

Westmeath PPN



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK
The Voice of the Community

Newsletter

February 2026

Nuachtlitir Feabhra 2026

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who attended our recent Grant Information evenings and walk-in Clinics in Athlone and Mullingar. The events were a great success, with up to 300 representatives from community and voluntary groups in Westmeath, joining us to learn about 2026 funding opportunities from Westmeath County Council and other agencies.

I'm also delighted to welcome Lourdes Neary as our new PPN Support Worker. Lourdes is a familiar face from the Community Development section, and we know she will be a fantastic asset to our local groups in this new capacity.

*Mark Ahearn
Westmeath PPN*



Visit the WPPN Website at <https://westmeathppn.ie>

Contact Mark by emailing ppn@westmeathcoco.ie or call 044 9332157



WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

SCAN ME



COMMUNITY GRANTS 2026

COMMUNITY ACTION SCHEME GRANTS

- TIDY TOWNS GRANT
- RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION GRANTS
- COMMUNITY ACTION GRANT

APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

CATHAOIRLEACH COMMUNITY AWARDS

- WESTMEATH PERSON/GROUP OF THE YEAR AWARD
- COMMUNITY PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD
- RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION PROJECT AWARD
- AGE FRIENDLY RECOGNITION AWARD
- PRIDE OF PLACE
- STEM GRANT (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHEMATICS)
- SCHOOLS ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETITION

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS 27TH FEBRUARY 2026

[Click on this link to the WCC Website for more info and to access the online application system](#)



FESTIVAL & EVENTS GRANT 2026

NOW OPEN FOR ONLINE APPLICATIONS

Westmeath County Council is inviting community groups and business groups to apply for grant support for Festivals and Events taking place in Westmeath in 2026.

Events should generate increased economic activity for the local area, involve significant voluntary input and attract increased visitor numbers to Westmeath.



For queries, please contact the Community Development Department on 044 933 8969 or 044 933 2196.

[Click on this link to access Festival & Events 2026 online application](#)

RURAL SUPPORT SCHEMES
Expression of Interests 2026

Expressions of Interest (EOI) are being sought for the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) and the CLÁR Programme for 2026. This is an opportunity for community groups to express an interest in projects that they feel would benefit their communities.

EOIs will be assessed against relevant criteria when schemes are announced by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

The EOI's will enter a competitive process to be considered to go forward for full funding applications.

Detailed scheme information and the online EOI application are available on Westmeath County Council's **Rural Support Schemes** page in the Community Development Section of our website. Please see QR code above.

For assistance, contact the Community Development Section at 044 9338969 or by email: rss@westmeathcoco.ie.

The closing date for CLÁR EOIs is Friday 27th February 2026 at 4pm.

The closing date for T&V and ORIS EOIs is Thursday 30th April 2026 at 4pm.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)



The **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)** provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure. It also provides support for the necessary repair, maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas across Ireland.

Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais (CLÁR)



The **CLÁR programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais)** provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas. CLÁR aims to support sustainable development in identified areas by attracting people to live and work there. The funding works in conjunction with local funding and on the basis of locally identified priorities.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)



The **Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)** is designed to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland through a renewed focus on town centre economic and social vibrancy and regeneration in line with the Town Centre First policy.

[Click on this link to access Rural Support Scheme online application](#)

WESTMEATH INTEGRATION
Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT)

AkiDWA
Network of Migrant Women

SAFE
Support and Aid for FGM and EFM

Guide for Frontline Professionals
Recognising and Responding to FGM and Early/Forced Marriage

Monday 9 February, 2026

11.00am - 1:00pm

Shamrock Lodge Hotel, Athlone

SAFE (Support and Aid for FGM and EFM) Training: Register here



[Click here for information on AkiDWA Safe Project](#)

- In-depth training for frontline professionals working with migrants.
- SAFE (Support and Aid for FGM and EFM) project, is an EU-funded initiative that focuses on prevention, protection, and support for women and girls affected by or at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Early and Forced Marriage (EFM).



Media Release
Tuesday, 20 January 2026

Minister Calleary publishes Action Plan for Irish Language Public Services 2026-2028

- *Action Plan for 2026-2028 launched in support of the National Plan for Irish Language Public Services 2024-2030*
- *Cross-Governmental actions set out under five strategic themes*
- *New initiatives focusing on capacity and awareness building, skills development, technology and a suite of supportive measures*
- *Important step towards a bilingual public service*

The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, today (Tuesday, 20 January 2026) announced that the Action Plan for Irish Language Public Services 2026-2028 has been approved by Government. This Action Plan, which is published on the Department's website, looks to take a holistic, measurable and practical approach to the implementation of the National Plan for Irish Language Public Services 2024-2030, which was published in October 2024.

Overall responsibility for the preparation of both plans fell on the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee, which was established in June 2022 under the Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021, with a wide range of organisations from across the public sector represented at a senior level on it including Government Departments, the Local Government Management Agency, HSE, An Garda Síochána, and the recruitment provider publicjobs.

Preparation of this action plan involved extensive consultation and engagement across Government and beyond – particularly as it relates to core public services and Gaeltacht areas.

It also built on the invaluable research carried out for the National Plan itself, which demonstrated a clear interest in increasing Irish language competence among public sector staff and positivity towards the language in general.

Cross-cutting initiatives contained in the action plan look to enhance the provision of bilingual public services across the country – particularly in Gaeltacht areas, through a range of various measures. It focuses on developing the supportive structures and includes measures focused on capacity and awareness building, skills development and technology.

The plan places a particular emphasis on measures to be undertaken to achieve the overarching recruitment target that 20% of recruits to public sector bodies will be competent in Irish by the end of 2030.

Ultimately this will enable the normalisation of the Irish language as an integral part of the public service and will also empower speakers of the language to use it when accessing services.

Minister Calleary said:

“It is a great honour for me, as the first senior Minister with responsibility for the Irish language and the Gaeltacht in several years, to publish this Action Plan today.

“At a time when the level of good-will and positivity towards the language has never been higher, this ambitious plan sets out the clear and measurable steps to be taken across Government in the years ahead towards achieving a truly bilingual public service, and indeed bilingual society, in line with Programme for Government commitments.

“This plan puts support and innovation at the heart of developments to come and I look forward to forging ahead with my Government colleagues and other key stakeholder on this work, at this very exciting time for the Irish language. One example of this is FÍS '26 - a new conference supported by my Department, that's to bring young people together during Seachtain na Gaeilge to show them how Irish is shaping the future.

“The actions of this plan will also be of great support to other work to come under the Act, including the introduction of the language standards system, and other duties relating to correctly recording names, titles and addresses in Irish and the availability of official forms in Irish or bilingually. I look forward to announcing more on all of this soon.

“This work also closely aligns with the language planning process, under which I published an independent review of the process to date yesterday. Many of the recommendations in that review relate to improving public services in the Gaeltacht. Having secured the largest ever increase for the Irish language and Gaeltacht sector in Budget 2026, an additional €3m will now be invested in the language planning process this year.

“Between that investment and the impact of the Action Plan published today, this process will also be accelerated in the coming period.”

A copy of the Action Plan for Irish Language Public Services 2026-2028 can be found [here](#)

ENDS

Contact:

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Press Office

01-773 6843 / 086 7912704

Press.office@drcdg.gov.ie

gov.ie/drcdg | X | Facebook | Instagram | LinkedIn | Threads | Bluesky | WhatsApp | YouTube



Media Release
Monday 19th January

Minister Calleary announces publication of the review of the first 10 language plans under the language planning process in the Gaeltacht

The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary, TD, announced today (19 January 2026) that the review of the first 10 language plans under the language planning process has been published.

Under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, the Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht must complete a review of language plans. As a result of a request from the language planning community itself, the first review of the process has been an independent one, undertaken by the company, Barr Feabhais Teo.

Barr Feabhais Teo. undertook research and consultation with a wide range of organisations, Irish language lead organisations and stakeholders in the course of their work. A range of recommendations are included in the review published today, encompassing actions which will support language planning in years to come. The response of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht to those recommendations is also being published today in tandem with the review.

It is worth noting that a significant number of recommendations are included in respect of which implementation has already commenced. These include matters emanating from the National Plan for Irish Language Public Services and from the Digital Plan for the Irish Language as well the provision of substantial additional financial supports by Minister Calleary's Department in the areas of family transmission, early years, youth services and the arts, to name a few. Other recommendations are included which could prompt new measures as the second cycle of the language planning process approaches.

Dara Calleary TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, welcomed the publication of this review. He said:

“I would like to thank Barr Feabhais Teoranta, who undertook the review of the first 10 language plans, and all those who took part in the review process. Although the independent consultants have identified certain challenges, the findings clearly show that overall the process is proving successful. Many of the recommendations involve improving public services in the Gaeltacht and, to that end, I will be submitting the first Action Plan for Irish Language Public Services to Government this week. Having secured the largest ever increase for the Irish language and Gaeltacht sector in Budget 2026, an additional €3m will be invested in the process this year. Between this investment and the impact of the Action Plan, the coming period will see an acceleration of the process. The review published today will be of assistance in accomplishing this, as well as supporting the implementation of the second cycle of the language planning process.”

A copy of the review and a copy of the Department's response is available [HERE](#):

ENDS

Contact:

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Press Office

01-773 6843 / 086 7912704

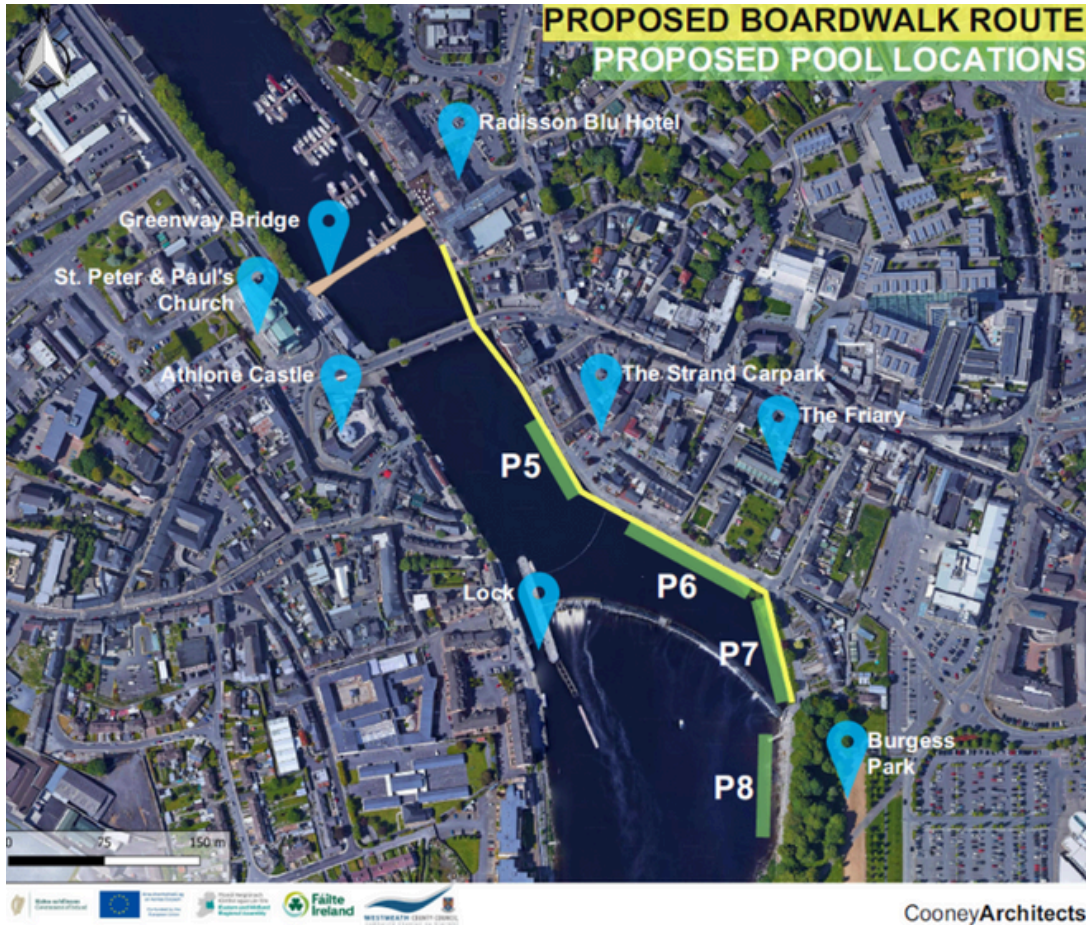
Press.office@drcdg.gov.ie

Latest Developments

Westmeath County Council has engaged a multi-disciplinary Design Team, led by Cooney Architects Ltd, to progress with a feasibility study and preliminary designs for the above development with a view to making an application for planning permission.

The Design Team are currently investigating construction methodologies for the proposed boardwalk and outdoor swimming pool, along with determining the optimum location for the proposed pool.

See graphic below identifying the proposed boardwalk route and the emerging feasible pool locations.



Athlone Boardwalk and Outdoor Swimming Pool Project Online Survey Consultation

Westmeath County Council is now seeking feedback from the public in relation to the proposed development and would invite you to give your feedback on the project.

An information evening will be held in Athlone Civic Offices on Monday 19th January 2026 from 4pm until 8pm.

A link to an online survey to gather views and observations on the proposals will also be published on this webpage from **19th January 2026 and will be available until 9th February 2026.**

Hard copies of the survey will be available upon request.
Please scan QR code to access the survey or [CLICK HERE](#)





The Creative Ireland Programme has announced three funds, with a combined value of €4.6 million supporting creativity, connection and wellbeing across the island of Ireland.

Creative Health & Wellbeing

Creative Communities on a Shared Island

Creative Youth Nurture Fund

Closing Date: February 27, 2026 — 1pm

Full info on these grants available here at <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/creative-grant-call-2025/>



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

PROTECT YOUR IDEAS,
BRAND & INNOVATION

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ESSENTIALS

Hosted by the Intellectual Property Office of Ireland

Date: 3 February

Time: 12:30pm – 1:30pm

Format: Lunchtime Webinar



Oifig Maoine
Intleachtúla na hÉireann
Intellectual Property
Office of Ireland

The Intellectual Property Office of Ireland (IPOI) is the official Irish government body responsible for the protection of intellectual property (IP) rights, including patents, trade marks, designs, and copyright.

This informative one-hour online presentation will provide a practical overview of intellectual property and help you understand which type of IP protection is right for your idea, invention, or brand. Whether you are a start-up, entrepreneur, or established business, this session will guide you through the key considerations when protecting your intellectual assets.

Sign up



The webinar will cover:

- Patents – Protect inventions that offer a technical solution, granting exclusive rights to the inventor
- Trade Marks – Secure exclusive rights for your brand, including names, logos, and slogans
- Designs – Protect the unique appearance or form of a product
- Copyright – Safeguard original literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works

The presentation will last approximately one hour and will conclude with a live Q&A session, providing attendees with the opportunity to ask questions and gain expert insights.

Visit localenterprise.ie/Westmeath



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Westmeath County Council

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Enterprise
Ireland



St. Mary's Hall
Tuesdays 8-9.30pm
Begins 20th January

'Best Foot Forward'

Free 8 week Motivational Programme for Men

Physical activities & guest speakers to kickstart your motivation

For more information & to book your place



0906472174



reception@acsc.ie



www.athlonecommunityservicescouncil.com

PHOTOS FROM NATIONAL PPN STAFF MEETING IN LAOIS



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c/o Community Development Section
Westmeath County Council
Áras an Chontae, Mullingar Co. Westmeath

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Contact number: 044-933-8939 / 044-933-2157
Website: Westmeath Public Participation Network



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