

## WELCOME

to our new PPN members

1. Clann Gaels LGFA
2. Enniscoffey Gaybrook Heritage Group
3. Killefree Residents Maintenance Group
4. National Learning Network – Mullingar
5. Saint Colman's Community Games
6. Milltown Singers Group
7. Shandonagh GAA
8. Streamstown Active Retirement



- **Mullingar St. Patrick's Day Festival 2026**

St. Patrick's day Parade will take place on  
Tuesday 17th March 3pm-Mullingar

- **Croi na hEireann Festival Athlone 2026**

St. Patrick's day Parade will take place on  
Tuesday 17th March at 12.30pm  
(route from the gate of Custume Barracks on  
Magazine Road to Golden Island).



SCAN ME

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

Contact us by emailing [ppn@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@westmeathcoco.ie) or call

044 9332157

A warm welcome to the March 2026 newsletter from Mark and Lourdes. We hope you will find it interesting and informative.

Westmeath PPN has been working tirelessly on your behalf during February. Westmeath PPN delegates made a presentation to the Councillors of the Mullingar Kinnefad Municipal District in an incommittee meeting. The presentation was based on submissions from community and voluntary groups, and actions have already been taken in some cases. The equivalent meeting for the Athlone Moate Municipal District will take place in March.

A Housing Community Recreation and Culture Linkage Group was held during February. Submissions were subsequently made in relation to two consultations – Access to Cash and The Cost of Disability.

We would like to Congratulate John Bawle as the new LCDC community & voluntary representative and to Anne Drury, who has been appointed as the new LCDC Chairperson. It is a great achievement for her and Westmeath PPN.



*Lourdes & Mark  
Westmeath PPN*



# WESTMEATH PPN PLENARY MEETING

27th April 2026

You are invited to register for the upcoming WPPN Plenary Meeting taking place on **27<sup>th</sup> April 2026** at the **Shamrock Lodge Hotel, Athlone.**



## RSVP



To confirm your attendance, please or scan the QR code provided.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

The event will run from 6:00pm to 9:00pm.

Our Information Village and registration desk will open at 6:00pm, followed by presentations.

Election of the new LCDC representative for the Social Inclusion pillar will also take place during the Plenary Meeting.

Refreshments will be served.



FREE  
EVENT

Brought to you by

Greenify  
CREDIT UNION FINANCE



# GO GREEN EXPO



Instagram and  
TikTok favourite Cat  
from Castlequarter  
House will be  
attending on the  
day to share her  
self-build journey.

SUNDAY 1st OF MARCH  
RADISSON BLU HOTEL, ATHLONE 12-4PM

GET EXPERT ADVICE ON SEAI GRANTS, GREEN HOME UPGRADES,  
GREEN LOANS & MEET EXHIBITORS - ALL IN ONE PLACE.



WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL  
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

Your Community, Your Credit Union

[www.wmcu.ie](http://www.wmcu.ie) | [info@wmcu.ie](mailto:info@wmcu.ie) | 0818 246 497

West-Midlands Credit Union Ltd is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

West-  
Midlands  
CREDIT UNION

**West-Midlands Credit Union** is delighted to invite interested parties to attend the upcoming Go Green Expo, taking place on Sunday, **1st March from 12:00pm to 4:00pm.**

This exciting community event will bring together leading organisations, sustainability experts, and local businesses to showcase practical solutions for greener living, energy efficiency, and sustainable communities.

### Event Highlights Include:

- Expert presentations and panel discussions with SEAI and Greenify
- Cat from <https://castlequarterhouse.ie/> will be sharing Insights from their self-build journey.
- A wide range of exhibitors showcasing eco-friendly products, services, and supports available locally
- The official Launch of the Energy Master Plan for Athlone: The Energy Master Plan, developed with support from Westmeath County Council, the SEAI and ORS prepared by Etownz, provides a roadmap for improving energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, and exploring renewable energy opportunities across homes, businesses, community buildings, and public services in Athlone. The plan identifies priority projects and access to grants and supports to help the community achieve measurable energy savings.

🗣️ Our MC for the day, Ollie Turner of Galway Bay FM, will guide the afternoon's discussions and engage with attendees.

🕒 Presentations will begin from 1:00pm.

Whether you are interested in home energy upgrades, sustainable finance, community climate initiatives, or simply learning more about how to reduce your carbon footprint, this event offers valuable information and practical advice for everyone.

This is a FREE event and tickets are available from Eventbrite.ie or you can reserve directly here:

<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/1977888824718?aff=odtdtcreator>

**Have an Idea for a Social Enterprise?**

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil  
Local Enterprise Office

# SOCIAL ENTERPRISE KICKSTARTER

Thinking about starting a business to support your community?

Got an idea that could earn income and create community impact?

This workshop is for community groups and clubs exploring a trading or business side but unsure what a social enterprise is.

- What a social enterprise is – and how it's different from a business or charity
- Common challenges when setting one up
- How to identify your social impact and potential
- Ideal if you have an idea and want to explore it and learn how to get started.

March 5th  
10:00am to  
12:30pm

Mullingar  
Park Hotel

TEL : 044 9338945  
EMAIL: LOCALENTERPRISE@WESTMEATHCOCO.IE



Local  
Enterprise  
Week 2026  
Making it Happen

Visit [localenterprise.ie/Westmeath](http://localenterprise.ie/Westmeath)



Office of the  
Government of Ireland

In partnership with



Enterprise  
Ireland



## Who Should Attend

This workshop is suitable for individuals or groups who:

- Have an idea for a social enterprise but haven't yet started
- See a need for social change but don't yet have a solution
- Are passionate about social impact but lack business experience
- Are part of a community or voluntary organisation considering a trading arm
- Run a for-profit business and want to explore a social enterprise, CSR, or ESG initiative

We would appreciate it if you could share this with any individuals or groups who may be interested in learning more about social enterprises. Further workshops will take place later in the year focusing on setting up and running the trading element of a social enterprise.

Local Enterprise Office is hosting a Social Enterprise Workshop in the Mullingar Park Hotel during Enterprise Week, which may be of interest to community groups and clubs in your area.

The workshop will be delivered by Marie Manning and is designed for individuals or groups who have an idea for a social enterprise but have not yet started. It will help participants understand what a social enterprise is, what makes it different from traditional businesses and charities, and how to begin turning ideas into realistic and achievable actions.

## Aims of the Workshop

- Introduce the core principles of social enterprise and how it differs from businesses and charities
- Identify common challenges faced when setting up a social enterprise
- Explore social and environmental needs and their potential for impact
- Support participants to shape and test early problem-solution ideas
- Encourage peer-to-peer learning, feedback, and connections

Local Enterprise Office  
Making It Happen

[Click here for more information and to book.](#)

# Westmeath Local Community Safety Partnership

## Open its 'Feeling Safe Survey' Public Consultation

**Westmeath**  
LOCAL COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS!**

**Feeling Safe Survey**

What safety issues do **YOU** feel are most important for inclusion in the Westmeath Community Safety Plan?

To take the survey, scan the QR Code or visit [Westmeathcoco.ie](http://Westmeathcoco.ie) or email [LCSP@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:LCSP@westmeathcoco.ie) for assistance

**Survey open until 31st March**  
**In person workshops also taking place**

You can complete the survey as an individual, business, community group, or other organisation.

Community safety is about people being and feeling safe in their communities. Westmeath Local Community Safety Partnership is asking people who live and work in Westmeath, what they think, and how they feel about community safety. Your views will be part of the survey results, which will be used to develop the Westmeath Community Safety Plan 2026-2028.

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL  
AN Roinn Dlí agus Cúir, *Ceathrú Búirí agus Iomairt*  
Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

Westmeath Local Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) is holding a 'Feeling Safe Survey' public consultation in February & March 2026 to gather information on how people who live and work in Westmeath feel about community safety. Community safety is about people being and feeling safe in their communities. While Ireland is generally considered a safe country, some communities and individuals can experience different challenges.

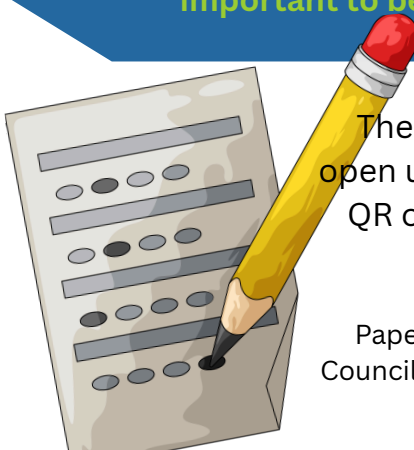
The Westmeath LCSP is working to develop a three-year Community Safety Plan that reflects the priorities identified by local people through public consultation. This plan will coordinate the work of multiple agencies to address the safety concerns raised by the community.

Local Community Safety Partnerships have been set up in every local authority area by the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. Their purpose is to improve safety and wellbeing by bringing residents, local authorities, state services, and community groups together to create and deliver local community safety plans.

Westmeath Local Community Safety Partnership wants to hear from the people who live and work in Westmeath about how safe they feel and what matters most to them. Your views will help shape the results of this survey, which will guide the development of the Westmeath Community Safety Plan for 2026-2028.

Public consultation plays a vital role in creating this Community Safety Plan. By voicing local concerns and experiences, the community helps identify the issues that need attention and the actions that should be included in the final Westmeath community safety plan.

**Have Your Say, use Your Voice, it Matters What community safety issues do You Feel are important to be included in Westmeath Community Safety Plan 2026 -2028**



The community safety 'Feeling Safe Survey' online survey is open until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2026 and can be accessed by scanning this QR code or on this link [Local Community Safety Survey – Fill out form](#)



Paper copies of the questionnaire will be made available at libraries and Council Offices throughout the county or by contacting the Westmeath Local Community Safety Office, see below contact details.

## Westmeath LCSP Public Consultation meetings 2026

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	VENUE
<b>5th March 2026</b> Thursday	Mullingar	10:30am– 12:30pm (Morning) 7:00pm – 9:00pm (Evening)	Annebrook House Hotel
<b>10th March 2026</b> Tuesday	Athlone	10:30am –12:30pm (Morning) 7:00pm – 9:00pm (Evening)	Shamrock Lodge Hotel
<b>11th March 2026</b> Wednesday	Kilbeggan	7:00pm – 9:00pm	Pastoral Centre
<b>23rd March 2026</b> Monday	Castlepollard	7:00pm – 9:00pm	Castle Varagh Hotel
<b>25th March 2026</b> Wednesday	Kinnegad	7:00pm – 9:00pm	Kinnegad Library
<b>31st March 2026</b> Tuesday	Moate	7:00pm – 9:00pm	Carmelite Pastoral Centre

**REGISTER NOW**



To register to attend in Westmeath LCSP in person consultation meetings, please click on below link [Registration to attend Westmeath Local Community Safety Partnership \(WLCSP\) Consultations – Fill out form](#)

Alternatively, to register to attend by phone or email, or request a paper copy of online survey or for more information on the Westmeath Local Community Safety Partnership or the 'Feeling Safe Survey', please contact Brigid Geoghegan or Andrew Slevin at Westmeath Local Community Safety Partnership, 044 9332114 or by email [LCSP@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:LCSP@westmeathcoco.ie)

The Midlands Training Links Network is continuing its workshop programme with a free workshop for Tidy Towns groups and Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC's) – focused on the Tidy Towns Application and what Adjudicators consider in the Biodiversity and Sustainability categories. **The workshop takes place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March from 9:45am - 1pm in Castlepollard Library, N91T183.**

Participants will have the opportunity to share experiences and get advice on Sustainability and Biodiversity projects, developing long-term plans, and preparing the Tidy Towns Application. The workshop will be delivered by Sharon Eastwood, an Environmental Consultant and Tidy Towns Adjudicator. Sharon has been an independent adjudicator for the national Tidy Towns competition for 17 years, advancing sustainability and biodiversity themes in particular. She has delivered many workshops and spoken at various conferences about the competition and its evolution in recent years to advance national policy. In 2024, Sharon spoke at Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Stakeholder's Forum on how the competition is working on transformative approaches to the SDGs.

SEAI Community Mentors will also provide advice on grant aid supports for sustainability projects and examples of recent projects funded by the Community Climate Action Fund.



**traininglinks** **seai** SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

**FREE WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABILITY AND BIODIVERSITY**

Join us for an inspiring workshop with Tidy Towns Adjudicator, Sharon Eastwood, and SEAI Mentors – Focusing on the Sustainability & Biodiversity categories of the Tidy Towns Application.

**Who should attend?** Members of Tidy Towns groups, Sustainable Energy Communities, or anyone interested in Biodiversity & Sustainability.

**What to expect:**

- Key tips on preparing the Tidy Towns Application and what Adjudicators consider in the Sustainability & Biodiversity categories.
- Insights and advice on developing Sustainability & Biodiversity projects and grant aid supports.
- Activities to help develop your own biodiversity or sustainability projects.
- Ideal for groups who want to focus on their long-term plans for Tidy Towns activities.

**Where:** Castlepollard Library N91T183  
**When:** 7<sup>th</sup> March 9:45am to 1pm

To attend & for further details, please register here:  
<https://forms.microsoft.com/r/LKDKY7aP6N>  
or scan the QR Code below; or phone 086 8439555

Sustainability & Biodiversity Workshop - Castlepollard Library, Saturday 7th March

SEAI Community Mentors will also provide advice on grant aid supports for sustainability projects and examples of recent projects funded by the Community Climate Action Fund.

Details are included in the attached flyer. For further information, please phone: 086 8439555.

The Workshop is free of charge, pre-registration is required **before 27<sup>th</sup> February.**

**REGISTER HERE**

Sustainability & Biodiversity Workshop - Castlepollard Library, Saturday 7th March



## Consultation on Cost of Disability Launched by Department of Social Protection

The Department of Social Protection launched a consultation on the Cost of Disability today.

They want to hear your views on two topics:

1. The agenda and format for a Cost of Disability Strategic Focus Network Summit. This will be held on the 13 May 2026, and will be a one-day event where key people and groups meet to discuss the cost of disability and help shape future strategy.
2. Your views on a cost of disability payment and how it should be designed.

### Submission Information

The Department would particularly like to hear from disabled people, their families and carers, their representative groups, and Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs/DPROs).

Submissions can be made in the following formats:

- Written
- Video
- Irish Sign Language
- Phone (dedicated hours and phone number available)

**Deadline for submissions: 7th April 2026 (5pm)**

[Find full details and submission requirements here.](#)



**UPDATE**

**Disability Participation News Hub**

**Consultation on the Cost of Disability Launched by the Department of Social Protection.**

 [www.disabilityparticipation.ie](http://www.disabilityparticipation.ie)



## 3rd World Congress of Age-friendly Cities and Communities

16 - 18, June, 2026  
Donostia/San Sebastián, Spain

**Theme:** "Transforming Together! An Age-Friendly World – Connected, Equitable and Sustainable for All Generations"

The Congress brings the global age-friendly community to the Basque Country for three days of plenaries, breakout sessions across all eight WHO age-friendly domains, and conversations on intergenerational connection, digital inclusion, caring communities, and climate resilience. Highlights include a Mayors' Summit on Age-friendly Leadership, the launch of a global age-friendly research network, an Age-friendly Awards Ceremony, and a social evening at the San Telmo Museum.

The Pre-Congress Day on 15 June is worth arriving early for – parallel sessions cover leadership, integrated care, human rights, and the future of age-friendly research.

Register now and submit your abstracts – free of charge

**REGISTER HERE**

Registration is free – and lunches and coffee breaks during the Congress are funded by the organisers and sponsors. Confirmation of attendance will be communicated in March.

You can also [contribute to the programme](#) by proposing a poster, workshop, presentation, roundtable, or exhibition stand in the Global Village. The call for abstracts closes on 9 March 2026.

**Creative Ireland** is delighted to announce the launch of a new €6.5 million Creative Climate Action Fund. It will support imaginative, large-scale, creative, cultural and artistic initiatives that support communities around climate change and empower people to make meaningful behavioral change.

The Creative Climate Action Fund III (2026-2029) is an initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme in partnership with the Shared Island Initiative and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. The fund will support ambitious, durational projects that bring together expertise from the creative sectors, climate science, and community engagement.

Now seeking proposals that respond creatively to Ireland's key national climate priorities, including those set out in the Climate Action Plan 2025, the National Dialogue on Climate Action, and the work of the Just Transition Commission.

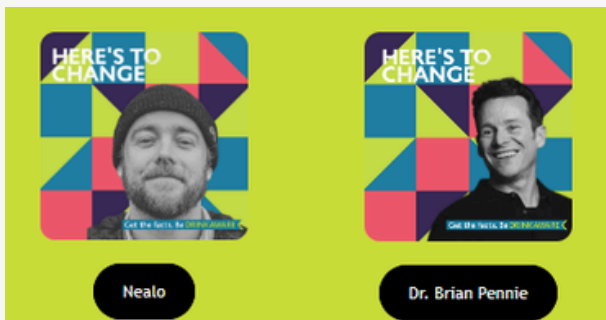
Funding between €400,000 and €750,000 is available for large-scale, public engagement projects, running from 2026 to 2029.

**Find out more and submit your application**

**HERE**



*Creative Ireland announces a new €6.5 million Creative Climate Action Fund*



Nealo

Dr. Brian Pennie

What you need to know about a life without alcohol. The benefits, challenges, and the ways relationships can change.

Why we are creatures of habit, why we push away pain, and how real change happens when we show up protecting what matters to us most.

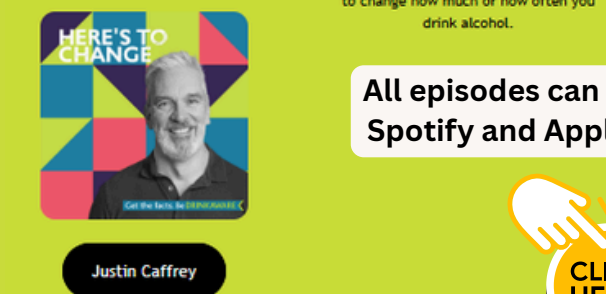


Mummy Wine Culture

Dr. Máire Finn and Alana Kirk

Challenging the "Wine O' Clock" trend encouraging mothers to reach for a glass of wine as the solution to their problems.

What women need to know about alcohol and menopause. What's going on, why we need to protect our sleep, energy and wellbeing and why it could be time to change how much or how often you drink alcohol.



Justin Caffrey

How to change the way you deal with stress, anxiety, and alcohol, while protecting your energy, mental health, and relationships.

**DRINKAWARE**



**Our Here's to Change Podcast will be returning for Season 2!**

**All episodes can be found on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.**



Here's To Change will introduce you to a mix of inspiring voices sharing real life experiences of alcohol's place in their lives. These chats offer a non-judgemental account from people who changed their relationship with alcohol, giving balance and harmony the chance to take hold. Listen in to find out how your life can transform – from making small positive changes to more drastic overhauls.

**fáilte isteach**

Welcoming Migrants through Conversational English Classes

Free conversational English classes

# Learn English

- Practice and improve your English
- Meet new people
- All levels welcome

**Location:** Womens Community Project, Bishopsgate, Mullingar (Adult English class)

**Day & time:** Fridays @11am - 12.30pm

**Contact:** [adult.ed@wcpmullingar.ie](mailto:adult.ed@wcpmullingar.ie)

044 93 44301



## Womens Community Project



Bishopgate, Mullingar  
(Adult English class)



Fridays ( 11am to 12:30pm)



**For queries:**  
[adult.ed@wcpmullingar.ie](mailto:adult.ed@wcpmullingar.ie)



044 934 4301



**International  
Diaspora  
Forum**

...promoting diversity & social inclusion

*The International Diaspora Forum is a welcoming and inclusive association created by and for people from diverse cultural backgrounds.*

*Our goal is to bring people together to share stories, celebrate cultures, and build strong, supportive connections. We are committed to making sure every voice matters and every contribution counts.*

*Our Mission is to empower diverse communities by promoting social inclusion, celebrating cultures, and creating opportunities for all to belong, thrive, and lead positive change.*

### The aims and objectives are to:

- ✓ **Celebrate Cultural Diversity**  
Provide platforms for migrants to interact integrate and collaborate.
- ✓ **Foster Social Inclusion and Participation**  
Promote mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and active engagement in community life for all members.
- ✓ **Promote family-friendly initiatives**  
Organize inclusive outings that support the socio-cultural and emotional well-being of children and families.
- ✓ **Amplify Voices**  
Ensure that individuals diverse background or status are able to express their views
- ✓ **Support Sustainable Development**  
Share and apply best practices that build resilient communities.

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER**

## International Diaspora Forum

Date : Time: Saturday, the 14th of March  
Venue: Radisson Blu Hotel, Athlone

For queries

089 9493550

[diaspora4040online@gmail.com](mailto:diaspora4040online@gmail.com)



Addressing key migrant pain points  
in the Irish context:



**PRESENTS  
PANEL DISCUSSION  
& COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE**

**STRONGER TOGETHER  
OVERCOMING INTEGRATION  
CHALLENGES IN IRELAND**

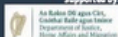
Date Sat., 14th March 2026  
Time 11am  
Venue Radisson Blu Hotel,  
Athlone, Co. Westmeath,  
Republic of Ireland



**STRONGER COMMUNITIES START WITH LISTENING**  
Join the conversation. Be part of the solution.

For enquiries, pls contact: 0899493550 | [diaspora4040online@gmail.com](mailto:diaspora4040online@gmail.com)

Supported by:



# Rural Social Scheme

**Are you a community group looking for help with Administration tasks?**

Westcd are looking for new Community groups to add to our database

**How Westmeath Community Development can help?**  
-Provide a suitable participant for 19.5 hrs per week under the Rural Social Scheme

**Contact RSS supervisor**

**Majella Boyhan** [mboyhan@westcd.ie](mailto:mboyhan@westcd.ie)/087-3600983

**Tony McCormack** [tmccormack@westcd.ie](mailto:tmccormack@westcd.ie) 044-9348571

We're here to support local community groups with their day-to-day admin tasks – so you can focus on making a difference.



**An Roinn Coimisce Sóisialaí**  
Department of Social Protection



Supported by the Department of Social Protection, which is funded by the Irish Government

**Are you a Community Group looking for help with Admin Tasks?**

Westmeath Rural Social Scheme (RSS) are seeking Community Groups to apply in the hopes that to provide RSS participant to help with Admin Tasks under the RSS Scheme.

The scheme provide suitable workers who can work for 19.5 hrs. per week.

APPLICATION can be access through this link:

**[Apply here:](#)**



**Contact information**

**Majella Boyhan**

Email: [mboyhan@westcd.ie](mailto:mboyhan@westcd.ie)

044-934 8571

**Tony McCormack**

044- 9348571



## **Rural Social Scheme**

### **NEW ELIGIBILITY!!**

**Work 19.5hrs for a community group near you**

**Earn a min rate of €286.50 per week**

-Must be over 50

-In receipt of a Social Welfare Payment

**or**

-Must be over 25

-In receipt of a social welfare payment

-Have a herd number or have a family member

**(Including In-Laws)** with a herd number

**Apply today! contact RSS Supervisors**

**Majella Boyhan 087-3600983 or Tony McCormack 044-9348571**



**An Roinn Coimisce Sóisialaí**  
Department of Social Protection





# Heritage and Biodiversity News and Events

## The Tóchar Midlands Wetlands Restoration - public information evenings

Information sessions on fen restoration, the benefits for local communities, and the work taking place across the Midlands. These free events are open to everyone, with opportunities to meet the project team, ask questions and learn how you can get involved.

 **Wed 4<sup>th</sup> March**

 7:15pm -8pm


 Greville Arms Hotel, Mullingar


## Sustainability & Biodiversity Workshop

An inspiring workshop with Tidy Towns Adjudicator, Sharon Eastwood and SEAI Mentors – Focusing on the sustainability & biodiversity categories of the Tidy Towns Application.

The workshop will include a short walk around the new Town Park and use this as a basis for a workshop activity for participants to suggest sustainability or biodiversity projects that might be suitable for the site.

 **Sat 7<sup>th</sup> March**

 9:45am to 1pm

 Castlepollard Library

## 'Tara by Name, Tara by Nature' Workshop


A project exploring the archaeology and placename heritage linked to Ireland's many 'Tara or Teamair' sites.

By studying Tara sites beyond Co. Meath, the project aims for a greater understanding of these sites within their local landscapes and communities, in addition to helping to provide a deeper insight into the Hill of Tara itself and its potential connections to other similar sites around the country.

Early findings show that Tevrin (between Mullingar and Delvin) is a site of particular interest with strong placename evidence connecting it to the wider Tara tradition.

The project team led by Dr Susan Curran of The Discovery Programme the national archaeological research body and Abarta Heritage are holding a community workshop and inviting local residents to share stories, memories, and folklore connected to sites in the area. All welcome to attend.

 **Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> March,**

 6pm

 Westmeath Libraries Mullingar Branch





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](http://www.athlonecommunityservicescouncil.com)



# RURAL SUPPORT SCHEMES

## Expression of Interests 2026

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST RURAL  
SUPPORT SCHEMES 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](mailto:rss@westmeathcoco.ie).

**The closing date for EOI's 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.

**MULLINGAR 4 ALL**  
**INTERNATIONAL POTLUCK**  
*Dishing up Diversity*  
**SATURDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2026**  
**1PM**  
**THE COMMUNITY HUB, BLOCK E, THE BARRACKS, MULLINGAR**

Supported by:

Mullingar 4 All will be organising an International Potluck in the Community Hub, Block E, The Barracks, Mullingar at 1pm on the 28th of March

This project is supported by the As Darragh Did Fund and sponsored by Westmeath integration- LAIT

Despite all our differences, Food Unites us All. This will be a communal gathering where we can share meals and make new friendships, supporting integration and encouraging collective action.

We are asking participants to bring a dish and try a dish on the day of our event. We are looking for dishes across the world.

If you would like to take part or if you would like to sponsor this event, please contact [mullingar4all@gmail.com](mailto:mullingar4all@gmail.com)

**HEARTLANDS PRIDE**  
**ATHLONE AGM**  
**THURSDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2026**  
**VIA ZOOM @ 7PM**

**POSITIONS:**  
 CHAIRPERSON  
 SECRETARY  
 PRO  
 TREASURER  
 EVENTS MANAGER  
 FUNDRAISING MANAGER  
 ORDINARY MEMBERS

Please contact our email for link:  
[heartlandspride.athlone@gmail.com](mailto:heartlandspride.athlone@gmail.com)

**HEARTLANDS PRIDE**

**SEACHTAIN**  
**NA GAEILGE**  
**Maointhe ag Ciste Spreagtha 2026**

**CISTE SPREAGTHA** **SEACHTAIN NA GAEILGE** **Conradh na Gaeilge**

Donation link:  
[buymeacoffee.com/mullingar4alldonations](http://buymeacoffee.com/mullingar4alldonations)

**MACHNAMH**  
**LE JAMESON NEWELL**  
**7 Ú LA DE MHARTA**  
**6PM**  
**VENUE 4, BAILE ATHA LUAIN**

**Maointhe ag Ciste Spreagtha 2026**

Heartlands Pride will be hosting it's first ever Summer Pride from the 3rd - 7th of June 2026

**Athlone**  
**June 3<sup>rd</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Ag úsáid do chúpla focal**  
**Cupán agus Caint**  
**8ú la de Mhárta**  
**A haon a chlog**  
**Caifé Chocolate**  
**Brown, Baile Átha Luain**

**Maointhe ag Ciste Spreagtha 2026**

Local communities are invited to attend upcoming Public Information Evenings in Westmeath,

hosted by **Tóchar Midlands Wetland Restoration** to learn more about fen restoration and the benefits of healthy wetlands for nature, climate and communities. The events follow new research showing strong public support for protecting wetlands for future generations.

To find out more and register visit [www.tocharwetlands.ie](http://www.tocharwetlands.ie).

The events are open to landowners, farmers, community groups, local organisations and anyone with an interest in wetlands and the future of the Midlands.

Further details and to register to attend any of the events are available at [www.tocharwetlands.ie](http://www.tocharwetlands.ie). Or follow us on Instagram @wetlandsrestoration or Facebook and LinkedIn Tóchar Wetlands Restoration

The Native Irish Honey Bee Society is a conservation organisation dedicated to the preservation and conservation of the Irish Native Honey Bee which is under threat from many different sources.



**Tóchar**  
 Athchóiriú Bogach Lár na Tíre  
 Midlands Wetland Restoration

**Public Information Evening: Just Transition Fen Restoration**

Restoration plans will be developed for 36 fen sites across the Just Transition region. Public information sessions will be taking place to explain some of the local environmental and community benefits, as well as financial incentives available for restoration initiatives for the following regions:

**LAOIS: 23/02/26 - Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise**  
**WESTMEATH 24/02/26 - Radison Blu Hotel, Athlone**  
**OFFALY: 26/02/26 - County Arms, Birr**  
**ROSCOMMON: 03/03/26 - Percy French Hotel, Strokestown**  
**WESTMEATH 04/03/2026 - Greville Arms Hotel, Mullingar**

**Time: 7:15pm - 8:45pm**

**To register please visit: [www.tocharwetlands.ie](http://www.tocharwetlands.ie)**

All are welcome to attend, whether you're a landowner, environmental enthusiast, or local decision-maker, this is your chance to learn how fen restoration can enrich the Midlands for present and future generations.  
**Light refreshments will be served on the night.**

The Tóchar Project is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the EU Just Transition fund.



## 2026 Conference Program

### Friday 6th March

- 17.30 **Welcome & Introduction**
- 17.45 **Gerard Coyne**,  
Do the bees know best?
- 18.15 **Colm O'Neill**,  
Giving our Honey Bees their best chance
- 18.45 **"To Treat or not to Treat"**  
Panel Discussion with conference speakers.  
Chaired by Paula Somers-Kennedy

### Suppliers Marketplace



### Saturday 7th March

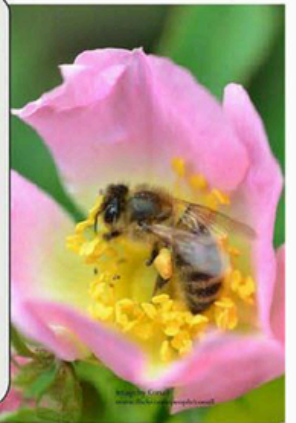
- |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.00 <b>Welcome &amp; Introduction</b><br>Loretta Neary Chairperson NIHBS                                 | 12.15 <b>The Rev. Sam Millar Award</b>                                                                             |
| 9.15 <b>Mick Verspuij</b><br>Mapping Our Bees: Insights from the Managed and Free-Living Honey bee Census | 12:30 <b>Lunch</b> 90 Minutes                                                                                      |
| 9:45 <b>Dr. Alan Moore</b><br>Hedgerows for life                                                          | 14.00 <b>John Kelly</b><br>Invasive species: threats to Irish Bees                                                 |
| 10.15 <b>Tea &amp; Coffee Break</b>                                                                       | 14.30 <b>John De Carteret</b><br>Asian Hornet - The Jersey experience                                              |
| 10.45 <b>Professor Stephen Martin</b><br>Science of Varroa resistance                                     | 15.15 <b>Tea &amp; Coffee break</b>                                                                                |
| 11.30 <b>Steve Riley</b><br>Accling Varroa resistance to Irish Honey Bee stocks                           | 15.45 <b>Professor Grace McCormack</b><br>SWARM: Sustainable Ways to Advance Reproductive Management in honey bees |
|                                                                                                           | 16.30 <b>NIHBS Annual Raffle</b>                                                                                   |

## AMM IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Friday 6th March  
 Early Bird €25/Late €30  
 Saturday 7th March  
 Early Bird €45/Late €55



Early bird rates until February 20th ONLY



Native Irish Honey Bee Society  
*Apis mellifera mellifera*



# Annual Conference

6th & 7th March 2026

Athlone Springs Hotel





## **Minister Jerry Buttimer announces the launch of the New Solutions Social Innovation €4m Pilot Grant Scheme**

- Minister Buttimer launches €4m Grants Scheme to pilot social innovations
- The New Solutions Pilot Grants Scheme is a two-year €4 million fund co-financed by the European Union and the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
- The call will be managed by the New Solutions Social Innovation Hub

Today (Monday, 10 February 2026) Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Jerry Buttimer TD, launched the New Solutions Social Innovation Pilot Grant Scheme, a €4 million fund to support early-stage social innovations in Ireland.

The overall objective of New Solutions Fund is to enhance the social innovation ecosystem in Ireland and is co-funded through the European Social Fund + 2021-2027 (ESF+), a European initiative aimed at reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion, with an emphasis on disadvantaged groups.

The New Solutions Pilot Grants Scheme will fund social innovation initiatives that will trial or test new products, services, practices or models to deliver better outcomes. The scheme will support a minimum of 40 projects with grants ranging from between €70,000 and €100,000 over a 24-month period. In addition, successful applicants will receive access to the New Solutions Social Innovation Hub's networks and supports, which will include mentoring, access to training, peer networking and any other supports identified as critical to the delivery of the project.

### **Announcing the launch of the scheme today, Minister Buttimer said:**

"I am delighted to launch the New Solutions Pilot Grants Scheme today. Last year, I announced €2.5 million in funding for social innovation initiatives that were ready to scale up and achieve greater impact.

"Through the pilot grant scheme, we have an exciting opportunity to test innovative solutions to our most challenging social issues where traditional methods have simply not worked.

"Today's announcement is the next step in how we support social innovation in Ireland, with up to €4 million being made available to support a minimum of 40 social innovation initiatives at an earlier stage of development that need funding to trial or test a new idea or service."

The scheme will be managed by the New Solutions Social Innovation Hub, which the Minister officially opened last year, who play a key role in developing the social innovation ecosystem in Ireland. The New Solutions Innovation Hub will work closely with the successful projects to provide capacity building and supports.

### **Mario Vottero from Rethink Ireland said:**

"The Pilot Grants are aimed at initiatives that have progressed beyond the idea stage and are ready to test their solutions in real-world settings. Successful projects take part in monthly check-ins, provide quarterly progress updates, and share their learning to support the development of Ireland's wider social innovation sector."

Applications will close on 13 March 2026, at 6pm. Online application clinics will take place on the 18 and 25 February. Applicants are encouraged to attend these online application clinics for guidance on eligibility and the application process. The application will be available on the [New Solutions Social Innovation Hub website](#).

The Department is supported by Pobal in the implementation of the New Solutions Social Innovation Fund.

### **Pobal CEO, Anna Shakespeare said:**

"Pobal is pleased to play its role in overseeing the New Solutions Pilot Grants, which are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the ESF+ EIST 2021-2027 Programme. This investment demonstrates a shared commitment to supporting organisations that are developing new approaches to social inclusion. By enabling communities to test, refine, and grow innovative ideas, the programme will help drive meaningful, lasting change for people experiencing disadvantage."

### **ENDS**

Contact:

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

01-773 6843 / 086 4618285

[Press.office@drcd.gov.ie](mailto:Press.office@drcd.gov.ie)



## Minister Calleary launches digital version of 'An Gaodhal' at the University of Galway

- Project delivered by the University of Galway and funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
- Minister Calleary also launches a new OCR tool for the Irish language

The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, today launched a digital version of An Gaodhal, one of the most important Irish-language newspapers of the late nineteenth century.

Funding of almost €47,000 was provided by the Department to support the University of Galway in digitising the entire collection of An Gaodhal (1881-1898), a bilingual Irish-English newspaper founded in New York by Mícheál Ó Lócháin, a native of Milltown, Co. Galway. The project was co-funded by the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, the Irish Institute of New York, Glucksman Ireland House, New York University, and the University of Galway.

The An Gaodhal research project supports the goals of the Digital Plan for the Irish Language, that include ensuring total support for the Irish language in the digital sphere in addition to sourcing high-quality language data for future use. As part of this project, new Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology was developed to accurately read the old Gaelic script, which has long been a challenge for researchers.

The digitised newspaper and related resources will be made openly available, so that students, researchers, and the wider public will be able to examine and properly study this material for the first time.

The An Gaodhal collection is online and available to view [HERE](#)

Speaking at the launch at the University of Galway, Minister Calleary said:

“This project shows how modern technology can be used to protect and strengthen the Irish language. By providing ‘An Gaodhal’ online in a digital format, we are opening up the linguistic and cultural history of the language to a new audience.

“Another wonderful result of the work undertaken for this project was the development of a new OCR tool for Irish; such developments closely tie in with one of my Department’s objectives regarding modern technological facilities being created for Irish, so that it keeps pace with the modern languages of the world.”

The project’s research associate, Dr Deirdre Ní Chonghaile, said:

“Irish and English are side by side on the newspaper’s pages as well as various dialects and the pre-standardised Irish spelling, totalling almost 1.8 million words. The volume and diversity of that content strengthens the digital tools which can be derived from it.”

Dr Ní Chonghaile added:

“All are welcome to avail of the models created on Transkribus for free. Now that there are three OCR models available for Irish – Gerard Farrell having published the third in 2023 – we are excited to see them applied to various texts. With a searchable digital version of An Gaodhal being published, we can see how the technology helps us establish an even playing field for various language communities and for historical sources which belong to everyone.”

ENDS

Contact:

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Press Office  
01-773 6843 / 086 4618285  
[Press.office@drcdg.gov.ie](mailto:Press.office@drcdg.gov.ie)



## OCED publishes Rural Policy Review of Ireland 2026

- OECD review of rural policy to inform development of the new Our Rural Future Policy  
The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has now published its first Rural Policy Review of Ireland.

The review highlights the unique whole-of-government approach taken under Ireland's Our Rural Future policy, which has provided increased visibility on the impacts of rural areas of policies and programmes across all government departments, as well as the significant status given to rural policy through the establishment of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht in 2017.

The OECD analysis also showed that, while Ireland's rural areas have significant potential in areas such as the green economy, tourism and food sectors, there remains a range of challenges facing rural areas.

In providing a series of recommendations, the OECD review points to the benefits of improved use of rural intelligence, broadening of support for rural enterprises and enabling delivery of essential services in rural areas.

### **Minister Calleary stated:**

"I am extremely grateful to the OECD for sharing its vast expertise and experience examining rural development policies and practices across its members.

"This review has provided a highly valuable independent evaluation of Irish rural policy, which will now help to inform the development of our new Rural Development Policy – Our Rural Future.

"I am pleased to note that the report recognises the benefits of our whole of government approach to addressing our ambitions for rural Ireland. Of course, challenges remain in ensuring we fully achieve this ambition and the detailed analysis provided by the OECD will help us to do this."

**ENDS**

Contact:

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Press Office  
01-773 6843 / 086 4618285

[Press.office@drcdg.gov.ie](mailto:Press.office@drcdg.gov.ie)

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## **Minister Calleary announces new pilot payment scheme for landowners in the MacGillycuddy Reeks**

- New three-year pilot Upland Recreation Scheme to support outdoor recreation and rural tourism in the MacGillycuddy Reeks
- Over €100,000 each year to fund over 50 landowners in managing recreational access to the Reeks
- Support also announced for the “Helping the Hills” network to improve capacity in managing upland paths

Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, has today (Thursday, 5 February 2026) announced funding for two initiatives that will support and protect upland areas. These are a new three-year pilot Upland Recreation Scheme in the MacGillycuddy Reeks, which is designated as a “Mountain Access Project”, and a two-year project to further the work of the “Helping the Hills” network.

The pilot Upland Recreation Scheme is similar to the Walks Scheme and is a first in Ireland. It will see payments being made to farmers and other private landowners in the MacGillycuddy Reeks who undertake an agreed work programme. These individual work programmes feed into an overall plan for the Reeks that includes monitoring and maintaining the upland paths and access areas. The scheme also rewards farmers for engaging directly with members of the public and providing them with assistance and guidance on how to access the mountain responsibly.

The implementation of the pilot will be overseen by the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum and will be administered by South Kerry Development Partnership CLG, a local development company which has been the lead partner in the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum since its establishment.

### **Making the announcement today, Minister Calleary stated:**

“My Department is committed to supporting the development and maintenance of recreational infrastructure in line with the aims of ‘Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors,’ Ireland’s national outdoor recreation strategy.

“In excess of 64,000 walkers access the MacGillycuddy Reeks each year and the area is an important driver of the local tourism economy. This pilot scheme is a crucial step in creating a more sustainable future for visitor access to the MacGillycuddy Reeks.

“We are fortunate in Ireland to have areas of outstanding natural beauty that are accessible to so many. However, we often forget the significant impact that walkers can have on these sensitive areas which are typically private land that is actively farmed. I would like to again thank the landowners for providing this access and dealing with the challenges it brings for them, and also commend them for participating in this new pilot scheme.

“I would also like to thank South Kerry Development Partnership and the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum for engaging with the Department to develop this scheme. I am committed to working with them to make this new venture a success and to address any challenges that emerge so that this and similar projects can become a permanent feature in many of our upland areas.”

### **Welcoming today’s announcement the Chairperson of the McGillycuddy Reeks Stakeholders Forum, Mr Stewart Stephens said:**

“The Upland Recreation Scheme is a major development in sustainable access to mountain areas, much of which are privately owned. It will benefit landowners, recreational users and the fragile upland environment. It recognises the important role of landowners in land management and the visitor experience. A lot of work has gone into the scheme, and we are delighted it is being piloted in the MacGillycuddy Reeks.”

The Minister also announced funding to support the ‘Helping the Hill’s’ programme, an initiative that provides training in upland path development, helping to build the capacity of organisations to address path erosion in upland areas, capture and share learning from recent projects, and to consolidate the Helping the Hills Network.

### **Minister Calleary added:**

“I am also happy to provide €90,000 in funding for the first year of a two-year programme to support the “Helping the Hills” network. Led by Mountaineering Ireland, the programme will build the capacity of organisations to address path erosion in upland areas and will include training in upland path development.”

**ENDS**



**Westmeath Public Participation Network**

c/o Community Development Section

Westmeath County Council

Áras an Chontae, Mullingar Co. Westmeath

Email: [ppn@westmeathcoco.ie](mailto:ppn@westmeathcoco.ie)

Contact number: 044-933-8939 / 044-933-2157

to join PPN please [CLICK HERE](#) or scan the QR code above



**Public Participation  
Network Westmeath**



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workshops, and grant opportunities.  
Don't miss out—join us today! 🙌

