



NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014 -2020

INTERIM LOCAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Summary Document

Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group Ltd



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

AN ROINN
**Talmhaíochta agus
Forbartha Tuaithe**

MÁNNYSTRE O
**Fairms an
Kintra Fordèrin**



'The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas'.



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The purpose of this Summary Document is to provide an overview of the key elements of the Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group Interim Local Rural Development Strategy.

OVERVIEW OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014-2020

The Rural Development Programme is supported through CAP Pillar 2. The European Union has three objectives for the development of our rural areas:

- Improving the competitiveness of the agriculture, forest and food industries;
- The sustainable management of the regions natural resources; and
- The development of rural areas.

A budget of up to £623 million has been agreed with the Northern Ireland Executive for the Rural Development Programme. This is made up of £186.5m of EU money and £186.5m of DARD's own money. The Northern Ireland Executive has also agreed to provide additional funding of up to £250m to fund a 'Farm Business Improvement Scheme' as requested by the Agri-Food Strategy Board in their 'Going for Growth' report.

There are six European Union priorities for rural development. The Local Action Group is responsible for the delivery of **Priority 6: Social inclusion, poverty reduction and rural economic development.**

The Causeway Coast and Glens area has been allocated £9.6 million budget which will be available through the Local Action Group to meet Priority 6. There are six schemes available under Priority 6:

- **Rural Business Investment Scheme**
- **Village Renewal Scheme**
- **Rural Broadband Scheme**
- **Rural Basic Services Scheme**
- **Leader Cooperation Scheme**
- Rural Tourism Scheme (£10million funding allocated for Northern Ireland managed directly by DARD).

The LAG is therefore responsible for the local delivery of the first five schemes.

OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL ACTION GROUP

The Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group Ltd is a registered company limited by guarantee and currently has 281 registered members in the 'Wider LAG'. These members represent the rural business, farming, voluntary and community sectors in the Borough. The wider LAG members have an active support role for the Company in the promotion of the opportunities offered by the Rural Development Programme through their personal networks.

The Local Action Group has 18 Board members who are the Directors of the Company and who provide strategic oversight and leadership to the Company. The Board membership is comprised of 8 Elected members nominated from within the Council and 10 Social partners nominated from the wider LAG members.

STRATEGIC AIM

The Strategic Aim of the Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group, through the implementation of Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme, is:

“To improve the quality and sustainability of local social and economic life and create a high quality experience for all rural residents in the Borough”.

The Interim Local Rural Development Strategy will assist the Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group in the management of their funding allocation under Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 for the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough.

Throughout the development of the Interim Strategy, the Local Action Group used the LEADER bottom-up approach to consult and ensure that the needs identified and the subsequent actions meet the needs of the rural community in the Borough.

ANALYSIS OF NEED

The analysis of need has been completed through both primary and secondary research using a variety of sources and methods to inform the Interim Strategy. In preparation for the primary research, the Board undertook a Stakeholder Analysis to identify the key stakeholders in the rural areas.

The primary research was completed in the form of public consultation events, surveys and meetings with stakeholders to gather the views of the rural community in the Borough.

- The Local Action Group held eight public consultation events between August and October 2015. Five of the events were facilitated by the Rural Development Council and were held in a variety of locations across the Borough to promote inclusion and encourage attendance by rural communities. The remaining three events were facilitated by Board members and the Council Rural Development staff. In total, 153 individuals attended the consultation events
- Surveys were sent to stakeholder groups to allow for feedback from those unable to attend public consultation events. In order to ensure consistency, the surveys followed the same framework as the consultation events.
- A number of meetings were held between August and October 2015 with other stakeholders to help inform different elements of the Interim Strategy and the Programme.

The secondary research was completed through a statistical analysis and an analysis of existing strategies and policies.

- The Statistical Analysis includes the key socio-economic statistics for the rural areas of the Borough. Information at a Super Output Area level and a Settlement level has been used for the Census statistics and it has been further broken down into the sections focusing on the different sectors of the community, including children and young people, women, older citizens, ethnic and minority groups, as well as the rural and business community.
- A range of relevant European, Regional and Council Strategies and Policies have also been taken into consideration by the Board to ensure an awareness and complementarity between this Interim Strategy and other regional and local priorities.

On the basis of the information gathered through the analysis of need, the Board has completed a SWOT analysis for the rural areas of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough and a Gap analysis to highlight the identified needs that are not within the remit of Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme.

KEY FINDINGS

The following is a summary of the overarching elements identified through the analysis of need for the Causeway Coast and Glens Interim Strategy:

- Job creation is the priority,
- Promoting social inclusion,
- Poverty reduction,

- Economic prosperity,
- Opportunities for young people,
- Business opportunities for women,
- Basic service provision,
- Village enhancement – vibrant villages,
- Good community infrastructure,
- Delivering rural development in our area,
- Meeting rural community needs,
- Empowering local people to get more involved in their community issues and also empowering business people to be better entrepreneurs.

INTERIM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Having taken account of the analysis of need, the Interim Development Strategy outlines how the Board proposes to address the need in the rural areas through their strategic objectives, the prioritisation of and allocation of funding to Schemes, maximum grant allowances per activity and the timeline for delivery.

RURAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT SCHEME

The Rural Business Investment Scheme will provide investment support for the creation and development of micro and small enterprises (including farm diversification and private tourism businesses) in rural areas. All businesses applying will require a business plan to support their application at the time of applying. The level of funding will be dependent on the businesses' potential for growth in the short to medium term. The funding will primarily provide capital grants with some resource funds towards bespoke training and marketing. Support is targeted at rural areas ie excluding towns with a population of more than 5,000.

Support is provided for capital investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas for all micro and small enterprises. The primary objective is to create new jobs. This might be either an activity which is new for an existing enterprise (or an expansion of an existing activity leading to job creation) or a new business start-up.

RURAL BASIC SERVICES SCHEME

Access to Basic Services Scheme will support capital investments which will provide access to basic services or improvements in social infrastructure (including activities to reduce isolation and/or poverty) to improve the welfare and access to basic services of those living in rural areas and which are an integral part of and in line with the Council Community Plan and emerging priorities.

Projects must relate to the main theme of Innovative Service Delivery, such as the creation of health hubs to deliver multiple services or community hubs where the capital infrastructure is put in place to allow a number of services to be delivered to the community.

VILLAGE RENEWAL SCHEME

The Village Renewal Scheme will provide financial support primarily for the drafting of integrated village plans and also for the renewal of rural villages through Village Plans. The village plan is a working document that has the support of the community. It should provide a needs based strategic framework to co-ordinate specific development actions. Support for Village Renewal must fit with the Council Community Plan and integrate with the Village Renewal plans supported under the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme. The measure will aim to build on the overarching fabric of a village/town integrating with other funding from other government departments and agencies. The measure will aim to address rural dereliction and prioritise reuse of existing derelict buildings, particularly to provide community infrastructure.

Support will be limited to within the ‘village’ development limits or in simple terms 30 miles per hour zone and may include:

- Development or updating of integrated village plans for Local Government Districts
- Village investments emanating from the integrated village plans.

BROADBAND SCHEME

This scheme will provide financial support to fill the gap for rural dwellers who cannot avail of broadband and will help address the very rural ‘not spots’ that are not within the scope of any other government initiatives. Funding will be limited to small broadband infrastructure schemes that will involve innovative community led solutions for local access.

CO-OPERATION SCHEME

Co-operation activities are considered to take place in:

- Northern Ireland;
- United Kingdom;
- Ireland; and
- The European context.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development considers Co-operation Actions to be a priority activity for the 2014 2020 Programme with a particular emphasis on cross border projects. As a result this Interim Strategy is making the provision for the development and funding of at least 2 North/South Co-operation Projects with the potential for additional Co-operation projects that involve North-South, East-West or other European partners. The LAG Board will take into account that the Department is encouraging co-operation projects, which are focused on the development of opportunities, afforded by unique landscape or natural resources that cross the boundaries of 2 or more LAG areas.

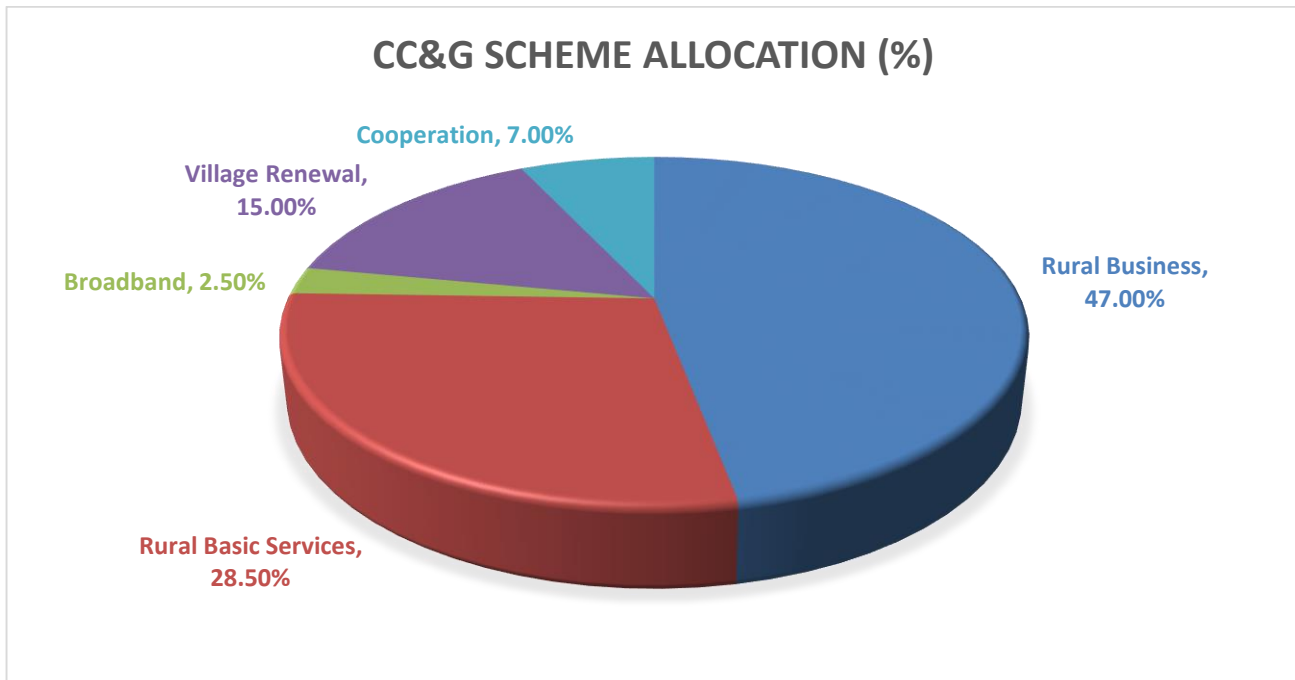
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Strategic objectives for each Scheme in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough are as follows:

Rural Business Investment Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 91 jobs created (FTE)• 39 businesses supported• 4 people completing bespoke training• 65 beneficiaries/people receiving capital grants for their business• 3 businesses supported to introduce/expand e-business• 3 businesses who have started to export as a result of the grant
Basic Services Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1,300 people benefitting from improved services / infrastructure• 13 projects supported for investment in local basic services for the rural population
Rural Village Renewal Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 650 people benefitting from village renewal projects• 13 villages supported to draw up or enhance village development plans• 7 projects supported for investments in village development• 7 derelict / vacant properties brought back into use
Broadband Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 operation for investment in broadband infrastructure and access to broadband, including e-government services• 10 people benefitting from new or improved IT infrastructures (eg broadband internet)
Co-operation Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7% of the budget will be allocated to Co-operation projects• At least 2 Co-operation projects to be developed

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

In order to meet the Objectives, the Local Action Group has prioritised the allocation of funding per Scheme depending on the needs identified for the area.



As can be seen, the Rural Business Investment Scheme has been prioritised to receive the largest allocation of 47% (£3,714,000), the Rural Basic Services Scheme has been apportioned 28.5% (£2,245,000), the Village Renewal Scheme has been assigned 15% (£1,186,000), the Cooperation Scheme has been apportioned the 7% stipulated by DARD (£525,000) and the Broadband Scheme has been allocated 2.5% (£200,000). These funding allocations will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure spend against each Scheme and the continued meeting of needs in the rural areas.

The LAG Board has also developed a timeline for Programme delivery which outlines proposed dates for Funding Workshops, Calls for Applications and Assessment phases per Call per Scheme. The Animation phase will run throughout the Programme with each new phase to raise awareness of the Programme, the Schemes and the requirements for applicants running for the 3 month period prior to a Funding Workshop. The initial Programme Animation phase will run from January to March 2016. Depending on the interest in Calls and the allocation of spend per Scheme, the timeline is subject to review throughout the Programme period.

DELIVERY

Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group Board is responsible for the delivery of Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme on behalf of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). In carrying out this role, the Board will establish sub-groups, assessment panels and review panels as required in line with the DARD requirements. The administrative support for the Local Action Group is provided by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council through an administrative unit.

In delivering the Rural Development Programme, the Local Action Group Board will undertake all business in compliance with the DARD Operating Rules and any legal requirements in order to achieve the Objectives set out within this Interim Strategy and its requirements as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The Local Action Group will enter into a contract with DARD to deliver the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council for both a communication and administration plan.

The Local Action Group will pro-actively engage with the Council in the delivery of all aspects of the Programme from the Animation phase through to the evaluation of projects. In addition, members will participate in co-operation activities and regional, national and European networks.

Throughout the Programme, there will be a two-tier management / reporting system in place to ensure, firstly, that projects meet their objectives and, secondly, to monitor progress against the agreed objectives of the Interim Strategy.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY STRATEGY AND PLAN

Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group has put in place a Communications and Publicity Strategy to outline how the LAG will raise local awareness of the RDP funding opportunities through animation activities, the actions that will be taken to encourage project applications and to publicise the programme, and how the public will be kept apprised of the benefits to the area from the operation of the Programme.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY KEY MESSAGES AND OBJECTIVES

In summary the overall key messages that the Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group are seeking to communicate are:

- Who** ➔ The LAG is comprised of Councillors, community voluntary members and private sector business people from within the rural area of Causeway Coast and Glens. The LAG are providing opportunities to individuals, businesses and organisations to apply for funding under Priority 6 of the NI Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.
- What** ➔ Responsible for delivery of £9.6 million DARD and European Union funding to the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.
- Why** ➔ Job creation, improve economic prosperity within the Borough, increase social inclusion and reduce rural poverty and rural isolation.
- Where** ➔ Projects to be located in rural areas within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough, with populations of less than 5,000.
- When** ➔ Eleven 'Calls for Applications' from April 2016 to March 2019.
- How** ➔ Via a competitive application process and mandatory attendance at funding workshops to be held by the LAG.

Taking into consideration the key messages that the Local Action Group wish to communicate, the key objectives in implementation of the communications plan have been developed. The effectiveness of the communication will be evaluated throughout the Programme to ensure it continues to meet the objectives of the LAG.

PROGRAMME COSTS

This Section details the Programme costs covering the period 2015 to 2020. The Section clearly shows the overall project and administration costs for each year of the programme with a breakdown of costs per Scheme and per financial year.

TOTAL BUDGET ALLOCATION

As can be seen from the **Total Budget Allocation Table**, the total budget allocation to Causeway Coast and Glens Local Action Group for Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme is £9.6million. This is separated into Project Expenditure (£7.87million) and Administration Expenditure (£1.73million). As per the DARD guidelines for the Programme, up to 22% of the eligible project spend has been factored as Administration costs to include staffing, Animation, information, publicity, co-operation and network costs. The Table provides an overall breakdown of the expenditure costs per year of the Programme and it is expected that all funding will be spent. All costs have been calculated to ensure value for money.

BREAKDOWN OF PROJECT EXPENDITURE

As can be seen from the **Breakdown of Project Expenditure Table**, a projected cost has been calculated for each year for each of the Schemes. This has been based on the number of proposed calls for each Scheme, the indicative activity that is expected (as outlined in Section 2.3) and the Scheme allocation. As with most funding Programmes, it is expected that the project expenditure will increase year on year until the end of the Programme as awareness of the opportunities under the Programme rises. All Project expenditure has been projected for spend between the financial years of 2016-17 and 2019-20.

BREAKDOWN OF ADMINISTRATION EXPENDITURE

As can be seen from the **Breakdown of Administration Expenditure Table**, a projected cost has been calculated for each year for Staff Costs and Running Costs. The Administration expenditure has been projected for the total period of the Programme from the financial years of 2015-16 to 2020-21 to allow for the initial phase of preparation prior to the Programme opening for Calls for applications and to manage the final monitoring and evaluation phase of the Programme.

Staff costs are based on the required resources to successfully manage the Programme. Resources and the associated costs are expected to fluctuate depending on the levels of applications and monitoring required throughout the period of the Programme and a flexible approach will be taken towards staffing levels.

Running Costs are based on a variety of costs and take into account expenditure including Animation costs, promotional costs, professional fees and compliance costs for the period of the Programme.

Total Budget Allocation

Expenditure Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	TOTAL
Project expenditure		£334,000	£2,124,600	£2,520,780	£2,890,620		£7,870,000
Administration expenditure	£86,107.78	£363,168.52	£383,312.52	£366,962.52	£351,214.52	£179,234.14	£1,730,000
TOTAL	£86,107.78	£697,168.52	£2,507,912.50	£2,887,742.50	£3,241,834.50	£179,234.14	£9,600,000

Breakdown of Project Expenditure

Projected Spend	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	Total
Rural Business Investment Scheme	£334,000	£1,155,100	£859,280	£1,365,620	£3,714,000
Village Renewal Scheme		£92,000	£569,000	£525,000	£1,186,000
Basic Services Scheme		£515,000	£730,000	£1,000,000	£2,245,000
Broadband Scheme		£100,000	£100,000		£200,000
Co-operation Scheme		£262,500	£262,500		£525,000
Total Spend Per Year	£334,000	£2,124,600	£2,520,780	£2,890,620	£7,870,000

Breakdown of Administration Expenditure

Administration Expenditure	2015-16 (3months)	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 (9months)	Total
Staff costs	£ 36,852.20	£ 247,473.44	£ 271,407.44	£ 272,407.44	£ 272,999.44	£ 118,747.08	£ 1,219,887.04
Running Costs	£ 47,342.15	£ 113,281.25	£ 114,991.25	£ 99,641.25	£ 75,248.56	£ 59,608.50	£ 510,112.96
Total Spend per year	£ 84,194.35	£ 360,754.69	£ 386,398.69	£ 372,048.69	£ 348,248.00	£ 178,355.58	£ 1,730,000.00

CONCLUSION

This Interim Strategy will be reviewed following the publication of the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Community Plan to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the rural community in the Borough.

In terms of equality requirements, as the Managing Agent, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development undertook an Equality Impact Assessment on the overall Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. In addition, a Section 75 Equality and Good Relations screening exercise was completed on the Interim Strategy and it was assessed as having no potential detrimental impact.

Details on the Rural Development Programme, the Schemes and Calls for Applications will be provided at the Rural Development Section of the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council website.



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