

As we prepare for our Spring Plenary meeting, which will feature a theme celebrating our Tidy Towns Groups, our Westmeath PPN Reps continue to work diligently on your behalf.

Of particular note, our Athlone Moate delegates made a presentation to the officials and Councillors of the Municipal District of Athlone Moate about issues raised by member groups.

An Environment Climate Rural Water and Emergency Linkage also met recently to discuss rising costs in energy, Waste Management, and Transport. A Whatsapp group was subsequently created to aid communication within this group.

Please don't forget to register for our upcoming Plenary Meeting on 27th April at 6pm in the Shamrock Lodge Hotel, Athlone.



*Louderes & Mark
Westmeath PPN*



Our PPN representatives joined in celebrating National Tree Week 2026 at Gaelscoil a' Choillín, where a Cherry Blossom tree—kindly donated by Slanemore Nursery was planted.

WELCOME

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

1. St. Josephs GAA
2. Intergration & Wellbeing Mullingar
3. La Leche League Mullingar
4. College Park Residents Association
5. The Beeches Residents Association
6. Westmeath Branch BirdWatch Ireland
7. Marine View Residents Association
8. An Cór Lár Tíre
9. Paw Patrol Westmeath
10. We Are Here
11. Mullingar Community Responders
12. Rochfortbridge Community Games
13. Athlone Cricket Club 1975
14. Meadow Park Residents Association
15. Milltownpass LGFA
16. Castlepollard Chidcare Group
17. Loughnavalley Ladies Football Club
18. Kilpatrick Community Games
19. Collinstown Fore Mens Shed
20. Irish Wheelchair Association Mullingar
21. St. Joseph Foroige
22. Rosemount GAA
23. Rathowen Active Retirement
24. Moate Christmas Lights Committee
25. Coosan Men's Shed
26. Glenview Heights Tower Residents Association
27. Almorita Graveyard Conservation Group



SCAN ME

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

Contact us by emailing ppn@westmeathcoco.ie

or call 044 9332157 / 8939

Westmeath PPN Spring Plenary MEETING



To confirm your attendance,
please RSVP through the link
or via the QR code

[WPPN Spring Plenary](#)



27th April 2026
Shamrock Lodge Hotel, Athlone
6pm to 9pm

*your vote
matters*

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

All PPN members are invited to attend on the upcoming WPPN Plenary Meeting taking place on the **27 April 2026** at the Shamrock Lodge Hotel, Athlone.

The Plenary Meeting is your chance to come together, share experiences, highlight local issues, and help shape the work we do for the year ahead.

It's also a great opportunity to meet other groups, learn what's happening across the county, and strengthen community links.

To confirm your attendance. Please RSVP below or via QR code



Westmeath PPN – Call for Nominations

PPN Representatives for Road Safety, WCD & Strategic Policy Committees

Westmeath Public Participation Network is now seeking nominations for PPN Representatives to several key bodies that influence policy, community development and local decision-making across the county.

PPN Representatives ensure that the voices, views and concerns of all PPN member groups are heard at county-level forums. Using their skills and experience, representatives communicate community issues, contribute to policy discussions, and report back to the wider PPN using the Representative Report after each meeting.

Nominations are open to all Pillars of the Westmeath PPN:

- Economic Development, Agriculture & Tourism
- Environment, Climate, Rural Water & Emergency
- Housing, Community, Culture & Recreation
- Planning, Regeneration & Transport

Further information and application forms can be found through the link below or via QR code:

[Westmeath PPN News](#)



• Road Safety Forum – PPN Representative



We are seeking a representative who will:

- Gather and present the views of all PPN member organisations
- Bring community issues to the Road Safety Forum
- Report back to PPN after each meeting

• Westmeath Community Development (WCD) – PPN Representative



The representative will:

- Bring forward community insights to WCD
- Represent the broad voice of the PPN Pillars
- Provide updates to members after each meeting

• Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) PPN Representatives.



SPCs include elected representatives and community partners who work together to advise the Council's Corporate Policy Group and support the development, monitoring, and review of local policy. SPCs typically meet at least four times per year during weekday working hours.

We encourage all eligible PPN member groups to consider submitting a nomination and helping strengthen the collective community voice across County Westmeath.

(There is no deadline for this, as nominations remain open).

This nomination is intended for identifying potential candidates for positions that may become available in the future. We will contact you should a suitable vacancy arise.



Global Citizenship Education workshop held on 20th March, delivered by Saolta in conjunction with Westmeath PPN. Workshop explored how the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) connect to our local communities through engaging, hands-on learning activities. A big thank-you to all our PPN participants.



SHE brunched with WILL Network in Port Laoise

Programme Manager Dr Michelle Maher talked at the Women in Leadership and Learning Network (WILL) about how the teaching profession accommodates being a councillor; 10 days annual leave paid to attend statutory council meetings, leave for elections and potential for funding through unions.

Anyone interested in learning more about WILL can contact the co-founders Rachel O'Connor and Kathryn Corbett via LinkedIn.

Around Rural Ireland



Bike Week 2026 Grants – Now Open!

Westmeath Sports Partnership is delighted to announce that funding is now available for **Bike Week 2026 (May 9th – 17th).**

We are looking for schools, clubs, community groups, and businesses across Co. Westmeath to host FREE cycling events. Whether it's a community fun cycle, a "Bike to Work", or school cycling activities, we want to hear from you!

Funding: Up to €300 available per applicant.

DEADLINE: Wednesday, April 15th at 12:00 PM.

Ready to get Westmeath cycling?

APPLY HERE



BikeWeek
9th-17th May 2026
**IT'S EASY, IT'S FUN
AND IT'S FOR EVERYONE!**

TFI TRANSPORT FOR IRELAND

WESTMEATH SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
SPORT IRELAND

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
COMhairde Chaithe na Rianaithe

An Roinn Iompair
Department of Transport



We have a **LEGO Blockbusters** event happening in **Athlone Library** on every other Saturday, next one is on **April 18th**. Its suitable for ages 5+. No booking required. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Craft and Chatter, Wednesdays 2pm – 4pm

Got a craft project you are working on or want to start? Come to Kilbeggan Library every Wednesday to knit, crochet, scrapbook or create whatever it is you fancy! All welcome and no need to book in advance. Just show up and enjoy the company of others while you work on your masterpiece. Suitable for ages 7 – 10



Why not join the **Shine Peer Support Group** for people with lived experience of mental health challenges in **Athlone library (sensory room)** from **2.30pm to 4.00pm, April 1st, 15th, 29th**. The group will meet fortnightly. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Jason at midlands@shine.ie or 086 8525281 to have their questions answered or to sign up.



Silent Book Club April 7th and 21st 7pm-8pm
Mullingar Library have started a Silent Book Club. They invite you to come along and read a book of your choice in companionable silence! Schedule reading time into your busy week. Make a commitment and watch it become a habit, then second nature. Read what you like, lower your blood pressure and join like-minded people in the quietest club in town! The group will meet every second Tuesday from 7pm-8pm.



Creative Writing workshop for kids,

Friday April 10th from 11am to 12.30pm

Learn how to create an interesting story and craft your own character. Draw a map of your story, explore your imagination and develop your writing skills.

For ages 7 – 9. Booking essential. Visit Westmeath.spydus.ie or contact Kilbeggan library for more information.

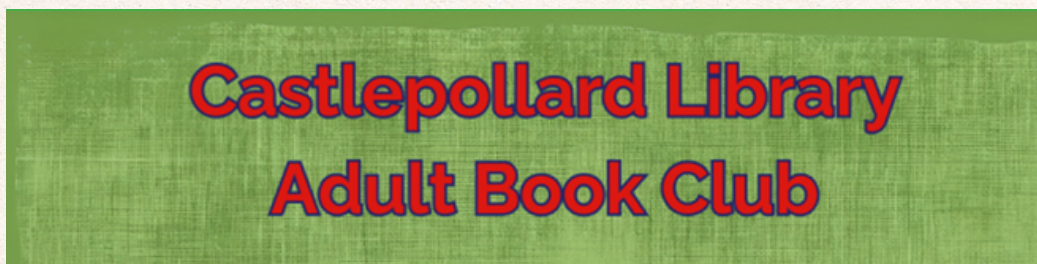
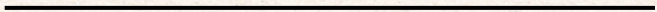


Why not join the Parent & Toddler Morning in Kinnegad Library.

Its on every four weeks on Fridays. Next meetup on March 27th.



Why not join us in Castlepollard for some Easter Arts and Crafts on April 1st 3.30 to 4.30. Suitable for ages 6 – 12 and booking is required. To book your place phone 044 9332199 or cpdlib@westmeathcoco.ie



The next meeting of the Castlepollard Library Adult Book Club will take place on Thursday, 23rd April at 6:30 pm when the group will be discussing "Diddy Squat – A Year On The Farm" by Jeremy Clarkson. New members are always welcome!"



Moate Baby & Toddler Group
Tuesdays 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Westmeath Moate Library

Join us every Tuesday at Moate Library where you can meet other parents and carers with babies and small children to relax and chat together while the children play.

The group is self-sufficient and there is a selection of suitable toys and hand-picked books available. All are welcome, no booking required.



Join us in Moate library every Monday for Knit & Natter.
Mondays 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM Westmeath Moate.
We have a lovely knitting group who meet in our meeting room.

Bring your own craft and share ideas and inspiration with other like-minded people.



Kinnegad Adult Book Club, First Thursday of each month - Next Meeting 2nd April. Books are available for collection at the Library.

Heritage and Biodiversity News and Events

Free webinar: Flower-Insect-Timed Counts

As flowers begin to bloom and more insects emerge, it's the perfect time to get ready for the busy recording season ahead.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is running a free webinar on Flower-Insect-Timed Counts (FIT Counts), which will give you everything you need to get started with 10-minute pollinator monitoring.

Wednesday 1st of April

12.00pm

Discover how you can play a vital role in monitoring insects in your garden, local park, or anywhere you find a patch of flowers. The session will cover how FIT Count surveys work, what data is collected and why it matters, how your counts contribute to understanding pollinator trends, and practical tips on how to recognise different insect groups. Whether you're completely new to insect recording or looking to build your recorder skills, this webinar will give you everything you need to get started.

Click on link register for this event - [Register Now – \(WEBINAR\) FIT Counts: How to Monitor Pollinators in 10 Minutes – Microsoft Teams](#)

Farming for Nature Festival to Bring Farmers Together for a Day of Practical Learning

The inaugural Farming for Nature Festival (FFN) is taking place at Ballykilcavan Farm & Brewery, Stradbally, Co. Laois. The event is a farmer-led celebration of practical, nature-friendly farming.

Ballykilcavan Farm & Brewery, Stradbally, Co. Laois

22nd and 23rd June 2026

Lydia Lishman, event organizer with FFN, says “this farmer-led gathering aims to provide a space for farmers to learn, connect, share knowledge, and explore practical, nature-based approaches to farming. The focus will be on real stories from farmers - the successes and the challenges and show how good food begins with good farming. By involving a wide network of partners, we want to inspire change and grow the movement of farmers and producers working with nature.”

Further event details, including ticket information and accommodation, are all available on the website www.farmingfornaturefestival.ie

National Built Heritage Service Traditional Skills Training March-May 2026

NBHS has assembled a team of conservation practitioners and experts for a series of one- and two-day traditional skills training events aimed at owners of traditional buildings and contractors and professionals wishing to upskill.

Attendance will benefit owners and those advising and working on traditionally constructed buildings and will particularly benefit owners of vacant traditional buildings who are considering undertaking the repair, reuse and retrofit of the traditional building or who simply wish to get accurate and impartial best conservation advice on its day-to-day maintenance. To join our mailing list to hear about traditional skills courses as they are announced email vernacular@housing.gov.ie

For more information on the events, including information on how to book a place, please click [Free webinar: Flower-Insect-Timed Counts](#)

Getting back into the swing of things....



Anna Browne shares a February update covering workshops, farm work, creative projects, and community events. She reflects on a successful Brigit's Week event, early spring flowers, and mindful eating with high-quality local meat. She's awaiting Creative Westmeath residency announcements and has enjoyed outdoor picnics and several trips to Dublin, including a moving performance featuring women farmers.

At **Cooles Meadow**, new fruit trees and 120 willows were planted, and she's feeling stronger physically after her operation. She ran sourdough and soap-making workshops, and continues flower-farming tasks, with early growth in the tunnel and some slug challenges.



Anna participated in creative sessions at Cuige, including life drawing (as the model) and completed her pottery class with a lamp she's proud of. She spoke at the Climate Justice Universities Union meeting and highlights useful links on food sovereignty and sustainability.

More information can be found here:

[Anna Browne](#)

The Health and Wellbeing Programme is currently undertaking a public consultation on the new Healthy Ireland Framework. We are inviting members of the public, relevant organisations and their networks to share their views and help shape the future direction of health and wellbeing policy in Ireland.

The consultation is open until 22nd of April and submissions can be made online via the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/consultations/healthy-ireland-framework-public-consultation/>

There is also a digital poster attached, which contains a QR code that links directly to the survey. We would greatly appreciate if you could complete the survey and circulate it within your networks and stakeholders.

The new framework will help guide national policy and action to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities over the coming years. Ensuring diverse input at this stage is critical to its success.

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**HEALTHY IRELAND
FRAMEWORK 2040**

hi
Healthy
Ireland

**HELP SHAPE A
HEALTHIER IRELAND**

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

For more information or to have your say
visit [gov.ie/HealthyIreland2026](https://www.gov.ie/HealthyIreland2026)

A digital poster for the Healthy Ireland Framework 2040. It features a QR code in the top right corner, a group photo of diverse people in the center, and the text 'HELP SHAPE A HEALTHIER IRELAND' in large white letters at the bottom. The logo 'hi Healthy Ireland' is also present.

Level 1 Food Safety Training

Fully Funded Training

LEVEL 1 FOOD SAFETY TRAINING

Learn essential skills for
handling, preparing and serving
food

Contact: edel.ennis@westmeathcoco.ie
Date: 15th April 2026
Time: 9am-1pm
Location: Mullingar County Council Building



The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan Pathway for Transition is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the EU Just Transition Fund Programme 2021-2027

Food Safety Training is being provided by [QHS Consultancy](#). This training is designed to provide participants with the skills and knowledge to safely work with food. Safe and nutritious food is key to promoting good health.

Participants will be accredited by the Environmental Health Association of Ireland on successful completion of training.



The training will take place in person in Mullingar County Council Buildings, N91FH4N. This training is fully funded by EU Just Transition Funding and is free to attend.

Places are limited and they will be offered on a first come first served basis.

Course: **Level 1 Food Safety**
Date: **15th April 2026**
Time: **9am-1pm**

Please register your attendance at this [link](#) or scan the QR code

Invasive Species Week

Save the date!

22nd – 28th June 2026

Invasive Species Week

Raising awareness of invasives in Ireland



Invasive Species Week 2026 will take place from the 22nd to the 28th June.

Invasive Species Week is coordinated by members of the British-Irish Council to raise awareness on invasive species and actions to prevent their spread.

The themes for this year are as follows:

Monday: Welcome to Invasive Species Week!

Tuesday: Volunteering and recording

Wednesday: Check Clean Dry

Thursday: Be Plant Wise

Friday: Be Pet Wise

Saturday and Sunday: Take part!

If you are planning an event or would like us to highlight any of the work you or your organisation is doing on invasive species, please get in touch.

Email: invasives@biodiversityireland.ie and put Invasive Species Week in the subject line

Ideas for Invasive Species Week:

- Host a talk or webinar about invasive species.
- Arrange a walk in your local area and look out for common invasive species.
- Give a biosecurity demonstration and promote the Check Clean Dry, Be Plant Wise and Be Pet Wise protocols.
- Organise a Balsam Bash. Check out this useful information leaflet from the Northern Irish Environment Agency. Always ensure compliance with Irish law and for queries relating to licences please email WildlifeLicence@npws.gov.ie.
- Share information on social media. Follow the National Biodiversity Data Centre channels and amplify our key messages throughout the week.

Stay tuned for further updates on our website [Invasive Species Week](#) and National Biodiversity Data Centre social media channels.

The Pure Mile

The Pure Mile is an environmental, community, heritage initiative, established by the Pure Project. The project encourages communities and groups living in rural areas to adopt a mile, or miles, of road, and keep this area litter/rubbish free, research information about their local wildflowers, plants, trees, animals, and the built, cultural, and social heritage.

The Pure Mile is open to all types of communities, groups and organisations;

A group of people living in a rural area

Community or residents' group

Individuals who want to clean up an area

Special interest groups, e.g., walking groups, cycling groups, scout groups, businesses and organisations, and many more, can adopt miles of road in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands and organise litter picks and clean ups

Primary and Secondary School Students can get involved in environmental projects, natural or built heritage projects, a social history project, or clean-up projects – Pure will provide advice and assistance with all school projects

Pure will assist with all projects – All work is carried out after entering the competition

Why do groups enter The Pure Mile?

To clean up your local area – remove litter and rubbish

Improve and enhance the appearance of an area

Get to know your neighbours, especially newcomers to an area

Brings communities together

Rediscover the beauty of your local area

Find out more about the natural heritage of an area

Research information about the built, cultural, and social heritage of an area

Highlight your area to others

Clean up the Wicklow/Dublin uplands

All groups feature in The Pure Mile Calendar

All groups are invited to the Pure Mile Awards Night

All groups receive a Certificate of Participation and a selection of native Irish trees.

Up to €5,000 in prizes are awarded to groups at the Pure Mile Gala Evening

For more Information, please visit the website:

[The Pure Mile](http://www.pureproject.ie)

Contact us on info@pureproject.ie or phone the Pure office 0402 28662 or write to the below address:

Pure Project, Unit 6 B, Riverside Business Centre, Tinahely, Co Wicklow, Y14 R978

The logo for the Pure Project, featuring the word "pure" in a lowercase, blue, sans-serif font. Above the letter 'e' is a stylized graphic of three green leaves or blades of grass.

The Pure Mile

Your Environment - Your Community - Your Heritage

International Volunteer Year 2026 (IVY) 2026

A global year designated by the UN to celebrate and advocate for volunteering. Volunteer Ireland has been named the national lead on IVY 2026 by the Government of Ireland and will deliver a programme of activities together with other partners in the sector.

They wanted to share some information about IVY 2026 and some ideas for how you can get involved.

Call to action: 26 for '26

The main call to action for IVY 2026 - 26 for '26 - was launched in January. Volunteer Ireland are calling on people to volunteer 26 hours during 2026. They can [take the pledge on Volunteer Ireland's website](#) and they'll get a digital pledge badge. They'll also be gathering their stories and sharing them throughout the year. It's a lovely way to recognise your existing volunteers and could even form part of a volunteer recruitment campaign.

See the pledge

Video series: A day in the life of a volunteer

Volunteer Ireland are asking volunteers across the country to share a day in their life as a volunteer. They want to showcase volunteering in all its forms. Volunteering is often undervalued and misunderstood and they want to change that. They want to show people what it's really like to volunteer and they need your help!

They're looking for volunteers to take part in a series of A Day in the Life of a Volunteer videos. All people need to take part is to be a volunteer and have a smartphone. Volunteers don't need any special skills and Volunteer Ireland will be there to offer support and guidance. Do you know a volunteer that could fit the bill? It would be a great showcase for some of your organisations and the volunteer roles they have on offer. Volunteers can complete the form below to indicate their interest in taking part. Or you can email amy@volunteer.ie for more information.

[Expression of interest form](#)

Quick hits: Easy ways to mark IVY 2026

One of the easiest ways to get involved is to talk about the importance of volunteering and help amplify the IVY 2026 message. For example, you could:

- Add the [IVY 2026 logo](#) to your email, website and events
- Let your volunteers know that it's IVY 2026 and thank them for their contribution
- Mention IVY 2026 and the importance of volunteering in event speeches, policy meetings and presentations
- Ask volunteers to [take the 26 for '26 pledge](#)
- Ask a volunteer to get involved in the day in the life video project
-

You can find more logos, blurbs and social assets on the [IVY 2026 Trello board](#).

If there's anything else Volunteer Ireland can do to support your engagement with IVY 2026 or if you'd like any more information, please get in touch - amy@volunteer.ie

News Hub Book Club 2026

Join us for Session #1 of the News Hub Book Club, featuring alt-pop singer and poet Liadh Moloney!

The News Hub Book Club aims to create an online space to celebrate and connect with disabled and neurodivergent writers, poets, academics and creatives each month.

Join from the comfort of your own home and expect everything from sci-fi to poetry and academic articles! Disabled people and allies are all welcome to join us for these relaxed online sessions.

Come along to hear from Liadh (Lee-ah) about her work and writing, connect with others and share your thoughts.

Date: Saturday, 25th April

Time: 7pm -8pm

Venue: via Zoom

Cost: Free

Registration: Register through our Eventbrite:

[News Hub Book Club Session #1: Liadh Moloney](#)

The poster features a yellow-to-orange gradient background with white stars. At the top, it reads 'NEWS HUB BOOK CLUB' in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, a circular photo shows Liadh Moloney, a woman with long dark hair wearing a light purple dress, standing in front of a brick wall. To the right of the photo, it says 'FEATURING LIADH MOLONEY' in white, bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom left, it lists the event details: 'DATE: SATURDAY, 25TH APRIL', 'TIME: 7PM', and 'VENUE: ZOOM'. A white button with a black border says 'REGISTER VIA EVENTBRITE'. Below the button, it states 'ISL INTERPRETATION AVAILABLE'. At the bottom, there are logos for 'Disability Participation News Hub' and 'West Midlands Credit Union', along with a decorative illustration of books and flowers.

We are delighted and grateful to be supported by the West Midlands Credit Union for this project.

If you would like to support us to ensure essential access costs such as ISL interpretation, book bundles and more, please reach out to our team to make a donation or become a sponsor at info@disabilityparticipation.ie

Ag úsáid do chúpla focal
Cupán agus Caint

8ú la de Mhárta
 A haon a chlog
 Caifé Chocolate
 Brown, Baile Átha
 Luain

Maoinithe ag Ciste Spreagtha 2026

CSTE SPREAGTHA **SEACHTAIN NA GAEILGE** An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Poblaithe agus Gaeltachta Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht **Conradh na Gaeilge**

Donation link:
buymeacoffee.com/mullingar4alldonations

HEARTLANDS PRIDE

June 3rd - 7th

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL **Athlone Chamber** Advancing business together

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

Síle na Gig Project

COMMUNITY SHEELA NA GIG PRIDE PARADE FLOAT PROJECT

With Heartlands Pride Athlone & Community Artist Aoife Doolan

To be displayed at Summer Pride 6th June 2026
 No Experience Necessary

Information Session Thursday 26th March - 5:30pm
Fill out form for Location

Creative Communities **Riattas Áitiúil Éireann Local Government Ireland** **Clár Éire Ildánach Creative Ireland Programme**

Community Call out for Síle na Gig Project

Heartlands Pride is delighted to have received funding from Creative Westmeath to create a Síle na Gig float for the Pride Parade, in collaboration with community artist, Aoife Doolan.

We are looking for people to take part in this project, please fill out the form if you would like to get involved, no experience necessary.

[Sheela na Gig Float Community Project sign up form](#)

We will have an information session on the 26th of March at 5:30pm - location will be given to those who fill out the form

Context: Síle na Gigs are iconic feminine figures seen as symbols of fertility and were used to protect against evil - the Athlone Síle can be found at Athlone Castle



Social & Cultural Funding 2026 Now open for applications

Available for local clubs and groups working on a voluntary basis within our common bond of Mullingar, Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge, Castlepollard, Lanesboro Ballyleague, Arva and Longford areas.

If your club or group is involved in a new, innovative or exciting initiative, we encourage you to highlight this in your application.

Only applications submitted using the official North Midlands Credit Union application form will be considered.

Download from our website at northmidlandscu.ie/membership/downloads/

Application forms are also available from our branches in Mullingar, Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge, Castlepollard, Lanesboro Ballyleague, Arva and Longford.

Completed application forms should be returned to The Secretary, Social & Cultural Committee, North Midlands Credit Union Ltd, St. Colman's House, Oliver Plunkett Street, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath or alternatively emailed to marketing@northmidlandscu.ie

**All applications must reach the office no later than
Saturday 28th March 2026**

Pre-Registration Training for Childminders

The Pre-Registration Training is mandatory training for childminders & is the first step in registering with Tusla.



It will give you all the information you need to be a childminder, understand the new Childminding Regulations and documents required to register with Tusla.

This training:



- takes approximately 6 hours and is **FREE**
- will be delivered either online or in person
- has no assessment
- will provide you with a certificate of completion
- is available via **Westmeath County Childcare Committee**

Wednesday 18th March on-line 6.30pm - 8.30pm

Wednesday 25 March on-line 6.30 - 8.30pm

Monday 30th March in Person 10am - 12 noon

**@ Westmeath CCC Office. Contact Michelle by email:
childminding@westmeathchildcare.ie or call 087-433 7700**



An Roinn Leanaí, Micheimais agus Comhionannais
Department of Children,
Disability and Equality

Rural Social Scheme

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 the link below:

[Apply here:](#)



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 Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection



Contact information

Majella Boyhan

Email: mboyhan@westcd.ie / 044-934 8571

Tony McCormack

044- 9348571

DRINKAWARE



Here's to more energy, better sleep, positivity, and health.
Here's to a mindful drinking movement. Here's to Change.

This week, we're joined by
alcohol-free coach and mentor,

Olivia Farrelly!



Olivia Farrelly

"I had an inner click ... I knew I couldn't binge drink anymore.

I had to look at who I was without alcohol."

In this episode of Here's to Change, Olivia Farrelly explores what it means to be a "grey area drinker": someone whose drinking may not appear problematic on the surface, but could still be impacting their wellbeing.

Olivia shares the moment that inspired her to make a change. A panic attack at a wedding abroad forced Olivia to reflect on her relationship with alcohol, connecting the dots between alcohol, anxiety, disrupted sleep, prolonged hangovers and emotional deregulation.

Now working as an alcohol-free coach, Olivia offers reassurance that slipping, as she did, can be part of the process. Sharing practical tools for building confidence, connection, and balance, Olivia's advice can help you live a life that's optimal for you wherever you're at.

[View in browser](#)



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Registered Charity Number: 20204601

You are receiving this mail because you have opted in at our website or at an event.

A banner for 'Workplace Peer-Supporter' featuring a photo of a woman in a green shirt talking to a man. The text 'Workplace Peer-Supporter' is written vertically in large, bold letters. Below it is the 'CYCLE AGAINST SUICIDE' logo and a QR code. At the bottom, it says 'More information here: or ↓ cycleagainstsucide.com/workplace/'.

Workplace
Peer-Supporter
BY
CYCLE
AGAINST
SUICIDE



More information here:
or ↓
cycleagainstsucide.com/workplace/

Cycle Against Suicide

is offering free training in Mental Health Peer Support on:

- March 2026: Thurs 12th & Fri 13th
- April 2026: Wed 22nd & Thurs 23rd
- May 2026: Tues 12th & Wed 13th
- June 2026: Tues 9th & Wed 10th

Time: 9.30am-5pm on both days

Delivery: LIVE online via Zoom

Cost: currently delivered free of charge

CPD: 13.5 points

For more information and to register, please visit:

<https://www.cycleagainstsucide.com/workplace-wellbeing-peer-support-programme/>

Join our Community Climate Innovation Programme

Would you like to create a sustainable future for your community?

This April-June 2026, Westmeath County Council, Trinity College Dublin and Munster Technological University will be co-delivering a Community Climate Innovation Programme for you to:

1. Build your climate knowledge
2. Network within your community
3. Access climate funding.

Apply by March 30th

The programme is **free** and is funded by the HEA and Westmeath County Council. To apply please email: climateteam@westmeathcoco.ie.

Over 3 months

- Explore the systemic nature of climate change.
- Identify key climate challenges in your community.
- Co-create climate solutions.
- Scale-up your solutions.

Engage in

- 6 luncheon webinars.
- 3 half day in-person sessions in Westmeath.
- 3 luncheon coaching webinars.
- 1 in-person summit.
- Access to an online learning platform and resources.

Join us in creating a sustainable future.



If you're a community leader passionate about sustainability-or know someone who is-we'd love to hear from you! Poster is attached for your further details.

Please submit your expression of interest by 30 March 2026 to climateteam@westmeathcoco.ie

In addition to this, the course will offer 10 spaces to undertake the course as an accredited micro credential. Anyone who wished to undertake the course as a micro credential must email climateteam@westmeathcoco.ie by 25th March 2026. These places will be offered on a first come, first served basis.

IKC3 Course for Community Leaders and Businesses.

A great opportunity to undertake a course in collaboration with Trinity College Dublin and Munster Technological University. The programme focuses on Mullingar's Decarbonisation Zone (DZ), the skills and tools you'll gain can be applied to a wide range of community settings.

The course runs from April -June 2026 It is a Free programme delivered online & in person (Approx. 7.5 hours per month) This course will help you and your community to:

- Understand the systemic nature of climate change
- Identify key climate challenges in your area
- Co-create practical climate solutions
- Scale successful ideas for wider impact

Please see the timetable below.

The monthly 3 hour sessions will take place in Mullingar,(location TBC).

Sessions are available both online & in person classes.

Month 1

Tuesday 14th April 1-2:30 pm
Tuesday 21st April 1-2:30 pm
27th April – 1st May – 3 hours
Tuesday 5th May 1-2:30pm

Month 2

Tuesday 12th May – 1-2:30pm
Tuesday 19th May – 1-2:30pm
25th May – 29th May 3 hours
Tuesday 2nd June – 1-2:30pm

Month 3

Tuesday 9th June – 1-2:30pm
Tuesday 16th June 1-2:30pm
22-26th June – 3 hours
Tuesday 30th June (Summit)

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



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.



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.

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.

Minister Dara Calleary Launches 2026 SuperValu TidyTowns Competition celebrating 68 years of environmental and community effort

The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, alongside the Managing Director of SuperValu, Mr. Luke Hanlon, have today, March 23rd, launched the 2026 SuperValu TidyTowns competition.

In place since 1958, the competition, administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht and sponsored by SuperValu, continues to be one of the most recognised sustainable, environmental and community initiatives in the country.

Speaking at the launch of the competition, Minister Calleary said:

"I am delighted to be here in Carrick-on-Shannon, Ireland's Tidiest Town for 2025, as we launch the 2026 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. This year we celebrate 68 years of this wonderful competition, which continues to thrive year on year - its success benefits us all."

There are almost 1,000 active TidyTowns groups, and last year saw a record 929 entries to the SuperValu TidyTowns competition. This saw over 30,000 volunteers giving up over 1 million hours of their time, all year round, to come together to make our communities cleaner, brighter and more vibrant places.

Minister Calleary continued:

"TidyTowns groups have been instrumental in supporting and enhancing the government's objective to ensure towns are sustainable, resilient and thriving hubs of commercial and social activity."

"I would encourage everyone to reach out to their local group and volunteer, you will be surprised at the benefits that can accrue to you and to your wider community."

"I would like to say a special thank you to our national sponsor, SuperValu, now in their 36th year of sponsoring the competition. SuperValu have been wonderful partners on this journey and I look forward to continuing this partnership in the coming years."

Speaking at the launch today, Luke Hanlon, Managing Director of SuperValu, said:

"The launch of SuperValu TidyTowns competition is always an exciting time for committees and volunteers nationwide. The longevity and diversity of the programme is remarkable, with 70% of committees active for more than a decade, and a quarter of all volunteers are under 45. It's fantastic to see volunteers of all ages and backgrounds come together with the aim of enhancing their communities, and we can't wait to see their hard work pay off throughout the year."

"SuperValu's role in communities goes far beyond retail. We are proud to provide local employment, champion local suppliers and invest in initiatives that help strengthen the quality of life in the areas we serve. SuperValu TidyTowns initiative aligns naturally with our long-standing commitment to building cleaner, greener and more sustainable communities. Sustainability continues to be a central pillar of the programme, and through SuperValu TidyTowns we aim to create a lasting positive impact on the environment, while supporting communities to take pride in the places they live and work."

"As a community retailer, we take great pride being involved with SuperValu TidyTowns for another year and we thank our independent retailers for their unwavering support and commitment."

Minister Calleary concluded by thanking the TidyTowns volunteers throughout the country and wishing them well in the 2026 competition. Duirt an tAire:

"Ba mhaith liom gach rath a ghui oraibh go léir i gcomórtas 2026. Táim ag súil le hiontrálacha álainn na mbailte agus na sráidbhailte a fheiceáil agus bualadh leat ag an searmanas bronnta níos déanaí sa bhliain."

The closing date for receipt of entries for this year's competition is Monday May 11th, 2026. Entry forms and further information about the SuperValu TidyTowns competition are available at www.tidytowns.ie.

ENDS



Minister Calleary announces expansion of areas eligible for CLÁR funding and launches CLÁR 2026 programme

- **110 additional areas added across 20 counties**
- **For the first time, over 1 million people are now eligible for support in CLÁR areas**
- **€12 million available for projects under CLÁR 2026**

Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, has today (Tuesday, 10 March 2026) announced an expansion of the CLÁR programme. This follows a commitment given in the Programme for Government to carry out a comprehensive review of the eligibility criteria of CLÁR with a view to expanding the programme to rural areas which were previously ineligible.

That review was completed by the All-Island Research Observatory in Maynooth University. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index and the CSO Urban and Rural Life in Ireland classification were used to identify areas classified as highly rural and remote while also experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The review has resulted in the addition of new Electoral Divisions (EDs) in 20 counties, including 10 or more new EDs in Donegal, Limerick, Tipperary and, for the first time, Wexford. One Electoral Division (ED) was also added in Kildare for the first time.

Announcing the details of the expansion today, Minister Calleary said:

“I am pleased to announce the 110 new Electoral Divisions with a population of nearly 150,000 people that are now designated as CLÁR areas. For the first time in its history, there will be over 1 million people living in parts of Ireland that are eligible to apply for this important funding”.

A copy of the report completed on the expansion of CLÁR areas together with updated county maps is available [here](#).

The Minister also announced that the 2026 CLÁR programme, with an increased budget of €12 million, is now open for applications.

Minister of State Buttimer added:

“The CLÁR programme has proven its value to rural communities all across the country over the years, and I know that community groups will continue to make great use of this funding again this year. The range of projects that can be funded under CLÁR continues to be one of its strengths, and today’s announcement will be welcome news in many rural communities.”

Under the initiative, funding will be provided across three measures:

Measure 1

Development of community facilities and amenities including sports facilities, youth clubs, teenage spaces, playgrounds, sensory gardens, walking tracks and much more. There are new items eligible for support this year under Measure 1, including support for traffic safety measures with a particular link to community facilities or events, and for initiatives aimed at reducing light pollution in rural communities.

Measure 2

Support for vehicles for community transport used to transport cancer patients or persons with reduced mobility, for community first responders and for meals on wheels organisations.

Measure 3

Tailored funding for our offshore island communities under the specific ‘Our Living Islands’ measure.

Speaking about the opening Minister Calleary said:

“I was delighted to secure an increase in funding last year’s Budget which now brings the allocation for 2026 to €12 million. The CLÁR programme continues to assist in building resilient and vibrant communities. To further support Gaeltacht areas, local authorities will be permitted to submit two extra applications this year in respect of a community facility in a Gaeltacht area under Measure 1.

“I very much look forward to announcing the successful projects across all measures later in the year, including in respect of the new areas added to the scheme this year.”

Minister Calleary concluded:

“Community groups should contact their local authority in respect of applications for community facilities under measure 1.

“Organisations can apply directly to my Department for projects under Measure 2 & 3. My officials will be providing capacity building seminars for community organisations interested in applying for Measure 2 and separately for Measure 3 on Wednesday March 25th. Interested organisations can register their interest at clar@drcdg.gov.ie.”

Full details of the scheme and measures to be funded are available on the [Department’s website](#).

ENDS



Minister Dara Calleary announces details of €25 million Community Centre Investment Fund

- Fund will focus on upgrade and enhancement works to existing community centres nationwide
- Funding of up to €100,000 available for refurbishment works
- Range of supports in place to assist community groups in developing high quality applications

The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, has today, 26th March 2026, announced a fourth round of funding under the Community Centre Investment Fund (CCIF).

The focus of the Community Centres Investment Fund 2026 – Refurbishment, is to support upgrade and enhancement works to existing community centres nationwide. This fund builds on the success of the CCIF 2022 & 2024 which provided funding of over €80m for almost 1,650 community centre refurbishment projects. Funding of over €30 million has also been provided to build 12 new centres.

Making the announcement today, Minister Calleary said:

“The Community Centre Investment Fund has had a transformative impact across the country. Since the inception of this Fund, over €111 million has already been provided to support community centres in their role at the very heart of community life.

“I am pleased today to be able to launch a new round of funding under the Community Centre Investment Fund with online applications being accepted from 29th May. This builds on an unprecedented level of investment in our community centres in recent years.

“This scheme can be used for a range of refurbishment works such as new roofs, energy upgrades, accessibility measures, new kitchen facilities, new stage and lighting, essential repairs and lots more.”

The Community Centre Investment Fund 2026 – Refurbishment will provide grants for projects from €10,000 up to a maximum of €100,000 towards capital costs. This is broken down into two categories of funding:

- **Category 1:**
Small scale projects/improvements to facilities: €10,000 - €25,000 (95% funding)
- **Category 2:**
Larger scale projects: €25,001 to €100,000 (90% funding)

All applicants must register as 'users' on the online portal [here](#) in advance of the application process which will open in late May. Groups that applied for this fund previously will not need to register again but should check that their details are still correct.

Groups are advised to get their application and paperwork ready in advance of the online application process opening at the end of May. The closing date for applications will be 13th July.

The Department will be running a series of information sessions in advance of the application opening date to assist in the preparation of applications.

All materials to support applicants including template application form, guidelines, FAQ document and details on information sessions can be found at the Department of Rural & Community Development and the Gaeltacht website [here](#).

The Minister concluded:

“I would encourage groups who need funding for works on their community centre to avail of this opportunity to begin preparing their applications and to start getting quotes together for the required works. I would also advise them to engage fully with the information sessions that will be provided and to review the information available about this scheme on my department’s website.

“Through ‘Our Rural Future,’ the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht continues to invest and to support communities the length and breadth of this country to thrive and to become better places in which to live, work and raise a family.”

ENDS



Minister Calleary Opens Applications for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) for Large Scale Capital Projects

1. This RRDF Category 1 call for proposals relates to strategic, large-scale projects that have all necessary consents in place and are ready to commence
2. Applications of scale are sought, with a minimum funding request of €500,000 and up to a maximum of €10 million
3. RRDF Investment to date of over €614 million across 273 projects nationally

Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, today (Friday, 27 February) opened applications in respect of a Category 1 Call for Proposals under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF).

Funded under Project Ireland 2040, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is a key measure directly supporting the objectives of Our Rural Future and the Town Centre First policy.

The key focus of this Call is to support projects that can revitalise our rural towns and villages, providing the necessary facilities and infrastructure in settlements to assist in attracting people to live, work and invest in rural areas while aiming to ensure that rural towns, villages and communities can prosper in the years ahead.

This Call for proposals invites applications for strategically important, large-scale capital projects that have full planning and other consents in place and are ready to commence.

Speaking today, Minister Calleary said:

“I am delighted to announce the opening of this Call for Proposals and invite Category 1 applications under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

“RRDF is the flagship funding scheme in my Department and, since becoming Minister a little over 12 months ago, I have seen evidence of why it is so important. RRDF investment in projects, such as the Shackleton Experience in Athy, Co. Kildare, have transformed towns and villages, created new tourist attractions and developed thriving hubs where communities meet.

“With over €614 million in funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund since it was first launched, the impact is clear, it has been transformative for our rural communities.”

The Minister continued:

“The capacity of the Fund to deliver projects of this scale and ambition represents an unprecedented opportunity for rural areas.

“I welcome co-ordinated, collaborative and integrated projects that will directly deliver on the objectives of Our Rural Future, the whole-of-government policy for sustainable rural development in Ireland. In particular, I am inviting proposals for projects that will help revitalise our rural towns and villages and provide the necessary facilities and infrastructure to assist in attracting people to live, work and invest in rural areas.”

Also speaking on the opening of the Fund, Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development, Jerry Buttimer added:

“This Call for Proposals represents an unrivalled opportunity for our rural areas. As Minister for Community Development, I have seen first-hand the importance of capital investment which supports projects focusing on the sustainable regeneration and development of our towns and villages. This investment encourages local participation and improves our rural communities.”

The Fund is seeking to support strategically important projects of significant scope and impact. In that regard, applications of scale are sought, with a minimum funding request of €500,000 and up to a maximum of €10 million.

Applications to the Fund must be the product of comprehensive deliberation and community engagement and led by a State-funded body, including Local Authorities, Local Development Companies and other State agencies, including non-commercial State bodies. Proposals under the Fund should demonstrate a collaborative approach between two or more organisations.

The closing date for the receipt of proposals is 12pm on 28 July 2026. More information on the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is available [HERE](#)

ENDS

Contact:

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



Minister Dara Calleary approves additional €235,000 for Language Planning Sector

- Capital fund to support the Language Planning sector within and outside the Gaeltacht

The Minister for Rural, Community and Gaeltacht Development, Dara Calleary TD, announced today (Monday, 2 March 2026) that he has approved a capital fund of €235,000 over a five-year period for the language planning sector nationally while attending the **Language Planning Conference in Castlebar**.

This package includes €155,000 for Údarás na Gaeltachta and €80,000 for Foras na Gaeilge to provide essential work equipment for the Language Planning Officers operating in the various regions.

Within the Gaeltacht, 26 Language Planning Areas (LPAs) and 3 Gaeltacht Service Towns under the auspices of Údarás na Gaeltachta will benefit from this fund and, outside the Gaeltacht, the funding will be available to 13 Gaeltacht Service Towns and 3 Irish Language Networks under the auspices of Foras na Gaeilge.

This funding supports the implementation of the recommendation made in the independent Review of the Language Planning Process regarding the availability of adequate resources for each LPA to purchase essential work equipment. It is recognised that this fund will be a major support to the Language Planning Officers in carrying out their work.

Announcing the funding today, Minister Calleary said:

“I am delighted to approve this grant. As a result of this practical assistance, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge will be able to ensure that the appropriate office equipment is available to the Language Planning Officers working in the Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks.

“This is another demonstration of the Government’s commitment to the language planning process and is a good example of the various actions we are taking to foster and develop a language ecosystem. The lead organisations and the Language Planning Officers are doing a very important job and I am pleased that we are able to provide them with this support.”

ENDS

Contact:

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

01-773 6843 / 086 4618285

Press.office@drcdg.gov.ie

gov.ie/drcdg | [X](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Threads](#) | [Bluesky](#) | [WhatsApp](#) | [YouTube](#)



Minister Calleary announces €1 million for Agricultural Shows in 2026

- **126 shows nationwide to benefit from funding**
- **Grants awarded ranging from €4,200 to €11,400**

Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, has today announced an investment of over €1 million to support 126 Agricultural Shows right across the country.

As part of the initiative, each show will receive a grant of between €4,200 and €11,400 depending on their size. This funding will support the work of each of the 126 show committees as they prepare for the upcoming show season.

Minister Calleary made the announcement today as the Irish Show's Association (ISA) are launching their 2026 Yearbook at an annual event in Athlone.

Making the announcement, Minister Calleary said:

“I am delighted as Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht to be supporting these agricultural shows which are a great platform to showcase our wonderful Irish agriculture sector.

“Last year, I had the privilege of visiting a number of shows across the country and I got to see first-hand the enormous benefits that each show brings to a community.

“They also provide an opportunity for some friendly competition, and I am always struck by the quality of the livestock and produce on show. Our agricultural shows are also a great social event where lifelong friendships have been made and fostered.

“Today I am announcing funding of over €1m which will support 126 agricultural shows across the country during the 2026 show season. The funding announced today, brings the total my Department has provided under the fund to over €6.3m since 2017”

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht will work with the Irish Shows Association (ISA) to administer the 2026 fund.

The Minister concluded:

“There is a huge amount of work and planning required in the weeks and months leading up to these shows. This does not happen by chance.

“I want to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of the ISA management and regional teams, the show committees, stewards, volunteers, and sponsors. Without your support this 200-year tradition of hosting these shows would not be possible.

“I would encourage everyone to go along and support their local show. These events are special and attendees will see the agricultural show has something to offer everyone.”

The funding provided to each show is available in a table [HERE](#)

ENDS

Contact:

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Press Office / 01-773 6843 / 086 7912704

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35 years of LEADER – Minister Calleary congratulates groups on reaching significant milestone

The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, has today (Sunday, 15 March 2026) congratulated LEADER groups all across Ireland for the vital work that has been delivered over the lifetime of the Programme.

The LEADER Programme was launched by the European Commission on this day, 15 March 1991, by Irish Commissioner Ray MacSharry, and once established in Ireland, it has been ever present in rural communities across the country.

LEADER was designed to provide communities with the resources to drive their own local development through a "bottom-up" approach that empowers local partners and communities, with Local Action Groups helping to identify specific needs and directing the development of their areas through Local Development Strategies.

Minister Calleary said:

“The LEADER programme has been a cornerstone of rural development policy in Ireland for 35 years. I want to thank all the stakeholders who have been involved over the years, you should all be very proud of what you have achieved to date. I want to acknowledge former Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Ray MacSharry for his foresight and leadership during his tenure which seen major reforms of the CAP.

“LEADER funding has provided rural communities with the necessary resources to bring about real change in their own local communities, through a community-led local development “bottom-up” approach.”

LEADER has evolved through several programming periods and continues today as part of the 2023–2027 LEADER Programme, which is gathering significant momentum now with projects being approved across the country.

To date under the 2023–2027 programme, over 1,000 projects have been approved for LEADER funding of over €50 million, supporting a broad range of enterprises and community groups across rural Ireland.

Minister Calleary added:

“The milestone of over 1,000 projects being approved for LEADER funding under the 2023–2027 programme is an achievement that shows the considerable support from my department and the European Union to rural communities nationwide.

“Grant aid awarded under the LEADER programme has played a critical role in empowering communities across rural Ireland by providing community groups, businesses, and individuals with the required resources to actively direct local development in their areas.

“This has enabled our rural communities to address the specific needs and challenges in their local areas and to become more resilient, while supporting job creation, and improving social and economic wellbeing.”

LEADER into the future

The LEADER programme is funded as an intervention under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and, therefore, the development of the EU regulations relating to the post 2027 CAP, is a matter of significant importance to the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

Ireland has and will continue to advocate for a well-funded CAP that supports farm viability and resilience, environmental ambition, and rural development measures such as LEADER.

Minister Calleary concluded:

“The development of the CAP post-2027 is a matter of significant importance for my Department. As these EU negotiations progress I will continue to advocate for the LEADER programme to remain a core element of the new CAP framework and for the continued prioritisation of a well funded LEADER programme in the coming years”

Further information about the LEADER Programme is available online via the Department’s LEADER homepage: www.gov.ie/LEADER

ENDS

Contact:

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

Westmeath Public Participation Network

c/o Community Development Section

Westmeath County Council

Áras an Chontae, Mullingar Co. Westmeath

Email: ppn@westmeathcoco.ie

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

Website: Westmeathppn.ie

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



Public Participation
Network Westmeath



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workshops, and grant opportunities.
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