourism businesses must be involved).
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	There is a need to focus on collaborative marketing and selling of products and services rather than individual products. By supporting new and innovative promotional initiatives for tourism this will result in increased numbers of people visiting and staying in Leitrim. The action will support tourism businesses and providers to work together and to present their businesses and the various elements of Leitrim's tourism offering to potential customers and visitors. It is hoped that sustainable longer term partnerships and collaborations can be built between tourism businesses and services in Leitrim through this action.
Primary Target Group(s):	Tourism Providers, Leitrim Tourism Network Members, Community Providers.
Geographic Area:	County wide.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Tourism Providers, Tourism Network Members.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Fáilte Ireland, Leitrim Tourism Growth Alliance, Leitrim Tourism Network, LDC.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 - 2019
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 X collective marketing initiatives • Number of jobs sustained 25 FTE • Number of visitors 10,000.

<u>Local Objective 1D</u>	
Title of Local Objective	1D Enable the development and growth of high quality sustainable festivals and events for maximum economic and social benefit.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation- Rural Tourism.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	There is a wide range of festivals and events taking place in County Leitrim. Festivals and events represent an important part of the county's social, cultural and economic life. They can reinforce the distinctiveness of the areas, create a sense of place and showcase our towns and villages. Consultation with festivals and events took place under the previous LEADER Programme and it was found that many festivals and events were interested in receiving funding which allows them to become more sustainable in the future. It was noted that there is potential for a number of festivals and events to collaborate and share resources. By increasing festival activity and developing festivals in the county it will result in

	increased economic benefits for the local economy of County Leitrim throughout the year.
Financial Allocation (€)	€50,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One Strategic Action

<u>Strategic Action 1D(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	1Di To increase visitors numbers at festivals and events in the county by supporting festivals and events throughout the year. These festivals and events should focus on the cultural diversity and heritage of the county.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This action involves funding for collaborative proposals for festivals and events in the county. Innovative approaches for the development, expansion and promotion of Leitrim's festivals and events will be considered. Applicants must demonstrate clustering of activities/events and sharing of resources. This will aid in the long term sustainability of the festivals/events involved. It is important that festivals and events are sustained and built upon *(three or more festivals or events must be involved).
Primary Target Group(s):	Festival and event groups/organisations, community groups.
Geographic Area:	County wide.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Festival and event groups/organisations, community groups.
Any collaborating Organisations:	AOIFE, Fáilte Ireland, Leitrim County Council, LTGA.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q1- 2018
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 9 existing festivals funded · 10,000 Visitors

<u>Local Objective 1E</u>	
Title of Local Objective	1E Provide training and developmental support in the form of human capital support such as training and development within tourism businesses, tourism networks and in the community of people who interact with our tourists and visitors.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation- Rural Tourism.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	From working with small tourism enterprises in the county it is clear that a lot of businesses were not familiar with each other and did not know the benefits of

	linking their products and services. Many of the smaller tourism providers also lacked the range of knowledge and skills to maximise the potential of their business within the tourism sector. In the past year a tourism providers network has established in the county. It has been identified through the consultations that supports (training and animation) are required and vital to strengthen local capacities for the development of rural tourism in County Leitrim. The public and people who interact with tourist and visitors to Leitrim are also important and building their understanding of customer care, familiarity with the various experiences, attractions etc. of the county could be developed.
Financial Allocation (€)	€75,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action.

<u>Strategic Action 1E(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	1Ei To enhance and develop the capacity of the tourism sector (and the people and communities involved) through networking, the provision of development supports and training.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	This action focuses on the promotion of best practice, networking and clustering of tourism businesses, activities and products in the county. It will increase the capacity and relationships between tourism enterprises including community groups, small tourism business operators and also those supporting and engaging with tourists and visitors in the county. It will equip the sector with the appropriate range of skills to deliver high quality, dynamic and innovative tourism experiences. It will provide for overall synergies for the tourism sector in the county.
Primary Target Group(s):	Leitrim Tourism Network Members, Tourism Providers
Geographic Area:	County wide. Businesses in or close to the most disadvantaged EDs will be targeted to participate in and benefit from these actions.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Leitrim Tourism Network, Tourism Enterprises, Community Organisations, LCDC Members, LTGA, Recreation Forum.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Fáilte Ireland, Leitrim County Council, Leitrim Tourism Growth Alliance, Leitrim Tourism, Recreation Forum and Working Groups, Leitrim Tourism Network, LDC.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q3-2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x training programmes completed (to enhance skills and knowledge of provider and community engagement with the sector) • 3 x collective tourism support initiatives delivered (developmental/capacity building, familiarisation, best practice, networking etc.) • Number of jobs sustained 30 FTE • 3,500 visitors.

4.2 Enterprise Development

<u>Local Objective 2A</u>	
Title of Local Objective	2A Build a thriving, expanding economy with an emphasis on the creation of sustainable employment opportunities through the development of new innovative products and services.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation - Enterprise Development
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	<p>Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises are vital for the rural economy of County Leitrim to grow and thrive. Many find it difficult to secure loans and other start-up and development funding. They also struggle with the myriad of requirements and challenges which face them as they grow and develop. This was very clearly articulated by many people throughout the consultation. Female entrepreneurs also encounter challenges which need to be addressed.</p> <p>The LDS Area Profile identified that the numbers of persons involved in agriculture and forestry in Leitrim is double the national average. This illustrates the strong dependence on agriculture in the county; however capacity and output are low with very few full time commercial farmers. These farms are essential to the local economy and for maintenance of the landscape. As a result there is potential to support farmers and farm families to improve their income from diversified non-agricultural activities on the farm.</p>
Financial Allocation (€)	€450,000 (capital)
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	Two strategic actions

<u>Strategic Action 2A(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	2Ai To support the creation and development of microenterprises and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across a diverse range of industries focusing on capital and asset investment.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This strategic action will support capital investment in businesses including buildings and equipment and also the introduction of new technologies, investment in work space, specialist equipment and energy saving measures. While capital investment is important, intangible investments such as the acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks could also be focused on.
Primary Target Group(s):	Existing micro and small/medium enterprises, new businesses, entrepreneurs, start-ups (both microenterprises and SMEs).
Geographic Area:	County wide. Businesses in or close to the most disadvantaged EDs will be targeted in the animation to participate in and benefit from these actions.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Existing businesses, entrepreneurs, new businesses, start-ups, expanding micro and SMEs, women in business.
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC & Partners, Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, WDC

Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q1 - 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 x existing businesses supported • 2 x new businesses supported • Number of new jobs created 12 x FTE and 4 Seasonal • Number of existing jobs sustained 20 FTE and 10 part time.

<u>Strategic Action 2A(ii)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	2Aii To support farm diversification using the assets of the farm for non-agricultural purposes.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	<p>A programme will be developed to engage a wide range of farmers and farm families throughout the county who are interested in farm diversification projects. Support will be given to develop new business ideas and expand existing diversification actions into business plans for farm diversification. Support will focus on applications for RDP capital grant aid in non-agricultural activities and examples of projects will be as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Farming • Energy Projects • Food Processing • Agri-tourism/Recreation
Primary Target Group(s):	Farmers and farm family members across County Leitrim.
Geographic Area:	County wide with a particular focus on encouraging farmers in the most disadvantaged EDs to develop other and alternative sources of income. Targeted through animation.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	LDC, farmers and farm family member.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Teagasc, IFA, ICSA, farmers groups around the county (LOF Co-Op, SELF, MED Group), Local Enterprise Office.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q4 - 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 farm diversification projects funded • Number of new jobs created 4 x FTE • Number of existing jobs sustained x 4

<u>Local Objective 2B</u>	
Title of Local Objective	2B Social/Community Enterprises throughout the county.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation - Enterprise Development.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	There are numerous social enterprises operating across county Leitrim providing services to a range of hard to reach groups in many cases but also in the areas of

	tourism and small business supports, etc. Many of these community enterprises are filling gaps in service provision which the main stream commercial economy is not willing or able to deliver due to non-economic returns which include childcare, social services, community, cultural activities and in some cases business supports. The Community Service Programmes (CSP) are also examples of such enterprises. The LDC report on community centres and community buildings shows clearly the importance of such social enterprise activities in Leitrim. These social enterprises have indicated that they provide employment and a range of services which are needed by the community. There is a need for investment to support and sustain their activities.
Financial Allocation (€)	€250,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 2B(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	2Bi To support social enterprises to develop and expand.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This action will provide capital and other supports (possibly including the cost of specialist supports) to assist social enterprise to develop, diversify and improve their organisations, services and facilities. Many of these social enterprises are struggling to invest in their facilities and equipment as they are using funds generated to sustain current activity rather than for future development and expansion. Collaborative projects involving social and community enterprises require supports such as networking, developing partnerships and promotional activities. Those projects which lead to sustaining existing employment and/or creating new employment and innovation will be prioritised as will those with more clearly defined targeting of supports for hard to reach groups.
Primary Target Group(s):	Existing social enterprises in the county and new start up social enterprises
Geographic Area:	County wide. Projects which are focused on engaging with people in the most disadvantaged EDs and also the various target groups around the county will be prioritised for funding and other supports.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Existing Social/Community Enterprises, Community Groups/Organisations
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC & partners, LEO, SEI, EI, Leitrim PPN
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016 –Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Social/ Community Enterprises supported • 15 jobs sustained 2new FTE • Jobs sustained 22

<u>Local Objective 2C</u>	
Title of Local Objective	2C SME and Microenterprise collaborative/cluster marketing
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation - Enterprise Development
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	Collaboration between micro, small and medium enterprises has been shown to be beneficial and can lead to learning, increases in sales, business referrals, sustainability in businesses and jobs. Ongoing collaboration and interactions with other similar or complimentary businesses is important. In particular many complimentary products and services can be cross sold and businesses can benefit from engagement with the established customer base of other similar or complimentary businesses. Providing a small support incentive to businesses in Leitrim to pilot such collaborative approaches will help these businesses to deal with some of the challenges they face and add value to what they already do.
Financial Allocation (€)	€20,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 2C(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	2Ci To support collective marketing and collaboration among businesses.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	Many smaller businesses struggle to find enough funding, time and energy to develop focused strategic promotion, marketing and sales initiatives to allow their customer base to grow. This action will allow for a number of micro and small medium enterprises whose products or services are complementary (in the same sector or across sectors) to come together and work in a collective and coordinated marketing initiative for their mutual benefit in a way which will add value to businesses. It is expected that 3+ businesses will work in each of these initiatives. Innovative projects which sustain and develop employment and link products, services and businesses for longer term collaboration will be prioritised.
Primary Target Group(s):	Existing businesses across all sectors around the county and new businesses.
Geographic Area:	County wide.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Businesses working collaboratively (3+).
Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, LDC, LCDC (& partners).
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2-2016-Q4 2020.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 businesses supported • 7 existing businesses • 2 new businesses

<u>Local Objective 2D</u>	
Title of Local Objective	2D Training and development supports for micro enterprises and SMEs.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation- Enterprise Development.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	Many new and existing businesses (farmers, creative enterprises, food businesses, service providers, etc.) face challenges and issues at each stage in their development which are different (pre-development, start-up, development expansion and mature). Many SMEs and microenterprises do not have the detailed knowledge or understanding to deal with and overcome these many challenges. Needs led training which is specific to the needs of different businesses at different stages and in different sectors has been successful in the past. Sourcing funding, lenders, investors, venture capital or angle investors was identified as another issue for Micro and SMEs. There is a need to provide a range of additional developmental supports in these areas and also for particular sectors and groups of entrepreneurs e.g. women in business, creative sector, farmers looking to diversify, food sector, etc.
Financial Allocation (€)	€80,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 2D(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	2Di To support training and development across all the areas of enterprise SMEs microenterprises, tourism, social enterprises, farm diversification, women entrepreneurs, etc.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	Across all areas and sectors of enterprise the development and enhancement of the skills, knowledge and understanding of the entrepreneur and their employees is important and it can vary depending on the stage in the lifecycle of the business, pre-development, start-up, development, expansion or maturity. This action will provide funding to allow a range of training programmes and for development activities to support the various groups of entrepreneurs including farmers and farm families, women in business, start-ups. Projects which support sectors or bring sectors together (e.g. food and tourism) and which focus on similar issues across a larger number of businesses will be prioritised. Innovation and job creation and sustaining existing employment will also be important factors influencing priority projects for funding in training and business support. An example project is Leitrim Livecraft which was funded during RDP LEADER 2007-2013.
Primary Target Group(s):	Existing businesses, entrepreneurs. Businesses in or close to the most disadvantaged EDs will be targeted to participate in and benefit from these actions.
Geographic Area:	County wide.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Businesses, LDC.

Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, LCDC & Partners.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016 –Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of enterprises supported existing 50 • No of enterprises supported new 10 • No of jobs sustained 75.

4.3 Rural Towns

<u>Local Objective 3A</u>	
Title of Local Objective	3A Enhancement of our towns and villages to create attractive, welcoming, accessible and vibrant towns and villages. Upgrade and development of community spaces as focal points for social interaction to be enjoyed by all residents, traders, shoppers and visitors.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation- Rural Towns.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	Towns, villages and smaller rural settlements (graigs) in County Leitrim are of themselves assets of significant social, cultural and economic value. Throughout the consultation process, it was identified that there is a need to entice people into our towns and villages to use the local services and facilities and to spend their money locally. There is a need to revitalise our rural towns and villages and ensure they are inviting places for those who live, work, do business visit the area.
Financial Allocation (€)	€600,000 (Capital).
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	Three strategic actions.

<u>Strategic Action 3A(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	3Ai To support town and village enhancement projects creating welcoming town centres with a high quality environment.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This strategic action will support the physical (capital) enhancement of our towns and villages. Capital projects will be supported to allow for vibrant shared community and public spaces to become focal points for both economic and social interaction to be enjoyed by all. This strategic action will include funding for, but not limited to, enhancement and development of public community spaces, approach road enhancement works, townscape/streetscape enhancements, renovation of derelict buildings/spaces for community purposes, farmers markets, public realm improvements, public squares and community gardens, etc. These projects will be led by community groups supported in many cases by the Local Authority. Umbrella projects for small scale investments and actions across similar areas and activities will take place.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups, Town/Village Enhancement Groups, Tidy Towns Groups, Chamber of Commerce, Town Enterprise Groups, etc.

Geographic Area:	Across all towns, villages and graigs within County Leitrim. The evaluation and decision making process will take account of the needs of disadvantaged groups and of the most disadvantaged EDs and projects which are targeted and benefiting these people and areas will be prioritised.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Community Groups
Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim County Council, REDZ (CEDRA) Initiative, Tidy Towns Groups, The Heritage Council,
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2018-Q2 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Town/Villages benefiting from enhancement works • 6,000 population in towns receiving funding • 6 x Tidy Towns Groups supported.

Strategic Action 3A(ii)

Title of Strategic Action:	3Aii To support the improvement of access to public spaces and community facilities within our towns and villages; to make them safe and accessible to all.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	This strategic action will focus on creating linkages and connectivity between town/village centres and community/recreation facilities on the outskirts of town/village. It will also focus on improved safety and access for the wide range of users of these amenities and facilities and will also include projects to improve access for the mobility impaired/disabled in the town/village cores.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups, Town/Village Enhancement Groups, Chamber of Commerce
Geographic Area:	Across all towns, villages and graigs within County Leitrim, Tidy Towns Groups.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Community Groups
Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim County Council, Leitrim Age Friendly Alliance, Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities, Tidy Town Groups, community and voluntary groups.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2018-Q2 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 x linkage projects i.e. connectivity from town/village core to community facilities on the outskirts • 6 x of towns/ villages benefiting • 6,000 population in towns receiving funding

Local Objective 3B

Title of Local Objective	3B Initiatives and programmes that regenerate and revitalise town centres to create thriving and vibrant retail, leisure, tourist and commercial centres to serve local residents, traders, visitors and tourists.
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LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation- Rural Towns
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	Many of Leitrim's smaller towns, villages and rural settlements (graigs) are experiencing issues related to the ongoing closures/removal of vital services such as Garda, Post Offices, schools and shops. There are numerous vacant and derelict buildings/premises within the town/village centres that give an impression of decline. Small businesses in these towns and villages are struggling to get sufficient footfall to sustain their businesses and to cover their various costs. Towns and villages need to be revitalised. Businesses also need to reorganise how they do business and build relationships with local residents, customers and visitors to the area.
Financial Allocation (€)	€150,000 (Training and development capacity building)
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 3B(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	3Bi To stimulate the inherent capacity, assets and leadership within the people (community) and businesses of town and villages. Link with the various supports and public bodies to encourage, attract and retain significant economic and social activity in these towns and villages.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This strategic action will focus on building and showcasing the distinctive character and unique selling points of our towns and villages both economically and socially. This is focused around creating a sense of place and enticing visitors, customers, traders and others to dwell in the towns/villages. With significant challenges in the future, towns and villages need assistance to concentrate their efforts and to re-envision their resources in innovative and creative ways so that they can develop their town or village and become unique or specialist hubs with distinct themes or appeal. They need to reach out to the local residents and to customers who visit. This action will help a number of towns and villages in this process. This will also help them to showcase and establish their town or village as a hub or centre with a particular theme. This action will dovetail with the CEDRA REDZ Initiative under the RDP and will allow some of these initiatives to get further support from the RDP REDZ fund. Socio-economic planning, engagement of stakeholders in and around these towns/villages, innovative promotional and development projects and events to highlight and showcase these towns/villages such as Christmas events and others which are part of a strategic, focused and collaborative plan for the area will be funded.
Primary Target Group(s):	Town Development Associations, Community Groups, Town/Village Enhancement Groups, Chamber of Commerce, Businesses Networks, Businesses.
Geographic Area:	Across all towns/villages within County Leitrim. A process of application and selection will be take place for those who will be supported and priority will be given to those who are targeting and supporting disadvantaged groups and disadvantage rural hinterlands particularly those most disadvantaged EDs .
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Town Business Associations, Town Networks, Community and Voluntary Groups.

Any collaborating Organisations:	Town Business Associations, Town Networks, Leitrim Development Company, Leitrim County Council, The Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, Tidy Town Groups.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	4 towns/villages to develop significant initiatives aimed at revitalization and the establishment of sustainable hubs.

4.4 Broadband

<u>Local Objective 4</u>	
Title of Local Objective	4A Support the engagement with ICT and broadband services.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation- Broadband
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	Broadband services continues to cause difficulties for many people and communities across the county but with the National Broadband Plan hoping to deliver much better quality service in the next few years there are still many people who do not have the necessary awareness, skills, experience or knowledge to use information and communications technology.
Financial Allocation (€)	€40,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 4A(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	4Ai To provide training, development and awareness raising on the benefits of ICT and about how individuals and communities can maximise the benefits for themselves.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This strategic action will support a number of initiatives aimed at providing training in ICT for communities in remote areas and targeting young people, older people and farm families among others. Support and training will be provided to communities and hard to reach groups to ensure that they can and are ready to embrace new technology and the opportunities which good quality broadband service can provide. For many people living in remote rural areas which lack services or transport, communicating and accessing supports and information through ICT is important. Training will also focus on the use of and access to technologies for fabrication, design and making such as 3D scanning, 3D printing, etc. This will lead to an increase in creativity and innovation particularly among young people in Leitrim.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community groups businesses and people living in remote and isolated areas and those in the hard to reach groups.
Geographic Area:	Across the eligible area of County Leitrim. Targeting of supports and training under this action will be towards those in the most disadvantaged areas and also among the communities.

Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Leitrim LCDC and Leitrim Development Company.
Any collaborating Organisations:	MSLETB, Leitrim PPN, Teagasc, IFA, NCYCS, Foroige, NLMG & NLWG, community groups.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Engagement of all target groups 14 · Training programmes 10 · Numbers engaged 200.

4.5 Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities

<u>Local Objective 5A</u>	
Title of Local Objective	5A Provision of capital support for hard to reach communities to enable them to fully participate in their local community.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Social Inclusion- Basic Services aimed at hard to reach communities.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	There are a significant number of groups and community and voluntary organisations across the county providing direct services, social, cultural and recreational opportunities and access to hard to reach groups and young people allowing them to interact in their own communities. This is only possible if the facilities are available and also that these facilities reach a certain standard of comfort, accessibility and functionality. Due to the lower population levels, the highly dispersed nature of the population and hard to reach groups and young people, communities in Leitrim require greater levels of support and funding to provide such facilities. For example fundraising possibilities are more limited, user contributions are lower, etc. There are still deficits in areas in Leitrim among the existing facilities or where there are no facilities in place. These facilities can range from community centres (including theatres, arts centres, heritage centres) to youth cafes, sporting and recreational facilities (both indoor and outdoor) and equipment, etc. The investment required can range from small to very large and both types of project can be equally valid.
Financial Allocation (€)	€850,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 5A(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	5Ai To develop, enhance and upgrade community services, facilities and infrastructure to engage and support hard to reach communities and groups within the county.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This action will involve grant aid investment for facilities, buildings, equipment, fixtures, fittings which will provide, enhance and develop the range of community operated buildings and facilities which are targeted at supporting and engaging with various hard to reach groups and young people within the communities

	across Leitrim. There will be both large scale and smaller scale projects considered (and also including “umbrella” projects for those with small scale investments). Priority will be for innovative projects which are clearly targeted at various and multiple hard to reach groups and for projects which will be sustainable and well used in the future. The needs for the project and of the community concerned will also inform the level of priority for investment.
Primary Target Group(s):	Young people, older people, people with disabilities, people living alone and those in isolated areas, migrants/new communities, travellers, people with disabilities unemployed people, children, women, isolated rural men.
Geographic Area:	Countywide. The evaluation and decision making process will take account of the needs of disadvantaged groups and of the most disadvantaged EDs and projects which are targeted and benefiting these people and areas will be prioritised.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Community and voluntary groups, LDC.
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC and partners, Leitrim PPN, LDC.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q4 2016 to Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of all target groups 14 • Enhanced social inclusion / community facilities 15 • New or additional service / facilities 3.

<u>Local Objective 5B</u>	
Title of Local Objective	5B Build the capacity of the community and voluntary sector particularly in relation to hard to reach communities in the county through training and developmental supports.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Social Inclusion - Basic Services aimed at hard to reach communities.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	Many of the community and voluntary organisations in the county are providing and delivering services to a range of hard to reach groups and young people. From the consultation it is clear that these organisations find that they have to tailor their actions and engagements in order to try and reach those most excluded in the community. This involves challenges due to the small numbers in isolated rural areas, transport issues, access, etc. Methods of engagement in these circumstances require tailored outreach, training and development initiatives to engage with those who are most isolated and excluded.
Financial Allocation (€)	€300,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	One strategic action

<u>Strategic Action 5B(i)</u>	
Title of Strategic Action:	5Bi To develop, engage, deliver and implement social inclusion support programmes including training and animation for those most disadvantaged, isolated or excluded.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	This action will allow a range of training programmes and development projects to take place which will target and engage with young people and also with a range of other hard to reach groups across County Leitrim. Many groups are involved in reaching out to hard to reach groups in various parts of the county. They are limited in how much they can achieve and in how many people they can support and engage with. This action will help such groups to engage with more people and also to deliver increased supports mainly through bespoke training and development type projects to both existing and new community members. Bespoke training for young people in skills development, employment and self-employment will also be prioritised in this action.
Primary Target Group(s):	Young people, older people, people with disabilities, people living alone and those in isolated areas, migrants/new communities, travellers, people with disabilities and carers, unemployed people, children, community groups, women, isolated rural men.
Geographic Area:	Countywide. Projects which either target people in geographic disadvantaged areas or other disadvantaged groups will be prioritised for RDP funding support.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Community and voluntary groups, LDC (Training), social inclusion service providers, women's groups, youth organisations.
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC and partners, Leitrim PPN, LDC (SICAP), MSLETB, HSE, representative networks.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016 - Q4 2020
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of services supported 5 existing • No. of project funded 15 • No of target groups reached 14.

4.6 Protection and Conservation of Local Biodiversity & Water Resources

<u>Local Objective 6A</u>	
Title of Local Objective	6A Protection and conservation of water resources through increased awareness, innovative uses of natural supplies and new technologies.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Rural Environment – Protection and sustainable use of water resources.
<u>Brief Rationale for the Objective</u>	Greater protection of the local water resources is essential for sustaining rural communities in the county. This objective will focus on prevention strategies and new technologies that augment existing natural water resources, reduce demand and achieve higher efficiency. Public awareness-raising and educational programmes will promote rational water use and the protection of exiting water courses. Integration of measures for the protection and conservation of potential sources of freshwater supply, including the inventorying of water resources, with

	land-use planning, forest resource utilization, protection of mountains and riverbanks and other relevant development and conservation activities.
Financial Allocation (€)	€150,000 (Animation - €90,000, Training - €10,000, Capital - €50,000).
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	Three strategic actions.

Strategic Action 6A(i)

Title of Strategic Action:	6Ai Animation actions to support the protection and sustainable use of water resources.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	Animation supports will be co-ordinated which ensure the banks of rivers, lakes, aquifers and the seas are protected and enhanced. This will be achieved through actions such as awareness raising, networking events, analysis and development, marketing and capacity building within the county across various sectors, farming business residents, community groups, etc. There will be a focus on specific water bodies and sources.
Primary Target Group(s):	County Leitrim as a whole.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	LCDC, Leitrim PPN, Community Groups.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim County Council, LDC, Leitrim PPN, The Heritage Council, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Farming Organisations, Community and Voluntary Groups.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Projects Funded New • 4 Conservation Initiatives • 1 Recycling Initiative.

Strategic Action 6A(ii)

Title of Strategic Action:	6Aii To provide training initiatives which focus on the preservation of water resources.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	A training initiative will be developed which involves a practical approach to the installation of rainwater and greywater harvesting systems. The trainees will participate in the practical installation of these systems both on a farm and at a community/sporting facility. With a greater uptake of rainwater harvesting in these kind of situations across the county a significant amount of pumped water can be preserved. This training will also focus on sustainable water use techniques including low flow systems and ensuring no drips or leaks.
Primary Target Group(s):	Farmers, DIY Enthusiasts, Community Groups, SME's.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.

Organisation who will deliver the Action:	LDC
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC, Leitrim County Council, Leitrim PPN, The Heritage Council, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2016.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	It is anticipated that this training initiative will run twice with a total number of individuals trained of 50.

Strategic Action 6A(iii)

Title of Strategic Action:	6Aiii To provide capital supports towards water conservation.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	Coinciding with the two objectives above it is important to have capital supports available for organisations proactive in the preservation of their local water resources. Applications are likely to be for projects seeking funding towards rainwater harvesting, water butts, low flow taps, greywater and community waste initiatives.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups, Conservation Groups, SME's.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Community Groups, Businesses & Farmers.
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC, Leitrim County Council.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	6 new projects assisted (mix of community groups, sporting organisations and businesses Farmers).

Local Objective

Title of Local Objective	6B Nurture our unspoilt natural environment, managing native species and counteracting any adverse actions which have contributed to the destruction of the county's flora and fauna.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Rural Environment – Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity.
Brief Rationale for the Objective	Leitrim is recognised nationwide as one of the most unspoilt counties in the country and through the consultation process the natural environment was perceived as the county's greatest strength. It is therefore vital that considerable work is done to ensure the preservation of the natural beauty of the county and those adverse or negative actions are remedied. The majority of works required in this objective will be in the development of a biodiversity plan, training,

	awareness and small bursary for capital grants. It will be important that the general public become more proactive and aware about how to ensure the preservation and protection of the native flora and fauna of the county.
Financial Allocation (€)	€50,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	Three strategic actions.

Strategic Action 6B(i)

Title of Strategic Action:	6Bi To develop a county based biodiversity plan that sets out a strategic roadmap for the protection of the Natural Environment to 2022.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	It is a definite starting point to develop a biodiversity plan for the county. There is a need for a structured county based study and an action plan which documents the resources of the county and outlines the work required to protect the local natural environment. This document will advise any decision making processes relating to the environment within the county and will be a useful asset in the leveraging of funding towards environmental related projects.
Primary Target Group(s):	County Leitrim as a whole.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	LCDC, Community Groups, Environmental Groups.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim County Council, LDC, The Heritage Council, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Nature Conservation Groups/Organisations.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2016.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	Development of a Biodiversity Plan for Leitrim 2016 – 2022.

Strategic Action 6B(ii)

Title of Strategic Action:	6Bii To deliver awareness raising through training initiatives which focus on the protection and preservation of the natural environment.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	A wide range of training initiatives will be developed which offer intensive hands on courses focusing on the preservation of the environment. Examples include hedge management skills, appreciation and understanding of the native flora and fauna, foraging and sustainable land use.
Primary Target Group(s):	County Leitrim as a whole.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	LDC.

Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC, Leitrim County Council, The Heritage Council, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2016.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	A widespread roadshow offering a generalised training exercise would be completed throughout the county and it is expected that 250 individuals would receive training as a result of this.

Strategic Action 6B(iii)

Title of Strategic Action:	6Biii To provide capital supports which benefit the preservation of the environment.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	Coinciding with the two objectives above it is important to have capital supports available for organisations proactive in the preservation of their local environment. Applications are likely to be for projects which deal with the removal of invasive species, landscaping & planting of native species, purchase of equipment for conservation groups.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups, Conservation Groups.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	LDC.
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC, Leitrim County Council, The Heritage Council, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2020.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	3 new projects assisted 3 existing projects funded.

4.7 Development of Renewable Energy

Local Objective 7A

Title of Local Objective	7A Stimulation of the Renewable Energy Sector with a direct focus on economically sustainable development leading to potential job creation.
LEADER Theme/SubTheme	Rural Environment – Development of Renewable Energy.
Brief Rationale for the Objective	Leitrim must utilise the county's own natural resources to develop the green economy in the county. It is imperative that a county scoping study is developed which strategically outlines the areas, technologies and sectors most suitable for deployment and development in the county. Through the consultation process it was apparent of the importance of raising awareness because public interest was poor and general knowledge limited in this sector. There is a definite need in the

	county for a range of hands on training, workshops and study visits cumulating in a selection of exemplar community energy installations which demonstrate both the financial viability and longevity of the technologies demonstrated. Increasing monoculture forestry plantation was contentious throughout the consultations however it was unanimously agreed that work is needed to ensure the existing plantations are utilised to encourage a greater degree of added value from the biomass in the county.
Financial Allocation (€)	€450,000
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	Three strategic actions.

Strategic Action 7A(i)

Title of Strategic Action:	7Ai To scope Leitrim's potential for the deployment of renewable energies.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	It is imperative that Leitrim develops a road map for the integration of Renewable Technologies in the county up to 2022. Leitrim has significant potential to become a carbon positive county through the development of a range of micro – medium scaled wind, hydro, solar and biomass installations. It is important that the developments and investments are considered logically so as to guarantee the economic benefits and to limit any negative environmental drawbacks.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups, SME's, Individuals.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	LCDC.
Any collaborating Organisations:	LDC, LCC, SEAI, Teagasc, WDC, Coillte, IWEA, IFA, Leitrim PPN.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q2 2016-Q4 2016.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	Development of a Renewable Energy Action Plan for Leitrim 2016 – 2021.

Strategic Action 7A(ii)

Title of Strategic Action:	7Aii To develop a range of exemplar community energy installations demonstrating the potential for more widespread deployment of the technologies utilised.
Brief Description of Strategic Action:	There is a number of large community buildings in the county with a medium energy load which have the potential to migrate to renewable energy sources. Due to the combination of a lack of knowledge, fear and misunderstanding of the benefits associated with such technologies it is imperative that a number of installations are completed which can demonstrate the long term potential, the benefits and the impacts of such technologies to the wider community and sectors around County Leitrim.

Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups/Organisations preferably with a three phase supply to their premises.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Community Groups.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim County Council, SEAI, WDC, Leitrim PPN.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q3 2016-Q4 2018.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	5 new installations completed which ensure a reasonable payback period and lead to a sustainable energy source and some income for the organisations involved. Likely to be a mix of Solar PV, Wind and Bio-Energy. 5 FTE jobs sustained.

Strategic Action 7A(iii)

Title of Strategic Action:	7Aiii To provide supports towards the development of the wood energy supply chain in the county.
<u>Brief Description of Strategic Action:</u>	Currently in the county a significant proportion of felled timber is processed, transported and engineered by external contractors or utilised outside the county. There is definitive potential for job creation, particularly in local supply chains in this sector, if it is developed and supported properly. It is important that support is provided to all individuals and small businesses seeking to develop in this niche industry through capacity building and capital supports.
Primary Target Group(s):	Private SME's.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Leitrim LCDC, LDC.
Any collaborating Organisations:	LCDC, Leitrim County Council, LEO, SEAI, WDC, Teagasc, Coillte.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q3 2016-Q4 2020.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	2 new enterprises developed 2 existing enterprises assisted 4 FTE jobs created 4 FTE jobs sustained.

Strategic Action 7A(iv)

Title of Strategic Action:	7Aiv To provide practical based training in small scale renewable energy
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Brief Description of Strategic Action:	The public has a relatively low level of knowledge and awareness of the various small scale renewable technologies and this knowledge is generally sporadic and often built up from misconceptions and hearsay. This in turn has led to a poor adoption of these technologies due to fear of the unknown. It is important that a programme of awareness raising and training is conducted including workshops, a roadshow, study visits to best practice examples to improve the general knowledge and to stimulate interest and increase confidence in the deployment of renewable technologies in Leitrim both in the private sector and in communities.
Primary Target Group(s):	Community Groups, SME's, Individuals.
Geographic Area:	County Leitrim.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Leitrim LCDC, LDC.
Any collaborating Organisations:	Leitrim County Council, SEAI, Teagasc, Leitrim PPN.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action:	Q3 2016-Q4 2020.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:	This will be a training initiative which will cover the range of renewable technologies available on the market. It is anticipated that a total of 250 individuals will receive training across a range of courses on offer. These courses will be needs led dependant on feedback received from those participating.

5 Strategic Integration

Achieving the vision as set out in this RDP LEADER Local Development Strategy will require sustained action in each of the priority areas with failure to do so making progress slow and inefficient. Delivery will require a strategic approach that results in cross-cutting actions and not isolated initiatives. This section summarises the three cross-cutting objectives of Innovation, Environment and Climate Change. It will also outline how the plan complements and aligns with other important strategies and plans.

5.1 Cross-Cutting Objectives

In addition to the objectives and actions under each priority there are a number of cross-cutting objectives for every project supported: Innovation, Environment and Climate Change. These are also cross cutting objectives for the CAP and other EU funds. By addressing and promoting these cross cutting objectives, this LDS will be in line with all other CAP and EU programme plans, strategies and policies.

In practical terms, the cross-cutting objectives are part of the Local Development Strategy on all its levels: themes, sub themes, objectives, actions, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Throughout the consultation process, the cross cutting themes were discussed and reviewed. The LAG is committed to putting these cross-cutting objectives into practice throughout the implementation of the RDP LEADER 2014-2020. The aim is to implement cross-cutting themes by including them in all project activities thereby ensuring a more integrated approach.

These cross cutting objectives are relevant to all aspects of development. All projects and initiatives should have a positive effect on innovation, environment and climate change. They are an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of both the programme and the LDS here in County Leitrim.

5.1.1 Innovation

Innovation should be about originality and experimentation within the local context where possible. This strategy will be innovative in relation to process and projects. It will actively encourage innovation in project purpose, collaborations, networking and delivery. It will do this by supporting projects that aim to:

- Provide new value adding services or products locally;
- Deliver existing services or products in new or different ways;
- Work across geographic areas and/or sectors by developing new partnerships or networks where added value has been identified;
- Include target groups in project development and delivery;
- Promote economic, social and environmental sustainability in new ways;
- Provide opportunities for job or career advancement;
- Provide wider opportunities for people to contribute to and become involved in the life and wellbeing of their communities;
- Share information and knowledge about good practice across the communities and LEADER groups within and outside Leitrim.

Innovative approaches and collaborative efforts to resolving business and community issues will be encouraged. Small and medium enterprises will be encouraged to try innovative approaches, new products or services. The LAG will take a reasonable approach to risk when

deciding whether to fund innovative projects. The key to improving the quality of life and living standards of rural communities and businesses is to increase value added through innovation. The LAG can also act as a platform for social innovations to provide basic services for hard to reach communities. The actions will be based on a broad innovation concept and stimulate cross-sectoral innovation. In particular the strategy will encourage and support small and medium enterprises utilising innovative approaches and testing new products or services.

5.1.2 Environment

This strategy will recognise the environment as both a stand-alone objective and integrate the environment into the overall strategy as a cross cutting objective. Environment in itself is a theme of the programme and the sub themes relating to the environment focus on protection and sustainable use of water resources, protection and improvement of local biodiversity and development of renewable energy. Every project will be assessed in terms of potential impacts on the environment and how the project will conserve and contribute to the improvement of the local environment. Mitigation measures must be in place to ensure that projects will have no negative impact on the environment. The environment will be fully integrated into the actions of the strategy and individual projects. This will include the sustainable use and management of resources, including energy across the economy, the exploitation of eco-innovation and the growth of the environmental goods and services sector. The Evaluation process (and scoring) will ensure that any environmental issues are identified and dealt with in all projects.

Awareness raising in relation to the environment is an important element of this strategy as this was identified in the public consultation as an area where support is required. In addition the environment can be used as a platform to help people progress towards and into work; return to work and to stay in work. The local environment will be promoted through rural tourism and local job creation in the green economy and environmental goods/services. Green skills for new and emerging renewable technologies will be encouraged. Training will also be targeted at conservation of the environment and environmental sectors.

5.1.3 Climate Change

The environment and climate change are inextricably linked. It is important that climate change is not approached as an isolated issue, but integrated into the strategy. Interventions relating to adaptation to climate change should be considered in the context of the strategy. This in turn will maintain sustainable communities and development. Protection of natural resources is important. Actions and projects will be supported which seek to mitigate the impact of recent environmental trends, including climate change and reducing the carbon footprint of the community and local industry.

Both the cross cutting objectives of environment and climate change will contribute to the targets as set out in Europe 2020: Europe's growth strategy which sets out five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas and this LDS will be in line with those objectives. Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will include a particular focus on these cross-cutting themes.

5.2 Policy Context

The strategy is based on the guidelines as set out by the Irish Government and the EU. This strategy is aligned with EU, national, regional and local plans, strategies and policies. Meetings were held with a number of key agencies at a regional and local level to ensure consistency with national, regional and local policy objectives.

The LDS is underpinned by the application of the six guiding principles of LEADER, one of which is integrated and multi sectoral actions as outlined in figure 5.1 below. LEADER is not a sectoral development programme; therefore this local development strategy has taken a multi-sectoral approach integrating several sectors of activity and also linked economic, social, cultural and environmental players and sectors.

Figure 5.1: The LEADER Approach



5.3 Review of Strategic Plans

A series of relevant European, National, Regional and Local Strategies were reviewed and analysed, to provide a broader national and regional context to this Local Development Strategy for Co. Leitrim. They were as follows.

Europe:	Common Agricultural Policy: Towards 2020 Europe 2020 A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable & Inclusive Growth Harvest 2020 A Vision for Irish Agri-Food & Fisheries Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020
National	National Development Plan National Spatial Strategy National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 Action Plan for Jobs (2015)/Pathways to Work (2013) Towards 2016 Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 Food Harvest 2020: A Vision for Irish Agri-food and Fisheries CEDRA Energising Ireland's Rural Economy
Regional	Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Regional Operational Programme (OP) 2014-2020

Local	Border Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2021 Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 Tourism Growth Strategy County Leitrim 2015-2021 Leitrim Recreation Strategy
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Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan

The LAG has sought to avoid duplication of resources and proposed activity; rather it complements existing plans and strategies and is in line with the objectives set out in the Local Economic and Community Plan through its common strategic objectives. The LCDC has aimed to add value by addressing the identified specific needs of the county at a local level. This LDS links directly to Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan and is not a standalone document. Clear evidence of alignment of this LDS with the Local Economic and Community Plan can be found in **Appendix 17**.

Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable & Inclusive Growth

The European Union has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas. Concrete actions at EU and national levels underpin the strategy.

CEDRA Energising Ireland's Rural Economy

Population and employment decline are some of the key challenges facing some rural areas and towns. Evidence from the Commission on the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) shows that the economic downturn has had differing effects on urban and rural Ireland. Rural areas have been particularly affected, with an increase in unemployment of 192% compared to 114% in urban areas between 2006 and 2011. Research for CEDRA also indicates that many of the key issues confronting rural communities are part of a long term economic and social transformation, as well as reflecting the more immediate impacts of the economic crisis, such as the significant decline in construction employment which in part is related to the longer term decline in agricultural employment. The CEDRA vision is *Rural Ireland will become a dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi sectoral economy supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a high quality of life with an energised relationship between rural and urban Ireland which will contribute to its sustainability for the benefit of society as a whole*. The vision as set out in this LDS is consistent with and reinforces the CEDRA vision and will help in transforming Leitrim's rural communities into stable, thriving socio-economic hubs of inclusive community spirit, environmental best practice with a superior quality of life. The recommendations of the CEDRA report are all relevant to this LDS which will help to deliver and build on its recommendations for County Leitrim. The LDS actions will also complement the RDP 2014-2020 REDZ fund and there is potential for further projects in Leitrim to apply to this fund.

Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) 2015

The Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) recognises some of the barriers to enterprise driven competitiveness improvements, including access to finance, lack of innovation capacity, language and international sales skills, to take advantage of growth opportunities. It envisages increased support for indigenous firms seeking to trade internationally, ICT skills initiatives, new measures promoting access to finance and direct support to the enterprise sector to build their capacity for research and development. The Action Plan also states that successful

delivery of the National Broadband Plan will ultimately underpin job creation across all sectors of the economy by providing high quality connectivity across the country.

The Action Plan for Jobs also sets out key targets to support additional jobs, increasing competitiveness and building clusters in key sectors. This LDS complements and contributes to these strategic ambitions of the Action Plan for Jobs at a local level in County Leitrim. The Action Plan also outlines that building indigenous growth and stimulating the domestic economy while generating employment in locally traded sectors is vital for creating additional jobs in the country. The APJ supports local and rural development and specifically outlines that the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 will be implemented following agreement with the European Commission. Innovation is key to the APJ and reforms include the development of Ireland as Europe's Energy Innovation Hub by 2020. It also outlines that stimulation of the domestic economy is required in key areas such as agri-food, marine, tourism, retail, construction and housing. The Leitrim LDS aligns directly with the strategic actions set out in the Action Plan for Jobs as they both aim to improve conditions for job creation in Leitrim.

Border Midlands and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020

The Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Regional Operational Programme (OP) 2014-2020 has been prepared in the context of the Europe 2020 goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and is consistent with the common Strategic Framework for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020. The specific focus of the European Regional Development Fund (under the investment in growth and jobs goal) is on research and innovation, information and communications technologies (ICT), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), promoting a low carbon economy and supporting integrated urban development. The OP sets out a development strategy, including a coherent set of investment priorities to meet the strategic objectives that have been set for the Regional OP, taking account of specific regional needs.

The Regional Planning Guidelines set out a planning framework for the proper planning and development of the Border Region ensuring that the region provides sustainable communities for our citizens in the coming years. The Border Regional Authority includes the geographical area of Counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo. They provide for an integrated model of growth and development of the Region complimented by more detailed consideration given to areas such as climate change, environmental management and flood risk management which is in line with the cross cutting objectives of this Local Development Strategy. The Regional Authority sets out a number of strategic goals and objectives to achieve their vision for the region which is in line with the themes set out in this LDS. With social inclusion a goal is *to develop the Region's most important asset, its people by providing an improved quality of life for all people and communities living, working and visiting the Region*. This is clearly in line with the LDS as the SWOT analysis identified that the People are one of the main strengths of the county. The RPGs also outlined *that Integration of bus services, including on a cross border basis, is at the heart of future public transport provision in the Region*. Again this was identified as an opportunity in the SWOT analysis relating to transport to examine more integrated options for transport within the county targeting areas with lack of transport services e.g. Rural Lift, Social Car, etc. The RPG also has an objective *to develop gateways and hubs as the strategic drivers of growth for the Region and to facilitate integrated sustainable development between urban and rural areas*. Carrick on Shannon in County Leitrim was specifically mentioned in this regard. The LDS is aligned with the objective

on the development of towns as gateways and hubs of economic activity which complement and align with the RPG.

In terms of economic development, enterprise development and job creation, the sectors outlined by the RPG link directly with those in the LDS and include natural resource sector (agriculture, agri-food & forestry), creative sector (design, digital, media, fashion, crafts, visual arts) and the caring sector. The RPGs outline that protection and enhancement of the quality of the natural environment and heritage of the Region is vital. The RPGs noted that *mixed species in forestry plantations, with an emphasis on native hardwoods, will enhance the natural landscape, promote biodiversity and absorb toxins from the atmosphere*. Water conservation and network management is an integral component of the Water Services Investment Programme and is key to the sustainable use of water resources. Again this focus on the natural environment is paramount in the LDS.

National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 focuses on building a fully inclusive society. It is based on a lifecycle approach where each section of the lifecycle has a number of high level goals prioritised. These goals will help in achieving the overall goal of reducing the numbers experiencing consistent poverty. The ultimate aim of the Plan is to eliminate consistent poverty by 2016 and beyond. The sections of the lifecycle as set in the Plan are in line with the target groups set out in this Local Development Strategy; Children, People of Working Age, Older People, People with Disabilities and Communities. They focus on:

- ensuring children reach their true potential;
- supporting working age people and people with disabilities, through activation measures and the provision of services to increase employment and participation;
- providing the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high-quality standard of living;
- building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.

This LDS will develop and support actions in Leitrim to reduce exclusion and allow people to become and to feel that they are important and equal citizens whose concerns are heard and listened to.

A Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim 2015-2021

The overall vision set out in the Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim is as follows; *Leitrim is renowned as an authentic, friendly tourism destination. Compelling experiences, rooted in natural beauty, are delivered by people who are proud of their county's unique strengths*. Priorities are focused on the following key areas; capacity building, networking and collaboration, product and experience development and marketing and sales. Implementation of The Growth Strategy for Tourism involves local, regional and national stakeholders and is working towards doubling the visitor numbers to the county by 2021 to 296,000, which in turn will substantially increase revenue and the number of jobs in the sector. This LDS links directly with the Growth Strategy for Tourism as it will support the development of the tourism sector in the county and contribute €1.1 million worth of funding to the sector over the programme period. The RDP LEADER 2014-2020 is specifically mentioned as a key funder of proposed activities in the tourism sector in the county for training, supporting tourism providers and developing Leitrim as a tourist destination.

Food Harvest 2020: A Vision for Irish Agri-food and Fisheries

The Food Harvest 2020 is a strategy for the development of the (agri-food including drinks) fishery and forestry sector for the period to 2020. It is a strategy for food production with negative environmental consequences. The strategy outlines the key actions needed to ensure that the sector contributes to the maximum possible extent to our expert led economic recovery and the full development of the smart economy. The overall vision relates to acting smart, thinking green and achieving growth. Leitrim's food and drinks businesses will contribute to the goals of "Origin Green" and the Leitrim LDS will aid in the delivery of the vision of Food Harvest 2020 in the county. This will involve innovative and expert entrepreneurs, unique high quality products and creation of new jobs which will be supported and funded.

6 Networking

Leitrim's LCDC (Local Action Group) will enhance its delivery of the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 by participating in a variety of local, regional, national and international networking structures. This will in turn result in increased learning, sharing of knowledge and best practice which will also influence wider rural development policy and actions. The National Rural Network (NRN) established under the RDP will be an important forum for exchange of practice, experience and for research during the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 delivery. The LAG and its partners will take part and interact with the NRN and its activities once it is established. Members of the LCDC and of the LAG partners participate in local networks such as:

6.1 Public Participation Network

The Leitrim LCDC, as outlined previously in Section 1, provides for a majority representation of private and community interests with strong links back to the local community and voluntary sector mainly through the Public Participation Network (PPN). The PPN aims to strengthen the capacity of communities to contribute to decision making and to improving the participation and representation of communities and volunteers on the Local Action Group (LAG) and on many other decision making and policy bodies. It also acts as an important network conduit through which information is communicated and dispersed to various sectors, interest groups and representative bodies. The LCDC has worked with the Leitrim PPN in the public consultation for the development of this LDS. This type of arrangement will continue during the implementation, monitoring and review stages of the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 to allow the community and voluntary sector to continue to participate and to keep up to date with the LDS implementation.

6.2 The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) is the representative body of Local Development Companies (LDCs) across 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 member organisations in the areas of social inclusion, local and rural development. ILDN membership consists of approximately 50 companies with members delivering the SICAP and who previously delivered the RDP LEADER 2007-2013 in rural areas. While these are the two core programmes delivered by members, there are a wide range of other initiatives, projects, schemes and programmes initiated by the members at National and European level. These companies also leverage other funding and contribute to policy and actions to develop their communities. ILDN activities include:

- Monthly meetings, regular seminars, exchange of information and good practice among LAGs;
- Representing members' interests with the DECLG, European Commission, Department of Agriculture Food and Fisheries and others on the many aspects of the RDP from operating rules to practical issues etc.;
- Representing LAGs on a number of Management/Monitoring Committees and also the RDP LEADER at National and International level.

ILDN also operates through regional structures in developing approaches, policies and programmes and helps to develop co-operation projects. Leitrim Development Company is an active member of the ILDN in the Border Region.

6.3 ELARD (European LEADER Association for Rural Development)

ELARD consists of national, regional and local associations active in delivering programmes via the LEADER method in the 23 countries. ELARD represents 1,075 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 are not in place. The organisation works with representative networks of Local Action Groups and LEADER type organisations. Leitrim Development Company has contributed to the ELARD network and is also linked through the ILDN members.

6.4 City and County Managers' Association (CCMA)

The Chief Executive of Leitrim County Council (Chairman of the LCDC) and the Director of Services for Planning and Economic Development (Chief Officer of the LCDC) are involved and active in the CCMA. The CEO of Leitrim County Council also represents the CCMA on Comhairle Na Tuaithe which is concerned with outdoor recreation. The City and County Managers' Association (CCMA) is a non-statutory body "representative voice" of the local government management network. Its members are Chief Executives of the County and City Councils. It works to ensure that the influence of local authority Chief Executives is brought to bear on the development and implementation of relevant policy. Since Local Authorities will now be financial partners in the RDP there will be sharing of best practice and networking relating to the RDP at the CCMA.

It operates through a number of established committees each of which is concerned with a specific policy area including some which are particularly relevant to the LDS as follows;

- Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development (EETD);
- Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Planning (ECCEP);
- Housing, Social and Community (HSC);
- Water.

Each committee, which is made up of County and City Council Chief Executives and Directors of Services interface with senior management of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) and other relevant Departments and organisations. The CCMA represents its members on external committees, steering groups and organisations and develops evidence-based positions. It also makes submissions on relevant issues.

The LCDC (LAG), its partners and members will also network locally, as well as engage with potential applicants and beneficiaries particularly those in hard to reach groups. These networks and activities will help to highlight and contribute to the RDP implementation as follows;

- The North and South Leitrim Community Network;
- The Leitrim Residents Network;
- The Leitrim Older People's Council;
- Comhairle Na nÓg;
- Cairde Liatríoma;
- Leitrim Mental Health Network;
- Leitrim Disability Network;

6.5 Co-operation - Implementing Co-operation Projects

Among the priorities for development and investment under the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 the LCDC has identified a number of areas where co-operation and co-operation projects will help to achieve progress and the delivery of various objectives. The Implementing Partner, Leitrim Development Company has an established track record in working with other Local Action Groups in the Republic of Ireland on inter-territorial projects and other LAGs in Europe on transnational co-operation projects. These co-operative projects have added value to the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 outcomes. Leitrim Development Company has also partnered with and co-operated with universities and other organisations both in Ireland and abroad. These co-operations programmes were concerned with rural development in areas such as farm diversification and development, social farming and renewable energy. This also involved accessing funding from other EU programmes including INTERREG. There are a number of priorities and objectives in the LDS where actions lend themselves to co-operation with other areas by building on previous co-operation and achievements and also in building new links to share and learn from best practice.

Leitrim County Council has a wide range of experience of co-operation projects and programmes, both past and present where co-operation has benefited the businesses, community and various sectors in the county. Both Leitrim County Council and Leitrim Development Company are part of the County Peace III Partnership which features co-operation projects with organisations and communities in Northern Ireland.

Many ideas and possibilities for co-operation were made during the consultation which can be developed and explored. Examples of areas where co-operation projects may be considered by the LCDC are as follows;

Social Farming - Leitrim has developed a strong expertise and reputation in the area of supporting and developing Social Farming across the island of Ireland. There are numerous connections and linkages to a range of organisations around Ireland, including Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK and Europe. These links will be built upon in co-operation and transnational projects.

Sustainability Training Programme - There are possibilities to link and work with the Organic Centre in North Leitrim, South West College, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland and the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales. This would involve organising a collaborative training programme whereby four of the courses not on offer in the other two would be delivered in the local facility.

Community Broadband Initiatives - During the RDP LEADER 2007-2013 some very interesting examples arose of community led infrastructure programmes where communities established their own broadband infrastructure and networks. There were some co-operation activities in Ireland on community broadband initiatives and depending on the success and the timelines on the implementation of the NBP it may well be worth co-operating with a number of other rural LAGs both in Ireland and abroad to examine such opportunities for communities in Leitrim. This would be focused on areas where there is poor access to good quality broadband.

The Wild Atlantic Way - This would involve a small inter territorial programme which animates the potential of developing various projects and proposals along the Wild Atlantic Way. This could focus on the existing Glens to Sea concept and various proposals which link/connect Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal.

Uplands - A proposal has also been made with regard to linking upland areas and counties within the island of Ireland. This would focus on exploring similar issues related to those living in upland and mountainous areas. There could be possibilities to link with the Irish Uplands Council. This would complement and expand on the work of the Leitrim Recreation Forum and its various working groups in supporting upland communities and landowners to take opportunities from the landscape and the places they live in.

Management of Native Hedges - This would involve a transnational project linking with Hedgelink in the UK which would stimulate the development of a similar entity here in Southern Ireland. This could potentially link with Monaghan Integrated Development and another LAG in Great Britain and possibly Northern Ireland who have an existing relationship with Hedgelink UK. This will require representatives from relevant agencies to guide and oversee the project, this group would be the beginning of a collective that would feed into the development of a similar network to Hedgelink in the UK to co-operatively guide the sector in this country. The project would work closely with key representatives and stakeholders and would provide them with the opportunity to learn all about hedgerows through hands on demonstrations and trips to the other regions to learn about the methods and techniques used in other areas.

Living through Nature - A potential inter-territorial project could focus on making a living from the natural environment. As part of this, two other border linked LAG regions would provide a training initiative focusing on garnering an income based on the nature around us. It will be an important aspect of this training that it is developed as one programme through which individuals can participate on a modular basis, allowing them to pick and choose modules most suited to them. It is anticipated that this training initiative could deliver ten intensive two week modules with a total of 12–16 individuals participating on each module. These individuals would develop skills which provide them with the opportunity to gain employment or become self-employed in the area of environmental protection and preservation. The modules will be designed to be very practical, hands on and field based. Modules offered will include, an income on less than an acre, understanding our wild resources, hedgerow management and timber based crafts and products to name but a few.

Film - Another inter-territorial project focuses on a training initiative between Leitrim, Sligo and Roscommon to maximise on the growing interest and development of the film industry in the area. This bespoke training programme will be specifically developed to promote sustainable employment in the region and to provide a sufficient pool of talent locally to persuade more programmes and films to be recorded and edited in the region. The training will be developed to be hands-on and will allow students to work with filmmakers on a regular basis, for basic foundation training and hands-on experience in the areas of storytelling, writing, directing, camera, sound and editing. The initiative will provide 50 individuals between the ages of 15 – 35 who demonstrate a distinct interest in the sector the opportunity to learn from those already directly involved in the industry and will hopefully lead to employment in the region. The training initiative would run for a period of six months.

Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project (USEFE) - The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project (USEFE) is a collaborative project supported by ESB and Board Na Mona currently being implemented by Leitrim, Roscommon, Cavan and Longford Local Authorities. It may also develop co-operation initiatives which can bid for the RDP co-operation budget. The USEFE project is working in areas as diverse as food, forestry, energy, tourism, creative, manufacturing, pharma/healthcare and with the diaspora sector.

The Glens to Sea Initiative - This involves an innovative bottom up initiative between communities in Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal which are focused on an area along the wild Atlantic Way and bounded by the mountains of North Sligo and North Leitrim. It is rich in heritage, tourism and has beautiful landscapes. The communities have been co-operating very closely and have a number of projects they would like to advance which could deliver an excellent co-operation project in the region.

Polish – Irish Tourism Links – This involves a potential international project involving three LAGs from Poland – Dolina Raby (the Valley of river Raba), Wadoviana and Gościniec 4 Żywiółów (Roadway of 4 Elements) and one from Ireland (Leitrim LCDC). The general objective is the development of tourism in the LAG partner areas. Specifically, the project will create a common, tourism network covering the LAG areas.

The project will involve:

- a study of the needs of the tourists in the area of each partner;
- an inventory of the various resources of the areas focusing on the needs of tourists;
- implementation of materials, applications and promotional gadgets;
- implementation of a joint website;
- the joint implementation of the guide with a passport that allows a tourist to keep track of his/her stay at a given location;
- visits to partners in order to offer promotion to their areas.

Local Foods for International Markets - A potential international project involving two LAGs from Poland - Dolina Raby (the Valley of river Raba) and the Green Tip of Silesia (Silesia region), and one LAG from Ireland (Leitrim LCDC). The main objective of the project is the economic development of the areas in terms of the production of local food products.

The project will involve:

- identification and dissemination of information about local food products in areas through the development of a joint publication highlighting the cuisine on offer;
- promotion of local products on joint stands at trade fairs and other promotional events in the partners areas;
- rolling out (promotion) of the local food products from the LAGs;
- visits to partners in order to offer promotion to their areas.

7 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation Plan

7.1 Introduction

The LCDC will be ultimately responsible for the overall monitoring of the Local Development Strategy. Monitoring and evaluation is vital in order to measure and understand the effects of the Local Development Strategy. Monitoring and review of the programme will be the responsibility of the RDP Programme Manager of the lead Implementing Partner assigned at the commencement of the programme and agreed in the Service Level Agreement.

Detailed monitoring and evaluation procedures and responsibilities for the various stakeholders DECLG, (Pobal), LAG, Financial Partner and Implementing Partner will be included in the SLAs drawn up between the LAG, the Financial Partner and the Implementation Partner.

The following monitoring and evaluation activity will be done annually by the LCDC and the LAG staff:

- Monitoring of spend and outputs against each objective of the LDS;
- Monitoring of changes in the result and impact indicators;
- Evaluation of the impact of proposed programme interventions against the intended socio-economic and environmental objectives;
- Evaluation of delivery processes to ensure efficient use of resources.

7.2 Monitoring

Evaluation and monitoring templates will be taken from the LEADER Monitoring Framework for each of the themes and subthemes. The ongoing monitoring and evaluation of projects is a critical way of ensuring that the programme itself and every project within it achieves as much as possible and is in line with the overall LDS objectives. A system will be used to review each project and keep track of their performance. The LAG will use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to provide clear and meaningful information to both internal and external stakeholders so that they can see how the programme is performing against targets. Performance indicator data will be collected, inputted and retained during the RDP implementation and procedures for this will be outlined in the LAG (and partner) procedures manual(s) drawn up for the programme. The RDP IT system will be used for these processes as appropriate. An experienced member of staff from the implementation partner will be assigned to assemble the monitoring data and actions.

7.2.1 Stages in the Monitoring of Projects

Below is an outline of the stages involved in the monitoring of projects:

Application Stage

Firstly, indicators will be allocated at EOI stage and collected at application stage; these indicators will set out the expected indicators and targets for the project, this will allow the Evaluation Committee and LAG members to assess the project. This information at application stage will be captured on the RDP IT System at the point of application.

Assessment Stage

At the time of LAG assessment of the project, the LAG will complete a small number of fields on the IT system as part of the assessment process and link the proposed project to one of its LDS local objectives which, in turn, is related to one of the overarching LEADER sub-themes.

A relevant set of indicators will be automatically associated with each project depending on the LEADER sub theme concerned.

Approval Stage

Successful projects will receive a letter of offer outlining all the standard conditions, for example, project eligible spend, duration of project, outputs and milestones, claims, publicity, any special conditions imposed and agreed by the LAG. This letter will also contain information in relation to the need for ongoing monitoring of the project and the commitment required by the promoter to comply with this.

Claim Stage

Indicators will then be collected upon completion of project prior to final payment by the LAG. It will be a mandatory element of the claims process for project applicants to complete the monitoring indicators form. The lead Implementing Partner will provide support to promoters completing their indicators as data and information relating to some project indicators may not be available at claim stage e.g. for a rural tourism project, the number of visitors at claim stage will not be accurate for the project as the project will only be operational. Therefore this information will be entered within a 12 month period. Reporting will also contain a qualitative element in which projects will briefly describe the progress, achievements and any key learning. Failure to submit a fully completed monitoring form as part of the claim process will result in the payment being withheld.

Ongoing

Thereafter, indicators will be collected on an annual basis to determine if there are any changes to the indicators as set out at completion stage. Changes in indicators will be taken into account. Each project promoter will be written to on an annual basis in relation to programme indicators. Support will be given to promoters to enable them to complete the indicators accurately. The LAG will also issue a letter ('In-Operation' Letter) annually to each promoter confirming that it is operating as funded.

Similar to the previous LEADER Programme, Leitrim Development Company as the lead Implementing Partner will be responsible for the review and collation of data and its maintenance. A senior staff member will be assigned responsibility for collating all monitoring data and preparing reports on all indicators. Internal control checks will take place to ensure all indicators are up to date. Promoters will be contacted directly on an annual basis by the Financial Partner for their annual in-operation letter and returns and to ensure that they complete their indicators each year. This data will also be analysed and inputted into the end of year report. The LAG will oversee this process and monitor programme delivery and performance and ensure alignment with both the RDP programmes and national policy.

Site visits at commencement and at each phased payment, along with other arranged site visits as required will also allow for monitoring of individual projects. Reports are prepared along with photographs if applicable for all monitoring visits.

7.3 Data Protection

The LAG will inform beneficiaries that their data will be made public in line with the European Commission requirements and that the data may be processed by auditing and investigating bodies of the European Union and the Member States for the purpose of safeguarding the Union's financial interests. They will also be notified that they have the right, given by the Data

Protection Act of 1988 and 2003 to obtain a print out of their computer record at any time for a fee.

At application stage, all applicants will be required to complete a Data Protection Act Consent Form as part of their application for funding. This form states that the LAG and the implementing partners will create a computer record and non-computerised record in their name with all information that they submit. This form also sets out the purpose for collecting the data – processing applications, compiling statistical information to help the LAG plan and improve services and analysing information about applicants for other bodies such as Government Departments and producing statistics for publications and reports.

The Procedures Manual of the LAG will outline the procedures and controls for maintaining the security of personal data and sensitive personal data received and processed in relation to LEADER. The LAG along with the lead Implementing Partner and Financial Partner will operate in compliance with data protection legislation. All non-computerised data will be kept in a secure and safe filing system which is not accessible to the public.

7.4 Evaluation & Review

7.4.1 Objectives for the Evaluation of the LDS

Monitoring and evaluation objectives focus on the overall Local Development Strategy and the specific objectives set out in the strategy. The objectives for the monitoring and evaluation of the LDS are as follows:

1. To analyse the process of implementation, focusing on participation of the community;
2. To analyse the impact or changes that have occurred as a result of the objectives as set out in the LDS;
3. To identify any problems and constraints that have been encountered and how to overcome them in redefining or fine tuning the LDS and the budgets and/or targets;
4. To identify important lessons to be learnt and make recommendations for the implementation and delivery of future projects;
5. To inform future programming and policy;
6. To ensure transparency and accountability;
7. To demonstrate what has been achieved and the added value of the LEADER approach to the LDS delivery.

7.4.2 Evaluation Process Management, Organisation & Co-ordination

Establishing internal systems and setting evaluation indicators at action and organisational level is a priority of the LCDC. These systems and indicators will be entirely compatible and comply with requirements for monitoring and evaluation.

Evaluation systems will be used as an ongoing management tool i.e. ongoing evaluation will be used by the LCDC to critically operate its activities with a high degree of self-awareness, flexibility and ability to respond to obstacles or problems with a solution orientated approach. The LCDC will coordinate all evaluation activities, while the lead Implementing Partner and the Financial Partner will also feed into the overall evaluation process.

The Rural Development Operational Committee (RDOC) is established as a sub-committee by the LCDC. Its purpose is to assist and support the LCDC in completing the LDS and in managing and trouble-shooting any issues which arise in the delivery of the RDP LEADER 2014-2020. It will also take responsibility for ensuring that ongoing monitoring and evaluation takes place. The RDOC will report to the LCDC on these operational matters with all decisions being made by the LCDC as the LAG.

The LAG will continue to use monitoring and evaluation as an important tool to manage the implementation of the LDS. There will be a review of outputs and outcomes delivered against the LDS objectives and actions to ensure the programme is on target. As part of the LAGs project assessment process projects will need to demonstrate tangible and measurable outputs before they are approved.

Qualitative information relating to the overall LDS and the LEADER delivery will prove beneficial as it will be more in-depth and detailed than purely analysing figures and numbers. This will be particularly important in evaluating data relating to specific themes in the LDS. Quantitative methods will be used to complement qualitative methods and gain a more in-depth evaluation. This is important to measure impacts and outcomes and also to query processes and build on best practice. Case studies and surveys can be carried out. The LAG will examine Partnership and collaborative approaches as part of the delivery of the LDS. There will be ongoing requirements for all staff working on the programme to monitor and evaluate the programme as this is integral to the success of the programme.

7.4.3 Approaches for Communicating Activities/Findings

Regular reporting by the lead Implementing Partner at LAG meetings will take place throughout the year. These reports will include achievements to date and output targets. The lead Financial Partner will report regularly to the LAG on expenditure and budgets. Written quarterly reports for the LAG will be prepared on the achievement of output targets and on expenditure and budgets.

End of year reports will be prepared along with information and case studies available on LCDC partner websites. As per the Draft Operating Rules of the Programme the LAG must submit an annual report to the Department by the end of February each year. This short report should include:

1. An outline of the achievements in the previous year relative to the priority actions identified and include;
 - Information on the organisational structure, operations and decision-making within the LAG;
 - Issues or challenges encountered in implementation during the year;
 - Particular successes to be highlighted;
 - Progress made in contributing to LEADER's cross cutting objectives.
2. The priority actions for the year in which the report is produced;
3. Three Project Case Studies covering at least 2 different sub-themes which will include information on the following aspects of the selected projects:
 - Promoter background/description;
 - Project/Business description;
 - Products/Facilities/Services;
 - Financial Information (previous funding/other sources of funding);

- Employment (current and potential);
- Compatibility with LAG’s LDS/overall LEADER themes and cross cutting objectives (innovation, environment and climate change);
- Benefit to the community.

For the first year of implementation (2016), the annual report will only include the priority actions.

A final (2020) external independent evaluation of the programme will be undertaken.

Table 7.1: Timeframe and Communication of Evaluation Activities/ Findings

Year 1	End of Year Report	Quarterly Report to LAG	Information & case studies on LCDC partner websites
Year 2	End of Year Report	Quarterly Report to LAG	Information & case studies on LCDC partner websites
Year 3	End of Year Report	Quarterly Report to LAG	Information & case studies on LCDC partner websites
Year 4	End of Year Report	Quarterly Report to LAG	Information & case studies on LCDC partner websites

Final External Independent Evaluation of Programme

8 Declaration and Disclaimer

Please see Appendix 18 for the signed declaration, disclaimer and a signed copy of the minutes from the LCDC meeting in which all LAG members agreed to the content and submission of this LDS and Action Plan.