



Irish Rural Link
Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann

Summer Newsletter

July 2019



EU Commissioner Phil Hogan who opened the IRL Annual Conference on the 27th May pictured with Board Members Maura Farrell, Miriam McKenna and Tom Lavin, Chair of IRL and Seamus Boland, CEO IRL

IRL Annual Conference

Irish Rural Link Annual Conference was held in Sheraton Hotel Athlone on the 27th May. The conference was opened by EU Commissioner Phil Hogan with the theme of this years conference 'Climate Change - An Opportunity for Rural Ireland'.

An overview of Climate Change and the current situation was delivered by Dr. Paul Deane, MaREI Centre in UCC. This was followed by a panel discussion on energy efficiencies, rural

economy, agriculture, natural environment and transport and how these sectors are adapting to mitigate climate change. Workshops highlighting case studies of work and projects currently being done. Case studies from McCauley Wood Fuels, Grow Remote, EIP Agri BRIDE Project, Abbeyleix Bog Project, Flexibus/Fingal, Louth and Meath Local Link - Rural Transport Programme.

Over 120 people attended the conference on the day. A copy of all presentations along with the Commissioner's speech is available

at <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1Gw21DXuZczT9RIAfjnNdGdBenP6ghzUo>

IRL Annual General Meeting 2019

IRL AGM took place on the 10th June 2019. We welcome two new members to the Board of IRL - Veronica Barrett RHS Homecare Galway and Ger Maguire, Mayo Abbey, Co. Mayo and look forward to working with them over the coming years.

Áras an Uachtaráin Summer Concert 2019



A number of IRL members were invited to join President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina in Áras and Uachtaráin on Friday 21st June to join in the celebration of Irish Country Music and to acknowledge the important and valuable work and role volunteers and community organisations play in rural communities.



EU Projects

IRL travelled to Sweden and Italy in May for Partner Meetings for three of the EU projects they are Partners in.

RUBIZMO



The second Partner Progress Meeting of Rubizmo Project took place in Angavallen Sweden between the 21st to 23rd May. RUBIZMO – Replicable Business models for modern rural

economies is a 3 year collaborative project to identify the best initiatives and conditions for supporting rural jobs and growth. The project is funded by Horizon 2020.

RUBIZMO will focus on three key elements to help make this happen:

- Identifying and analysing promising business models and collaborative networks fertile for up-scaling and replication.

- Providing easy access overviews of these rural 'hot spots' of business innovation and practical support tools for entrepreneurs, local networks and policy makers to adopt them.

- It will also carry out active coaching of entrepreneurs and peer-to-peer training focusing on creating the novel collaboration patterns RUBIZMO assessment has identified as key for improved competitiveness and sustainability of the business model.

The second round interviews with Business cases for further analysis took place in June to select the business cases that will be included in the final database of business cases.

A meeting of the Irish National Stakeholder Panel took place on the 26th June in the IRL office in Moate to discuss and get input and feedback on the draft design of Business Tool 1 - Virtual Library.

You can follow the projects on twitter @RUBIZMO and website <https://rubizmo.eu/>

DELSA



IRL, is lead partner in DELSA - Digital Empowerment for Low Skilled Adults. IDP, the Italian partner in the project hosted the first Progress Partners meeting on the 28th May 2019 in Pescara Italy. The two other Irish Partners in the project; Maynooth University and Longford Women's Link also attended the meeting along with partners from Belgium, Hungary, Poland, Spain.

DELSA addresses the issue of low digital competences and skills and will develop immediate and concrete training and educational resources to advance digital abilities of low skilled adults.

During the meeting, the Partners started off discussing the training module's structure and content in DELSA available in 5 languages. Each Partner made a presentation of their current status regarding digitalisation and how to improve Adult Education system via a proper strategy. Also administrative aspects were brought up as well as dissemination, exploitation, visibility and quality assurance matters were discussed.

The project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission, Key Action 2, Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education.

More information about the project is available on www.digitaldelsa.eu

SustainIT

IRL met with 8 Partners from 6 European Countries – Belgium, Cyprus, Italy, Iceland, Ireland and Spain for the second meeting of SUSTAIN IT – Sustainable Tourism Innovative Training the following day, 29th May also in Pescara, Italy. This Project is also co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, also under Key Action 2, Strategic Partnership for Vocational Education and Training.

The goal of the Project is to reinforce capacities of European workers and professionals in the sustainable tourism sector to enhance their employability while reigniting the sectors' growth and competitiveness.

SUSTAIN IT will develop innovative, concrete and actionable training to be delivered via traditional means (face-2-face) and the dedicated Open Educational Resource (OER).

During this meeting, Partners had the opportunity to make a presentation about the current status of the Project's website as well as issues related to sustainable tourism. Dissemination and administrative issues were also addressed, including the training content of the courses for future implementation.

More details about Sustainit is available on www.sustainit.eu

MICRO

The MICRO project is now complete but the Online Educational Resources are still available for FREE on the project website <http://www.microsmetraining.eu/>



Getting Citizens Online and IT Skills for Farmers



Participants who completed the 'Getting Citizens Online' Basic Computer Course receiving their certificates.

'Getting Citizens Online' and 'IT Skills for Farmers' basic computer classes continue to be delivered across the country. These classes run for 5 weeks, 2 hours a week and are FREE to attend. The classes are aimed at any person who has never used a computer before, with the classes teaching participants how to use the internet, online banking, email, pay bill online, Skype etc. The 'IT Skills for Farmers' courses help farmers to register calves and herd movements as well as the basic skills also.

If you know anyone who would be interested in or would benefit from one of these classes, please contact Mary Keyes, Programme Coordinator, on 090 6482744 or Maryk@irishrurallink.ie or you can search the map for a class near you https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1HCmFsxcCTIFj390bjRZ_urz927YNqhH&ll=53.37084448323444%2C-8.125986099999977&z=8



Participants and Tutors of 'Getting Citizens Online' classes that took place in Galway

National Rural Network



Smart Villages Conference

A National Seminar on the EU Action for Smart Villages Initiative in Ireland, entitled 'Smart Villages and Rural Towns in Ireland: Revitalising Rural Areas through Community-Led Innovation' took place in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, Co Westmeath on Thursday, July 4th, 2019. This event was organised and run by the National Rural Network (NRN) and the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

This national seminar on Smart Villages and Rural Towns in Ireland was structured to build a greater knowledge base around the EU Action for Smart Villages initiative, and demonstrate how it can be planned, implemented and realized in an Irish context, particularly in the context of the design of the LEADER Programme post 2020. It brought together key rural development stakeholders from across Ireland and the EU to showcase and exchange ideas on how rural communities can help retain and attract people to live and work in their locality by implementing practical and tangible solutions to the various local challenges they face in the form of digital, social and environmental innovation. Policy instruments which can support the development of Smart Villages and Rural Towns both now and in the future were also explored.

Click the link below to view the conference report: <https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/leader-news/smart-villages-and-rural-towns-in-ireland-revitalising-rural-areas-through-community-led-innovation/>



Rural Inspiration Awards



James Claffey and Shane Conway, NRN with EU Commissioner Phil Hogan at the ERND Rural Awards Event
Brussels in April

James Claffey and Shane Conway from the National Rural Network attended the ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards in Brussels on the 11th and 12th April.

The inaugural Awards aims to celebrate how rural development projects and policy contribute to a more competitive, sustainable and inclusive rural Europe. The ENRD received 176 entries overall and 25 projects were shortlisted in five categories.

Two projects based in Ireland were shortlisted. In the 'improving the competitiveness of rural areas' category [Mid Ireland Adventure](#) is a start-up adventure tourism business that has received support through the LEADER Programme. In the environment and climate action category, Meath based [Golashane Farm Nature Reserve](#) is part of the Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS). The farm focuses strongly on enhancing biodiversity. Both projects attended the awards also.

Local Public Banking



Delegation at Central Bank: (L to R) Dr Michael Ermrich, Executive President OSV, Niclaus Bergmann CEO Sparkassen Foundation Ed Sibley, Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Ireland, Noel Kinahan, Irish Rural Link with senior board members of the OSV.

A delegation of 20 German Sparkassen representatives visited Ireland on 20-23 June. The delegation included the President of the OSV (East German Sparkassen) along with board members of various Sparkasse in the region. They had a busy schedule that kicked off on the Thursday with a special tour of Leinster House that the Ceann Comhairle arranged. On Friday the Deputy Governor Ed Sibley hosted the delegation for a meeting at the Central Bank. This

was followed by a lunch attended by Eamon Ryan, Green Party leader which gave the delegation a good overview of the political situation in Ireland at the moment.

The Seanad Public Consultation report on SMEs was launched on 16th May. Noel attended the launch in Leinster House. The report included a recommendation to continue to give support to researching and furthering the debate on evaluating the possible ways of implementing a local public banking concept in Ireland.

The Stakeholder Forum was convened on 28th May as part of the independent evaluation on local public banking being carried out by Indecon. This consisted of three roundtable discussions on topics drawn from the Terms of Reference. There were around 30 people present including representatives of the Credit Unions, An Post, the SBCI, Bank of Ireland and Seamus and Noel representing IRL. The group then came together and reviewed the outcomes from each table. It was a useful exercise and we look forward to the completion of the report that we hope will be published in early Autumn.



German Sparkassen Delegation following tour of Leinster House

Next Chapter Cross Border Project

REPRESENT Event in Monaghan



Speakers at 'The Next Chapter' event REPRESENT which took place in Monaghan in May. Pictured L to R: Jane Morris EU election candidate and former Deputy Speaker of the first power sharing Northern Ireland Assembly, Liz O'Donnell former Department of Foreign Affairs Minister, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation Heather Humphreys TD and Bronagh Hinds former Women's Coalition.

REPRESENT was organised by Irish Rural Link, together with partners Politics Plus and Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), as part of The Next Chapter's civic empowerment project building positive relations between women from different communities and backgrounds in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland. It is funded through the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. Match-funding for The Next Chapter project is provided by the Executive Office in Northern Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland.

The event, which is the second Women's Ambassador Forum, heard from former Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Liz O'Donnell, and founder member of the Women's Coalition and Deputy Speaker of the NI Assembly, Jane Morrice and Bronagh Hinds, Senior Associate at DemocraShe and UN expert on women's engagement in peace processes, who spoke about the challenges they faced during the peace process and their determination to ensure that the voice of women was heard. The forum also heard from four participants of the Next Chapter, who have already used the skills they have learned through the training programme to step forward and become more involved in community and public life.

With more than 300 participants in ten Chapter Hubs across Northern Ireland and the border counties, the Next Chapter provides a network and training for women to develop ideas, build communities and support the transition out of conflict. Participants have already completed

modules 'Women as Champions of Peacebuilding' and 'Decision Making, Politics & Public Life', and are currently working on 'Developing a Powerful Voice' and 'Communicating with Impact'.

The forum was opened by Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation Heather Humphreys TD, who said: "It is my great pleasure to open the REPRESENT Women's Ambassador Forum on the theme of "Women: Champions of Peace Building – The Past and The Future" marking the 21st anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, which opened a new chapter of peace in Northern Ireland. One element of the peace process, and one that is of keen interest to peace-builders internationally, is the crucial role that women have played throughout successive years of negotiations. When women are meaningfully involved in peace negotiations, it is acknowledged that there is a far more significant chance of a longer-lasting and more inclusive peace. Our Government is a key supporter of this principle, and we will always work faithfully to support the protection and full realisation of the achievements of peace for everyone. As we move ahead with today's phase of the peace process with a new generation of leaders in politics and in our communities, everyone involved needs to re-commit to the principles at the core of the Agreement—equality, mutual respect, partnership, tolerance, and trust."

The Next Chapter project will support and encourage more women to become actively involved in this vital work, which will help to create a truly equal society in which women are empowered and afforded the opportunities to take up leadership positions within their own communities."

You can read all about this exciting Programme and its members here on www.thenextchapter.eu



Deputy CEO Irish Rural Link, Sinead Dooley with Minister Heather Humphreys TD at the Next Chapter REPRESENT Event in Monaghan



The Next Chapter Coordinator Claire Rushe pictured with President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina at the Áras Summer Concert

Networks

Community Wetlands Forum



Chris Uys, CWF Development Officer attending NG Europe Erasmus+ Training recently [Picture Credit: Joao Goncalo]

NG Europe Erasmus+ Training:

CWF attended a 5-day NG Europe Erasmus+ training event on Green and Social Entrepreneurship in GMIT Mayo Campus from 28 June - 2 July 2019. The training was hosted by Leave No Trace Ireland, together with Associação BioLiving and Athens University of Economics and Business. Participants from Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Austria attended and shared their experiences and activities with each other. More information about the project on www.ngeurope.net



*[Chris Uys in conversation with Dr Kimberley Davies (UCC WetFutures) and Terry Morley (NUIG Care-Peat.
Picture credit: Nathan Chandler]*

Caring for Peat:

CWF and Irish Rural Link are associated partners in the North-West Europe Interreg Project Care-Peat. CWF Development Officer attended the kick-off meeting of partners in Manchester on June 12th. Care-Peat has nine partners working together to reduce carbon emissions and restore the carbon storage capacity of different types of peatlands in North-West Europe. The main partnership consists of five knowledge institutes and four nature organisations from Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Together with other project partners, Care-Peat will develop and test new techniques and socio-economic strategies for carbon reduction. Information about and presentations from the kick-off meeting are available [here](#).

Next CWF Event



Connecting peatland conservation with archaeological and cultural heritage:

Integration, preservation & understanding

12-13th August 19 Start Workshop  **Abbeyleix**

You are warmly invited to the first Irish project workshop of our Horizon 2020 project 'WETFUTURES' on Tuesday 13th August in Abbeyleix, Ireland.

The WETFUTURES project will focus on key peatland environments across the Netherlands, UK and Ireland. These will act as case studies for the identification of specific threats to these landscapes and their rich archaeological and cultural histories and help us to identify ways in which the heritage of wetlands can contribute to contemporary social challenges and its links to current conservation and restoration agendas.










This workshop is designed so you can understand the 'WETFUTURES' overall project goals, alongside the specific aims for the Irish work programme and so we can get to know members of the Irish partner organisation; the Community Wetland Forum and any other interested parties.

Draft Programme

Monday 12th Aug

- Optional: Site visit to Abbeyleix Bog Project. Guided walk with Chris Uys. This will be an opportunity to hear about the forums work at this site but also get to one another in a more informal setting.
- Optional: Ice breaker

Tuesday 13th Aug

- AM: Presentations from the project, forum members and linked projects.
- LUNCH: Provided by WETFUTURES project.
- PM: Your thoughts. We will discuss key questions which will allow us to focus our future work programme with the needs and views of the local community and project partners in mind.
- Optional: Dinner

Further details will be provided closer to the time. For more information on the WETFUTURES project please visit www.wetfutures.eu. If you would like to attend this event please register your interest with project post-doc Kim Davies (kimberley.davies@ucc.ie). Please don't hesitate to email if you have any questions.

The Irish project team:
 Dr Ben Gearey (Principal Investigator) and Dr Kim Davies (Research Assistant) are based in UCC, Ireland. Both are environmental archaeologists interested in archaeology and long-term environmental history in peatlands and wetlands.









The CWF will host the first Irish workshop for the Horizon 2020 'WETFUTURES' Project on 13 August 2019 in Abbeyleix, Co Laois. CWF community and stakeholder members will join the Irish, UK and The Netherlands partners of 'WETFUTURES' to discuss ways in which the heritage of wetlands can contribute to contemporary social challenges and its links to current conservation and restoration agendas. More detail on the posters below. Any person interested to attend, please email Dr Kimberley Davies kimberley.davies@ucc.ie

Meals on Wheels

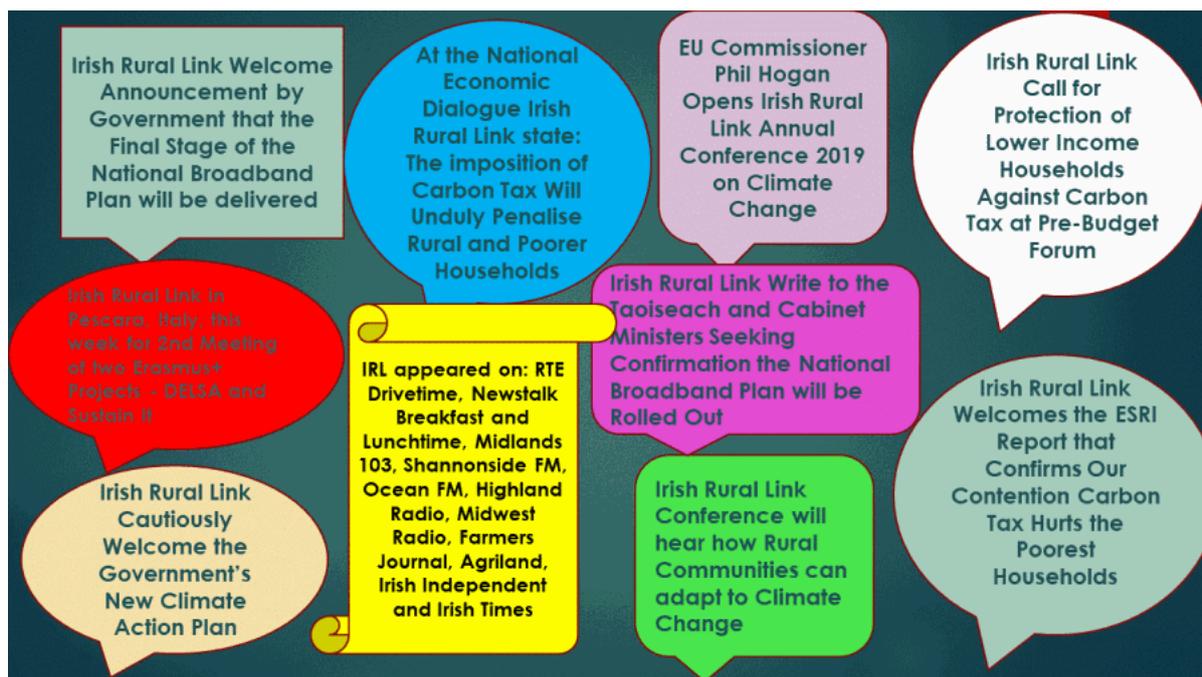


Some of the Meals on Wheels groups attended the Summer Concert to celebrate Irish Country Music in the Áras on the 21st June. Pictured above are Bernie Boyle from Ballyshannon Meals

on Wheels with President Michael D. Higgins and Elaine Keogh from Longford Social Services with two of her Meals on Wheels Volunteers, Lily Hogan and Margaret McGuinness with the President and his wife Sabina.

In his speech, the President thanked and praised highly the work of all volunteers stating that they are what holds rural communities together.

In The News



Submissions and Advocacy Work

IRL made a number of Submissions to various Government Departments and Agencies. Submissions were made to the Department of Rural and Community Development on the new National Social Enterprise Strategy, to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on Community Employment and Social Inclusion Schemes. To the Independent Review on Community Services Programme and the Solas Corporate Plan 2020-2024. A submission was also made to the Department of Finance on the Usage of Increased Carbon Tax.

IRL attended the National Economic Dialogue in Dublin Castle in June and the Dept of Employment Affairs and Social Protection Pre-Budget Forum in July.

We attended Bilateral meetings with our C&V Pillar Colleagues with Department of Expenditure and Reform, Department of Rural and Community Development, Department of Health, Department of Justice and Equality and Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

FUNDING CALLS

UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty 17th October 2019

Each year the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection supports small public awareness initiatives to promote awareness of the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty on the 17th October through small scale funding for groups to hold event, create brochures, videos to promote the day. This funding is open to anti-poverty organisations and groups working with people experiencing poverty at national or local level.

Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the **United Nations** theme for 17 October, 2019 is: "**Acting together to empower children, their families and communities to end poverty.**" It is important that this theme is reflected in the projects.

Applications are now open until 12 Noon on Friday 26th July 2019. Applications after this time will not be accepted. More information and download application form are available on http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/UN_Event.aspx

PHOTO GALLERY - IRL Annual Conference 2019





