Clare Rural
Development Strategy

2026

REALISING CLARE'S RURAL POTENTIAL
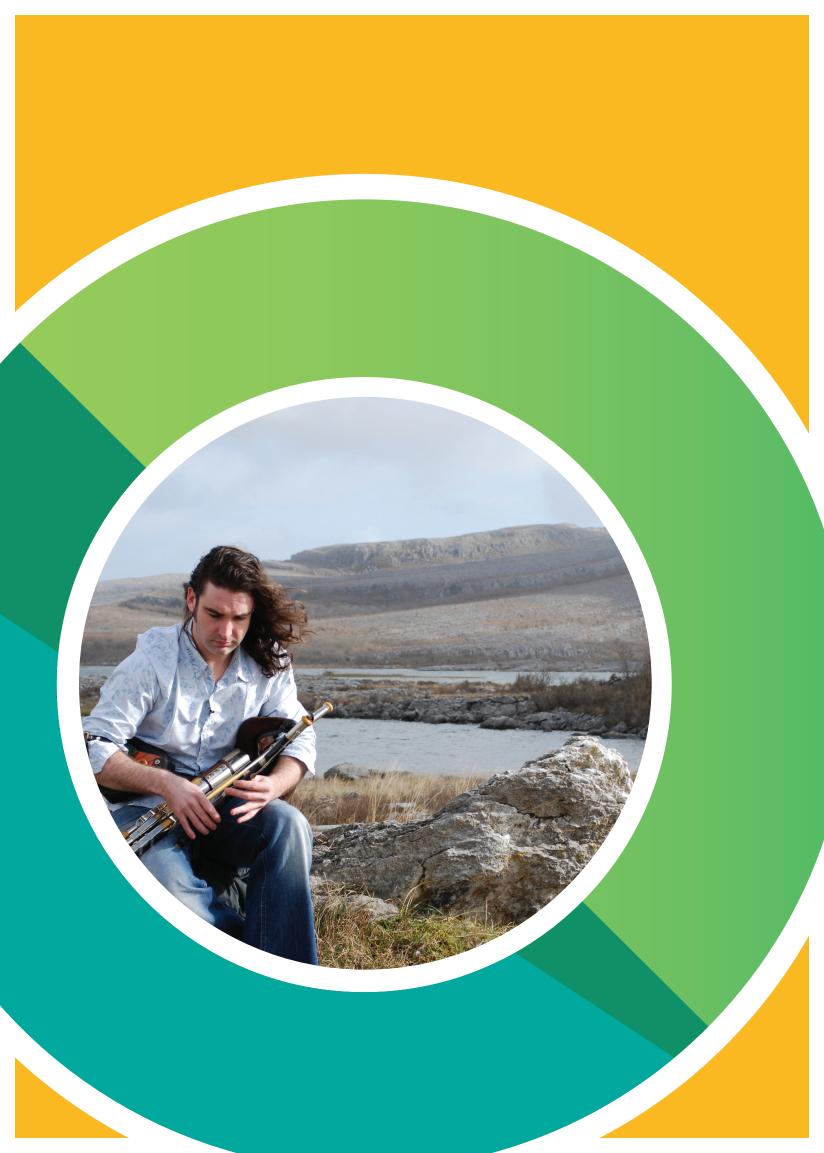### Our Life, Our Home

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As the first citizen of Clare, I commend the members of Clare Rural Development Forum for developing both this creative vision for rural Clare and a strategy to achieve it.

The Clare Rural Development Strategy delivers in a very tangible way on the Government's "National Action Plan for Rural Development" which itself is complemented by the appointment at Cabinet level of a Senior Minister for Rural and Community Development.

Clare must plan for the future of its people. The Elected members of Clare County Council are fully committed to providing a leadership role in facilitating the delivery of this strategy which will provide a significant legacy for future generations in the County. We are determined to support the Forum in every way possible to achieve the comprehensive set of actions that have been prepared separately.
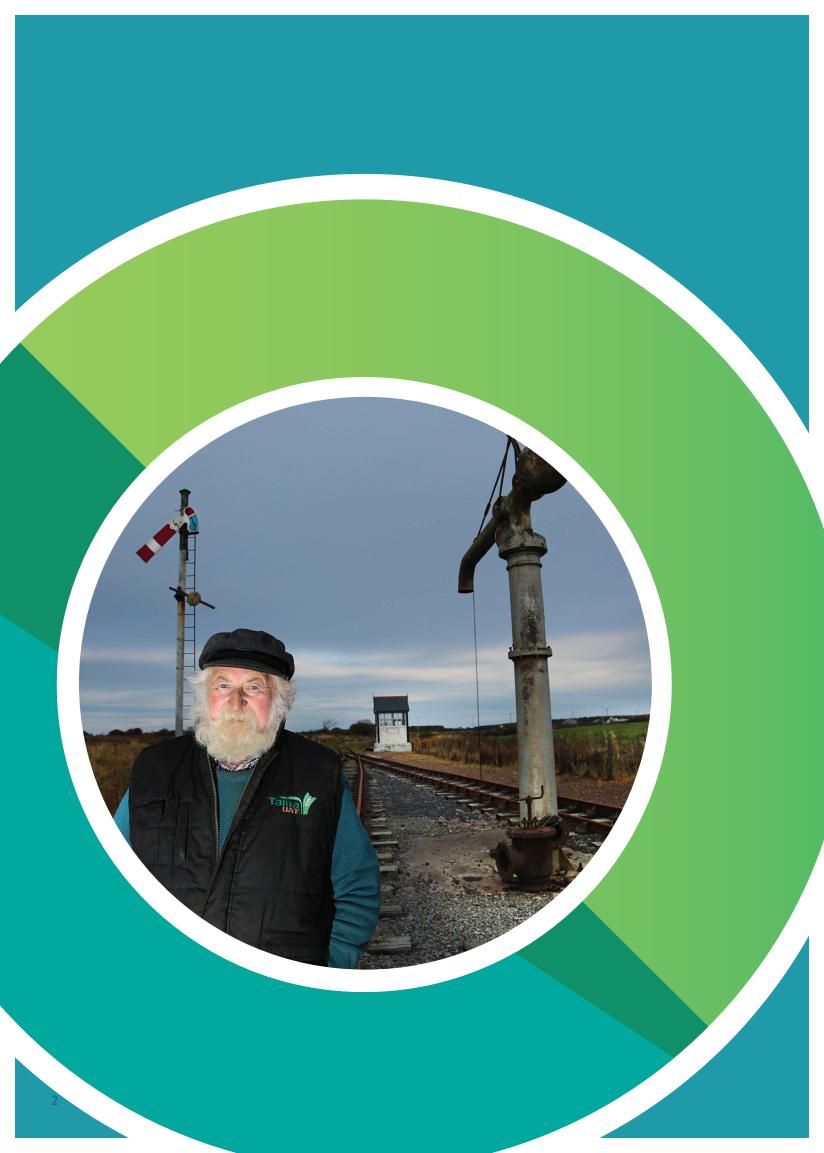
I encourage the various agencies and community organisations to work together as such co-operation will protect the uniqueness of rural Clare and provide opportunities for our quality of life to be sustained.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my predecessor, Cllr. Bill Chambers, for his support of this strategy during his term of office.

Le meas,

Tom McNamara

Cathaoirleach, Clare County Council.

The Clare Rural Development Strategy is about what we want rural Clare to look like in ten years. We want to positively discriminate in favour of rural Clare, its people, community and way of life by adopting a can-do attitude to shaping our shared future. Economics, fiscal correctness, efficiencies at all costs and critical mass must be matched by a brave new approach, partnership and avoidance of negative thinking.

The actions set out in this strategy target a reversal of the statistical trends that emphasise the stark challenges facing rural Clare. Over the past thirty years, the population of some areas of County Clare grew by 61% whilst it declined by 3% in others. Depopulated areas lost much of their agricultural and retail employment and gained few jobs in the emerging sectors. Primary school and GP service closures and threats of closure have followed as public services contracted.

This strategy challenges the thinking that urban living is the only model for the future. Our strategy aims to deliver jobs, multi-service centres, co-operating towns and parishes, environmental programmes, age-friendly communities, vibrant rural ways of life, digitally-supported communities and a range of infrastructure. A partnership approach that engages the community, business, local authority, State agencies, Government Departments and key influencers is required to achieve these objectives.

The establishment of a Government Department for Rural and Community Development represents a significant and welcome commitment at national level to delivering positive change for rural Ireland. Locally, Clare County Council has recently established a Rural Development Directorate, the first local authority directorate of its kind in Ireland, and also has appointed a Director of Rural Development. Through its membership of the Clare Rural Development Forum and backed by a supportive Department, Clare County Council is committed to providing the essential community development supports to facilitate the implementation of all actions set out in this strategy.

Pat Dowling

Pat Dowling

Chair: Clare Rural Development Forum)
Chief Executive Clare County Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategy is innovative in its analysis and challenging in its approach to doing business and delivering services in the community as well as in the private and public sphere. Our analysis shows that between 1981 and 2016, one part of the county experienced population growth of 61% while another experienced population decline of 3%. There has been a contraction and withdrawal of private investment (retail, manufacturing and ancillary services including those to agriculture). There has been a similar contraction of public services (health services, including GPs, Post Offices, Schools, Garda stations, transport services, enterprise development, welfare support services, etc.) and a protracted wait for physical and service infrastructure (e.g. schools, broadband, water, public transport). Our young people often lack employment opportunities that are compatible with their education and aspirations and when combined with the long commutes to work, the attractiveness of rural living is diminished. The flexibility of our communities to respond to emerging needs is often constrained by their on-going commitments to maintaining costly community facilities and buildings that far exceed their current needs.

The period of our analysis is inter-generational (more than 30 years) and the rural dynamics it identifies have resulted in a steadily declining rate of new family formations. These dynamics will lead to terminal decline unless they are reversed.

Over the next ten years, 4,000 jobs will be created with a particular focus on social enterprises. Our communities will be supported by a range of organisations to develop social enterprises, to provide essential local services, tourism information and enterprise supports. In parallel, the Clare Economic Development Strategy will provide the economic conditions and supports for the growth of enterprise and employment across the whole county. The Economic Strategy will have a particular focus on the further growth of the high performing Ennis-Shannon economic corridor to the benefit of all of Clare.

Jobs will also be created in community-based and community-run social enterprises. Some social enterprises will provide goods and services to the community on a commercial basis. Others will contract the delivery of public services. Social enterprises will also be enabled to provide and staff multi-service centres where different agencies can offer their services in a manner that increases their 'value for money' and be more local to the people who wish to avail of them. These centres will also act as enterprise hubs where a number of hot desks will provide high speed broadband access and where small-scale training and conferencing facilities will be available.

The towns of Clare will be encouraged to work together as will our rural parishes. For example, by working together the combined towns of: Kilrush/Kilkee; Scariff/Mountshannon; Miltown/Ennistymon/Lahinch, will be well positioned to meet the needs of the modern entrepreneur, resident and visitor alike. In conjunction with their smaller satellite villages and extensive rural hinterland, they will be helped to win public investment and stimulate private investment. By working closely together they will drive their own regeneration and that of their more rural hinterland. In parallel, the more rural parishes of North-East Clare, North Clare, Mid-West Clare, the Peninsula and the Estuary, will develop the scale, complementarities and co-operative arrangements to, more adequately, benefit from their land and marine-based resources as well as their tourism and enterprise potential.

Change requires leadership, persuasion and support. Leadership is required to chart a new bold vision and stay with its strategic direction, particularly at a time when continuing to work in the same old way is not an option. Persuasion is required to overcome historical divisions and create new coalitions, identities and ways of doing things. Public support, in its various forms, is required to achieve practical outcomes, particularly those that are innovative, challenging and which contribute to public welfare. The leadership of the different communities across Clare will be supported by a special 'Rural and Community Support Unit' in Clare County Council. Together, this coalition of interests will identify and support new opportunities for co-operative endeavour and individual achievement.

This Strategy is sub-titled 'Our Life, Our Home' in recognition of the fact that our environment is our very life – the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the energy we use, the home we inhabit, the culture and heritage that is our daily inspiration - a home we share with many diverse life forms. The health of our environment impacts on our health and our lifestyle impacts on our environment in a mutually nurturing, but fragile, interaction. While some people are born in and grow to cherish the rural way of life, others are drawn to it. This strategy will ensure that what we have inherited we will bequeath in a healthier state and that those who wish to re-settle in rural Clare will be supported. Consequently, the celebration of our environment and our rural way of life, in all its artistic and recreational forms, will provide an unique contribution to the proper consideration and management of our environment in its physical, built and living form.

Ageing is living in delightful anticipation, practical solidarity and comfortable acceptance. This strategy recognises that our social context is changing so rapidly that it is essential to consider all generations and all ages when planning our public and private spaces, facilities and amenities. Only in this way, will the physical environment we are now building, be appropriate to future generations. Never was it more apt to say that 'what is good for one is good for all'. Regardless of their age, younger and older people wish to be safe and secure in their home and welcome in their community and have the opportunities to contribute to their community. Particular attention is given in our strategy to fostering intergenerational relationships. We focus on creating opportunities for all to participate in the social, cultural and political life of the community and to enjoy the supports that facilitate a life that all have reason to desire

This strategy is also supported by the 'Clare Digital Strategy' that provides for what are called 'Intelligent Communities' that will help ensure that local people as well as enterprises and entrepreneurs have access to high speed broadband in their own community. Our Rural Strategy will establish a number of digital hubs throughout the county. Local people, entrepreneurs and visitors, irrespective of their sector (agriculture, tourism, local services, international businesses, etc.) will be able to access these hubs to use digital technologies as appropriate to their needs. In addition, our Strategy focuses on ensuring that communities have the skills and competencies to prosper in the broadband enabled digital economy.

Modern life, whether in rural or urban areas, requires a range of publicly provided infrastructure, including transport, education and water. Innovative rural transport initiatives, such as 'rural uber', 'community car pooling', 'befriending transport' and community bus services, among other initiatives will be developed to supplement the current rural provision. These initiatives will extend the times of availability and reduce costs to the traveller. In conjunction with education, and training and learning providers, additional opportunities will be developed that have greater local reach and relevance. The Strategy will support the roll out of major and small Water Services Investment programmes to address the County's Water and Wastewater needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Strategy

The Clare Rural Development Forum was specifically established to give rural communities the opportunity to work with the various public agencies, in shaping a roadmap for the development of rural Clare in the years ahead.

The Forum consists of community and voluntary groups, local development bodies, public representatives, and key state agencies[1]. The Strategy sets out how rural Clare will develop in the coming years by all stakeholders working in a spirit of co-operation.

1.2 Our Guiding Principles and shared understanding

The Forum was guided by a set of principles that include:
- A commitment to supporting bottom-up and community-led development
- Building the capacity for innovative community collaboration that challenges traditional approaches
- Being innovative in how we support sustainable development
- Supporting social solidarity and inclusion
- Working together as communities and agencies to create a better future for rural Clare
- Being open and transparent in all our efforts to make Clare a better place.
- Encouraging all parts of rural society in Clare to be active in building our shared future.

1.3 Rural Clare

The members of the Forum have taken an open view on what constitutes rural Clare, its towns, villages and open countryside. While stretching physically from the wild Atlantic in the west to the beautifully tranquil Lough Derg in the east, from Loop Head to Scarriff, from Ballynacally to Ballyvaughan, rural Clare also extends to our widely dispersed global diaspora. The Forum recognises the key economic and social role of the county town of Ennis and the importance of the regional city of Limerick/Shannon, to which many of Clare's rural population travel to work.

The Strategy acknowledges that rural Clare, with its rich physical environment, its built and cultural heritage, its magnificent landscapes and seascapes, can be proud of its history, heritage, environment and natural produce. Our shared culture, with its diverse identities and histories, inspires us to positively confront our challenges and avail of the many opportunities that surround us. We acknowledge that this strategy provides for a future that will sustain all our people, and will do so in a manner that nurtures our culture, builds opportunity and maintains solidarity.

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[1]See Appendix 1 for details

1.4 Strategic Focus

This Rural Development Strategy focuses on four things:
- targeting specific geographical areas in order to maintain and grow their populations
- providing special supports for combined towns and partnering parishes so that they can achieve sufficient scale of population and resources to attract public investment and justify private investment
- developing innovative and community-based social enterprise centres where multiple agencies can deliver their services
- increasing the quality of the physical, built, social and cultural environment of rural areas so that they are more attractive places in which to live both now and in the future.

1.4.1 Focusing on Specific Geographic Areas

Certain parts of Clare, including key traditional towns and large tracts of open countryside have experienced long-term population decline. Unless radical and innovative interventions are designed and delivered, their decline is set to continue. This is not acceptable to the members of the Forum and so continuing to do 'the same as we always did' is not a solution. We will apply our combined efforts and resources to ensure the future of the most challenged areas of the County.

1.4.2 Focusing on towns and villages and ensuring accessible public and private services

If our rural communities are to have a future, they need to have a growing population that is economically active and socially engaged and which can access quality public and private services. This means that existing communities will be supported by a special 'rural and community support unit' in working together. Combined towns and partnering parishes will aim to be large enough to justify the maintenance of public facilities and services (e.g. education, transport, leisure and recreation, health, education, welfare, security and employment) and the development of economically viable private facilities and services (e.g. hotels, retail, private professional services).

1.4.3 Focusing on a quality environment

The more rural parts of the county have experienced long-term decline of its natural and built environment. There has been a decline in the quality of the social fabric as a result of poor, and often inappropriate, housing which has often been accompanied by the inadequate provision of a range of public services. Opportunities for social interaction and cultural activity have declined. This strategy aims to address these deficiencies by means of community led, multi-agency responses that promote environmentally-sustainable practices as well as social and cultural activities underpinned by the necessary infrastructure.
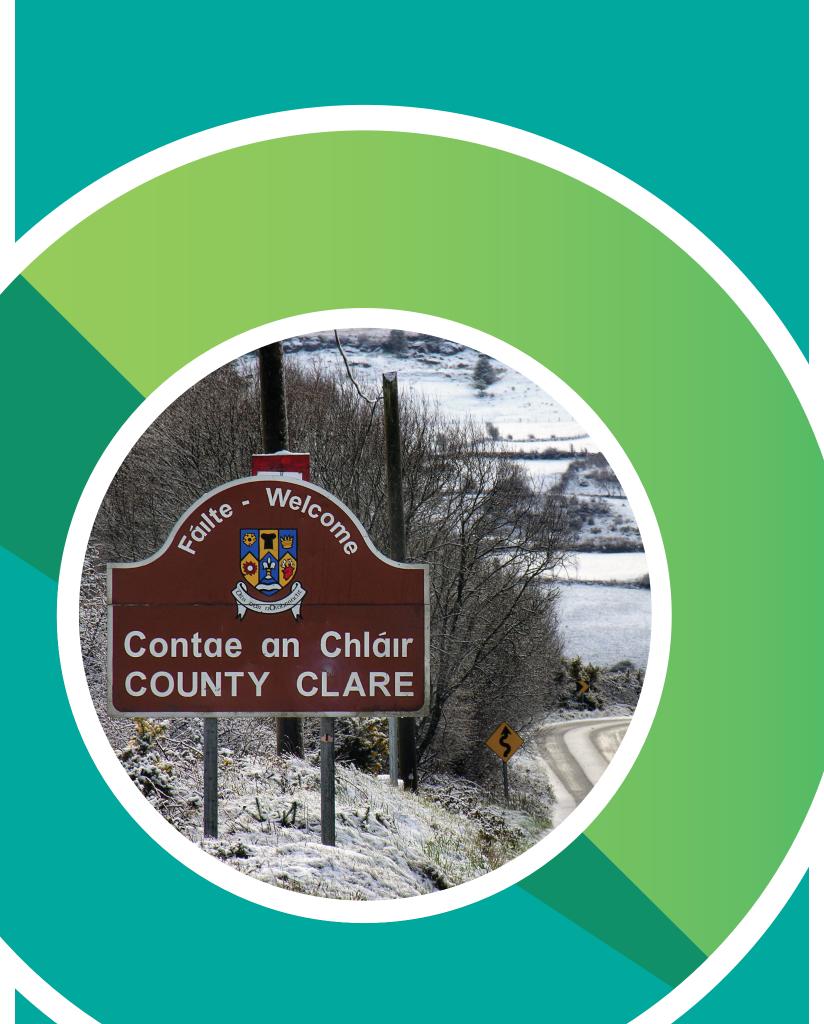
1.5 Other Plans

A particular purpose of this Rural Development Strategy is to provide other plans and strategies[2] with a clear vision for rural Clare. It provides the roadmap and key signposts

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[2]See Appendix 2 for an overview of these other plans.

for those delivering public services and for those making public investment, so that they can align their services and investment. There may be a need for some re-alignment in such plans in order to achieve the optimum welfare of rural Clare. This will ensure the County is home to vibrant, open, welcoming, industrious communities capable of sustaining themselves into the future. This re-alignment will be put into place without delay so that unnecessary barriers to delivering our strategy will not get in the way of our combined efforts.
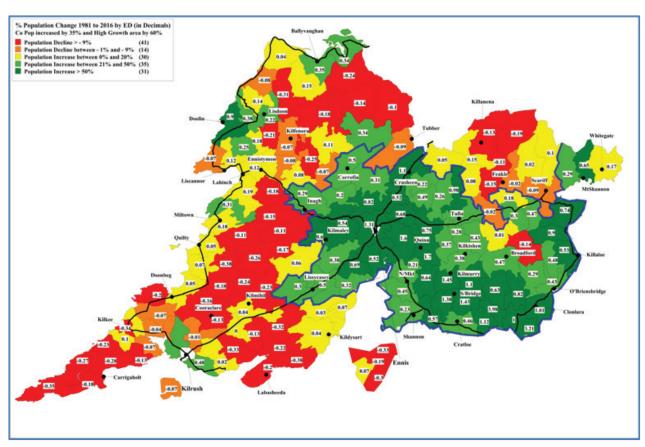
2 ANALYSIS

2.1 Clare – Identifying Urban and Rural

In 2016 the population of Clare was 118,627. This reflected an increase of 1.5% since 2011 and 35% since 1981. However, the high average population growth masked significant inter-generational (1981-2016) decline across much of the County. While the large corridor from Ennis, through Shannon, to Limerick and Killaloe, experienced population growth of 61% between 1981 and 2016, the more rural parts of Clare experienced population decline of 3%. Map 1 shows the percentage (expressed as decimals) population change between 1981 and 2016 for each Electoral Division (ED).

Map 1. Population Change in Clare 1981 – 2016 by ED

Source: Census Population 1981 and 2016 (Preliminary)

The area within the blue boundary is an area of population growth while the area outside the blue boundary and considered rural Clare is an area of population decline. By providing employment, to which many workers living in rural Clare commute, the strong performance of the growth area plays a vital role in the overall development of the County. It is likely that, with the opening of the M17 from Gort to Tuam, the current growth corridor will come under its own development pressure. This will demand future targeted policies to sustain the existing identities of its towns and villages, particularly those located towards its northern end.

The 41 Electoral Divisions (EDs) that experienced population decline in excess of 9%, are shown in Red and a further 14 EDs in decline (-1% and -9%) are shown in brown. Only four of these 55 EDs whose population declined were in the growth area (3 in the Town of Ennis and one in South-East Clare).

It is clear that, with the exception of a small number of EDs (eg. Doolin and Mountshannon), the vast majority of EDs in the rural area performed well below the county average. Those experiencing most severe population decline were in open countryside and, while containing no large settlement, they formed a number of neighbouring parishes with small settlements at their core.

A number of settlements in the rural area, such as Ennistymon/Lahinch (1,599), Miltown Malbay (777) and Lisdoonvarna (739) experienced modest growth of 12%, 18% and 22%, respectively. Other settlements, such as Kilrush/Environs (2,695), Kilkee/Environs (1,139), and Scariff (816), experienced population decline of -7%, -34% and -9%, respectively.

Table 1. Co. Clare. Socio-Economics, Demographics of long-term urban/rural growth and decline

	Urban Growth	Rural Growth – Open Countryside	Urban Decline	Rural Decline – Open Countryside
Share of County Population 2016	62%	21%	9%	8%
Population Change 1981 - 2016	64%	40%	-19%	-18%
<20 yrs	29%	31%	23%	27%
60+ yrs	16%	18%	25%	24%
Housing built post 1981	62%	58%	38%	40%
One person households	24%	22%	35%	28%
3rd. Level +	32%	31%	21%	22%
Primary or less	13%	13%	23%	22%
Managerial and Technical Social Class	34%	39%	28%	31%
Manufacturing (POWSCAR)	22%	14%	4%	7%
Private Professional Services ICT/ Finance/Real Estate (POWSCAR)	15%	10%	14%	6%
Semi-Skilled + Unskilled Social Class	14%	23%	18%	14%
Others Gainfully Occupied/ Unknown	18%	16%	25%	17%
Agric/Forestry/Fishing (POWSCAR)	4%	21%	6%	43%
% of area's farms <50 Acres	28%	25%	30%	26%
Male Labourforce participation rate	70%	68%	65%	68%
Female Labourforce participation rate	57%	53%	47%	49%
Male Unemployment	23%	18%	30%	20%
Female Unemployment	16%	12%	21%	13%
Lone parents	20%	11%	26%	12%

Table 1 distinguishes the urban and rural EDs that experienced growth and urban and rural EDs that experienced decline. The urban and rural growth EDs experienced long-term (1981-2015) population growth of 64% and 40% and, by 2015, accounted for 62% and 21% of the county's population, respectively. The urban and rural decline EDs experienced long-term population decline of 20% and each accounted for less than 10% of the county's population.

Compared to the decline EDs, growth EDs had: more modern housing, more highly educated, more high class (managerial and technical) and more employment in private professional services and manufacturing, more young people, less one-person households. However, rural and urban growth EDs differed in a number of ways. Compared to the urban growth EDs, the rural growth EDs had: more in the 'semi-skilled' and 'unskilled' class (23% v 14%), more agricultural jobs (21% v 4%) and less male unemployment (18% v 23%), less female unemployment (12% v 16%), less 'lone parenting (11% v 20%).

Rural and urban decline EDs differed in a number of ways. Rural decline EDs had: less one-person households (28% v 35%); less 'semi-skilled' and 'unskilled' social class (14% v 18%); less in the 'unknown' class (17% v 25%); less male unemployment (20% v 30%); less female unemployment (13% v 21%); less 'lone parenting' (12% v 26%) and, as expected, more in agricultural jobs (43% v 6%).

2.2 Rural Clare – Its key assets

2.2.1 Leveraging Community Resources

Community identity has been built in rural Clare around the County's traditional parishes and townlands of which there are more than 2,000 in the County. This shared community identity has helped align the many diverse identities of the County's sporting clubs (particularly GAA) and organisations (farming, political and cultural). The combination of community identity and organisational identity has mobilised large scale voluntary effort (15% of the rural population reported volunteering compared to 13% in the rest of Clare and public fundraising to develop and maintain:
- community centres, community buildings and heritage centres many of which are leased from the state or religious organisations,
- sporting and recreational facilities, most of which are owned in trust by National Governing bodies of different sports,
- social 'not for profit' enterprises which are formally incorporated and generally work in the areas of care (childcare, adult care, education, eldercare, etc), community enterprise and tourism development (community development companies), community facilities (playgrounds, parks, walkways, etc.), etc.

It is estimated that, for example, fundraising for sporting, community, school, church and cultural purposes exceeds €100,000 annually on average for each parish or €3.2 million for the 32 parishes in rural Clare. The community asset base would extend to multiples of this. In most of rural Clare the extent of community-owned assets exceeds that of State-owned assets.

The spirit of volunteering also finds expression in the scale of voluntary healthcare provided for family and neighbour, as reflected in the 1.0 hr per week per capita, reported in 2011 Census for rural Clare compared to 0.8 hrs in the rest of the County.

However, in the absence of higher level identities with motivational capacity, rivalry and competition for scarce resources 'between' communities, has become the norm, albeit that competition 'within' communities is rare. In the case of the latter, shared community identity is a constant reminder to all of the need to prioritise projects for the 'greater good' of the community. Competition between communities has, in instances, proved wasteful and has provided poor 'value for public money'. As portfolios of fixed assets increase (buildings, lands, equipment, etc), communities' ability to remain 'lean' (efficient use of capital, land and labour) and 'flexible' (responsive to changing needs), decreases. This is especially the case if their population (as a proxy for fund-raising capacity) is ageing and declining. As a result they may no longer be relevant to emerging community needs and the maintenance of their assets may constitute an unsustainable drain on community funding. This situation is exacerbated by the 'open call' approach to public (EU, National, Local, etc.) funding initiatives that may range from 50% to 100% and in the absence of a strategic focus, in terms of geography, sector or activity, benefit the better organised and better resourced . The result is that often, the nature, scale and location of projects fail to reflect and quantify an emerging or pressing community need and fail to quantify the nature and scale of the benefit generated so that 'value for money' is less than optimal.

Nonetheless, the need to strengthen community endeavour and initiative is now more pressing than ever and forms a core rationale for this strategy. Declining and ageing populations, coupled with diminishing community leadership, lack of successors, new emerging needs and the financial strain of maintaining fixed assets or people require substantive responses, both immediate and long-term.

To some extent this is already occurring with, for example, faith groups having to 'cluster' church parishes; sporting clubs to 'amalgamate'; and farming ventures (cattle marts and supply stores) and credit unions to 'merge'. In some cases this has resulted in redundancies, closures of premises and sale or lease of assets.

This strategy draws on these examples of the need to stay responsive and innovative by developing community-based governance structures that are capable of holding assets (many funders require a minimum of 5 to 10 year leases for capital funding), employing staff (many service providers aim to achieve greater 'value for money' by focusing on their core activity), undertaking commercial activities on a 'not-for-profit' basis, where no private market exists.

2.2.2 Social Conditions in Rural Clare

In terms of population structure, rural Clare contains 29% of the County's population but 40% of the County's population aged '65+'. Only 26% of the county's young people (<15 Yrs) live in our rural areas. Diagram 1 shows that 26% and 11.4%, respectively, of the population of 'Rural Clare' is < 20 years and 70+ compared to in 29.5% and 6.8%, respectively in the 'Rest of Clare'. The relatively small proportion of the younger age group and relatively large proportion of the older age group is therefore evident in rural Clare and without positive action will deteriorate over the coming years.
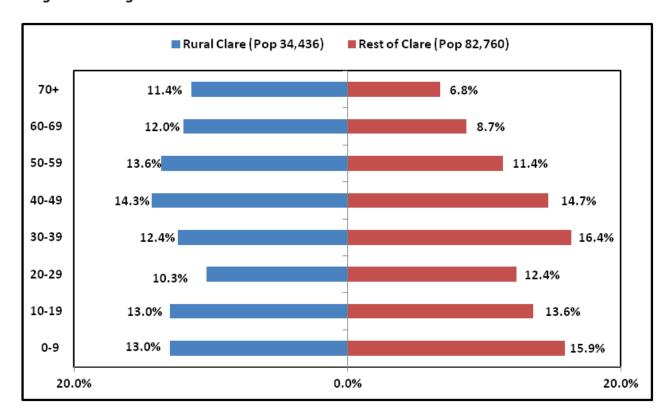
Diagram 1   Age Structure of Rural Clare and Rest of Clare

Legend: Rural Clare (Pop 34,436) — Rest of Clare (Pop 82,760)

Age	Rural Clare	Rest of Clare
70+	11.4%	6.8%
60-69	12.0%	8.7%
50-59	13.6%	11.4%
40-49	14.3%	14.7%
30-39	12.4%	16.4%
20-29	10.3%	12.4%
10-19	13.0%	13.6%
0-9	13.0%	15.9%

Source: CSO Census Population 2011

However, the smaller proportion of children and young people and their rural setting, should not lead to a presumption that there is any less of a need for childcare and for social, cultural and creative activities for children and young people in rural Clare. In fact, while rural Clare accounts for 26% of the county's families with a child (<15yrs.), they also account for a similar percentage of lone parents with a child <15 years. The need for childcare and family support is similar to that in the rest of Clare and perhaps because of its rural context an above proportionate response is required. The need for elder supports is far greater than average. There is a similarly proportionate spread of new communities in rural Clare and a resulting proportionate demand for support services for them.

In terms of isolation, rural Clare contains 45% and 36%, respectively, of the county's 'one-person 65+' and 'two-person 65+' households. Similar isolated living is apparent among those in jobs in rural Clare. While 25% of the County's jobs are located there, it contains almost 30% (1,250) of all workers living 'alone' with agriculture/forestry /fishing accounting for 375 approximately. 45% of workers in rural Clare who commute to work, experience commutes of 33 minutes one way on average, which is twice that of commuting workers in the rest of Clare.

While rural Clare contains 29% of the County's houses, it contains 45% and 43%, respectively, of the County's houses built in the periods pre-1919, and 1919-1945 and 2% of the population reported 'bad' or 'very bad' health compared to 1.5% in the rest of Clare. Rural Clare also contains a very high percentage of the county's population with Lower Secondary Education or Less (38%), suggesting low ICT skills. Rural Clare also contains the vast majority of EDs with low (< 60% of households) internet connection[3] and poor broadband

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[3] See Appendix 3 Map 5: Household internet connections

infrastructure[4]. This low ICT skill base, low household internet Connections and a poor broadband infrastructural provision suggests that there is a deficit in terms of modern ICT requirements for enterprise, employment and general communication opportunities for people living there.

The age profile, living circumstances and living conditions suggest a very high concentration of older people living alone or as couples, predominantly in open countryside and in poor housing. In the absence of public transport and modern ICT, many are likely to be living in physical, social and psychological isolation. The very old housing stock has consequent negative impacts on people's physical and psychological health and suggests disproportionately heavy demands on their finances. It also suggests a high demand on public health services (physical, social and psychological) as well as welfare and transport.

2.2.3. Rural jobs and Key Sectors

In terms of the more formal work life of rural communities, jobs in rural Clare (10,133) accounted for 25% of the county total[5] (41,198) and the sectoral profile of rural jobs is compared to that in the rest of Clare in Diagram 2.
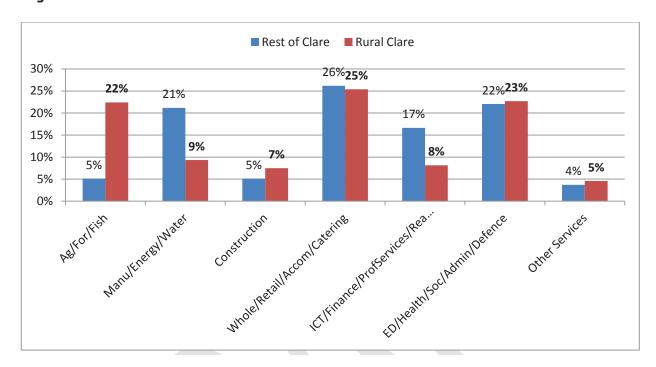
Diagram 2. Jobs in Rural Clare and rest of Clare

Source: CSO 'Travel to Work' 2011

Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing and Construction

The rural economy is highly dependent on the traditional sectors of agriculture/forestry/ fishing and of construction, with the former sector accounting for 22% of all jobs in rural Clare and 60% (2,112) of all jobs in this sector in Clare. What is most significant is that, agriculture/forestry/ fishing accounted for more than 50% of all jobs in the majority of EDs in rural Clare's open countryside[6]. Employment in the agricultural sector is low paying (see Diagram 2) and 50% of those employed in the sector also work outside the farm - usually in construction. Those engaged in occupations other than dairying are particularly vulnerable

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[4] See Appendix 3 Map 6: Areas covered by broadband infrastructure
[5] This analysis is based on 'Travel to Work' data 2011
[6] See Appendix 3 Map 1

as their net income is largely dependent on state transfers, particularly from the EU. In addition, there is a wide variation in average financial output per farm, with the lowest financial output on farms in North-east Clare and Mid-West Clare where most of the County's forestry is also located[7]. It is worth noting that 12.5% of the County's land area is forested, including pockets of ancient, long-established and native woodlands and the majority (55%) is publicly owned.

Rural Clare's agriculture/forestry/fishing resource base offers many opportunities for direct enterprise development, renewable energy production as well as tourism, leisure and recreation development. As regards specific products and services, fishing, mariculture, seafood harvesting, fresh and processed products, including artisanal foods, are developing as important enterprise opportunities. A much contracted Construction sector accounted for only 7% of jobs in rural Clare and only 5% of jobs in the rest of Clare.

Manufacturing/Energy and Water

The relative insignificance of the Manufacturing/Energy and Water sector in rural Clare is apparent from the fact that it only accounted for 9% (878) of all rural Clare jobs compared to 21% of jobs in the rest of Clare. In fact, the majority of employment in this sector in rural Clare is accounted for by 3 or 4 medium sized enterprises (50 – 250 employees) and one of these - Moneypoint power plant- is extremely vulnerable unless alternative production technologies are installed. However, rural Clare offers many opportunities for renewable (wood-based) as well as wind and wave energy production. The majority of the micro (<10 employees) and small (10 – 49 employees) manufacturing enterprises in rural Clare supply traditional markets, albeit that many use modern production technologies.

Retail/Wholesale/Accommodation/Catering

Contrary to public perception, the Retail/Wholesale/Accommodation/Catering[8] accounted for approximately the same percentages (25%) of jobs in rural Clare as in the rest of Clare and is the most important sector in rural Clare. There has been a decline in retail employment in the smaller villages and settlements and a concentration in the larger towns in rural Clare. However, in light of increasing tourism numbers and farmer markets, the combination of service provision, local produce and mainstream retail may offer an innovative opportunity for new private investment in these smaller villages and settlements. The enhancement of towns and villages in North, West and North-East Clare will contribute to the retention and growth of the wholesale, retail and other service jobs, including those dependent on tourism in rural Clare.

In terms of the Catering and Accommodation sector, which is a proxy for tourism-related direct employment (overseas and domestic), Failte Ireland estimated that, in 2015, overseas tourism (597,000 visitors) expenditure was €127 Million and domestic tourism expenditure was €101 Million in County Clare. On the basis that 30% (€68 Million) of total revenue was available for wages at €17,000[9] per full time equivalent job, 4,000 jobs approximately were supported in the county. On the basis that 25%

(1,000) of these were located in rural Clare (in line with sector's share of County jobs), and allowing for a 50% employment multiplier total employment impact is estimated to be

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[7] See Appendix 3 Map 2
[8] 'Travel to Work' data does not disaggregate these sectors
[9] Approximating National Average Earnings in the Sector

approximately 1,500 jobs in rural Clare. Tourism-related employment accounted for more than one in five jobs along the Coastal tourism stretch from Ballyvaughan in North Clare to Killimer on the Estuary, but was notably absent in North East Clare[10].

Direct tourism expenditure on accommodation and catering services is accompanied by other direct expenditure on a wide range of tourism activities and services (golf, water-based, angling, language learning, horse-riding, tour guiding, transport, etc.). This expenditure, in turn, generates a second round of expenditure that results in further job creation (a multiplier) which is estimated as 50% of the first round direct expenditure.

Tourism in rural Clare is heavily dependent on the aesthetic, environmental and heritage qualities of landscape and seascape as well as the cultural assets of local communities. Town and Village enhancement initiatives will strengthen the base for rural tourism. This is particularly the case in light of the fact that the county's Special Areas of Conservation (SACs – accounting for 12% of the county's land mass) are concentrated in the tourism area of the Burren in North Clare and the county's Special Protection Areas (SPAs – accounting for 9% of the county's land mass), are located in North East Clare[11]. It is worth noting that these areas contain the majority of scenic routes and in conjunction with their built heritage of monuments[12] adds to the wealth of rural Clare.

Public Services - Health/Education/Social/ Administration/Defence

Public sector employment in Health, Education, Public Administration, Defence and Social Welfare is the second most important sector in rural Clare accounting for 23% of its jobs. The provision of modern facilities, amenities, social and cultural opportunities and activities as well as the various services such as education, childcare, transport and ICT connectivity, are important to ensure that people will be happy to live close to their public sector employment. These quality of life features are especially important to those contemplating family formation and those considering re-settlement to rural Clare.
10 CSO

Private Professional Services - ICT, Finance, Real Estate, Administration and Support services.

Private Professional Services sector (ICT, Finance, Real Estate, Administration and Support services) and Other services (arts, entertainment, recreation, personal, etc.) account for 8% and 5%, respectively, of rural Clare's jobs compared to 17% and 4% of the rest of Clare jobs. In the case of the former sector, 14% 'work from home' in rural Clare compared to 7% in the rest of Clare. It appears that rural Clare offers unique aesthetic, cultural and quality of life features that make it an ideal location for this emerging way of working in this sector.

Share of County earnings in rural Clare

Rural Clare accounted for 29% and 25%, respectively, of the County's population and jobs. Based on the earnings per sector (Diagram 3) it is apparent that there is a wide variation in sectoral earnings.

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[10] CSO 2011 Census Population: Special Request. (Accommodation and Catering + 50%)
[11] See Appendix 3 Map 3
[12] See Appendix 3 Map 4

Share of County earnings in rural Clare

Rural Clare accounted for 29% and 25%, respectively, of the County's population and jobs. Based on the earnings per sector (Diagram 3) it is apparent that there is a wide variation in sectoral earnings.

Diagram 3 Annual Earnings per Sector 2014

Annual Earnings by Sector - 2014

Source: CSO 2014

Because the 'Travel to Work' data is aggregated at sectoral level, earnings were employment-weighted to derive the earnings for the aggregated 'travel to work' sectors for rural Clare. As rural Clare was more dependent on low-paying sectors, it only accounted for 22% (€0.28 Billion) of the County's overall earnings (€1.27 Billion[13]), while accounting for 25% of the County's jobs. In light of the wide variation in earnings within the different sectors and in light of the fact that most of the 'lower than average' sectoral earnings arose in rural Clare, a percentage closer to 20% would be more accurate.

2.3 Rural Clare – Its key challenges

In order to fully exploit the opportunities of rural living, the following challenges need to be addressed:
- the mis-alignment of community effort with emerging need and the necessity that community effort be lean and flexible;
- the highly dependent demographic structure with a low active age population; the

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[13] Calculated at 2014 National Sectoral earnings

particular set of social conditions requiring specific public service responses;

- the high dependency on low-skilled, low paid traditional sectors; the minimal presence of modern sector activity; the long commutes.

Taken together, the data demonstrates:
- a downward cycle of low consumption coupled with a contraction of private investment and community capacity; heavy employment-related transport costs;
- lack of family supports resulting in significant out-migration pressures on the working age population.

As a result, out-migration, particularly among the active age population, to locations more proximate to employment and key services, becomes more attractive and results in a further round of low rates of 'family formation' which, in turn, results in a declining young replacement population and an increasing older population- a self perpetuating circle of decline.

2.4 Rural Clare - Conclusion

New approaches are required to mobilise rural communities to unlock the potential of rural Clare's assets. This needs to be done in such a way that it is people-driven, community-led, environmentally-sensitive and valuing the rural way of life for its own sake. In addition, it needs to identify opportunities for economic, social and cultural growth. In this way, the people of rural Clare will have command of the resources to participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities, which are customary or at least generally encouraged or approved, in their wider community.

In the absence of pro-active policies that assist both the larger settlements and the parishes in more open countryside to reach sufficient scale and to achieve comparative advantage, there is a strong likelihood of continued decline. Without immediate and sustained action, through innovative interventions to 'connect' and 'combine' their demographic and physical assets, they will not foster or flourish. The central role of communities, in their own development, needs to be expanded and publicly supported. It is equally important to achieve a growing population with a more balanced age profile in order to foster the inter-generational transfer of culture and the rural way of life.

There is a need to focus specifically on un-tapping the key natural resources of rural Clare such as its food, forestry, environment (landscape, seascape, flora, fauna, built heritage, etc.), culture and current way of life. While many of these resources offer opportunities for production, manufacturing, tourism, modern services and everyday living they are part of a legacy for future generations.

Deficits in the skill base and sectoral enterprises need to be addressed, particularly in the promotion of more modern, knowledge, ICT-based industries. The emerging labour shortages in the more traditional sectors (e.g. farm relief, multi-skilled handiworkers, routine maintenance workers, hospitality workers) provide opportunities for employment in many parts of rural Clare. Movement in this direction will involve up-skilling the labour force and identifying more modern sector employment opportunities. As a consequence, per capita incomes will be raised and consumption expenditure increased so that private investment is encouraged, especially in retail and private services. Indirectly this will improve communities' capacity to fund further initiatives.

Particular attention is required to address the needs of rural Clare's ageing population, living alone or as couples, and predominantly, in open countryside. They occupy an ageing housing stock and, in the absence of public provision, are dependent on private or community transport. When they are no longer able to drive, they have to move to more urban facilities. Greater public costs are incurred and people lose their social networks at a great cost to their emotional, psychological and physical health.

Various infrastructural deficits need to be addressed, especially in the areas of broadband, water and wastewater treatment as well as transport. These are a perquisite, since in their absence, many rural residents, younger and older, are denied access to the range of opportunities that have become customary in the society to which they belong.

3. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

We have identified the key resources that offer opportunities for the revitalisation of rural Clare as:

- the long tradition of successful community-led development;
- the land and marine-based opportunities for agri- and marine foods and their by-products as well as renewable energy production, including wind, solar and wave;
- the private professional services sector, especially those seeking to work from home;
- the wealth of environmental assets, from the physical to the cultural, that offer rich quality of life opportunities while at the same time attracting increasing numbers of visitors both overseas and domestic;
- the pivotal role for communities in addressing the emerging need for greater 'value for money' in the delivery of public services; and
- the opportunities for those wishing to pursue a particular way of life and those who are willing to re-settle.
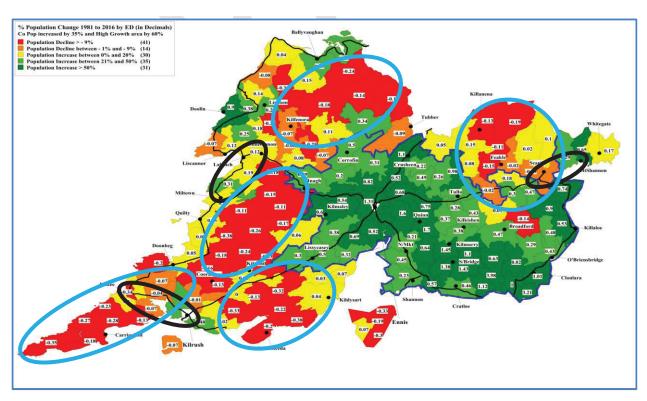
We have identified the underlying negative dynamics of rural decline as:

- the overly-competitive, fragmented and small-scale community initiatives that often have a large unsustainable physical infrastructural component;
- the lack of employment opportunities that are compatible with people's education and aspiration that are often coupled with high commuting costs resulting in the out-outmigration of the critical family-forming age group (25 to 40 years);
- the diminishing attractiveness of rural areas, especially for young families as a result of the contraction and/or withdrawal of private and public investment (retail services, enterprise development, welfare and family support services, Health services, including GPs, Post Offices, Schools, Garda stations, transport services, etc.);
- the diminishing local purchasing power and consequent poor private investment in consumer goods and services; the increasing demands for care of an ageing population, on a voluntary or low-pay basis, that has made significant demands on the local labour force;
- the lack of suitable social, cultural and artistic opportunities, especially for young people, whose formative years have, by and large, been spent in more urban settings, that have made rural Clare unattractive;
- the inadequate and poorly maintained physical and service infrastructure (eg. broadband, water, public transport service), that has made migration to more urban settings preferable.

3.2 Innovative approaches to achieving Scale and Comparative Advantage

Rural economic decline has resulted from the lack of scale and comparative advantage of its productive resources (land, entrepreneurship and labour) with consequent low returns on investment and low consumer spending with the latter making private investment in locally demanded goods and services, unattractive and, with a declining and ageing population, the expenditure on public services poor 'value for money'.

The future of rural Clare depends heavily on the extent to which its communities can achieve economies of scale and develop or exploit their existing strengths and opportunities. Our demographic and resource analysis identified a number of neighbouring towns and, in the more open countryside, a number of neighbouring parishes that, by working more closely together, could become self sustaining and provide a platform for the rest of the county to develop. They could in a reasonably short time frame achieve the required scale and comparative advantage that would generate adequate returns for private investment and 'value for money' for public investment. These are shown in Map 2 as the combined towns of: Kilrush/Kilkee; Ennistymon/Lahinch/Miltown; Scariff/Tuamgraney/Mountshannon (shown in Black) and the partnering parishes of: North-East Clare, North Clare, Inland Mid-West Clare, South-West Clare, the Shannon Estuary (shown in Blue)

Map 2. Map of 'Combined' Towns and 'Partnering' Parishes

Note: Rings on the Map are indicative of a strategic approach and do not denote specific boundaries

The combined towns offer the resources of a traditional 'service town' (Kilrush, Ennistymon, Scariff), a renowned leisure and recreation centre (Kilkee, Lahinch and emerging in Scariff/ Tuamgraney /Mountshannon) and vibrant cultural community in both the towns and their rural hinterland. This combination provides them with the resources to build on their

enterprise base, expand their visitor offering and extend their season. This would better assure the viability of private investment and justify public investment in facilities and amenities which, in turn, would contribute to the quality of life of their people and those living in their hinterland.

The partnering parishes can achieve scale and comparative advantage by:
- pooling their land and marine-based output (food, forestry, energy);
- agreeing common access protocols to tourism products of a scale that is sufficient to market them internationally and nationally; adopting innovative community-based approaches to renewable energy generation;
- developing and applying technologies to the task of environmental management and monitoring, local service provision, farm management, tourism information, internet-based products and services, etc.;
- building landbanks and shorelines (offshore/onshore) of scale to attract private/ community investment; developing community participation and financing models; developing planting, harvesting and processing technologies, etc.;
- branding areas as eco-friendly, habitat-rich, bio-diverse, socially-responsible, carbon-neutral, culturally-diverse, heritage-rich and socially-vibrant.

These clusters and networks will provide the basis for attracting greater private investment and will justify a wider range of public services and increased investment in sports, recreation and cultural facilities and amenities, than would otherwise occur. They will form the design and architecture around which a range of private and public initiatives will be developed. The Forum will help define the range and extent of services which should be available in the connected towns and the partnering parishes, as a result of which, public investment will achieve greater 'value for money'. The 'combined towns' and 'partnering parishes' will be supported by a specially developed 'Rural and Community Support Unit' within Clare County Council.

3.3 Innovative approaches to Community Mobilisation

Change requires leadership, persuasion and support. Leadership is required to chart a new bold vision and stay with its strategic direction, particularly at a time when continuing to work in the same old way is not an option. Persuasion is required to overcome historical divisions and create new coalitions, identities and ways of doing things. Public support, in its various forms, is required to achieve practical outcomes, particularly those that are innovative, challenging and contribute to public welfare but are of little interest to the private sector. The leadership of different communities will be supported by a special 'Rural and Community Support Unit' working with our communities to enhance their capacity, skills and competence to co-operate. The communities will be enabled to determine their own future within the broad framework of this strategy. This may involve difficult prioritisation and collaboration with statutory authorities.

The Unit will be staffed by people with the necessary skills in community development and the ability to transfer skills such as:
- community auditing (existing resources, skills, capacity);
- community planning (individual/collective working, objective setting, prioritisation, inter-agency collaboration);

- business skilling (need identification/target market, product/service definition, customer/market testing, financing, quantitative/qualitative outputs/outcomes, economic sustainability, etc);
- governance structures (representativeness, personnel sustainability/succession planning, etc.).

Following the initial capacity-building intervention, a competition will be organised for community planning initiatives in line with specific terms of reference that reflect the objectives of this Strategy.

3.4 Key Performance Indicators

This Strategy aims to achieve the following key performance indicators.

3.4.1 Jobs and Employment

Both enterprise and employment is essential to the future of rural areas. Low employment levels have been a significant contributor to declining populations. Employment and population numbers will be key performance indicators. The areas, where there is potential for employment creation, include:
- the agriculture and marine sectors and the food and alternative/renewable energy industries;
- the tourism industry;
- the private professional services;
- the emerging 'working from home' occupations.

Over the next ten years, 4,000 jobs will be created in rural Clare with a particular focus on social enterprises. Communities will develop social enterprises to provide essential local services, tourism information and enterprise supports. Modern broadband connectivity will be made available to support those considering enterprise or interested in enhancing their skills or returning to work, training, education or learning.

Within this Strategy, the achievement of these employment targets, including the development of social enterprises, will continue to be supported by a range of organisations and programmes, such as those set out in the National Action Plan for Rural Development[14] and including the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Office of the Action Plan for Jobs (APJ), the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the LEADER Programme delivered by Clare Local Development Company (CLDC), Town and Village Renewal Programme and Hi-speed Broadband Hubs of Clare County Council, E-working joint initiatives with the IDA, and the Regional Enterprise Development Fund. In parallel, the Clare Economic Development Strategy will provide the economic conditions and supports for the growth of enterprise and employment across the whole county and, in addition to the 4,000 jobs in rural areas to be delivered under this strategy, will further advance employment opportunities, particularly in the existing growth corridor.

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[14] See Appendix 4 for a list of programmes and agencies involved

3.4.2 Community Run Social Enterprises and Multi-service centres

Jobs will also be created in community-based and community-run social enterprises, the number of which will be a key performance indicator. Social enterprises will:

- provide goods and services to the community on a commercial basis;
- will contract the delivery of public services from agencies such as HSE, Clare County Council, Gardai, An Post, Tourism Information, Employment and Enterprise supports;
- will provide and staff multi-service centres where different agencies can offer their services more locally and in a manner that increases their 'value for money'.
- These centres will also act as enterprise hubs where a number of hot desks will provide high speed broadband access and where small-scale training and conferencing facilities will be available.

The scale of these facilities will depend on the scale of their respective catchment so that 'value for public money' is best achieved in the form of effectiveness and efficiency. Not only will those opportunities benefit residents but will they add to the attractiveness of rural Clare for those who wish to work or re-settle there.

3.4.3 Enhanced Environment

This Strategy is sub-titled 'Our Place, Our Home' in recognition of the fact that our environment is our very life – the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the energy we use, the home we inhabit, the culture and heritage that is our daily inspiration - a home we share with many diverse life forms. Environmental quality will form a key performance indicator since the health of our environment impacts on our health and our lifestyle impacts on our environment in a mutually nurturing, but fragile, interaction. While some people are born in and grow to cherish the rural way of life, others are drawn to it. This strategy will ensure that what we have inherited we will bequeath in a healthier state. Consequently, the celebration of our environment and our rural way of life, in all its artistic and recreational forms, will provide an unique contribution to the proper consideration and management of our environment in its physical, built and living form. This will include actions which will facilitate our communities to act sustainably whilst also delivering on enhanced environment infrastructure and sustainable community based transport.

3.4.4. Culturally- active and Inter-generationally connected

This strategy recognises that our social context is changing rapidly. Particular attention will be given to fostering intergenerational relationships and focusing on creating opportunities for all to participate in the social, cultural and political life of the community. In this context, it is essential to consider all generations and all ages when planning our public and private spaces, facilities, amenities and events. Never was it more apt to say that 'what is good for one is good for all'. Regardless of their age, it is essential to the physical and psychological health of people and their communities that the latter offers opportunities for the former to contribute economically, socially, culturally and artistically. In this way, social cohesion and wellbeing is supported by activities and events. Their number, quality, diversity and scale will form a key performance indicator by means of which we will know that the society we are now building will be appropriate to future generations. As a contribution to ensuring that people are safe and feel secure in their homes and communities, a more visible, effective and

responsive police service will be provided and programmes such as 'Community' and 'Senior' Alert rolled out. As towns and villages are renewed people are less subject to isolation. They can walk to local public services such as libraries, entertainment, info hubs, shops and restaurants, community spaces. They are supported by a fully developed and integrated healthcare service and by local community/social enterprises that deliver daily services that are responsive to their needs.

3.4.5 Digitally Adapted

This strategy is supported by the 'Clare Digital Strategy' that provides for what are called 'Intelligent Communities' that ensure local people as well as enterprises and entrepreneurs have access to high speed broadband in their own community. Our rural strategy will establish a number of digital hubs throughout the county. Entrepreneurs, visitors and local people, irrespective of their sector (agriculture, tourism, local services, international businesses, etc.) will have access to these hubs to use digital technologies as appropriate to their needs. In addition, this Strategy focuses on ensuring that broadband is available and that there is high internet connectivity in rural Clare and that communities have the skills and competencies to prosper in the digital society.

3.4.6 Modern Infrastructure

Modern life, whether in rural or urban areas, requires a range of publicly provided infrastructure, in the areas of Transport, Education, Water, etc. Innovative rural transport initiatives, such as 'community car pooling', 'befriending transport' will be developed, as will community bus initiatives to supplement the current rural provision. These initiatives will extend the times of availability and reduce costs to the traveller. In conjunction with education, training and learning providers, additional opportunities in the areas of apprenticeships and traineeships will be developed that have greater local reach and relevance. A vibrant education/learning sector underpins the community's capacity to engage in the creation of its own future. As populations stabilise and begin to grow, local schools become more secure. The Strategy will support the roll out of major and small water services Investment programmes to address the County's water and wastewater needs.

4. MAKING IT HAPPEN

4.1 Introduction

This strategy is developed in support of the National Plan "Realising our Rural Potential – Action Plan for Rural Development"(see appendix 4 for details). In addition, we propose a number of innovative interventions to grow enterprise, create employment, enhance the environment and extend the local delivery of public services. The commitment to a number of inter-organisational actions under the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), is already set out under the leadership of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (Enterprise SPC). In the wider rural context however, different state and local agencies are implementing actions beyond the scope of the LECP but clearly within the scope of this strategy. Their successful delivery will require community development interventions and strategic public investments and a full alignment of public services. Consequently, the development of a Clare-led response to meeting gaps or delivering additional resources, may require appropriate 'within' and 'between' organisational re-alignment if the strategic objectives and key performance indicators are to be met. The Rural Development Forum will remain in place to ensure an ongoing focus on rural Clare and will be facilitated to develop its own agenda over the life span of the Strategy.

4.2 Role of Rural Development Forum

The Forum will drive the delivery of the Strategy by way of an Action Plan that is being developed by the Forum. In addition, the Forum will engage with other parallel strategies in the areas of Economic Enterprise, Tourism and Digital Broadband. It will ensure that future iterations of the LECP will take the strategy into account. The Forum, supported by a Council secretariat, will meet on a quarterly basis and will:

- determine the necessity, brief and duration of specific sub-groups;
- determine how rural Clare can best benefit from national policy changes;
- receive reports from the different agencies outlining how their annual business planning reflects the key strategic objectives and key performance indicators of the strategy.

The forum will monitor the strategy and Action Plan on a quarterly basis. It will then review them annually and evaluate the Strategy every three years to 2016. This work will be undertaken in relation to the key performance indicators set out in the Action Plan by way of agreeing benchmarks with the responsible organisations delivering public services. The Forum will establish targets and identify milestones. These will allow it to review progress and when necessary to agree changes including revising the strategy and or Action Plan on the basis of reviews and/or evaluations.

4.3 Signed Charter reflecting Agencies' commitment to Rural Clare

The strategy is the responsibility of the various communities and public service agencies. Consequently, it is essential, if the former are to engage, that we demonstrate our commitment. This we will do by aligning our expenditure and investment, as set out in our

annual business plans, to the strategic objectives, investment hierarchy and performance indicators set out in this strategy and we indicate our commitment to doing so, by signing the following charter:

"Our Rural Development Strategy sets out a vision of community action in rural Clare for the next ten years. Consequently, it provides those of us, who are charged with the delivery of public services in the county, with a focus to which we will align our services. In the process, rural Clare will be placed at the heart of our actions, policies and programmes.

We will therefore, as appropriate to our mission:

1. Prioritise the location(s) of our rural investments, developments and services according to the strategic focus, settlement hierarchy and performance indicators identified in the Rural Development Strategy.
2. Consult with the Rural Development Forum on the manner in which, and the extent to which, we are considering the Strategy when developing our annual plans and prior to finalising them.
3. Consult with the Rural Development Forum on the inter-agency initiatives which we plan to undertake in rural communities, prior to finalising them, so that other agencies have an opportunity to consider and contribute to them.
4. Deliver actions and public services that best assure people's rural way of life economically, socially and culturally.
5. Nurture entrepreneurship, co-operative working and sustainable living,
6. Sustain our rural heritage, foster our rural identities and celebrate our cultural creativity,
7. Attract visitors to our county and increase the opportunities available in our rural communities for tourism development,
8. Put in place local policies and develop programmes that underpin the way of life of the people who live in rural Clare and that stimulate the growth of our towns, villages and their more rural hinterland.
9. Create an age-friendly rural county where all our people can feel safe and have access, as required, to life-long supportive services and facilities,
10. Create opportunities across our rural communities to re-skill, access knowledge and develop the capacity to own our future.

APPENDIX 1: CLARE RURAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM AND SECRETARIAT.

Pat Dowling, (Chair), Clare County Council
Áine Mellett, TÚSLA
Cllr Bill Chambers, Clare County Council
Cllr Christy Curtin, Chair CEDRA, Clare County Council
Christy Sinclair, PPN – Public Participation Network
Ciaran Lynch, former LIT and Rural Development
Cillian Murphy, Loop Head Tourism
Clodagh Barry, Western Development Commission
Con Donnellan, OPW
Doirin Graham, Clare Local Development Company
Dr. Fergal Barry, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)
Frances O'Connell, Limerick Institute of Technology
Cllr Gabriel Keating, West Clare Municipal District, Clare County Council
Geraldine Quinn, HSE
James Power, LCETB - Limerick Clare Education Training Board
Jim Connolly, Rural Resettlement Ireland (RRI)
Joe Downey, Sergeant, An Garda Síochana
Cllr John Crowe, Clare County Council
John Moroney, University of Limerick
Cllr Johnny Flynn, Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
Ken Stockil, Clare Digital Strategy
Laura Ward, Clare Accessible Transport
Dr. Liam Browne, Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT)
Liam McGree, Southern Regional Assembly
Liz Dack, Clare Youth Service
Margaret Slattery, Clare Youth Service
Martin McMahon, ICMSA
Martina Enright, TEAGASC
Mary O'Donoghue, Clare Family Resource Centres
Niall Garvey, Muintir na Tíre
Dr. Orlaith Borthwick, Action Plan for Jobs, Mid-West
Cllr Pat Hayes, Killaloe Municipal District, Clare County Council
Paul Murphy, Clare GAA
Cllr PJ Ryan, Shannon Municipal District, Clare County Council
Seamus Hoyne, Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT)
Sinéad Copeland, Dept of Rural and Community Affairs
Stella O'Gorman, Older People's Council
Susan Kelleher, Dept of Social Protection
Tomás Ó'Siocháin, National University of Ireland Galway
Cllr Tom McNamara, Cathaoirleach, Clare County Council
William Cahir, Chamber of Commerce
Willie Hanrahan, Clare IFA

Secretariat: Rural Development Directorate, Clare County Council

Leonard Cleary: Director of Rural Development
Monica Meehan: Senior Executive Officer.
Urban McMahon: Broadband/Digital Officer & HIS
Michael Neylon, Deirdre O'Shea: Administrative Officers
Karen Fennessy: Development and Age Friendly Officer.
Geraldine Corbett: Senior Staff Officer
Nicola Killeen: Staff Officer
Deirdre Power: Rural Development Analyst
Claire Rutherford and Anne Moloney: Assistant Staff Officers
Siobhan Brennan, Tadhg Holmes: Clerical Officers
Ciarán Harty: Graduate.

APPENDIX 2 RELATED PLANS

Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 sets out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Clare for a 6-year period, indicating the development objectives for the area, including a number of mandatory objectives. It incorporates the areas formerly within the jurisdiction of Ennis Town Council and Kilrush Town Council, both of which previously had their own development plans and reflects the local governance set out in the 'Local Government Reform Act 2014' that established four Municipal Districts in the County. It includes a Core Strategy, showing how the development objectives are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines.

The statutory Clare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) was developed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (Enterprise SPC). It set out a comprehensive series of actions across a wide spectrum of objectives, many of which impact upon rural Clare.

The Leader Local Development Strategy (LDS) was developed by Clare Local Development Company (CLDC) to achieve a number of objectives in the areas of: Enterprise Development and Tourism; Rural Towns, Community Facilities and Broadband; Hard-to-Reach Communities and Young People; Water Protection, Biodiversity and Renewable Energy. Clare Leader has been particularly pro-active in underpinning the growth of market towns providing them with the platform to build 'connected' towns across the County.

The Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) identified six Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZs) in South-West, Mid-West, North-West, North-East, Mid and South Clare containing the key towns of Kilrush, Miltown, Ennistymon, Scariff, Ennis and Shannon, respectively. These zones consisted of groups of Electoral Divisions (EDs) whose commuting workforce travelled within it to a greater extent than to any other group of EDs. However, REDZ did not take account of economies of scale or asset complementarities.
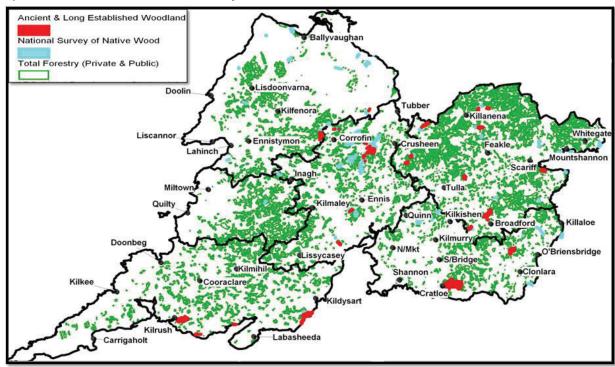
APPENDIX 3 MAPS

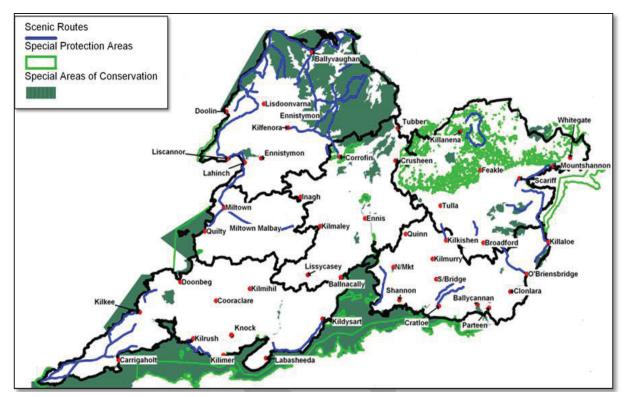Map 1 Agriculture Forestry Fishing as % (as decimal) of all Jobs by ED

Source: CSO 'Travel to Work' 2011

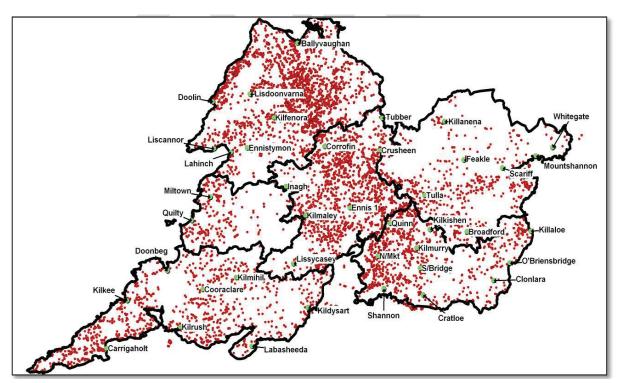Map 2 Clare: Woodland and Forestry

Source: Dept. Agriculture, Food and the Marine, NPWS (2015)

Map 3 SPAs, SACs, Scenic Routes and Settlements
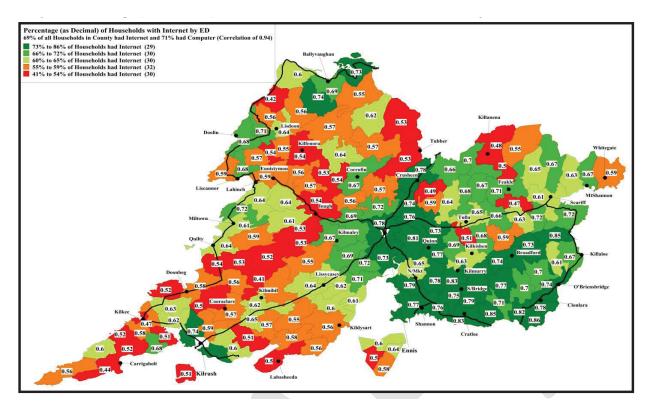

Source: National Parks and Wildlife Service (2015)

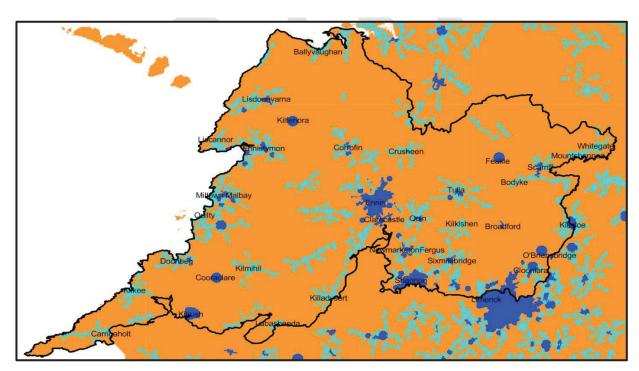Map 4. Location and Number of Recorded Monuments (7,500 approx.)

Source: Office of Public Works (2015)

Map 5. Percentage (as Decimal) of Households with Internet connection by ED

Source: CSO Census of Population 2011

Map 6. Broadband infrastructure by end 2018. Blue = Current. Marine Blue = Eir proposed

Source: http://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/high-speed-broadband-map/Pages/Interactive-Map.aspx

APPENDIX 4 REALISING OUR RURAL POTENTIAL

Pillar 1: Supporting Sustainable Communities

No	Action	Lead identified in National Plan
1	Town & Village Renewal Scheme	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
2	Residential Occupancy in town and village centres	CLA
3	Town Centre Health Check Programme	CLA
5	New social homes	CLA
7	Small housing schemes in towns and villages	CLA
9	Rural Resettlement Initiative	CLA
10	CLAR Programme	CLA
11	Tidy Towns Competition expansion	CLA
19	Promote a culture of volunteering.	Clare Volunteer Centre (CVC)
20	Support of the Post Office Network	Clare Rural Forum
21	Using rural post offices to pay social welfare	Dept. Social Protection (DSP)
24	Increase no. of GP's in rural areas	Health Services Executive (HSE)
25	Connecting for Life Programme	HSE
27	Public nursing homes, district, community hospitals	HSE
28	Delivery of Primary care centres	HSE
29	Primary care workforce	HSE
30	Community Intervention Teams	HSE
31	Day Care Centres	HSE
32	Senior Helplines	HSE
34	Use of school buildings out of hours	Clare Rural Forum
36	Affordable Childcare	Dept. Community and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
44	Rural Proofing	Clare Rural Forum
47	Leader Programme	Clare Local Development Company (CLDC)
49	SICAP	Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
50	Rural Social Scheme	CLDC
56	Garda recruitment	An Garda Síochána (AGS)

57	Delivery of policing services to local communities	AGS
58	RE-open garda stations – pilot	AGS
59	Neighbourhood Watch and Text Alert	AGS
60	Community CCTV Grant aid scheme	Dept Justice and Equality
64	Community Facilities Fund	Clare Local Development Company (CLDC)
65	Sports Capital Programme	Dept. Transport, Tourism and Sport

Pillar 2: Supporting Enterprise and Employment

No	Action	Lead identified in National Plan
97	REDZ	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
98	SICAP – social enterprises	Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), LA
122	Apprenticeships	Dept. Education and Skills
123	Post secondary school leavers	Limerick Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB)
130	State Agency Network to support farmers	TEAGASC
131	Training and education programmes to farmers	TEAGASC
132	Options Plus Programme	TEAGASC
133	Roll-out website to help rural dwellers increase income options www.opt-in.ie	TEAGASC
135	Support job seekers	Dept. Social Protection (DSP)
136	SICAP	Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
139	Farm Assist	Dept. Social Protection (DSP)

Pillar 3: Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential

No	Action	Lead identified in National Plan
153	Irelands Lakelands	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
167	Greenways	CLA
168	Blueways	CLA
169	Inland navigation systems	Inter-Agency Group 'Outdoor Recreation'
172	Major outdoor recreation projects	TEAGASC
173	Training and education programmes to farmers	TEAGASC

191	Heritage sites	Office of Public Works (OPW)
192	Heritage sites	OPW
196	Historic Towns Initiative	Heritage Council
200	Heritage sites	OPW, Waterways Ireland
201	Monastic sites	OPW, CLA

Pillar 4: Fostering Culture & Creativity in Rural Communities

No	Action	Lead identified in National Plan
207	Framework for Collaboration – the arts	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
210	Creative Ireland Programme	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
212	Culture and Creativity Plans	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
214	Cruinniu na Casca	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
215	County of Culture	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
218	Culture night	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
222	Public art works	Clare Local Authority (CLA)

Pillar 5: Improving Infrastructure and Connectivity

No	Action	Lead identified in National Plan
234	High speed broadband	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
235	Broadband Officer	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
236	Local Digital Strategies	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
238	Development contributions	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
250	Piers and harbours	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
252	Rural Transport	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
259	Local Improvement Schemes	Clare Local Authority (CLA)
265	Flood Risk Management Plans	Clare Local Authority (CLA), Office of Public Works

APPENDIX 5 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Cllr Johnny Flynn, Clare County Council
Cyril Feeney, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Water Services, Clare County Council.
Brian McCarthy, Senior Planner, Planning & Enterprise Development, Clare Co. Council
Dick Cronin, Dysert, Corofin, Co. Clare
Environment Section, Clare County Council.
Karen Christine Wise, National Chair of NCPD in Shannon
Kenneth Fox, Disabled Drivers' Association of Ireland
West Clare Community & Education Centre Ltd., Miltown Malbay
James Power, LCETB, Limerick Clare Education Training Board
Cllr Christy Curtin, Clare County Council
Joe Garrihy, Ardeamush, Lisdoonvarna, Co Clare
Christy Sinclair, PPN, Public Participation Network
Doirin Graham, CLDC, Clare Local Development Company
Eileen Ryan, Chairperson, Miltown Malbay Tidy Towns Committee
Michael Howe, Secretary, Miltown Malbay Development Committee
Theresa O'Donohoe, Lisdoonvarna
Clare Accessible Transport, The Creamery, Feakle
Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer, Clare County Council
Geraldine Corbett, Clare County Council
Dr. Brendan Dunford, Burren Programme
Cillian Murphy, Loop Head Tourism
Clare Youth Services
Bishop Fintan Monahan, Bishop of Killaloe
Kieran Fitzpatrick, Doonbeg Community Development Ltd
Doonbeg Tidy Towns Committee
Kildysart Community Development
Terry Twomey, Vice-President Academic Affairs & Registrar, L.I.T.
Mary Cassidy, Tuamgraney Development Association
Younger Voices Subgroup, Clare Youth Services
Clare Comhairle na nÓg.
Kilkee Tourism Ltd.
Lisdoonvarna Tidy Towns
Tony Bolger, CEO Church Support Group, Wicklow
Geraldine Quinn, HSE
Anny Wise, An Taisce

Clare Rural
Development Strategy

2026