COLLINSTOWN

VILLAGE PLAN 2018 – 2023



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









CONTENTS

	Page No
Explanation of Process	3
Collinstown	5
Our Vision	7
Our Values	7
Community Engagement and Key Findings	8
Collinstown Village Survey	11
Quality of Life Conditions	13
Our Outcomes	14
Detailed action projects and connected info	15

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 Collinstown. 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. Blue Moss used a participatory facilitation process called Outcomes Based Accountability or OBA with all 7 villages; a process that is interactive and aimed at turning words into action.

Process Stages:

- i. Development of a Vision Statement and underpinning values- 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 outcomes that the group wanted to see for their village and connected people, 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. Reflection, amendment and agreement of previously identified outcomes and actions within the draft plan.
- v. Joint meeting with the other villages to consider aspects of their individual plans that overlapped and how the villages could support each other in

reaching their goals.

- 1. Castletown Geoghegan
- 2. Collinstown
- 3. Coole
- 4. Milltownpass
- 5. Multyfarnham
- 6. Rosemount
- 7. Streete
- vi. Identification of potential partners and strategies representatives of the villages met with public bodies and agencies relevant to their plans.
- vii. Joint launch of all seven community plans hosted by Westmeath Community Development.

COLLINSTOWN

Collinstown (or Baile na gCailleach) is an expanding village 18 km north east of the Westmeath county town of Mullingar. Collinstown (St. Mary's parish) was known in the past as Maypole and has grown to a population of approximately 500.

Collinstown possesses several local businesses and community facilities; Daybreak, Post office, Roma, the Lough Lene Inn and the Maypole Bar. National School, Creche and Montessori school, Church and Community Hall. C&F Automotive Factory has been operating in Collinstown for over 40 years.

Collinstown is alive with clubs and societies including Lough Lene Gaels Hurling and Camogie clubs, Collinstown/Fore ICA, Collinstown Parent Toddler and Baby Group, Collinstown Defibrillator Committee, Community Games, Collinstown Running Club, Lough Lene Anglers, Collinstown Pitch and Putt, Lough Lene Set Dancers, Collinstown Residents' Association, Senior Citizen Committee, Social Dancing, Collinstown Fore Parish Alpha Group (youth group), Tidy Towns and Collinstown Action Group.

Lough Lene is situated centrally among the villages of Collinstown, Fore, and Castlepollard. Collinstown along with other nearby villages rely on Lough Lene as a reservoir for their water supplies. The lake is known for its excellent water quality and diverse environment providing a lush habitat for many bird, animal and plant species. The lake is also used for swimming, sailing, wind-surfing and authorized fishing and jetty facilities are available at the Lough Lene access point named locally as "The Cut" about 2 km north of the village.

Collinstown has a rich history and has been an inhabited area from pre-Christian times, proven by the presence of a multitude of Ringforts many now over grown, and other historic relics, may be visited in the surrounding high ground surrounding Lough Lene. The area also boasts of ancient burial-grounds associated with Saint Colman who was responsible of 7 early Christian cells, of which Lene and Carric, are nearby, and during penal times there are the Christian mass paths, and styles by which pilgrims travelled on foot through fields to Sunday mass. Turgesius the Viking had a fortress built upon the major Lough Lene island nearby. Collinstown also has close historic links with the religious orders, the Irish name Baile na gCailleach associated to the Nuns convent upon the second island on Lough Lene, and finally, the saint Taurin, Saint Fechan, and Evreux Benedictine monks who came from Normandy, associated with Fore Abbey.

The Lough Lene Bell is of particular heritage significance. In 1881 a boy fishing for eels on Lough Lene's Castle Island, the ancient redoubt of Turgesius the Viking, discovered what might have been St. Féichín's ceremonial bell. The Norse warrior may have stolen this relic of the saint from the Fore church in a ninth-century raid. Although the original bell is now in the National Museum, a half-size

replica was given to the Dáil Éireann (Irish parliament) in 1931. The Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson) rings the bell to restore civility whenever deputies are out of order.

Collinstown also boasts a rich hurling tradition. Lough Lene Gaels, the local hurling club, was founded in 1969 as a result of an amalgamation between the Collinstown, Fore, Glenidan and Rickardstown hurling clubs. The club has enjoyed success since its formation and has won the Westmeath Senior Hurling Championship on seven occasions since 1975.

Information taken from: https://voicesfromthedawn.com/seven-wonders-of-fore/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collinstownhttps://www.lakelubbers.com/lough-lene-1807/

OUR VISION

The people of Collinstown will benefit from and contribute to a friendly, welcoming village that sustains all generations, has a thriving centre and is connected to its beautiful natural surroundings.

WE VALUE

Our environment: We protect and enhance our natural and village

environment.

Social inclusion: All generations have opportunity to be involved in a rich

village social life.

Community spirit: We are a neighbourly, supportive and fun-loving

community.

Age friendliness: Our village is for all generations.

Pride in our village: We have pride in the place where we live.

Our people: We value the skills and knowledge of all generations and

the role they play in current and future village life.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND KEY FINDINGS

The community spent time considering the current context and status of Collinstown. 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

- Sense of community and belonging
- Location
- ▶ Facilities / activities
- Employment
- Safe
- The lake
- ▶ Beautiful place unspoiled
- ► The hall (although needs work)

- Healthy environment / no pollution
- Good school national / secondary
- ▶ Heritage
- Family time no long commute time
- ► Triathlon amenities
- Cycling

WEAKNESSES

- No social hub other than pubs for all ages together or individually – no fully functioning community centre – nothing consistent
- Not enough use of local amenities e.g. lake & swimming lessons. Can't access the lake safely
- Not enough activities for nonsporting. The activities that are run are not well communicated / marketed to whole village (noticeboard?)

- Non-consistent non-sporting activity for young people.
- ▶ Elderly and young mixing
- Lack of rural transport, specifically to Mullingar
- Risk of losing our post office
- Pedestrian safety on roads
- Broadband inconsistent can't work from home
- Need indigenous employment
- Mobile phone coverage is very inconsistent
- Need parking
- Plastic recycling

OPPORTUNITIES

- Population growth
- County development
- Public transportation & necessary improvement of infrastructure
- Future of post office to remain open
- Data role out (broadband county officer)
- Potential innovation and craft workshop

- Development of the lake
- Move for community to conserve energy
- ► Extension to school
- Playground
- Leverage of Public Participation Network
- ▶ Housing
- Midland Tours
- ► Town & Village plan

THREATS

- Return to Longford Westmeath Constituency
- ► Transportation links (N51)
- Student grants not for everyone – limits access to education
- Driving costs increased expense for young people to drive
- Loss of post office hub for senior citizens & £ will leave the village as knock on impact on shops
- Lack of broadband & extortionate costs

- Town & village renewal plan needs review / balance
- ► Loss of any employment
- Overdevelopment of lake loss of Blue Flag & biodiversity
- Water quality drinking & lake. As village grows increased strain on lake water resources
- Bureaucracy and lack of support and grants for start ups

CONSIDERATION OF COUNTY WIDE AND VILLAGE CENSUS INFORMATION

Participants also considered a range of census information connected to 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 on pertinent information. The following was recorded.

<u>Population:</u> Large under 10 population in Collinstown yet losing 20 – 30 year-olds / Nearly 15% of people with disabilities

Housing: High number of 1-person households

<u>Tourists:</u> Low number of visitors/tourists to Westmeath County / No record of numbers that visit Fore

<u>Employment:</u> Low % of county population is working – 40% / Professional 23% same as national average & greater commerce and trade 22% / High unemployment rate - Only ½ of Collinstown population are working (impact of summer housing?) / Only 4 people working in forestry and agriculture

<u>Education and Qualifications:</u> Fewer males getting qualifications – rural employment is in trades. Students that access higher education don't return to Collinstown as a lack of employment / Low % of Collinstown students studying maths and sciences / 5 people have no formal education / No acknowledgement of online access to qualifications

<u>Communications:</u> 83 of 143 households in 2016 have broadband – doesn't reflect quality / 59 households have no access to computers

<u>Transport:</u> very car focused. No one cycles to work or school. Quite a high no of people have a very early commute

<u>Irish language speakers</u> – high % know how to speak but not part of their day to day lives

COLLINSTOWN VILLAGE SURVEY

Collinstown Action Group undertook a comprehensive village wide survey in August 2017. 370 surveys were delivered, and 88 households returned surveys which represented 276 villagers. The survey responses give an invaluable wider Community perspective on views of Collinstown. Key common responses were considered and incorporated, into the village plan.

(* indicates most common responses)

Improvements needed

- ▶ Hall eyesore, needs upgraded
- Lack of activities for all ages, poor communication between clubs
- Footpath to lake
- Speed of traffic through village

Suggested improvements

- *Improved, fit for purpose hall. Paint the hall
- *Footpaths
- *Walking trails / looped walk
- Tidy towns? working together as a community
- Garda alert service
- Community notice board / Facebook page
- Map in village centre
- More litter bins
- *Traffic calming system
- *Green area in centre of village. Central meeting point / picnic benches
- *Somewhere to sit. lunch / café
- More activities for young people explore creative talents
- Marked parking outside Daybreak
- Lighting

Age Friendly additional to above

- Bench at the bus stop
- *Increased public seating
- 'Bob a job' scheme
- Activities specifically for 60+

Lough Lene Improvements

- Trading booth / coffee shop / tackle shop / souvenir shop Seasonal
- *Picnic tables / more seating
- Garda presence on busy days / summer days
- * Clean-up / Litter wardens / more rubbish bins
- Restore blue flag
- *Facilities need updated / Family changing room / disabled facilities / showers
- *Footpath to the lake
- *Walkway around lake
- *More activities kayaking /summer water club / boating / zip line / paddle boats
- *Swimming lessons
- *Lifeguard during summer months
- Playground
- Car park needs improved

Tourism

- Need better mobile phone coverage
- *Restaurant, café or pub grub / coffee shop
- Village aesthetics more green space/ replace old trees that have been removed
- Promotion of existing assets / facilities / use social media for promotion / advertise on national tourism websites
- Yearly festival
- Walkway from village to lake
- Signage within the village / information board in village / Brown signage to village
- Utilise the lake
- Greenway / Walk and cycle way from lake to Fore

QUALITY OF LIFE CONDITIONS

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

- People are safe
- People live in a healthy environment and have access to health care for good physical and mental health
- Village facilities and services to cater for needs of all ages
- Good infrastructure supporting village development
- People have a sense of belonging and not isolated
- People can access opportunities for lifelong learning
- Opportunities for local employment
- People can access and enjoy the natural environment
- Village sustainability through an increasing population

OUR OUTCOMES

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

The people of Collinstown will benefit from and contribute to a friendly, welcoming village that sustains all generations, has a thriving centre and is connected to its beautiful natural surroundings.

This will be achieved through a focus on the three long term strategic themes across which fall 10 outcomes:

THEME 1: Health & Social Wellbeing

- Outcome 1: As an Age Friendly Village, all people of Collinstown, from all generations, can participate in community activities.
- Outcome 2: All people of Collinstown can feel connected to and involved in Community life.
- Outcome 3: All people of Collinstown can feel safe.
- Outcome 4: All people of Collinstown have a good understanding of and connection with village heritage and identity.

THEME 2: Sustainable Environment & Infrastructure

- Outcome 5: All people of Collinstown have access to a village infrastructure that supports home and work life.
- Outcome 6: All people of Collinstown have a strong sense of village pride and collectively maintain a clean and attractive village.
- Outcome 7: All people of Collinstown can access and sustainably use the beautiful natural environment, especially Lough Lene.

THEME 3: Education & Economy

- Outcome 8: All people of Collinstown can access a range of educational and developmental opportunities
- Outcome 9: The Collinstown area will experience increased revenue via tourism
- Outcome 10: Collinstown will encourage and support self-employment opportunities

Theme One: Health and Social Wellbeing

ors of success ased membership of	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Ctratagy and funding
ased membership of			Strategy and funding programme links
ased diversity within members ased use of current facilities ased GAA activity and ies	Short	GAA	
ased range of activities ed ased engagement, sion & connections as generations ased sharing of skill ced social isolation	Medium	Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council, Community Development Section	
ased participation of in community activity ased positive mental	Medium	Irish Mens Sheds Association Mullaghmeen Men's Shed Castlepollard Men's Shed Westmeath Community	
	ased participation of in community activity ased positive mental	ased participation of Medium in community activity assed positive mental	ased participation of in community activity ased positive mental in Mullaghmeen Men's Shed Castlepollard Men's Shed

d) Establish Community Garden & herb gardens	 Increased collective community engagement Increased skill sharing across community Increased access to fresh, home grown produce 	Short	Westmeath Community Development	Leader Programme 2014 - 2020
e) Hall Committee encourage effective use of the hall	 Increased daily & hourly usage of hall Increased number of clubs/activities using the hall Increased number of community members using hall 	Medium	Local activity and sport groups/clubs	

Outcome 2: All people of Collinstown can feel connected to and involved in Community life.				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
a) Increased rural transport runs	 Increased access to the wider community Increased numbers of people travelling outside of village on a weekly basis Increased positive health and sense of well being 	Long	Local Link	Local Link
b) Hall development	 Increased access to fit for purpose facilities Increased provision of community activity Increased participation in activity 	Medium	Westmeath Community Development	Leader Programme 2014 - 2020

c) Local directory of clubs / activities, businesses & people [consider village communication tool]	 Increased knowledge of local activities Increased participation in local activities 	Short	Local businesses	Local business sponsorship
d) Create community website – tourist & local sections	 Increased knowledge of local activities & community life Increased participation in local activities Increased participation in community life Reduced social isolation Increased positive mental health 	Short	Westmeath Community Development	Leader Programme 2014 - 2020
e) Coffee shop: Consider community / private / social enterprise options	 Increased access to a central meeting place Increased socialisation & sense of belonging 	Long	Westmeath Community Development	Leader Programme 2014 - 2020
f) Public seating	 Increased access to a central meeting place Increased socialisation & connections cross the community Increased sense of belonging 	Short	Westmeath County Council, Community Development Section	Town & Village Renewal Scheme Outdoor recreation scheme
g) Community notice board	 Increased knowledge of local activities Increased participation in local activities Increased sense of belonging 	Short	Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council, Community Development Section	Leader Programme 2014 – 2020 Community Grants

Outcome 3: All people of Collinstown can feel safe.				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
a) Footpath to school	 Increased numbers of people safely walking & cycling within the village 	Short	Westmeath County Council, Community Development Section	Town & Village Renewal Scheme
b) Levelling of verges for safe access to Lough Lene	 Increased numbers of people safely accessing the outdoors 	Medium	Westmeath County Council, Roads Department	
c) Footpath from village to Lough Lene Gaels GAA field	 Increased numbers of people safely accessing GAA facilities 	Medium	Westmeath County Council, Roads Department	Low Cost Safety Measure Community Involvement Scheme
d) Traffic calming	 Decreased traffic speed through village Increased safety for pedestrians Decrease in road traffic incidents 	Short	Westmeath County Council, Roads Department	Town & Village Renewal Scheme
e) Re-establish text alert service	 Increased sense of safety Reduced antisocial behaviour and reported crime 	Short	An Garda Síochána Muintir na Tire	Muintir na Tire funding programme

f)	Raise awareness of safety	 Increased sense of safety 	Short	An Garda Siochana	
	initiatives for the elderly	 Increased access to safety 		_	
		equipment		Westmeath County	
				Council, Roads	
				Department	
				·	Muintir na Tire funding
				Muintir na Tire	programme

Outcome 4: All people of Collinstown have a good understanding of and connection with village heritage and identity.				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
a) Archive, raise awareness of and promote village heritage, people's history & ICA history	 Physical archives of local heritage Increased knowledge of local history within village Increased community connection and identity 	Medium	Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer Westmeath Community Development	Westmeath County Council Heritage support programmes
b) Raise awareness of and promote Lough Lene history – bell & boat	 Recording of Lough Lene history and heritage Increased knowledge of local history within village Increased community connection and identity 	Short - Medium	Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer Westmeath Community Development	Westmeath County Council, Heritage support programmes

THEME 2: ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
a) Lobby for quality broadband and mobile phone coverage	 Increase in broadband speed and quality Increase in mobile phone reception Decreased negative impact of poor communications on work, family and social life 	Short	Westmeath County Council Broadband Officer Westmeath Community Development	
b) Increased parking between the church and hall	Increased parking spaces	Short - Medium	Land Owners Community Members	
c) Playground	 Increased easy access to local play area Increased outdoor play for children Increased positive health and mental health for families 	Short	Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council Community Development Section	Leader Programme 2014 - 2020 Westmeath Playground Strategy
d) Defined parking in the village	 Increased access to safe parking Increased access to local services 	Short	Westmeath County Council Community Development Section	Town & Village Renewal Scheme

Outcome 6: All people of Collinstown have a strong sense of village pride and collectively maintain a clean and attractive village.				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
a) Community litter pick	 Decrease in litter Increased community responsibility towards & pride of village appearance 	Short	Westmeath County Council, Environment Department	Litter Management Plan
b) Recycled bins emptied more frequently	 Increased ability to recycle plastic effectively Increased amount of recycling across the village 	Short	Westmeath County Council, Environment Department Collinstown Tidy Towns	
c) Children's education programme re litter and recycling	 Increased understanding of issues of litter and recycling Increased responsibility towards these issues 	Short	Westmeath County Council Community Development Section Green Schools Ireland An Taisce Environmental Education Unit	
d) Upgrade appearance of hall	 A more attractive hall exterior A more attractive whole village appearance 	Short	Local Community groups / businesses / individuals	
e) Develop & maintain village aesthetics via trees and flower beds that encourage biodiversity	 A more attractive whole village appearance Increased enjoyment of and pride in village 	Short	Collinstown Tidy Towns Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council, Community Development Section	Tidy Towns Town & Village Renewal Scheme Community Enhancement Scheme

Outcome 7: All people of Collinstown can access and sustainably use the beautiful natural environment, especially Lough Lene.				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
a) More Lough Lene based activity: Fishing, canoeing, island hopping, triathlons	 Increased activities offered Increased participation in activities by locals of all ages 	Long	Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer	Outdoor Recreation Fund
b) Lough Lene walk/cycle trail and information points	 Increased access to the Lough shoreline & environment Increased awareness of the Lough environment; wildlife, geology, history 	Long	Westmeath County Council, Roads Department Lake side Wheelers Cycling Club National Trails Office	Westmeath County Council Greenway Plan
c) Update changing facilities	 Increased use of changing facilities across the community Increased use of Loughs for activities 	Medium	Westmeath County Council	
d) Picnic tables including Pound and safe access	 Increased use of Lough Lene environment for social interaction 	Medium	Westmeath County Council	
e) Consider collaborative Lough Lene development group	 Increased collaboration Increased sustainable management of the Lough Lene 	Long	Land owners Relevant village & organisation representatives	

THEME 3: ECONOMY & EDUCATION

Outcome 8: All people of Collinstown can access a range of educational and personal development opportunities				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
a) Offer classes in community hall	 Increased access to educational and personal development courses 	Long	Westmeath Community Development	
	 Increased qualification levels Increased skill sets 		Longford Westmeath Education Training Board	

Outcome 9: The Collinstown area will experience increased revenue via tourism							
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links			
a) Promote Collinstown for tourism on community website and county tourism sites	 Increased awareness of Collinstown's heritage and natural environment within County Westmeath and beyond Increased number of visitors/tourists to Collinstown Increased revenue into the village 	Medium	Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer Fáilte Ireland Ireland's Ancient East	Westmeath County Council Tourism programmes			
b) Signage re Lough Lene & other heritage and natural environment sites	 Increased access to Lough Lene & other sites Increased visitors/tourists to Lough Lene & other sites 	Medium	Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer	Westmeath County Council Tourism and Heritage programmes			

c) Lough Lene viewpoint layby + promotion	 Increased awareness of Lough Lene; environment and heritage 	Long	Westmeath County Council Tourism Officer	Westmeath County Council Tourism programmes
d) Farmers and craft market: [indoor or outdoor]	 Increased visitors /tourists to the village Increased engagement by locals Increased entrepreneurship Increased revenue into the village 	Long	Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council, Community Development Section Westmeath Food Network	
e) Coffee shop	 Increased access to refreshments/food in the village Increased visitors/tourists to the village Increased revenue into the village 	Long	Westmeath Community Development Pobal Local Enterprise Officer	Pobal Social Enterprise Loans

Outcome 10: Collinstown will encourage and support self-employment opportunities							
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links			
a) Shared office space	 Increased access to necessary infrastructure for 	Long	Self Employed				
	self-employment Increased numbers of people		Local Businesses				
	engaged in self-employment		Westmeath County				
	 Increased positive 		Council Broadband				
	family/work life		Officer				



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