

LEADER
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME 2023 - 2027

LEITRIM LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



LCDC

Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil Liatroma
Leitrim Local Community Development
Committee



Prepared for :
**Leitrim Local Community
Development Committee**

Prepared by :
Venture International Ltd



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council



Leitrim
DEVELOPMENT
company



The European Agricultural Fund
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1. The Rural Development LEADER Programme 2023-2027 (LEADER)

1.1 What is LEADER

LEADER is a key element of 'Our Rural Future', Rural Development Policy 2021-2025.

The LEADER approach is based on 7 specific principles:

1. A Bottom Up approach of community-led development [CLLD]
2. Area based local strategies
3. Integrated and multi-sector strategies
4. Local partnerships
5. Networking
6. Innovation
7. Co-operation

LEADER is co-funded under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development [EAFRD] through Ireland's CAP strategic plan. The programme aims to:

'Promote employment, growth, gender equality, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry'

1.2 Background to the LEADER Programme

The Department of Rural and Community Development [DRCD] is responsible for the implementation of the LEADER Programme. Pobal supports DRCD in the administration of a number of elements of the LEADER Programme.

Since its launch in 1991, LEADER has provided rural communities across the European Union with the resources to enable local partners to actively engage and direct the local development of their area, through community-led local development. The LEADER Programme aims to support the local development of Ireland's rural areas which, for the purposes of the programme, are defined as all parts of Ireland with the exception of the areas within the boundaries of the five main cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway.

The current programme [2023-2027] identifies a €180m investment supporting locally-led rural development and enterprise projects over the next five years.

There is €6.3 Million in LEADER funding available for Co Leitrim from 2023 to 2027. Leitrim Development Company on behalf of the LAG in collaboration with Leitrim County Council have developed the priorities and needs in the county for projects, proposals and ideas which will be funded under LEADER over the next 4 years.

1.3 2023-2027 Programme Themes

1	Economic Development & Job Creation
1a	▪ The 'Green Economy'
1b	▪ Agricultural diversity
1c	▪ Rural tourism & recreation
1d	▪ Enterprise Development
1e	▪ Rural Food Production
1f	▪ Social, Community & Co-operative enterprises
2	Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion
2a	▪ Rural infrastructure
2b	▪ Accessible services
2c	▪ Optimising digital connectivity
2d	▪ Rural youth
3	Sustainable development of rural environment and climate change mitigation and adaption
3a	▪ Sustainable development of rural environment
3b	▪ Climate change capacity building
3c	▪ Climate change mitigation and adaption

2. The Local Action Group & Governance Model

2.1 Organisation Details and Contacts

The Local Action Group [LAG] is made up of multiple members including: community representatives, social partners, statutory agencies, business interests. The delivery of the LEADER Programme will be led by the LAG and supported by two partners as follows

- The LAG, [LCDC] Leitrim Local Community Development Committee Leitrim County Council [LCC] Financial Partner
- Leitrim Integrated Development Company CLG [LDC] Implementing Partner

The primary contact for the LAG and LEADER programme is, Emer Connolly, Chief Officer LAG/ LCDC, Aras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

t. 071 962 0005

e. lcdc@leitrimcoco.ie

- The legal name for the LAG is:

Leitrim LAG/Leitrim Local Community Development Committee [LCDC],
Aras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim

- Tax Clearance Certificate Number: 00035121- 30449R

2.2 Details of the LAG

The LAG (LCDC) is an independent sub-committee of the Local Authority which was formally constituted in June 2016 in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001, as amended in January 2014 and has operated successfully since then, meeting monthly.

The work of the LAG is conducted on the basis of constructive co-operation between all LAG members and active participation based on a partnership approach. All members of the LAG have equal status. The LAG in Leitrim was established in 2016 and has functioned and operated successfully since then.

2.3 Composition of the LAG

The legislation and guidelines define the LAG [LCDC] composition. There are 17 members on the LAG. 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 LAG is outlined as follows:

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 Joseph Gilhooly	Interim CE, Leitrim County Council (LCC)
	Mr Joe Lowe	Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office.
	Cllr Paddy Farrell	Elected Rep. Carrick-on-Shannon MD
	Cllr Felim Gurn	Elected Rep. Manorhamilton MD
State Agencies – 2 Places Minimum Minimum 2 places	Cllr Thomas Mulligan	Elected Rep. Carrick-on-Shannon MD
	Mr James Keane	Teagasc, Regional Manager
	Mr Declan Doherty	Department of Social Protection (DSP)

representing public authorities with responsibilities for providing services to or within the administrative area of the committee	Ms Lorraine Sheridan	Health Service Executive (HSE)
Community sector - Members of the Committee include: A minimum of 2 persons representing community and voluntary (C&V) interests:	Mr Seamus Regan Ms Helen Doherty Harte	Elected by the PPN from the C&V college (Rep Leitrim Area) Elected by the PPN from the C&V college (Rep Ballinamore Area)
Community sector - a minimum of 2 persons representing social inclusion interests within the administrative area of the Committee.	Currently vacant awaiting appointment of new Rep. Previously held by a female Ms Margaret Hyland	Elected by the PPN from Social Inclusion College (Rep Intercultural Forum.) Elected by the PPN from Social Inclusion College (Rep. LAPWD / People with Disabilities)
Community sector - a minimum of 1 person representing environmental interests within the administrative area of the Committee	Currently vacant-recently vacated. Previously held by a female	Elected by the PPN Environmental Pillar
Community 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 Majella McGovern Mr Chris Gonley	Nominated by Family Resource Centres/Community Development Projects. (Rep. Mohill Family Resource Centre). Nominated by the Board of Leitrim Development Company (CEO)
Community 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	Mr Gerard McParlan Mr James Gallagher (Chairperson)	Nominated representing the Business pillar. Nominated by the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and representing the Farming Sector.

In relation to gender balance, the female representation of the LAG stands at 35% which is above the European target of 33% by 2027 (prior to recent resignations). The two recent resignations were females and the LAG will seek where possible females for these vacant roles. The LAG however endeavours to move towards 50% gender balance and intends to achieve this in the lifetime of the new programme. This will be achieved in two ways. Firstly, as part of a national campaign to increase accessibility for women to join boards throughout the Country. Secondly in situations whereby retirement or other vacancy arises, the request for new members from within the pillar must, where possible, provide a female representative.

Membership is reviewed every 3 years [as set out in the LAG Operating/Procedures Manual] and consistent with LCDC standing orders and actioned by the Local Authority.

2.3.1 Processes and 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 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.

The LAG has established a Rural Development Operational Committee [RDOC] which is a partnership working group [subcommittee] of the LAG with three representatives from the LAG [the decision making LAG], three from Leitrim County Council [the Financial Partner] and three from Leitrim Development Company [the 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 and makes recommendations, presents information and options to the LAG.

The RDOC will also discuss, formulate, drafts all LAG policies, procedures etc. as appropriate and as directed by the LAG and makes recommendations so that the LAG can make considered decisions. A list of key procedures/policies of the LAG 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 are detailed in the LAG Procedures Manual. The roles and responsibilities of the partners will form part of the Service Level Agreements between the LAG and each of the partners. Figure 2.1 below represents the structures and various information and decision pathways which the Leitrim LAG has adopted to ensure smooth development of the LDS and implementation, delivery and oversight of the RDP 2023-2027.

2.4 Roles and Responsibilities [LAG, LCC, LDC, RDOC, IEC]

2.4.1 Leitrim Local Action Group [LAG, Leitrim Local Community Development Committee]

The primary role of the LAG 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.

2.4.2 Leitrim County Council [LCC, Financial Partner]

- LCC will be responsible for the overall administrative and financial management of the LAG
- LCC will account for the budget and finances of the programme
- Responsibility for maintaining and retaining records of all financial aspects of the programme and provision of an audit trail for each project and ensuring projects payments are correct and up to date

- The Chief Officer [and supporting staff] will assist the LAG and manage the business of the LAG [LCDC]
- LCC will provide administrative and secretariat support to the LAG including arranging and accommodating LAG meetings drafting and circulating minutes and agendas, notifications of information and documentation to the LAG members, etc.
- LCC will also be responsible for the preparation of Local Authority policy and position papers and for organisational and support activities for the LAG

A summary of the financial partner's role, is as follows:

- Providing advance administration and animation funding to the implementing partner
- Approving the issuing of contracts following Article 48 administrative checks
- Making payments to promoters on behalf of the LAG
- Requesting monthly drawdown of monies from DRCD
- 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

2.4.3 Leitrim Development Company [Implementing Partner]

- LDC and the LAG have extensive experience in implementing and delivering the LEADER Programme [2007-2022] and other EU and national funding programmes
- LDC will promote the LEADER programme and animate the various sectors and communities and potential applicants / beneficiaries across the county
- LDC will make applications to the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 on behalf of sector target groups or the county as a whole for projects which are beneficial including A&D, Training etc
- LDC will be responsible for all expressions of interest, project development, project level monitoring, animation, administering all projects, calls for proposals, applications, assessments, presenting projects to the evaluation and the LAG, processing claims and acting as the main communication point for the programme
- LDC will facilitate and provide administration support for the Evaluation Committee.
- LDC will present the Independent Evaluation Committee recommendations to the LAG
- LDC will provide administration and facilitate the RDOC meetings and minutes, etc
- LDC will have responsibility for the implementation and successful conclusion of the programme on behalf of the LAG
- LDC manages its own staff who will work on all aspects of the programme implementation

2.4.4 Rural Development Operational Committee [RDOC]

The Rural Development Operational Committee [RDOC] is a partnership working group [subcommittee] of the LAG with three representatives from the LAG, three from Leitrim County Council [Financial Partner] and three from Leitrim Development Company [Implementing Partner].

The RDOC which has operated successfully through LEADER 2014-2022, is supported by staff from the LAG; Leitrim County Council and Leitrim Development Company. This Rural Development Operational Committee will report directly to the LAG and makes recommendations, presents information and options to the LAG

The RDOC will also discuss, formulate, agree and draft all LAG policies, procedures etc. as appropriate and as directed by the LAG so that the LAG can make considered decisions. The RDOC will support the LAG in its role in the LEADER Programme 2023-2027

2.4.5 Independent Evaluation Committee [IEC]

The Independent Evaluation Committee [IEC] established in 2016 is 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 LEADER 2023-2027. The Committee has representation across the various pillars including community and voluntary, social inclusion, business and the environment. The Independent Evaluation Committee also has expertise that includes:

- Financial
- Project planning
- Project management
- Governance
- Business development

The committee has a range of sectoral expertise in keeping with the project themes set out in Section 5 of this strategy. The sectoral skills required will include:

- Environmental
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Farm diversification
- Youth
- Enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Community capital projects
- Finance
- Grant funding
- Project development and management

The independent evaluation committee will be reconstituted for the 2023-2027 programme period and will follow a similar Terms of Reference and operation to that in the 2014-2022 programme which was very successful. This will be agreed by the LAG in advance of accepting the first application and will operate in accordance with the LAG procedures manual DRCD Operating Rules and the European Commission regulations.

2.5 Procedures and Control Documents

The LAG has developed an active procedures manual which includes a comprehensive list of operating documents which has successfully guided and supported the management of the LEADER programme and its delivery since 2016, including:

- [1] Organisation structures
- [2] Project processing
- [3] Claim approval stages LEADER ICT System
- [4] Transparency procedures
- [5] Inspection procedures
- [6] Appeals procedures
- [7] Financial procedures

These documents are continuously updated in line with Departmental circulars, changes to the programme operating rules and other items concerned with programme operating amendments. This process will continue in the 2023-2027 programme.

The LAG also delegates specific responsibilities to the Implementing and Financial partners. These responsibilities are captured in a draft Service Level Agreement which will update the previous Service Level Agreement used in the 2014-2020 Programme.

2.6 Management and Staffing Management

2.6.1 Leitrim LAG Management Structure

The LAG management and staffing structures for LEADER 2023-2027 will bring forward the successful partnership which has delivered for LEADER 2014-2020, EURI and 2021-2022 Transitional Programme. The success of the Partnership was evident as Leitrim LAG was one of the top ten performing LAGs in the 2014-2020 programme and was awarded an additional €500,000 in funding in 2019.

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 LAG. These roles are fully funded from the resources of Leitrim County Council in their statutory role in supporting the LAG. 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.

Name	Role
Interim Chief Executive	Joseph Gilhooly
Chief Officer	Emer Connolly

The LAG management and staffing structures are as follows;

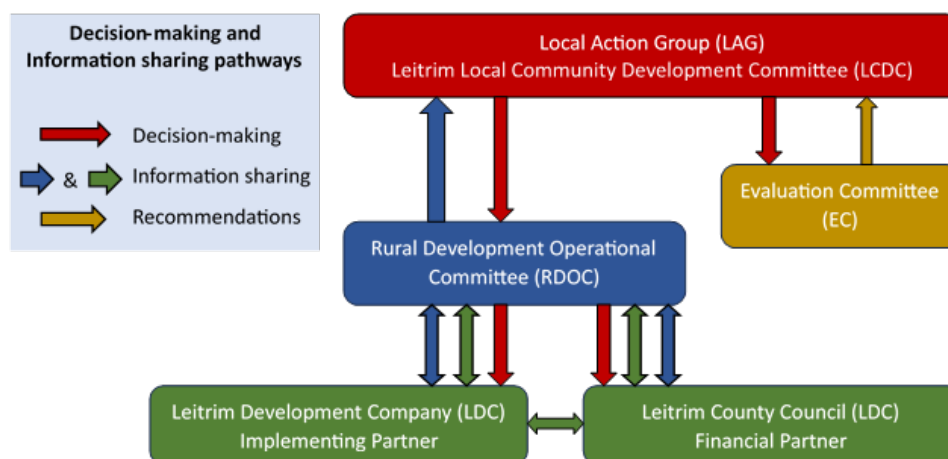


Figure 2.1 - Infographic: Leitrim LAG Programme Management, Staffing & Reporting Structure

2.6.2 Implementing Partner Staffing Structure

The staff team of the implementing partner equates to 4.81 FTE (Full Time Equivalent including 10 individual staff in various roles), Leitrim Development Company will deliver the RDP LEADER 2023-2027 Programme. Figure 2.2 below illustrates the planned staff resources.

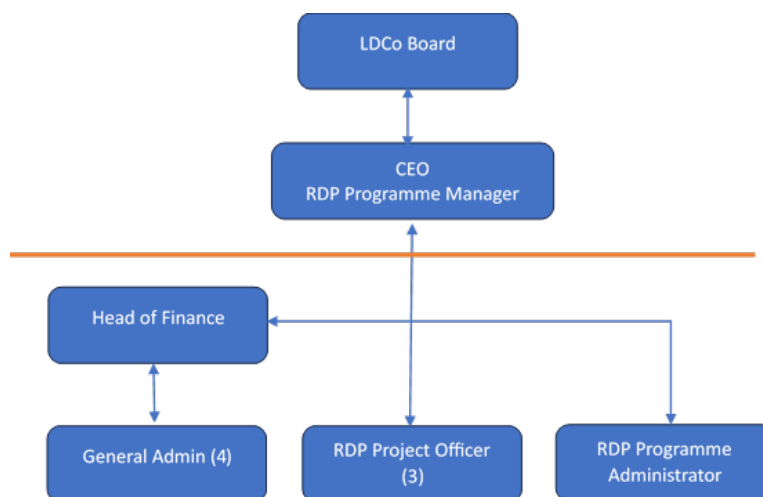


Figure 2.2 - Infographic: Leitrim Development Company Implementing Partner Structure specific to the RDP Programme

In Leitrim Development Company, the CEO is responsible for the management of the company and all of its functions and this will include the delivery (implementation functions) of the RDP LEADER 2023-2027. Day to day management and co-ordination of the RDP LEADER programme will also be carried out by the CEO in conjunction with the project officers and administration staff. Financial Control and Company Secretarial functions are the responsibility of the Head of Finance, who reports to the CEO and the Board. The SLA Contract for implementation functions of the RDP Programme 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 Head of Finance, who will be assisted by other (RDP) administration staff. For purposes of internal management, the company has an executive committee, which is comprised of board members, with delegated responsibility for dealing with personnel, procedures and financial issues. The Table below outlines the staff that will work on the RDP 2023-2027 and in many cases their time and pay will be apportioned to the RDP. Timesheets recording their activity will be retained for verification purposes. The job descriptions for these RDP staff members are outlined in the appendices.

Name	Role	Direct Experience in RDP	Role Numbers as per Financial Plan (Appendix 11)
Chris Gonley	CEO	22 years	Role 1
Paddy Beirne	Head of Finance	3 years	Role 2
Brian Smyth	Project Officer	15 years	Role 3
James Duffy	Project Officer	18 years	Role 4
Ashling Cartwright	Project Officer	14 years	Role 4
Trish Gilchriest	RDP Programme Administrator	5 years	Role 5
Sharon Casey	RDP Administrator	15 years	Role 6
Andrea Fox	Compliance Officer	6 years	Role 7
Roisin McKenna	RDP Administrator	>1 year	Role 8
Nanette Jameson	RDP Administrator	>1 year	Role 9

In relation to the experience of direct programme staff this is detailed below;

CEO (Role 1): Involved in Leader Project development and management since 2001 in Sligo and Leitrim. Worked on the successful implementation of each of the different LEADER programmes since then in project development and management. Has taken part in co-operation, Transnational and Interterritorial LEADER Projects.

Head of Finance (Role 2): Has a degree in Accountancy, Diploma in Forensic Accounting and ACCA qualified accountant with 12 years' experience. Manages a team of RDP administrators including payroll, finance and compliance officer. Responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisations finances, with annual funding of almost €5 million across multiple projects, from various funding streams.

Project Officer (Role 3): Worked in rural and local development at development officer level and in senior management since 2001. Experience in project planning, development and project management. Previously programme manager for 12 years for Leitrim Development Company managing the delivery of the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 RDP LEADER Programme. Experienced in supporting and assisting project promoters, the RDOC, evaluation committee and LAG members to understand and comply with the programme rules, regulations and many requirements.

Project Officer (Role 4): With a degree in Mechanical Engineering, Masters in Manufacturing Systems and expertise in the implementation of Small Scale Renewable Technology having previously worked in the Northern Ireland Energy Agency. Directly involved in the delivery of the LEADER programme since 2005 and has specialised in energy projects throughout. As part of the 2014 – 2020 programme over half a million was allocated between 23 energy related projects in County Leitrim.

Project Officer (Role 4): Qualifications include Masters in Regional & Urban Planning, Masters in Geographical Analysis and further training in community development and training facilitation. Worked as an Animator and Project Officer on the three previous LEADER Programmes in Meath and Leitrim. Member of Leitrim Heritage Forum. Led on a number of strategic initiatives including Leitrim Recreation Forum, Biodiversity Strategy, etc. Previous experience of biodiversity projects having worked as a Heritage Project Worker within the local authority with responsibility for biodiversity projects.

RDP Administrator (Role 5): Administrator with Leitrim Development Company since 2012 with 5 years' experience on the LEADER programme. Experience in supporting and assisting Project Officers, reviewing application & claim documentation, organising Evaluation and RDOC meetings and preparing monthly LEADER returns.

2.6.3 Financial Partner Staffing Structure

Leitrim County Council as financial partner will nominate competent administration staff to provide supports for the programme and the LAG 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. Local authority staff will conduct all checks and sign off on the Article 48 checks.

Name	Role
Vincent Dwyer	Head of Finance
Michelle Reynolds	LAG Secretariate
Eilish McGovern	Article 48 Manager
Elizabeth Hanley	Article 48 Checker

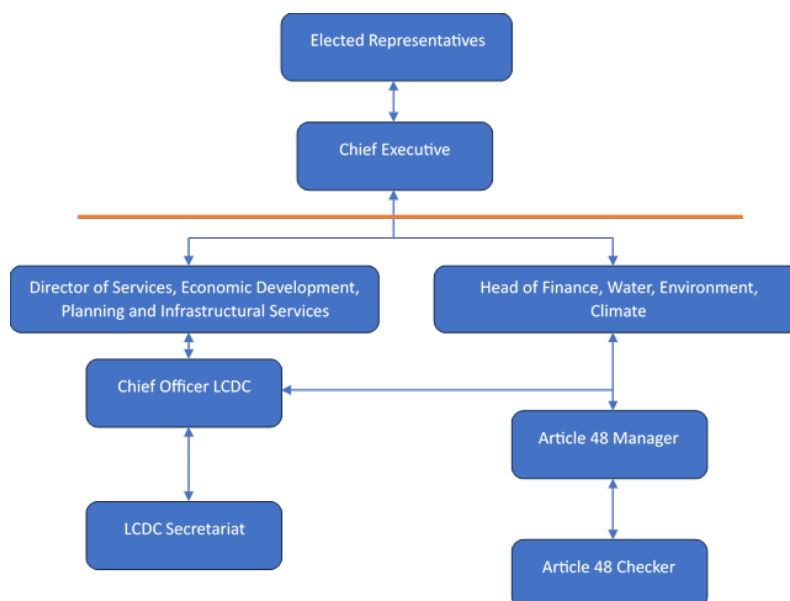


Figure 2.3 - Infographic: Leitrim County Council Financial Partner Structure specific to the RDP Programme

2.7 Management including Financial, Governance and Risk

2.7.1 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 DRCD/Pobal] to manage the programme. Leitrim County Council now has over five years' experience of using this system having implemented the LEADER Programme 2014-2022, the EURI and Transition LEADER programmes.

LCC 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.

LCC 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 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 LEADER Programme 2023-2027. The purpose of the LAG Procedures Manual is to comply with accreditation requirements as referenced in EU and Government Regulations and to guide the LAG 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.

2.7.1 Codes of Practice, Risk Management and Governance

The Board and staff of Leitrim Development Company have a longstanding record in the area of governance and corporate responsibility in accordance with the Guidelines on the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary, and Charitable Organisations in Ireland. The company conforms to the Ethics in Public Office Act, and a list of the main policies are available on request.

Within the company risk management is an ongoing process with risk assessments carried out at regular intervals. The company views it as particularly important as part of the planning/budgeting process. A Risk Register is in operation for the organisation and operated through the company intranet site.

2.7.2 RDP LEADER Procedures Manual

The Procedures Manual from the previous programme will be updated in line with the Operating Rules of the RDP LEADER programme 2023–2027. The purpose of the Procedures Manual is to comply with accreditation requirements as referenced in EU and Government Regulations and to guide the LAG on all relevant procedures in their decision making.

The manual, while subject to change from Governmental, Legislative or Practical Implementation Considerations, acts as the foundation stone for the operational actions of the LAG. All LEADER personnel will have an in-depth knowledge of this document and it will be updated annually at a minimum, and more regularly if required by Departmental or EU Circulars.

2.8 Project Eligibility, Selection Processes and Decision Making

The Project Eligibility, Selection and Decision-Making processes are as follows;

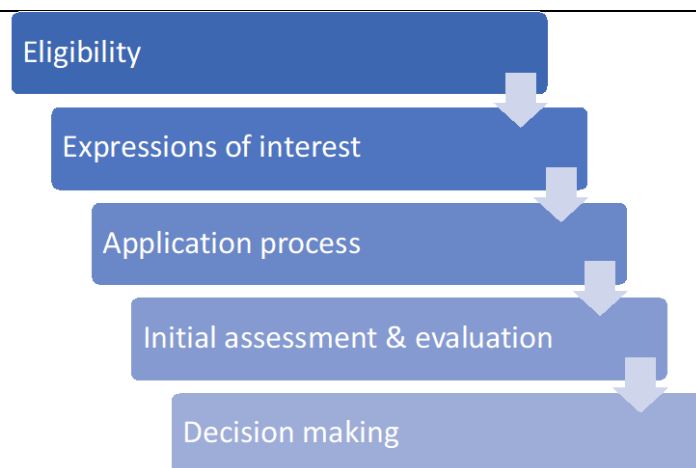


Figure 2.4 - Infographic: Decision making process flow

2.8.1 Eligibility

- The implementing partner will develop the eligibility criteria for the LEADER programme consistent with the operating rules of the programme
- Eligibility will be consistent with the themes set out for programme delivery
- Where applications are ineligible advice, guidance and signposting will be delivered to the promoter [it is recommended that this is recorded as a programme outcome]

2.8.2 Expressions of interest

- Each applicant will complete an 'expression of interest form' [Eoi] which will be reviewed by the implementing partner to determine eligibility
- All expressions of interest will be recorded and registered on the RDP IT system and reviewed at the LAG meeting

2.8.3 Application process

- Eligible projects with completed Eoi forms will proceed to full application
- Applications [where necessary] will be supported with advisory workshops delivered by the LDC
- Where possible, animation work will build the capability and capacity of groups to facilitate the application process
- The RDP delivery team should declare any conflict of interest regarding wider involvement in any application

2.8.4 Initial Assessment and Evaluation

- An evaluation assessment report will be completed on every application received which is sent to the evaluation committee members in advance of their meetings
- Recommendations will be made by the LDC to the EC
- EC will undertake an independent appraisal function and will make recommendations to the LAG via use of an 'evaluation report'
- The evaluation report will address the viability of the project including assessment of project impacts [and challenges] against innovation, displacement, procurement, deadweight, funding, other financing, statutory approvals [e.g. planning]
- Projects with the greatest impacts will be prioritised which will be reflected in their scoring by the EC members
- The evaluation reports will include a clear project scoring including a detailed commentary to justify the project scores. Total scores will be calculated [from all members of the EC] and an average score awarded
- A project must score a minimum of 65% to be recommended for funding by the LAG
- The criteria for scoring will be developed by consultation through the RDOC and the Implementing Partner based on the experience of delivering the previous LEADER programme and on the operating rules.
- EC members should complete a 'register of interest' form annually and declare any project declaration of interest
- All EC recommendations to be signed and dated

2.8.5 Decision Making

- The LAG will make the final funding decision based on the recommendations and project scoring received from the Evaluation Committee
- The formal recommendations from the Evaluation Committee relating to all project applications will be brought before the LAG for their consideration
- The LAG will pay particular attention to the impacts of the project in delivering on the LDS and the requirements of the LEADER Programme
- The LAG minutes will indicate the criteria used to establish the amount and rate of aid offered and all other matters related to the project

What does this information tell us

- The Implementing Partner has experience of delivering the LEADER Programme since 2007 and the LAG has experiencing of managing the programme since 2016.
- There is significant experience across the delivery partners and familiarity with the LEADER programme, its purpose and the requirements for its effective delivery and management of LEADER 2023-2027
- The Evaluation Committee is already established and functioning and is experienced in evaluating and scoring LEADER projects.
- The Leitrim LAG and its partners have significant success in delivering previous iterations of LEADER and has an excellent track record
- Governance systems and procedures are clearly in place and operational – these systems are consistent with the requirements of LEADER and are fit for purpose

Looking forward, why is this relevant

- The LAG will consider ‘freshening’ the membership of the LAG to ensure it fully represents the target groups identified for the LEADER programme 2023-2027 and in attempting to reach gender balance
- There has been an influx of Ukrainian refugees to Leitrim [1,688 as of June 2023 (CSO 2023) into the County] since the last LEADER strategy – the LAG should consider how best to reflect this audience in structuring the delivery of the programme
- The LAG will a review of the Operating Procedures to ensure they are up to date and fully reflective of any changes to the operating rules of the new LEADER Programme 2023-2027

3 Area Profile

Leitrim is the 26th of the 32 counties by area (21st in size of the 26 counties of the Republic) and the smallest by population [35,199 as of 2022 (CSO 2022)]. It is the smallest of Connacht's five counties in both size and population. Leitrim is bordered by the counties of Donegal to the north, Fermanagh to the north-east, Cavan to the east, Longford to the south, Roscommon to the south-west and Sligo to the west. Fermanagh is in Northern Ireland while all the other neighbouring counties are within the Republic of Ireland.

Leitrim has a hilly and mountainous landscape in its northwest and is relatively flat in the southeast, each separated from the other by Lough Allen in the middle of the county. Leitrim has the shortest length of coastline of any Irish county that touches the sea. At Tullaghan, the coastline is only 4.7 kilometres (2.9 mi) long. The Shannon is linked to the Erne via the Shannon–Erne Waterway.

The most significant settlements are as follows:

Settlement	Population [2022 Census]
Ballinamore	1,112
Carrick-on-Shannon	4,743
Carrigallen	481
Dromahair	939
Drumkeeran	287
Dromod	753
Drumshanbo	1,240
Drumsna	268
Keshcarrigan	238
Kinlough	1,196
Leitrim	701
Manorhamilton	1,667
Mohill	1,027
Roosky	787
Tullaghan	293

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.

Further Leitrim fact include:

- 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. 4.7km] 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.

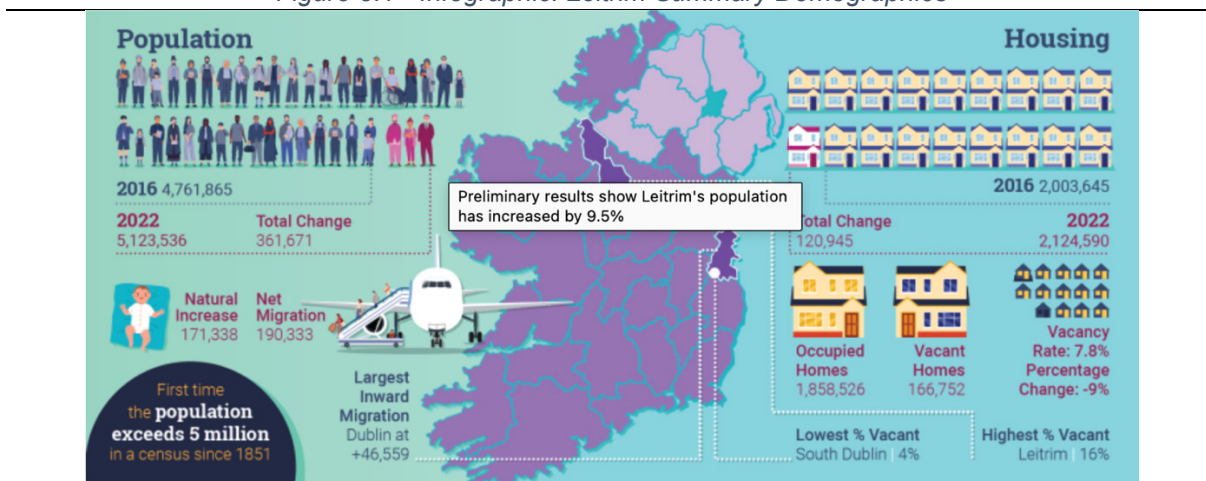
- The County is traversed by three main arterial routes- the N4, N16 and the N15. The Sligo to Dublin railway line runs through the southwest of the county serving Carrick on Shannon and Dromod.

Based on the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 Evaluation including EURI and Transitional funding and analysis of project location breakdown, 34 settlements in the county received LEADER Funding for 169 projects. A number of projects were countywide which included training and analysis and development projects. As almost 60% of the population of Leitrim live outside towns/population centres (Census 2022), almost every ED in Leitrim is classified as highly rural/remote (CSO 2019). Of the 42% of Leitrim population that live in towns/population centres, almost one third (or 13% of the overall population) live in the county town of Carrick on Shannon.

Of the three Municipal Districts in the county (see appendix 2), each district received over €1.8 million in LEADER funding under the 2014-2020 RDP LEADER Programme, however the Carrick on Shannon Municipal District received the least funding which includes the county town of Carrick on Shannon. The smaller more rural settlements in this municipal district include Rooskey, Dromod, Drumsna and Jamestown along with the larger town of Mohill. As a result, these settlements and their large rural hinterlands will be prioritised under the 2023-2027 programme. Carrick on Shannon has a population of 4,743 and Mohill 1,027 (Census 2022). Working with the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme, various capacity building training projects will be developed to target isolated rural groups and communities including target groups in these areas.

3.1 Overview and Summary of Socio-Economic Profile of County Leitrim

Figure 3.1 - Infographic: Leitrim Summary Demographics



Source: CSO

The 'Census 2022', 'City Population' and local demographic information [including the Socio-Economic Profile of the draft Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan] shows that the population of Leitrim grew by 10% to 35,199, which means the number of people in the county rose by 3,155 between April 2016 and April 2022. Over the same period, Ireland's population grew by 8% from 4,761,865 to 5,149,139.

Population – Males and Females

Of Leitrim's population, 17,646 were female and 17,553 were male, which means there were 99 males for every 100 females. In Ireland overall there were 2,604,590 females and 2,544,549 males or 98 males for every 100 females.

Population by Age

The average age of Leitrim's population in April 2022 was 40.7 years, compared with 39.8 years in April 2016. Nationally, the average age of the population was 38.8, up from 37.4 in April 2016.

The number of people aged 65 and over continues to grow. This age group increased by 22% to 6,573 in Leitrim, and by 22% to 776,315 at a national level since 2016.

Dual Irish Citizens

In Leitrim, the number of dual Irish citizens increased from 603 to 1,146 while non-Irish citizens accounted for 10% of the county's population. Nationally, dual Irish citizenship increased by 63% from 104,784 to 170,597 people and non-Irish citizens made up 12% of the population.

Health

In 2022, 83% of people in Leitrim stated that their health was good or very good compared with 86% in 2016. This is a similar trend to the national figures, which showed a 4% decrease in the good/very good categories, from 87% to 83%.

Employment

There were 14,816 people [aged 15 and over] at work in Leitrim, an increase of 2,088 people [+16%] between 2016 and 2022. Nationally, there were 313,656 additional people [+16%] at work.

Working From Home

In Leitrim, 4,079 people [aged 15 and over] worked from home at least one day a week in 2022. This represented 28% of the workforce. The national figure was 32%.

Childcare

This was a new question for Census 2022. There were 7,161 children aged 15 and under in Leitrim in April 2022. Of these, 2,648 [37%] were in childcare, compared with 33% nationally.

Tenure

In 2022, in Leitrim 71% of households owned their own home, with a further 22% renting. This compared with 66% of households owning their home nationally and 28% renting.

3.2 Socio Economic Analysis

Consideration of the socio economic position has been undertaken against the following 5 factors.



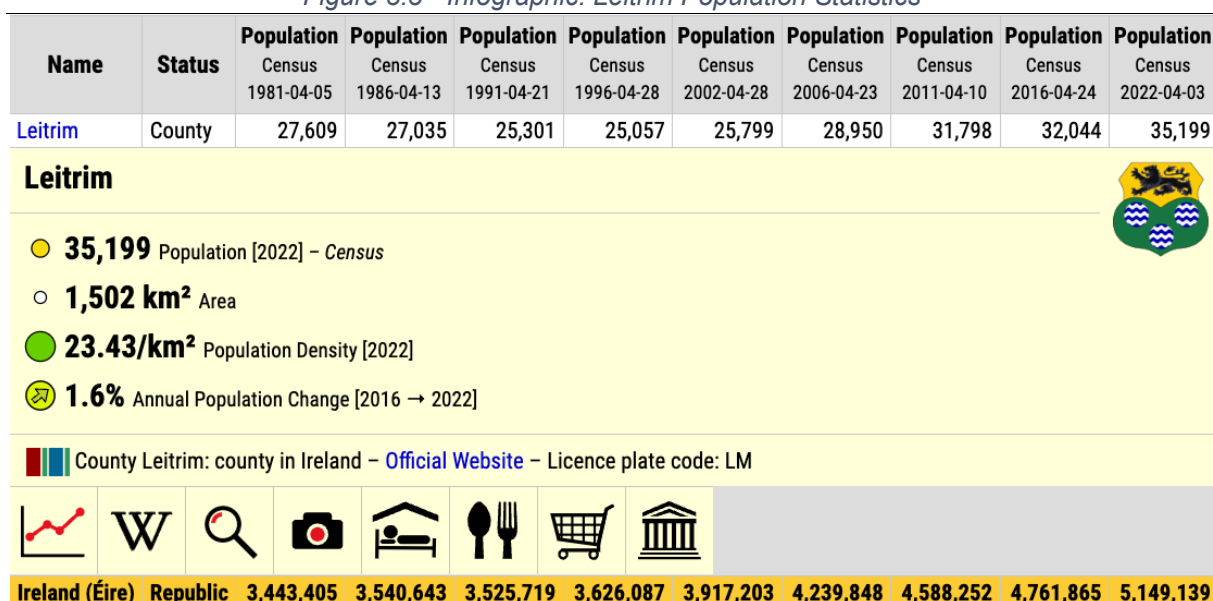
Figure 3.2 - Infographic: Area Profile Factors

3.2.1 Population

- The population figure recorded by County Leitrim in 2022 represents a fifth consecutive increase in the population since 1996.
- The population of Leitrim County represents less than 1% of the total state population but 2022 marks an increase in this percentage after a decrease in 2016.
- Net migration was the primary driver of population growth for Leitrim, the region and the state. The net migration rate for Leitrim in 2022 was 11 per 1000 which was more than the rate of natural increase of 4 per 1000.
- In the case of the state and the region, the net migration figure is largely composed of females [50.6%]. The net migration rate for Leitrim was equally distributed with females at 50.1% and males at 49.9% accounting for those migrating to the county.
- The population composition by gender is similar for the state, region and the county; with females and males composing approximately 50% of the population.
- The largest age cohort in Leitrim is shared with the 0 – 9 and the 40 – 49 age cohorts both accounting for 14.4% and 14.2% of the population in 2016, respectively. Therefore, these two age cohorts collectively account for 28.6% of the population in Leitrim.
- The smallest age cohort in Leitrim as of 2016 was the 84 and over age cohort with only 4.3% of the county’s population falling within this age group.
- Between 2011 and 2016 the largest growth recorded by an age cohort was the 50 – 59 group, with a growth rate of 19.4%. Conversely, the age cohort with lowest growth rate between 2011 and 2016 was the 20 – 29 group that decreased by 21.1%.
- In 2016, Leitrim’s population was largely consistent of Irish nationals at 87.6% of the population. The largest grouping of foreign nationals was those from the UK which accounted for 4.7% of the county’s population.
- In 2016, Leitrim’s urban population grew to 11.6%. Carrick-on-Shannon was the most populous settlement in the county with 4,062 inhabitants and Dromod was the fastest growing settlement with a growth rate of 28.5%.
- The average annual population growth rate between 2011 and 2022 was 0.6%, if that annual rate of growth is continued the population of Leitrim could grow to over 41,000 by 2050.
- The population of the key settlements in Leitrim is set out on P.27

Seven Electoral Districts [EDs] in Leitrim recorded a population growth rate over 20%. Conversely, only one ED experienced a decrease in population of 20%. There is a concentration of population growth to the south, with four of seven EDs with a growth rate of over 20% located in the southern half of the county

Figure 3.3 - Infographic: Leitrim Population Statistics

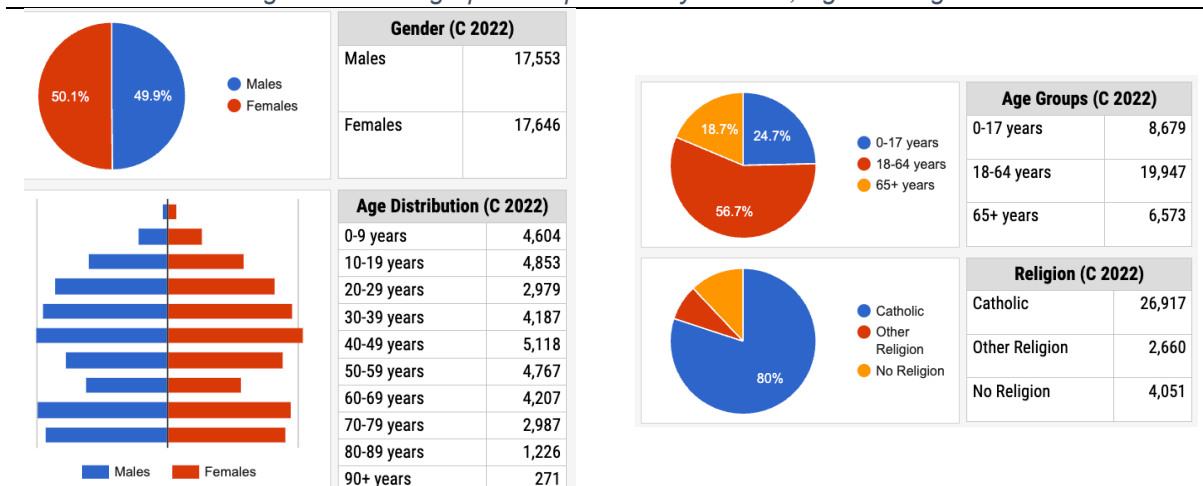


Source: CSO

3.2.2 Housing

- Leitrim’s housing stock stood at 18,657 in 2022. This figure marks a return to growth after a decrease in the housing stock figure between 2011 and 2016.
- The housing stock figure for Leitrim accounts for 0.88% of the total housing stock of Ireland.

Figure 3.4 - Infographic: Population by Gender, Age & Religion

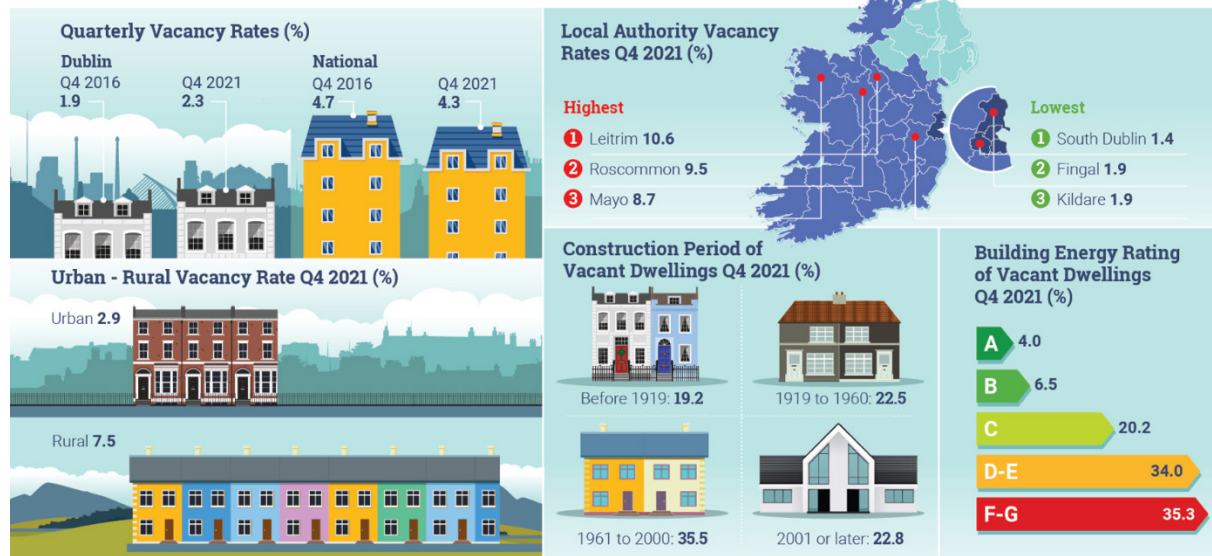


Source: CSO

- Both the region at 4.2% and County Leitrim at 3.4% are lagging behind the national growth rate in housing stock [6.0%] for the period between 2016 and 2022.
- The housing stock growth rate of 3.4% for Leitrim between 2016 and 2022 is a marked improvement when compared to the -0.6% for the period between 2011 and 2016.
- In 2022, Leitrim’s housing stock vacancy rate stood at 16.1% and was the highest vacancy rate in Ireland. Leitrim’s vacancy rate is 6.3% more than the national vacancy rate of 9.8% and 3.3% more than the regional vacancy rate of 12.8%.
- The 2022 vacancy rate recorded for Leitrim marks a third consecutive decrease in the vacancy rate for the county, having halved the vacancy rate of almost 29.1% in 2011 to 16.1% in 2022.
- The top 5 reasons for vacancy during the 2022 Census in Leitrim were “Deceased” [21.4%], “Rental Property” [19.9%], “Farmhouse” [16.9%], “Renovation” [12.5%], “Other Reason” [9.8%]. The top three reasons account for 58.2% of the reason for vacancy provided.
- 35% of the 2016 housing stock was built between 2001 and 2010 in Leitrim. However, only 1.7% of the 2016 housing stock was built after 2011.
- The home ownership figures in Leitrim align with that of the state and the region with 36.7% of the homes in Leitrim owned by the occupier with no mortgage owed on the property.
- There was little change in the ownership rates for the county between 2011 and 2016, however, there was a decrease of 2.5% in group categorised as “owner occupied with mortgage”.

The high rate of growth recorded between 2016 and 2022 for the population figures was not replicated for the housing stock figures. This was the case for Ireland as a whole, the region and County Leitrim

Figure 3.5 - Infographic: Vacancy Rates



Source: CSO

3.2.3 Economy

- The top three economic industries in 2016 were “Professional Services” [25.1%], “Commerce and Trade” [18.7%], and “Manufacturing Industries” [11.5%].
- In comparison the share for “Professional Services” and “Manufacturing Industries” at state level was 23.5% and 11.4%, and at the regional level it was 24.7% and 13.8%. However, for “Commerce and Trade” at state level this industry accounts for 23.9% which is 5.2% more than in Leitrim [18.7%].
- Between 2011 and 2016, the movement toward a diversified economy in Leitrim intensified with a three percent increase in workers active within “Other” industries and a decrease of one percent of workers active in the “Professional Services”, “Commerce and Trade”, “Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing”, and “Public Administration” industries.
- Employment activity was equally split by gender across economic industries in 2016. However, there were certain industries that were dominated by either females or males.
- Females were most prevalent in the Professional Services [75.8%] and Public Administration [55.8%]. While males were most active within the Building and Construction [96.4%]; Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing [91.9%], Transport and Communication [78.1%]; and Manufacturing Industries [71.9%].
- The results from the 2020 Business Demography highlight that the majority [95.1%] of enterprises in County Leitrim employ less than 10 people. The large percentage of small businesses underlines the importance of SMEs and micro enterprises to the economic livelihood of County Leitrim.
- Between 2012 - 2019, national disposable income per person rose from €18,273 to €22,032. Disposal income per person for Leitrim County in 2019 was €19,361 which was higher than the figure for the region at €19,147 but lower than the figure for the state.
- Disposable income per person for Leitrim increased every year since 2015, with the largest jump in disposable income per person of 7.9% recorded for the period between 2016 [€17,126] and 2017 [€18,483].
- Leitrim had the fourth highest business vacancy rate at 16.9% as reported in the GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report Q2 of 2022. However, the business vacancy rate in Leitrim decreased by 0.2% between Q2 2021 [17.1%] and Q2 2022 [16.9%].

The “Professional Services” sector is the most prevalent economic activity in Leitrim and is evenly distributed throughout the county. The Socio-economic profile of the draft Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan [November 2022] identifies there is a concentration of “Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing” in the south east of the county.

3.2.4 Community

- 45% of Leitrim’s population aged 15 and over have completed some form of tertiary education. This is slightly above the region [44.8%] but below that of the state [48.1%].
- The most prevalent category for tertiary qualifications obtained in Leitrim are within the fields of social sciences, business and law.
- 56.4% of people in Leitrim classified themselves as in Very Good Health which is slightly below both the region [57.9%] and the state [59.4%]. Furthermore 28.7% of people classified themselves as being in Good Health which is the same as the region and slightly higher than that of the state [27.6%]. However, those classed as being in Good or Very Good Health [85.1%] is below that of the region [86.6%] and state [87%]. It should also be noted that these figures do not reflect the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic which could possibly adversely affect physical and mental health of the county.
- Leitrim had a lower incidence rate of COVID-19 than the region and state during 2020 and 2021.
- Due to the war in Ukraine, as of November 2022, just short of 60,000 Ukrainians arrived in Ireland, of them 15,161 arrived in the Northern and Western region and of them 1,688 arrived in Leitrim. This represents 4.8% of Leitrim’s population. This may increase pressure on the provision of key services in the county and work should be done to ensure that the necessary capacity is available.
- The POBAL Deprivation Index Score for the County in 2016 was -3.18, which is lower than the state [-1.74] and region [-2.84] and classes the county as “marginally below average”.
- Leitrim’s 2016 POBAL Deprivation Index Score is lower than the scores recorded in 2006 [-1.95] and 2011 [-2.57] but the county’s classification as “marginally below average” affluence has remained the same. This deterioration in the deprivation score can be seen to align with the downturn following the financial crisis and may have improved since 2016 given the then continued recovery of the economy [results are yet to be released].
- The POBAL Deprivation Index Score for Elector Divisions [EDs] indicate that 78.1% of EDs in Leitrim are categorised as “marginally below average” and “disadvantaged” compared to the 21.9% EDs classified as “marginally above average”.
- Since 2017, the crime statistics for the Sligo/Leitrim Garda Division followed the downward trend for the state and the region. The Sligo/Leitrim Garda Division recorded a drop in total crimes committed for 2020 and 2021 by -15.1% and -2.6%, respectively.

Electoral Divisions [EDs] classed as “marginally below average” were evenly distributed throughout the county. There was a concentration of EDs classed as “marginally above average” to the north of the county. The majority of EDs classed as “disadvantaged” were located to the south of the county

Figure 3.6 - Infographic: Example of Community Engagement

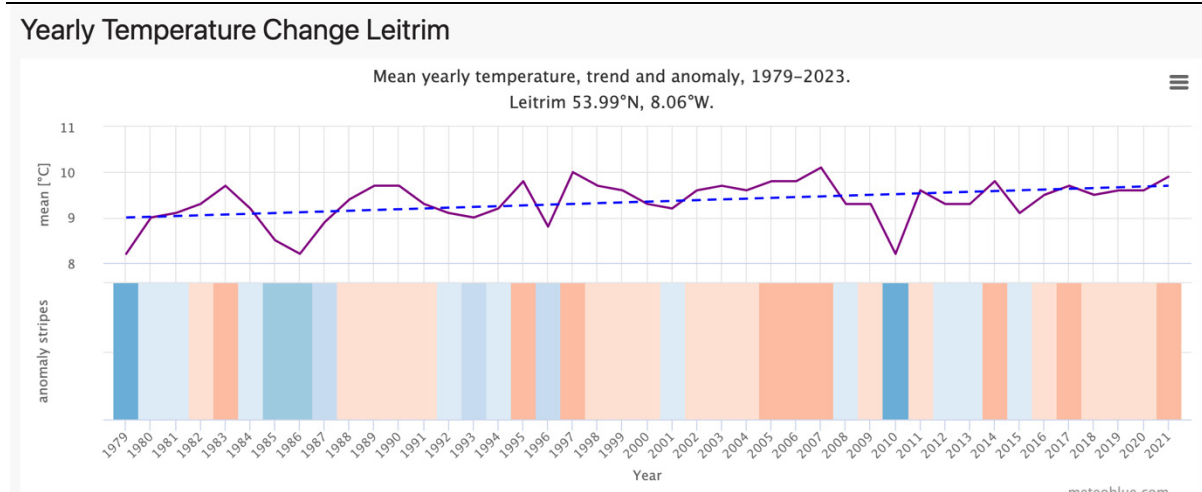


Source: Leitrim Sports Partnership

3.2.5 Environment

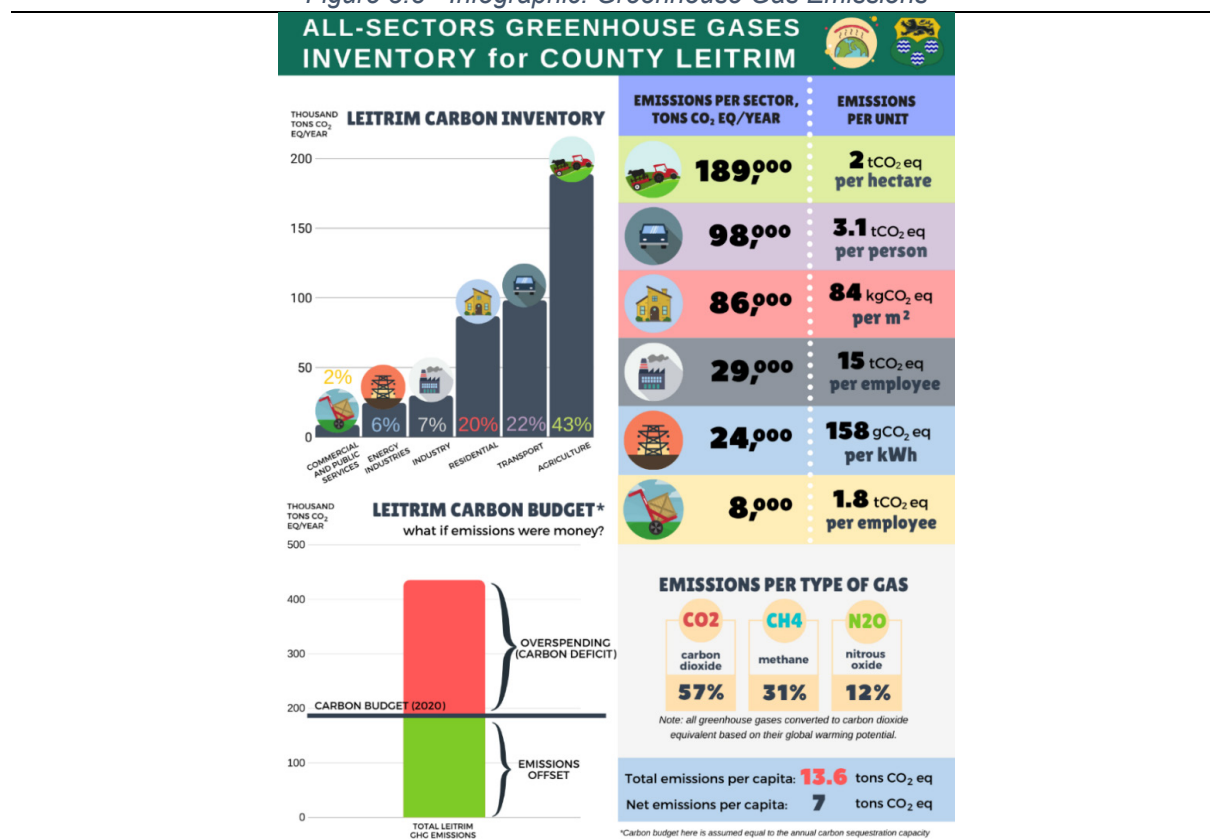
- Data from the SEAI, highlights that no small area in the county has a median Building Energy Rating [BER] rating of B2 or higher [i.e., the most energy efficient buildings]. The general spatial trend in the data shows that high BER ratings are located in and around settlements and lower BER ratings situated in rural areas.
- In Leitrim, residential buildings account for almost 50% of the total average energy demand for heating.
- The most prevalent source for heating in Leitrim is oil, with source of heating representing more than 60% of the total for the county and the region.
- For Ireland as a whole there is a split between oil and natural gas, as these two sources of heating accounts for almost three quarters of the total share. Just over 6% of households in Leitrim use electricity for heating, with the exception of the Electoral Division [ED] of Carrick-on-Shannon where electricity is the primary source for heating.
- In 2022, the County had a total of 13 wind and 1 hydro electricity generators with a total installed capacity of 93 MW. The total installed capacity for Ireland is 4,304 MW, therefore, Leitrim contributes approximately 2% of the total installed capacity of wind and hydro generator connections in Ireland. For the state, the number of wind connections dropped from 35 in 2017 to 2 in 2022 and similarly, for Leitrim, there hasn't been any new wind farm connections since 2017.
- Approximately 65% of those commuting to work in Leitrim are car drivers while only 8% of commuters make use of sustainable modes of transport. This tendency toward private car transport is slightly higher than the region which is approximately 64% but almost 7% above the state figure of 58%.
- Between 2011 and 2016, the percentage of commuters “working at or mainly from home” grew from 0% to 4%.
- Between 2020 and 2021, the number of new electric vehicles sold in Leitrim increased by 133% from 12 to 28 electric vehicles. This figure is below the percentage increase recorded for the region and the state where new electric vehicle sales increased by 205% and 176%, respectively.
- As of November 2022, there are 8 public EV charging stations in the county funded as part of the RDP 2014-2022.
- The County Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2027 has recently been published and raises awareness of biodiversity amongst individuals and communities by providing support, guidance and encouragement to engage with biodiversity through education and practical conservation participation.
- The effects of climate change are visible with increasing air temperatures, rising air temperatures and more frequent weather extremes including heat waves, droughts, floods and storms. In Leitrim, the mean yearly temperature has risen by almost one degree since 1979 [Source: Metroblue.com]

Figure 3.7 - Infographic: Leitrim: Yearly Temperature Change



Leitrim along with the rest of Ireland is facing a climate crisis. The median BER rating per small area from the SEAI shows that Leitrim has very few buildings with a BER rating of B2 and above. More than a third of small areas have a median BER of D1 and D2

Figure 3.8 - Infographic: Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Source: GEAI 2019

3.3 Deprivation

The new LEADER Programme 2023-2027 will also support projects which target the most deprived areas in the county and this has been outlined in Section 5- Action Plan of the LDS. Below is a synopsis of the most deprived areas in the county;

3.3.1 Absolute Deprivation

Leitrim is part of the Border Region which is the most disadvantaged region of Ireland, with an absolute deprivation of -8.1 in 2016. Leitrim's absolute deprivation score in 2016 was -7.1, approximately double the national average.

3.3.2 Relative Deprivation at ED Level

Leitrim is not characterised by particular extremes in affluence or deprivation at the level of Electoral Divisions (ED). Of the 73 EDs the majority (42) are marginally below average relative deprivation, while 31 are marginally above average. The most disadvantaged areas are Kiltyclogher, Greaghglass, Mohill, Carrigallen East, Drumreilly South, Riverstown and Yugan, all with relative deprivation scores below -10. The more affluent areas are Munakill, Cashel, Aghacashel, Leitrim village and Glenboy, all with relative deprivation scores above 3. The relatively less deprived ED areas of the county are around Carrick-on-Shannon and Dromahair.

3.3.3 Relative Deprivation at Small Area Level

Leitrim has one Small Area which includes McDermott Terrace Estate in Manorhamilton, categorised as “very disadvantaged”. It has 27 Small Areas categorised as “disadvantaged”. Three of these are in Carrick-on-Shannon, six in Mohill, two in Drumshanbo and the remainder in Drumkeeran, Carrigallen East, Kiltyclogher, Garadice, Greaghglass/Stralongford, Belhavel, Manorhamilton, Cloone, Yugan, Gubacreeny, Kinlough, Keshcarrigan, Drumreilly South, Riverstown, and Yugan. In 2016, the total population in Leitrim living in either very disadvantaged or disadvantaged small areas is 4,614 or 14% of the population.

3.4 Key Services

Leitrim County Council
Leitrim County Council is the Authority responsible for Local Government in County Leitrim. The corporate headquarters are located at Áras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim and there are three Municipal Districts Ballinamore, Carrick on Shannon, Manorhamilton. Leitrim County Council provides a diverse range of services across a large geographic area. Key services areas include Planning, Local Enterprise Office, Community, Economic Development, Transportation, Tourism, Motor Taxation, Water, Environment, Emergency Services along with Housing, Libraries and the Arts.
Leitrim Development Company (LDC)
Leitrim Development Company is a community led Local Development Company. The LDC delivers a range of rural, social and economic programmes at local level across County Leitrim and supports communities, individuals and businesses to increase their economic sustainability and improve their quality of life.
Teagasc
Teagasc is the state agency providing research, advisory and education in agriculture, horticulture, food and rural development in Ireland. Leitrim is part of the Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal advisory region
Public Participation Network (PPN)
Leitrim Public Participation Network [PPN] is an independent network of community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental organisations, working to build a better county for the community of Leitrim. The PPN is managed by voluntary Secretariat which reports to PPN members through the Plenary.
Fáilte Ireland
Fáilte Ireland has tourism responsibility for Ireland. In Leitrim, this is specific to current developments including the Shannon Masterplan, the Bears Breifne Way, the Web Improvement Programme, Destination Towns and Platforms for Growth Investment Programme.
Enterprise Ireland
Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. We work in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales in global markets.
Western Development Commission
Promotes social and economic development in the Western region of Ireland including the Counties of Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare.
Health Service Executive
The Health Service Executive is the publicly funded healthcare system in Ireland, responsible for the provision of health and personal social services.
Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim Education and Training Board [MSLETB]
MSLETB provides a wide range of educational services to around 30,000 students and learners on an annual basis across the counties of Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim. MSLETB’s educational and training provision includes second-level schools, further education colleges and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes, Post Leaving Certificate Courses [PLCs], Youthreach centres, Outdoor Education, Youth Services, Music Generation, Apprenticeships and Traineeships.

TUSLA

The Child and Family Agency is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. It represents the most comprehensive reform of child protection, early intervention and family support services ever undertaken in Ireland.

Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North/South Implementation Bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement of 1998. It is the cross-border navigational authority responsible for the management, maintenance, development and promotion of over 1000 km of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes. Specific to Leitrim, this includes a remit for the Shannon-Erne Waterway.

The Heritage Council

Established under The Heritage Act 1995, the Heritage Council is a public body whose mission is to develop a wide understanding of the vital contribution that our heritage makes to our social, environmental & economic well-being.

National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS]

The role of National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] is:

- To secure the conservation of a representative range of ecosystems to maintain and enhance populations of flora and fauna in Ireland.
- To 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] having particular regard to the need to consult with interested parties.

Office of Public Works [OPW]

The Office of Public Works [OPW] is an Irish government office whose primary function is to support the implementation of government policy. The OPW advises the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Minister of State at that department, principally in the disciplines of property [including heritage properties] and flood risk management.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Inland Fisheries Ireland protects, manages and conserves Ireland's fisheries and sea angling resources.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland [SEAI]

SEAI is Ireland's national sustainable energy authority. We work with householders, businesses, communities and government to create a cleaner energy future.

SOLAS

SOLAS is the further education and training authority in Ireland responsible for funding, planning and coordinating training and further education programmes.

Department of Social Protection

The Department of Social Protection is a department of the Government of Ireland, tasked with administering Ireland's social welfare system. It oversees the provision of income support and other social services.

What does this information tell us

Population

- Leitrim has a growing population with 7 EDs with significant population growth of over 20%
- There is an even gender balance within the County population
- Ageing population with the over 65 age cohort growing
- The 0-9 age group has the highest population in the County
- 28% of the population are working from home
- Population projections suggest Leitrim could grow to a population of c.41,000 by 2050

Housing

- Housing stock has grown moderately [below the National rate]
- Leitrim has the highest housing stock vacancy rate in Ireland [16.1%]

Economy

- Leitrim is an SME economy with 95.1% of employment within organisations employing less than 10 persons
- Leitrim has the fourth highest business vacancy rate Nationally [16.9%]
- The ‘Professional Services’ sector is dominant with other concentrations in ‘Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing’
- The Leitrim Hive and Drumshanbo Food Hub are successful examples of good practice

Community

- 45% of the population [over 15 years] have availed of tertiary education – this is below the national level [48%]
- 54% of the population identify as having very good health – this is below the National level [59%]
- There have been 1,688 new Ukrainian migrants settled in the County
- In deprivation terms, the County is marginally below average

Environment

- Leitrim along with the rest of Ireland is facing a climate crisis.
- The median BER rating per small area from the SEAI shows that Leitrim has very few buildings with a BER rating of B2 and above.
- More than a third of small areas have a median BER of D1 and D2

Looking forward why is this relevant

- Population growth indicates an increasing need for services particularly for the over 65 age group
- There is an increasing level of employment based from home which presents challenges for digital connectivity
- If housing stock levels do not increase in line with population growth, there will be a requirement to address the high levels of domestic housing vacancy rates
- Increasing levels of females working and an economy dependent on SMEs suggests opportunity regarding female [and younger people] in entrepreneurship [most likely in the services sector]
- There may be an opportunity to encourage females into male dominated sectors including engineering, manufacturing and agriculture
- There is an opportunity to tailor support to new communities e.g., the Ukrainian migrants which are significant in number in Leitrim
- Leitrim, like all Counties, is facing climate challenge. The LEADER programme has a significant focus on the Green Economy which should be embraced by the Local Development Strategy 2023-2027
- Leitrim is a rural county and experiences challenges regarding digital connectivity and broadband
- Small farm holdings are typical in Leitrim. This presents challenges in scaling farm operations. As a result, there are opportunities to consider agricultural diversification as a means of ensuring the ongoing sustainability of the farm
- There are a number of important community centres in Leitrim some of which are successful social enterprises that provide vital services to the community including childcare, recreation, sports which contribute to improved levels of mental and physical health– these services require to be sustained and should be supported as part of the RDP
- Leitrim PPN has identified over 100 active social enterprises in the County. This is an increasingly important sector of the economy. Social economy enterprises should be encouraged to come forward and seek support in this round of the RDP
- The Leitrim Biodiversity Plan 2020-2027 is live and identifies 8 ‘Special Areas of Conservation [SACs] and 1 ‘Special protection Area’ [SPA]. Opportunities are set out in this plan to support [1] Habitat Creation & Management [2] Tree & Hedgerow Planting [3] Meadow Grasslands & Wildflower Lawns. The Biodiversity Plan can be found at: https://www.ldco.ie/assets/uploads/Website_Final_Leitrim_Biodiversity_Plan_2022-2027.pdf

4 RDP Planning Process 2023-2027

4.1 LDS Participative Planning Processes

The LAG and Leitrim Development Company were clear that their information gathering, community consultation and public participation processes leading to the development of the LDS, would be in line with the ethos of LEADER; i.e. it would be characterised by a bottom-up participatory planning process which ensured that all constituents of Leitrim’s rural communities had the opportunity to input to influence and shape the LDS.

The Leitrim LDS participatory planning process comprised of seven separate but inter-related processes as follows:

- Public Community Participation including online digital access Planning Events
- Online Survey
- Submission of Expression of Interest [EOI] Forms and other written comments
- Facilitated workshop with the SICAP Team and other hard to reach groups [to map issues and opportunities for hard-to-reach groups]
- Direct Stakeholder Engagement including semi structured interviews, focus groups and meetings
- A review of a number of reports / analysis and development projects from RDP 2014-2020 (including public consultation on LEADER Kinlough Area Plan, 12 Tidy Town Plans, the Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan, Leitrim Recreation Strategy, the draft Leitrim Integration Strategy, e draft LECP and draft Peace Plan which the LAG is currently developing.
- Review of the evaluation report and process of the LEADER programme 2014-2022 in Co Leitrim which included a survey of 169 projects]

The following diagram sets out the process led by the LAG to deliver this LEADER Local Development Strategy:

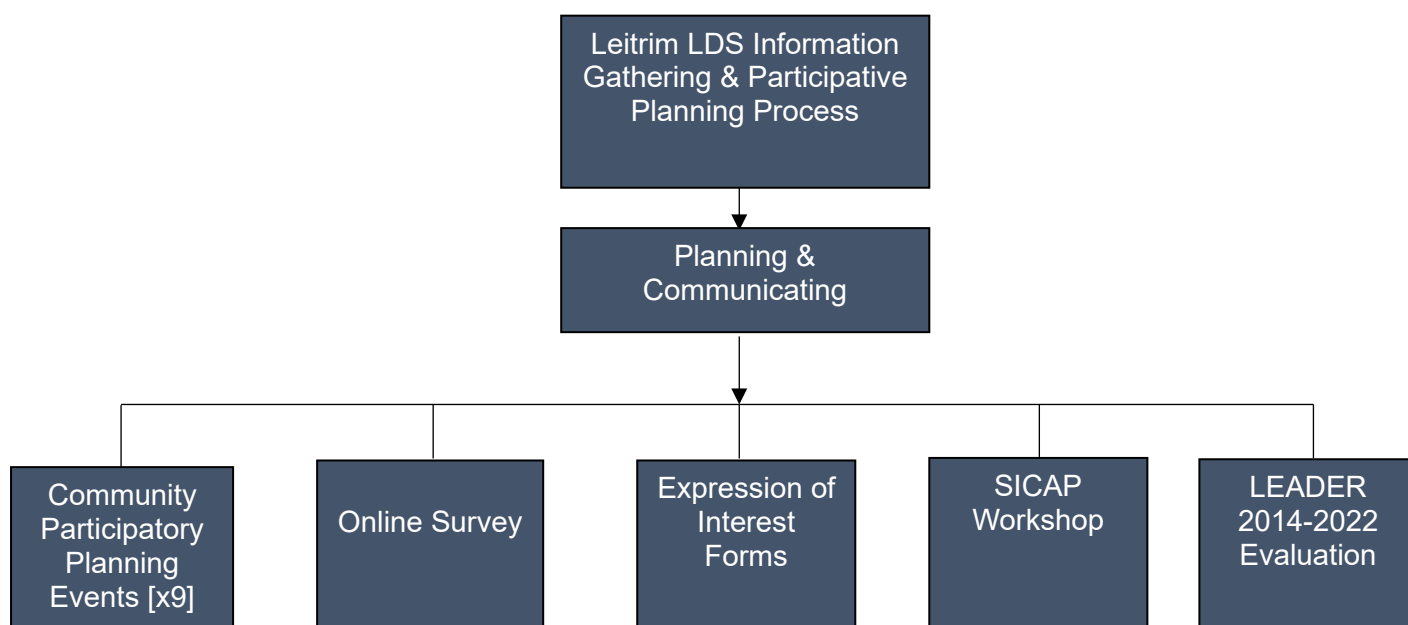


Figure 4.1 - Infographic: Process led by the LAG to deliver this LEADER Local Development Strategy

The seven elements of the Leitrim LDS process set out above generated the following:

- [1] A Statistical Analysis [Statement of Need] for Leitrim as a County placing emphasis on its performance against the national norms and in respect of key features for the LEADER Local Development Strategy including demography, deprivation, inclusion and economic performance
- [2] A review of the impact of the implementation of the LEADER Programme 2014-2022 in Leitrim; capturing learning which has a potential to influence and shape the LDS 2023-2027 for Co Leitrim
- [3] Feedback from previous beneficiaries of the LEADER Programme 2014-2022 in Leitrim
- [4] Feedback from Leitrim’s rural community through a series of nine public participatory planning sessions organised by the Local Development Company and supported by Venture
- [5] Feedback and direction from members of the LAG and the Council team with responsibility for its LEADER Programme
- [6] Feedback and direction from the Local Development Company team responsible for LEADER and other programmes impacting on Leitrim’s rural communities including SICAP
- [7] Feedback for the participatory public consultation processes within all of the reports and plans which have identified potential projects and areas where LEADER 2023-2027 can support individual sectors, projects, initiatives, communities and businesses.

The information generated by the processes provides a baseline for the development of the LEADER 2023-2027 Local Development Strategy which helps shape it through the confirmation of need and the identification of themes and potential investment areas against these themes.

4.2 Findings from the Public Consultation: Analysis of Public Participatory Planning Sessions Feedback

The Local Development Company planned, promoted and facilitated nine accessible Public Participatory Consultation Sessions to secure ‘bottom up’ inclusive community engagement in the processes leading to this Local Development Strategy. Three of these were live blended events with online access for those that could not attend in person. LDC and the consultation process was guided by the “Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making” issued in Feb 2023 designed to support local consultation and engagement processes. This LEADER LDS consultation in Leitrim focused on engaging marginalised communities and the organisations that represent them. The process was guided by the nine principles for inclusion at all stages in its planning, implementation and review. Feedback is being provided to all who participated. The guidance will also be applied by the LAG and its partners during the implementation and review of RDP 2023-2027 in the future to ensure it is inclusive and engaging for all. The following table summarises the outcomes from the events, dates and attendance:

Carrigallen, Bredagh Old School	Tuesday 2 nd May	30
Drumkeerin, Community Centre	Wednesday 3 rd May	14
Carrick-on-Shannon, Bush Hotel	Thursday 4 th May	27
Drumshambo, Leitrim Development Company	Tuesday 9 th May	15
Barnacoola, Community Centre	Wednesday 10 th May	14
Manorhamilton, Bee Park	Thursday 11 th May	41
Ballinamore, The Scout Den	Monday 15 th May	23
Mohill, Canon Donohue Hall	Tuesday 16 th May	18
Kinlough, Community Centre	Wednesday 17 th May	20
Online attendees		18
TOTAL ATTENDEES		220

This shows that there was a very high level of participation in the consultation process with 0.62% of the total population of Co. Leitrim (35,199 census 2022) actively participating in the events. Many of these people attended representing their communities and wider groups. This very high level of input was achieved through individual and multiple email invites to over 1,000 people and groups. Leitrim PPN also emailed their members on three occasions (April 26th May 4th and 10th) specifically about the development of the LDS inviting their 378 member groups to attend or make submissions. There were daily posts on social media platforms (Facebook Twitter, Instagram LinkedIn) by the Implementing Partner, Financial Partner and also by many of the groups, sectors and organisations who are members of the LAG (including the PPN which has five members on the LAG). Fliers advertising the LDS consultations were placed in community venues, notice boards in post offices, libraries, health centres, shops, etc. and distributed by community workers, scheme supervisors and staff in LDC. The consultation events were also advertised for three weeks in the local newspaper The Leitrim Observer and two feature articles were also carried on LEADER 2023-2027 by the newspaper during May 2023. An extensive portal of information, documents and links was placed on the Leitrim Development Company website for the duration of the consultation process. This included the recording of the online event, the presentation made about LEADER 2023-2027 and all of the items to make a submission including the survey link and Expression of Interest form. An individual feedback summary sheet from each event is appended. There is no doubt that the feedback for these people and the needs identified in this open and public process reflects the needs of people, businesses and communities across all the sectors in Leitrim. The following table sets out an analysis of that feedback for this Local Development Strategy under the various themes and subthemes.

Key Areas of Discussion: Rural Tourism and Recreation

- Build on the investment which will be made through the Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands regional brand [of which Leitrim County Council is one of the component Councils] by the developing visitor experiences, trails, stories and accommodation across Leitrim
- Trails might include those associated with Thomas Clarke [The Rising], John McGahern [Author], Phil Fitzpatrick [Lovely Leitrim] and Thomas Jackson [The Banker]
- Develop and enhance natural amenities such as lakes, rivers as local amenities which also serve as visitor attractions
- Use the existing railway network [or what is left of it] as part of our heritage offering but also develop parts of the remaining track system as outdoor recreation space
- Develop a Youth Hostel [or Hostels] to encourage groups with an interest in outdoor activity to visit the County [particularly around Mohill which has the Outdoor Recreation facility at Lough Rinn]
- Develop a County wide approach to tourism signage to promote and direct visitors to rural sites, businesses and attractions of interest
- Need to take a strategic approach to the development of the accommodation offer providing everything from hostel, glamping, self-catering and guest house accommodation
- Examine the potential to develop specific sites or buildings as tourism accommodation
- Examine the potential for developing additional water-based canoe trails [e.g., Lough Melvin or adjacent to Spencer Harbour]. Leitrim can also benefit from a water-based activity perspective by being adjacent to the river Shannon
- Examine the potential to strategically position rural Leitrim by sustainably developing its natural resources to position it as the ‘Spa Capital’ of Ireland
- Develop the facilities at specific sites to make them more functional from an individual or family perspective e.g., Drumreilly Lake, Farnaught Historical Trail and Forest Walk, Lough Melvin, Scarden Waterfall, Spencer Harbour
- Develop a Tourist Information Point [probably digital] in each significant rural settlement

Key Areas of Discussion: Rural Infrastructure

- Develop local pathways and walkways around settlements; largely for local use with an element of active travel

- Examine the potential to retrofit or refurbish existing facilities as modern community hubs which might support enhance delivery of community services, community drop in space, work in space/working hubs and information points
- Support the development of additional childcare facilities, after schools' clubs and pre-schools' projects
- Examine approaches to improve community transport provision to make rural settlements more accessible and equally to link people in those settlements to services and activities in regional towns such as Carrick or Sligo
- Examine the potential to floodlight existing sports facilities to increase their availability across the year particularly in Spring, late Autumn and Winter
- Invest in existing local facilities to make them more multi-sport in nature, more family friendly or to introduce play and recreation element as part of their family offer

Key Areas of Discussion: Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment

- Examine the opportunity to develop the rural Blueway environments [i.e., water based] with increased levels of accessibility, safety to support additional engagement in physical activity through water-based activities in addition to encouraging visitors to the area
- Develop Eco Pods across rural Co Leitrim

Key Areas of Discussion: Rural Youth

- Need for facilities which support young people to meet; must be attractive and possibly drop in/hang out/youth café models should be examined
- Need to access to training for young leaders
- Need to expand the opportunities for physical activities for young people: significant focus on team sports. Facilities and spaces in rural communities should be developed to support other types of sport or casual physical activity
- Link with statutory agencies to provide a range of outreach youth services and activities across Leitrim's rural settlements
- Encourage and support youth volunteering
- Engage with young people to find out what services and activities would help them to decide to remain in Leitrim's rural communities
- Examine opportunities to provide youth mentoring and personal development support programmes

Key Areas of Discussion: Accessible Services

- Increase the level of independent living support services for older people to facilitate them to live at home and in their community for longer
- Examine the potential to develop independent living housing options for older people
- Develop approaches to increased wheelchair and limited mobility accessibility to a range of community, recreation and leisure facilities, spaces and places; including lakes, waterways, walkways, sports facilities, play areas and community centres & hubs
- Resource increased levels of community mental health services
- Develop community employment schemes which focus on new entrants to the county especially from the Ukrainian community
- Develop a range of community integration events and activities for new communities [particularly the Ukrainian community]

Key Areas of Discussion: Optimising Digital Connectivity

- General consensus that broadband and connectivity across much of County Leitrim fall below expectation; encourage investment in infrastructure to provide hotspots or enhancement of connectivity in community building across the area which allows people to 'drop in' and access higher levels of connectivity
- Need interventions which support digital literacy for older people, this is becoming more important as they access services online. Time is right to pursue this on the basis that many older people began their digital literacy journey through Covid 19

Key Areas of Discussion: Bio-diversity and Water Quality Exemplar Projects

- Need for an education centre and education programme around biodiversity; developing skills to maintain bogs, develop de-carbonisation projects, sustain habitats and reinstate habitats
- Need better approaches to water quality testing and improving of water quality in our rural communities; this may include a feasibility study on water quality
- Examine opportunities to rewet bogs and recreate indigenous ecosystems and associated biodiversity
- Need to examine more sustainable approaches to managing forestry and avoid over-forestation and commercial forestry activities as this is having a negative impact on water quality and habitats
- Examine and introduce better approaches to sustainable habitat management on land and on water
- Carry out feasibility studies to examine community led approaches to renewable energy and community energy schemes
- Introduce biomass projects, education and initiatives across the County
- Take a more strategic approach to the protection, enhancement, management and sustainable development of our rural landscapes and water assets
- Introduce an initiative to manage hedgerows across the County and reinstate hedgerows where feasible
- Install litter traps on rivers to prevent pollution
- Examine the potential for group water schemes

Key Areas of Discussion: Enterprise Development

- Resource new work space, co working space and offices for micro businesses and to support business development and expansion; emphasis placed on communities where no such provision exists
- Develop links between school and industry
- Develop and agree a strategic plan for enterprise and job creation looking across a medium to long term timeframe [e.g., up to 15 years]
- Examine niche enterprise development programmes focusing on food, tourism, arts and creativity
- Support on and off farm diversification projects [non-primary production]
- Develop the County's water-based assets for commercial advantage i.e., increasing the number of water activity packages
- Develop additional art studio space for people involved in making, visual arts and creativity

Key Areas of Discussion: Rural Food Production

- Resource a feasibility study for Leitrim Lamb Producers
- Support and facilitate a sustainable farm producer group [or groups if niche opportunities arise]
- Examine the feasibility of a food distribution hub for local producers [smaller scale or artisan]
- Undertake research on food chain security
- Develop specialist organic vegetable produce for an existing farmers markets' or introduce new organic farmer markets if appropriate
- Support a programme to include innovation in farm production



Figure 4.2 - Photograph: Consultation Event - Ballinamore



Figure 4.3 - Photograph: Consultation Event - Manorhamilton



Figure 4.4 - Photograph: Break out session as part of Consultation



Figure 4.5 - Photograph: Break out session as part of Consultation



Figure 4.4 - Photograph: Community representative attendees at Consultation Event in Carrick on Shannon

4.3 Analysis of the Expressions of Interest [EOIs]

As part of the public engagement process, people or organisations were provided the opportunity to complete an expression of interest setting out details of potential projects which they might present to the LEADER programme 2023-2027.

A review of the 93 EOI's submitted to the Local Development Company as part of the public participatory engagement processes leading to the development of the LDS confirms that:

- 36 were submitted by private individuals
- 44 were submitted by community organisations
- 13 were submitted by sports clubs

Individuals or representatives of organisations completing EOI's were asked to identify the most appropriate category for their proposed project. An analysis of the responses confirms the following:

Category	Number of Projects
Tourism Development	30
Community Facilities	16
Enterprise Development	15
Social Inclusion	10
Renewable Energy	8
Village/Town Enhancement	6
Biodiversity/Water Quality	6
Rural Youth	2
Total	93

The following table sets out the type of projects submitted under each of these categories:

Category	Summary of Range of Projects
Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing additional tourism accommodation provision; extension of existing accommodation and hospitality projects; conversion of existing vacant and underused properties as tourism accommodation and development of new projects • Development of festivals and events • Providing access to natural and heritage assets and environments • Developing experience projects which connect people to the history, way of life, people of note and sites of interest
Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing community hub facilities (new and enhancing existing facilities) • Improving accessibility • Adding to sports clubs' current space and facilities including changing, toilets, equipment, floodlighting and improving general accessibility • Improving the multi-functional nature of community facilities
Enterprise Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading business premises and facilities • Investing in equipment
Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of social farms • Mental health and wellbeing support initiatives • Enhancing the accessibility off existing community and sports facilities
Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofitting existing community facilities • Introduction of solar PV panels to business and community premises • Examining community energy models
Village/Town Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of green spaces and walking trails and activity paths

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing general presentation and appearance
Biodiversity/Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining and sharing best practice in habitat management Improving water quality Developing capacity and awareness in relation to more sustainable farming and business practices
Rural Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of youth drop in spaces Expanding the range of sports, recreation and leisure activities available for young people

4.4 Online Survey Analysis

The LDC issued an online survey as part of the public participatory planning process informing the development of the 2023-2027 LDS.

A total of 24 people from across Co Leitrim completed the online survey and an analysis of their responses provide the following direction for the 2023-2027 LDS:

- 26% responses were previous LEADER beneficiaries [it is also noted that previous beneficiaries responded to a survey as part of the evaluation of the LEADER programme 2014-2022]. Almost 75% were not previous LEADER programme beneficiaries
- Respondents ranked Rural Tourism and Recreation as their most important area under an enterprise support priority followed by enterprise development [capital funding] and agricultural diversification
- Respondents ranked Rural Infrastructure as the most important priority for funding under community support area for investment followed by Optimising Connectivity and Investment to Improve Accessibility to Rural Services
- Respondents ranked Sustainable Development of the Environment as the key priority for investment in the Environmental Support Theme followed by Climate Change Mitigation and Climate Change Capacity Building
- Respondents were asked to identify if there was an investment area or area for support which in their opinion had been omitted could they outline it; 37% of respondents were of the opinion that the LDS should also examine: cultural enterprise, community led energy projects
- Utilisation of the County's heritage.

4.5 Ensuring the Voice of Hard-to-reach Groups in the 2023-2027 LDS

The LDC is responsible for the oversight / operational management of the SICAP programme which is an intervention designed to engage with the most marginalised and hard-to-reach groups across the County. It supports them to become involved in planning and decision-making processes and also identify the issues that they encounter.

The LAG in its work is very conscious of contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan which sets out the overarching national governance, coordination and monitoring framework for the SDGs. The Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 was published on 5th October 2022. The LAG and LDC were very conscious of all 17 SDGs during the consultation phase and in defining the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 objectives for Leitrim. The LAG will focus on the contribution of LEADER 2023-2027 in the review of its implementation and in its evaluation.

As part of the LDS Development Process a meeting was facilitated with Social inclusion and Community Activation programme (SICAP) representatives connected with SICAP who work with disadvantaged/hard-to-reach groups across County Leitrim.

The purpose of the discussion was to focus on:

- How did LEADER 2014-2022 work for hard-to-reach groups across the County; and
- How can we develop greater integration between SICAP and the LDS for 2023-2027

The feedback focused on a number of areas for discussion as follows:

Areas of Discussion and Input to the 2023-2027 LDS	Discussion and Direction
Social Enterprise	<p>Social Enterprises did not feature strongly in the current Programme. Need to build capacity in this sector, particularly financial capability and managing the LEADER application process.</p> <p>Match funding presents a significant challenge for many Social Enterprises and there is a need to build awareness of various types of match funding [grants and loans]</p>
Supporting Enterprise	<p>View that the funding criterion in LEADER is quite narrow with a focus on new business, or niche business concepts.</p> <p>What role does LEADER play in supporting established businesses that require financial support?</p> <p>Both of the above points may be awareness or communication issues as much as criterion issues.</p>
Community Facilities	<p>Clear recognition that capital investment in the delivery of community facilities has had a very positive impact on local communities. Many examples where these facilities were now being used by groups to deliver services, expand existing services, and introduce new services. E.g., Theatre in Ballinamore is used for English classes for the local Ukrainian community.</p>
Education, Animation and Integration	<p>Traveler Groups require greater assistance in accessing programmes. Could the LEADER Programme help this target group develop practical vocational skills, and overlay business/entrepreneurial acumen to support employment opportunities?</p> <p>Could the new LDS examine the potential for a Men’s Shed for men from the travelling community?</p> <p>Support Programme in the areas of Building Self Confidence, Communication skills, Self-Development.</p>
Supporting Housing Estates	<p>Large numbers of people who are deemed ‘disadvantaged’ currently live in housing estates. There are 32 housing estates across County Leitrim.</p> <p>Can LEADER 2023-2027 support residents in housing estates to work jointly with LCC to improve their living environment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop play areas • General maintenance of estates • Empowering younger and more elderly

	Proposal – LDC through LEADER 2023-2027 will conduct an A&D project to examine and report on current issues affecting people who are residents of LA housing estates.
Older People and recently retired people	Is there an innovative way to enhance the lives of older people in the community, including recently retired people? Pilot scheme? Develop an interactive ‘hub’, centrally located, that provides resources and activities for this demographic? Create a Social Network that signposts and encourages this group to proactively contribute to their own communities?
Disabled People	Investment still required to support inclusion in community life and access to facilities [indoor and outdoor] and services across the County.
Integrating communities	LDC support integration of minority groups within local communities? Potentially use joint programmes to drive integration through learning and capacity building. What does a full Integration Strategy look like? Do we need an Integration Centre? LDC to support the implementation of the final Leitrim Integration Strategy and to examine how LEADER 2023-2027 can help fund some of the initiatives and projects which will arise

4.6 Engaging directly with Youth

As part of the development of the LDS youth group representatives attended the public consultation sessions. A number of young people also attended themselves. Feedback from these sessions outlined the need for additional youth involvement in community groups and intergenerational activities in rural areas.

The consultation activities for RDP Leader 2023-2027 included a focus group with young people with disabilities conducted through the Leitrim Disabled People Organisation (DPO) and Independent Living Movement Ireland. These young people called on the LEADER programme to help deliver and to develop a Leitrim Disabled Persons Strategic Plan, similar to the County's current Migrant Strategy. DPO members would like to see such a strategic process carried out in consultation with DPO activists and disabled people living in Leitrim as the priority participants in the LEADER Strategy and to help deliver on Irish commitments under the UNCRPD for those disabled people living in Leitrim.

A second focus group with project staff and volunteers who work with young people, young migrants, youth groups and young travellers also heard about their needs and how the LEADER programme can support them and their needs. The outcomes of these consultations were incorporated into the actions in seeking improved and better facilities and community spaces both indoor and outdoor that young people can use.

A review of the 93 EOIs submitted as part of the public participatory engagement processes leading to the development of the LDS two focused specifically on a rural youth project. These two projects were for the provision of youth drop in spaces and expanding the range of sports, recreation and leisure activities available for young people. While specific EOIs didn't focus on youth, they were multi-generational and multi-use projects including sports and recreation facilities and social inclusion programmes which would all benefit youth in the county.

The Education & Youth Support Worker within Leitrim Development Company consults with the various youth support groups and agencies in the region and county and works directly with youth through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP). 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 2023-2027 will add value to this work and provide additional

services and supports for young people through training, engagement and inclusion in community and voluntary activities for disadvantage young people. Adding value to this work is a priority for the LCDC under the RDP and any possible duplication (with the Peace Programme (Peace Partnership and others) will be avoided.

4.7 Semi-Structured Consultations

As part of the LDS Development Process Venture carried out semi-structured consultations with stakeholders:

- Members of the LAG
- Members of the RDOC
- Members of the Independent Evaluation Committee
- Staff of the FP and IP

Their collective feedback is summarised, as follows:

- The previous LEADER Programme has proved effective in identifying rural specific issues and providing both animation and funding to help to address these
- The local decision -making element of LEADER [compared to the majority of National programmes] is perceived as a main strength
- The collaborative working between LAG, Leitrim County Council and the Local Development Company team is deemed effective and brings the broad range of governance, strategic planning, operational delivery and monitoring required to deliver a well governed, effective and impactful rural investment programme to the County
- Accepting that there are [and will possibly always be the case] hard-to-reach groups, there is a high level of connection between rural individuals [as entrepreneurs] and rural community organisations with the LEADER Programme; the role of the Development Company in promoting the LEADER Programme, engaging with people in communities and supporting them [through animation] to the point of making an application is central to this
- It is recognised that the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 will operate in an environment where there is an increased availability of capital and revenue funding nationally which can be drawn down by rural promoters. Therefore, it is important that the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 in Leitrim is strategically aligned with national strategy and policy associated with these programmes and at a County level with the LECP to ensure that there is little possibility for duplication, that investment in County Leitrim is maximised and that the uniqueness of the LEADER Programme [with its local decision making and animation elements] is preserved and reinforced
- There is a consistently expressed view that the process can appear bureaucratic or challenging for new applicants and particularly for hard-to-reach communities; equally, it is recognised that this is largely outside local control and is as a result of the LEADER Operating Rules and other National and EC Regulations and laws.
- The new LDS must be needs led and seek to identify gaps in facilities, activities and services locally across County Leitrim; where possible there may be merit in developing more Flagship projects which have the potential to deliver greater outcomes and more sustained legacies
- It is recognised that there is a significant disparity in the capacity and experience of potential promoters; particularly across community organisations and social enterprises. The new LDS should seek to build capacity but also to create connections between the more experienced and the newer promoters.

Priority investment areas for the new LDS were examined and there is consistency around the following:

- Clear, holistic approach tourism beginning with feasibility and research work. There is potential to build on an investment through Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and to develop a range of accommodation, activity and visitor experiences complete with support for promoters marketing aligned to the sub-regional marketing and promotion which will be an output of the County's involvement with Ireland's Hidden Heartlands
- Developing and enhancing existing community facilities [and introducing new facilities where clear gaps have been identified] should also be an element of the new programme; this has the potential to reduce the buyers to accessing services. This approach should be combined with rural transport solutions.
- The new LDS should examine investment in environmental, eco-system management, bio-diversity, climate change and renewable energy projects.
- Continued investment in farm diversification projects providing alternative income streams for younger farmers.
- Support for both the agri-food and agri-tourism sectors.

4.7 Capturing Learning and Direction from LEADER 2014-2022 Investment in Co Leitrim

The independent evaluation of the previous LEADER Programme 2014-2022 in County Leitrim provides useful information to inform and shape the direction of the LEADER 2023-2027 Local Development Strategy. An independent evaluation of the outgoing LEADER Programme in the County was completed. Whilst this evaluation provides confirmation around the effectiveness and impact of LEADER 2014-2022 funding across the County it also identified remaining issues across Leitrim's rural communities, opportunities to build on previous initiatives, projects and investments, and opportunities for the new LEADER Programme 2023-2027.

The evaluation was informed through direct [and independent] engagement with beneficiaries, consultation with LAG members, consultation with Council's team with responsibility [accounting and assurance] for LEADER and the LDC team [responsible for the operational management, animation and applicant support elements of the programme]. The following bullet points summarise learning captured through the independent evaluation process which can meaningfully contribute to the direction of the LEADER LDS 2023-2027 for County Leitrim.

4.7.1 Policy Alignment

- Alignment with Local Development Strategies is important to ensure added value and facilitate stakeholder co-operation and engagement in rural regeneration by placing rural at the centre of Community Planning.

4.7.2 Administration

- Challenges were noted regarding group projects and the procurement difficulties these presented
- The competitive nature of the fund did not always allow for balance
- Stringent procurement measures were challenging for promoters navigating funding for the first time; ability to accommodate some flexibility will encourage applicants.

4.7.3 Animation

- Support for animation work and technical assistance is required; this could include development grants to enable capital grant applications while animation support is needed to enable groups through the application process.

4.7.4 Proportionality

- The issue of proportionality was highlighted; thresholds should be in place for smaller scale grants to require less administration
- Larger grants could benefit from a two stage/phased approach to benefit smaller businesses

- Funding schemes will also need to be mindful of funding thresholds as capital costs escalate.

4.7.5 Revenue Costs

- There is a need for revenue funding to sustain groups and their work; all funding was capital. Staff costs could include shared workers across two or three villages as a cluster project.

4.7.6 Procurement

- The need for procurement to be undertaken at application should be reviewed for any future programme, especially in the current economic environment.

4.7.7 Timelines

- Funding timelines need to reflect factors which may impact on capital project implementation e.g., if applications require land acquisitions and/or statutory requirements such as planning permission.

4.7.8 Delivery Mechanism

- Any future programme should accommodate a local delivery mechanism to embed local knowledge in project implementation, tailoring investment to the needs and characteristics of each rural community; any emerging mechanism should reflect community development approaches and principles
- A local component to the delivery mechanism can assist in identifying gaps in provision or funding uptake and work at grass roots to develop local solutions; accommodating low infrastructure communities must be addressed
- The participation of both Elected Members and Social Partners is recommended, building on working relationships and knowledge developed to date and providing a platform for ongoing co-operation and shared learning.

4.7.9 Looking Ahead

A range of areas were identified through consultation for future programmes:

- The Green Economy and its implementation in business strategy going forward
- Agricultural diversification was [again] a core theme identified in consultation. The small scale farms evident in Leitrim have particular need as scaling is challenging. Energy, agri-food and tourism were identified as possibilities
- Rural tourism was identified as underdeveloped in the County. There is potential in developing projects around Leitrim's natural environment including its lakes, rivers and canals. From an infrastructure perspective, tourism accommodation was also identified as lacking in the County
- The SME sector was identified as being in need of support particularly around innovation and female entrepreneurship [any supports in this sector should complement the range of services provided by the Local Enterprise Office and other providers of support to the SME sector].
- Food and food production was a strong finding in the consultation process. The strength of the food sector in the County was identified as were possibilities for growth and development in the sector
- The social economy and social enterprise sectors were underrepresented [in comparison to private and community enterprise] on the current LEADER programme]. There was a clear appetite identified to provide support in this sector
- Support to community organisations who provide services to the community was identified as a potential component of any future programme. These community organisations operate across multiple sectors [e.g., sport, recreation, culture, arts, heritage, etc.]. Rural infrastructure for buildings, facilities and equipment was identified as needed going forward – this should include consideration of Towns and Villages in the context of 'Place' consistent with local and regional policy directives and strategies

- A general theme identified involved the need for LEADER to ‘reach’ [across its platform of support] some of the more disadvantaged and isolated groups and communities in Leitrim [consistent with policy directives and actions from SICAP, LECP & LDS]. This is also consistent with more general consultation findings that the LEADER programme has previously found [anecdotally] that better equipped groups have been more successful in applying for funds
- The need for a rural county like Leitrim to continue to focus on provision on ICT, technology and broadband was highlighted. Rural connectivity continues to present some challenges that could be supported in any future LEADER programme
- Supporting young people in the County was highlighted as important, particularly in the wake of Covid-19 which had a very significant impact on this rural group
- Sustainability of the rural environment was identified as important to the future of the County as was consideration of promoting the use of renewable energy – in both respects support towards demonstration and/or pilot projects were felt to be of need in encouraging the adoption of best practice in these sectors. It was also highlighted that uptake in the current programme was slower than hoped and there would be a significant level of encouragement and animation required. Support in this sector would benefit from a grant rate uplift from 75% to 90% to help motivate and action projects in the private sector [cost and risk are significant factors for private sector in the area].

4.8 Rural Leitrim: A Statistical Statement of Need

The socio-economic analysis of the County establishes a number of characteristics, dynamics and features which investment of the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 in the County has the potential to address and impact positively upon.

A review of the area profile confirms that Leitrim has a growing population with its growth exceeding the National average. It also identifies a number of areas against which LEADER investment might focus including:

- Older people
- Investments to support activities which lead to improving the health and wellbeing of the County’s population
- Space and facilities which supports people to work from home and supports the development of micro businesses
- Investment in spaces and facilities which support young people especially, to provide opportunities for personal development and engagement in activities outside traditional field sports
- Investment in facilities and services which meet the needs of new entrants to the County; with particular emphasis on the 1,688 Ukrainians who now reside in the County [4.8% of the population]
- Initiatives which address deprivation [given that 78.1% of the EDs in Leitrim are categorised as marginally below average and ‘disadvantaged’]
- Investment in projects and initiatives which address more environmentally and financially efficient forms of heat, lighting and power for both community buildings and for communities/householder.

There is no doubt from the detailed consultation and engagement process that this LDS will deliver in all its actions on strategies and plans and is a strategic fit with national and regional policies and plans.

4.9 LEADER SCOT Analysis

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing governance structure, systems and processes. ▪ High level of satisfaction of past applicants and programme beneficiaries in the process and support received. ▪ High level of visibility of the project team [LDC] to provide advice and guidance to potential and eventual applicants. ▪ Local decision making viewed as effective, responsive, and having an understanding of the nature and character of rural Leitrim. ▪ Good fit with County and National Plans and funding programmes; however, these change as do the priorities within them so the new LDS must reflect these [increased emphasis on climate change and green growth, as an example] ▪ Growing population with growth sustained across three Census periods ▪ Strong economic sectors including food, tourism, creative and MedTech ▪ A strong SME focussed economy with exemplar projects ▪ Good road and rail infrastructure ▪ The County has an abundance of natural beauty and resources with a strong angling dimension ▪ A growing population with a significant evidence of new communities e.g. Ukrainian's.
Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A small population – smallest county population in Ireland ▪ Emigration of younger people ▪ Increasing deprivation levels across the county ▪ Small farm holdings that present challenges for scaling ▪ Currently, high commercial premises vacancy rates ▪ Low levels of FDI and significant business employers ▪ Currently, high domestic dwelling vacancy rates ▪ Challenges of rural connectivity and digitalisation ▪ Low uptake of climate change and bio-diversity projects but a lack of experience and capacity might limit the volume and quality in this sector. ▪ Administration and Animation budgets have the potential to limit the ability to engage with harder to reach individuals, groups and communities ▪ No third level education institution ▪ Transport and access issues for many people particularly those who are “hard to reach”
Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examples of good practice in certain economic sectors – technology & food ▪ Availability of vacant commercial and domestic properties ▪ Potential to develop the uptake of renewable energy use and to consider how this can be done – potentially involving a partnership between community and business sectors ▪ Continue to promote the unspoiled natural landscape and the quality-of-life benefits of Leitrim including water, forestry, and hills/mountains ▪ Potential of tourism offering in including activity tourism and greenway development - these are important growth sectors in tourism post Covid. ▪ Drive forward the development of digitalisation and connectivity and the positive impacts commercially ▪ Continue to develop commercial clusters in key sectors ▪ Maximise the opportunities that are available as part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor ▪ LEADER provides additional funding for the county; this is important given its rural character. ▪ Potential for LEADER investment in tourism to compliment the significant investment in branding and product development associated with Ireland's Hidden Heartlands [of whom Leitrim is a member] ▪ To invest in more Flagship/Strategic projects which have legacy potential/impact in LEADER Programme 2023-2027. ▪ Continuous engagement/animation across the lifetime of the LDS to ensure that changing needs are identified and responded to.

- Investment in agricultural diversification that encourages next generation farming families to derive new, and/or additional income streams that support a sustainable future for their farms
- To upgrade and retro-fit existing community facilities to allow service provision to broaden in line with emerging needs of both local communities and new communities
- To focus on Elector Divisions [Eds] which are marginally below the median of POBAL deprivation index [78%]
- Develop a Mentoring element to the application process that encourages experienced promoters to offer support to new or less experienced applicants
- As part of the consultation process, 93 expressions of interest were sought and received which are summarised in the 'Expressions of Interest' section.

Threats

- Lack of co-ordination on Strategic priorities at a local and national level leading to duplication and value erosion
- Lack of co-ordination across a broad range of rural development funds
- Impact of another globally, or nationally significant event that could impact the sustainability of future LEADER programmes. Ukraine war, Global Pandemic.
- Losing the unique nature of LEADER 'or perceived as 'just another funding programme'. Constantly need to reinforce the aim and project development support element of LEADER [its distinct uniqueness]
- Impacts of the current economic climate including increasing costs, inflation, increasing interest rates and recession
- Labour force challenges with a migrating youth population
- Labour force challenges with a seasonal tourism sector
- Potential for further decline on the back of already high levels of commercial vacancy
- An increasing population [including new communities] puts additional pressure on services in the context of tightening public sector budgets
- Failure to impact on priority markets including social economy, biodiversity and renewable energy [which have been historically slow to uptake].

5 Priorities & Objectives

5.1 The LDS vision

“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”

Having considered the LEADER context, the findings of extensive public participative consultation, analysis of the area profile, consideration of the strategic and policy context and evaluation of networking opportunities, the LAG has developed the following ‘Local Objectives’ in response to the needs identified and in line with the framework of the LEADER Programme 2023-2027.

The tables below set out the themes and priorities which have been identified with associated actions, target groups, outputs and indicators for the 2023 – 2027 programme. The process has been informed by the LEADER 2014 – 2020 review for Leitrim in order to build on previous learning and investment, while also responding to local needs as evidenced through a robust participatory planning process. This process, as set out in the previous section, engaged directly and online with the rural Leitrim community to ensure a locally led community development approach. Alignment with the policy environment at local, national and transnational level has also been considered and Section 6 later sets out in detail the potential for strategic integration, recognising the cross-sectoral nature of rural development. The SCOT analysis in Section 4 provides further evidence for the selection of themes and priorities which have been developed to respond to the constraints and threats identified during consultation and to which grass roots communities have put forward potential actions.

Collectively the themes provide a robust framework for rural regeneration in Leitrim, building on learning and experience to date and recognising the need for a cross-sectoral approach which empowers local communities. In particular, the strategy seeks to build upon the County’s assets such as its unspoilt landscape, rural heritage and enthusiasm to further explore green energy. It recognises the need for capacity in areas such as renewable energy and the need to address deficits such as a low tourism accommodation base. At a demographical level, it also recognises the population changes which have shaped Leitrim’s population profile, including the importance of integration of new communities and catering for an older population while also providing much needed rural youth services.

Implementation of these Local Objectives will support the rural regeneration process at local level, enabling communities to benefit both economically and socially through localised interventions and action which add value to other initiatives and plans, including the LECF.

Theme 1: Economic Development & Job Creation

Local Objective 1.1

Local Objective 1.1	
Title of Local Objective: The Green Economy, opportunities presented by the circular and bio economy	
Financial Allocation [€]	€150,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	There is significant potential for growth in the Green Economy in County Leitrim enabling the use of environmentally friendly technologies, processes and products in existing and new businesses. Increasingly business owners are thinking about the impact of their business on the environment and continuously trying to reduce energy usage by becoming more environmentally sustainable. With rising energy costs, reduction in energy consumption and waste is crucial for many businesses in County Leitrim. Many businesses are interested in the use of environmentally friendly technologies, processes, and products.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	The Green Economy, opportunities presented by the circular and bio economy

Strategic Action 1.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	The Green, Circular and Bio Economies
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	<p>Support will be given to develop new business ideas and expand existing green actions. A programme will be developed to engage a wide range of businesses that maximize on local, natural and sustainable resources in their commerce. This action will foster green economy business opportunities thereby creating a healthy environment and promoting the well-being of all by promoting the use of low-carbon technologies and practices, and using technologies that rely on clean and renewable energy. Support will focus on reducing the impact of production and consumption on the environment while creating a virtuous relationship between economic growth and environmental wellbeing. The LDS will promote and encourage new green enterprise and biodiversity, energy efficiency and renewable energy measures for existing businesses, which assist businesses to reduce their cost base or exploit new market opportunities. Projects focusing on low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive will be welcomed. Support will focus on applications for RDP capital grant aid in green, circular and bio economies including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wood fuel from forestry ▪ Local resources refined as products ▪ Green technologies ▪ Community owned Energy Projects ▪ Water Management/Recycling projects ▪ Renewable energies- wind, solar, water, biofuels & biomass, etc.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Existing micro and medium enterprises, new businesses, entrepreneurs, farmers, start-ups [both microenterprises and SMEs] and community enterprises.
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[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Existing micro and medium enterprises, new businesses, entrepreneurs, start-ups [both microenterprises and SMEs] and community enterprises
Collaborating Organisations	LAG & Partners, Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, WDC, SEAI.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 projects funded ▪ Number of new jobs created - 2FTE ▪ Number of existing jobs sustained - 3FTE

Theme 1: Economic Development & Job Creation

Local Objective 2.1

Local Objective 2.1 Title of Local Objective: Supports for Agricultural Diversification for local farmers and their families to diversify into other economic activities	
Financial Allocation [€]	€100,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	<p>Agriculture plays an important role in County Leitrim. Many of the farms are small scale and farmers work part time off farm. In order to ensure farms are economically sustainable, farm diversification support is vital.</p> <p>Farmers and farm family members should be supported and encouraged to create supplementary or increased income on their farms to ensure their long term sustainability for future generations. County Leitrim is renowned for its remote natural landscapes and farms may wish to utilize the natural resources and built environment on the farm for non-agricultural uses. Social farming is an innovative on-farm support for many people which is developing nationally and allows farmers to diversify their farms and income.</p> <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.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Agricultural Diversification, supports for local farmers and their families to diversify into other economic activities

Strategic Action 2.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	To support farm diversification using the assets of the farm for non- agricultural purposes
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	<p>Support will be given to develop new business ideas and expand existing diversification actions into business plans for farm diversification. Supports will focus on projects that provide farm families with on-site employment, strengthens sustainability of farms and results in viable community economic development.</p> <p>With the move towards more environmentally friendly farming, many farmers may be interested in showcasing their farms for nature based tourism and opening them up to create unique visitor experiences. Projects relating to development of farms for social farming will also be important.</p> <p>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/Climate Projects ▪ Food Processing ▪ Agri-tourism/recreation ▪ Craft/creative businesses
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action	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[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	LDC, farmers and farm family members
Collaborating Organisations	Teagasc, IFA, ICSA, farmers groups around the county [LOFCo-Op, SELF, MED Group,] Local Enterprise Office
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 farm diversification projects funded ▪ Number of new jobs created - 4FTE ▪ Number of existing jobs sustained - 4FTE

Theme 1: Economic Development & Job Creation

Local Objective 3.1

Local Objective 3.1	
Title of Local Objective: Rural Tourism & Recreation, development of the tourism sector in County Leitrim	
Financial Allocation [€]	€850,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	Two strategic actions
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	<p>There is significant potential for growth in the tourism sector in the county. The ultimate aim of this objective is to increase visitor numbers and spend while sustaining and increasing local jobs in the tourism and recreation sector in the county. Building on County 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.</p> <p>One of the main strengths of the County identified at the consultations was the unspoilt natural landscape with diversity of habitats and scenic beauty. The county boasts a spectacular natural environment with a variety of towns and villages and an abundance of lakes, rivers and canals. It is important that tourism development is in keeping with the natural landscapes.</p> <p>Under the previous LEADER Programme there was a strong demand for tourism and recreation related projects. This has resulted in the development of a number of unique, innovative and attractive offerings in the county.</p> <p>Aid in the development of clustered tourism offerings in the county including 'Slow Adventure Tourism', Blueways, Greenways and projects aligning to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands proposition will prove beneficial. Complementary tourism enterprises are important for these offerings and add value to the sector as a whole.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Rural Tourism & Recreation, development of the tourism sector in the County including accommodation, attractions, walks, infrastructure, etc

Strategic Action 3.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Develop a range of high quality tourism accommodation in the county focusing on the overall visitor experience.
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	Tourism accommodation varies considerably across the county; however, from the consultation it is clear that there is still limited tourism accommodation provision in areas of the county. A number of existing and new tourism accommodation was developed and upgraded under the previous LEADER Programme, e.g., Drumhierny Woodland Hideaway, Warren Lodge Boutique Cottages, Paddy Macs Self Catering Holiday Bar, Drumkeeran Holiday Homes, etc. This programme will focus on niche and specialised tourism accommodation with added value elements including self-Catering, B&B, guesthouses, boutique accommodation, camping, hostels, etc. This should increase tourism accommodation stock and bed nights in the county. All accommodation will meet Fáilte Ireland standards of approval and must demonstrate a clear need. Particular geographical areas of the county particularly in the North Leitrim area lack tourism accommodation. Projects targeting these areas and those with added value elements which will increase bed nights will be encouraged.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	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[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Tourism Accommodation Providers, Local Entrepreneurs.
Collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Leitrim County Council.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<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 3.1.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Develop sustainable rural tourism facilities, products and services focusing on the unique assets of the county.
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	This strategic action will focus on adding value to existing tourism businesses/community tourism enterprises and diversifying their offerings [infrastructure, facilities, products & services]. It will also focus on new businesses emerging in the sector. This in turn will aid in the development of compelling tourism experiences in line with the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands proposition. Supports will be offered for different types of tourism enterprises including but not limited to recreational/activity tourism, eco-tourism, cultural/heritage tourism, culinary tourism, health and wellness, etc. Projects which build on local resources, communities, culture, heritage and the environment while ensuring their sustainability will be welcomed.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	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 and where the projects will have maximum impact and which can also develop sustainable economic activity and job opportunities.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Private tourism operators and providers, Community Groups
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	Throughout Programme with continuous animation
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<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

Theme 1: Economic Development & Job Creation

Local Objective 4

Local Objective 4.1 Title of Local Objective: Build a thriving, expanding economy with an emphasis on the creation of sustainable employment opportunities through the development of new innovative products and services.	
Financial Allocation [€]	€400,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	Two strategic actions
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	<p>It is important that local entrepreneurship is stimulated and this in turn will create jobs and add economic value to the county. 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 including new technologies, sustainability, innovation, skills and enterprise. Some of the sectors which will be supported include but are not limited to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food Production ▪ Manufacturing ▪ Creative/Craft ▪ Digital ▪ Social Enterprises <p>Many rural businesses cannot thrive and grow in the long term without access to finance to develop. In this regard rural businesses have been particularly hard hit by Covid 19 restrictions and increased costs. Closure of local bank branches have also proved challenging for some businesses. Niche and specialised sectors will be favoured thereby avoiding duplication with other funding agencies.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Enterprise Development, capital costs for business creation and expansion including new or innovative technologies. Increased focus to be given supporting female entrepreneurs in rural communities.

Strategic Action 4.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	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.
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	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. Investment in work space, specialist equipment and environmental/energy saving measures will also be important. Intangible investments such as the acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks could also be focused on. There is also potential for increased growth and employment in the arts & creative sector in County Leitrim which was highlighted as an area requiring support in the new programme.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Existing micro and medium enterprises, new businesses, entrepreneurs, start-ups [both microenterprises and SMEs].
Geographic Area	County wide. Businesses in or close the most disadvantaged EDs will be targeted in the animation to participate in and benefit from these actions.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Existing businesses, entrepreneurs, new businesses, start-ups, expanding micro and SMEs.
Collaborating Organisations	LAG & Partners, Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, WDC.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 x existing businesses supported ▪ 2 x new businesses supported ▪ Number of new jobs created 6 x FTE and 2 Seasonal ▪ Number of existing jobs sustained 10 FTE and 5 part time

Strategic Action 4.1.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Supporting Female Entrepreneurs
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	<p>This strategic action will support the development of existing and new business led by Female Entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Women entrepreneurs can provide innovative solutions to existing problems in various industries. They often bring different perspectives, insights, and ideas to their businesses that can help drive growth and innovation.</p> <p>By having an action dedicated to assisting existing and new Female Entrepreneurs it is more likely that women will take the first step to develop their business idea or further expand their existing enterprise.</p>
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Existing and new Female Entrepreneurs.
Geographic Area	County wide. Businesses in or close the most disadvantaged EDs will be targeted in the animation to participate in and benefit from these actions.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Existing and new Female Entrepreneurs.
Collaborating Organisations	LAG & Partners, Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, WDC
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 x new Female Entrepreneurs supported ▪ 3 x existing Female Entrepreneurs supported ▪ Number of new jobs created 3 x FTE and 4 Seasonal P/T ▪ Number of existing jobs sustained x 3

Theme 1: Economic Development & Job Creation

Local Objective 5

Local Objective 5.1 Title of Local Objective: Rural and Artisan Food Production	
Financial Allocation [€]	€150,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	There are numerous artisan and specialty food producers based throughout the county. 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. The Food Hub in Drumshanbo is fully occupied with plans for expansion into a new premises in the town. The Shed Distillery with its Visitor Centre and tours is a major boost to the Food Hub and has increased the profile of the food and drink sector in the county. Other businesses funded under the previous LEADER Programme based in Drumshanbo include Jinny's Bakery, Chef in a Box and McNiffes Boxy. This objective will focus on developing the food sector throughout the county.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Rural Food Production, investment in artisan and micro, small and medium food producers to develop and expand rural food production, skills development and marketing

Strategic Action 5.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Rural and Artisan Food Production
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	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. This in turn will increase the numbers employed in food sector in county by 2027. Supports for artisan food networks will help to raise the profile of the sector in the county. Capital investment in equipment will also be vital for the sector. Existing and new artisan food businesses will be supported.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Existing food micro and medium enterprises, new businesses, entrepreneurs, start-ups [both microenterprises and SMEs] and community enterprises
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[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Existing food micro and medium enterprises, new businesses, entrepreneurs, start-ups [both microenterprises and SMEs] and community enterprises
Collaborating Organisations	LAG & Partners, Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, WDC, Food Networks.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 projects funded ▪ Number of new jobs created - 6FTE ▪ Number of existing jobs sustained - 10FTE

Theme 1: Economic Development & Job Creation

Local Objective 6.1

Local Objective 6.1 Title of Local Objective: Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises	
Financial Allocation [€]	€140,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	Many social enterprises are filling gaps in service provision, which the mainstream commercial economy is not willing or able to deliver due to non-economic returns. These include childcare, social services, community and cultural activities and in some cases business supports. Social Enterprises benefit marginalised communities and promote social inclusion. Many social enterprises are still recovering and rebuilding from the impact of Covid 19 restrictions.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises, support for enterprises whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact rather than maximising profits for their owners.

Strategic Action 6.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Social Enterprise Support
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	There are numerous social enterprises operating across county Leitrim providing services to a range of hard-to-reach groups and in the areas of tourism and small business supports, etc. They create employment opportunities, deliver vital services for local communities and leave positive impacts for society. Social enterprises provide employment and a range of services that are a necessity to the local community. Support is needed to stimulate investment expansion and to help sustain their activities.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	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 in the small area of disadvantage and also the various target groups around the county will be prioritised for funding and other supports.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Existing Social/Community Enterprises, Community Groups/Organisations.
Collaborating Organisations	LAG & partners, LEO, SEI, EI, Leitrim PPN.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 projects funded ▪ Number of new jobs created – 2 FTE ▪ Number of existing jobs sustained – 6 FTE

Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion

Local Objective 7.1

Local Objective 7.1	
Title of Local Objective: Develop, enhance and upgrade community services, facilities and infrastructure.	
Financial Allocation [€]	€1,750,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	Three strategic actions
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	There are a significant number of community and voluntary organisations across the county providing direct services, social, cultural and recreational opportunities in their own communities. This is only possible if the services and facilities are available and also reach a certain standard of service, comfort, accessibility and functionality. Facilities can range from community centres [including theatres, arts centres, heritage centres, etc.] to tidy town development, sporting and recreational facilities [both indoor and outdoor] and equipment, etc. According to the EU Action Plan for Smart Villages, Smart Villages are “rural areas and communities which build on their existing strengths and assets as well as on developing new opportunities”, where “traditional and new networks and services are enhanced by means of digital, telecommunication technologies, innovations and better use of knowledge”. Projects that initiate or facilitate a process for implementing a Smart Village approach will be supported. Thereby increasing economy activity and enhancing quality of life both in the rural areas of the county and our towns and villages.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Rural Infrastructure, measures to develop and/or enhance rural infrastructures, in order to provide an opportunity for more people to live and work in their rural communities.

Strategic Action 7.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Improving Rural Infrastructure
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	<p>This action will involve grant aid Investment for facilities, buildings, equipment, fixtures fittings, etc, to develop the range of community operated buildings and facilities which are targeted at supporting and engaging with various hard-to-reach groups within the communities across Leitrim. Projects to improve, upgrade and/or refurbish community facilities/infrastructure to offer activities and services which help to increase opportunity, reduce inequality and broaden community engagement will be supported. Access to services will be prioritized. Communities must demonstrate a need for their project. Analysis & Development and feasibility studies will be encouraged where required. Community groups or organisations wishing to expand or diversify their offering to include marginalised, new communities, or hard-to-reach communities will be supported. Projects must align with the principles of access for all, sustainability and participation.</p> <p>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.</p>
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	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 prioritized.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Community and voluntary groups
Collaborating Organisations	LAG and partners, Leitrim PPN, LDC
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhanced social inclusion / community facilities 15 ▪ New or additional service / facilities 3

Strategic Action 7.1.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Town and Village Enhancement
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	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. Use of innovative and digital solutions to local needs will prove important. Many of the towns and villages in the county have town plans or Tidy Town Plans, projects which align with these strategies will be supported. Town teams in the many towns and villages of the county have innovative projects which may be supported under this action. Projects considered should enable rural communities to make the most of new opportunities offered by a digital transformation, the transition to a low-carbon and circular economy and new forms of urban-rural linkages.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	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 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[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Town Business Associations, Town Networks, Community and Voluntary Groups.
Collaborating Organisations	LAG and partners, Leitrim PPN, LDC.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6 towns/villages to develop significant initiatives aimed at revitalization and the establishment of sustainable hubs.

Strategic Action 7.1.3	
Title of Strategic Action	Community Recreation and Sport related amenities
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	Leitrim is endowed with an array of mountains, lakes, woodlands, canals and rivers, as well as the shortest coastline in Ireland. These assets provide a superb base for the development of land and water based recreational amenities. According to the Recreation Strategy for County Leitrim 2023-2032 over the past two decades Leitrim has developed an impressive array of outdoor recreational amenities for walking, cycling, angling, boating, rowing, kayaking, canoeing and hillwalking. In line with the vision of the Recreation Strategy, projects which facilitate accessible, high quality outdoor recreational amenities which engage best practice sustainable environmental, tourism and economic development will be supported. These projects must also demonstrate a clear need, be open to all and have wide ranging benefits for the wider rural community within their hinterlands. County Leitrim also has a number of sporting facilities. According to Leitrim Sports Partnership there are 50 public sports facilities which are dominated by the GAA, community centres and public playgrounds. All these facilities require continued improvement and development. It is vital that supports are available to assist these facilities. All recreation and sporting amenities which are funded must demonstrate a need for the facility, be open to all and accessible for the wider community. Intergenerational projects and projects that benefit the wider community will be favoured.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Sporting Organisations, Clubs and Societies.
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 prioritized.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Sporting Organisations, Clubs and Societies.
Collaborating Organisations	LAG and partners, Leitrim Sports Partnership, Leitrim PPN, LDC.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 9 facilities supported through the lifetime of the programme [intergenerational projects, accessible to all]

Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion

Local Objective 8.1

Local Objective 8.1 Title of Local Objective: Accessible Services	
Financial Allocation [€]	€50,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	The LECP, the SICAP Programme, 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. Different needs and abilities should have equal access to services and facilities and supports will focus on access for all. The LDS will support social and community participation for people of all ages and abilities. Shared spaces and multifunctional and multi-use facilities and services prove beneficial for the entire community. All generations and disadvantaged groups should have access to social and community facilities which suit their needs thereby creating healthy, inclusive and sustainable communities.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Accessible Services, improve access to services for rural dwellers and increase social inclusion for people living in remote rural areas and groups who are at risk of social exclusion.

Strategic Action 8.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Accessible Services
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	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. Projects that improve existing community facilities to allow for the involvement and participation of a wider variety of groups and organisations particularly marginalised groups is key to vibrant rural communities. Projects that demonstrate collaboration between groups and users of facilities will be favoured resulting in multi-use, adaptable facilities which involve the entire community. Community facilities should serve the needs of the community, enhancing communications, relationships and cohesion.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Community groups businesses and people living in remote and isolated areas and those in the hard-to-reach groups
Geographic Area	County wide - projects which are focused on engaging with people in the most disadvantaged EDs, and also in the small area of disadvantage and also the various target groups around the county will be prioritised for funding and other supports.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Community groups businesses and people living in remote and isolated areas and those in the hard-to-reach groups
Collaborating Organisations	Leitrim County Council, Leitrim Age Friendly Alliance, Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities, community and voluntary groups
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engagement of target groups 6 ▪ Numbers engaged 200

Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion

Local Objective 9.1

Local Objective 9.1 Title of Local Objective: Support the engagement with ICT technologies and broadband services	
Financial Allocation [€]	€50,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	It has been recognised through the consultations that there is a need to address the growing digital divide and the exclusion of disadvantaged community groups. Broadband services continue 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. Much of our business is now conducted online including access to public services, banking, etc. Coupled with that, many groups rely on online fundraising and access to online services, this was particularly important during Covid 19 restrictions. As a result, it is important that communities are up to date and able to access such information. The major benefit of ICT on people and communities is the increased access to services and networks.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Optimising Digital Connectivity, improving IT infrastructure and connectivity, supporting the development of digital skills to enable rural dwellers to maximise the benefits of digitalisation.

Strategic Action 9.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Optimising Digital Connectivity
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	This action will concentrate on promoting the relevance of ICT to those most at risk of digital exclusion. It will also enable access to ICT through provision of training to communities and hard-to-reach groups. ICT includes but is not limited to mobile phones, tablets, laptops, PCs, digital cameras/TVs, internet/emailing, broadband, online shopping, online services, etc. This will ensure that they can embrace new technology and the opportunities which good quality broadband service can provide and allow. For many people living in remote rural areas which lack services, or transport, communicating and accessing supports and information through ICT is important.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Community groups, businesses and people living in remote and isolated areas and those in the hard-to-reach groups.
Geographic Area	Countywide.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Community groups, businesses and people living in remote and isolated areas and those in the hard-to-reach groups.
Collaborating Organisations	MSLETB, Leitrim PPN, Teagasc, IFA, NCYCS, Foroige, NLMG & NLWG, community groups.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engagement of target groups 6 ▪ Numbers engaged 200

Theme 2: Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion

Local Objective 10.1

Local Objective 10.1	
Title of Local Objective: Rural Youth	
Financial Allocation [€]	€50,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	It was recognised that the provision and development of facilities and supports for rural youth including youth cafes, encouragement of volunteers [particularly young people] and other integration actions and initiatives were required. There is continued need for additional youth services & facilities. Niche training targeted at youth and development of youth leadership skills will support youth to create positive change towards more inclusive, fair and sustainable communities. It was noted in the consultations that the age profile of many of groups and organisations in the county is dominated by the older age cohorts. There is a need to inspire youth involvement and enhance their capacity to aid in the development and implementation of projects within their communities
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Rural Youth, encourage rural youth participation in issues that affect their daily lives, build their leadership capabilities and provide on-going input to the development of future rural youth initiatives.

Strategic Action 10.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Rural Youth
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	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. This programme can add value to this work and provide additional services and supports for young people particularly excluded youth through training, engagement, focusing on employment and inclusion in community and voluntary activities for disadvantaged young people in prioritised areas. Intergenerational projects will also be considered.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Youth organisations, Community groups, Comhairle Na nOg.
Geographic Area	Countywide.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Youth organisations, Community groups, Comhairle Na nOg.
Collaborating Organisations	Leitrim County Council, MSLETB, Leitrim PPN, NCYCS, Foroige, NLMG & NLWG, community groups, advocate groups.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engagement of target groups 6 ▪ Numbers engaged 200

Theme 3: Sustainable Development of Rural Environment & Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

Local Objective 11.1

Local Objective 11.1	
Title of Local Objective: Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment	
Financial Allocation [€]	€475,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	Three strategic actions
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	<p>County Leitrim is rich and diverse supporting a range of unique habitats including mountains uplands, wetlands and waterways along with a short coastline. Many community groups are actively engaged in their local area in the preservation of their local environment. In line with the County Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2027, this objective will support projects that conserve, enhance and raise awareness of biodiversity and connect the people of Leitrim with their natural environment.</p> <p>Climate change is dictating that all people and communities change how they consume and use finite resources. This objective will contribute to climate change mitigation in the county. There is also scope for communities, businesses and farmers to engage in renewable energy projects, adopt new technologies and to develop energy solutions.</p>
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment, encourage protection and sustainable use of water resources, protection and improvement of local biodiversity and development of renewable energy.

Strategic Action 11.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Protection and Sustainable use of water resources
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	Capital supports will be made available for organisations proactive in the preservation and conservation management 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 along with Analysis and Development projects around water quality of local water courses. Projects that encourage and promote local community stewardship [protection, enhancement] of rivers and other waterbodies and raise awareness of the importance of the riparian zone as biodiversity corridors will be supported.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Conservation Groups, SME's
Geographic Area	Countywide
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Conservation Groups, SME's
Collaborating Organisations	LAG, Leitrim County Council, LAWPRO
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6 new projects assisted [mix of community groups, sporting organisations and businesses]

Strategic Action 11.1.2	
Title of Strategic Action	Protection and Improvement of local biodiversity
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	<p>County Leitrim contains a diversity of habitat types including peatland, wetland, woodland, grassland and coastal habitats. This action will be in line with the County Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2027. 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 conserve, enhance and raise awareness of biodiversity in the county. Capital supports will be made available for organisations proactive in the conservation of local biodiversity.</p> <p>Projects which focus on the following can be supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving our knowledge of the biodiversity resource ▪ Protection of wildlife corridors and biodiversity hotspots ▪ Biodiversity awareness, education and training ▪ Tackling Invasive Species
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Conservation Groups.
Geographic Area	County Leitrim
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Conservation Groups
Collaborating Organisations	LAG, Leitrim County Council, The Heritage Council, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6 new projects assisted [mix of community groups, sporting organisations and businesses]

Strategic Action 11.1.3	
Title of Strategic Action	Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Waste Management
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	There is a number of large community and business owned buildings in the county with a medium energy load which have the potential to migrate to renewable energy sources and review their energy and waste management. 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] for this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Businesses.
Geographic Area	Countywide.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Community Groups, Businesses.
Collaborating Organisations	Leitrim County Council, Local Enterprise Office, SEAI, WDC, Leitrim PPN.
Timeframe for Delivery	Throughout Programme with continuous animation
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 facilities supported through the lifetime of the programme.

Theme 3: Sustainable Development of Rural Environment & Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

Local Objective 12.1

Local Objective 12.1 Title of Local Objective: Climate Change Training, Study Tours and Events	
Financial Allocation [€]	€60,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	Climate change is considered the most urgent environmental issue facing the world today. Each one of us can play our part in reducing our carbon emissions. Reduce, reuse and recycle on a daily basis, use public transport / walk or cycle where possible, planting native broadleaf trees, retention of hedgerows and incorporating green energy into our homes and businesses are some ways that we as individuals and communities can make a difference. Raising awareness and providing training in climate change will help people to gain knowledge, motivation and confidence to mitigate the effects of climate change.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Climate Change Capacity Building, awareness and engagement around climate change and foster the development of a greater range of local responses to climate change

Strategic Action 12.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Climate Change, Training, Study Tours and Events
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	Different types of activities can support capacity building like targeted events, debates, videos, brochures, projects, workshops, study tours, etc. Training initiatives will be developed which offer intensive hands-on courses focusing on the climate change mitigation and adaptation for communities and businesses. Other examples include but are not limited to hedge management skills, appreciation and understanding of the native flora and fauna, foraging and sustainable land use, waste reduction initiatives/water conservation management, etc. This will be also be achieved through actions such as awareness raising, analysis and development and capacity building within the county across various sectors, farming, business residents, community groups etc.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	County Leitrim as a whole
Geographic Area	Countywide.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	County Leitrim as a whole
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	Throughout Programme with potential for a time limited call to boost interest.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is anticipated that a total of 250 individuals will receive capacity building measures across a range of themes and sectors. These will be needs led dependant on feedback received from those participating.

Theme 3: Sustainable Development of Rural Environment & Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

Local Objective 13.1

Local Objective 13.1 Title of Local Objective: Biodiversity and Water Quality Exemplar Projects	
Financial Allocation [€]	€500,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions under this Local Objective	One strategic action
Rationale for the Local Objective [max 250 words]	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 county Biodiversity Plan will lead on the delivery of this action which sets out to 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.
Alignment with LEADER Sub-theme	Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Providing support that encourages and complements climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

Strategic Action 13.1.1	
Title of Strategic Action	Biodiversity and Water Quality Exemplar Projects
Brief Description of the Action [max 250 words]	It is important that the general public become more proactive and aware about how to ensure the conservation and protection of the native flora and fauna of the county. The principle of this action is to have a number of iconic landmark projects that the public can visit and experience first-hand and learn about biodiversity and how to nurture the natural beauty of the region. Existing parks could look to focus on the biodiversity of the site including habitat creation, nature restoration and add sustainable aspects i.e., solar lighting, micro wind turbine, etc. Local community groups and recreation groups will be supported to undertake habitat mapping of their local town/village/townland or habitat area [e.g., bog, lake, river, etc] and thereby encourage biodiversity initiatives. Local area biodiversity plans will also be welcomed. There are also opportunities for the rewetting of boglands and rewilding of reclaimed sites with continuous studies of how native species return and develop over time.
Primary Target Group[s] for this Strategic Action.	LAG, Leitrim County Council, The Heritage Council, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, LAWPRO, Inland Fisheries Ireland.
Geographic Area	Countywide.
Organisation[s] delivering this Strategic Action.	Leitrim County Council, LDC, Community and voluntary groups
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	Throughout Programme with strategic animation and administration support to develop the projects and assist through the capital phase.
Anticipated Outputs/Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is anticipated that a total of 3 - 4 exemplar sites will be developed in the County.

6 Strategic Integration

The Local Development Strategy is underpinned by the application of the guiding principles of LEADER, one of which is integrated and multi sectoral actions as outlined in the infographic below. LEADER is not a single sectoral development programme but rather is cross-cutting in nature; therefore, the LDS has adopted a cross-sectoral approach integrating several sectors and linking economic, social, cultural and environmental stakeholders.



Figure 6.1 - Infographic: The guiding principles of LEADER

6.1 Overarching Policy Context

6.1.1 The LEADER Approach

First launched in 1991, LEADER has supported rural communities across the European Union including Ireland to actively engage in and take ownership the local development process in their local area, through a community led local development [CLLD] model.

The LDS is based on guidelines established by the EU and Irish Government. Recognising the importance of strategic integration and opportunity for co-operation, it has been designed to align with and add value to strategies at national, County and local level and the LECP in particular. This approach reflects both the grass roots emphasis and cross-cutting nature of the LEADER programme, impacting across a range of key sectoral areas. This is evidenced by the policy context within which the strategy has been developed, which has considered key strategies including:

European & International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] ▪ European Green Deal ▪ EU Long Term Vision for Rural Areas ▪ EU Rural Action Plan ▪ EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common Agricultural Policy [CAP] strategic plan 2023-2027 ▪ Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 ▪ Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2023 ▪ National Biodiversity Action Plan ▪ National Heritage Plan - Heritage Ireland 2030 ▪ Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework ▪ National Outdoor Recreation Strategy ▪ Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 ▪ Sustainable, Empowered and Inclusive Communities
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021 – 2027 ▪ North-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 ▪ Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2020-2032
County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Economic Community Plan 2023 – 2029 [draft] ▪ Leitrim County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 ▪ Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020 - 2025 ▪ Leitrim Tourism Strategy: A Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim 2015-2021 ▪ Leitrim Recreation Strategy 2023 ▪ Social Inclusion Activation Programme [SICAP] ▪ Leitrim Climate Change Adaption Strategy 2019 – 2024 ▪ County Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022 – 2027 ▪ Leitrim's Digital Strategy to 2025 ▪ Leitrim Retail Strategy 2015 - 2021

The table above clearly illustrates the cross-cutting nature of rural development and the ability of LEADER to impact across a range of sectoral areas. It clearly demonstrates the importance of co-ordination of action and clear communication among stakeholders to ensure added value, avoiding duplication of resources and displacement of existing policies and projects. The grass roots nature of LEADER means that is ideally placed to work at a more localised level than other interventions with the LAG mechanism via the LAG ensuring a platform for County wide discussion and planning to avoid overlap and ensure any gaps in provision are addressed.

6.1.2 The Rural Development and Regeneration Landscape

LEADER is one of a suite of rural development funds in Ireland that support the RDP, the other funds include:

1. The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund [RRDF]
2. Town and Village Renewal
3. Clar [Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais]
4. Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
5. Connected Hubs

Each of these Rural Development funds have defined objectives and remits. LEADER fits within the overall range of interventions and its remit for animation and capacity building provides a critical element which supports, facilitates and adds value to the other funds.

6.1.3 Strategic Context

In terms of strategic fit, key policy positions which the LDS recognises as central to rural development and regeneration in Leitrim and those sectors/issues which LDS consultation identified as being in need of are discussed as follows:

EU Policies

UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The LDS, in keeping with the UN Agenda and 17 associated Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], recognises that there are three core integrated elements to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental factors. It also recognises the importance of collaboration and partnership, reflected in the LAG delivery mechanism and LAG participation.

The Agenda's commitment to sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies is reflected in the LDS theme promoting enterprise, which includes efforts to support rural youth employment and women's economic empowerment as reflected in the UN Agenda.

The UN Agenda also recognises the importance of sustainable management of our natural resources in supporting both social and economic development and states its determination to sustainably use forests, protect biodiversity and ecosystems in addition to promoting sustainable tourism. This is in line with feedback informing the LDS for Leitrim with consultation identifying a need for sustainable use of natural resources and the County's unique landscape.

The European Green Deal

Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, the European Green Deal aims to transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, ensuring:

- no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050
- economic growth decoupled from resource use
- no person and no place left behind

Key goals of the EU Green Deal include Europe as the first climate-neutral continent by 2050; at least 55% less net greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 1990 levels; and three billion additional trees to be planted in the EU by 2030.

The priorities of the EU Green Deal are reflected in National and Regional policy and strategy. At the local level, the Leitrim County Development Plan and the Draft Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) both contain goals, objectives and actions that are informed by these priority areas. The LDS was informed by these local level documents, and endeavours to support progress in the key goals of the EU Green Deal through the identified Local Objectives and Strategic Actions.

EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union brings together the most important personal freedoms and rights enjoyed by citizens of the EU into one legally binding document. The Charter was declared in 2000, and came into force in December 2009 along with the Treaty of Lisbon. There are six main chapters in the Charter, each with several associated articles detailing specific rights. The six chapters are: Dignity, Freedoms, Equality, Solidarity, Citizen Rights and Justice.

The LDS considers these topics to be cross-cutting and endeavours to embed them across all objectives and actions. The strategic direction of the LDS was particularly informed by Chapter Three: Equality, which is reflected in the Local Objectives and actions under LEADER Theme 2 and Article 37 (within the Solidarity chapter) states that there is a fundamental right to Environmental Protection, which is reflected in the Local Objectives and actions in Theme 3.

EU Long Term Vision for Rural Areas

The EU Vision and Action Plan identifies four areas of action to enable:

- **Stronger:** focus on empowering rural communities, improving access to services and facilitating social innovation
- **Connected:** to improve connectivity both in terms of transport and digital access
- **Resilient:** preserving natural resources and greening farming activities to counter climate change while also ensuring social resilience through offering access to training courses and diverse quality job opportunities
- **Prosperous:** to diversify economic activities and improve the value added of farming and agri-food activities and agri-tourism

This long-term vision aims to address the challenges facing rural areas, building on opportunities for rural areas presented through the green and digital economies. In doing so it seeks to explore approaches to improve rural quality of life, achieve balanced territorial development and stimulate economic growth. The LDS for Leitrim presents a key opportunity to realise this Vision, with a commitment to the green economy and potential to support environmental projects while also exploring digital opportunities through SMART Villages.

National Policies

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

As part of the National Planning Framework, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund provides investment to support rural renewal, strengthen and build resilience in rural communities and assist in the regeneration of towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. The Framework identifies key national strategic outcomes the following of which are of particular relevance and have been supported by LEADER:

Compact Growth – Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work.

Strengthened rural economies and communities - Rural areas play a key role in defining our identity, in driving our economy and our high- quality environment and must be a major part of our country's strategic development to 2040. In addition to the natural resource and food sector potential as traditional pillars of the rural economy, improved connectivity, broadband and rural economic development opportunities are emerging which offer the potential to ensure our countryside remains and strengthens as a living and working community.

A strong economy supported by enterprise, innovation and skills - creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. It can be achieved by building regional economic drivers and by supporting opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy, to leverage the potential of places. Delivering this outcome will require the coordination of growth and place making with investment in world class infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.

Enhanced amenity and heritage - This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.

The LDS Action Plan and associated outcomes are in line with those set out above, ensuring that LEADER investment at County level across Leitrim is well positioned to contribute to the national policy framework.

Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025

The vision:

‘Our Vision is for a thriving rural Ireland which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development, which is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and which recognises the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places, and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment.’

The key deliverables to which the LDS can contribute in Leitrim include:

- Remote working
- Revitalising Rural Towns and Villages
- Jobs for Rural Ireland
- Rural Living
- Rural Ireland’s Unique Tourism, Culture & Heritage
- Supporting Communities to create their own future
- Agriculture, the Marine and Forestry
- Transitioning to a climate neutral economy

Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025

High level goals established by the roadmap are in keeping with LEADER aims, including building inclusive communities through the encouragement of active citizenship and ensuring everyone has access to quality services. The roadmap recognises the challenges facing rural areas, including the quality of local infrastructure and need for investment to support the development of rural communities.

With its rural focus and active grass roots presence LEADER can contribute to building more inclusive rural communities and supporting the roadmap in its efforts, both interventions recognising the cross-cutting nature of social inclusion.

Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan 2023 is the second annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2019. The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. LEADER in Leitrim has a long-established commitment to Climate Action and will continue to animate projects which are environmentally beneficial.

National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy

The Government’s vision for the bioeconomy is to grow Ireland’s ambition to be a global leader for the bioeconomy through a co-ordinated approach that harnesses Ireland’s natural resources and competitive advantage and that fully exploits the opportunities available while monitoring and avoiding unintended consequences. As part of the programme delivery there

is potential to stimulate bottom-up activity including collaboration, networking, innovation and cooperation between local development actors for bioeconomy and circular economy development.

Smart Villages Concept

'Smart Villages' is the sub-theme of the broader ENRD thematic work on 'Smart and Competitive Rural Areas'. Ideas and initiatives around revitalising rural services through digital and social innovation have been explored through this concept. It looked at how rural services can be improved and made more sustainable through the deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and through community-led actions and projects. This delivery model focuses on innovation and collaboration between local communities and agencies to deliver policy actions in the most effective and efficient way and is very much the cornerstone of the LEADER delivery model.

National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021

Objective 1 – Mainstream biodiversity into decision-making across all sectors; 1.1.3. All Public Authorities and private sector bodies move towards no net loss of biodiversity through strategies, planning, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Blue-Green infrastructure; 1.1.6. Local Authorities will review and update their Development Plans and policies to include policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity; 1.1.7. Develop a Green Infrastructure at local, regional and national levels and promote the use of nature-based solutions for the delivery of a coherent and integrated network; Objective 6 – Expand and improve management of protected areas and species; 6.2.1. Increase connectivity of the protected areas network using appropriate buffer zones, corridors, stepping stones and/or flyways

The All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025 (5-year Road Map)

The 2015-2020 Pollinator Plan made it clear that 33% of Ireland's bee species are threatened with extinction due to reduced amounts of food and safe nesting sites in our landscapes. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan for 2021-2025 is a new five-year road map that aims to help bees, other pollinating insects and our wider biodiversity – as part of better management of our whole landscape to permanently support our struggling biodiversity. The AIPP 2021-2025 has 186 actions spread across six objectives. It has a 16-person steering group who provide oversight, with implementation coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Responsibility for delivering the actions is shared out among the main partner organisations, who have committed to taking action and funding them. There are 6 core objectives.

Regional Policies

North-West Regional Enterprise Plan

The new plan includes projects and initiatives across the three North-West counties (Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal). Stakeholder consultation sessions highlighted the high level of collaboration and ambition that exists within the region, with a strong sense of optimism prevalent despite some regional challenges.

The following strategic actions listed in the plan will be given priority for implementation in the Local Development Strategy:

- Strategic Objective 1: Harness the potential of micro, small and medium indigenous businesses in the North-West Region through encouraging entrepreneurship and scaling of existing businesses
- Strategic Objective 3: Support the offering of the North-West Region as a place to work and invest high value jobs in

- Strategic Objective 4: Support the North-West's enterprise to mainstream climate action and transition to a low carbon future in their business planning

The Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027

The Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027 is a roadmap for the tourism industry and all stakeholders involved in the region to navigate the current challenges and steer a course towards recovery and future success. One of the most important aspects of this strategy will be to support tourism providers with the skills they need to navigate an uncertain operational environment and to be prepared to seize the opportunity when it presents itself.

Although Leitrim has the shortest shoreline of any coastal county of Ireland the Wild Atlantic Way plays a large part in the tourism success especially in the North of the County. The LDS will continue to support tourism and environmental development in this area to capitalise on the success of the Wild Atlantic Way.

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands 2018

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is the key experience tourism proposition for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, launched in 2018, alongside The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin – Surprising by Nature. Ireland's Hidden Heartlands embraces the heart of the country from Leitrim southwards to Lough Derg, through Roscommon, West Cavan, Longford, East Galway, East Clare and parts of Westmeath, Offaly and Tipperary. The IHH brand promises a bold and ambitious strategic focus on the tourism potential of Ireland's midlands, with the Shannon as its spine. The brand promises to 'bring to life for visitors the Midlands' rich natural assets including its many lakes, walkways and blueways'. Fáilte Ireland has identified the Shannon as one of two 'transformational signature products of scale' in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, that are key to unlocking the region's potential (the second being the Beara Breifne Way). This recognises the value and potential of the Shannon and Shannon Erne Waterway, and associated lakes and canals, as a critical corridor for water based and land-based tourism activities. These are essential elements of Leitrim's recreational and tourism offering.

Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon (2020)

Waterways Ireland, in association with Fáilte Ireland and the Local Authorities within the Shannon region launched the Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon in 2020. The objectives are to reposition the combined Shannon Navigation and Shannon Erne Waterway (collectively referred to as 'The Shannon'), identifying world class visitor experiences based on the region's natural and cultural assets. The Masterplan sets out a co-ordinated strategy and development framework of scale to guide sustainable development of the Shannon as a compelling tourism destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. It serves as a roadmap for future tourism investment and resources, all of which should be directly aligned to the core proposition and experience development themes for the Shannon. The overall aim of the Shannon Masterplan to grow tourism in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands also aligns strongly with national rural development policy to drive rural development through tourism.

Northern & Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032

The Regional Spatial and Economy Strategy (RSES) provides a roadmap for effective regional development in the Northern & Western Regional Assembly area. It supports the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 (NPF and NDP) and the economic policies and objectives of the Government, by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic

framework for the development of the region. Development plans for counties within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) area must align with this RSES. The RSES seeks to realise an ambition for our region that is Vibrant, Connected, Natural, Smart and a Great Place to Live, consolidated by a strong settlement strategy focusing on 'People' and 'Places'. The intention is that it becomes a living framework, which will be supported as required by detailed action plans, investment proposals and delivery partnerships. It brings a new 'place based' approach that involves tapping into the economic potential that remains unused, so that all parts of regions, be they cities, towns or their rural hinterlands, can contribute to national development. Investment in the creation of 'place' is key to delivering the key elements that inform business location choices.

Local Policies

Leitrim County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

The plan sets out a series of strategies, the following of which are closely aligned with LEADER and thus of particular relevance to the LDS:

- Economic Development
- Tourism
- Sustainable Communities
- Transport
- Infrastructure And Energy
- Rural Development
- Heritage & Biodiversity
- Climate Action And Renewable Energy

Through a series of policy actions including diversification, rural enterprise, tourism, food sector and outdoor recreation including Blueway and Greenway provision there is clear alignment between the County Development Plan and LDC which collectively provides a needs led framework for a co-ordinated and strategic approach to rural regeneration in Leitrim and further underpins the importance of co-ordination among partners and stakeholders via the LAG and Local Development Company.

Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan [LECP] 2023 – 2029

Currently [July 2023] in draft form pending Committee approval, the new LECP for Leitrim will promote a collaborative approach which includes key LEADER areas such as economic growth, development of sustainable tourism, town and village regeneration while also supporting community development in key areas including wellbeing, inclusion and education. The LDS represents an important mechanism in supporting outcomes in these areas through its work at local community level in supporting and sustaining rural regeneration while building community capacity.

Of particular relevance to the LDC is the LECP's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals [SDG], adopting a cross-cutting policy approach which will underpin the new LECP, ensuring sustainability and climate action are pivotal to Leitrim's development model and, in doing so, very much in sync with LEADER's own core principles and UN SDG commitment.

Leitrim LECP Socio-Economic Statement

This statement was prepared as part of the LECP development process to generate discussion and ideas about the goals and outcomes envisioned for Leitrim over the 2023 – 2029 timeframe. The statement was informed by a policy review and socio-economic analysis in addition to identification of strengths, challenges, weaknesses and threats. This process

identified potential areas and themes which the new LECP can address and which the LDS Action Plan will seek to align with and add value to.

High level goals drafted as part of the development and consultation process set out an initial strategic direction [pending approval at time of writing] for the new LECP are as follows and highlight significant opportunity for the LEADER LDS to make meaningful contribution to:

1. Leitrim will continue to develop as an inclusive, healthy and equitable county that supports wellbeing and is celebrated as a great place to live
2. Leitrim will embrace climate action to increase the sustainability of its communities and unlock the benefits of the green economy
3. Leitrim's towns and villages will continue to be revitalised and regenerated as attractive places to live, work and visit
4. Leitrim will be recognised for its educational attainment, life-long learning and training opportunities
5. Leitrim will strengthen and diversify its innovative economy, create meaningful employment and promote sustainable enterprise
6. Leitrim will champion its natural and cultural environment and support the development of the county as a tourism destination in a sustainable and balanced manner

Leitrim Heritage Plan 2020 - 2025

The Leitrim Heritage Plan aims to: *'To connect all Leitrim residents with their shared heritage and to work together to conserve and celebrate Leitrim's unique heritage, for the benefit of both present and future generations'*.

The plan recognises the need to support the conservation and preservation of Leitrim's heritage for future generations in addition to awareness raising, fostering community engagement in local heritage and supporting sustainable heritage tourism in Co. Leitrim. This grass roots emphasis clearly aligns with LEADER principles and presents significant opportunity for rural regeneration which is underpinned by community participation across all ages, preserving and celebrating the rural heritage of the County.

Leitrim Recreation Strategy 2023

Funded through the LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020, the County's Recreation strategy is ideally placed to fit with LEADER actions and needs which were identified during consultation, including support for outdoor recreation facilities and an interest in seeing further development of the tourism offer for visitors to the County. This includes development of infrastructure in the form of walking trails and enhanced accessibility of facilities.

The strategy is also in line with potential Co-operation project areas through the promotion of projects such as development of the Sligo-Leitrim Northern Counties Railway corridor, Greenway development along the Cavan-Leitrim Railway corridor and the Shannon Erne Blueway.

County Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022 – 2027

Funded through the LEADER Programme 2014-2020, the County Leitrim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2027 aims to raise awareness of biodiversity amongst individuals and communities in County Leitrim by providing support, guidance and encouragement to engage with biodiversity through education and practical conservation. This is clearly in line with the principles of LEADER and the themes of the biodiversity action plan align directly with this Local Development Strategy. The themes of the biodiversity plan are as follows;

Theme 1. Improving our Knowledge of the Biodiversity Resource

Theme 2. Protection of Wildlife Corridors and Biodiversity Hotspots

Theme 3. Biodiversity Awareness, Education and Training

Theme 4. Tackling Invasive Species

Theme 5. Biodiversity and Climate Change

Leitrim Tourism Strategy: A Growth Strategy for Tourism in Leitrim 2015- 2021

The strategy centres on six strategic pillars which are designed to develop the tourism sector in Leitrim, recognising challenges such as gaps in accommodation provision and building on attributes such as its landscape/scenery, water-based assets [the Shannon, lakes, canals], culture and community.

The pillars complement actions set out under the 2023 – 2027 LDS and collectively both plans provide significant opportunity to support tourism growth which is both sustainable and sensitive to the environment and landscape of the County which is in itself a key asset:

1. Customer Centricity
2. Product and Infrastructure
3. Experience Development
4. Collaboration
5. Marketing and Sales
6. Governance and Implementation

What does this information tell us

- The LDS recognises the key role of the local authority and locally led actions in key sectoral areas including enterprise, tourism, recreation and heritage; the LAG will ensure these interests are reflected via LEADER through complementary action
- The LDS for Leitrim aligns with local/County, national and EU strategies, including the LECP and key local sectoral plans, ensuring added value via LEADER investment
- This includes coherence with to UN Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] and the EU Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas
- There is a need for support for rural communities and farm families through interventions such as LEADER to support local development and sustainability

Looking forward why is this relevant

- The role of the LCDC as LAG demonstrates and ensures co-ordination with other agencies/stakeholders and their associated plans/strategies to ensure synergy with the LDS
- This delivery mechanism ensures LEADER will contribute to a joined up approach to economic and community at the local level across Leitrim
- These policy positions have influenced the development of the LDC Action Plan to ensure actions align with both locally identified need and policy at County, regional and national level
- Synergies are identified at international, national and county level which the Action Plan will take forward, complementing other interventions and local development plans to ensure added value via
- The policy context underpins consultation findings and provides a robust evidence base for action

7. Networking

As part of its commitment to partnership working and networking and building on the results of the programme 2014 – 2020, the LAG will continue to work with strategic and delivery partners across the 2023 – 2027 programme at local, national and transnational level. This approach recognises the benefits of joint working to enhance the sharing of ideas, experiences and learning which can contribute to wider rural and local development initiatives while avoiding duplication and displacement.

7.1 Evidence of Participation

Leitrim LAG's commitment to co-operation and networking under the 2023–2027 programme is reflected in its participation in a wide variety of cross-sectoral networks and projects including the following:

County	National	Transnational
Public Participation Network [PPN], linkage groups & Environmental Network	Irish Local Development Network [ILDN]	EU CAP Network
Leitrim Community Networks	City and County Managers' Association [CCMA]	European LEADER Association for Rural Development [ELARD]
Leitrim Residents Network	National Rural Network	Social Farming
Leitrim Heritage Forum	Hidden Heartlands Steering Group	Innovating Communities [border counties]
Leitrim Recreation Forum		SMART Villages Transnational Group
Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group		
Leitrim Volunteer Centre		
County Migrant Strategy Group		
Leitrim Tourism Network		

7.2 Public Participation Network [PPN]

Leitrim PPN has over 200 members and engaged in the consultation workshops informing the LDS, ensuring that the voices and interests of its members were represented. As a County wide presence, the PPN has a critical role to play in both dissemination of information and facilitating community representation in an equitable and meaningful manner. Its involvement with the LAG is critical given LEADER's grass roots, local community development approach and represents an important opportunity to engage with hard-to-reach communities on an ongoing basis.

PPN members consulted as part of developing the LDS were about the importance of an ongoing engagement/consultation process should remain in place throughout the lifetime of the LEADER programme, so that changing needs within the County can be identified and where possible, responded to. The need for focus on new communities, given the changing demographics of Leitrim, was also noted, enabling those groups to integrate more fully into community life with the need for integration across all vulnerable or hard-to-reach groups within the community being recognised.

7.3 Co-operation Projects

Co-operation is defined in the LEADER Guidelines as “fostering and supporting co-operation and collaboration between LAGs at national and European level” and is one of the seven guiding principles. The Scheme seeks to encourage rural areas to work together on joint projects, recognising the mutual benefits for all participants. This includes access to a wider base of information, ideas and views in addition to learning from best practice projects in other areas, innovation and skills development opportunities.

Co-operation projects should clearly define partner roles and responsibilities and set out the relevant skills and experience each brings to the projects with demonstration of added value through a clear indication of outcomes. Under the LEADER Programme 2023- 2027, co-operation project selection will be undertaken exclusively by LAGs in order that they can ensure most effective targeting of resources which will contribute to LDS objectives and facilitate joint working with partners from other LAG areas/jurisdictions.

Leitrim LAG participated in five Co-Operation projects under the 2014 – 2020 programme, representing 3% of its overall budget. Both the Local Development Company as implementing Partner and Leitrim County Council as Financial Partner have extensive experience in collaboration and co-operation projects, including cross border work.

For the purposes of the programme 2023 – 2027, Leitrim LAG has identified the following potential projects for co-operation through its evaluation and consultation processes:

7.3.1 Innovating Communities

This co-operation project focussed on building community capacity in the border region and was led by Monaghan Integrated Development in partnership with Leitrim Development Company, Cavan County Development, Donegal Local Development CLG, Louth LEADER Partnership and Sligo LEADER Partnership.

Recognising the Community Led local Development [CLLD] approach of LEADER, the project helped rural communities develop new ways of thinking and new ways of working in order to build the confidence and ability of communities to develop new ideas and take an active role in decision making impacting their local areas, fostering ownership of emerging ideas. Scope exists for further collaboration under this project area, which saw awards for both capital and training made under the previous programme. Given the changing demographics of the border region, co-operation such as this on a border wide basis presents scope for sharing of experiences and learning and the generation of new approaches for the sub-region. Sustainability can also be supported through engagement of volunteers as peer educators/mentors and enabling community to adopt a people-centred approach to rural regeneration.

7.3.2 Film

This inter-territorial project proposal 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. A bespoke training programme will be specifically developed to promote the development of 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.

Hands-on training will be provided, enabling allow students to work with filmmakers on a regular basis, for basic foundation training and direct experience in key areas including storytelling, writing, directing, camera, sound and editing. It is intended that the initiative will provide over twenty individuals who have expressed a distinct interest in the sector with the opportunity to learn from those already directly involved in the industry with the ultimate goal

of generating employment in the region. The proposed training initiative would run for a period of six months.

7.3.3 Outdoor Recreation

Consultation identified enthusiasm for outdoor recreation, including walking trails, greenways and development of the County's water based assets with a view that the latter in particular are under-utilised. Given the growing interest in these areas both regionally and nationally, scope exists to explore potential co-operation projects, including cross border working. Such projects can generate significant health and economic benefits for rural areas in addition to environmental outcomes.

7.3.4 Social Farming

The benefits of social farming were identified as a potential response to health and wellbeing concerns, especially in relation to mental health. The County has an established track record in this area and sharing learning and best practice both nationally and transnationally could be further explored through the Co-Operation measure.

What does this information tell us

- Participation in networks provides significant opportunity for co-operation and sharing of best practice which can improve rural communities locally, nationally and internationally. The proposed network participation set out above is in line with LEADER guidelines for networking and can generate synergy at each level for the benefit of all partners, acting as a catalyst for collaboration and tangible outputs in the form of co-operation projects.
- Scope exists in key areas such as outdoor recreation to impact both locally and regionally/transnationally generating vital outcomes for rural communities in relation to environment, economy, health and wellbeing
- The 2023-2027 LDS aims to build on the achievement of the previous programme through further engagement with Innovating Communities which can help build community capacity and consequently address a key need in relation to low infrastructure communities as identified through both the evaluation and LDS consultation processes.

Looking forward why is this relevant

- In addition to the identified Co-operation projects outlined above, Leitrim's participation in networking platforms during the course of the programme may lead to identifying other co-operation opportunities as further needs and potential partnerships emerge
- Identified project proposals embrace the CLLD model and have been informed by robust community consultation, ensuring full compliance with LEADER principles
- Mindful of the administration resource requirements attached to Co-operation projects, the LAG is keen to ensure best use of resources by engaging in projects which can have a tangible impact on rural communities across Leitrim

8. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation Plan

8.1 Introduction

Local Action Groups will be required to monitor progress on the delivery of their approved LDS and to provide an evaluation on the impact of the support provided throughout the programming period.

This will be done by through the submission of an Annual Progress Report [APR] and Implementation Plan from 2024 onwards. The APR will cover the LAG's key activities, achievements and challenges during the previous calendar year or part thereof. It will also provide the LAG with the opportunity to outline in an Implementation Plan their planned actions and activities for the coming calendar year.

8.2 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.

In keeping with the LEADER 2023-2027 guidelines, monitoring will include the following:

- Setting up the performance monitoring and evaluation framework - Regulation 2021/2115.
- The calculation of output and result indicators - Regulation 2021/2290, and;
- Evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans and the provision of information for monitoring and evaluation - Regulation 2022/1475

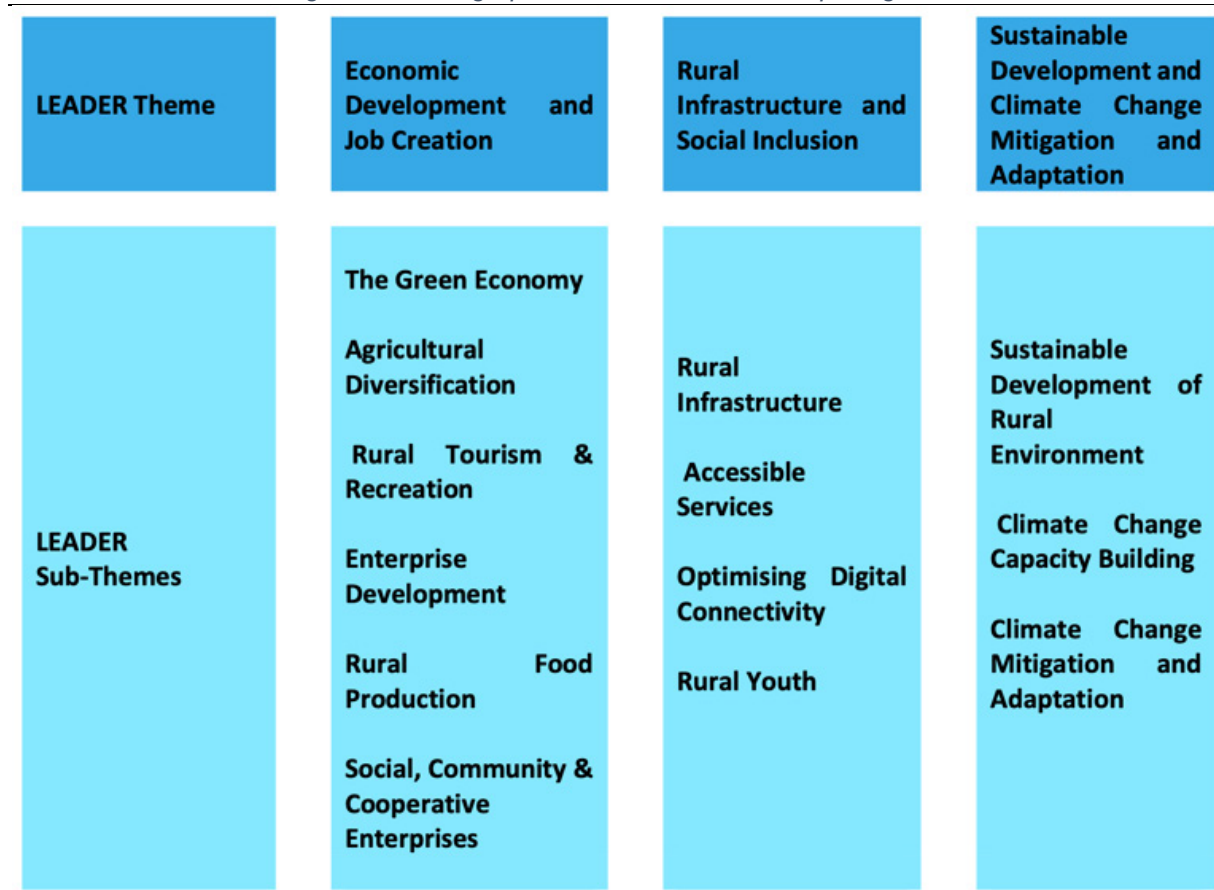
8.2.1 Added Value of LEADER

In addition to demonstrating programme impacts specific to the seven principles of LEADER [Page 5], the added value of LEADER will be demonstrated through assessment of:

- Improved social capital
- Improved governance
- Enhanced results and impacts of programme and strategic implementation

The monitoring framework for the LEADER 2023-2027 programme is underpinned, as follows:

Figure 8.1 - Infographic: LEADER Relationship Diagram



Source: LEADER Guidelines 2023-2027

In terms of specific monitoring, the LAG has developed the following evaluation framework consistent with the schedule of Local Objectives and subsequent actions:

8.2.3 Evaluation Framework

Local Objective	Actions	Summary Description	Projects	New FTE	Sustained FTE	New PTE	Sustained PTE	Additional Outputs
1	1	[a] Capital grant: Green business	3	2	3			
2	1	[a] Capital grant: Farm [non-agricultural activity]	5	4	4			
3	2	[a] Capital Grant: Niche/specialist accommodation	6	3	3	4		4,320 bed nights
		[b] Outdoor recreation	6	3	3	4		4,320 bed nights
4	2	[a] Businesses: Buildings & equipment	6	6	10	2	5	
		[b] Female entrepreneurship	6	3	3	4		
5	1	[a] Marketing & supply chains	4	6	10			
6	1	[a] Social economy tourism & small business	4	2	6			
7	3	[a] Community operated buildings	15					3 new services
		[b] Town & village enhancement	6					
		[c] Sports & recreation	9					
8	1	[a] Accessible services	6				200 people	
9	1	[a] Digital connectivity	6				200 people	
10	1	[a] Rural Youth: Education & training	6				200 people	
11	3	[a] Preservation of water resources	6					
		[b] Preservation of local environment	6					
		[c] Business & Community migration to renewable energy	10					
12	1	[a] Training: Preservation of the environment					250 trained	
13	1	[a] Iconic landmark projects	3				3-4 sites developed	
13	19		113	29	42	14	5	

8.2.4 Stages of Monitoring Process

Stage	Type	Description
1	Application	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 Independent 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
2	Assessment	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.
3	Approval	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.
4	Claims	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.
5	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.

8.3 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.

8.4 Evaluation and Review

8.4.1 Objectives for the Evaluation of the LDS

- To analyse the process of implementation, focusing on participation of the community;
- To analyse the impact or changes that have occurred as a result of the objectives as set out in the LDS;
- 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;
- To identify important lessons to be learnt and make recommendations for the implementation and delivery of future projects;
- To inform future programming and policy;
- To ensure transparency and accountability;
- To demonstrate what has been achieved and the added value of the LEADER approach to the LDS delivery

8.4.2 Evaluation Schedule and Timing

When	What	Timing	Availability
Year 1	End of year report	Quarterly Report	LCDC website
Year 2	End of year report	Quarterly Report	LCDC website
Year 3	End of year report	Quarterly Report	LCDC website
Year 4	End of year report	Quarterly Report	LCDC website
Year 5	Final Programme Evaluation	End of programme final report	LCDC website

What does this information tell us

- A monitoring and evaluation framework is in place consistent with the requirements of the LEADER guidelines 2023-2027

Looking forward why is this relevant

- There is a requirement to fulfil the monitoring and evaluation processes as set out in the LEADER guidelines 2023-2027

9. Financial Plan

9.1 Budget

The total budget for the Leitrim LEADER Programme 2023-2027 is €6,300,000. Of this a maximum of 25% can be allocated towards administration and animation.

It is proposed that the costs of the Article 48 Checks are outside of this budget. This differs from the 2014-2020 Programme budget whereby the Article 48 costs were included in the administration and animation budget.

9.2 Allocation by Theme

Leitrim RDP identifies 13 'Local Objectives' against which there are 19 core actions.

Figure 9.1 - Infographic: Summary of LEADER budget by Local Objectives

Objectives	Theme	Budget	Actions
Local Objective 1	The Green Economy	€150,000	1
Local Objective 2	Agricultural Diversification	€100,000	1
Local Objective 3	Rural Tourism & Recreation	€850,000	2
Local Objective 4	Economy & Employment	€400,000	2
Local Objective 5	Rural & Artisan Food Production	€150,000	1
Local Objective 6	Social, Community & Co-operative Enterprise	€140,000	1
Local Objective 7	Community Services, Facilities & Infrastructure	€1,750,000	3
Local Objective 8	Accessible Services	€50,000	1
Local Objective 9	ICT technology & Broadband	€50,000	1
Local Objective 10	Rural Youth	€50,000	1
Local Objective 11	Sustainable Rural Environment	€475,000	3
Local Objective 12	Climate Change Training, Study Tours & Events	€60,000	1
Local Objective 13	Biodiversity & Water Quality Exemplar Projects	€500,000	1
		€4,725,000	19

9.2.1 Summary of LEADER programme outputs

- Commitment of €4,725,000 to develop the rural aspect of the County
- Delivery of 19 focussed actions
- Creation of 29 new full-time equivalent jobs
- Sustain 42 full-time equivalent jobs
- Creation of 14 new part-time equivalent [and/or seasonal] jobs
- Sustain 5 part-time equivalent [and/or seasonal jobs]
- Support the generation of 4,320 bed nights regarding rural accommodation in the County
- Development of 3 new services in community operated buildings
- Engagement of 200 [hard-to-reach] people in delivery of accessible services
- Engagement of 200 [hard-to-reach] people in delivery of digital connectivity
- Engagement of 200 young people in education and training programmes
- Training of 250 local people in preservation of the environment

- Development of 3-4 iconic landmark sites as exemplar projects for biodiversity and water quality

9.3 Projected Spend Profile

The LAG have developed an estimated profile of allocation and cumulative spend across the 2023-2027 period, as follows:

Year	Annual Allocation
2023	€363,461.54
2024	€1,090,384.62
2025	€1,090,384.62
2026	€1,090,384.62
2027	€1,090,384.62
Total	€4,725,000

What does this information tell us

- There is a defined budget allocation for the Leitrim LEADER Programme
- There is a defined allocation for administration and animation
- The LAG has developed a detailed profile of budget allocation against Local Objectives [13] and subsequent Actions [19]

Looking forward why is this relevant

- Monitoring of spend will be an important aspect of programme delivery
- There may be requirement to move funding between Local Objectives depending on the uptake of Actions by the local community
- Budget allocations are less than in previous years of LEADER and there are more objectives to meet – there will be a challenge to deliver more with less funding.