



Community Spirit

A Community Plan for Multyfarnham

This Action Plan was part-funded by Westmeath Local Community Development Committee under the Rural Development Programme (LEADER 2014-2020)



Contents

Explanation of Process	3
Multyfarnham	5
Our Vision	7
Our Values	7
Community Engagement and Key Findings	8
Quality of Life Conditions	12
Our Outcomes.....	13

Explanation of Process

Blue Moss was commissioned by Westmeath Community Development to undertake an Action Planning Initiative for seven rural towns and villages in County Westmeath, one of which is Multyfarnham. This initiative will act in support of the regeneration of these rural towns and villages and will prioritise projects for development in each of the seven areas.



Action planning for rural towns and villages has been set out in the LEADER Local Development Strategy for County Westmeath under the subtheme of Rural Towns. This sub-theme supports the regeneration of rural towns, promoting them as attractive places to visit, live and do business in. This is to be achieved by building on the economic strengths and infrastructure of the area while also addressing the key challenges for business, community and recreation.

The process involving all seven villages took place over six months, between January and June 2018. They all followed a similar process based on a participatory model called Outcomes Based Accountability or OBA. Blue Moss have used this approach before as it is a process that is interactive and aimed at turning words into action. Each village went through the same stages however the number of meetings varied slightly depending on the availability of the group.

Process Stages:

- I. Development of a Vision Statement and underpinning values. This included considering what is good about living in the village and what would the group like to see in the future.
- II. SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of the village. The information gathered was then considered against statistical data, principally drawing upon a census completed in 2016.
- III. Deeper consideration of the wellbeing that the group wanted to see in their village and the projects and activities that would be needed to create these. This led to the point of the first draft of the plan being developed which was circulated with the group.
- IV. Joint meeting of the villages where they considered aspects of their individual plans that overlapped and how the villages could support each other in reaching their goals. Those participating included:
 1. Castletown Geoghegan
 2. Collinstown
 3. Coole
 4. Milltownpass

5. Multyfarnham
 6. Rosemount
 7. Streete
- V. Identification of potential partners and strategies- village representatives met with public bodies and agencies relevant to their plans.
 - VI. Joint launch of all seven community plans hosted by Westmeath Community Development.

Multyfarnham

Multyfarnham is located at the intersection of the L1820 and L1618 local routes, approximately 12km northwest of Mullingar and approximately 8km southwest of Castlepollard. The village has a long history, developing around the main street.

The landscape and farmland surrounding the village is of high quality with many fine hills and lakes nearby. The village provides connection to Lough Derravaragh, offering opportunity to cycle, walk and horse ride in beautiful environments.

There is evidence that people lived in the area from sometime after 3400 BC with a number of ancient burial sites having been found. It is also likely that the crannogs at nearby Lough Derravaragh and Lough Iron were used as dwellings during the Bronze Age.

The arrival of the Normans in Ireland saw the formation of the heart of the village. A Motte to the south of the village is reckoned to be the earliest surviving evidence of a settlement at Multyfarnham. It is also thought that the first bridges of Multyfarnham were established by the Normans.

An ancient monastery was also established during the time of the Normans. The Franciscan Friary was founded in 1268. This friary has been central to the life and development of the village since its establishment.

During the English conquest of Ireland the monastery was attacked numerous times and was burned on two separate occasions. It was also an influential site during the wars of the 1640s. In 1839 the friary was rebuilt and a Franciscan College was opened there in 1899. This college transitioned to become an agricultural college which remained open until 2003.

Multyfarnham was hard hit by the closure of this well-known Agricultural College, which had been run by the Franciscan Order. This resulted in the community not having access to a range of services and facilities that people had relied upon. It put pressure on community connections, removing access to meeting rooms and sports pitches for local people.

This situation did act as a catalyst though, bringing people together to consider how they can develop and provide their own services. At the beginning of 2005 some local groups came together and began working to develop a range of facilities for Multyfarnham. The work of this group proved so successful that scores in the National Tidy Town improved significantly.

The key element of the group's intentions was to establish a new community building and sports hall. With support from Westmeath Community Development, Westmeath County Council, Clann Credo and local input the Community Centre and Sports Hall is now fully operational and providing significant benefit to local people.

The centre includes meeting rooms, a handball alley, indoor sports and drama facilities, a fully-equipped kitchen and space for a crèche. The deep involvement of local people in development of the site has ensured its use has continued to grow and to meet needs of people from the local area.

In connection with this positive development, Larcc Cancer Support Centre and Irish Autism Action are now on the site of the Friary, along with Portiuncula Nursing Home. These connections ensure that community spirit can continue to thrive and that facilities remain available for service to local people.

Our Vision

Our vision is that all the people of Multyfarnham know that it is a good place to be alive.

We care for one another, ensuring every person knows they belong.

We remain connected as people and to places such as the Friary and our existing natural landscape.

We promote the employment, safety and health and well-being of everyone connected to Multyfarnham.

Our Values

Respect and Tolerance:

- For all our people, especially our young and old.
- For property and our infrastructure.
- For our environment.

Worth:

- Everyone has value and we want to encourage and enable all local talent in our actions.

Belonging:

- All our actions will further build the community spirit and sense of connection in Multyfarnham.

Heritage:

- Our history is important. We will continue to cherish our heritage – built and otherwise – in all our development.

Community Engagement and Key Findings

The community spent time considering the current status of Multyfarnham. This included reflecting on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats connected to the village. This following is a record of the views of those who participated.

Strengths in Multyfarnham

- Outgoing and open people
- Sports facilities
- Inclusive of people's opinions
- Acceptance of others e.g. religions and cultures
- Steeped in history: Friary; ruin; Wilsons; Fairy Forts; Children of Lir connection
- Friendships and positive community spirit
- Garda station
- Proximity to Dublin
- Friary (750 years old)
- Community Centre
- Bars and restaurants
- General infrastructure
- Lots of clubs
- Tourist attraction
- Lots of younger people
- Good choice of secondary schools
- Well kept land
- Picturesque and idyllic village (Tidy Town)
- Our park
- Broadband in the village
- Unspoilt landscape and wildlife, including lakes and rivers
- The friendliness of the people in the community
- Steeped in history
- The community centre is very active
- Good childcare provision
- Football team
- Super park
- Very tidy town
- Respect for older people as well as our young people
- Respect for the environment
- Promote traditional music

Weaknesses and Threats

- No fulltime Garda station – impacts on safety and security
- Farming – government cuts and Brexit
- Population decline – no employment opportunities
- Business rates and insurance; economic decline
- Threat of business disclosure
- Weather – climate change
- Mining license – Chinese company
- Pylons – proposed windfarm; electricity, affecting visual
- Road routes – lorries – village traffic
- Needs to be ‘cohesiveness’ in the county and country regarding environmental issues. This needs to include better communication with the villages
- Local people do not have enough of a say on change and development connected to the village
- Lack of tourists
- Lack of infrastructure for start-ups
- Transport – need better connections or will remain isolated
- Doctor and pharmacist
- Insufficient development in connection to lake, walking and cycling
- No Post Office
- No ATM
- No continuity – do we always see things through?
- No brand or image
- No morning coffee – that provides a service to all age groups
- Weak sense of inclusion

Opportunities in Multyfarnham

- Tourism – lake and river
- Rediscover the old walkway to the lake and create a walk around the lake and/or long the river
- Outdoor – hub for walking and cycling
- Provide, service and extend broadband
- Community café with tourist information available
- Improve public transport – better connections; reuse the Multy train station?; night time transport needed
- Entertainment including an adult drama group
- Annual festival centred on Children of Lir
- Tap into Centre Parc in Ballymahon – create a day trip to Multyfarnham
- Bridle Way - Multy to Crookewood (horse routes and cycles)

Consideration of County Wide Information

Participants also considered a range of census information connected to Multyfarnham and to County Westmeath. Although there was some concern that the census information did not correspond directly to what local people understand as 'the village', there were some broad reflections given. The following was recorded.

Population Change

- Aging population
- Almost 1/3 retired. Does this affect village vibrancy?
- ¼ are aged 0-4. The opposite to the aging population so how do we cater for these people and encourage them to remain in the village in the long term?

Access

- To lakes
- Issues of land access
- Public transport is weak but then use is low

Health

- High suicide rate
- Significant amount of carers for people with disabilities. ¼ of these carers do more than 6 hours per day

Tourism

- This is low.
- Spaces are not utilised
- There is history and heritage sites and much more could be done with these.

Employment

- Professional services focussed
- Low numbers in building and agriculture

Broadband

- Percentage seems good but how much is urban focussed?
- Even though the percentage seems good, the quality of the broadband is not good.

Quality of Life Conditions

In considering how they would like the village in the future, local people thought that the following elements were vital:

- Provision of local employment
- Remains a secure village to live in; people have peace of mind and feel safe in their home
- Systems in place to combat loneliness and support people living in a rural area
- Good transport, especially public transport and a community taxi service
- People feel listened to
- Additional services including post office and community café
- People have heat, health and food
- Promote the togetherness in the community

Our Outcomes

The primary intention of this plan is to enable people in and around Multyfarnham to achieve their intended vision for the village.

Our vision is that all the people of Multyfarnham know that it is a good place to be alive.

We care for one another, ensuring every person knows they belong.

We remain connected as people and to places such as the Friary and our existing natural landscape.

We promote the employment, safety and health and wellbeing of everyone connected to Multyfarnham.

This will be achieved through a focus on the three long term strategic themes of:

Health and Social Wellbeing

Sustainable Environment and Infrastructure

Education and Economy

Theme One: Health and Social Wellbeing

Outcome One: All people from Multyfarnham benefit from improved mental and physical well-being				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Time Frame	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Construct a basketball D court in the park	Improvements in health outcomes for local people Increase numbers of local people participating in physical activity	Short	Westmeath County Council Westmeath Community Development Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport Local sports clubs and activity groups	Town and Village Renewal Scheme Sports Capital Programme
Establish a footpath and cycle path to link village with Ballinafid walkway	Improvements in health outcomes for local people Increase numbers of local people participating in physical activity Increased number of local people enjoying and make use of local environment Development of walking groups	Short	Westmeath County Council Roads Section Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports Westmeath Community Development National Trails Office	Leader Programme National Trails Office
Develop a sports programme for all ages, that celebrates ability	Improvements in health outcomes for local people Increase numbers of local people participating in physical activity	Short	Westmeath Community Development Westmeath Sports Partnership Local sports clubs and activity groups	Leader Programme Westmeath Sports Partnership

<p>Establish Multyfarnham as the home of All Ireland Pickleball</p>	<p>Raise the profile of Multyfarnham across Ireland Increase in number of visitors to Multyfarnham Increase in number of people regularly playing Pickleball in Multyfarnham Increase in sense of pride village residents feel</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Westmeath Sports Partnership Local sports clubs and activity groups Multyfarnham Pickle Ball Club Pickle Ball Ireland</p>	<p>Westmeath Sports Partnership</p>
<p>Establish a cycling hub in the village</p>	<p>Improvements in health outcomes for local people Increase in numbers of local people participating in physical activity Increase in number of visitors to Multyfarnham</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council, Roads Section Cycling Ireland</p>	<p>Annual Roads Programme Town and Village Renewal Scheme Sports Capital Programme Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports</p>

Outcome Two: All people from Multyfarnham benefit from improved social connections				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Time Frame	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Establish a community café that is affordable for local people	<p>Increase in social connections in the village</p> <p>Increase in sense of community togetherness for village residents</p>	Medium	<p>Westmeath Community Development</p> <p>POBAL</p>	<p>Leader Programme</p> <p>POBAL</p> <p>Social Enterprise Loans (e.g. Clann Credo, Community Finance Ireland, Microfinance Ireland)</p>
Establish social/communal housing (assisted living)	<p>Decrease in social isolation in the village</p> <p>Reduction in loneliness for older people</p> <p>Increased access to suitable housing for local people</p> <p>Increase in feelings of independence for our older residents</p> <p>Increase in numbers of older people who remain in the village</p> <p>Decrease in number of our older residents accessing nursing home care</p>	Long	<p>Westmeath County Council</p> <p>Approved Housing Bodies</p> <p>Private sector</p>	<p>Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government</p>

Support the village shop to thrive	Improvement in social connections centred on the village shop	Short	Westmeath County Council Westmeath Community Development POBAL	Local businesses Town and Village Renewal Scheme POBAL
Put a communications board in place in the park or at entrance to community facility	Increase in numbers participating in community activities Increase in knowledge of community activity among local people Improvement in social connections in the village	Short	Westmeath Community Development Tourism Officer – Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer – Westmeath County Council Local sports clubs and activity groups	Leader Programme Community Grants (Westmeath County Council)
Establish footpath and cycleway from village to Wilson’s School	Increase in numbers of people involved in physical activity Improved health outcomes for local people	Medium	Westmeath County Council Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports	Annual Roads Programme Town and Village Renewal Scheme Sports Capital Programme Leader Programme National Trails Office

Outcome Three: All people from Multyfarnham feel a high sense of safety living in the village

Action Project	Indicators of success	Time Frame	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
<p>Establish a village greenway by cleaning and clearing all paths and walks towards and along the lake and river</p>	<p>Increase in numbers of people walking Increase in social connections in the village Improvements in health outcomes for village residents</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council Westmeath Community Development Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport Transport Infrastructure Ireland Local sports clubs and activity groups</p>	<p>Outdoor Recreation Fund Westmeath County Council Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport Town and Village Renewal Scheme Transport Infrastructure Ireland Community Involvement Scheme</p>

Ensure all footpaths are accessible	<p>Increase in numbers of people walking</p> <p>Improvements in health outcomes for village residents</p> <p>Improvement in sense of safety in the village</p> <p>Increase in social connections in the village</p>	Medium	<p>Westmeath County Council</p> <p>Westmeath Community Development</p>	<p>Town and Village Renewal Scheme</p> <p>Community Involvement Scheme</p>
Research and restore old pathways connecting the village to waterways	<p>Increase in numbers of people walking</p> <p>Improvements in health outcomes for village residents</p> <p>Increase in numbers of visitors to the village</p>	Medium	<p>Westmeath County Council</p> <p>Westmeath Community Development</p> <p>Waterways Ireland</p>	<p>Outdoor Recreation Fund</p> <p>Town and Village Renewal Scheme</p> <p>Community Involvement Scheme</p>
Establish a club for teenagers in the village	<p>Increased sense of safety for young people in the village</p> <p>Increased sense of belonging for young people in the village</p> <p>Improvement in mental well-being</p> <p>Improvement in physical well-being</p>	Short	<p>Westmeath Community Development</p> <p>Faroige</p> <p>Local sports clubs and activity groups</p>	<p>Faroige</p> <p>Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme</p>

Move wires away from Gaine Park grounds	Improvement in physical appearance of the village	Long	Electric Ireland EIR	
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Theme Two: Sustainable Environment and Infrastructure

Outcome Four: All people from Multyfarnham are connected to each other and more widely				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Time Frame	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Establish pedestrian bridge (links friary to village)	Easier access to the park from the main village Increased safety for people Increased access for people to all areas of the village	Short	Westmeath County Council	CLAR Annual Roads Programme
Establish a transport service for elderly, others without transport and a night-time service	Increase in travel options for elderly Decrease in environmental impact Improvement in social interaction	Short	Westmeath Community Development Local Link	Local Link
Improve availability of bus services to Mullingar	Increase in travel options for elderly Decrease in environmental impact Improvement in social interaction	Medium	Westmeath Community Development Local Link	Local Link

<p>Link Multyfarnham to the Greenway</p>	<p>Increase in numbers of people walking Increase in social connections in the village Improvements in health outcomes for village residents</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council Westmeath Community Development Department Transport, Tourism and Sport Transport Infrastructure Ireland Local sports clubs and activity groups</p>	<p>Outdoor Recreation Fund Westmeath County Council Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport Town and Village Renewal Scheme Transport Infrastructure Ireland</p>
<p>Improve coverage and quality of broadband service across the village</p>	<p>Increase in use of broadband by local business Increase in employment opportunities in the village</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council Department of Communications</p>	<p>LEADER Programme 2014-2020 Theme 1, Sub-Theme 'Broadband' National Broadband Plan'</p>

Outcome Five: All people from Multyfarnham enjoy the sustained, rural environment in the area				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Time Frame	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Improve the environmental sustainability of the community facility	Reduction in overhead cost of facility Decrease in energy use in the village	Medium	Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	Town and Village Renewal Scheme Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Leader Programme
Gather more information on any possibility of mining development	Greater sense of ownership in decision making in the village Further increase in numbers of people involved in community support activity	Short	Westmeath County Council	
Establish area for off-road parking for larger events	Increase in number of events held in the area Decrease in number of reported safety incidents involving vehicles	Long	Westmeath County Council Local landowners	

Theme Three: Education and Economy

Outcome Six: All people from Multyfarnham benefit from the high quality tourist product the village offers				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Time Frame	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Extend cycle way from Lake Owel	More visitors to the village Increase in number of cyclists from Multyfarnham	Medium	Lakeside Wheelers Bórd Failte National Trails Office Westmeath County Council Roads Section Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports Westmeath Community Development	Annual Roads Programme Town and Village Renewal Scheme Sports Capital Programme Leader Programme National Trails Office
Have a statue of Children of Lir at centre of village	More people aware of the connection between Children of Lir and Multyfarnham More visitors to the village	Short	Bórd Failte Westmeath County Council Westmeath Community Development Local artists Local businesses Friary	Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer Leader Programme Town and Village Renewal

<p>Create a Multyfarnham brand (Children of Lir, Friary connection)</p>	<p>More visitors to the village Increased spend by visitors to the village Increased use of B&Bs in the area More people aware of the connection between Children of Lir and Multyfarnham More people visiting the friary</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Local businesses Bórd Failte Westmeath County Council Westmeath Community Development Friary</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer Leader Programme Town and Village Renewal</p>
<p>Develop a tourist guide to Multyfarnham and use for promotion (Protected structures, B&B availability, historical links, Friary Way of the Cross etc.)</p>	<p>More visitors to the village Increased spend by visitors to the village Increased use of B&Bs in the area People visiting the area remain longer in the area</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Local businesses Bórd Failte Friars Local historians</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer</p>
<p>Develop a local 'Children of Lir' festival</p>	<p>More people aware of the connection between Children of Lir and Multyfarnham More visitors to the village Increased spend by visitors to the village Increased use of B&Bs in the area More people involved in community activity in connection with the festival</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Local businesses Bórd Failte</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer</p>

<p>Create 'Children of Lir' twinning links with walks in Mayo</p>	<p>More people aware of the connection between Children of Lir and Multyfarnham</p> <p>More visitors to the village</p> <p>Increased spend by visitors to the village</p> <p>Increased use of B&Bs in the area</p> <p>More people involved in community activity in connection with the festival</p>	<p>Short</p>		
<p>Create a Multyfarnham tourist trail and use for promotion</p>	<p>Greater number of visitors to the village</p> <p>Increase spend by tourists in the village</p>	<p>Medium</p>		

Outcome Seven: All people from Multyfarnham derive some economic benefit from life in the village				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Time Frame	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Bring an ATM to the village	Increase in local expenditure Reduction in traffic in the village	Short	Banks Local businesses	
Establish a local business area, with affordable units	Number of new businesses established Number of businesses that stay local Lower number of younger people leaving the area	Long	IDA Ireland Local enterprise team Westmeath County Council	
Campaign for lower rates for rural businesses	Increase in number of businesses that stay local Increase in competitiveness of rural businesses Continued existence of local shops and pubs	Long	Local businesses Westmeath County Council – Finance Section National Valuation Office	

Investigate options for establishing additional accommodation in the area	If established then: Increase in tourist numbers Increase in spending directly in purchase of accommodation Increase in spend in businesses in the village	Medium	Local businesses Established B&Bs Failte Ireland Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council	Failte Ireland Westmeath Community Development
Create a 'buy-local' campaign for Multyfarnham	Increase spend in the village Increase employment opportunities village	Medium	Local businesses Westmeath County Council	
Investigate options for regeneration of currently vacant property in and around the village	Increase employment opportunities in the village Improvement in business investment in the village	Long	Westmeath County Council Heritage Section	



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