



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Rural Safety Plan

2022-2024



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Vision

People and communities in rural Ireland feel safe and are safe in their homes, places of work, and their local environments.

The Rural Safety Plan 2022-2024 brings together and strengthens all of the various strands of work being carried out in relation to rural safety. In demonstrating and highlighting the collaborative efforts made by An Garda Síochána, other State bodies, the Rural Safety Forum, community groups, and supported by the Government, the Plan seeks to enhance security in our rural areas and enforces the importance that is rightfully placed on the welfare of rural Irish communities.



Introduction

From Minister James Browne

The safety and welfare of every person and community in Ireland is of utmost importance. My Department and I are committed to advancing the safety of everyone. For us, the safety of individuals and communities in rural Ireland is a major priority.

In line with our vision of a safe, fair and inclusive Ireland, I am delighted to publish the Rural Safety Plan. The development and publication of this Plan is an important objective under my Department's 2022 Justice Plan and is connected to the first goal of the Justice Plan to tackle crime, enhance national security and transform policing.

The Rural Safety Plan 2022-2024 highlights the safety-related initiatives underway across the State in Action Plans for 5 priority areas:

- **Community Safety**
- **Burglary and Theft**
- **Roads Policing**
- **Animal Crime**
- **Heritage Crime**

The Action Plans that make up the overall Rural Safety Plan outline the key actions underway in each priority area in an informative and accessible way. Further, the Plan provides useful contacts for partner organisations and organisations that share our aim of advancing the safety of our people, as well as groups committed to supporting victims of crime.

I wish to recognise the wide-ranging and impactful work to further people's safety and welfare that is being undertaken in rural communities across the country. Much of this work is undertaken by dedicated volunteers who admirably commit so much of their time to the benefit of our communities and our country. I wish to pay tribute to all those involved in advancing and ensuring the safety of people, especially those in rural communities, who often face their own unique challenges.

I wish to also commend An Garda Síochána for their tireless ongoing dedication to keeping individuals and communities safe, and for their essential input into developing this Rural Safety Plan.

As we are all aware, the safety of everyone is a matter for us all. With that in mind, it is appropriate to acknowledge the work of the National Rural Safety Forum and its member organisations, who are striving, together and with An Garda Síochána, to enhance people's safety.

My Department and I are committed to continuing to support actions that promote safety and tangibly benefit people in rural communities. This Rural Safety Plan is an important development for that objective.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'James D. Browne'.

James Browne T.D.
Minister of State for Law Reform

What do we mean by Rural Safety?

When we think of a rural setting, we might imagine countryside with open spaces, fields and farms. Rural areas of Ireland cover this general template and many more besides. From forests to mountains and lake lands, from small family farms to large towns, Rural Ireland is a rich and diverse tapestry of communities of all shapes and sizes.

For the purposes of the Rural Safety Plan, when we say 'Rural' we mean one of three broad categories of community:



1

Any area that is sparsely populated and isolated, such as the majority of the West Coast or inhabited off shore islands.

2

Any area that is sparsely populated with a strong urban influence, such as areas of North County Dublin.

3

Any large town that is not sparsely populated, such as Navan or Sligo Town, but is predominately rural in character, independent of any one of the five cities of the State, and which influences a sparsely populated or isolated area.

So, what is Rural Safety?

At its heart, Rural Safety is tied to the broader concept of Community Safety. Community safety goes beyond just policing and crime. It is about people being, and importantly, feeling safe in their communities. It includes everything from visible Gardaí to safe places for children to play. Everyone, whether they live in, work in, or are just visiting a community, deserves to be safe and to feel safe so that they can enjoy all that the community has to offer.

We can say that one of the factors that impacts feelings of Rural Safety can be the geographical isolation of communities and people living in Rural Ireland. This sense of physical isolation, of being apart from the services and supports that a person feels they need to access in times of difficulty, is a challenge that those who live in sparsely populated areas of the country face every day.

This distance should not be of detriment to feelings of safety for persons living in Rural Ireland. There are many services, both State and voluntary, that act as first responders in an emergency across Ireland, such as Civil Defence, the RNLI and the emergency services (Gardaí/Fire/Ambulance).

The aim of this Plan is to strengthen and enhance community safety initiatives in rural areas and to provide residents of rural areas with information and resources relating to safety initiatives that are available. Not all of these initiatives will apply to every rural area, and some will apply to areas that many would consider urban, such as larger towns. This Plan is intended to offer an overview and to be informative and accessible while outlining the key actions and their owners in a clear, concise manner as well as providing useful contacts for partner organisations.



The National Rural Safety Forum

The National Rural Safety Forum comprises organisations and people with a common purpose of ensuring rural safety. The Forum works to develop a nationwide network for the distribution of consistent highly effective crime prevention advice, increase engagement within communities and prevent and reduce opportunities for crime.

The core objectives of the Forum are:



1

Community Reassurance

2

Information Sharing & Communication Network

3

Increased Community Engagement

4

Crime Prevention & Crime Opportunity Reduction

The Forum is co-chaired by Assistant Garda Commissioner Paula Hilman and Mr. Brian Rushe, Deputy President of the Irish Farmer's Association.

Others organisations represented on the Forum include:

- **Muintir na Tíre**
- **Age Friendly Ireland**
- **Foróige**
- **the Gaelic Athletic Association**
- **the Irish Cattle & Sheep Farmer's Association**
- **the Irish Country Women's Association**
- **the City & County Management Association**
- **Active Retirement Ireland**
- **the National Transport Authority**
- **Macra na Feirme**
- **ESB Networks**
- **the Department of Justice**
- **the Department of Community & Rural Development**

The Forum, through its wide range of member-organisations, seeks to ensure that the safety needs and concerns of all people living in Ireland's rural communities. The Forum aims to achieve real engagement, via its member organisations, with all people living in rural Ireland, to advance safety and the fight against crime in rural areas.

The Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland identified the crucial need for collaboration and multi-agency approaches with the following principle – that policing and security are not matters for An Garda Síochána alone. Recognising that need, the National Rural Safety Forum brings together a wide range of organisations, including An Garda Síochána, to pursue collaboration in efforts to tackle criminal activity and reduce opportunities for criminality in rural areas.



Local Community Safety Partnerships

The innovative Local Community Safety Partnerships (LCSPs) are intended to meet one of the key recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland's report, namely that community safety is not solely the responsibility of An Garda Síochána or the Department of Justice. Rather it is a 'Whole of Government' responsibility.

The aim of the partnership approach to community safety is to reduce the level of crime, to target resources more effectively in preventing crime and finding solutions, and to enhance feelings and experiences of community safety locally and nationally.

The causes of crime and criminality are a complex mix of social and economic deprivation and the breakdown of local communities.

These outcomes require multi-faceted, co-operative and coordinated responses. They also fit alongside other community development and partnership-based initiatives, such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the Place-Based Leadership Development Programme, and the Empowering Communities Programme, which focus on capacity building within the community and are funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The LCSPs will replace and build upon the existing Joint Policing Committees (JPCs) and will provide a forum for State agencies and local community representatives to work together to act on community concerns.





Each Partnership will devise and oversee a Local Community Safety Plan, which will be informed by the community itself. Membership of the Partnerships will be broader than that of the existing JPCs and will include residents, community representatives (including youth, new communities and voluntary sector representation), and business and education sector representation, relevant public services including the HSE, Tusla, An Garda Síochána, and local authorities as well as local councillors.

The role of the LCSPs seeks to build on the good work done by the Joint Policing Committees, but through an evolution and expansion of that structure. The LCSPs will bring a broader focus to community safety issues, of which policing is but one factor, to enable communities to be safe and feel safe.

Minister Helen McEntee announced the establishment of three Local Community Safety Partnerships on a pilot basis in Longford, Dublin and Waterford in November 2020. Each Pilot is fully established, with an independent Chairperson, and each are progressing their Community Safety Plans.

The pilots will run until 2023, and their evaluation will inform the best practice roll out of the LCSP model to every Local Authority Area on enactment of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill.

Action Plans – The 5 Priorities





1. Community Safety

The concept of community safety is about people being safe and feeling safe in their own community.

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS
Detect and prevent anti-social behaviour.	Community Safety Partnerships and Joint Policing Committees.	Feedback from Community Safety Partnerships and Joint Policing Committees.
	Community CCTV Schemes, where appropriate and necessary.	Increased understanding of rationale for CCTV schemes and relevant laws.
	Continued development and roll-out of digital crime prevention messaging.	Number of Text Alert schemes and the piloting and roll-out of the 'See Something Say Something' initiative.
	The governmental Anti-Social Behaviour Forum.	Practical initiatives from the current and future working groups on specific issues (e.g. knife crime and scramblers).
Foster community safety culture.	Community Safety Innovation Fund.	Extent to which the Fund is taken up through successful applications.
	Promote and encourage participation in the Community Crime Prevention Programmes.	Number of Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert schemes.
	Implementation of An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy 2021-2024.	Action owners to report on implementation.
Detect and prevent littering.	Local authorities to enforce littering legislation with a focus on fly-tipping.	Reduction in littering / fly-tipping in rural areas.
	Encourage reporting of littering through established local authority platforms.	Annual review by local authority on reports received.



2. Burglary and Theft

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS
Reduction in the number of burglaries.	<p>Promote and encourage community-based alert and property-marking schemes in partnership with rural stakeholders.</p> <p>Intelligence-led operations by Garda units will be co-ordinated through Regional Intelligence Hubs nationwide reacting to crime trends.</p>	Reduction in the number of burglaries and outcome of planned operations.
Reduce fear of crime in rural communities.	<p>Implementation of the Community Policing Framework.</p> <p>Publication of An Garda Síochána's Older People Strategy.</p> <p>Promote and encourage home security awareness initiatives / campaigns.</p> <p>Promotion and dissemination of crime prevention information on home security.</p> <p>Promote and encourage reporting of suspicious activity through community crime prevention programmes.</p>	<p>Roll-out of the Community Policing Framework.</p> <p>Implementation of An Garda Síochána's Older People Strategy.</p> <p>Public surveys from research advisory groups and An Garda Síochána's Public Attitudes Survey.</p> <p>Feedback from key stakeholders on impact of campaigns.</p> <p>Text Alert and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.</p>
Disrupt the illegal selling of stolen goods.	<p>Continued implementation of An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy 2021 to 2024.</p> <p>Intelligence-led operations by Garda units will be co-ordinated through Regional Intelligence Hubs nationwide reacting to crime trends.</p>	<p>Action owners to report on implementation.</p> <p>Outcomes of planned operations.</p>

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS
Prevent and deter the theft of agricultural vehicles, farm and forestry machinery plus plant and quad bikes.	Promote and encourage community-based alert and property-marking schemes in partnership with rural stakeholders.	Reduction in thefts.
	Apply the 10 principles of Crime Prevention as contained in An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy 2021 - 2024.	Implementation of An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy 2021 -2024.
	Launch of An Garda Síochána's Property Register App.	
	Promote and encourage the use of crime prevention products and technologies.	Record number of downloads and number of subscribers.
Reduce theft via cyber enabled crime.	Stakeholders share examples of good practice at Rural Safety Forum.	Rural Safety Forum Secretary Reports.
	Public awareness campaigns regarding the dangers of sharing personal information online.	Reduction in incidents of cyber enabled crime/fraud.
Reduce crimes against rural businesses that can impact on people's livelihoods.	Encourage implementation of and engagement with Garda Community Crime Prevention Programmes e.g. Business Watch.	Number of Business Watch schemes.
	Focused campaigns on protecting rural seasonal businesses including Tree/Plant Nurseries, Fishing/ Marine, Food Growing, etc.	Number of campaigns and outcomes.



3. Roads Policing

Roads Policing, particularly in rural areas, is to ensure safety for everyone who uses our roads network.

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS
Reduction in deaths and serious injuries on our rural roads.	Implement action plan as outlined in the Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030-Phase 1 Action plan 2021-2024.	Reduced deaths and serious injuries on our roads.
	Implementation of An Garda Síochána's Roads Policing Operational Plan.	Monitor detections of Lifesaver Offences on our roads.
	Review of speed enforcement zones.	
	Promote the Garda Traffic Watch Scheme.	
Deny criminals the use of the rural roads network.	Intelligence-led operations by specialist Garda units will be co-ordinated through Regional Intelligence Hubs nationwide reacting to rural crime trends.	Outcomes of Garda operations to be accounted for to Policing Authority Board.
	Multi-agency partnership checkpoints.	Number of multi-agency checkpoints conducted.
Road safety education.	Educate contractors on safely operating farm machinery on roads.	RSA & HSA educational programmes.
	Deliver Garda Schools Programme Road Safety Module.	Garda Schools Programme Road Safety Module implemented.
	Awareness campaigns on road safety including driver fatigue.	Number of RSA campaigns supported by An Garda Síochána.



4. Animal Crime

Animal crime includes any activity that goes against legislation protecting animals, wild animals and plant life.

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS
Reduce damage created by uncontrolled dogs on farms and other rural settings.	Local authorities to develop information resources on animal control in rural areas.	Local Authority reports.
	Local Authorities apply enforcement of Control of Dogs Act 1986, as amended.	Local Authority reports.
	Encourage reporting through established local authority platforms.	Local Authority reports.
Deter illegal practices of lamping, poaching and trespassing.	Enforcement of the joint protocol between An Garda Síochána and the National Parks & Wildlife Service.	Reports from designated Garda Divisional Liaison Inspectors and the National Parks & Wildlife Service.
Prevent, detect and reduce livestock theft.	Encourage keepers of livestock to report stolen livestock to An Garda Síochána and their regional veterinary office and update of AIM system.	Reduction in theft of livestock.
	Continued implementation of An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy 2021-2024.	Increased reports of thefts of livestock.
	Promote and encourage the use of crime prevention products and technologies.	
Prevent, detect and reduce incidents of dog theft.	Promote compliance with the Microchipping of Dogs Regulations 2015 and the purchase of a licence as per the Control of Dogs Act 1986, as amended.	Reduction in incidents of dog thefts.
	Continued implementation of An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy 2021-2024.	
	Promote and encourage the use of crime prevention products and technologies.	



5. Heritage Crime

This section covers any offence involving damage or loss to the historic environment, including all offences involving cultural property.

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS
Safeguarding and preservation of all national heritage sites and national monuments.	Partnership approach with relevant agencies (e.g. OPW, Heritage Ireland, Waterways Ireland, An Garda Síochána).	Increased participation in the Rural Safety Forum.
Reduce Heritage & Cultural Property Crime.	Enforcement of relevant legislation (e.g. National Monuments Acts 1930-2014, as amended, Criminal Damage Act 1991).	OPW Reports.
	Encourage Hate Crime reporting where property is targeted for hate motivated graffiti, criminal damage (e.g. attacks on places of worship).	Reports of Hate Crime.
	Utilise Divisional Crime Prevention Officers to conduct site security surveys at sites that are high risk or have been targeted.	Number of Divisional Crime Prevention Officer reports.
	Explore heritage crime prevention techniques.	Recommendations resulting from partnership approach between appropriate organisations, Rural Safety Forum and An Garda Síochána.

Youth Justice Strategy

Anti-social behaviour by young offenders, including in rural areas, can have a significant impact on not just the young offenders themselves, but on the wider community. A prevalence of youth crime can greatly impair the feeling of security in rural residents, particularly elderly or vulnerable people and those living or working alone.

Dealing with youth crime is a priority for An Garda Síochána and other Justice agencies. An integrated response is required, including elements of service provision with respect to Child and Family Services, Health, Education and local authority functions.

While the problems created by this type of crime are obvious, it is important to note that the proportion of our children and young people involved is extremely small.

The Department of Justice's Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 includes consideration of the full range of issues connected to children and young people at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system, including early intervention and preventative work, family support and diversion from crime, through to court process and facilities, supervision of offenders, detention and reintegration and support post release.

Youth Diversion Projects

The Youth Justice Strategy strengthens and expands the role of the Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs), which are a fundamental support to the operation of the statutory Garda Diversion Programme and provide a vital ingredient in





enhancing community policing partnerships. The Strategy promotes cooperation among community-based initiatives. Bringing the full range of relevant interventions together in a coherent and holistic response to youth crime supports the objective of diverting young people from crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Strategy expands the remit of the YDPs to provide a broader range of services for communities, families and children at risk, including family support and early intervention with children aged 8-12 years, as well as developing enhanced approaches to engaging with harder to reach children and young people who may have more entrenched patterns of offending.

There are currently 106 YDPs nationally and the intention is to further develop this service so that it is available to every child in the State

who could benefit from it, through an ongoing expansion of existing services and the foundation of new projects where necessary. Additional funding has been provided in Budget 2022 to enable completion of this expansion of the YDP network across the State.

The Department of Justice, through its work with the Anti-Social Behaviour Forum, has secured funding for a community-based approach to tackling the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes. This approach, for which almost €200,000 in funding has been provided already, is led by the Youth Diversion Projects and the Department of Justice would welcome further applications for funding from interested YDPs.

Emergency Services/Search and Rescue

(In an emergency call 999/112)

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE/EMAIL	PHONE
Ambulance Service	www.nationalambulance.ie	
An Garda Síochána	garda.ie	01 666 0000 (Garda Headquarters)
Civil Defence	www.civildefence.ie	0505 25310 (Civil Defence Headquarters)
Coast Guard	admin@irishcoastguard.ie	01 678 3454
Fire Service	Please see your Local Authority website	
RNLI Lifeboats	rnli.org	
Mountain Rescue Ireland	www.mountainrescue.ie	

Useful Contacts

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE/EMAIL	PHONE
Active Retirement Ireland	info@activeirl.ie	01 873 3836
Age Friendly Ireland	rleavy@meathcoco.ie	046 9097000
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	info@bim.ie	01 2144100
Coast Guard	admin@irishcoastguard.ie	01 678 3454
Coillte	www.coillte.ie/contact	0818 367 378
County and City Management Association	ccma@lgma.ie	
Dept of Community and Rural Development	info@drcd.gov.ie	01 773 6860
Dept of Agriculture	info@agriculture.gov.ie	01 607 2000
ESB Networks	esbnetworks@esb.ie	1800 372 757

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE/EMAIL	PHONE
Foróige	info@foroige.ie	01 630 1560
Gaelic Athletic Association	gaa.ie	01 819 2300 (Croke Park)
Health and Safety Authority	contactus@hsa.ie	0818 289 389
Inland Fisheries Ireland	fisheriesireland.ie	0818 34 74 24
Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association	info@icsaireland.com	057 8662120
Irish Countrywomen's Association	admin@ica.ie	01 668 0002
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	info@icmsa.ie	061 314532 /061 314677
Irish Farmer's Association	ifa.ie	01 450 0266 (IFA Headquarters)
Irish Local Development Network	info@ildn.ie	061 404 923
Irish Men's Sheds Association	info@menssheds.ie	01 891 6150
Irish Natural Hill Farmers Association	office@inhfa.ie	071 930 2715/087 933 0793
Irish Rural Link	info@irishrurallink.ie	090 648 2744
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	info@ispca.ie	043 33 25035 (or 0818 515 515 if you believe an animal is being cruelly treated or neglected)
Irish Uplands Forum	membership@irishuplandsforum.org	086 2480979
Keep Ireland Open	info@keepirelanopen.org	
Macra na Feirme	macra.ie	01 426 8900
Mountaineering Ireland	info@mountaineering.ie	01 625 1115
Muintir na Tíre	muintir.ie	062 51163
National Parks & Wildlife Service	natureconservation@housing.gov.ie	01 888 2000

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE/EMAIL	PHONE
National Transport Authority	info@nationaltransport.ie	01 879 8300
Office of Public Works	info@opw.ie	046 942 2000
Road Safety Authority	info@rsa.ie	096 25800
Teagasc	info@teagasc.ie	059 917 0200
Údarás na Gaeltachta	eolas@udaras.ie	091 503 100
Waterways Ireland	waterwaysireland.org	0044 (0) 28 6632 3004
Western Development Commission	info@wdc.ie	094 986 1441
Youth Work Ireland	www.youthworkireland.ie	01 858450

Victims' Supports

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE/EMAIL	PHONE
Crime Victims Helpline	crimevictimshelpline.ie	1800 116 006
Federation for Victim Assistance	victimassistance.ie	1800 277 477
Victims Charter	victimscharter.ie	
Victim Support at Court	vsac.ie	01 872 6785
Citizens Information	citizensinformation.ie	0818 07 4000
Free Legal Advice	flac.ie	01 906 1010
Legal Aid Board	info@legalaidboard.ie	0818 615 200





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