

Annual Review 2014

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Message from Billy Murphy, Chairman IRL

As chairman of Irish Rural Link I attended, along with over 400 other delegates from all over Scotland, the inaugural Scottish Rural Parliament last November, the culmination of years of hard work by the organising committee with support from the Scottish Government. Rural Parliaments are a growing European rural movement that offer people who work and live in rural Europe an opportunity to develop a shared vision for their rural areas that is captured in this quote from the vision statement of the Scottish Rural Parliament, *'it is important that those who live and work in rural Scotland are not disadvantaged by challenges arising from their location, and that rural life is sustainable socially, economically and environmentally in the long term and for future generations.'*

To deliver on such a vision the ingredients have to be in place to create the right environment for rural communities to flourish, to this end I welcome the appointment of the CEDRA implementation committee and wish them well in their endeavours. As rural communities begin to fight back against the worst recession in the history of the state is it time to enshrine in legislation the rights of communities as has happened in the UK Localism Act 2011.

While the jury is still out on whether the Localism Act has delivered on its primary objective of being the catalyst for devolving decision making powers from central government control to communities, however elements such as, 'Community Right to Bid', 'Community Right to Challenge' and 'Community Right to Build' have enabled communities to acquire valuable local assets, provide local services and have an input into local planning and development.

Furthermore the potential growth of Social and Community Enterprises should be further aided by such initiatives, estimated by the European Commission's 'Europe 2020' strategy to contribute 6% of GDP across Europe with the potential to grow to 9% of GDP over the decade to 2020. It is estimated that in Ireland this could mean a growth in employment in social and community enterprise from 33,000 people to 65,000 people, jobs that are local by their nature. I would encourage the CEDRA implementation committee to examine the enshrining of community rights in legislation, consider the recommendations made by Forfas in their report 'Social Enterprise in Ireland' and explore the possibility of hosting a Rural Parliament in Ireland.

May 2015

Tidy Towns Committees are the length and breadth of the country and as I write this piece, busy at work in and around their towns and villages contributing to, in a very tangible way, the recovery of rural places and making them good places to live, work and play. I feel that if the Tidy Towns energy could be captured for the benefit of all rural places, the contribution to the common good and well-being of Ireland would be immense. With this in mind I would like to offer the services of IRL to any Tidy Towns groups who might see the value in establishing a national Tidy Towns Network, at the very least IRL could facilitate exploratory meetings in our offices in Moate or elsewhere.

In closing I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board of IRL for their continued support and hard work and would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution to IRL of the staff ably marshalled by our CEO Seamus Boland, thank you. Finally to you our members and the wider rural community with whom we have had the opportunity to engage with through our seminars, Benefit 4 training, campaigns and meetings over the past year, it is you who set the agenda for IRL and ensure that rural Ireland is not disadvantaged.

Billy Murphy
Chairperson



May 2015

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

In 2014 Irish Rural Link, continued to highlight issues that affect people living in rural Ireland. These include challenges to the provision of rural transport, adequate household income, services to rural areas such as health and education provision, financial services and infrastructural, such as broadband provision, roads improvement and general utility provision. In terms of adding to the provision of services IRL completed its pilot programme on Farm Safety and have continued the Benefit 4 computer training programme specifically aimed at people who have never even turned on a computer. The programme is supported by the Department of Energy, Communications and Natural Resources.

As a nation, Ireland is now almost eight years into what is one of the longest recessions in its history. In that time almost every household, business including farms have had to radically adapt their plans in order to survive. Our rural youth simply took the air ticket to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and elsewhere. And despite the welcome fall in national unemployment figures, down to 10%, regional unemployment remains stubbornly 12 to 13% depending on the isolated nature of the region.

The physical signs of regional disadvantage have manifested in the overall appearance of many of our small towns and villages. It is not uncommon to drive through rural villages and indeed the larger provincial town and see the many for sale signs, closed premises and general quietness that pervades. Of course many towns are fighting back, but without clear support from a national policy perspective, these fight backs are akin to pushing the boulder up a hill. IRL have advocated their main principles which would go a long way to support towns who want to succeed.

1. The urgent publication of a comprehensive white paper on the development of Rural Communities
2. The availability of stimulus programmes similar to CLAR, the Rapid Programme.
3. The creation of specific banking arrangements similar to the Agricultural Credit Corporation and the Industrial Credit Corporation.

IRL were involved in the CEDRA report launched by Enda Kenny in April of 2014. It is a welcome report and now awaits serious implementation. However without the radical reform outlined in the already mentioned three principles, CEDRA will find it extremely difficult to implement all of its thirty four recommendations. We wish the implementation group well and extend our congratulations to Dr. Maura Farrell of UCG and a current board member of IRL, who has been appointed by Ministers Alan Kelly and Ann Phelan to the CEDRA implementation committee.

The recovery of Ireland from the edge of bankruptcy is welcome and it is accepted has a long way to go. Equally it should be the ambition of all policy makers either national or EU who are responsible for the country's well being, to ensure that all of the country, not just one section is catered for. It also must be remembered that almost 40% of our national population reside in rural areas. Forgetting this would be fatal for people living in rural communities.

May 2015

In organisational terms IRL were successful in securing the SSNO funding. As a result we are glad to welcome James Claffey to the staff, which will strengthen the policy and advocacy role of the organisation. We also continue to support the community Wetlands Forum and also begun the process of assisting meals on wheel groups who provide a range of extremely valuable services to families, especially householders where people are incapacitated for various reasons.

In partnership with the Wheel IRL will be involved in the community information programme which will inform people of the roll out of the new EIRCODE (postcode) programme.

During the year IRL held a number of seminars on Rural Isolation, 'The future of Energy' and Broadband.

I continue to be grateful for the support of the Board of IRL And its chairperson Billy Murphy for the help to myself and staff. My thanks to the staff of IRL who continue to commit to ensuring that members receive the best service possible.

Seamus Boland
CEO



IRL Executive Board & Staff

Billy Murphy, Chairman, County Wexford Partnership
Peter Brady, Secretary, Kilnaleck Community Council, Co. Cavan
Michael Kenny, Treasurer, NUI Maynooth
Marian Flannery, Asst. Treasurer, Women of the North West, Co. Mayo
Ann Murtagh, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Martin Smyth, Mullaghmeen Enterprises, Co. Westmeath
Paddy Egan, Kenagh Co-op, Co. Longford
Alan Kerry, County Kildare RTI
Miriam McKenna, Flexibus, Co. Meath
Pat Leogue, County Kildare Partnership
Gerard Quain, Ballyhoura Development, Co. Limerick – elected 2014
Maria O’Gorman, Duagh FRC, Co. Kerry – elected 2014
Dr. Maura Farrell, NUIG – Co-opted 2014
Maureen Lally, Tochar Valley FRC, Co. Mayo – elected 2014

Staff

Seamus Boland	Chief Executive Officer
Maria Pettit	Administration & Finance
Chrissy Casey	Administration Assistant
James Claffey	Media Officer - October 2014
John Aja-nwachuku	NUIM Student Placement Autumn 2014

Irish Rural Link Priorities 2014

Overall Aim

To secure the existence of substantial numbers of viable communities in all parts of rural Ireland where every person would have meaningful work, adequate income and social services, and where infrastructures needed for sustainable development would be in place.

Strategic Priority 1

- Continue to develop as a visionary organisation in the field of rural community development
Objective
- IRL is a key independent and influential rural community based organisation, influencing good practice and progressive and creative policy formation

Strategic Priority 2

- Influence Policy Development and Implementation at Local National and European levels towards a sustainable vision
Objective
- IRL in voicing rural policy has the skills and strategy to effectively influence sustainable policy development and sustainable policy implementation at national and EU levels

Strategic Priority 3

- Facilitate and promote social and economic development initiatives in rural areas
Objective
- IRL is the key community based organisation promoting sectoral networks that cohesed rural communities of interest for the promotion of social and economic development.

Strategic Priority 4

- Strengthen and build the capacity of IRL members
- IRL is supported by a strategically developed active membership representing a profile of rural volunteers, community organisations and professionals working in rural community development.

IRL's Plans

- Develop a greater link between all advocates of community based development within Ireland and the EU.
- Ensure that groups affected by social inclusion or disadvantage have a continued voice
- Assist communities with innovative ideas that support rural communities.

Representation on External Bodies:

As well as being involved in Social partnership Irish Rural Link represents rural interests on a wide range of external bodies & boards.

1. Chair of Pobal
2. Member of the Community & Voluntary Pillar (only member representing rural)
3. Chair of the Peatlands Council
4. Member of CEDRA
5. National Rural Water Services Committee
6. Member of European Economic Social Committee
7. Community Outreach Eircode Programme Joint Coordinator
8. Economic & Social Infrastructure Operational Programme. Administered by the Department of Transport, this committee monitors work undertaken as part of the NDP.
9. Productive Sector Operational Programme. Also an NDP monitoring committee. It is administered by the Department of Enterprise and Employment.
10. NESF – National and Economic Social Forum.
11. National Transport Forum.
12. Full member of NESF.
13. Carnegie Commission for Rural Development. The Carnegie Trust based in Dunfermline, established this commission, chaired by David Steel, former Liberal Party leader, to “carry out a research programme, promote debate between policy makers and local communities and support the exchange of good practice nationally and internationally”.
14. The Wheel.
15. Consumer Liaison Panel Department of Agriculture.
16. Rural Agri Tourism Committee.
17. Rural Coordinating Committee.
18. Social Inclusion committee.
19. Farm Safety Authority.
20. Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice's Minimum Essential Budget Advisory Group.
21. NGO working group on fuel poverty.

Activities in 2014

1. Seminars/ Consultations

2014 was a busy year for Irish Rural Link; we worked in partnership with Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources and the EU Parliament Office in Ireland, hosting a number of seminars and public consultations;

A: Rural Isolation 2 events

B: Future Energy Policy for Ireland 3 events

C: Rural Broadband 1 event

D: Community Wetlands Seminars 4 events

IRL Hosted two seminars on Rural Isolation in Ennis and Donegal, the seminars came at a time when rural isolation was receiving a lot of media attention and IRL felt the issue needed to be addressed. Rural isolation has a range of factors attached to it such as loss of services, crime and poverty. The impact of rural isolation is having a hugely negative impact on the quality of life in rural areas.

The seminar aimed to highlight the issues that affect people arising from rural isolation. Looking at the current data that describes it, and with the help of everybody involved, look at the problem in terms of proposing new or improved solutions.

Speakers included; Mr. Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh, Dr. Ann Cleary UCD, Dr. Patrick Collins NUIG, Dr. Michael Murray, Queen University, Dr. Caoimhín McAoidh Donegal Local Development Company, Fiona O'Shea, SITT, Garda Paul Wallace, Ann Sheridan National Office for Suicide Prevention, Rosemary O'Doherty, the Samaritans, John Curran Donegal Volunteer Network.

The Ennis seminar was attended by 100 local service providers and individuals; Donegal was attended by 45 local services providers.

IRL hosted **three public consultations on Future Energy Policy for Ireland** in Moate, Sligo and Cork.

Main speaker was Mr. Ken Spratt, Assistant Secretary for Energy at the DCENR, Dr. Brian O'Gallachoir, Principal Investigator in Energy Policy and Modelling UCC, Dr. Helen McHenry, WDC, Brendan Hennessey, Membership Liaison Officer, Social Justice and Policy, St. Vincent de Paul, Val Cummins IMERC, Donal Kissane Energy Cork, These were lively events attended by energy providers, action groups, and interested parties. The aim is to feed into the National Strategy (Green Paper on Energy) due to be published summer 2015. The Moate seminar was attended by 40 groups; Sligo 40 groups, Cork 68 groups. Each seminar was live streamed on IRL and DCENR websites and can be viewed at www.irishrurallink.ie

The shape of the seminars include; presentations, questions & answers, facilitated group discussions, plenary, observations.

2. Networks

Community Wetlands Forum

The forum was established under the umbrella of Irish Rural Link www.irishrurallink.ie in September 2013. The forum came together as a result of the work already undertaken by Irish Rural link on behalf of community groups affected by the Peatlands directive and in the development of wetlands as an enhanced asset in the community.

The rationale supporting a Wetlands Community Forum is based on the development of wetlands using the tools of community development as a means of ensuring that all actions taken have the full support of the community. It means that the community become engaged in acquiring a greater knowledge of the value of wetlands and can use this to their own benefit. It also means that the community becomes involved as early as possible and that the necessary local stakeholders are included.

In establishing a network of wetland groups it is proposed that the aim is to: Facilitate the sharing of knowledge, ideas and organisational methods. It will also introduce groups to the latest research, national and international experts, similar networks and funding possibilities.

It will also provide skills in the use of community development principles as a means of bringing all parts of the community with them.

Clearly the group currently in its infancy will need support, particularly some funding. As of now there is a group of 11 local networks with interest in more joining. These include Abbeyleix, Corlea, Cabragh, Laois/Offaly wild life trust, Cloughjordan, Kenagh, Boora, Clara, Kerry, Westmeath and Kildare. The forum boasts a range of members from around the country which can be seen as a positive sign for the proposed expansion.

In 2015, the forum seeks to establish:

- The identification of potential wetland sites in communities and communities who wish to evaluate their own areas.
- The co-ordination of targeted events, seminars on community involvement.
- The provision of direct assistance to groups who wish to explore new projects.

Meals on Wheels Network-delivering community services

Meals-on-wheels service is a critical component of the continuum of care services that enables older people to remain living in the community or to return to their own homes after hospitalisation. It has, therefore, previously recommended on a number of occasions that the service is designated as a core service underpinned by legislation and funding. Currently there is no legal entitlement to receive or obligation on the State to provide meals-on-wheels to older people. As a result, there is no clear direction regarding who should be responsible for the support and development of the sector.

Without the existence of the meals on wheels there would be:

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- higher mortality
- longer hospital stay
- increased need for nursing home care following discharge
- reduced likelihood of discharge from nursing home and increased need for non-elective hospital readmission
- greater use of medications and lower activities of daily living
- increased incidence of falls
- greater dependence on mobility aid

The need to provide structure to Meals on Wheels organisations caused the formation of the network under the umbrella of Irish Rural Link. The aim and objectives of the network are outlined below.

Aim:

To provide a local, community led service of care to enable people who need it to maintain good health and independent living.

Objectives:

- To advocate for a standardised meals on wheels service nationally which provide a system all organisations can adhere to
- To ensure its members has adequate resources to deliver a professionally produced nutritious meal to their clients
- To advise and advocate on behalf of its members to government and other agencies which influence the delivery of their services
- To meet the future demands of members by assisting in the development of their services
- To develop the organisation in a manner which is inclusive and participatory to all meals on wheels organisations

Current Work Plan

As the Meals on Wheels Network is in its infinite stages, the network will begin by establishing itself in the Western region and later expanding across the country. The group currently has over 20 members with membership projected to reach 100 members by the end of 2015. The network is set for an official launch in late May or early June in the Western region and a national launch at the end of 2015. There are a number of core issues that the group wishes to address in the near future such as a core service underpinned by legislation and funding, food labeling, employment schemes used to run the services etc.

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3. Benefit 4 Programme

Benefit 4 – the programme to get Ireland on Line, this initiative is run in conjunction with Department of Communications – IRL trained 2200 participants on basic computing, setting up Email accounts, sending email, buying on line etc. Participants from all over the country were trained in venues in their own community. This year IRL held a unique class on Arranmore Island with the Minister in attendance to make a presentation to one of our oldest participants Mr. Sonny O’Brien and address a gathering of training organisations in Dublin via web link.



Watch out for Benefit4 in your area or email Chrissy@irishrurallink.ie.

4 .Bank Closures

December 2014 marked a change in Irish society, the small community of Ferbane in west Offaly decided to rally together to stop the closure of their Ulster Bank branch. Over a thousand people from the locality turned out on the streets to show their commitment to Ulster Bank with a further show of solidarity on Friday 23rd January in Athlone supported by Irish Rural Link, both protests received national media coverage. Bank closures are a major concern for rural communities with Allied Irish Banks closing

67 of its branches, Bank of Ireland 19, and Dansk Bank the former National Irish bank closing over 50 branches since 2009, Permanent TSB 19 while Ulster Bank closed 14 branches in 2014.

Irish Rural Link is proposing that Rural Protocol should be first consulted before the closure of any services in rural Ireland. Such a protocol might save a great deal of negative energy and anxiety expended by rural communities in order to defend, what seems to be an ongoing attempt to disenfranchise rural areas.

A protocol in simple terms challenges the proposers of closures to manage it in a way that allows the community to have an input. It starts by engaging with the area in question in the task of conducting a socio economic analysis in terms of reasons for closure and the consequences of same. It also allows the community to examine the issues involved and perhaps put forward proposals that could offset the need for a closure. It equally puts some obligations on the organisation, government or private company that proposes closure.

Following closures, an automatic nomination of a Government task force would occur, which would conduct a dialogue with all stakeholders in the area, with a view of improving the conditions, so that the bank branch, Credit union, post office branch or any other service facing closure might benefit from increased community commitment

5. Innovative Farm Safety Mentoring Programme 2013/2014

The pilot project funded by the Health and Safety Authority was initially rolled out in the midland counties of Westmeath, Meath, Cavan and Longford and is based on the discussion group model, where farmers mentor their colleagues on farm safety.

This new and innovative approach to saving lives will engage farmers to become change makers, supporting safer farms and the development of farm to farm advice and mentoring systems.

Farmers know better than anyone the day to day challenges in terms of farm safety and actively engaging leaders in the farming community has huge potential to bring about a change in culture.

Martin O'Halloran CEO of the Health and Safety Authority commended Irish Rural Link for this proactive and innovative pilot program and see great potential in Farmers mentoring Farmers on health and safety issues. Farmers influencing farmers on the critical importance of having a safe farm, putting things right before accidents happen and indeed setting up the farm for safe expansion must be seen as part of the foundation to successful farming. This program could not be coming on stream at a better time, with farmers looking to expand their production at a time when fatal and serious accidents are unfortunately increasing. We will support this initiative in any way we can."

Project Outcomes:

- 13 trained Farm safety mentors

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- Mentors attend number of Agricultural and Machinery shows including Tullamore, Athlone, Mullingar, Oldcastle, Cavan, Moate, Punchestown; cumulative attendance in excess of 200,000 people.
- Secured sponsored chainsaw to raffle at Cavan Machinery Show.
- Questionnaires undertaken on farmers attitude to safety at shows (300 applicants)
- Production of slurry safety signage with best practice guidelines for farmyards. 1000 signs distributed
- Produced slurry safety DVD, shown at 20 marts. 70,000 cumulative internet views of DVD. DVD also shown at all IFA county Executive meetings nationwide (membership of 85,000).
- Secured prize of an agitator from NC Engineering and launched competition in Farmers Journal (Readership of over 200,000 weekly) running over two consecutive weeks to entice farmers to view slurry safety DVD. 614 applications received in competition. DVD loaded on Farmers Journal website was viewed 800 times over the fortnight of the competition
- Spoke on 14 occasions on local radio
- Designed, produced and distributed 200 caps with **Think! farm safety** message
- Supported and addressed over 100 farmers at BTAP, STAP and DTAP Teagasc discussion groups
- Secured LEADER grant aid support and commissioned ORS Engineering to develop simple low cost way of making storage and handling slurry safer. Development of prototype ongoing
- Gave talks on Farm Safety at National Schools and youth groups
- 100 members of Longford Purchasing Group (LPG) received discounted price Bear-Co drive shaft covers in return for promoting simplicity and importance of covers to at least three or four of their neighbours and friends
- Exploring the possibility of replicating the driveshaft cover initiative with focus of getting PPE chainsaw gear onto the LPG farms
- Secured survivors of farm accidents to speak on Pat Kenny's Newstalk.
- Press & Media coverage
- Signage erected in marts
- Peer to peer promotion of farm safety by mentors ongoing



Back row L/R Michael Larkin, Eamonn Cassells, William O Reilly, Tony Farrelly, Ben Lynn, Bartle Spollen, PJ Connolly, Clement Fitzsimons.
Front row L/R Barbara Gaynor, Minister Simon Coveney, Vincent Nally.

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6. Irish Rural Link, 9th Annual National Rural Awards to Honor Contributions to Rural Community Development, 2014

These awards aim to recognise the hard work, energy, enthusiasm and dedication given to improving and developing local communities around the country.

Over the last seven years, National Rural Award recipients were groups that have made a real impact on the quality of life of the rural communities in which they work. Irish Rural Link hopes that this award will go some way to acknowledge the efforts that these groups have made to enhance the lives of those living in their communities.

2014 winners were;

Irish Rural Link has announced the winners of its 9th annual awards to celebrate the work of community and voluntary organisations throughout the country. The awards were formally presented to representatives of the winning organisations by Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh at the Irish Rural Link annual conference in Moate, Co Westmeath on the 9th of May.

2014 category 1 award (groups with one paid employee) went to **New Future Farming Group** in Co Tipperary for their role in providing knowledge and support to their members in the ever changing agriculture industry. They also act as a social outlet for their members who are employed in a now considered isolated occupation. The group provides a range of training programmes specifically designed for farmers as well as hosting seminars around the social needs of its members such as isolation.



The category 2 award (groups with more than one paid employee) went to **South West Mayo Development Company**, for its work in sustaining rural communities in south and west Mayo. In harsh economic times, SWMDC has continued to provide a quality service to groups and individuals in South and West Mayo.

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7. Grundtvig Programme

In 2014, IRL participated in the **'European rural network for community and lifelong learning for the support of local economies'** with five other European partners (Czech Republic, Latvia, Sweden, Estonia, Poland). This involved a 'kick off' meeting in the Czech Republic in August, where partners were introduced and expectations explained. These were as follows;

- Make contacts, exchange methods, know how, experience
- Best practice examples
- Find inspiration for our initiatives
- Sharing experience and good practice
- Develop a handbook of good practice
- Community development
- Bring Czech experience to other partner countries
- Encourage networking as different levels – international – schools
- Citizenship exchange methodologies
- Sustainable rural livelihood
- Strategies for community development
- Identification of strategy of immigration

IRL was represented by two members of the Board, Billy Murphy & Peter Brady.

8. Peatlands Council

Irish Rural Link along with other stakeholders, such as IFA, environmental organisations, The Turf Cutters association, Department of Parks and Wild Life were invited by Government to sit on the Peatlands Council in 2011. The task is to implement the Habitats Directive as signed into Irish Law in 1996.

To date the Peatlands Council have published the National Peatlands Strategy.

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Clearly IRL are particularly interested in the outcome of the fuel poverty study, the fair implementation of the directive and plans to restore the bogs concerned. As of the end of 2012 the council was making progress on all fronts; However IRL recognises the huge dissatisfaction felt by some communities who believe strongly that they should not be affected by the directive.

9. 2014 Annual Conference

IRL held our 2014 Annual Conference in Moate, Co. Westmeath; the theme of the conference was **“Rural learning – Access to education”**.

The focus of the conference was Rural Learning- Access to education & training. The sustainability of rural communities has never been more under threat than it is now. Since the crisis began, communities have seen the widespread closure of services, schools, Garda stations, and the consequence loss of jobs. It is now recognised that rural areas will need to hold on to its youth and in doing that it will need to provide jobs. One of the key cornerstones to job creation will be the quality and availability of opportunities to re-skill, re-train and acquire the capacity to develop businesses that will create jobs.

The speakers were Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin - President Athlone IT, Alice McDonnell- C&M Training, Dr. Maura Farrell- NUIG, Dr. Bryan Fields- SOLAS and members from Czech rural schools.

Over 40 members attended the conference.



Guest speakers and visitors from the Czech Republic

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Annual Conference 2014



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Rural Isolation Seminars



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Future Policy for Ireland





10. Submissions

- Rural Development Programme 2014- 2020 Submission to Department of Environment, Community & Local Government
- IRL Statement of Strategy – to Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources
- Submission to National Office for Suicide Prevention – New National Framework for Suicide Prevention
- Submission to Dept. Agriculture, Food and Marine – Forestry Programme 2014-2020
- DCENR – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020
- 2014 Budget Submission / Budget Analysis

Training: Skills for Community & Enterprise

Survival of rural based organisations depends on having skills to manage core activities in an efficient way. The expertise of our staff has proven invaluable for many groups who encounter barriers due to remoteness, funding and finance, or effective management.

Modules in Skills for Community & Enterprise

- Train the Trainer (FETAC)
- Media and Communications
- Policy and Advocacy Skills
- Making the Planning System work for your Community
- Community Organisation

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- Engagement of Volunteers
- Finance and Fundraising in Communities
- Community Needs and Resource Analysis
- Strategic Planning and Evaluation Skills

Any organisation/ Individual wishing to avail of these training programmes should contact the office on (090) 6482744/5

Membership:

At end of December 2014 IRL Membership stood at 613, a reduction on 2013 by 20

List available on request

Media in 2014

- Minister Pat Rabbitte to meet participants of IRL's basic computer course (Benefit 4) on Arranmore Island
- Irish Rural Link: Budget 2015 fails to lift burden in rural Ireland
- IRL welcomes CEDRA Report
- IRL to present budget submission to the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform in Leinster House
- Guidelines for Obtaining a Local Area Hackney Licence
- Irish Rural Link appoints James Claffey as Policy and Communications Officer
- Irish Rural Link Launch Benefit 4 Programme for upcoming year
- CHARITIES CALL FOR PLAN TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SERVICES - Six national networks, encompassing over 1,500 Irish charities, today called on Government to develop a cross-departmental plan to restore and grow funding for public services
- Irish Rural Link to meet Ministers for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform
- 700,000 rural homes remain forgotten by broadband providers.
- Rural Crime - Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities is disappointed at the figures released by the Irish Daily Mail which shows a rise in the number of burglaries and attacks on older people in the past ten years.
- Irish Rural Link warns that rural crime is a result of poor government policy on policing
- Concern for the proposed closure of Ulster Bank Branches
- Irish Rural Link make education their priority in Pre-Budget submission

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- Budget Disappoints Rural Ireland
- Common Agricultural Policy
- Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities is disappointed at the minimum 5% of the Common Agricultural Policy that will be devoted to LEADER funding
- Future Energy Consultation Seminar to discuss increasing levels of fuel poverty
- Report of Rural Schools
- Irish Rural Link- – the national network representing the interest of rural communities is disappointed at the continued phrasing out of teaching posts in small primary schools of 4 teachers or less. IRL feels that small rural schools need to be protected as they are the lifeblood of rural Ireland
- Land Tax will increase poverty levels among small land owners
- Irish Rural Link is welcoming the introduction of the Local Area Hackney Licence which will cost 50 euro per vehicle
- IRL unsurprised that over half of septic tanks failed inspections
- Irish Rural Link launches their SHOUT STOP campaign
- IRL calling for the development of a new National Rural Strategy
- Irish Rural Link unsurprised by regional imbalance of farm income levels
- Irish Rural Link launches their RURAL Broadband campaign
- Rural Development Programme 2014-2020
- Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities is calling on the government to grant at least 46% co-financing to the LEADER mechanism of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 in line with the agricultural co-financing, expressing that this is minimum allocation that needs to be delivered to help reduce social exclusion in rural areas.

2014 Press Notifications

Issue- Rural Crime

- 08 January 2014– Radio Appearance on Clare FM and East Coast FM
Quoted in the Irish Mail
Radio Appearance on 2FM Matt Copper Show
- 13th January 2014- Tipp FM
Limerick 102 FM
- 15th January 2014 Cork FM (James)

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Issue- Local Area Hackney

15th January 2014- Waterford-WLM
Midlands 103
Kilkenny- KEM

Issue- Broadband

22nd January 2014- Radio One
News Talk
Midlands Radio 3

Issue- Rural Crime

22nd January 2014 Raidio Corca Baiscinn (James)
Radio East FM
Shannon Side News (James)
Tipp FM

Rural Schools Amalgamation

14th February 2014 News Talk
Shannon Side (James)
Northern Sound
25th February 2014 Connemara Community Radio (James)

Rural Isolation Seminar

24th February 2014 Kildare FM
Clare FM

Rural Crime -

4th March 2014 Clare FM

Rural Isolation Seminar, Ennis

28th February 2014 RTE News
2nd March 2014 Sunday Independent

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Post Office Closures

18th March 2014 Mid East FM

What rural Ireland needs

30th March 2014 The Independent (Seamus and James)

Septic Tank Failure Rates

2nd April 2014 LMFM (Louth)

News Talk

RTE One

Midlands 103

3rd April 2014 Tipp FM (James)

C103 (James)

Loss of rural train services

3rd April 2014 Irish Independent- Quoted James

Shannon Side Radio (James)

CEDRA Report

15th April 2014 Midlands 103

Rural Isolation Seminar

16th April 2014 Donegal Democrat

Farm Safety DVD Launch

16th April 2014 Northern Sound Radio

Rural Education and Annual Conference

21st April 2014 Irish Examiner (Billy)

CEDRA Report

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23rd April 2014 Ross FM (James)

IDA Reaction

23rd April 2014 Newstalk (James)

Farm Safety DVD Launch

24th April 2014 Farmer's Journal

CEDRA Report

28th April 2014 Seamus appeared on Morning Ireland

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5th to 9th May 2014 Midland 103
 Tipp FM (James)
 Mentioned in Farmers Journal
 LMFM (Louth)
 Kildare FM
 Connacht Tribune (Access to education for Rural Students)

Rural Awards

22nd May 2014 Tipp Fm (James and New Futures Farming Group)
 Pictures in Westmeath Papers

BenefIT Four

Mention by Minister Rat Rabbitte in his Skype link to Dublin Castle

26th June Donegal Democrat

27th June Irish Independent

BenefIT Four

3rd July Westmeath Examiner

4th July Donegal Democrat

Standard of Rural Broadband

10th September Rte One Drivetime

BenefIT Four

11th September Irish Country Living

Pre-Budget Submission

19th September Shannonside

Joint pre-budget press release

23rd September Journal.ie
RTE News
Morning Ireland
Newstalk
24th September Mid West Tipperary Radio (James)
8th October Be the Change Magazine (James)

Rural Broadband Campaign

10th October Mid West Radio
13th October K FM Radio

Budget 2015

14th October RTE News
14th October The Irish Times (James)

Rural Policing

October The Saint Vincent De Paul Bulletin
700,000 rural homes remain forgotten by broadband providers.
29th October Shannonside Radio
Cork 103
Mid West Radio (James)

May 2015

Discussion Panel

7th November Midlands 103

Economic Recovery

15th November Irish Independent

Rural Broadband Mapping

24th November Radio One
RTE News at Six
RTE News at Nine
Midlands 103 (James)

25th November The Irish Times
Midlands 103
Cork 103
Mid West Radio (James)
KFM
The Living Daily
East Coast FM

27th November Limerick FM

30th November Sunday Times

May 2015

Rural Broadband Seminar

15th December RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta (Peter)

Economic Recovery in Rural Areas

31st December The Irish Times

Farm Saftey Competition

1st January Farmers Journal

Regional Investment- IDA Research

7th January Irish Independent
Shannonside

8th January Tipp Mid-West (James)

Farm Safety Competition

8th January Farmers Journal

Regional Investment- IDA Research

12th January Cork 103

Stop Ulster Bank Ferbane Closing Campaign

23rd January RTE News
TV3 News
The Irish Times
Midlands 103
Athlone Community Radio

Septic Tank Failure Rate

4th February Tipp Mid-West (James)

Bus Éireann Cuts Services

23rd February Irish Independent (James)
Midlands 103
Newstalk
Mid West Radio (James)
East Coast Fm (James)
Matt Copper Show (James)
Drivetime

24th February Primetime (James)

26th February Athlone Advertiser (James)

May 2015

Rural Transport

2nd March Irish Independent

CEDRA Implementation Committee

2nd March Drivetime

Advocating for rural Ireland

11th March Athlone Advertiser (James)

Bus Éireann Cuts Services

12th March The Irish Examiner (James)
Radio Kerry (James)
Shannonside (James)
The Irish Independent (James)

New Speed Limits for Rural Roads

19th March Sean O'Rourke

Closure of GP Offices

19th March The Irish Examiner (James)