

Chapter 4: LDS Action Plan

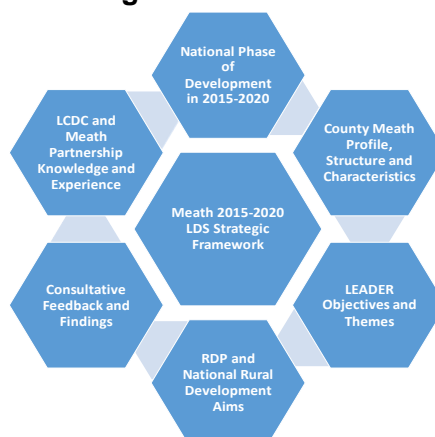
4.1 Strategic Framework

The current challenges of rural development in County Meath are not unique to it, nor unique to the 2015-2020 programme period. Enhancing the quality of life and economic well-being of a population living in a predominantly rural county and whose resources and potential are constrained by virtue of relative isolation, remoteness and dispersed communities and economic activity remain the fundamental purpose of rural development policies and programmes in Meath, in Ireland, and elsewhere, and countering both the causes of continual urbanisation and their negative effects on rural areas in ways that provide a sustainable and self-sustaining alternative remains the starting point for rural development aspiration and ambition. Fundamental processes and aspects of effective rural development will continue to centre on the provision of local economic opportunity, the encouragement and support of community action and interaction, the diversification of economic activity from least to most sustainable forms, and the widening of access to and engagement with services, supports and social and economic networks among rural dwellers.

In formulating and articulating the strategic framework within and around which Meath's local development strategy for the period 2015-2020 is positioned, a number of key considerations provide the frame of reference:

- the cycle and phase of national development and the development of all rural areas that will characterise Ireland over the period;
- Meath's location within Ireland, its profile (Chapter 2), its rural structure, its natural and socio-economic asset base, and its unique characteristics;
- the local development objectives of LEADER, at National and EU level for the period 2015-2020, and the LEADER themes and sub-themes within Ireland's Rural Development Programme;
- the wider objectives of Ireland's Rural Development Programme for the period, and national rural development goals, objectives and policies, for example as articulated in the CEDRA report;
- the consultative feedback and findings (Chapter 3) relating to the county's contemporary needs, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and
- the knowledge and experience of the LAG and Meath Partnership regarding rural development processes, capacities and opportunities in the county, and of development initiatives, processes and capacities that are evolving in and throughout the county as the new 2014-2020 programme transitions from its predecessors.

Strategic Framework Model



The period of the last programme (2007-13) began with Ireland continuing to experience strong economic growth following the prolonged period of expansion that began in the mid-1990s, and planning for the 2007-13 EU funding and programming round originally took place very much in this benign economic climate. However the international and national economic crisis quickly turned this context around quite comprehensively, and Ireland entered its worst and most dramatic recession, characterised by economic decline, a banking crisis, a national budgetary crisis, a property collapse, a labour market crisis characterised by spiralling unemployment and emigration, and a period of external financial support and national austerity, and these conditions dominated most of the period of the last rural development programme. Only in its final stages did conditions begin to indicate a national recovery was underway, and in very recent times the evidence is of a strong and strengthening national economic recovery that, while still occurring against the backdrop of the most severe recession Ireland has experienced, is nevertheless broadly-based, accelerating, positively and strongly impacting the labour market and the national debt and budgetary position, and surpassing the expectations of most observers and experts.

The national setting for local and rural development is therefore currently pointing towards a new cycle of renewal and optimism, and of opportunity and growth, although the lessons of unsustainable growth, of geographically uneven growth, and of the fragility of economic conditions more generally, are still likely to influence confidence and sentiment to a large extent. Similarly, development and growth that is sustainable in the widest sense, and the need to ensure policies, programmes, plans, and processes have the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions, are inescapable lessons from Ireland's recent experience in both national and rural development.

Meath's status, structure and position within this national setting is also central in framing the strategic approach to the local development strategy. Situated very proximate to Dublin city and forming a substantial geographical part of the Greater Dublin Area, the influence of Dublin is very strong although both positive and negative, and by no means uniform throughout the county. Much of the south and south-east of county Meath takes the form commonly characterised as a peri-urban rural structure¹, characterised by a high proportion of employment outside agriculture, above average levels of education, and employment within more advanced sectors and services, but all of which relates to the strong commuter pull of Dublin with much of the economic activity of residents occurring outside the county.

The rural structure of areas of the county more distant from Dublin to the north and west predominantly constitute relatively strong agricultural areas characterised by a resilient agricultural base but with a propensity for diversification away from agriculture and a transition towards non-agricultural activities. Other specific areas and pockets display weaker socio-economic structures both within small towns and in rural areas where there is a continuing dependence on low-output agriculture, a poor age structure and low levels of self-employment or employment in secondary or tertiary sectors.

These rural structures quite consistently define rural county Meath relative to rural Ireland as a whole, over a timeframe beyond relatively short-term economic cycles. Equally important

¹ One of a number of rural structure typologies developed as an input to the National Spatial Strategy launched in 2002.

issues that must inform the strategic approach are those relating to Meath's unique experience of the recent economic waves and troughs, the contemporary asset and resource endowment of the county, and the distinct effects of the past five to ten years within Meath on its development capacity and potential over the medium term. Addressing unemployment, underemployment, migration, low levels of investment and entrepreneurship, education, training, upskilling and reskilling, growing age dependency, and limited employment in high-value added industry and services are all challenges for the county emerging from the economic crisis of 2008-2013, while a strong but perhaps underutilised human, historical, natural and tourism resource base combined with an advantageous physical location within Ireland provide significant assets and development enablers.

The local strategic approach must also relate strongly to the EU and national aims of LEADER for the period. Ireland's Rural Development Programme has been designed in a way intended to achieve and complement rural development objectives at EU level as set out in the EU Regulation. The objective most relevant to LEADER is to achieve "a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment."

Under Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-20, LEADER is to be delivered in furtherance of the sixth rural development priority agreed at EU level, namely "promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas, with a focus on the following areas:

- facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises, as well as job creation;
- fostering local development in rural areas;
- enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies in rural areas.

In this regard the LEADER measure within Ireland's Programme is to "fund initiatives emerging from a community led local development approach at local level that aim to address the needs of individual sub regional areas. These local objectives will be specific to each individual area but will contribute to both the aims and objectives of each individual LDS as well as addressing social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development of rural areas as outlined in the programme priority".

As well as these EU and national priorities, the LEADER themes and sub-themes developed at a national level also define the scope of appropriate local activities and define the framework for local strategic planning. The themes and sub-themes are:

- Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
 - Rural Tourism
 - Enterprise Development
 - Broadband
 - Rural Towns
- Social Inclusion
 - Basic Services for hard to reach communities
 - Rural Youth
- Rural Environment

- Water Resources
- Biodiversity
- Renewable Energy
- Support for Food Producers
 - Artisan Producers
 - Regional Product Development
 - Marketing and Processing in Strategic Sectors

Alongside these EU regulatory and policy objectives for rural development supported by the EAFRD over the period, national research and strategies for rural development are important considerations for establishing local aims and goals. With regard to the economic development of rural Ireland, the CEDRA report adopted the following vision statement:

“Rural Ireland will become a dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi-sector economy supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a quality of life with an energised relationship between rural and urban Ireland which will contribute to its sustainability for the benefit of society as a whole”

Major themes of the CEDRA report, and its recommendations to Government, that are relevant to optimum local and county-level strategic development planning, include the following:

- the need for highly-integrated and co-ordinated rural economic development efforts on the part of all agencies and bodies with development responsibilities;
- the important relationship between rural towns and their rural hinterlands, and the need to focus on these geographically-defined areas of identifiable community and economic activity that are functionally- (rather than administratively-) defined locations and areas;
- the need to stimulate rural towns and support their revitalisation as a catalyst for wider economic development of rural areas;
- the appropriateness of a community-led local development model to rural economic development policy and efforts, and the need for a programme of community capacity building to underpin this, including for leadership and governance training, the development of community structures and participative planning, and specific training initiatives, as well as more widely-defined capacity building in rural communities;
- recognition of the role and importance of social enterprise to rural economic development, and the need for policies and programmes to focus on supporting social enterprises at all stages including conception and later evolution;
- the need for enabling processes, supports and services, including broadband, other infrastructure, transport, finance, and education and training; and
- specific programmes to energise and drive the growth of sectors and sub-sectors central to Ireland’s rural economic resource base and potential, including food, creative industries, tourism, marine and renewable energy.

The consultative feedback and findings that were described in Chapter 3 provide another important pillar of the strategic framework for the LDS. While not repeated in detail here, they provide a comprehensive and current representation of the county’s key development

determinants, assets and opportunities from parties and stakeholders most qualified and informed about them. To be effective, relevant and capable of engendering the utmost community and stakeholder buy-in and support, the LDS will need to be fully-framed within the themes and strategic priorities emerging from this local information, knowledge and perspective.

Finally, the appropriate strategic approach needs to reflect the perspectives and knowledge of those active in spearheading, guiding and managing community and economic development processes already underway in Meath so as to ensure past investments, evolving capacities, and new-formed resources and capabilities are built-upon, enhanced and have their potential realised in the new period, and that developmental processes are not stunted in the transition from the last programme to the current one. Communities at different stages of organisation and definition, towns and villages with different degrees of community co-operation and civic engagement, social and commercial enterprises at different pre-development or development phases, and local niche economic assets, sectors and co-dependent industries at different stages of their development and recognition (e.g. artisan foods, heritage and tourism), are all examples of critical local and rural development resources and processes evolving over the longer term yet requiring the supports and assistance between 2015 and 2020 which are most appropriate to them and their unique development phase. The optimum strategic choices made in the LDS and its later delivery will facilitate supporting all such local development processes according to their unique 2015-20 needs.

4.2 Vision

The long-term strategic vision for County Meath that underlies this LDS is

“a county which fulfils its social and economic potential, that is a preferred location for living and doing business, and one that provides its citizens and communities with the highest standards of living and quality of life”.

Over the period 2015-2020 the vision and strategic goal of the LDS is

“to drive and embed the economic recovery, renewal and self-sufficiency of the county, to enhance the unique identity of the county and the pride of place of Meath citizens of all ages and backgrounds, to maximise civic and community engagement with inclusive and enduring development processes and activities, and to create and in-still the confidence and means by which the county can continuously achieve its social and economic potential over future generations”.

4.3 LDS Vision and Local Objectives

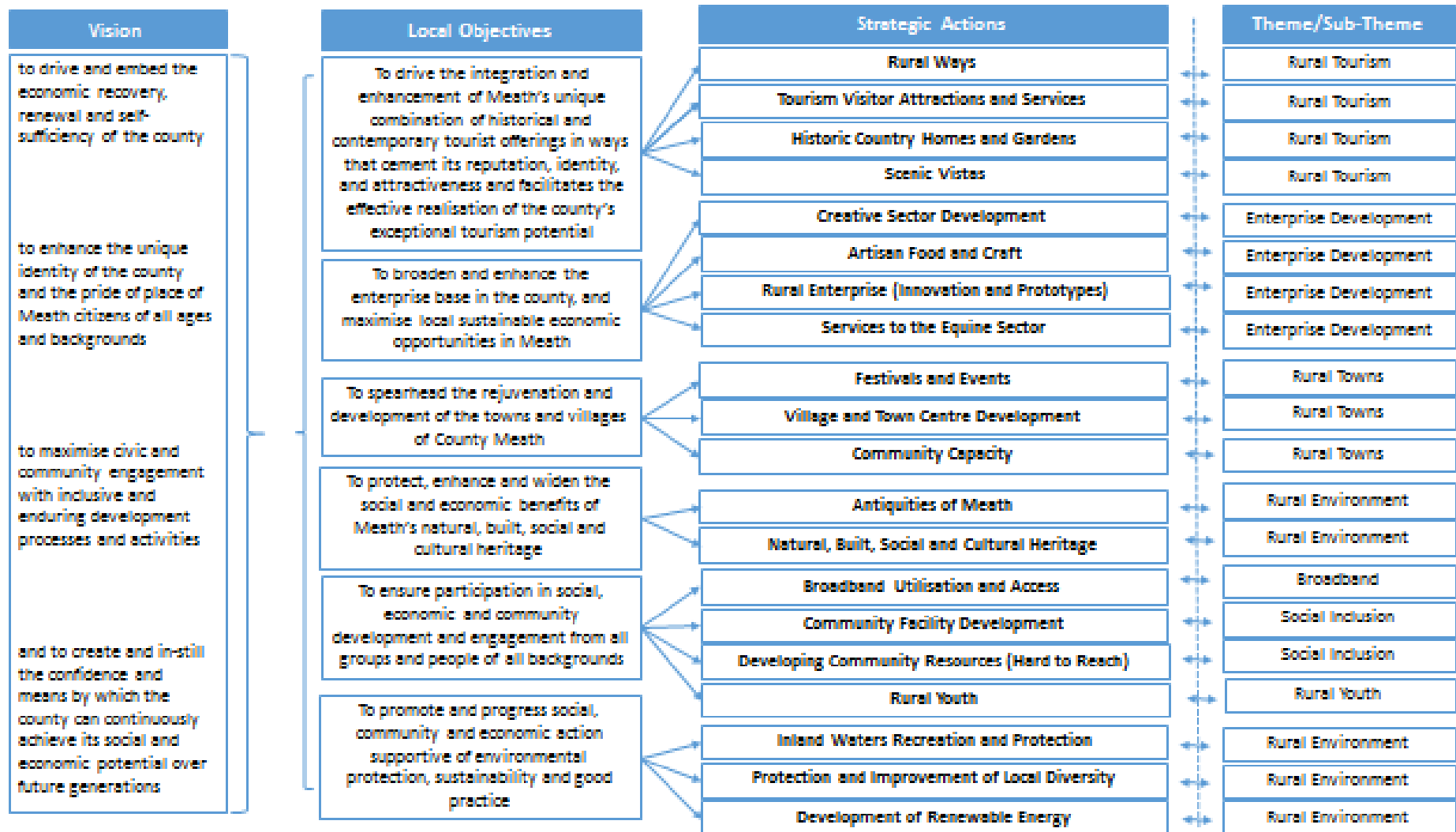
Starting from the various pillars that make up the strategic framework for the LDS set out above, the strategic approach to fulfilling the LDS vision is one that adopts a relatively small number of local objectives, which individually and in aggregate link the vision statement to, and give it practical expression across, a set of appropriate measures and strategic actions that align with LEADER themes and sub-themes.

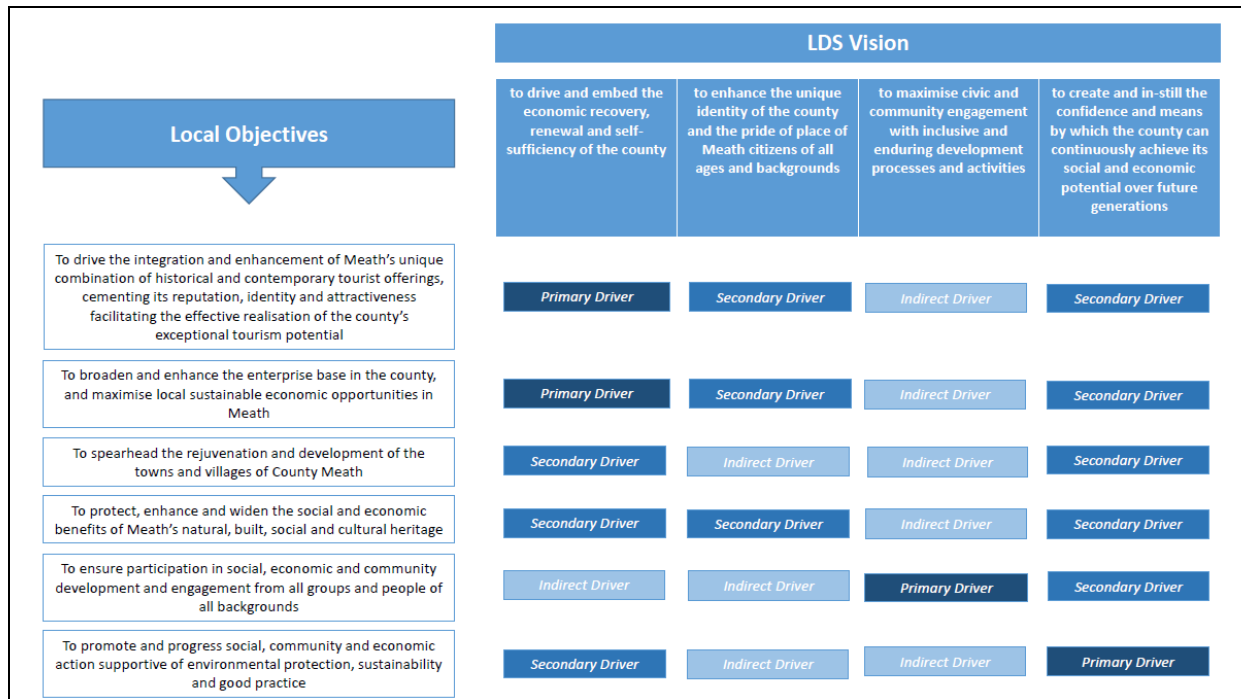
The core rationale for this approach lies in the judgement that the LDS vision encapsulates aspirations and goals that are both distinct but also linked and mutually reinforcing. At the same time there are a relatively small number of core strategic objectives that simultaneously reflect the County's rural development context, needs and opportunities, and at the same time give expression to those distinct and mutual elements of the LDS vision.

Six local objectives have been selected, as follows:

1. To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings cementing its reputation, identity, and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the county's exceptional tourism potential
2. To broaden and enhance the enterprise base in the county, and maximise local sustainable economic opportunities in Meath;
3. To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of the towns and villages of County Meath;
4. To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage;
5. To ensure participation in social, economic and community development and engagement from all groups and people of all backgrounds;
6. To promote and progress social, community and economic action supportive of environmental protection, sustainability and good practice.

Each local objective is expected to support the realisation of the LDS vision over the 2015-2020 period. The strength, with which they do so across different elements of the goals and aims the vision addresses, is illustrated in the figure overleaf.





The figure relates the selected local objectives to each of four different dimensions of the LDS vision statement, by way of a ranking of their likely influence and strength of impact. The integrated and mutually-supportive features of this approach are evident in that, while the strength of impact varies, each local objective is likely to have some impact and role in addressing all elements of the vision, and similarly all the goals and aspirations of the vision will be supported by all local objectives.

4.4 Local Objectives and Strategic Actions

Finally, the overall strategic approach is illustrated in the following figure, which relates the LDS vision to these local objectives, which are then related to more specific strategic actions, which in turn correspond to one (or more than one but with one primary) LEADER theme or sub-theme.

Local Objective 1	
Title of Local Objective	To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings cementing its reputation, identity, and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the county's exceptional tourism potential
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
Sub-theme	Rural Tourism
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The importance of tourism as a source of sustainable economic life in rural Ireland is widely acknowledged and understood, and locations that offer distinctive and marketable tourist attractions and offerings have the opportunity of generating and developing a sustainable and employment-intense source of indigenous economic activity deeply embedded in the rural economy and community. The natural, historic and cultural tourism assets and attractions Meath is bestowed with provide it with a unique

	platform to realise such opportunity for the benefit of its rural population, and the realisation of that potential calls for the development of infrastructure, specific attractions, branding and identity creation, and quality of service.
Financial Allocation (€)	€893,550.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural Ways 2. Tourism Visitor Attractions and Services 3. Historic Country Homes and Gardens 4. Scenic Vistas

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 1	Rural Ways - to use cutting edge technology to accurately communicate the authenticity and uniqueness of Meath's rural tourism experience with a strong focus on antiquities, activities and attractions made accessible and intriguing to visitors in search of an authentic rural experience.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	<p>Authenticity, real experiences, interaction with people and place, these are the key themes running through the future of rural tourism in County Meath. Rural Ways will communicate the availability of these experiences and will facilitate visitors to engage and interact with them providing a wide range of options and personal choice, generating a sense of anticipation and interaction with the unexpected.</p> <p>Support will be provided for technological hardware and software development, data recording and upload, associated human resources, digital mapping, high resolution imaging, brand identity linking with the Boyne Valley product and the Ancient East global marketing product. Support will also be provided to market the rural ways brand and the availability of the technology platform.</p>
Rationale	<p>Rural Ways encompasses the application of cutting edge technology designed to extend the reach of Meath's rural tourism product by providing an integrated branded platform that will facilitate interaction with the visitor who wishes or can be persuaded to increase dwell time in the County in order to explore the interior of the county with ease of navigation, enjoying an infinite number of visitor trails of their own choice and creation, interaction opportunities with local communities, access to multi-sectoral visitor interests and activities and guidance in respect of creature comforts and visitor services.</p> <p>Rural Ways represents a move away from linear visitor pathways and towards a model of independent rural tourism clusters offering a variety of choices for those with an interest in driving tourism. Rural Ways will offer Meath's fledgling tour bus sector an infinite number of potential driving routes from which to draw in marketing services to visitors.</p> <p>In terms of choosing and planning a holiday by far the highest number at 76% used the internet to plan their holiday with 60% choosing this method to book their holiday. 41% reported assistance from friends and family as a factor in choosing a holiday with 23% using guide books and 12% using travel agents. New and enhanced internet platforms can play a significant role in attracting greater numbers to Meath.</p> <p>In respect of transport 45% of visitors brought their own car or hired a car on arrival, 63% were on a first visit with 35% on a repeat visit.</p> <p>Despite its apparent homogeneity, drive tourism is in fact made up of very different segments - people choosing to undertake a drive tourism holiday</p>

	<p>have widely diverging reasons for doing so. One of the few motivations shared by the diverse segments of drive tourism is a desire for flexibility - they want to determine where they go and when. Even if people plan their route in advance, they want the opportunity to change the itinerary as they go.</p> <p>This fundamental desire at the core of drive tourism leads to very different patterns of travel behaviour – the ways in which people interact with a region, the length of their stay, what they see and do, the services, infrastructure and information they require – which call into question the value of a linear driving trail if the right conditions do not exist.</p> <p>The development strategy being pursued sets out to ensure that the right conditions do exist and that the six factors which influence choice can be catered for in the visitor decision making process. Care must be taken not to bring about the potential loss of the ‘sense of discovery’ as those undertaking drive tourism can view themselves as ‘explorers breaking new ground’. Overly groomed and packaged driving trails run the risk of contradicting this sense of discovery.</p> <p>In principle the overall strategy envisages clusters which consist of a visitor gateway, a main attraction hub and ancillary attractions. Some of the benefits offered by adopting a cluster approach to developing rural tourism in Meath as opposed to a linear trail concept include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The linkages between main and ancillary attractions offer opportunities to introduce alternative modes of transport – walking or cycling instead of driving – and increased engagement with a specified local area. • Rural tourism clusters can be more effectively linked to the Boyne Valley Driving Route without confusing users or diminishing the profile of either the clusters or the driving route. • Clusters can be more readily conceptualised and developed to meet the needs and desires of diverse interest groups. They enable visitors with an intense interest in rural life in Meath to link focal points, travelling from cluster to cluster in a trail format. At the same time, they also enable visitors to be more selective, and to focus on just one or two activities/attractions in a specified localised area. <p>We have identified a set of deep-seated visitor requirements that ‘are unique and specific’ to the character of a rural holiday experience. These can be described as a desire for serenity, affiliation and stimulation and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration with nature • ‘typical experience’ • Meeting people • Peaceful natural environment • Isolation with friendliness <p>Rural tourism clusters in Meath should be developed to meet this interest in authenticity, in experiencing real living culture as opposed to manufactured culture. Each rural tourism cluster in Meath should offer activities, attractions and opportunities covering the complete spectrum of the visitor’s desire for serenity, affiliation and stimulation.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Organisations involved in marketing Co Meath as a desirable tourist destination and in meeting and greeting visitors.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as lead implementing partner.

Any collaborating Organisations	Meath Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, OPW
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Tourism Clusters • 16 Trails opened • 1 New and Innovative ICT based tourist service offering • 2 Projects Funded • 4 FTE Jobs Created • Private Match Funding Investment: €24,000.00 • Improved identification and marketing of rural tourism product • Enhanced inflow of visitors in rural Meath • Improved access to Meath's antiquities, attractions, heritage and cultural activities • Increased visitor dwell time

Strategic Action 2	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Tourism – Visitor Attractions, Tourism Facilities and Accommodation: to invest in the enhancement of iconic sites of visitor interest, development of new and significant visitor attractions and support for investment in the direct provision of activity-based offerings by existing tourism providers.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	<p>This strategic action seeks to benefit rural tourism through the creation of new visitor flows by investing in iconic sites whose value has not been fully realised while also investing in locally based visitor activities and attractions. Support will be offered for the following initiatives and developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access, parking facilities and visitor comfort facilities and infrastructure • Innovative solutions to visitor transport barriers and access facilities for the disabled • Site interpretation, viewing points, site protection measures and site mapping • Support for provider led investment in activity and recreation based visitor facilities • Support for medium to large scale visitor attractions, priority afforded to new developments • Support for visitor accommodation where need can be demonstrated
Rationale	<p>Having encouraged and part funded the transfer of the Jolly Farm concept from South Wales to what is now Tayto Park in Co Meath as part of a development initiative to create visitor attractions up the central spine of Meath from Ashbourne to Oldcastle, LEADER moved from this success to supporting the development of the Irish Military War Museum at Slane and a feasibility study for a visitor centre at Slane Castle attached to the proposed Slane Castle Whiskey Distillery.</p> <p>In order to build on these successes and increase visitor numbers into the rural reaches of the county, LEADER needs to encourage further development taking in the value of proximity to interesting centres of population such as Navan, Kells and Oldcastle. Taking advantage also of the convergence of access routes such as the M2/N2 and M3/N3 and the excellent linkages between Slane and Navan, developments aligned with the M3 through the Navan, Kells and Oldcastle corridor would feed greater visitor numbers into central and northwest Meath.</p>

	<p>This strategy would align very well with the Boyne Valley and Ireland's Ancient East visitor destination strategy being marketed heavily by Fáilte Ireland.</p> <p>In terms of the Ancient East concept, both the Hill of Tara and more especially Sliabh Na Calliagh at Oldcastle stand out as an iconic sites of great visitor interest which would contribute significantly to the rural economy of Mid and North West Meath if matters relating to access, parking and interpretation were addressed. These sites represent underutilised gems which if sensitively developed could become sparkling jewels in the ancient treasures of County Meath. The drawing power of such visitor attractions if appropriately enhanced would be very strong and would lend support to the further development of smaller scale visitor attractions and activity based provision. These developments would do much to assist Kells which as a significant heritage town is failing to attract a visitor flow commensurate with what the town has to offer.</p> <p>The second tenet of this strategy is to continue to encourage tourism providers to add value to existing offerings. In this context accommodation providers have been targeted, the LEADER policy of supporting the creation of four star self-catering accommodation units in rural areas has been very successful and the next step is to encourage the direct provision of activity opportunities to customers in addition to the quality visitor care and interaction with local people so highly valued by these visitors.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	State agencies, Fáilte Ireland, entrepreneurs with a tourism interest, rural communities, tourism service providers, property owners
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as the LAG implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, OPW, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Meath Tourism
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% increase in visitor numbers and/or bed-nights in rural areas • 10 projects funded • 30 providers engaged in accommodation or activity provision • 20 FTE jobs created • Private match funding invested: €700,000.00

Strategic Action 3	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Historic Country Homes and Gardens of Meath - Implementation of Meath's Historic Country Homes and Gardens Initiative
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	<p>This initiative will support actions and operations aimed at increasing the number of homes and gardens open to the public in County Meath and to enhance and upgrade existing properties operating in this tourism sector in order to attract the growing number of visitors to Meath who expressly wish and expect to interact with this tourism product. Support will be provided for the following developmental requirements and associated costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External demesne development and improvements • Internal visitor facilities and accommodation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of historical, internal and external features • Accommodation for visitors including function facilities • Interpretation of historical aspects and historical document viewing • Walled garden restoration and development • Provision of outdoor activities and walks • Technical, archaeological and engineering services • Access, egress and visitor management facilities
Rationale	<p>In recognition of the fact that 35% of visitors to County Meath demonstrate interest in heritage and a desire to visit an historic country home and garden, Meath Partnership engaged Tourism Development International to consult with the sector to establish how this product might be developed and opened in greater numbers to visitors. Feedback from owners demonstrated strong interest in participating in this initiative, the product was described as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being sustainable in the long term • An authentic and historic product • Capable of contributing to the local economy • Fits into a particular cultural niche • Part of the local environment <p>It was agreed that if well developed, the product would attract the overseas visitor in addition to significant domestic interest, heritage visitors can make a real difference in Co. Meath as they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have greater potential for growth than regular travellers • Stay longer than many other visitors • Are more flexible in travel plans • Spend more in enjoying an authentic experiential holiday • Have a strong desire to interact with different people and cultures • Are interested in lifestyle travel • Create their own footsteps – soft footfall • Strong desire to uncover hidden treasures <p>Given that there is a strong domestic and overseas visitor interest in Meath, the proposed new cluster of Meath’s Historic Homes and Gardens will offer an exciting new dimension to destination Meath that will appeal to a wide range of visitors particularly sightseers and the cultural interest market.</p> <p>The collective body of interested owners expressed their support for cultural and heritage tourism in respect of its potential to benefit local communities in so far as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage tourism preserves historic sites, cultural traditions and natural assets • Provides new activities for local residents and builds community pride • Strengthens local economies and communities • Heritage tourism ensures a legacy for future generations • The heritage visitor fits into the local landscape and requires no major environmental adjustment <p>Based on the strength of this rationale, support will be offered for product development across a range of developmental cost headings as laid down in the description of this strategic action.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Owners and managers of historical properties and walled garden features, existing garden properties and other stately homes capable of attracting visitor interest
Geographic Area:	Geographical area of Co Meath

Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as lead implementation partner
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Meath Tourism, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 no. of properties newly opened to the public • 3 no. of properties enhanced • 2% contribution to increased visitor numbers • 5 no. of projects funded • 6 FTE jobs created • Private match funding invested: €240,000.00

Strategic Action 4	
Title of Strategic Action 4	Scenic Vistas - developing the economic potential of Meath's scenic vistas through the provision of visitor facilities, improving access and interpretation, addressing health and safety and the creation of attractive and interesting sites.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 4	<p>During the scenic vista and site identification process, a survey was conducted to identify the developmental requirements attaching to each potential site. LEADER support will therefore be offered to assist in meeting the capital cost involved in site development and also with high level interpretation, communication tools and marketing strategies and associated costs. Specifically support will be offered for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate lay-by development and associated costs • Pedestrian pathways and view arena development • Picnicking, human comfort facilities and seating • Fencing and walling and elevated viewing points • Underground servicing and lighting • Interpretation materials and signage • Landscape works and plantings • Technical support, architectural and engineering costs
Rationale	<p>Meath's scenic vistas could be described as hidden gems in a rural landscape renowned for its past heritage, diverse topology and fertile lands. While deeply appreciated by local communities many or most of these scenic vistas are not frequented by visitors because as a product they do not feature in our tourism marketing programmes to the extent that they should. There is good reason for this in so far as the facilities required to enjoy these vistas do not exist in many instances.</p> <p>The first phase of the scenic vistas initiative was funded by LEADER in 2013 and completed in 2014. This project set out to uncover the ten best scenic vistas in Co Meath, to map these and bring forward detailed proposals for their development to include the nature and value of the vista and specific actions to be taken in developing each chosen site. The output of this initiative has been the identification of ten high quality scenic vistas the development of which will enhance the quality of the rural tourism product in Co Meath.</p> <p>Outline plans for these sites have been completed including: access, parking, surfaces, railings, furniture, interpretation, signage and site</p>

	markers. Matters relating to planning, ownership and identification of local communities of interest prepared to assist with application support and local funding has been progressed. As part of this process consultation has taken place with Meath County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Boyne Valley Driving Route Consultant's BSM, and other bodies engaged in assisting LEADER's tourism product development. It is proposed that the completion of works on these scenic vistas will be carried out during the period 2016-2018 with support provided by LEADER in order to strengthen the rural tourism product and build on the value of Meath's natural environment and landscapes.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, history and heritage groups, tourism bodies, local tourism and development networks
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with lead implementation partner body Meath Partnership
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Meath Tourism, Landowners
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 no. of sites developed • 18 community bodies participating • Increase in visitors using new facilities • Private match funding invested: €125,000.00 • 6 projects funded

Local Objective 2	
Title of Local Objective	To broaden and enhance the enterprise base in the county, and maximise local sustainable economic opportunities in Meath
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
Sub-Theme	Enterprise Development
Brief Rationale for the Objective	Growing the quantity and activity range of successful and sustainable enterprises in rural areas in ways that offer local opportunity for local residents, the means to generate household incomes, and local economic vibrancy, is a defining dimension of successful rural development. Processes not only need to deliver economic resurgence and economic activity where it has diminished, but also transition its evolution from activities and sectors with limited future viability to those most relevant to, viable within, and necessitated by, contemporary rural life.
Financial Allocation (€)	€966,000.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creative Sector Development 2. Artisan Food and Craft 3. Rural Enterprise (Innovation and Prototypes) 4. Services to the Equine Sector

Strategic Action 1

Title of Strategic Action 1	Creative Sector Development - to support the future development of the Creative Sector by exploiting opportunities for growth, mitigation of barriers to growth both on the supply and demand side, introduction of supports to enable innovation and business success, the development of sustainable creative clusters, enhanced interaction between cultural and creative entrepreneurs locally, in Ireland and overseas. Support for participation in events and exhibitions concerned with their industry.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	<p>In furthering the development of the creative sector in Co Meath support will be offered for the following initiatives and operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The clustering of CCIs and partnership development between CCIs and industry, research, education and other relevant sectors and services. • The setting up and operation of innovation labs. • In co-operation with the European Creative Industries Alliance (ECIA) to assist in guaranteeing appropriate recognition for professional content creators and the protection of intellectual copyright to include licencing, trademarks and brands. • To identify and support new knowledge and creative based enterprise and local development models. • To address underdeveloped entrepreneurial and management skills • To broaden knowledge of property protection issues and support solutions • To enhance local markets and opportunities to market creative goods and services and to exploit creative industries export markets. • To provide support for mentoring enablers to address capacity for experimentation and support required for entrepreneurial success. • To encourage interaction between cultural and creative entrepreneurs working in Co Meath and their overseas counterparts. • To support participation in local, national and overseas events to include seminars and exhibitions concerned with their industry • To enable effective networking and artist led experimentation and innovation • To strengthen entrepreneurial skills through training and capacity building • To support the acquisition of specialised equipment, production facility fit out and shared service and production hubs
Rationale	<p>In addition to being essential drivers for cultural diversity in Europe the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI's) represent highly innovative companies with great economic potential and are one of Europe's most dynamic sectors contributing 2.6% to EU GDP, with a high growth potential and providing five million jobs across the EU. CCI's often contribute to boosting local economies, contributing to the emergence of new economic activities creating new and sustainable jobs and enhancing the attractiveness of rural regions, towns and villages.</p> <p>Creative industries are built around individuals with creative skills, some progress alone, more in cooperation with entrepreneurs, managers and technologists, who combine to create marketable products the economic value of which primarily lies in their cultural or intellectual property, the key component in these enterprises is individual creativity. When technological skills, entrepreneurial vision and business acumen is added the world's fastest growing business sectors emerge encompassing advertising, graphic design, architecture, crafts, designer furniture, designer fashion, film, video, performing arts, computer games and leisure software, music, television, radio, visual arts, writing and publishing. In general creative enterprises which comprise this sector are micro enterprises; they have a</p>

	<p>limited capacity for innovation using their own resources and rely heavily on business development support agencies and services to move their enterprise to the next level.</p> <p>Developing the creative industry sector in rural towns and locations can accelerate growth and lead to a leapfrogging effect in terms of social and economic development. It can also offer an opportunity to re-think rural development strategies which are often constrained within a narrow triangle comprising ecotourism – agri-food – craftsmanship. By introducing the concept of creativity, a new more contemporary idea of rural development can emerge.</p> <p>Research shows that the creative industries are more innovative than many other high-innovation sectors, for example professional and business services, and that the creative industries provide a disproportionate number of the innovative businesses in any given country in Western Europe.</p> <p>To be successful creative enterprises depend on a high density of creative talents and supportive eco-systems that enable knowledge exchange and open innovation. For CCIs to be able to make the most of the opportunities offered by cultural diversity, globalisation and digitalisation, which are key drivers for the further development of these sectors the challenge is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To put the right enablers in place by increasing the capacity to experiment, innovate and succeed as entrepreneurs, and providing easier access to funding and the right mix of skills. • To help CCIs develop in their local and regional environment as a launch pad for a stronger global presence , including through increased exchange and mobility • To move towards a creative economy by catalysing the spill-over effects of CCIs on a wide range of economic and social contexts. <p>As one of the main development, support and funding agents for micro-enterprises in County Meath the focus for LEADER will be on supporting the growth of independent creative businesses and the talent that feeds and sustains them and the development of visible, coherent and sustainable creative clusters in different regions throughout the county. There are a range of specific supports that our research and assessment of international best practice can highlight which would need to be taken into consideration when planning the building of an ecosystem around the creative industry sector in the county. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling effective networking • Supports for artist-led experimentation leading to innovation • Providing access to the right sort of finance • De-risking innovation • Develop IPR knowledge, valuation, realisation, & protection • Offering a programme of relevant events, exhibitions and competitions • Strengthening entrepreneurial skills through training and effective mentoring • Building the potential for internationalisation <p>At the local level LEADER will seek to develop a strategy to de-risk innovation to facilitate investment and support growth in the sector.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Rural Entrepreneurs, Creative Sector individuals, partnerships, networks, sole traders and SMEs
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath

Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body
Any collaborating Organisations	Arts Council of Ireland, Irish Local Action Groups, European mainland Local Action Groups, Fáilte Ireland, ECIA
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2017-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 new enterprises created • 15 projects supported • 10 new FTE jobs created • 15 Number of enterprises mentored • Value of match funding invested: €132,800.00

Strategic Action 2	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Artisan Food and Speciality Products – to support the establishment, growth and sustainability of inclusive rural food and speciality product enterprises.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	This strategic action seeks to assist with investments which support: improvements in productivity; new product development and certification; use of new technologies; capital grant aid for the development of infrastructure; purchasing of equipment; further processing and marketing of products; development and sustainability of networks; collective network services and specialised human resource provision; investments to encourage diversified activity; support for analysis and development; industry and sector training; and implementation of quality standards. Support will also be offered for direct and collective marketing, fit out of production facilities, initiatives to drive direct engagement with customers, attendance at showcase events and other measures to enhance visibility and presence in the market.
Rationale	<p>The development of Meath's artisan food sector has been heavily supported by LEADER over the period 2001-2013 with significant growth in the sector and in the value of output. The Meath Artisan Food Network comprises 87 active producers and processors at varying stages of development, leaving the territory poised to take another leap forward similar to that which occurred between 2001 and 2013 during which period Meath's artisan food sector came from a standing start to now match the best Ireland has to offer.</p> <p>The proposed development of an artisan food production hub outside Navan, the Boyne Valley Food Hub, will address the infrastructural needs of developing artisans, the attached laboratory facilities will further facilitate enhancement of product quality and new product testing. Aligned with LEADER support this new development supported by the LEO and Meath County Council will provide a comprehensive range of services to the sector. The artisan sector also relies on producers of raw product to specialise and diversify into breed type and production methodologies outside the norm in mainstream agriculture. Where aid is not available through the <i>RDP</i> as managed by the Department of Agriculture it is proposed that LEADER will offer assistance.</p> <p>The further development of this sector as proposed embraces the findings of the OECD, Western Development Commission and CEDRA in which they emphasise the key drivers of growth as human capital, entrepreneurship, innovation and supportive infrastructure. These growth factors are very evident in the local artisan food sector and are fully deserving of public support.</p>

	<p>Having set aside 16 medium to large food companies in Co Meath who because of scale of operation and turnover are not eligible for LEADER support we find 57 speciality food and artisan producers who have engaged with LEADER in the past. Local research shows combined turnover of €14.8m with 156 persons employed directly in these small operations. Over 40% of these operations have good capacity for growth and will be targeted through the RDP. Growth potential will be strengthened through collaboration with Bord Bia and the Local Enterprise Office.</p> <p>The 30 new additional members of Meaths Artisan Food Network will be supported in respect of the needs of new entrants to the industry.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Artisan food enterprises, intending artisan producers, artisan networks, farm family members, rural entrepreneurs, production facility owners and developers.
Geographic Area:	Geographical area of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body
Any collaborating Organisations	Teagasc, Bord Bia, Dublin Institute of Technology
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 Number of projects supported • 8 Number of new business created • 5 Number of collective operations • 20 Number of new employments created • 40 Number of employments sustained • Amount of private capital invested: €398,475.00

Strategic Action 3	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Innovative Manufacturing, Networking, Service Provision and Prototype Development - to continue to support innovation in the manufacturing and services sectors and to encourage research and development and prototype creation.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	Over the period 2007-2013 prototype development in Meath performed well with initiatives emerging in the forestry timber recovery sector, soft fruit and vegetable transportation and handling, sustainable roofing solutions, transformer multi-use farm equipment, new era wood chip dryers fuelled by waste timber and reduced power self-sustaining information transmission systems and new banking security software applications. There is every indication that these innovations will continue to emerge therefore support will be offered for analysis, research and development, 3D printing, manufacturing and material costs, marketing and showcasing of new products, patent registration, licencing, branding and protection of knowledge know how and hard and software designs and systems. Progression to full scale production and/or operationalisation will also be supported.
Rationale	<p>In terms of the greatest levels of employment provision in Co Meath, rural enterprises fall into four distinct categories including, agri-food and forestry; mining, extractive sector and turf production; mainstream manufacturing and transport, storage and communications.</p> <p>This strategic action is seeking to support innovation in the enterprise sector progressing beyond mainstream activity and attached to research on future technological requirements and prototype development. New enterprise opportunities exist in the green sector and in the processing of</p>

	<p>sustainable resources to meet fabrication, energy, insulation and environmental protection demands. Meeting the needs of a 21st century enterprise base and protecting knowledge, intellectual property, emerging technologies and prototypes can help retain value and support the application of such resources in a localised enterprise development context.</p> <p>LEADER is about innovation and looking to the future and is ideally suited for this role. Networking and research are key elements of enterprise development, multi-sectoral enterprise networks can stimulate and strengthen links for economic gain and mutual benefit, and in turn provide a platform through which enterprise creation and business expansion can be supported through an array of tailored supports funded by the RDP. Networking fosters a culture of collaboration, resource sharing, strategic alliances and clustering among members in key enterprise development areas.</p> <p>The creation of such networks based on productive sector membership quickly attracts the interest of the service sector, the Meath experience with the Elevation Enterprise Network has seen the service sector request membership, the rationale being that the service sector had much to learn in developing services to meet the 21st century needs of enterprise. This relationship has introduced both innovation and reality in respect of service sector offerings designed to support economic growth and is a welcome development. It is proposed therefore that networking as a tool will be applied to support this strategic action and to assemble the resources required for sustainable progress.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Rural entrepreneurs, equipment designers and manufacturers, SME's, farm family members, IT Specialists, designers and manufacturers.
Geographic Area:	Geographical area of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Colleges of Engineering, IT development Institutions and organisations
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Number of projects supported • 3 Mainstream manufacturing prototype investments • 10 FTE employments created • 6 Innovations demonstrated • Private resources invested: €319,000.00

Strategic Action 4	
Title of Strategic Action 4	Sport Horse Industry – To exploit the potential of Meath's sports horse industry to generate employment, support the growth of sustainable service enterprise, grow equine tourism, attract overseas visitors, provide for recreational and leisure activity, support breeding standards and contribute to star rating objectives.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support rural enterprise in servicing the equine sector through the provision of improved information, training and access to technologies such as AI, embryo transfer and advanced reproductive technologies coupled with access to AI technicians for equines. • To assist in the progress of equestrian centres and livery yards towards star rating in respect of quality of husbandry, facilities, horse instruction and other services capable of being addressed

	<p>by service provision enterprise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote and foster a range of equine tourism and recreationally focused initiatives to promote increased participation in equine tourism across the sector in Co Meath. • To support the further development and growth of Meath's Royal Equine Hospital which was constructed with aid provided by the NRDP LEADER Programme 2001-2007. • To create opportunities for the exposure of primary and secondary school children to the sport horse industry. • To invest in the development of equine facilities linked to equine tourism and service related initiatives and enterprises.
Rationale	<p>The sport horse industry is envisaged as a vibrant, dynamic sector contributing significantly to the economic and social life of Co Meath. The development and growth of the sport horse sector can do much to encourage job creation and sustainable enterprise development. A sport horse can be defined as a riding horse intended to be used for recreational and competitive activities other than racing while providing the foundation of a leisure and recreation industry in Co Meath.</p> <p>The industry is worth over €700m to the Irish economy, it employs 12,512 people directly and indirectly with approximately 73,000 registered sport horses from a total of 124,000 equines. The leisure sector accounts for 36,000 registered sport horses and contributes €119m to the rural economy.</p> <p>The sport horse sector in Meath consists of a total of 5,801 animals with 1,749 in the leisure sector, 557 in competition and 3,495 in breeding. Based on the UCD study of the economic contribution of the sports horse industry total sectoral spend in Meath's rural economy is €27.384m per annum. The breeding sector accounts for €12,756,750 with competition standing at €3,035,260 and leisure at €11,942,172. Meath has 3,495 animals of all ages in breeding, 577 in competition and 1,749 in the leisure sector.</p> <p>Leisure performs very strongly with expenditure of €11,942,172, competition stands at €3,035,260 with breeding at €12,756,750. Direct employment in leisure is 301 FTE's, 113 in competition and 105 in breeding. This however is just part of the picture as involved family member's amount to 279 principally in breeding giving an overall total of 798 FTE's. Given the scale of the spend on services those indirectly employed represent the largest body of employment standing at 3,373 giving a grand total of 4,171 full time equivalent employments.</p> <p>LEADER investment to date has been focused both on direct and indirect employment with the latter being the greatest priority in terms of enterprise development focused on providing essential services to the sector. Across counties Meath, Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow, the spend in the sport horse industry has risen to a total of €69,335,454.00 creating a growing potential for further expansion in related service enterprise. The return on the investment of public funds is stated by UCD to be very strong at €23,600.00 for each €100 of public funding invested.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Sports horse service providers, equine tourism providers, the equine leisure sector
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group, with Meath Partnership as the LAG implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	Sports Horse Ireland
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2019

Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Projects Funded • 4 Number of new enterprises supported • 4 Number of existing enterprises enhanced • 15 number of new employments created • Private match funding invested: €212,520.00
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Local Objective 3	
Title of Local Objective	To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of the towns and villages of County Meath
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development, Job Creation
Sub-theme	Rural Towns
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The need to revitalise rural towns and villages for the benefit of both their residents and the rural hinterlands they serve and function within has been widely recognised, and very recently by CEDRA where it featured as a key strategic recommendation. While critical in a development phase of economic recovery following a severe national recession, it is also a constant rural development prerequisite given the enduring relationships between towns and their hinterlands through all stages of economic cycles. The towns and villages of Meath have many strengths, opportunities and capabilities to enhance the development of the wider rural areas in which they act as a natural social and economic juncture. The opportunities and challenges cover infrastructure, community and economic features, and all towns and villages have unique strengths, capabilities and needs.
Financial Allocation (€)	€623,875.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Festivals and Events 2. Village and Town Development 3. Community Capacity

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 1	Festival Development and Support
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	To provide capital assistance to support further growth and development of festival activity in Meath. Investment will be guided by feedback on needs provided by festivals and will address sustainability, diversity and growth. Collective initiatives will be supported such as to address sharing of facilities and equipment, marketing based on a shared identity, collective purchasing, enhancement of visitor facilities and services, human resource provision and training and support to equip/re-equip with essential equipment and rental of same. The introduction of new activities and attractions will also be supported.
Rationale	An analysis of festival activity across Co Meath demonstrates that there are in excess of 36 such events held across the county during the period April to mid-October of each year. The majority of festivals are one day events however sixteen are held over two days or more with the number in this category growing. Of the one day events, a further five have the capacity to become two day events with finance and human resources being cited as the main constraining factor.

In respect of finance, analysis shows that local funding invested in festivals and events amounts to €998,000 with combined income standing at €1,079,000.00. The estimated combined profit at €81,000 is low and is largely retained for re-investment and for distribution to local charities. In the main, these events are run by totally committed volunteers who in the majority of cases make other significant contributions to their communities.

The economic value of volunteer contribution can be measured and is very considerable. Analysis demonstrates that 1110 volunteers are involved in running festivals with 310 volunteers actively planning and managing as committee members of the responsible bodies. Based on the number of days volunteered and differentiating between committee members and other volunteers the input value has been calculated at €975,000 per annum.

The estimated attendance at these events is 173,000 at a minimum; spend for attendees' ranges from €15 to €25 with a midpoint value of €20. Spend for attendees' ranges from a total of €2,595,000 to €4,325,000 with a midpoint figure of €3,460,000. This outcome, when taken together with expenditure on festivals of which 90% is invested locally, results in a total spend of €4,358,200.00 in the local economy. Activity measured does not include racing, golfing or events such as Slane Castle concerts, only community driven festival activity has been included.

The importance of tourism to the future economic development of County Meath cannot be understated and in a local context festival activity plays a very important role in this respect. Across the towns and villages of rural Meath festival endeavours by local groups also serve to promote the origination of economic and developmental actions built around a self-help ethos and fuelled by the application of the skills of local people.

In this context the delivery of a successful festival event is capable of enhancing economic growth and by successfully stimulating and revitalising community interest and participation can act as a catalyst for wider economic development. This developmental approach is in keeping with policy as laid down in the CEDRA report and is particularly supportive of the LDS Local Objective 3.

In respect of value for money, the annual spend in the rural economy resulting from festival activity has been established at €4,358M. In contrast the public investment in achieving this outcome has been established at approximately €200,000.00 per annum. This represents a return of €1,935.00 for every €100.00 of public funding invested.

Building on successful project delivery and benefitting from associated capacity building initiatives many festival groups have broadened their remit to include social enterprise and wider economic development. Such groups for example are now engaged in running local tourism offices, community facilities and local service provision, more are involved in marketing their local town or village and enhancing the environment in order to attract enterprise and provide employment.

With 36 such active groupings now in operation across the County, Meath is well placed to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the future growth potential of festivals and events. Fundamental to the successful exploitation of the opportunities presenting will be a redefined vision and understanding of what constitutes a rural festival or event. The key requirement in this respect will be the delivery of an event with potential to benefit all sectors of the local economy and which seeks and secures the participation and engagement of all sectors of society and the economy.

For example the retail sector in Ireland's towns and villages is in need of new and progressive strategies to meet increasing competition from large urban shopping centres and commodity suppliers operating from large retail parks, increased customer mobility adds to the depth of this challenge.

As a result of research in this area we now have a greater understanding as to how festivals and events can influence local retail survival in towns and villages and while retailers acknowledge such events as important factors with the potential to confer a competitive advantage the challenge to be addressed is the lack of communication between retailers, service providers, event and festival management groups and local governance.

In future, redefined events and festivals will need to incorporate a whole of community approach, the retail sector will need to become part of the event through special sales, on street trading, weekend trading, promotional pricing and the stocking of goods to match the immediate market presenting. Service sectors such as auctioneering could run special events such as antique auctions or the auctioning of goods appropriate to the season or to the individual event. The festival event should be seized on by local goods manufacturers to exploit the market for their products as all too often purchasers are not even aware of their existence, at present we only witness this promotional activity on such as St. Patrick's Day and even then in a very limited manner. Festivals therefore have an opportunity to celebrate the existence of their community in a way which promotes key elements of sustainability in respect of their own local area or town. This developmental approach is supportive of Local Objective 3.

The LDS through its proposed support for local festivals and events targets not only the development of tourism per se but also wider economic development through the evolution of existing festival and event groupings into collective stakeholder co-operative bodies with the capacity to deliver integrated events while respecting the core driving factors associated with the central festival theme. Such broader community and business participation will serve to strengthen the financial viability of rural festivals. This developmental approach supports the targeted outcomes of Local Objective 4.

The engagement process required to plan such integrated events and festivals provides the opportunity to bring together and harness the interest, skills and knowledge of a wide range of local actors in the community, the opportunity to enhance the capacity of local actors and to demonstrate to the wider community just how much can be achieved through collective action at the local level. This engagement process is heavily supportive of Local Objective 5.

Given the above rationale for prioritising festival and event development in Co. Meath it is believed that the provision of aid for such activity as detailed under Local Objective 3, Strategic Action 1: Festival Development and Support is justified and will yield a strong return on investment and achieve long lasting positive outcomes.

Festival Development is also referenced under Strategic Action 2: Village and Town Centre Development and linked to Local Objective 3, this is in respect of the broader impact of festivals and events on the commercial life of town and village centres and in this respect is supportive of CEDRA's town and village development policy.

Linkages to Other Initiatives or Activities

	<p>In respect of linkages to other activities or initiatives the festival and event support programme and its planned evolution is supportive of tourism development policy generally in County Meath and provides local communities with a manageable developmental starting or expansion point capable of attracting large scale support and delivering an immediate economic uplift. With regard to the Local Objectives as laid out in the LDS, festival and event development primarily supports Local Objective 1 but also makes an important contribution to Local Objectives 3, 4 and 5 by virtue of the developmental approach involved and the broader economic value of such events. These Local Objectives are as follows;</p> <p>Local Objective 1: To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings cementing its reputation, identity and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the County's exceptional tourism potential.</p> <p>Local Objective 3: To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of towns and villages of County Meath.</p> <p>Local Objective 4: To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage.</p> <p>Local Objective 5: To ensure participation in social, economic and community development and engagement from all groups and people of all backgrounds.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Community development organisations, festival committees, sectoral interests, tourism organisations, private promoters, sporting, recreation and leisure bodies, heritage and cultural bodies.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Festival groups, Meath Festival Committee, Meath Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, cultural, preservation and sporting bodies.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 towns and villages engaged • 15 Number of projects supported • 10% Increase in visitor numbers • Enhanced diversity of offering • 20 no. FTE jobs created or preserved • Private funding invested: €95,000.00

Strategic Action 2	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Village and Town Centre Development - Strategic actions to support the development of rural villages and towns through the enhancement and exploitation of local resources including human capital, the physical environment, historical and heritage based resources and employment generation potential
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	<p>Support will be offered to operations which address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism operations designed to attract and facilitate visitors with an emphasis on authentic experiences • Town and village regeneration plans which focus on local resources and built on self-help methodologies • Conservation and enhancement operations based on the

	<p>preservation of local heritage and the enhancement of historic streets, monuments and other public spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations which seek to enhance the village and town environment and amenity and recreational interests of residents, business and visitors • Operations and initiatives that address the economic development of the area • Operations and initiatives which support social development, integration, social service requirements and community facilities • The delivery of festivals and events to build visitor numbers, profile the village or town and capable of generating economic activity • Support for new enterprise developments and or expansion and development of existing enterprise
Rationale	<p>At the core of sustainable village and town centre enhancement and development lies a number of objectives which resonate strongly with the needs identified by these communities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of vibrant mixed centres that serve as a focal point for the community • Contributes to the provision of engaging and interconnected public spaces • Provision of enhanced amenities to meet community needs • Developments supportive of local employment opportunities • Improved pedestrian, cycle and transit conditions • Planning for a more balanced and diverse population • The creation of more compact, complete and connective communities <p>Further examples of what works and what catches the interest of village and town communities is laid out in a Heritage Council Report compiled in association with the Irish Walled Town Network titled 'A Proposal for Regenerating Ireland's Historic Towns and Villages'. Some interesting aspects of this report include proposals for such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town regeneration plans based on a self-help approach and a local sense of ownership, the binding and promotion of the towns historical and cultural attributes together with sights and activities. Benefits are stated as job creation, enhanced visitor experience, increased numbers, improved town attractiveness and improved local knowledge of heritage • The exploitation of festivals and events to build visitor numbers and profiles and generate economic activity and visitor spend. Benefits are stated as improving destination awareness, job creation , good economic return, increased level of visitor spend • The carrying out of conservation works to prominent monuments and buildings and smaller conservation and maintenance operations to structures on historic streets. Benefits are stated as a resulting economic stimulus, job creation and retention, preservation of national heritage, enhanced use of historic structures, improved access and attractiveness and enhanced experience for shoppers and visitors • The message being communicated at local level is that attracting people and investment to village and town centres requires a focus on the provision of high quality public realm including street furniture, traffic calming and quality townscape. Any village or town which does not have a strong residential community is facing major difficulty therefore they must be seen as attractive places in which to live. Irish policy in respect of village and town regeneration has been consistent over the past two decades, the policy objectives have been strong and resonate firmly with our

	<p>2020 objectives and remain worthy of consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the attractiveness of the village or town as a place to live in and to stabilise its resident population in line with its carry capacity. • Promote the village or town as a local commercial or social centre and thereby increase its sustainability as a place in which to live in and work and stem the loss of shopping and other facilities to larger centres of population • To promote villages and towns as centres for culture and local heritage and thus enhance the sense of identity physically and socially • Enhance the village and town environment and amenity in the interests of residents, businesses, visitors and the promotion of tourism; and • Promote more sustainable development patterns <p>In the process of village and town renewal it will be important to include the economic development context and to provide support for the formulation of local economic development strategies to build on progress in enhancing the physical and social environment in order to be fully inclusive in respect of the six priority activities which REDZ believes should be supported. These priorities include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that can enhance employment or be shown to enhance employment potential on scale up from pilot initiative • Projects that can display realistic and achievable targets and proposed outputs and outcomes • Projects that display a coordinated effort from all members of the community in line with the aims of Putting People First. • Projects that display learning opportunities to facilitate scale up and increased activity within the context of the REDZ areas identified • Projects that are integrative in their approach to identifying potential synergies between different economic opportunities and meeting the social and economic needs of the community <p>It is very evident that common ground exists across the spectrum of opinion as to how regeneration can be achieved, it is equally clear that this is an objective that requires multi-agency, governmental community and private sector input if it is to be achieved. It is equally apparent that the LEADER methodology despite limited capital resources can do much to progress this objective. In this context the Renaissance Programme rolled out during the 2009-2014 LEADER Programme offers a proven toolkit and methodology through which positive intervention can be progressed leading to well-planned initiatives and operations which can be funded by LEADER.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, property owners, rural enterprises, rural entrepreneurs, historical and heritage based groups, local tourism interests, local businesses and the general public
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath with a focus on the more deprived towns and villages
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as lead implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	Meath County Council, LEO, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs and C&V Organisations
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Number of villages and towns assisted • 25 Number of entrepreneurs supported

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Number of historic and heritage operations assisted • 7 Number of tourism development steps initiated • 50% Level of community and business engagement • 10% Increase in visitor numbers • 12 New jobs created and 15 jobs preserved • Private match funding invested: €350,000.00
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Strategic Action 3	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Community Capacity - to enable specific communities of place in county Meath to work in partnership to create more resilient communities, thriving local economies and better places in which to live and work.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	This action will support local development, networking and capacity building to empower local communities to develop the skills and experience that the community can draw on in developing a sustainable future and harnessing the potential of LEADER. An emphasis will be placed on enabling communities' to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills required to lead or contribute to the development of their community with LEADER assistance; improving partnership working between communities, business, public agencies and third sector organisations. Community capacity resides in a community's individuals, formal organisations and associations, and the relational networks among them and linking those to the broader systems of which they are a part. It is our intention that building community capacity under this strategic action will focus on these components and will act as a priming action to facilitate capital investment through other strategic action budgets.
Rationale	<p>To promote participation is to empower the people and can be summarised into three areas. The first relates to community capacity building through the expanding leadership base, strengthening of individual skills, sharing of understanding and vision, setting of community agendas and goals, the development of more effective community organisations, institutions and use of resources. The second is indicative of personal growth through skill development, relationships and networks within the community, confidence and leadership. Research concludes that community participation can lead to the existence of a number of grassroots organisations, alliances among organisations, a level of community trust, involvement of existing organisations in broader community initiatives, building on previous community development efforts, development of new networks among groups, ability to leverage funds for new projects. These characteristics are all factors that contribute to the build-up of social capital within communities. Therefore, the outcomes that can be derived from community participation can be very beneficial to the long term wellbeing of a community.</p> <p>Through the consultation process and key informant interviews it is apparent that certain communities of place have significant community assets, but they are not always leveraged to the fullest extent possible to collectively address local issues and needs. Networking across and within local communities is often weak and historically these communities have not leveraged the existing human, organisational, and social capital necessary to maintain the well-being of the given community.</p> <p>This strategic action will therefore focus on the following elements of support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building the capacity of local communities to engage and assume

	<p>leadership in the process of collaborative and participative planning and bottom-up local development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing communities with a clear sense of identity, sense of purpose, sense of place and sense of direction. • support these specific rural communities through a series of capacity building workshops and animation activities to engage village populations in forward planning through the participatory process to stimulate the emergence of developments eligible for funding under the LEADER Programme • create awareness, understanding and motivation amongst the rural communities so as to enable their full participation and input into the development of their rural villages and communities. • Social well-being arises from a sense of security, belonging, familiarity, support, neighbourliness, cohesion and integration of different social groups, based on respect for different cultures, traditions and backgrounds.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, SMEs, social enterprises, young people, third sector organisations and hard to reach communities.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	All organisations with a local development, social inclusion and economic development remit
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016 – 2017
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 no. of area based communities engaged; • 16 no. of collaborative operations or initiatives emerging; • 8 no. of local area enhancement and economic development plans created and activated • 6 no. of hard to reach communities engaged • Private match funding invested: €50,000.00

Local Objective 4	
Title of Local Objective	To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage.
LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation
Sub-theme	Rural Tourism
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The tremendously rich heritage of County Meath is perhaps its most distinctive resource and asset. As well as offering a fundamental source of social, community and cultural identity, and enhancing pride of place and kinship amongst its residents, there is recognition of the enormous potential heritage can play in furthering economic prosperity and the quality of life of residents. Responsible and sustainable development of the heritage assets of the county must balance conservation with promotion, and protection with use and enjoyment, but such balances can be struck in ways that generate tangible and intangible gains in rural communities and neighbourhoods throughout the county.
Financial Allocation (€)	€611,800.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antiquities of Meath 2. Natural, Social and Cultural Heritage

Objective

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 1	The development of a network of inter-connecting mix and match heritage based visitor trails throughout rural Meath built around the hidden and historic antiquities of the County.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	To support actions designed to preserve and animate the historical value of Meath's hidden and historic antiquities, enhance awareness of and access to such antiquities. Support will be offered to improve access while also supporting measures to support preservation, site protection, health and safety and site interpretation. Support will also be offered for clustered trail development, appropriate signage, safe viewing points and technical services required for appropriate site development.
Rationale	<p>Antiquities of Meath Multi-Choice Visitor Trail Development – The Antiquities of Meath strategic action is built around the identification of heritage sites that have the potential to contribute to rural visitor trail development. At the core of the objective is the clustering of antiquities and historical features that would attract visitors to the locality and contribute to increased dwell time. Actions to identify and engage local community organisations who wish to be involved in improving access to, interpretation of and animation of these sites has been undertaken with the next step incorporating capital works in respect of access, interpretation and viewing.</p> <p>The clustering of sites is designed to create a critical mass that will not only attract visitors but also encourage them to spend more time in the locality, in this context the trails will represent a half a day to a day's worth of activities. These trails can incorporate additional sites of natural heritage and habitat and can be incorporated into the Rural Ways technology platform which is designed to support rural and community based tourism and which supports the multi-choice concept, i.e. create your own personal trail.</p> <p>Nine heritage based trails have been researched supported by a strong information base on each site and also including mapping, access actions required and viewing potential. A number of these sites are located close to farmland therefore information obtained can be pooled with that available through the Meath Fieldnames Study providing the visitor with a greater level of historical background on the locality. In total over sixty sites have been surveyed and researched and can be marketed to visitors when site specific issues have been addressed.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Heritage and historical societies, Meath Tourism, community based heritage interests, local tour guides/site interpreters, local tourism interests, touring service enterprises.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co Meath.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	OPW, Meath County Council, Meath Tourism, Department of Heritage, Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Number of trails opened for visitor appreciation • 10 Number of sites with improved access • 10 Number of projects funded • Amount of match funding invested: €167,400.00 • 5,000 Visitor numbers increase

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Number of community managed sites opened
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Strategic Action 2	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Natural, Social and Cultural Heritage - To support operations designed to support the rural economy through the exploitation of the economic value of Co Meath's unique natural, social and cultural heritage while simultaneously supporting operations designed to support the preservation, conservation and animation of these valuable resources.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	Investments in rural heritage have to be conceived as part of broader programmes in favour of social and economic development. In that regard, the integration of rural heritage in other developmental sectors as a crosscutting theme opens the way for a new generation of investments. Institutional co-ordination and community involvement within a gradual process of economic improvement and physical rehabilitation must be viewed as the necessary ingredients for taking on the manifold conservation and revitalisation needs. In the long run community involvement is the best means of achieving lasting results.
Rationale	<p>Heritage is a broad concept which includes Natural, Historic, and Cultural inheritance. It is the whole variety of things that are passed down from generation to generation, from traditions to landscapes, industrial, recreational, domestic, agricultural, flora and fauna to name but a few.</p> <p>Heritage reflects all that we value of our past. Heritage re-enforces our community sense of belonging and worth - who we are and how we got here. Heritage is also an authentic sense of place, expressed through our customs, traditions, landscape and other heritage resources, that visitors seek out both to share and celebrate. Heritage has contributed significantly to local economic growth across rural Ireland. Rural Heritage, classic and contemporary, contributes to the identity and branding of territory, so relevant in an age of globalisation and fierce competition. This identity constitutes the base for sustainable and endogenous development. The link between culture and tourism is the most visible aspect of the contribution of culture to rural development: 37% of the global tourism has a cultural motivation. When tourism is identified as part of an overall development strategy, the identification, protection and enhancement of historic resources is vital for any sustainable effort. Heritage visitors stay longer, visit twice as many places, and so spend 2.5 times more than other visitors. Worldwide, wherever heritage tourism has been evaluated this basic tendency is observed: heritage visitors stay longer, spend more per day and therefore have a significantly greater per trip economic impact. Therefore cultural heritage tourism will also be one of the main economic contributors of the LDS.</p> <p>Our main focus is to support local people in taking pride in the distinctiveness of their own communities through development and celebration of the special skills and knowledge of local people, traditions, social history, environment, culture and local products thus giving the community a feeling of belonging and pride.</p> <p>It is necessary to improve awareness of rural heritage and the ethics of its care in study curricula and to identify tools that can be developed to help communities to better understand and conserve rural heritage. Heritage education needs to be developed through formal and informal processes. Preservation can be the tool to create a future in which a stable community core is enlivened and sustained by a widespread system of small workshops and tailored activities, supported by essential infrastructure and community facilities and made more attractive by well-maintained open</p>

	<p>spaces and monuments.</p> <p>This initiative will create an interest in local culture, heritage and history, it seeks to involve young people together with new and old rural dwellers in a process designed to encourage integration, sense of place and historical and cultural research.</p> <p>Within this strategic action capital support for cultural and heritage networks to encourage collective inter-organisational actions where such actions can promote the interpretation and animation of our rural heritage through publications such as local histories, brochures, websites, podcasts and through avenues including branded interactive information panels, site markers, heritage trail animation and heritage guides.</p> <p>New opportunities for rural communities to generate income through the utilisation of their own cultural knowledge will be fostered facilitating them to employ their diverse social, cultural and heritage resources and matching them with LEADER funding to progress local level development.</p> <p>The strategic action will support the introduction of capacity building programmes, through knowledge-based clusters, in order to provide support for local publishing initiatives, museums and archive services and research actions.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, Meath's historical and heritage groups and local member bodies, local tourism organisations, tourism enterprise providers, cultural and performing groups, literary societies and sporting organisations.
Geographic Area:	The geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, OPW and cultural and performing arts organisations.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Number of projects funded • Level of private investment: €75,000.00 • 15,000 Number of visitors facilitated • 5 Number of jobs created • 10 Number of new cultural heritage based initiatives developed • 5 Associated enterprises supported/created

Local Objective 5	
Title of Local Objective	To provide support for improved access to and utilisation of broadband services to increase connectivity across rural communities and with the disadvantaged and hard to reach. To enable ICT driven interaction between rural communities, relevant state agencies and service providers while also enabling access to broadband for local business and new era community enterprise.
LEADER Theme Sub-theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation. Broadband
Brief Rationale for the Objective	As much as lack of economic opportunity does, social and community disconnection, isolation and seclusion feature as the conspicuous symptoms of rural decline over generations, and directly result from the remoteness and distance that distinguish rural from urban living. To fulfil its promise, rural development must fully embrace the challenges these raise, which are multifaceted

	and diverse, and vary for people of different backgrounds and circumstances, and a variety of processes, supports, infrastructure, and services including ICT require targeted deployment so that all rural dwellers are given opportunities to engage and participate in social, economic and community life.
Financial Allocation (€)	€86,940.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Broadband Utilisation and Access

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 1	Broadband Utilisation and Access - Improving connectivity to enable improved utilisation, service delivery and access.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	This action will provide rural communities with assisted connectivity to information and services through developing new community services to be located in community or state agency facilities situated within rural communities. Increased access and know-how to reliable and high-speed broadband is vital for the economic and social development of rural areas and communities. High-quality broadband enables businesses to set-up or continue to be based in rural areas, by overcoming barriers relating to access to markets and services. There is also a potential to create additional employment as access to broadband can support businesses to grow. Individuals and communities will have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to develop and access digital connectivity and make more use of it.
Rationale	<p>The use and application of ICTs as the basic instrumentalities of the Information Society go much beyond discussions of the digital divide. They include examining how and under what conditions Broadband and ICT access can be made usable and useful i.e. how effective use can be achieved by, among others, marginal or excluded populations and communities. Developing strategies and applications for using ICTs to support local economic development, social justice and civic engagement; ensuring local access to education and health services; enabling local control of information production and distribution; and, ensuring the survival and continuing vitality of local cultures are among the most significant possible applications within this strategic action.</p> <p>Defining access to ICT is difficult for several reasons. While access is consistently identified as a key principle in policy discussions, it is not an end in itself. Access only enables further activities that can only partially be specified beforehand. Therefore the proposed model of access under this strategic action will include: support for a multiplicity of usage roles involving creation and dissemination as well as retrieval of existing information; encompass both conventional and new media; recognise the interplay of social and technical dimensions in the development of infrastructure; define what services are essential; identify access gaps particularly for those groupings in our communities who are excluded and marginalised.</p> <p>This access model will take an e-readiness approach which includes the training, technical, legal and regulatory infrastructures which ensures access to the use of technology. Examples may also include, basic ICT training to priority groups, skills development for installing broadband, feasibility studies in relation to community broadband and funding for small</p>

	scale equipment, such as boosters, for local businesses and community facilities.
Primary Target Group(s)	Hard to reach target groups and communities including disadvantaged youth, older people and time poor sectors of society such as home carers and rural enterprises as primary employment generators.
Geographic Area:	The geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Broadband providers, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 no. of Individuals assisted • 10 no. of facilities engaged in projects • 350 no. engaged in training to enable effective use • 10 Broadband, internet and social media equipment installations • 5 no. FTE jobs created • Private match funding invested: €30,000.00

Local Objective 6	
Title of Local Objective	To provide support for community facility development to counteract the withdrawal of essential services, to provide for social and economic interaction at the local level, to promote community enterprise, provide for service provider outreach and to operationalise community action in support of the hard to reach and disadvantaged in rural society.
LEADER Theme	Social Inclusion
Sub-theme	Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities
Brief Rationale for the Objective	As much as lack of economic opportunity does, social and community disconnection, loss of essential services, lack of community facilities, isolation and seclusion feature as the conspicuous symptoms of rural decline over generations, and directly result from the remoteness and distance that distinguish rural from urban living. To fulfil its promise, rural development must fully embrace the challenges these raise, which are multifaceted and diverse, and vary for people, rural communities or people of different backgrounds and circumstances, and a variety of processes, supports, community infrastructure and services require targeted development so that all rural dwellers are given opportunities to engage, avail of essential services and participate in social, economic and community life.
Financial Allocation (€)	€869,400.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Facility Development 2. Developing Community Resources (Hard to Reach)

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Community Facility Development – Developing community facilities to enhance quality of life, educational opportunity and address local service loss.
Brief Description of	Community assets are those which include social capital, physical assets

Strategic Action 2	leased, owned and managed by the community and may include a wide range of buildings, facilities, land or environmental spaces and features. An emphasis will be placed on operations which promote the benefits of assets for building community life, addressing social inclusion, enhancing opportunities for progression, supporting lifelong learning and training, are attractive to residents, businesses and visitors and capable of providing essential services.
Rationale	Rural communities have experienced a gradual rural decline over the last couple of decades. Changing agricultural practices and the more recent economic crisis have contributed to rural unemployment, which has led to outward migration, reduced rural services, and to the marginal economic viability of many rural communities. The loss of public services, high unemployment levels and the consequential outmigration of younger, better educated members of rural communities has collectively endangered the social fabric and structure of rural areas. This has resulted in the run down or withdrawal, at a local level of many essential services such as transport, medical, education and policing, as well as the closure of small shops, post offices, garages and small locally based trading concerns. The enhancement of community facilities as a means of addressing these gaps is a significant imperative.
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations, village and town communities, local service providers, social economy interests.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co. Meath with a focus on disadvantaged EDs
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Faith organisations, Clann Credo, Community Finance Ireland, GAA, Community Resource Holders, Social Enterprise and Small Business Organisations.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 no. of community projects funded • 10 buildings restored or enhanced • 25% Increase in community usage and service provision • 10 no. of services provided or restored • 10 FTE jobs created • Private match funding invested: €584,800.00

Strategic Action 2	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Developing Community Resources targeting the Hard to Reach
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	Examples of potential activity include feasibility studies and business plans for resource and asset based development; investment in development and refurbishment of local community resources; purchase of equipment to enable additional economic development and social inclusion objectives to be achieved; review of community resources to maximise usage; developing resource sharing management initiatives; reviewing and developing ways to overcome barriers to resource utilisation e.g. integrating local services with community transport initiatives; developing and supporting resource sharing networks and knowledge sharing in respect of community resources and facilities across community groups and organisations. It is also important to note that where resources are being placed in community ownership or control, the LAG if providing support has an obligation to ensure that the future of these resources and their utilisation is sustainable. Business planning will play a key role in resource transfer, community management policy and control.

Rationale	<p>Village communities across Co. Meath hold significant resources in the form of people, land, buildings and facilities which are available for community activity and service provision. In the majority of cases the physical resources are owned or managed by community organisations and there is a long history of local groups using resource-based development to achieve long term social, economic, and environmental improvements in their local area. However, the community consultation process highlighted the fact that community resources, principally the people, remain under-utilised with their skills and knowledge not put to use in addressing community needs or working on behalf of deprived sectors or disadvantaged members of the community.</p> <p>In the early stages of the new programme, it is intended to undertake an audit to establish location, capacity, current use, local demands and potential for future resource development in terms of supporting the hard to reach. This knowledge will enable the LAG and the communities it serves to be better informed about funding decisions relating to the utilisation of community resources and to ensure that any funding used for this purpose is invested strategically in order to engage hard to reach target groups in County Meath.</p> <p>The hard to reach can be defined as the underserved, the elderly, the young, minorities, those slipping through the net and the service resistant. To support our work with the hard to reach, our strategy will include five operational approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with people in their own environment • Developing outreach components to projects/initiatives • Partnership working with other bodies and agencies • Target agents for change in the community, sports body leaders, groups that people divide into for common, social, political, economic, cultural, business and education purposes • Work with community organisations with an existing rapport with the hard to reach <p>LEADER support will enable groups to plan better for investment in community resources, subject to both need and longer term impact being demonstrated. It is expected that LEADER funding will operate alongside other sources of national exchequer finance to meet demand within this strategic action and maximise the benefit to local communities.</p> <p>Taking service provision to the hard to reach is a fundamental objective of this strategic action, LEADER will assist in creating the local circumstances in which this can be facilitated.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Young people, older people, migrants, people with disabilities, small farmers, carers in society, minority groupings, the unemployed and disadvantaged.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of County Meath with a focus on deprivation and hard to reach communities.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Laterlife Network, Foroige, Irish Farmers Association, GAA, sporting bodies, Teagasc, communities of interest, relevant NGO's and community bodies. Relevant state agencies and NGO Networks.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 Number of service provision initiatives planned and supported • 1,500 Number of persons engaged in capacity building • 20 Diversity of opportunity options provided

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 no. FTE jobs created • Private match funding invested: €109,000.00 • Localised support offered to 15 hard to reach communities
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Local Objective 7	
Title of Local Objective	To support the development of a strategic framework and community planning in addressing the issues facing rural youth. Support will be provided for the assimilation of rural youth into the social economy to provide essential work like experience, promotion of creative endeavour, improvement of employability and action to address skills deficits and ease the increasingly difficult journey into employment.
LEADER Theme	Social Inclusion
Sub-theme	Rural Youth
Brief Rationale for the Objective	As much as lack of economic opportunity and employment does, disadvantaged rural youth and social issues arising feature as the conspicuous symptoms of rural decline over recent generations. To fulfil its promise, rural development must fully embrace the challenges raised by this issue, which are multifaceted and diverse. This will require the provision of supports to the target group, the development of the social economy, community infrastructure and service provision to ensure that rural youth is given opportunities to engage in training and the work life environment to underpin future employment prospects.
Financial Allocation (€)	€163,802.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Rural Youth

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 4	Addressing the needs and advancing the interests of rural youth.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 4	<p>In developing a strategic framework to address the issues facing rural youth in the county, the LAG is proposing to encourage and support the development of the social economy with a specific youth focus. According to a report of the Social Enterprise Task Force 2010, the social enterprise sector in Ireland has the potential to grow significantly to represent 5 % of GDP and to generate at least 65,000 jobs. It recognises that the sector is underdeveloped and that growth is hindered by a number of historical factors including a lack of policy focus and direction and limited access to support structures similar to those available to the SME sector.</p> <p>Employers across all sectors continue to identify the lack of customer facing skills as one of the key issues in filling job vacancies while for job seekers it is the insistence that applicants have 2 to 3 years' experience for almost every position advertised that presents a problem. Developing the social economy with a youth focus in County Meath can simultaneously address these issues.</p> <p>One of the key elements of the proposed social economy model will be ensuring that the young people who participate achieve an appropriate recognition for the skills they have developed. Meath Partnership as a QQI accredited body will assist participating organisations and project</p>

	promoters to provide the necessary skills recognition.
Rationale	<p>There were approximately 21,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 25 years living in County Meath at the last census. Foreign nationals account for almost 11% with Poland and England the most common countries of origin. Throughout Europe youth have been disproportionately effected by the economic downturn and while we in Ireland are experiencing a genuine economic recovery young people today still face a number of key challenges not least of these being the unprecedented uncertainty and change in contemporary worlds of work. Many of those on the margins of society face an increasingly difficult journey into employment and even those in work face insecurity as the required skill-sets continue to change in response to the evolving marketplace. For today's young people the notion of a career scarcely resembles that of previous generations.</p> <p>At present County Meath has a vibrant and sustainable third sector economy. Meath can boast a vast array of community organisations working to deliver services and supports to local communities throughout the county. All type and manner of sports are also widely represented and available, and there are a considerable number of bodies supporting all type of creative endeavour. Throughout the year the county provides festivals and events to suit all tastes. The level of volunteer activity necessary to support all of this activity is considerable and most of the groups or organisations responsible for the management and delivery of these diverse programmes are not-for-profit associations or NGOs. Over the years, through successive LEADER programmes, many of these organisations have benefited from the available funding and support that the programme offers. With funding from central government sources still in short supply as we continue on the road to economic recovery it is anticipated that many of these groups will once again turn to LEADER to further develop their services to the community. It is within this context that the LAG will encourage project promoters to harness the potential of the social economy to support the development of key skills and competences among youth across the county.</p> <p>The proposed social economy engagement model will provide valuable work experience for young people enabling them to build impressive curriculum vitae of desirable skills and competences. The LAG will put a considerable emphasis on ensuring that the soft skills so readily sought by business are supplemented by key skills essential to the employability and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>To support the achievement of this strategic action LEADER will, as part of its animation programme, host several workshops under the title "Developing The Social Economy for Youth Employment". It will also collate and disseminate best practice social economy development models from Ireland and abroad to act as a reference tool for project promoters interested in this approach.</p> <p>Young people will play a significant role in the future development of society and economy in County Meath and the social economy model proposed will help to sustain and develop the third sector throughout the lifetime of the current LEADER programme and beyond.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	The primary target group are rural youth throughout County Meath. The proposed strategic action is such that it can be expected that the youth engaged will be representative of a wide range of youth profiles. LEADER will ensure that all sectors of the rural youth target group are engaged particularly those at risk of long-term unemployment and the hard to reach.
Geographic Area:	The geographic territory of County Meath
Organisation who will	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as the Implementing Partner body.

deliver the Action:	
Any collaborating Organisations	Existing social economy enterprises, community facility management committees, festival organising committees, cultural event organisers, training organisations, social care providers and community service interests, relevant state bodies and community transport providers.
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2017-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 social enterprises engaged • 250 youths will develop new skills and competencies • 200 youths will achieve experiential accreditation • 15 service providers with youth included in service provision • 150 youth progressing to employment, self-employment or further education and training • Private match funding invested: €30,000.00

Local Objective 8	
Title of Local Objective	To support the sustainable development of County Meath's water resources, to improve the recreational use of inland waters, to realise the significant health, economic and environmental benefit arising from such development and to foster a better understanding of the need to care for and protect our environment.
LEADER Theme Sub-theme	Rural Environment Protection and sustainable use of Water Resources
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The natural environment is the lifeblood of rural Ireland, and the protection and sustainable utilisation of water resources is where rural development must have its starting point. While sustainable development principles are cornerstones of this and previous local development strategies in the county, there is a recognition that not just environmental, but social, community, and economic opportunity exists for rural people where the challenges of sustainable development of water resources are understood and embraced.
Financial Allocation (€)	€313,950.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Inland Waters Recreation and Protection

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 1	Inland Waters Recreation and Protection - To support the conservation focused development of lakes and rivers as recreational resources which contribute to quality of life while offering opportunities for water based enterprise creation
Brief Description of Strategic Action 1	This strategic action will support the sustainable development of Meath's water resources through the provision of aid to Blue Way development proposals, foreshore facilities, improved access, angling facilities, boating, kayaking, canoeing, bird watching and other forms of water based recreational activity.
Rationale	Recreational use of inland waters and adjacent land enhances the quality of people's lives and fosters a better understanding of the

	<p>environment. Recreation provides economic, social, health and environmental benefits to individuals and communities alike. LEADER in county Meath will work with communities and the private sector to seek to realise the recreational potential of county Meath as a driver of rural enterprise and wellbeing.</p> <p>There is a clear need emerging from the community and stakeholder consultation process for improved strategic planning in providing for water-based sport and recreation in county Meath. This process will identify existing recreational resources to be utilised and protected, and opportunities to cater for unmet recreational demand. LEADER will address the lack of packaging of blueway recreational activity in Meath, the lack of networking of existing facilities and operators and the need to strengthen the vision of Meath as a recreational destination in this context. Meath's potential to provide a full range of water based recreational activity is very strong given the diversity of the county's rivers, coastline, lakes and waterbodies. Sustainable management and development of these water resources requires closer collaboration between local authorities, public agencies, riparian owners and water resource users in all their diversity, greater collaboration and collective development will be facilitated through LEADER funded actions.</p> <p>The LDS will seek to identify characteristics that contribute to the tourism value of a waterbody and enable the development of knowledge of good practice in this respect and will support properly conceived proposals with targeted capital investment packages.</p> <p>Support will also be offered towards the restoration of navigation upon historic inland waterways, and the construction of new navigations where this enhances the use of existing waterways, contributes to amenity improvements, permits the mitigation of any adverse effects on nature conservation, and promotes economic regeneration.</p> <p>The LAG's inland waterway recreation development plan will seek the expansion of recreational facilities to fill gaps for defined demand such as whole of family, niche activities, active retired and young people and facilities that benefit residents and visitors alike.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Community development organisations, conservation societies, entrepreneurs, recreation and water based sporting interests, tourism networks, rural society organisations.
Geographic Area:	Entire area of Co Meath with a specific focus on larger rivers, estuarine environments, and the lakes of North and North West Meath.
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath LAG with Meath Partnership as implementing partner body.
Any collaborating Organisations	Fáilte Ireland, Inland Waterways, Regional Fishery Authorities, Coillte
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2017-2020
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 no. lakeside operations • 2 no. coastline developments • 4 no. enterprises assisted • 3 no. riverside operations • 10 no. FTE jobs created • Private match funding invested: €266,000.00 • 1 inland waterways development plan

Local Objective 9

Title of Local Objective	To support actions to combat the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems through engagement with agencies, organisations, communities and individuals with specific interest in biodiversity in respect of County Meath's farmlands, bogs, lakes, rivers, coastal sites and wildlife habitats.
LEADER Theme	Rural Environment
Sub-theme	Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The natural environment and its associated flora and fauna is the lifeblood of rural Ireland, and its protection and sustainable growth are where rural development must have its starting point. While sustainable development principles are cornerstones of this and previous local development strategies in the county, there is a recognition that not just environmental, but social, community, and economic opportunity exists for rural people where the challenges of sustainable development are understood and embraced.
Financial Allocation (€)	€303,125.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Protection and Improvement of Local Diversity

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 2	Protection and Improvement of Local Diversity - To support conservation and restoration of biodiversity through actions to combat the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems by strengthening the knowledge base for the conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity as a rural resource.
Brief Description of Strategic Action 2	<p>Biodiversity in Meath is rich and abundant, and the landscape provides numerous areas and forms of natural habitat. River valleys, particularly those of the Boyne and Blackwater, the county's coastal zone to the east, rolling farmland, lakelands, bogs and upland areas (many defined by historical and pre-historical significance), provide a breadth and depth of landscape types and a multiplicity of habitats that represent both resources, assets, and attractions but also obligations and responsibilities for citizens, developers and for environmental policy more generally. As such, support will be provided to initiatives and projects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small-scale and local biodiversity research initiatives that form part of wider development projects or plans; • wider research into new forms of biodiversity protection, recovery or enhancement services in local settings that have long-term scope to be commercial or offer "public good" benefits; • local biodiversity interest groups, community actions, or local improvement projects; • tourism projects and initiatives that place significance on biodiversity protection, enhancement, celebration or education; • recreational amenities that seek to enhance, protect or raise awareness about and experience of local biodiversity and its importance; • projects and initiatives seeking to enhance young people's understanding and appreciation of biodiversity; • training programmes for local communities, interest groups or individuals that centre on biodiversity protection, enhancement or

	<p>promotion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • programmes to enhance biodiversity knowledge and appreciation among tourism, recreation and sporting service providers (e.g. in hunting/shooting, fishing, cycling, equestrian, walking, water sport or water-based recreation). • initiatives designed to facilitate or improve community-based biodiversity management.
Rationale	<p>Meath has a rich and varied landscape with historic features dating back to prehistory, the county retains a strong connection with traditional agriculture and the landscape supports a wide range of ecological habitats. Hedgerows are considered to be a prominent feature of the landscape; a recent survey estimated there are over 22000km of hedgerow in the county. Many have grown tall and form an extensive network of tree lines, which gives the intensive agricultural landscape a wooded appearance from the ground level.</p> <p>The Boyne and Blackwater Rivers dissect the county and are considered to be of international importance in terms of nature conservation. The Boyne and Blackwater Special Area of Conservation was designated because these rivers contain populations of species protected under Annex II of the European Habitats Directive (Atlantic salmon, otters, and lamprey – an ancient, jawless fish) and the wetlands associated with the rivers include habitats protected in Annex I of the same directive (fen and wet woodlands).</p> <p>Meath contains several small lakes, a few of which are designated for nature conservation because they are hard-water marl lakes (e.g. Lough Bane and Lough Glass). These hard water lakes occur mainly on the Meath/ Westmeath border. The only medium-sized lake, is Lough Sheelin (SPA 4065), located on the north-western boundary of the county and home to several important populations of birds. It should be noted that lakes in County Meath have a particular fishery value as they contain valuable salmonid and course fish species.</p> <p>Meath's short coastline is home to internationally important populations of wintering birds at the Boyne estuary (SAC 1957), as well as protected habitats of high nature conservation importance. A total of eight habitats listed under Annex I of the European Union Habitats Directive exist at this site including estuary, tidal mudflat, embryonic shifting dunes, marram dunes, fixed dunes, <i>Salicornia</i> mud, and both Atlantic and Mediterranean salt meadow. Other important coastal sites include the Laytown Dunes and Nanny estuary (pNHA 554) consisting of a mosaic of habitats including freshwater marsh, salt-marsh, sandy beach and muddy estuary.</p> <p>In Ireland, peatlands have accumulated 1,200 million tons of carbon that would otherwise be released and contribute to global warming. Peatlands contain about 90% water and act as vast water stores safeguarding ecosystems downstream. They also have a vital role in the supply of drinking water in catchments that are largely covered by peatlands. Ireland contains over 50% of all raised bog habitat remaining in Europe. Meath represents the north eastern limit of raised bog distribution and in total seven sites are designated for nature conservation. Raised bogs are a rare habitat in an international context and therefore are of high nature conservation value.</p> <p>Urban areas are not necessarily wildlife deserts and a wide range of plants and animals can be found in public green spaces, town parks, old stone walls, hedgerows, graveyards, bridges, rivers, canals, gardens and waste ground. Towns such as Navan and Trim have many old stone walls and</p>

	<p>bridges that are important habitats for bats and birds in particular. Old graveyards can be wildlife hotspots too if they have not been managed too intensively. Certain species such as foxes have become increasingly visible in urban areas.</p> <p>Meath is home to several protected mammals. All bats are protected under the Wildlife Acts. At least eight of the ten species known to occur in Ireland have been recorded in Meath. Several protected bird species appear among Meath's bird fauna. There are two nature reserves in county Meath managed by the Irish Wildlife Trust namely <i>Golashane Farm</i> and <i>Newcastle Lough</i>.</p> <p>The LDS will therefore assist in delivering on the following national vision for biodiversity;</p> <p><i>"That biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally."</i></p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Farming community, rare breed societies, gun clubs, game bird breeders, bird watch groups, conservation societies, and young people in education, Flora and Fauna linked organisations and community bodies.
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	IFA, NARGC, Bird Watch Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, Coillte, Bord Na Mona, OPW
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2019
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 Farmers engaged in training on application of new conservation technologies; • 2 Gun clubs engaged in breeding to conserve endangered species; • 15 Landowners and communities engaged in habitat preservation and improvement; • 3 Breed society programmes for protection of rare breeds, • 5 Training and education programmes delivered to young people in education, • 4 Lakeland, estuarine environments and bog lands engaged in biodiversity protection actions • Private match funding invested: €230,000.00

Local Objective 10	
Title of Local Objective	To promote and progress social, community and economic action supportive of environmental protection, sustainability and good practice in environmental care.
LEADER Theme	Rural Environment
Sub-theme	Development of Renewable Energy
Brief Rationale for the Objective	The natural environment is the lifblood of rural Ireland, and its defence and protection in respect of carbon emissions and climate change is where rural development must have its starting point. While sustainable development principles are cornerstones of this and previous local development strategies in the county, there is a recognition that not just environmental, but social, community, and economic opportunity exists for rural people where the challenges

	posed by climate change are understood and embraced.
Financial Allocation (€)	€304,902.00
No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective	1. Development of Renewable Energy

Strategic Action 1	
Title of Strategic Action 3	Development of Renewable Energy - To drive community engagement with and investment in energy conservation, renewable energy utilisation and new sustainable energy technologies
Brief Description of Strategic Action 3	This strategic action seeks to secure investment in improving the thermal, electrical and energy efficiency of community buildings and facilities while also encouraging investment in the retrofitting of new sustainable energy technologies. The methodological approach will involve innovative collective and partnership approaches in delivering cost effective capital investment operations. Support measures will include, building fabric upgrade including insulation ventilation and heat recovery systems, systems upgrades, energy saving control technology, energy generation systems passive and active.
Rationale	<p>Community buildings are often the hub of community life, but remaining financially viable in these challenging times is always a concern, For some community facilities energy can be one of the biggest costs they face therefore monitoring and conserving energy consumption is critical.</p> <p>There are a range of energy efficiency actions that can be taken, however it is important to understand your current and future energy needs before investing in renewable energy technologies. The benefits that energy generation and conservation bring are greater than ever before and are predictable in terms of cost and good financial return.</p> <p>Both heat and electricity feature strongly in terms of energy related investments, however, heat as the greatest energy consumer and biggest cost in community facilities is most often the cost heading which should first be tackled in combination with insulation and conservation. Accordingly LEADER will focus on providing assistance to communities in addressing this issue.</p>
Primary Target Group(s)	Community organisations controlling and managing community buildings and facilities in the rural environment
Geographic Area:	Geographical territory of Co. Meath
Organisation who will deliver the Action:	Meath Local Action Group with Meath Partnership as implementing partner
Any collaborating Organisations	SEAI
Timeframe for Delivery of Action	2016-2018
Anticipated Outputs/ Indicators and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 no. projects funded • 7 no. facilities engaged in upgrade operations • 4 no. facilities generating sustainable energy • 11 communities involved in collective developments • Private match funding invested: €100,000.00

