



Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future



Our Rural Future

Progress Report 4

Prepared by the Department of
Rural and Community Development

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Summary

Our Rural Future 2021-2025 is the Government's national rural development policy, and provides a blueprint for sustainable development of, and investment in, rural Ireland over its five-year lifespan.

The policy contains a range of measures for implementation across Government throughout this period – these measures are being achieved through the delivery of actions set out in annual work programmes and monitored through the publication of twice yearly progress reports.

All progress reports and work programmes are published on the Department of Rural and Community Development's [Our Rural Future website](#).

This Fourth Progress Report covers activity which has taken place in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2023, and reflects the progress made towards the delivery of actions set out in the 2023 Work Programme.

The Fourth Progress Report contains updates on 96 actions in the 2023 Work Programme, with contributions from 16 departments or agencies.

Of these, 10 actions were of an ongoing nature. Of the remaining 86, a total of 51 were completed, with the remaining 35 delayed, a completion percentage of 60%.

This includes the completion of 13 actions that were delayed in 2022 and brought forward for completion in the first half of 2023.

Key measures delivered across Government

The following is a selection of notable Our Rural Future deliverables that are being reported across Government during the first half of 2023. Full details of these and all other updates begin at page 7.

Digital Connectivity and Remote Working:

- Launch of 'Better Public Services', the Public Service Transformation Strategy. (Measure 10.2)
- Completion of WiFi4EU programme, with more than 1,200 hotspots 'live' across 27 local authority areas. (Measure 16.7)

Employment and Careers:

- Launch of four new Regional Tourism Development Strategies by Fáilte Ireland. (Measure 32.6)

Revitalising Towns and Villages:

- Third round of URDF funding worth €150 million launched, with a focus on returning long-term vacant or derelict properties to use. (Measure 50.1)
- Appointment of Town Regeneration Officers in all 26 participating local authorities. (Measure 52.2)

Enhancing Community Resilience and Participation:

- Roll-out of PPN national awareness campaign. (Measure 82.7)
- Launch of Culture and Creativity Strategies (2023-2027) in all 31 local authorities. (Measure 84.1)
- €50 million in funding for over 880 projects under the Community Recognition Fund. (Measure 169.1)

Improving Public Services:

- Commencement of 10 new Local Link bus services as part of the Connecting Ireland rural mobility plan. (Measure 91b.4)
- More than 50 settlements have been newly connected to the public transport network as a result of Phase 1 of the Connecting Ireland strategy. (Measure 91a.2)

Climate Transition:

- Procurement of more than 3GW capacity in Ireland's first offshore wind auction under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme. (Measure 116d.1)

Islands and Coastal Sustainability:

- Publication of Ár nOileáin Bheo / Our Living Islands, the first islands policy for 27 years, and associated 2023-2026 Action Plan. (Measure 135.1)

€150 million

of funding available to larger towns under **URDF Call 3**



€20m

fund announced for 'shovel-ready' **Community Centre** projects



1,200

hotspots live under the **WiFi4EU** programme



10 new **Local Link** bus services in operation



26

Town Regeneration Officers appointed across local authorities



€1m

given to more than **150 projects** under the **Healthy Ireland Ukrainian Resilience Fund**



More than

162,600

premises have now been passed under the **National Broadband Plan**



€50 Million

in funding for over **880** projects under the **Community Recognition Fund**



Publication of first **Islands Policy** in **27 years**



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Highlights from Progress Report 4

Glossary

BCP	Broadband Connection Point
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CLÁR	Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais
CSP	CAP Strategic Plan
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI)
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
D/Education	Department of Education
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
D/Health	Department of Health
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
D/Justice	Department of Justice
DPENDPR	Department of Public Expenditure and National Development Plan Delivery and Reform
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DSP	Department of Social Protection
DTCAGSM	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
D/Transport	Department of Transport
EU	European Union
EV	Electric Vehicle
FLAG	Fisheries Local Area Group
GIS	Geographic Information System
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IDA	Industrial Development Agency
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MAP	Maritime Area Planning
NBI	National Broadband Ireland
NTA	National Transport Authority
OPW	Office of Public Works
ORESS	Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme
ORIS	Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
PPN	Public Participation Network
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
REDF	Regional Enterprise Development Fund
RTP	Regional Tourism Plan
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland
SEUPB	Special EU Programmes Body
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
TVRS	Town and Village Renewal Scheme
URDF	Urban Regeneration and Development Fund
WDC	Western Development Commission

Optimising Digital Connectivity

Measure 1 Invest up to €2.7 billion in the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan and explore how the initiative can be accelerated to deliver connectivity as soon as possible in rural areas.		
Lead Delivery Body: National Broadband Ireland, under contract to DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
1.1	Continue roll-out of the National Broadband Plan, with construction continuing in all counties.	Ongoing
<p>Update: As of 14 July 2023, more than 162,600 premises have been passed across all counties since the start of the plan, meaning they are able to avail of a connection to high-speed broadband. In addition, more than 177,400 premises across all counties can order or pre-order service. There have been more than 46,500 premises connected, with a further 5,391 premises pending connection.</p> <p>The focus is to continue to build momentum in the build programme, catching up on the delays experienced. NBI committed to delivering a cumulative target of 185,000 premises passed by the end of January 2024, but due to the positive pace of the roll-out, the forecast for the end of 2023 is due to be exceeded, with more than 190,000 premises passed by mid-December 2023.</p>		

Measure 3 Introduce legislation to provide employees with the right to request remote work.		
Lead Delivery Body: DCEDIY		
2023 Actions		Status
3.4	Complete passage of the legislation through the houses of the Oireachtas. The right to request remote working has been integrated into the DCEDIY 'Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022'.	Complete
<p>Update: The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 has been enacted. Parts 1 and 2 of the Act together with other provisions have now been commenced. Part 3 of the Act provides for a right to request remote working and DETE are leading work on the development of the Code of Practice on this. The Workplace Relations Commission recently held a public consultation on the code of practice, which was receiving submissions up until 9 June. Part 3 of the Act will be commenced by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment as soon as is practicable following the completion of this Code.</p>		

Measure 8 Develop national data on the incidence and frequency of remote work, to provide an evidence base for future policy.		
Lead Delivery Body: CSO		
2023 Actions		Status
8.2	Provide remote working statistics from the quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS).	Ongoing
<p>Update: Published figures for Q1 2023 show that a total of 891,000 workers either ‘usually’ or ‘sometimes’ work from home. While this is a slight reduction of just over 50,000 on the same quarter in 2022, it still reflects a 75 per cent, or 384,000, increase on Q4 2019, the last full quarter before the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>Ongoing statistics available quarterly from the Labour Force Survey figures on the CSO website.</p>		

Measure 10 Mandate public sector employers, colleges, and other public bodies to move to 20% home and remote working in 2021, with further annual increases over the lifetime of this policy.		
Lead Delivery Body: DPENDR		
2023 Actions		Status
10.2	The Government will finalise its Public Service Transformation Programme in Q2 2023. This will include a core requirement for public service organisations to provide dynamic and agile workplaces, which will generally adhere to the principles set out in the Government’s Blended Working Framework for the Civil Service.	Complete
<p>Update: The seven-year Public Service Transformation Strategy (to 2030), ‘Better Public Services’ was launched in May 2023. The strategy is framed around three core themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital and Innovation at Scale • Workforce and Organisation of the Future • Evidence-informed policy and services designed for and with our public <p>Under the ‘Digital and Innovation at Scale’ theme, there is a commitment that the Public Service will collaborate on projects to provide dynamic and agile workplaces by creating environments that support a culture of innovation and continue to respond to the needs of citizens and customers.</p>		

As part of the strategy, Public Service Bodies are asked to develop scalable innovations and create dynamic workspaces to replicate successful approaches and support the right environment for innovation and customer focus.

Measure 14 **Provide grants to retail businesses in rural towns and villages to establish an online presence to complement traditional footfall trade.**

Lead Delivery Body: DETE, LEOs

2023 Actions		Status
14.2	Launch a further call for the Online Retail Scheme aiming to encourage the retail sector in Ireland to increase their customer base and build a more resilient business in the domestic and global marketplace both online and offline.	Complete

Update: A new round of the Online Retail Scheme with a budget of €3.4 million closed for applications on 3 May 2023. The assessment process is ongoing.

All counties with the exception of Co. Leitrim submitted an application. Dublin has 20% of the applications under assessment with the remaining 80% from other counties outside of Dublin.

In 2022, the COVID-19 Online Retail Scheme (ORS) underwent an economic evaluation as part of a programme of expenditure reviews carried out by DPER.

The Review found that the ORS assisted the retail sector by providing the necessary credit required to build and develop digital capabilities to become more productive and competitive. It also found it is critical to continue to fund the ORS, as the retail sector needs to be equipped with digital tools so it can retain and expand its customer base.

Measure 16 **Expand the provision of free-to-use wireless internet connectivity in rural areas through the rollout of Broadband Connection Points and other initiatives such as the WiFi4EU public wi-fi networks and the Digital Innovation Programme.**

Lead Delivery Body: DRCD

2023 Actions		Status
16.6	Ensure that 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCP) are live and operational.	Delayed

Update: There are 290 of the 300 BCPs now declared live with a number of sites nearing completion. There are a small number of sites that have additional technical complexities and it is expected that the full network will be connected in the coming months.

16.7	Work with local authorities to ensure the timely deployment of remaining WiFi4EU hotspots.	Complete
Update: DRCD has provided total funding of approximately €1.2 million to support this initiative, through co-funding of up to €15,000 for each voucher secured by local authorities, effectively doubling the value of the investment. The programme is now complete and 1,201 hotspots are 'live' across 27 local authority areas.		

Supporting Employment and Careers in Rural Areas

Measure 21 Develop and implement a set of nine new Regional Enterprise Plans to support enterprise development and jobs growth in the regions.		
Lead Delivery Body: DETE		
2023 Actions		Status
21.2	Launch European Regional Development Fund scheme to support delivery of Regional Enterprise Plans.	Delayed
<p>Update: €145 million has been secured for regional enterprise funding to 2027 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support projects aligned to the Regional Enterprise Plans.</p> <p>Enterprise Ireland, which designs and administers regional enterprise funding schemes on behalf of DETE, has been engaging with the Managing Authorities and European Commission to secure the appropriate sanctions in order to launch the first call under the proposed 'Smart Regional Enterprise Innovation Scheme'. These discussions are at an advanced stage and the aim is to launch the first call under the Scheme by the end of 2023.</p>		

Measure 23 Deliver ambitious job creation and enterprise development targets for the indigenous sector in the strategies of Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Local Enterprise Offices to embed jobs growth more deeply within the regions.		
Lead Delivery Body: Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, LEOs		
2023 Actions		Status
23.6	Develop an Action Plan 2023-2025 for the Uíbh Ráthach Task Force.	Delayed
<p>Update: A draft Action Plan is under review at present. This document is expected to be completed by end of August 2023.</p>		
23.7	Complete the Gaeltacht micro-enterprise strategy.	Complete
<p>Update: The Gaeltacht micro-enterprise strategy has been completed, with work currently underway regarding the development of an implementation structure.</p>		

Measure 25 Promote awareness and the use of remote working hubs and enterprise centres across the country to support remote working and encourage local enterprise start-ups.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD, DETE		
2023 Actions		Status
25.4	Finalisation of the Connected Hubs Development Strategy.	Delayed
Update: A Connected Hubs strategy, setting out Connected Hubs platform priorities and actions to ensure the continued development of the Connected Hubs ecosystem from 2023-2025, will be finalised shortly. The strategy focuses on the key areas/pillars of Research and Sustainability, Technology, Hub Community Ecosystem, and Marketing, Promotion and Awareness. It will also include an action plan which will be open to review in response to the rapidly changing nature of the sector and, in particular, in response to the publication of the forthcoming National Hubs Strategy.		

Measure 26 Maximise our resources and strengths in the Green Economy to support employment opportunities for rural communities in areas such as renewable energy, sustainable tourism, energy retrofitting, the Bioeconomy and the Circular Economy.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM, DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
26.8	Publish all of Government Bioeconomy Action Plan.	Delayed
Update: The Bioeconomy Action Plan is currently being finalised and is expected to be published shortly.		
26.9	Develop pilot and demonstration funding opportunities of the bioeconomy through Ireland's EU Just Transition Fund Territorial Just Transition Plan and Programme.	Complete
Update: €20 million was allocated in Q2 2023 for bioeconomy pilot and demonstration funding opportunities through Ireland's EU Just Transition Fund Territorial Plan and Programme. The first funding call will open for proposals in Q3 2023.		

Measure 28 Develop an overarching Clustering Policy and Framework to advance strong and effective clustering and links between SMEs, multinational corporations and the third-level sector.		
Lead Delivery Body: DETE		
2023 Actions		Status
28.3	Finalise consultancy report and recommendations from the National Cluster Policy Steering Group to inform a national cluster policy and framework.	Complete
Update: To support and inform the development of the National Cluster Programme, DETE commissioned independent research which involved the development of international case studies in clustering, stakeholder consultations, mapping of the cluster landscape in Ireland, and consideration of the policy options for a national approach to clustering in Ireland. This report was published in March 2023 and is now informing the development of the National Cluster Programme and considerations around the establishment of the national coordination mechanism.		
28.4	As part of the implementation of the Government's White Paper on Enterprise, identify a central coordinating function with responsibility for implementing a national clustering approach.	Delayed
Update: Following completion of the work referred to in 28.3 above, work is underway to develop the National Cluster Programme which is due in Q3 2023. DETE is engaging with a range of stakeholders to ensure the Programme is tailored effectively to support and enhance the Irish clustering ecosystem. The Programme will identify a central coordinating function with responsibility for implementing a national clustering approach and implementation will commence in Q4 2023.		

Measure 30 Deliver a suite of new measures to support the development of Social Enterprises in rural areas to increase their social, economic and environmental impact and contribute to job creation locally.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
30.3	Encourage job creation through social enterprise by providing social enterprise funding supports. (Údarás na Gaeltachta)	Complete
Update: Údarás na Gaeltachta has launched two social enterprise funding supports for 2023 as part of its Gaeltacht Social Enterprise Strategy. The primary social enterprise support scheme is funded by Údarás to assist the development of new or existing social enterprises. The second is a Social Enterprise Concept Development Scheme, funded by DRCD, with a budget of €5,000 per funded application, aimed at enabling potential social enterprises to		

develop a concept and business plan. Both schemes opened for applications in March 2023, and applications are being assessed on an ongoing basis.		
30.4	Launch a new hybrid social finance pilot which will allow social enterprises to build capacity and provide them with more financial flexibility by reducing their reliance on grant funding.	Complete
Update: The Hybrid Social Finance Loan 2023-2024 was launched in March 2023 as a partnership between Rethink Ireland, Community Finance Ireland and DRCD via the Dormant Accounts Fund, following on from research undertaken in partnership with DCU. The scheme aims to build the capacity of start-up social enterprises that are first-time borrowers.		

Measure 32 Further develop the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW), Ireland's Hidden Heartlands (IHH), and Ireland's Ancient East (IAE) as regional tourism offerings and further diversify tourism opportunities by strengthening Ireland's image as an outdoor activity holiday destination to the domestic and international markets.		
Lead Delivery Body: Fáilte Ireland		
2023 Actions		Status
32.6	Launch Regional Tourism Strategies (RTPs) for each of Fáilte Ireland's brand regions.	Complete
Update: Fáilte Ireland launched its four new Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027 in May 2023. These strategies provide a framework for sustainable tourism development across Fáilte Ireland's regional brands.		
The Regional Tourism Development Strategies will be activated across each region through a series of local area action plans, referred to as Destination and Experience Development Plans. Fáilte Ireland's commitment is for every part of the country to have a detailed tourism development action plan created in partnership with local stakeholders.		

Measure 35 Publish and implement a new National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, through Comhairle na Tuaithe, to support access to, and responsible use of, outdoor recreational and leisure facilities for people of all ages, and increase employment opportunities in rural areas.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
35.2	Review the Mountain Access Project, an initiative which seeks to secure the voluntary agreement of landowners in a defined mountain area to allow recreational access to their lands.	Delayed

Update: The Mountain Access Project is being reviewed and a guidance document is being developed to incorporate lessons from the project and support expansion to other upland areas. Funding has been provided for an engagement officer to work with landowners and local stakeholders to assist with outstanding issues.

35.3	Establishment of a strategy oversight and implementation group to assist with the delivery of <i>Embracing Ireland's Outdoors</i> , the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy.	Complete
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Update: A Strategy Oversight and Implementation Subgroup was established in February 2023 and had its first meeting in April 2023. The Group, which is chaired by DRCD, is made up of members from Comhairle na Tuaithe and will meet quarterly.

Measure 36 Invest in greenways, blueways, walking trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure to support the growth in outdoor recreational tourism.

Lead Delivery Body: D/Transport, DRCD

2023 Actions		Status
36.2	Open new Call for Applications under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) to support development of natural amenities such as our mountains, lakes, beaches, bogs, walkways, greenways, blueways and other outdoor recreation infrastructure.	Complete

Update: ORIS 2023 was launched on 1 June 2023 with a budget of €16 million.

36.10	Develop a strategic partnership with Bord na Móna to enhance the outdoor recreation infrastructure in the midlands.	Complete
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Update: Funding of €50,000 was approved for the development of an Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Bord na Móna lands, this is the commencement of the strategic partnership with Bord na Móna.

Measure 38 Expand the Walks Scheme to achieve a target of at least 80 trails, doubling the number from 2018.

Lead Delivery Body: DRCD

2023 Actions		Status
38.4	Continue to progress the trails who received 'approval in principle' under the Scheme in 2021 – these trails are expected to receive participant payments under the Scheme in 2023.	Ongoing

Update: To date in 2023, 10 approved trails have been brought onto the Walks Scheme, with participant payments being paid on each of these. This brings the total number of trails fully operational on the Walks Scheme to 65. Local Development Companies are working on the ground with landowners on the remaining approved trails.

38.5	Announce a new expansion of the Walks Scheme to increase the number of trails approved from 80 to 150 by end 2024.	Complete
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Update: Expansion of the Scheme to develop 70 new walks was announced in February 2023.

Measure 40 **Develop a Dark Skies Strategy for Ireland, with a focus on the opportunities it can create for rural communities and employment creation.**

Lead Delivery Body: DRCD

2022 Actions

Status

40.4	Establishment of Dark Skies Strategy Steering Group made up of key stakeholders.	Delayed
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Update: DRCD continues to engage with relevant contacts, with a view to more clearly defining the potential parameters of the project, and to identify the appropriate stakeholders. DRCD will undertake deeper bilateral engagement to establish this in Q3 and Q4 2023.

Revitalising Rural Towns and Villages

Measure 50 Deliver major regeneration projects in towns with a population of over 10,000 which play an important role as key hubs in rural areas, through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
50.1	Continue delivery of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.	Ongoing
Update: A third round of URDF funding support in the sum of €150m was announced by Government and launched on 11 July 2023. Call 3 is consistent with the objectives of the National Development Plan, Housing for All, the Town Centre First Policy and the Vacant Homes Action Plan, in terms of accelerating new supply and tackling long-term vacancy. The Call 3 funding will be used by local authorities for the acquisition of long-term vacant and derelict buildings and sites in URDF towns/cities, for onward sale on the open market to purchasers who undertake to return the properties to use within timelines agreed with the local authority. It will also support the CPO activation programme being advanced by the Vacant Homes Unit within DHLGH.		

Measure 51 Develop and deliver a collaborative Town Centre First approach to put town centres at the heart of decision-making where appropriate.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH, DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
51.3	Complete initial tranche of Town Centre First Plans.	Delayed
Update: The Town Centre First Plan Initiative was launched in late 2021. Local authorities were given a 12-18 month timeframe for delivery of the initial tranche of Town Centre First Plans with 26 towns across 26 local authorities chosen to deliver the first plans. The first six plans have been completed with a further 20 expected to be complete by end November 2023.		
51.4	Establish the TCF Toolkit (lead by National TCF Office).	Delayed
Update: The National TCF Office is continuing to develop the TCF Toolkit. This work is being carried out in collaboration with the broader Town Regeneration Officer Network, which has now been established. A review of the initial Town Centre First Plans is underway and this will form a significant input into the development of the policy toolkit.		

In addition, the TCF Office is engaged with the Scottish Towns Partnership STP to capture international best practice for inclusion in the TCF toolkit.

Measure 52 As part of the Town Centre First approach, provide and resource dedicated Local Authority staff to support town centre renewal.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
52.2	Completion of recruitment of 26 Town Regeneration Officers (TROs) and establishment of TRO Network.	Complete
Update: 26 TROs have been appointed and the TRO Network is established and operational.		

Measure 54 Examine the feasibility of introducing ‘meanwhile use’ legislation so that empty buildings and shopfronts on main streets can be brought back into compatible use on a short-term, temporary basis as pop up shops, street markets, exhibitions spaces and other purposes in accordance with Town Centre First policies.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
54.1	DHLGH to engage with DETE to discuss any necessary changes to the planning legislation to allow for meanwhile use.	Delayed
Update: This action has been reviewed by DHLGH, in conjunction with a similar Action 4 in the Night Time Economy Taskforce – “Examine the practical implications of ‘meanwhile use’ for planning and other legislative codes to enable the potential for buildings to be used for Night-Time Economy activities”.		
DHLGH will now engage with DETE to determine the scope required of this action following which DHLGH will assess the feasibility of legislation or regulations to meet needs identified.		

Measure 55 As part of the Town Centre First approach, provide seed capital to Local Authorities to provide serviced sites at cost in towns and villages, to allow individuals and families to build homes in rural centres.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status

55.2	Continue to roll out the Croí Cónaithe 'Ready to Build' scheme in conjunction with local authorities to support the provision of Serviced Sites for New Homes in town and villages.	Ongoing
<p>Update: The Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund is supporting the refurbishment of vacant and derelict properties through the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and the provision of serviced sites for people to build their own homes through the Ready to Build Scheme.</p> <p>From 1 May, a number of important enhancements to the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant were introduced. The grant levels increased from €30,000 to €50,000 for vacant properties and from €50,000 to €70,000 for derelict properties. Eligibility was extended to cover houses built before 2007 and support is now available for properties intended for rental as well as owner-occupied.</p> <p>Under the Ready to Build scheme, local authorities will make serviced sites in towns and villages available at a discounted rate to individual purchasers who will self-build their own home and live in it as their principal private residence. It is intended that the local authority will either supply existing sites in their control or purchase sites and make them available for development by providing services and access to the sites concerned. The level of discount available will depend on the level of servicing cost incurred by the local authority before the sale of the site but will not exceed €30,000. The amount of such discount will be reflected in the sale price of the site to the purchaser. DHLGH is currently engaging with local authorities in respect of the identification of potential sites to determine their suitability under the Ready to Build scheme.</p>		

Measure 56 Engage the Approved Housing Bodies with responsibility for housing for older people to develop accommodation in town centres more suited for those with reduced mobility.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
56.1	Develop and roll out a Geographic Information System (GIS) Decision Support Tool for use by the Department, local authorities, approved housing bodies and developers which would score available sites on their appropriateness for housing developments for older people in line with Action 2.3 and Action 5.9 set out in "Housing Options for Our Ageing Population", published in 2019.	Complete
Update: All local authorities now have access to the ASSIST Tool, with training ongoing in its use.		

Measure 64	Invest in infrastructure, including water and wastewater infrastructure, to support the development of rural towns and villages.
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Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
64.3	The roll-out of €50million scheme to improve wastewater infrastructure in rural towns and villages will continue with the delivery of recommendations for funding by an independent expert panel.	Delayed
Update: This action is currently ongoing. Funding announcements are expected in Q3 2023.		

Enhancing Participation, Leadership and Resilience in Rural Communities

Measure 69 Refine and build on a range of programmes to support communities, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and charities to build their resilience and enhance their impact in the aftermath of COVID-19.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
69.3	Continue to deliver Community and Voluntary Energy Support Scheme (CVESS) until such time as the scheme closes (early 2023), to assist community and voluntary organisations meet increased energy costs.	Complete
Update: The CVESS was launched in November 2022 in response to rising energy costs and their impact on the community and voluntary sector. The fifth and final tranche of payments was made in May 2023.		

Measure 74 Build capacity for community development through provision of mentoring/training for community development leaders, with a particular focus on young people between the ages of 18 and 25.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
74.2	The assessment of training needs in the Community and Voluntary sector, taking place as part of the Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities Strategy, will continue with Project Two and Project Three assessments into the training needs of trustees of voluntary boards and smaller community and voluntary organisations. Following finalisation of these reports, an implementation plan will be developed.	Delayed
Update: DRCD continues to work with Pobal and a subgroup of the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development on this comprehensive research into training needs in the community and voluntary sector. The reports, with recommendations, on Projects One (training needs of LCDCs) and Two (training needs of voluntary boards of mid-sized C&V organisations) are completed. The report for Project Three (training needs of small C&V groups) is expected to be completed in Q3 2023. Following publication of these reports, an implementation plan will be developed.		

In addition, DRCD are providing support to the All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training (AIEB), hosted by Community Work Ireland. AIEB seeks to build an inclusive framework for the endorsement of community work education and training at all levels, as laid out in the All-Ireland Standards for Community Work developed in 2016 by AIEB in association with Community Work Ireland.

AIEB endorsement benchmarks community work/community development as a profession in its own right requiring specific skills, values, knowledge and qualities. It provides clear and direct guidance on standards of professional practice, and education and training programmes that meet those standards, with particular emphasis on third-level training programmes, relevant to the target cohort.

Measure 78			Deliver the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to the end of 2023, and develop a new SICAP programme to commence in 2024, following a review and consultation with stakeholders.
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD			
2023 Actions			Status
78.3	Finalise review of current programme and consultation to inform next SICAP programme.		Delayed
Update: KPMG Future Analytics has been contracted to carry out this work and has engaged directly with stakeholders to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the current programme, and to consolidate lessons learned to inform the next iteration of SICAP.			
Direct consultation with LCDCs and LDCs took place across April/May and the initial findings were presented to DRCD in May. Other stakeholders consulted include individual programme beneficiaries, community group and social enterprise beneficiaries, representative organisations, Government departments and agencies, and underrepresented target groups. The final survey and consultation with community development organisations was also completed.			
The report from KPMG will be finalised shortly, with recommendations informing the new SICAP programme design for 2024 and onwards. The Executive Summary of the Report was published via the Prior Information Notice on procurement for SICAP 2024-2028 on 10 July.			

Measure 79 Increase the number of places on the Rural Social Scheme, TÚS and Community Employment Scheme to support rural communities.		
Lead Delivery Body: DSP		
2023 Actions		Status
79.4	Extend eligibility for TÚS to persons in receipt of Disability Allowance.	Complete
Update: The TÚS scheme opened to self-referrals from customers in receipt of Disability Allowance (DA) in June 2022. There are 73 people currently participating on TÚS who have commenced through the extension of eligibility to DA customers. These TÚS participants retain their DA payment and receive a top-up (€27.50 per week) from their employer. Recruitment of DA customers to TÚS continues.		
79.6	Implement pilot scheme to extend eligibility of Community Employment to qualified adults.	Complete
Update: The pilot scheme to extend Community Employment (CE) eligibility to qualified adults commenced in April 2023.		

Measure 81 Provide investment for multi-purpose spaces in the community (e.g. community centres, libraries, and sports clubs) for a variety of activities, including leisure, community, cultural and services provision.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
81.3	The CLÁR 2023 Programme, with an allocation of €7.85 million, will deliver a new round of funding and continue to incorporate measures to support the development of community facilities.	Complete
Update: CLÁR 2023 was launched in March 2023 with the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Community Facilities and Amenities (Measure 1) • Mobility, Cancer Care and Community First Responders Transport (Measure 2) • 'Our Islands' (Measure 3) <p>Some 330 applications have been received across all the measures and the assessment process is now underway.</p>		
81.5	Implement the 2023 tranche of the Community Centres Investment Fund, with a focus on new build centres.	Complete

Update: The focus of the Community Centres Investment Fund has moved to new builds and, in March, a €20 million fund to support communities with ‘shovel-ready’ projects on green or brownfield sites to build new community centres was announced. This measure will target areas which do not have an appropriate facility to meet the needs of their area. The deadline for receipt of applications was 3 July and the assessment process has now commenced.

Measure 82 Further enhance the Public Participation Network and Local Community Development Committee structures to ensure that local communities are fully involved in, and contribute to, decisions affecting their local areas.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
82.7	Oversee preparation, delivery and completion of PPN awareness campaign and related communication measures.	Complete
Update: The awareness campaign was rolled out in mid-February via radio and digital channels, and concluded at the end of March 2023. The related communication measures (branding, training to PPNs) were also concluded in Q2 2023.		
82.10	Develop a programme of awareness at national and local level on LCDCs and their role and function, highlighting how community members can be part of the LCDC structure so they can contribute to decisions affecting their local areas.	Delayed
Update: This project is in the planning and scoping stage. Developing a national awareness campaign in relation to the role and function of the LCDCs will encompass: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a Working Group of key stakeholders to assist with the development and implementation of the campaign. • Procurement of consultant support for the development and delivery of this campaign. <p>The specifics of the project, in terms of reference and budget, are being finalised and this action is expected to be completed in Q3 2023.</p>		
82.11	Provide resources and training to LCDCs on good practices on the engagement of marginalised communities in planning and decision making processes. This includes capacity building in Public Sector Duty, Intercultural awareness and reducing barriers to engagement.	Complete
Update: A project identifying the training needs of LCDC members is complete and the report has been agreed by the Cross-Sectoral Group tasked with strategy oversight and implementation (see update 74.2 in this document). DRCD expects to publish this project’s report in Q3 2023. The development of a plan to implement the report’s recommendations will follow publication.		

There are plans to hold an Inclusive Engagement presentation/workshop aimed at local authority senior leadership. Consideration is being given to engaging a suitable training partner for the development of learning tools as well as the design and delivery of related training. There is an undertaking to hold a second round of workshops in collaboration with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, focusing on how to assess for human rights and equality.

Measure 84 Implement Culture and Creative Strategies in each Local Authority area, including “Culture Days”, to showcase local cultural heritage.

Lead Delivery Body: DTCAGSM

2023 Actions

Status

84.1	The Culture and Creativity Strategies in all 31 local authorities are currently being funded and implemented to deploy creativity to support wellbeing, social cohesion and economic development at local level. These strategies will be launched in Q1 2023.	Complete
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Update: The roll-out of 31 new local authority Culture and Creativity Strategies (2023-2027) was announced in February 2023.

The new strategies reflect the creative ambitions of communities around the country which will be supported by the principles and values of Creative Communities under the Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027.

84.3	Hold Cruinniú na nÓg, the national day of creativity for children and young people led by the Creative Ireland Programme, in partnership with 31 local authorities.	Complete
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Update: Cruinniú na nÓg is a flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme’s Creative Youth Plan to enable the creative potential of every child and young person. It aims to celebrate and encourage children and young people’s participation in culture and creativity in activities such as art, music, coding, theatre workshops, performances, exhibitions, readings, film screenings and much more.

Cruinniú na nÓg took place on Saturday, 10 June with more than 750 events delivered by local authorities.

Consistent with the aims of the Government’s Shared Island initiative to deepen beneficial cooperation and connections across the island of Ireland, Cruinniú na nÓg 2023 was programmed on an all-island basis with cross-community events connecting children and young people from both sides of the border, including via strategic partners in Circus Explored and Rhyme Island. This action is an integral part of the Shared Island dimension to the Creative Ireland Programme which focuses on harnessing the power of culture and creativity to inspire connections between people, communities and places.

Measure 88 Undertake research to inform the particular needs of women, girls, LGBTI+, Travellers, Roma, migrants and those of migrant origin living in rural areas.		
Lead Delivery Body: DCEDIY		
2023 Actions		Status
88.2	The review of implementation of the LGBTI+ Youth Strategy will be completed in 2023 and used to inform any future strategy.	Delayed
Update: The report is being finalised for publication in Q4 2023. The report will provide a final update on the implementation of strategy actions based on reports by the relevant Government departments. It also documents learning from a number of commissioned reports and evaluation of programmes initiated under the Strategy and includes recommendations to inform decisions on DCEDIY's future direction for LGBTI+ youth policy.		
88.4	Commission work to shape a baseline of public attitudes to all equality groups.	Complete
Update: In order to understand public attitudes across all the equality grounds, DCEDIY commissioned a survey of attitudes towards diversity and the equality grounds. A report on this work was published online on 29 June 2023: Attitudes towards the Equality Grounds Poll . The full dataset has been requested from the polling contractor to facilitate the possibility of further analysis.		
The survey questionnaire was designed in conjunction with several Government departments and representatives from different civil society groups, including: Pavee Point, the National Disability Authority, AsIAM, the Independent Living Movement, the Irish Deaf Society, the National Platform of Self Advocates, Voice of Vision, Impairment Physical Ireland, Disabled Women Ireland, Belong To, the Irish Network Against Racism, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, and the ESRI.		

Enhancing Public Services in Rural Areas

Measure 90 Update the Rural Housing Guidelines for planning authorities, to address rural housing in a broader rural development and settlement context.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
90.1	Prepare updated Rural Housing Planning Guidelines that will continue to allow for the development of homes in rural areas while also highlighting the need to manage certain areas around cities and towns in order to avoid over-development of those areas.	Delayed
Update: The draft guidelines, which will address these complex environmental and legal issues, while also providing a framework for the sustainable management of housing in rural areas, are currently subject to legal review and provisional approval, and will then be published for a period of public consultation.		

Measure 91a Provide improved rural public transport services and pilot new transport initiatives for people of all ages and abilities living in rural areas, through:		
a) Developing and implementing a Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan to ensure all settlements over a certain size in terms of population have a service connecting them to the national public transport system.		
Lead Delivery Body: D/Transport, National Transport Authority		
2023 Actions		Status
91a.2	D/Transport will support the NTA's implementation of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan to increase public transport connectivity outside major cities and towns in rural Ireland.	Ongoing
Update: The NTA published an Implementation Review of Phase 1 of Connecting Ireland in Q1 2023. This report summarised the impact of the programme in relation to the 38 new and enhanced services implemented across 2022.		
<p>The review found that over 110,000 weekly vehicle kilometres were added to the public transport network via 13 brand new services, 16 frequency enhancements and nine route extensions which included frequency enhancements. Over 50 settlements have, as a result, been newly connected to the public transport network.</p>		
<p>A total of 760,534 passenger journeys were recorded on Connecting Ireland routes in 2022, of which 342,607 passenger journeys were recorded from the date implementations were introduced. Connecting Ireland services continue to see an increase in patronage, up 112% at</p>		

the end of 2022 compared to the beginning of 2019. Where Connecting Ireland services have been implemented patronage has increased 128% from the beginning of 2022 to year-end.

The Connecting Ireland 2023 Programme was launched in February 2023, and proposes a total of 69 new and enhanced services in 2023.

Measure 91b b) Delivering expanded Local Link services and further integrating Local Link services with other existing public transport services through the roll out of the NTA Connecting Ireland Plan.

Lead Delivery Body: D/Transport, National Transport Authority

2023 Actions

Status

91b.4	Commence services on 10 new bus routes, with enhancement of a further five routes.	Complete
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Update: The Connecting Ireland implementation programme for 2023 is available on the [NTA's website](#). It contains route details, estimated operational timescales and operator details starting Q1 2023.

Examples of new and enhanced TFI Local Link services introduced under Connecting Ireland during 2023 include:

- TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal – new services between Athboy, Navan and Drogheda, 16 January 2023.
- TFI Local Link Wexford – a new bus service connecting Wexford Town and Enniscorthy, 13 February 2023.
- TFI Local Link Galway – a new bus route which will improve connectivity between Tuam and Galway, 22 May 2023.
- TFI Local Link Waterford – a new bus service improving connectivity between Dungarvan, Co. Waterford and Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, 12 June 2023.
- TFI Local Link Cork – a new bus route which will improve connectivity between Allihies and Kilcrohane, 12 June 2023.
- TFI Local Link Kerry – a new bus service, which will improve connectivity between Waterville and Kenmare, 10 July 2023.
- TFI Local Link Wexford - improving bus services to frequently connect Wexford Town with Rosslare Europort, the gateway to Europe and a key transport hub for the South East, 12 July 2023.
- TFI Local Link Kerry – a new bus route, which will improve connectivity between Waterville and Killarney, 17 July 2023.
- TFI Local Link Kerry – a new bus service, which will improve connectivity between Tarbert and Tralee, 24 July 2023.
- TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan – a new bus service, which will improve connectivity, between Shercock and Dundalk, 24 July 2023.
- TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath – a new bus service, which will improve connectivity, between Longford and Roscommon, 21 July 2023.

Measure 91f f) Examine the potential transition of TFI Local Link fleet to low/zero emission fleet

Lead Delivery Body: National Transport Authority		
2023 Actions		Status
91f.1	Deploy two electric vehicle buses in Local Link services on the Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry.	Delayed
Update: This is a pilot action, which has been delayed due to external factors, for example the delayed delivery of the vehicles and setup of charging infrastructure. Interior fitting out is currently being finalised to ensure that they meet all national and EU safety requirements.		

Measure 92 Build on the work already undertaken to ensure that public transport services in rural and regional areas are accessible to persons with disabilities.		
Lead Delivery Body: D/Transport, National Transport Authority		
2023 Actions		Status
92.1	The NTA has set a target of having wheelchair accessible bus stops (one stop in each direction) in 43 towns with a population over 5,000. This would mean 50% of main towns would have a wheelchair accessible bus stop (one in each direction).	Ongoing
Update: The NTA is continuing to work with local authorities and Bus Éireann on development of wheelchair lift-accessible bus stops in towns and at bus stations. Construction is ongoing on wheelchair accessible bus stops, with works at Mullingar station bays substantially complete and works continuing at Cork and Ennis Bus Stations, and Kilkenny train station. Local authority wheelchair accessible bus stop schemes are continuing including commencing locations identified in the audits of town over 1,000 population.		
92.3	The NTA will continue to manage the upgrading of existing and older infrastructure and facilities, such as Victorian-era rail infrastructure via D/Transport's dedicated, ringfenced Accessibility Retrofit Programme funding.	Ongoing
Update: Irish Rail continues to progressively make train stations more accessible, via the Accessibility Retrofit Programme and other capital funding programmes. Example of initiatives underway include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rathmore station – Planning lodged with local authority – Proposed to complete design tender and commence construction in November 2023. • Arklow station – Section 5 approval granted. • Boyle station – Planning issued in March 2023. • Claremorris station - Full planning application to be lodged in July 2023. • Longford station - Full planning application to be lodged in July 2023. 		

<p>Phase 3 preliminary design works is in process for a number of stations, including Gorey, Castlerea, Roscommon, Ballyhaunis, Enniscorthy, Carrigaloe, Dromod, Rosslare, Farranfore and Mhuine Beag.</p> <p>The Travel Assistance Scheme (TAS) is also funded under this programme and is a service to enable people to travel independently on Public Transport. The TAS was expanded in Cork in September 2022. The NTA is planning to expand the TAS to both Limerick and Galway to carry out pilots in both cities in late 2023/early 2024.</p>		
92.5	Reduce advance notice requirement on InterCity and all other rail routes down to 12 hours, and monitor progress.	Delayed
<p>Update: 120 customer service officers were recruited by Irish Rail to allow for a member of staff on every InterCity service to assist customers. The operator is currently exploring avenues and best practice models on how to commence the proposed reduction of the advance notice requirement.</p>		

<p>Measure 96 Establish 96 new Community Healthcare Networks throughout the country to re-shape how community healthcare services will be delivered and support people to live more independently in their community.</p>		
<p>Lead Delivery Body: D/Health</p>		
2023 Actions		Status
96.1	Continue the roll-out of 96 Community Health Networks (CHN) across the country to support the local delivery of integrated care at the appropriate level of complexity.	Ongoing
<p>Update: 94 of 96 CHNs are currently operational. Completion of recruitment for CHN teams continues, with focused HSE recruitment campaigns currently underway for remaining roles, with the target of full implementation to be completed imminently.</p> <p>Engagement with the HSE continues regarding the reporting of ECC metrics, and interrogation of activity, impacts and outcomes of the CHNs, and CSTs (Community Specialist Teams).</p>		

<p>Measure 102 Invest in high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure specifically targeted at towns and villages across the country.</p>		
<p>Lead Delivery Body: D/Transport</p>		
2023 Actions		Status

102.3	Publish the National Cycle Network and Implementation Plan. (Transport Infrastructure Ireland)	Delayed
Update: The development of the National Cycle Network is substantially complete, with refinement of an accelerated delivery schedule ongoing. This will require further consideration of the funding needed to enable the delivery schedule. This has impacted the Q2 delivery timeframe. It is envisaged a report will be published in Q3.		

Transitioning to a Climate Neutral Society

Measure 110 Enable community energy to play a role in reaching the target of generating at least 70% of electricity through renewables by 2030, through supports such as a Community Benefit fund and a community category within the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme.		
Lead Delivery Body: DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
110.6	Rollout of the next five toolkits in the Community Energy Resource Toolkit.	Complete
Update: The nine modules of this Toolkit are available to download at Community Enabling Framework RESS SEAI .		
110.7	Publication of Small-scale Generation Support Scheme (SSG) High Level Design, supporting non-domestic renewable electricity generators above 50kW, and community energy and SME projects up to 6 MW.	Complete
Update: Following a public consultation on proposed High-Level Design features of a Small-Scale Generation Support Scheme in 2022, Government approved the High-Level Design of the Small-Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (SRESS) on 23 June 2023.		

Measure 111 Prioritise the development of microgeneration of renewable electricity, allowing people sell excess power back to the grid, through the establishment of a Microgeneration Support Scheme.		
Lead Delivery Body: DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
111.3	SEAI to assess the extension of the MSS grant scheme to include other technologies beyond solar.	Delayed
Update: The assessment of potential benefit has been delayed until Q4 2023. 98% of microgeneration connections are solar PV and the focus to date has been on expanding the solar PV scheme and removing barriers of entry for domestic and non-domestic applicants.		
111.4	Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) to consult on an Implementation Plan for a support tariff for new micro-generators between 6 kW and 50 kW.	Closed (see update)

Update: Changes to the non-domestic microgeneration scheme, to expand capital grant supports to applicants from 6 kW to 50 kW and beyond, has eliminated the need to tariff support for this cohort.		
111.6	Review of Microgeneration Support Scheme to assess capital grants and tariff support structures, in line with revised ambition under Climate Action Plan 23 and the need to encourage and support small businesses to become active consumers.	Delayed
Update: Review of MSS is underway and the non-domestic solar PV scheme has now been extended on a pilot basis to end of 2023, to support a significantly wider cohort of businesses and non-domestic applicants, to become active customers.		

Measure 114b Continue to develop Ireland's approach to a Just Transition away from fossil fuels, including by (b) Promote the integration of just transition considerations into climate action and relevant sectoral policies		
Lead Delivery Body: DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
114b.2	Establish Just Transition Commission to provide strategic advice to the Government.	Delayed
Update: The Government is continuing to progress the development of proposals to establish a Just Transition Commission. The Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications has engaged directly with key stakeholders to inform its approach, including through the National Climate Stakeholder Forum.		

Measure 115 Retrofit 500,000 homes and install 400,000 heat pumps across the country up to 2030, contributing to employment opportunities in rural areas.		
Lead Delivery Body: DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
115.1	Following further evaluation of a potential new Community Activation Scheme, a targeted and more streamlined strand of the Communities Grant Scheme focused on smaller projects for retrofitting homes will be introduced.	Delayed
Update: The potential for this initiative is being considered as part of the development of a new Community Energy Strategy in SEAI.		

Measure 116a Bring investment and job opportunities to coastal communities by developing the offshore renewable energy sector, including through: a) The finalisation of the Marine Planning and Development Management Bill.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
116a.3	Co-ordination of preparation of MAP Act regulations.	Complete
Update: Planning and Development Regulations for Maritime Development were published on 10 March 2023.		
Measure 116c c) The development of an offshore transmission grid.		
Lead Delivery Body: DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
116c.2	Publication of offshore grid regulatory framework by the CRU.	Complete
Update: The CRU published relevant offshore decisions in Q1 this year in advance of ORESS 1. The CRU continues to progress development of the wider offshore regulatory framework.		
116c.5	Publish Policy Statement on the Framework for Phase Two Offshore Wind.	Complete
Update: The Policy Statement on the Framework for Phase Two Offshore Wind was published on 10 March 2023. The framework provides clarity for all stakeholders regarding the plan-led development of offshore wind. It is a critical step on Ireland's journey towards maximising our offshore wind energy capacity and eventually eradicating our dependence on imported fossil fuels		
Measure 116d d) Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (O-RESS) auctions.		
Lead Delivery Body: DECC		
2023 Actions		Status
116d.3	Results of O-RESS 1 Auction will be announced.	Complete
Update: The results of Ireland's first offshore wind auction under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS 1) were finalised on 14 June 2023.		

Over 3GW of capacity has been procured from four offshore wind projects, which will deliver over 12TWh (terawatt hours) of renewable electricity per year. This is the largest volume of renewable energy Ireland has ever procured at auction – equivalent to more than a third of Ireland’s entire electricity consumption this year and more than a quarter of projected 2030 electricity demand.

Measure 118 Develop a national policy on coastal erosion and flooding and maintain a multi-annual investment programme in flood relief measures to protect impacted communities.		
Lead Delivery Body: OPW, DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
118.5	The Interdepartmental Group on Coastal Change Management Strategy will finalise its report to Government with options and recommendations for managing the projected impact of coastal change to our coastal communities, economies, heritage, culture and environment.	Complete
Update: The Interdepartmental Group is jointly chaired by DHLGH and the OPW and is supported by a Technical Working Group. The scoping report on Managing Coastal Change has now been finalised. It will be submitted to Government for consideration and approval at the next available opportunity, and before mid–September, and this will include publication of the report.		

Supporting the Sustainability of Agriculture, the Marine and Forestry

Measure 121 Develop and Implement a new Agri-Food Strategy to 2030, building on the success of the previous strategies.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		
2023 Actions		Status
121.2	Progress implementation of Food Vision 2030, with updates provided through Annual Report 2022.	Ongoing
Update: The first Food Vision 2030 Annual Report was published in May 2023. In terms of overall progress, six actions are complete, 64 actions have substantial action undertaken, 142 actions have commenced and are progressing, and six actions have not yet commenced.		

Measure 122 Encourage and support Local Authorities to expand the number of farmers' markets, farm shops and food emporiums, and support the formation of community-owned markets in all towns, showcasing local food produce from local farmers, growers, and food producers.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		
2023 Actions		Status
122.1	Engagement with DRCD to scope potential involvement of Local Community Development Committees in the implementation of this measure.	Delayed
Update: This action is now due to commence in Q3 2023.		

Measure 123 Support farm diversification, including through the provision of the Options programme managed by Teagasc.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		
2023 Actions		Status

123.3	Deliver a series of Farm Business Options workshops throughout Teagasc Advisory Regions. Three remaining workshops will take place by Q2 2023.	Complete
Update: Two-day 'Planning your Farm Business Start-up' Options workshop were held in February in collaboration with LEO Mayo. A further series of Options workshops is planned for autumn 2023.		

Measure 125 Explore the potential application of Living Labs in an Irish context, establishing innovation networks to identify and pilot tailored place-based initiatives for primary production, food and bio-based systems.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		
2023 Actions		Status
125.2	An Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) Coordination Group will be established.	Delayed
Update: The establishment of an AKIS group is now expected to take place in Q4 2023.		

Measure 128 Publish a successor forestry programme to deliver an ambitious afforestation plan, to achieve an afforestation target of 8,000 ha/year, with a particular focus on an increased farmer participation and habitat creation.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		
2023 Actions		Status
128.5	The new Forestry Strategy is currently being finalised and will be published after environmental assessment processes are completed.	Delayed
Update: Engagement with EU Commission is ongoing. The Strategy is expected to be finalised in Q3 2023.		

Measure 129 Provide ongoing support for the development of the knowledge and skills base of the agriculture and forestry sectors by the Teagasc Advisory and Education Services.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		

2023 Actions		Status
129.3	Teagasc Education Service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch the Sportsturf Technician (Higher Level 6) Apprenticeship Programme, with a proposed minimum intake of 20 apprentices in September. Appoint a new climate specialist to the Curriculum Development and Standards Unit. Recommence Whole College Evaluation Projects in association with D/Education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Complete Complete
Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sportsturf apprenticeship will begin in Q3 2023 with a proposed intake of 20 apprentices. QQI approval was obtained in late Q2 with amendment to statutory legislation also completed. The new climate specialist has been appointed and is based in Kildalton College reporting to Head of Curriculum Development. A new MOU was agreed with the D/Education and Teagasc to re-commence the whole college evaluations. The first evaluation will take place in Ballyhaise College in Q4 2023. 		

Measure 132 Increase awareness and outreach across the farming community of programmes and initiatives to support the safety, health and wellbeing of farmers.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		
2023 Actions		Status
132.6	Assess the impact of the Farm Health and Safety and Wellbeing European Innovation Partnership projects.	Delayed
Update: As some European Innovation Partnership projects were granted extensions, the assessment has been deferred to Q3, after the EIPs have published their project reports.		

Measure 133 Conduct a review of the means test for Farm Assist to ensure farmers receive the appropriate level of support through this scheme.		
Lead Delivery Body: DSP		
2023 Actions		Status

133.3	Increase the amount of the available disregard under the Farm Assist Scheme for agri-environmental schemes from €2,540 to €5,000 (as announced in Budget 2023).	Complete
Update: This measure was introduced with effect from 1 January 2023, as legislated for in the Social Welfare Act 2022. In addition, the list of agri-environmental schemes that attract this disregard (which was already expanded in 2022) was further expanded with effect from April 2023 by S.I. 162 of 2023.		

Supporting the Sustainability of our Islands and Coastal Communities

Measure 135 Publish and implement a new cross-Departmental Policy for Island Development and associated action plans to ensure delivery of the policy, including in areas such as housing, health, energy, utilities, waste management, climate change, education, digital connectivity, employment, infrastructure and transport.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
135.1	Publication of policy and action plan.	Complete
Update: The national islands policy, Ár nOileáin Bheo / Our Living Islands was approved by Government and published in June 2023. The policy is accompanied by an Action Plan for the period 2023-2026 that includes 80 time-bound actions which will be implemented by various stakeholders, each led by a nominated Government department or State agency.		

Measure 143 Following completion of the Marine Spatial Planning policy, bring forward Ireland's first National Marine Planning Framework which will introduce a planning system for managing the development of Ireland's maritime area in the same way that the National Planning Framework does on land.		
Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH		
2023 Actions		Status
143.1	Supporting Reform of Marine Management in Ireland (SRMMI) Project – DG REFORM funded cross-Government project identifying the changes needed, including specifying digital systems and tools, to put in place plan-led marine management in Ireland as detailed in the MAP Act.	Complete
Update: The SRMMI project has been completed. Reports on the project will be published in Q3 2023.		

Measure 146 Continue to invest in coastal communities through the Fisheries Local Area Group (FLAG) scheme, providing support for investments by micro seafood enterprises and projects in the area of marine tourism and leisure and the wider marine sector.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		

2023 Actions		Status
146.2	Issue calls for expression of interest in the community-led local development under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027 Operational Programme.	Complete
Update: The call for expressions of interest for selection as a Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) under the EMFAF 2021-2027 was opened on 9 May 2023. The closing date for applications was 5 June 2023. The applications are currently being assessed with a view to selecting FLAGs in July 2023 before moving onto the next phase of local development strategy formulation.		

Implementation of the Policy

Measure 150 Establish a Higher Education Institutions Network on rural development to ensure ongoing engagement with rural development experts over the lifetime of this policy.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
150.3	Expand the Network on an all-island basis through the addition of representatives of DAERA, Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster.	Complete
Update: DAERA, Queen's University Belfast, and the University of Ulster have all proposed nominees to participate in the HEI Network.		

Measures added in 2022

Measure 153 Support social cohesion and integration following the arrival of citizens of Ukraine in rural communities.		
Lead Delivery Body: All Departments		
2023 Actions		Status
153.4	Provide additional services, routes, and trips via the deployment of new shuttle bus services as well as supplementing existing public transport offerings in identified towns and villages, with additional stops and added trips and days of service. This will be across both Demand Responsive (door-to-door) and Regular Rural (timetabled) routes. New services will be added where public transport is not available. (D/Transport)	Complete
<p>Update: D/Transport and the NTA continue to monitor and respond to the arrival of refugees due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and are factoring in the geographical spread of Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) into the planning process.</p> <p>In order to serve a dual purpose, by catering for both existing demand as well as responding to the increased pressures on services where the local population has grown in response to the humanitarian crisis, the NTA accelerated the implementation of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan, and also added additional stops, routes and services to increase connectivity where the need had arisen. (See actions 91a and 91b above for further information on the rollout of Connecting Ireland services).</p> <p>This approach continues as more BOTPs are accommodated across Ireland.</p> <p>Whilst this action is complete, continued services delivery and new services are anticipated.</p>		
153.5	Complete distribution of the Healthy Ireland Ukrainian Resilience once off funding. (D/Health)	Complete
<p>Update: The Healthy Ireland Ukrainian Resilience Fund was distributed to local authorities in December 2022 to fund projects focused on improving the health and wellbeing of Ukrainian refugees and all people in the community. More than 150 projects have been completed to date, across 30 local authorities. While the vast majority of projects are now complete, some projects remain ongoing due to various local matters. The full €1 million funding has been distributed and excellent feedback has been received from the local authorities. Examples of completed projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Art Therapy Workshops ○ Woodland Walks ○ Orienteering for families and children ○ Mindfulness Exercises and Workshops ○ Family Day Excursions to attractions and leisure facilities ○ Cookery Classes and healthy Food made easy 		

- Development of allotments and planting schemes in conjunction with local environmental/tidy town groups

Measure 154 Review of School Transport Scheme, including provision of school transport in rural communities.

Lead Delivery Body: D/Education

2023 Actions

Status

154.1	Complete the review of the School Transport Scheme (which encompasses the School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs and the Primary and Post-Primary School Transport Schemes) with a view to ensuring that it serves students and their families appropriately. The review will consider issues such as climate action, school transport in rural areas, and promoting where possible initiatives that encourage walking and cycling to school.	Delayed
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Update: Considerable progress has been achieved on Phase 3 of the School Transport Scheme review. It is expected that the review will be completed shortly. A draft report has been finalised by the Technical Working Group and has been circulated onwards to the Steering Working Group for consideration and will in turn be furnished to the Minister.

Measure 157 Development of strategic Gaeltacht tourism initiatives.

Lead Delivery Body: Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland

2023 Actions

Status

157.5	Complete the South Conamara Outdoor Recreation Hub report.	Delayed
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Update: An advanced draft of the Conamara Outdoor Recreation Hub report has been completed, and is currently under review as part of the community consultation process.

157.7	Following strategic partnership agreement between Údarás na Gaeltachta and Fáilte Ireland, the agencies will develop a list of priority tourism development projects to be taken forward.	Delayed
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Update: A long list of priority projects has been prepared, assessment is underway with final list to be agreed by end of Q3 2023.

Measure 158 Development and implementation of An Gaeltacht Ghlas strategy, which will look to create a sustainability strategy for the Gaeltacht, taking into account economic, community and social sectors.		
Lead Delivery Body: Údarás na Gaeltachta		
2023 Actions		Status
158.1	Launch and develop implementation plan for An Gaeltacht Ghlas strategy.	Delayed
Update: The first draft of An Gaeltacht Ghlas strategy has been developed and is currently being reviewed prior to launch. This is expected to be completed by Q4 2023.		

Measure 159 Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the forestry licensing system to support measures aiming to achieve an afforestation target of 8,000 ha/year.		
Lead Delivery Body: DAFM		
2023 Actions		Status
159.4b	Develop a customer charter for Forestry.	Delayed
Update: The Farmer's Charter, which incorporates a Forestry Chapter, is still being finalised.		

Measure 160 Co-develop and implement rural development elements of the new PEACE PLUS programme 2021-2027.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD, SEUPB		
2023 Actions		Status
160.2	Following launch of the PEACE PLUS Programme, DRCD will work with the Special EU Programmes Body and relevant NI departments on the preparation of guidance documents and calls for applications for approval by the Programme Monitoring Committee for relevant measures under the programme.	Complete
Update: The financial agreement between the UK Government, Irish Government and the EU came into force on 14 June 2023 and the launch of the programme is now imminent.		

DRCD has worked closely with the SEUPB and relevant NI departments on the preparation of guidance documents and calls for applications which were approved by the Programme Monitoring Committee prior to the launch of calls for applications under a number of Investment Areas on 15 June last including

- 1.1 Co-designed Local Community PEACE Action Plans;
- 1.4 Reimagining Communities; and
- 4.3 Victims and Survivors.

Further calls for applications will open during Q3-Q4 2023 under the following Investment Areas including

- 1.3 Building Positive Relations;
- 4.2 Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion; and
- 2.4 Smart Towns and Villages.

Full details on all investment areas are available on the [SEUPB website](#).

New Measures in 2023

Measure 164 Further develop the role of Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) as digitally-enabled community assets that facilitate the delivery of online services in rural and under-served communities.		
Lead Delivery Body: DRCD		
2023 Actions		Status
164.1	Publication of the BCP Network's development strategy. The strategy will consider a range of issues relating to ensuring that BCPs deliver clear benefits, including the coverage and usage of existing BCP sites, development of new services and initiatives in BCPs and awareness raising activities.	Delayed
Update: The BCP Development Strategy is currently being drafted and developed in consultation with Broadband Officers, BCP hub managers and volunteers. The strategy will focus on the future potential of the BCPs and how to support these hubs to reach this potential.		
164.2	Expand the delivery of digital skills, STEM and digital literacy training at BCPs.	Complete
Update: Through the delivery of the BCP thematic programme a number of projects have been progressed under the education and training work stream. DRCD has worked with a number of stakeholders including OurKidsCode, Microsoft, Kinia and CoderDojo to facilitate digital skills training. These training programmes are aimed at senior citizens, primary and secondary school age children, and adults with an interest in updating their digital skills. The courses are intended to promote basic digital literacy, upskilling and engagement with STEM subjects during childhood.		

Measure 166 Examine and take forward commitments outlined in the White Paper on Enterprise to support balanced regional and rural economic development outcomes.		
Lead Delivery Body: DETE		
2023 Actions		Status
166.1	Develop an Implementation Plan for assignment of commitments to relevant stakeholders.	Complete
Update: During Q1 2023, DETE developed the first of consecutive two-year Implementation Plans of cross-government activity to implement the White Paper commitments.		

This first Implementation Plan was published in May and identifies a portfolio of 40 key initiatives and projects under each of the seven priority objectives as outlined in the White Paper on Enterprise.

Details of progress made under each of the initiatives in the Implementation Plan will be provided by the relevant stakeholders, and included in bi-annual update reports to the Cabinet Committee on the Economy and Investment. The first of these bi-annual reports will be prepared in Q3 of this year.

Measure 167 **Implementation and monitoring of the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan (CSP) for the period 2023-2027, which will address existing and emerging challenges including climate action, environmental protection, generational renewal, viable farm incomes, and sustain vibrant rural areas.**

Lead Delivery Body: DAFM

2023 Actions

Status

167.2 Engage as needed with the Commission to ensure the approval of the first amendment to the CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

Complete

Update: Action completed with approval for the first amendment received on the 16 June.

Measure 169 **Implement a new Community Recognition Fund to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities in communities hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries**

Lead Delivery Body: DRCD

2023 Actions

Status

169.1 Announce successful projects under new €50m Community Recognition Fund.

Complete

Update: In May, €50 million in funding was announced for over 880 projects under the Community Recognition Fund.

Measure 172 **Prepare planning guidelines for Gaeltacht areas.**

Lead Delivery Body: DHLGH

2023 Actions		Status
172.1	Publish a draft set of Gaeltacht planning guidelines for consultation.	Delayed
<p>Update: DHLGH convened a Working Group during summer 2021 to examine various aspects of the planning process in all Gaeltacht areas. Membership of this group is made up of representatives from the DTCAGSM, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the relevant local authorities. This group met most recently on 19 July.</p> <p>The Group has been examining how current arrangements could be strengthened in the overall interest of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht and in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development.</p> <p>It is intended to publish draft guidelines for Gaeltacht Areas for public consultation in Q3 2023, following screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as well as for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA).</p>		