

The Department of Rural and Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in 2017 to facilitate economic development in rural areas through a range of programmes, and to support communities, in urban and rural areas, to become sustainable and desirable places to live, work and raise families.

The Department oversaw a gross expenditure in excess of €237 million in 2018, and at the end of 2018 had a staff complement of over 190 across locations in Dublin, Ballina and other regional centres.

In March 2018, the Department published its first Statement of Strategy, setting out our mission, vision, values and strategic goals and objectives.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that all communities will have the opportunity to grow and develop economically and socially. To help bring this about, the Department will work across Government to:

- Create the conditions to support increased economic opportunities and local employment in all areas of the country
- Deliver schemes and programmes that support the revitalisation of towns and villages
- Improve access to services and social networks that ensure a high quality of life
- Enable communities disadvantaged by location or social issues to reach their full potential now and in the future
- Support all communities to be able to have a voice in shaping their own futures and addressing their common goals

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

- Work across Government to advance the economic and social development of rural areas in order to enhance the quality of life for people who live in rural Ireland.
- Contribute to enhanced regional development, with a view to strengthening the potential of all regions to contribute to economic recovery.
- Support local communities to develop, empowering them to identify their needs and aspirations and providing them with the opportunities, skills and confidence to influence, shape and participate in decision-making processes which affect them.
- Support the Community, Voluntary and Charity Sector to strengthen its capacity to contribute to civil society and support the growth and development of philanthropy

2018 Spending

In its first full year of operation, the Department of Rural and Community Development delivered for communities and rural areas through a wide range of programme and projects.

In 2018, a total of €237.4 million was spent by the Department across three strategic programmes. This included €7.7 million carried forward from 2017.

Rural

Community development (€145.8m)

224 projects worth €20.8 million were approved under the 2018 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

- The CLÁR programme funded 389 small infrastructure projects to the value of €11.8 million across 4 measures in 2018: Schools/Community Safety; Play Areas; First Response Support; Mobility and Cancer Care Transport.
- Over €20 million was approved for improvement works under the Local Improvement Scheme in 2018.

- In 2018, Local Action Groups approved funding of more than €38 million for 1,034 individual LEADER projects.
- The €15 million LEADER Food Initiative was launched to provide supports to artisan and small food and beverage producers.
- The new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was launched with funding of €190 million for frontline services from 2018-2022.
- In 2018, SICAP assisted 31,967 individuals and 2,558 groups in local communities.
- The new Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) was launched and supported over 3,000 projects with total funding of €13million.
- Social Innovation Fund Ireland have opened 24 calls for applications and received over 900 applications from social innovations across Ireland.
- €3.5 million was allocated to volunteering supporting infrastructure nationwide.
- The Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan 2018 included provision of €1.2 million in 2019 for the upgrading of the eight Volunteering Information Services to full Volunteer Centres.
- A review of the Dormant Accounts Fund was completed and launched in July 2018.
- A Call for Input paper was launched in December 2018 as the first step in developing a national volunteering strategy.
- Over 19,000 participants were approved under the Seniors Alert Scheme in 2018, an increase of 56%.
- Plans were announced for the first National Community Weekend, The Big Hello, to be held in May 2019.
- The Second Progress Report of the Action Plan for Rural Development was published in May 2018 with the Third Progress Report published in November 2018.
- €44 million was provided by the Department under the Community Services Programme in 2018.

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS (PPNS)

Public Participation Networks have been established in all Local Authority areas. Their main function is to facilitate and enable the local community to interact with local government and other relevant legislation for the good of their communities.

During 2018, the Department continued to provide practical support for PPNS including the on-going provision of funding, the continued roll-out of a Client Relationship Management database for all PPNS and the provision of training. In addition, in late 2018, the Department announced the provision of additional funding in 2019 for a Support Worker in each PPN to assist the PPN Resource Worker.

The second National PPN Advisory Group, which is representative of all stakeholders, continued its work with four meetings in 2018. This group provided invaluable input into a number of PPN initiatives including the publication of the 2017 Annual Report and arrangements for the 2018 National PPN Conference

VOLUNTEERING

The Department's community and voluntary supports and programme provides a cohesive framework of support for the community and voluntary sector. Payments of €3.47m were made in 2018 to 21 Volunteer Centres, eight Volunteering Information Services and four national volunteering supporting organisations. Further actions taken to advance volunteering included

the grant of €200,000 to support IT upgrades for Boardmatch and Volunteer Ireland platforms in 2018.

The Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan 2018 included provision of €1.2m in 2019 for the upgrading of the eight Volunteering Information Services to full Volunteer Centres in order to provide a consistent level of volunteering infrastructure nationwide. Discussions with stakeholders on the roll-out of this initiative got underway in late 2018.

A Call for Input paper was also launched in December 2018 as the first step in developing a national volunteering strategy.

PHILANTHROPY AND FUNDRAISING

In 2018, the Department continued to provide funding to key organisations for their core costs, on a matched funding basis.

Philanthropy Ireland

The contract with Philanthropy Ireland committed €75,000 pa for both 2017 and 2018.

Philanthropy Ireland, through networking events, research and collaboration with appropriate partners are targeting business professionals and potential leaders on giving. Its aim is to communicate the value and potential of philanthropy to key stakeholders, most particularly potential philanthropists, corporates and individuals.

SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND IRELAND Social Innovation Fund Ireland (SIFI) was incorporated in July 2013 to support the establishment and growth of social innovations with the potential for transformative impact on critical social issues facing Ireland, including unemployment and the environment.

As a partnership between the private sector and Government, provision was made for SIFI to receive €5 million in total from the Dormant Accounts Fund over the period 2014 to 2017 to support its set-up and development. This arrangement was extended until May 2018, when the Government's commitment was reaffirmed to match private philanthropic donations raised by Social Innovation Fund Ireland for the next three years to end May 2021.

Social innovation has a key role to play at a national and community level in supporting healthy and inclusive communities. Fulfilling this Programme for Government commitment has been a key priority of the Department

SIFI drew down €4.8 million from the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2018. In total, by end of 2018, SIFI raised over €15.2 million in funding, 50% from private philanthropy and 50% from Government.

These funds have supported 14 issue-specific programmes and provided growth capital and supports to 61 social innovations in Ireland, which include supporting initiatives to build resilient communities, tackling issues such as youth mental health, technology for social good, social enterprise development, combatting educational disadvantage, elderly independent living, and equality.