



2020

Rural Social Scheme

Dear Client,

Thank you for your interest in the Rural Social Scheme. Should you wish to register your details for the scheme, you are invited to fully complete the enclosed Application Form.

Once the Application Form is complete, you will be registered on our database for a period of twelve months. After that period, this list will expire.

When Leitrim Development Company identifies the requirement for a client in a certain area, candidates in that locality are invited to attend an interview. **Please note you will not be contacted unless information is missing from your application or if a potential vacancy is identified.**

Please pay special attention to the eligibility conditions attached to this scheme as ineligible Application Forms cannot be processed further. Canvassing will disqualify.

Should you wish to speak or meet with me or any member of our team regarding this process, please do not hesitate to call us where I will be delighted to help.

Many thanks again for your interest in the Rural Social Scheme.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Guihen".

Karen Guihen
Employment Programmes Co-ordinator

RURAL SOCIAL SCHEME - INFORMATION SHEET

RSS Background

The aims of the Rural Social Scheme are to address certain issues in rural Ireland:

- To provide income support for farmers and fishermen who are currently in receipt of long term Social Welfare payments
- To provide certain services of benefit to rural communities by harnessing the skills and talents of the farmers participating on the scheme.
- Participants will experience opportunities to improve existing, or develop new skills, and perform valuable work in the community
- The RSS provides additional resources to maintain and improve local amenities and facilities in rural communities.

While responsibility for the operation of the RSS lies with the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, it is managed at a local level, on their behalf, by the Local Development Companies.

There are a total of 3,350 placements on the Rural Social Scheme throughout the country. Places on the scheme are allocated in ratio to the number of farmers in receipt of Farm Assist per region. Currently the allocation for County Leitrim is 134 places. This process is subject to ongoing review by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection.

Leitrim Development Company (Supporting Rural Social Scheme Projects)

Leitrim was the pilot for the Rural Social Scheme upon its inception in 2004. The Scheme has continued to grow over the past year and delivers a much needed community service throughout the County. This is demonstrated by the new and existing community groups that submitted worthwhile projects last year. At present Leitrim Development Company currently has a quota of 134 participants on the scheme with a support team of 6 supervisors and 1 Co-ordinator. Work is ongoing throughout County Leitrim and provides community-based work on a part-time basis (19.5 hours per week). Participants work on a variety of projects across all measures of work. The variety of work requested by the local community groups has expanded this year. Various new projects were undertaken with the co-operation of the communities and despite very tight budgets communities have come up trumps with the provision of materials to complete these projects.

The service and benefits that the Rural Social Scheme brings to local rural communities is very well appreciated by all concerned and it is vital that the scheme continues into the future and can then be recognised as one of the mainstays of rural sustainability.

Who is eligible to participate on the Rural Social Scheme

To be eligible to participate, an individual must be in receipt of **an active herd number** and be in receipt of one of the following long-term Social Welfare payments:

- Farm Assist/Fish Assist
- Jobseeker's Allowance,
- Disability Allowance,
- One Parent Family Payment
- Widow(ers) Payment – contributory and non-contributory,
- Adult dependents of non-contributory old age pensioners under 66 years of age etc.
- The dependent spouse/child/sibling of a person qualified to participate in the scheme as an alternate, i.e. instead of the spouse to whom the herd number is allocated.
- The dependent spouse of a person qualified to participate in the scheme as an alternative, i.e. instead of the person with the fisherperson's license

The applicant must provide proof that the qualifying herd number is active by providing a copy of his/her Basic Payment Application (BPA) for the current year.

- Eligibility will be limited to those over 25 years
- Eligibility will be limited to duration of three years at a time and a total of six years in a lifetime to ensure that there will be a throughput of places available and more opportunities for new entrants.

Participation on the Rural Social Scheme

The scheme in Leitrim currently appoints local farmers in 6 scheme areas which stretch the length and breadth of the county. Each scheme has a dedicated Supervisor who works with local communities and participants to carry out a broad range of work plans which fall into the following broad range of categories. These are as follows:

- Maintaining and enhancing waymarked ways, agreed walks and bog roads;
- Energy conservation work for the elderly and the less well off;
- Village and countryside enhancement projects;
- Social care and care of the elderly, community care for both pre-school and after-school groups;
- Environmental maintenance work; maintenance and care-taking of community and sporting facilities,
- Projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres;
- Community Administration/Clerical duties.
- Any other appropriate community work identified during course of the scheme

Participants on the RSS work 19.5 hours per week and the scheme is administered in a farmer/fisherperson friendly manner. Participants can work their hours in a flexible way e.g. week on week off, subject to the requirements of the project they are working on and the Supervisory arrangements.

In 2020 the maximum Rural Social Scheme (RSS) weekly payment is as follows:

Participant Category	Total Weekly Payment*
Participant without Adult Dependant	€225.50

* Please note that these figures may be subject to change

****The amount of the increase for the adult dependant is assessed by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection. This means that the rate for a participant with an adult dependant may be reduced if the adult dependant has income, for example, from part-time employment.**

Participants can work outside the scheme; however, it is the participant's responsibility to ensure any earning outside of their primary income (i.e. farming/fishing) remains within the income threshold that applies to their underlying Social Welfare payment. Earnings in excess of the income limit will affect a Participants eligibility to qualify for the Rural Social Scheme.

Participants in receipt of Disability Allowance, One-Parent Family Payment, Widow's/Widower's (Contributory) Pension and Widow's/Widower's (Non-Contributory) Pension **will continue to get their payment from the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, along with a top-up payment from the RSS** to bring their overall payment in line with the rates listed above for their family circumstances.

Participation in the RSS is not intended to be on a permanent basis. The operation of the RSS will always be reviewed after each twelve-month term. Participants are included on the RSS for an initial period of twelve months. Following each term, participants must re-apply to participate in the RSS and are considered for participation for a further term or for inclusion on any waiting list that may be in operation, as appropriate. All appointments depend on the availability of vacancies and funding.

PAYE & PRSI

RSS income will be assessable under PAYE. It is envisaged that many participants however, shall have little or no actual tax liability. The amount of tax payable will depend on individual circumstances and allowances. You will pay contributions towards Class A1 rate PRSI on all income above the current PRSI free allowance.

Medical Card & Secondary Benefits

As a participant, you will be entitled to retain certain secondary benefits, such as your medical card, fuel allowance etc. You should check with your local Social Welfare Office or Health Board, as appropriate, for further clarification.

Participant Retirement

RSS participants and supervisors may work on the RSS until the day before their 66th birthday. The Old-Age Pension (both Contributory and Non-Contributory) is payable with effect from the day on which a person reaches 66 years. RSS participants on the Scheme on the basis of their own entitlement to a qualifying Social Welfare payment. Receipt of a State pension will eliminate a person's eligibility for any of the underlying Social Welfare payments required to qualify for the Rural Social Scheme. Receipt of a State pension eliminates a participant's entitlement to claim an increase for Qualified Adult Allowance in respect of the person claiming the pension payment i.e. Rural Social Scheme Participant.

Community Applications

Community groups have a very important role to play in the role out of this scheme as they determine and put in place the various work plans which the participants will be employed to deliver. Community groups are asked to submit project work plans for their respective areas, these plans should outline the various tasks being put forward and a timetable for their completion within a 12

month period. Project applications must be constituted as a Limited Company. A template will be forwarded to all groups who wish to apply with a proposal. It should be noted, where a group is not registered as a limited company, they should link up with a local community development company who is and in this way can ensure that some of the work they want completed is included within an action plan. Groups should also ensure that any works they propose to have completed by the scheme have relevant permission from local authorities, Dúchas and the legal owners of property where work is to be carried out etc.

For further information on the Rural Social Scheme please contact:

Team	Area Covered	Contact Number
Karen Guihen	Programme Co-ordinator	071-9641770 / karen@ldco.ie
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Alternatively, please contact:

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