



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

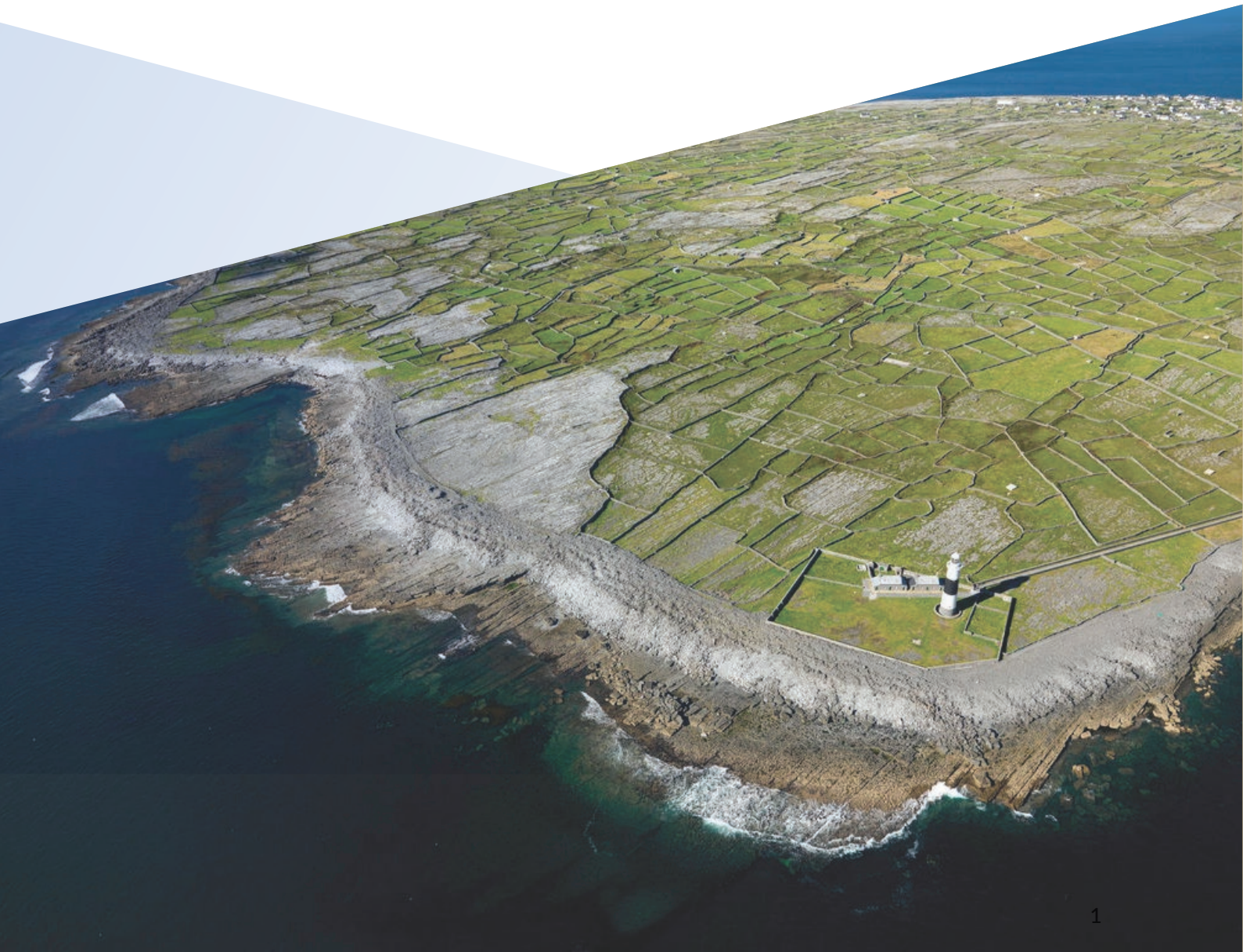
# Statement of Strategy 2021-2023





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## Our Vision

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A sustainable society with individual and community wellbeing at its heart, supporting thriving rural communities, and where all communities, urban and rural, have opportunities to grow and develop economically, socially and culturally



# Foreword

## Minister Heather Humphreys



I welcome the publication of the Department's second Statement of Strategy, covering the period 2021-2023. This Strategy has resulted from extensive consultation with a variety of stakeholders. It will guide the delivery

of an ambitious work programme which will make a positive and significant difference to rural Ireland and all our communities in the years ahead.

Since its establishment in 2017, I have seen the positive contribution the Department has made across our economy and society.

We will continue to have a crucial role to play in supporting all communities across Ireland to thrive and develop sustainably through the challenges of COVID-19, Brexit and climate adaptation.

Through leading delivery of Government policies impacting on rural Ireland and communities, and investing strategically, this Department will enable rural Ireland and our communities to emerge stronger from these challenges.

The delivery of key Programme for Government commitments by my Department comes at a significant time as we strive to make a meaningful difference to those living and working in rural Ireland, including the offshore Islands.

Our policies and programmes will provide supports that ensure all communities and individuals have the capacity and opportunity to contribute to, aid, and benefit from, a shared national recovery and future growth.

We will renew our focus on strengthening community resilience and social cohesion, supporting communities so that they are empowered to face current and future challenges. In doing this we will seek to reduce social inequalities and exclusion, and facilitate a society that is just, fair and leaves nobody behind.

Present challenges have shown us the potential to uncover the strength and resilience that exists within our communities. I know that the work of the Department in fostering and nurturing this spirit in an inclusive manner will help deliver this Strategy successfully. Opportunities for economic, social and cultural development within rural Ireland are there to be harnessed, notably around exploring the future potential of remote working, and this Department and its work will champion balanced regional development in a manner which will benefit us all.

The Department's vision is one I am passionate about and one I look forward to working to deliver upon with Minister of State Joe O'Brien and our colleagues across Government, our Secretary General, and the committed and professional staff of the Department.

At all times, our Department will strive to work closely with our agencies and key stakeholders, and most importantly with those in all communities across Ireland to fully implement the ambition of this Strategy in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Heather Humphreys'.

**Heather Humphreys**

Minister for Rural and Community Development



## Our Mission

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To promote rural and  
community development and  
to support vibrant, inclusive  
and sustainable communities  
throughout Ireland



# Introduction

## Secretary General – Kevin McCarthy



This Statement of Strategy sets out the vision, mission and strategic goals that will guide the work of the Department for the period 2021 to 2023. It describes the wider context for the delivery of our work and the key actions that we commit to implementing over the next three years.

The Strategy has been prepared with the benefit of an extensive range of inputs from staff, stakeholders and colleagues in other Government Departments and I want to thank all those who contributed. It will be delivered in partnership with all of those who share in our mission. That mission is more relevant and important than ever.

The Department will seek to deliver on this mission through a range of commitments under the policy framework set out in this Strategy, through a range of programmes and supports for communities and community organisations, and through collaborations across Government and with our wider stakeholders. Together, we will work to unlock the vast potential for economic, social and cultural development that exists across rural Ireland, within our Island communities and in our wider communities, both urban and rural.

The Strategy will contribute to wider Government objectives for achieving a sustainable, inclusive and balanced recovery post Covid, for supporting climate action based on a just transition, and for delivering on the objectives of the National Planning Framework, as well as to the delivery of specific Programme for Government commitments on a number of priority fronts.

Since its establishment in 2017, the work of the Department and its staff has made a significant positive difference to rural Ireland and to communities throughout Ireland. We remain committed to organisational excellence and will continue to support improvement and innovation in how we deliver, in how we measure the impact of what we do and in how we communicate what we do and why we do it.

I am proud of the commitment and innovation of the staff of the Department over recent challenging times. As an organisation, we recognise the importance of valuing and supporting our staff in their work, in their development and in their wellbeing. Together with colleagues, I look forward to working with Minister Heather Humphreys and Minister of State Joe O'Brien to now build further on our achievements and to deliver on our ambitious agenda over the period of this Strategy.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kevin McCarthy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Kevin McCarthy**  
Secretary General

# Context for our Work

In finalising our new Statement of Strategy we have carefully reflected on our operating context and this has influenced our strategic goals and objectives, and the actions which we commit to delivering over the next three years.

## Introduction

Balanced social and economic development, where the benefits of growth and recovery are felt equally by all people, is integral to the prosperity and wellbeing of the nation as a whole. Ireland's economic, social, and cultural development is heavily dependent on the contribution of rural Ireland and those in grassroots community and voluntary groups, and organisations in all parts of the country.

Within the above context the remit of our Department in supporting rural and community development in all communities across Ireland is more important than ever. The Department will seek to improve the economic and social opportunities available in both rural and urban areas through delivery of a wide suite of policy initiatives, actions, funding and supports over the lifetime of this strategy.

The Department's work will be guided by the Programme for Government existing and evolving cross-Government priorities such as Project Ireland 2040, the response to climate change, the economic and social recovery from the impact of COVID-19 and dealing with Brexit impacts.

Implementation of our key policy documents will underpin our work for the next three years, including:

- Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
- Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024
- National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022
- National Volunteering Strategy

## Programme for Government

Our Shared Future, the Programme for Government agreed in June 2020, outlines a range of commitments for supporting balanced regional development and investment in rural areas and in communities, both urban and rural. Much of our work over the lifetime of this Strategy Statement will prioritise the continued progression of these commitments.

## Our changing environment

A key objective of all our programmes is that they are targeted at those sectors and areas most in need. We recognise the importance of providing effective responses to ongoing and future economic and social challenges, notably those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the response to climate change, Just Transition, and the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

Facing these challenges will ensure that our remit takes on increasing significance as we seek to build resilience and help develop a sustainable and prosperous future for our communities, particularly for those most impacted or at risk. As we seek to embark on an economic recovery and a return to growth, guided by the National Economic Recovery Plan, it is important to ensure that the recovery is inclusive and regionally balanced where no one is left behind.

We will ensure our programmes and supports retain sufficient flexibility to react to emerging needs in our communities and will continue to work closely with our many partners and stakeholders with a view to maximising the impacts of our policies and programmes at local level. Our collaborative relationships with local government, organisations in the community and voluntary sector and our other implementing partners are essential for programme delivery and to realise our vision to support sustainable development at a local level.

We will also seek to further develop our relationship with colleagues in Northern Ireland, through shared knowledge and cooperation that is of benefit to communities on both sides of the border. In particular, we will work to ensure that the opportunities presented by the new PEACE PLUS programme are harnessed to deliver tangible benefits for border communities.

These and the following additional key themes were to the forefront of our thoughts as we consulted on, and finalised, our Strategy.



# Climate Adaptation

**Climate change and the actions required to mitigate against it continue to have a profound effect on all aspects of our lives. The Government has outlined ambitious targets for a climate neutral future and measures undertaken to achieve these will require significant changes in behaviours for all families, businesses and communities in Ireland.**

The Department has an important role to play in addressing the impacts these changes will bring by engaging with stakeholders and communities to advocate for, and to support, a just transition. This entails building resilience in vulnerable communities to overcome climate adaptation challenges, and maximising climate mitigation and adaptation opportunities.

We will do this through our policy development and through our funding programmes by:

- Directly supporting projects that bring about tangible climate benefits and incentivising climate action through programmes under our remit
- Ensuring that the climate agenda features strongly in consideration of policy development and implementation, particularly the new Rural Development Policy and the Strategy for the Community and Voluntary sector – Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities
- Assisting communities to build capacity in local development and community organisations in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Participating in the development and delivery of cross-Government Climate Action Plans
- Contributing to the goal of reducing energy emissions across the Civil Service





# Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The UN Sustainable Development Goals recognise the need for strategies that lead to sustained, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and address a range of social needs, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

A key commitment under the SDG National Implementation Plan involves mainstreaming the 17 SDGs across national policies, and our Department will continue to take Ireland's commitments under the SDGs into account in our policy development and implementation.

We will:

- Align our policies with the specific goals and the targets in the Implementation Plan by placing the SDGs at the heart of our policies, including the Rural Development Policy, the *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities* Strategy, the National Social Enterprise Policy and the National Volunteering Strategy.
- Work across Government to strengthen and build understanding and capacity in local government and the community and voluntary sector to support the delivery of current and future SDG National Implementation Plans.



# Innovation

A thriving culture of innovation enables the Civil and Public Service to develop new policy responses and provide more efficient and improved services. Over the lifetime of this Statement of Strategy, we will seek to innovate in the priority areas identified by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in its 'Making Innovation Real' Public Service Strategy.

These are:

- **Citizen-centric innovation** – By continuing to meaningfully engage with our stakeholders and collaborative partners in communities, we will encourage innovation in our programmes and policies so that they continue to respond to the needs articulated by our delivery partners and end users.
- **Culture of innovation** – Our people are our greatest asset and we aim to foster a culture of ideas and empowerment that enables our staff to create new and effective ways to deliver our mission.
- **Scale up innovation** – We will support social innovation and develop a strategy to grow and develop it in Ireland. Through increased communication and collaboration, we will share and implement ideas with colleagues across Government

# Leading and influencing across Government

The development of rural Ireland and of sustainable, inclusive and resilient communities are Government priorities that involve collaboration and partnership with other Government Departments, public bodies and State agencies, as well as with sectoral representatives and local and community groups.

Our Department plays an important part in leading and guiding this collaborative work, through:

- Shaping and developing policy and implementation strategies for rural Ireland and for communities
- Leading and overseeing whole-of-Government responses to the needs of these communities in a range of policy areas
- Advocating for the consideration of rural Ireland, local communities and the offshore islands in the development of policies and programmes across Government
- Influencing and supporting the important work of other Departments, through co-production of policies and strategies, contributing policy inputs, and the delivery of specific actions that help deliver economic recovery, growth and social advancement in rural Ireland and communities
- Engaging with other Departments and agencies to promote and facilitate appropriate community engagement in relation to initiatives which impact on marginalised and disadvantaged communities

## Collaborating across Government

In delivering our mission, the Department takes a leadership role in the development of cross-Government policy and implementation plans in a range of areas. We acknowledge the support and partnership of other Departments in enabling the delivery in these areas, which include:

- Rural Development Policy and Investment
- Strategy for the Community and Voluntary sectors
- Social Enterprise
- Volunteering
- Philanthropy
- Islands Development
- Outdoor Recreation Strategy
- Development of connected remote working networks
- Public Libraries Strategy
- Dormant Accounts Fund Policy
- Social inclusion (in partnership with the Department of Social Protection)
- Development of Town Centre First principles (in partnership with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)



# Partnering to support delivery across Government

The Department will also continue to collaborate with other Departments to advance our strategic objectives and support the delivery of other cross-cutting Government priorities that deliver for rural Ireland and communities.

These include:

## Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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- Engagement on the implementation of the Rural Development Programme and on inputs into EU Regulations for the Common Agricultural Policy insofar as these relate to the LEADER Programme

## Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

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- Supporting the First 5 Strategy by investing in libraries as community hubs for young children and their parents
- Supporting the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the National LGBTI+ Strategy and the National Disability Inclusion Strategy.
- Contributing to work relating to International Protection

## Department of Defence

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- Supporting the work of the Government Taskforce on Emergency Planning through active participation on the Taskforce and engagement with the Office of Emergency Planning
- Contributing to community engagement, communication and resilience and inputting into relevant policy development on emergency planning

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

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- Supporting the implementation of Future Jobs Ireland, Regional Enterprise Plans, and the National Remote Working Strategy
- Participation on the Retail Consultation Group (with an emphasis on Town Centre rejuvenation)

## Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

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- Supporting the rollout of the National Broadband Plan through supporting Local Authority Broadband Officers and the development of Broadband Connection Points
- Co-chairing the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce
- Assisting the national climate action efforts through the completion of inputs and actions to Climate Action Plans and the National Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Plan

## Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

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- Working to secure funding under European Social Fund
- Delivery, through public libraries, of actions contained in the 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy

## Department of Health

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- Contributing to the Healthy Ireland strategy through delivery of the Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme and via funding to LCDCs
- Supporting the Connecting for Life and National Drugs Strategies.
- Contributing to the development of an area-based approach to health and wellbeing in disadvantaged communities

## Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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- Working to develop and implement the Community Call initiative in response to COVID-19 pandemic
- Delivering on the objectives of the National Planning Framework
- Developing the Town Centre First principle and supporting the regeneration of town and village centres
- Through the National Advisory Group, supporting the development of Age Friendly housing options to enable older people to live independently at home in their communities

### Department of Justice

- Supporting the progression of the Policing and Community Safety Bill, ensuring that the community perspective is at the forefront of its development and implementation

### Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

- Supporting the objectives outlined in Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan through delivery of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
- Collaborating as an accountable Department to the PEACE IV and PEACE PLUS programmes.

### Department of Social Protection

- Supporting the implementation of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion
- Developing a new Anti-poverty, Social Inclusion and Community Development Action Plan in consultation with stakeholders

### Department of the Taoiseach

- Contributing to the work of the North-East Inner City Oversight Group which underlines the Government's commitment to ensuring that the recommendations of the Mulvey Report are implemented.

### Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, the Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

- Delivering supports for projects and community organisations in Gaeltacht areas, including the inclusion of Gaeltacht remote working hubs in national hubs network
- Investment in tourism and outdoor recreation infrastructure in partnership with Fáilte Ireland
- Supporting Creative Ireland initiatives in communities

### Department of Transport

- Collaborating on policy issues relating to rural transport
- Cooperating on the development of Ireland's network of greenways





# Our Values

The Department of Rural and Community Development stands for:

## Integrity

- A commitment to independence, impartiality and professionalism in our work
- A culture of accountability, transparency and efficiency in the Department and in our agencies
- Strategies and approaches that achieve and deliver value-for-money
- Inspection, monitoring and evaluation integral to our work which foster continuous improvements of our programmes, policies and procedures

## Equality and Inclusion

- Dedication to fair and equal treatment of all our stakeholders
- Programmes, policies and practices that promote and advance social justice and diversity
- Belief that communities have the right to actively participate in identifying their own needs and interests and the outcomes required to meet them
- Commitment to human rights, equality and anti-discrimination in accordance with the Public Sector Duty obligation of the Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014

## Our Values

## Leadership and Collaboration

- Having clarity of purpose which enables a substantial contribution to effectively face our challenges and maximise emerging opportunities
- Influencing, collaborating and implementing with colleagues across Government, to deliver policies which support our mission and strategic objectives
- Communicate effectively with all our stakeholders on what we do and why we do it to support delivery of our work

## Our People

- We value all our staff and the contribution they make to our mission
- We value staff collaboration, communication and engagement
- Our culture embraces innovation in how we deliver
- We work together in a positive work environment where staff are fully supported to contribute and develop



## Our Strategic Goals

**1**

**Advance the economic and social development of rural areas, including the offshore islands**

**2**

**Contribute to and support national regional development objectives**

**3**

**Support empowered, inclusive and resilient communities and a thriving volunteer culture**

**4**

**Enable the community, voluntary, charity, philanthropic and social economy sectors to contribute fully to civil society**

**5**

**Foster and maintain a high performance culture and organisation to achieve our mission in the interests of all communities**



# Strategic Goal 1

## Advance the economic and social development of rural areas, including the offshore islands

### Strategic Objectives

- Lead a coordinated approach to rural development across Government to increase economic and social opportunities for rural areas.
- Make rural Ireland a viable and attractive place for people to live and raise families, including through the revitalisation of rural towns and villages, with access to good job opportunities and public services.
- Champion connected remote working which will enable people to live in rural areas and work locally.
- Reinforce the contribution of rural Ireland to our national wellbeing and development and emphasise the interdependence between rural and urban areas in supporting the objectives of Project Ireland 2040.
- Support the economic, social and cultural development of our island communities.
- Develop the Outdoor Recreation sector as a key contributor to job opportunities in rural areas.
- Maximise the benefits of high speed broadband and innovative technologies for rural communities and businesses, including through the development of Broadband Connection Points.

### Key Actions

- Publish and implement a new five-year Rural Development Policy to support the economic, social and cultural development of rural Ireland, and co-ordinate delivery of the policy across Government.
- Fund a range of targeted schemes and initiatives under the Department's Rural Development Investment Programme to support the development of rural areas in line with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040.
- Develop and deliver a Transitional LEADER Programme for the period 2021-2022, and a new LEADER programme to commence in 2023 in line with the next EU funding framework.
- Establish a national network of remote co-working facilities to allow more people to live and work locally.
- Publish and implement a new Government policy and associated Action Plan for the development of our offshore islands.
- Publish a new National Outdoor Recreation Strategy which will act as an overarching framework for the development of the outdoor recreation sector.
- Sharing the lead in developing a Town Centre First approach and progressing measures to encourage increased residential occupancy and repurposing of vacant buildings in rural towns and villages.
- Work with Local Authorities through their Broadband Officers to maximise the benefits of high speed broadband for communities and local businesses, including through the Connected Communities Programme which will ensure full use of Broadband Connection Point connectivity.

## Strategic Goal 2

### Contribute to and support national regional development objectives

#### Strategic Objectives

- Support the Western Development Commission in deepening its impact in the Western region and in contributing to regional and national policy objectives.
- Align our key policies and investments under the Department's Rural Development Investment Programme to support the regional growth objectives of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan.
- Promote the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) region, from Donegal to Kerry, as an attractive place in which to live, work and invest.
- Contribute to the delivery of the Government's Regional Enterprise Plans to support job creation and skills development throughout the regions.
- Facilitate the continuous improvement of mobile phone and broadband access throughout the country.

#### Key Actions

- Work with the Western Development Commission to strengthen its role in promoting economic and social development in the Western region and to identify areas for further involvement in regional and national policy objectives.
- Regularly review our policies and programmes to ensure that they are consistent with, and contribute to, the objectives of the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan.
- Work with the Western Development Commission to highlight the assets and opportunities along the Atlantic Economic Corridor area for employment, living and investment, and pilot innovative projects to further enhance the attractiveness of the region in this regard.
- Contribute to the development and delivery of the Government's Regional Enterprise Plans as they are periodically updated, and participate on the Steering Committees for each of the Plans.
- Through the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce, and working with Local Authorities, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders, identify and address issues which will lead to better mobile phone and broadband access throughout the country.



## Strategic Goal 3

### Support empowered, inclusive and resilient communities and a thriving volunteer culture

#### Strategic Objectives

- Support individuals and groups from disadvantaged, marginalised and socially excluded communities to reach their full potential economically, socially and culturally.
- Facilitate the growth of grassroots community-led development and greater participation and engagement by all communities in local decision-making processes which affect them.
- Support and promote the public library as a community hub and develop it as a focal point for community development.
- Recognise, support and promote the value of volunteering for individuals and for society as a whole.

#### Key Actions

- Continue to work with stakeholders in delivering the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups.
- Engage with stakeholders and explore programme review recommendations to further develop and enhance the next iteration of the SICAP Programme, including the development of a Just Transition approach.
- Engage with other Government Departments and agencies to promote and facilitate appropriate community engagement in relation to initiatives which impact on marginalised and disadvantaged communities.
- Support the economic and social regeneration of severely disadvantaged urban areas by supporting place-based approaches on a pilot basis, taking into account the experience to date in Dublin's North East Inner City.
- Restructure the Community Services Programme to maximise its impact in building sustainable communities and reducing social disadvantage.
- Support the enhancement of community facilities in disadvantaged areas through the Community Enhancement Programme.
- Enhance the capacity of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) by implementing the recommendations of the LCDC review.
- Support Local Authorities to develop and implement new Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), taking account of the impact of COVID-19 on local businesses and communities.
- Review the Department's experience with the Community Call initiative, and examine the merits of maintaining it on a more permanent footing.
- Develop and enhance the Seniors Alert Scheme to ensure it adapts to changing demographics and technological advancements for older people to live safely and independently at home in their own communities.
- Continue to enhance the vital service public libraries provide and support library staff to engage with communities.
- Implement the new National Strategy on Volunteering and continue to strengthen volunteering infrastructure nationwide, supporting local Volunteer Centres in every county.
- Continue to ensure the Dormant Accounts Funding is utilised effectively to address disadvantage and to support people with disabilities.

## Strategic Goal 4

**Enable the community, voluntary, charity, philanthropic and social economy sectors to contribute fully to civil society**

### Strategic Objectives

- Foster and strengthen the renewed collaborative relationships between Government and the Community Development, Local Development and Community and Voluntary sectors.
- Support the development of social enterprise and social innovation as key components of an inclusive and sustainable recovery.
- Support the growth and development of philanthropy in Ireland, learning from experiences in other countries.
- Ensure that the Charities Regulator has the necessary powers to increase public trust and confidence in the management, governance and administration of charities.

### Key Actions

- Engage on an ongoing basis with the sectors to support the full implementation of the actions in *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024*.
- Building on the existing Strategy, develop a new Anti-poverty, Social Inclusion and Community Development Action Plan in consultation with stakeholders and in partnership with other Government Departments.
- Commission a review of the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) and support them to further develop their capacity, in conjunction with the National Advisory Group.
- Implement the National Social Enterprise Policy 2019-2022 and develop a successor policy for delivery from 2023.
- Develop a strategy to grow and develop social innovation in Ireland.
- Develop a National Philanthropy Strategy in consultation with stakeholders, drawing on commissioned research and experience in other EU countries and similar philanthropic environments.
- Amend the Charities Act 2009 in consultation with the Charities Regulator.
- Explore options for the establishment of a centralised database for information about those in receipt of State funding for the delivery of community services.



## Strategic Goal 5

**Foster and maintain a high performance culture and organisation to achieve our mission in the interests of all communities**

### Strategic Objectives

- Build strategic collaborative relationships with stakeholders which enable delivery of our mission.
- Foster a robust governance culture in our programmes and in the bodies under the Department's remit.
- Leverage strategic communications to support our mission.
- Support and enable staff to maximise their potential to deliver our objectives and goals.
- Build our capacity to evaluate the work we do and the impact it has to foster continuous improvement.
- Foster a culture of innovation and embrace technology within the organisation.

### Key Actions

- Implement our Organisational Capability Review Action Plan which encompasses the recommendations of an external review of the Department.
- Prepare and implement an ICT and Data Strategy for the Department and contribute to the development of a new ICT Strategy for the wider Public Service.
- Develop a remote working policy for the Department which builds on the learning of recent experience and fosters innovation in how we work.
- Continue to implement Our People Strategy 2019-2021 and actively collaborate across Government on design and implementation of future civil service renewal objectives.
- Implement and monitor delivery of Our Communications Strategy 2020-2023, which is aimed at fostering a culture of strategic, timely and effective communication with our stakeholders and the public
- Strengthen structured engagement and collaboration with all our stakeholders including our counterpart Departments in Northern Ireland and with other international organisations.
- Provide for structures which ensure that inspection programmes inform scheme and policy development and enhance programme efficiency and delivery, internal control and risk management.
- Support all recipients of Department funding through workshops and seminars, communicating compliance requirements and promoting and sharing good practice and feedback, informing future schemes and process.
- Deliver annual programmes of evaluation to measure effectiveness of our work and collaborate with the ESRI and other research organisations to inform the ongoing development of our policies and programmes.
- Support Water Safety Ireland in its role in the promotion of water safety.
- Implementation of Resource Efficiency Action Plan (REAP) for the Department to include monitoring of energy usage, and measures to increase energy efficiency and recycling amongst staff.
- Meet our obligations under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 by performing our Public Sector Duty to assess relevant rights and issues arising, address what actions are required by us, and report on progress of these actions in our Annual Report.
- Encourage and promote staff development and wellness through the provision of training and health and wellbeing initiatives.

## Bodies under our Aegis

The Department has four agencies under its remit – all are involved in working with, and on behalf of, the Department in the delivery of its objectives in relation to rural development, community development, regulation of the charities sector and, as an island nation, promoting water safety in our communities for coastal, as well as inland, waterways. The agencies work with us in promoting, inter alia, social inclusion, economic development, volunteering, rural and community development at a local and regional level, and ensuring compliance with the Charities Act.

