



Granard Municipal District PPN Plenary Meeting Minutes

Date: 13.06.17

Venue: Granard Library

Welcome and Introduction

Tess Murphy, PPN Secretariat and Chairperson opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and announcing the theme of the meeting “Community Groups and LEADER funding. She said that the PPN was now a network with over 200 community groups, 53 of which were in the Granard Municipal District (MD) all working together to make our County a better place to live in.

She said previously small voluntary groups worked on their own in their various parishes but through the PPN all of these groups can stay connected. She said most of you will have received an email today from Siobhán Cronogue, PPN Development Officer inviting community groups to review and comment on Longford County Councils Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019. She said the plan covers all areas like housing, community, economic development, tourism, civil defence, water, environment etc so it is important that community groups had their say on what is important to them. This is the plan that Longford County Council will follow to develop the County.

She then spoke of the difficulties and challenges community groups faced in applying for funding because of all the bureaucracy. She said she was delighted to introduce the first of our guest speakers who would discuss their experiences of applying for LEADER funding. She welcomed Catherine Reid on to the stage.

Catherine Reid, Leebeen Park Development Ltd

Catherine told the plenary that she has been involved as a volunteer in her area since the 1990's. As a member of a local development committee at the time they first applied for funding under the second LEADER Programme 1994 -1999. She said they were successful in obtaining a little under £1000 for equipment. She said back then it was a simple application and process.

She said in the years following they started to look at how they could develop the park. They held a public meeting in 2002 where they decided to buy 5 acres of land. After doing this they applied to LEADER for funding to contract landscape architects (Hayes/Ryan). This time round the process was more complicated and they had to submit 3 quotes, have all their accounts and audit reports in order. They received €5000 under this LEADER funding stream.

In 2006, they decided to submit an application to develop a car park. The total cost of this was €30,000 (€17,300 plus match funding). She noted that everything at that time was priced so high.

She said the first hurdle was getting planning permission. This took six weeks. Catherine told PPN groups to be conscience of this when planning because with their project everything took longer than expected. She informed the plenary that because they had set up the Leebeen Park Development Group as a Limited Company by Guarantee this made it easier to apply for funding because they already had their Articles of Association, Audit Reports, Financial Reports, Charitable status, Tax Cert etc in place.

She said their experience of applying last time round was challenging and frustrating but so rewarding when the project was completed. She commented that the current application form can be frightening to look at but she can understand why it is that way because of the number of fraudulent cases involving charities, banks and business in previous years. She said it's sad that bigger organisations mess up but the smaller voluntary community groups have to pay for their mistakes too. She ended her presentation by asking if the LEADER Programme could acknowledge the amount of time, paperwork, phone calls, photocopying, travelling etc that community groups have to do and if in some way this could be laid off as part of the process.

Tess Murphy thanked Catherine and introduced the next speaker, Jamie O' Neil.

Jamie O' Neil, Colmcille Community Development

Jamie said they as interested individuals started meeting in 2011 and formed as a group in 2012. They tried to come up with ideas of what they could do in their community so they invited school children to make suggestions. This lead to them undertaking the project of developing a playground in Leebeen. Jamie noted that Leebeen Park Development Ltd owned the land and they lease it from them.

They began by fundraising and getting planning permission. Jamie said Longford County Council supported them with funding and locals with expertise in surveying volunteered their time and services. He said they also needed match funding and the total of the project was €75,000 of which LEADER funding 75% of that. This meant they needed to raise €25,000. He said they negotiated a deal with the construction company that they would pay them in instalments until LEADER Funding was drawn down. Jamie told the PPN groups to

be mindful that due to tenders, drawing down the funding can be a stressful and lengthy process. They opted for loans from the Credit Union but in hindsight thought bridge financing would have been better. It would have saved people a lot of stress and worry. He highlighted that the rules of LEADER were set in stone so just be aware of that, there is no wiggle room.

He also advised that groups need a Tax Cert and to be mindful that the company/person carrying out the work also needs one. If you are not aware of this it can slow the process down. He also highlighted the durability of investment of LEADER. The programme requires you to stay linked with them for 5 years after your project is complete. Reports need to go back to Europe so you cannot disband. You must report every year.

He said it was important to note that they used what he called benefit in kind i.e. the leased land was used the value as Capital. He ended his presentation by stating If you have an idea for a project it is do-able through LEADER funding which he thought was a great source of funding. He also said the LEADER staff were very helpful.

A question and answer time followed and Tess Murphy, Chairperson congratulated both PPN Community Groups on the fantastic developments they had achieved for their area. She then introduced the next speaker Ciaran Mullhooly.

Ciaran Mullhooly, Lough Ree/ Lanesborough Angling Hub

Ciaran opened his presentation by explaining that they were a hub and not a club. In the background, he played a DVD that allowed all in attendance to get a real taste of what the group had achieved in terms of angling and tourism in the area.

He explained that 6000 visitors attended the Lanesboro and Ballyleague 9th World Fishing Championship and accompanying 'Taste of the Lakelands' food festival in 2016. Hundreds of pike and perch were caught (and released) on Lough Ree. He said the economic boost for counties Longford and Roscommon was of the magnitude of €400,000 over the five days with hundreds of visitors staying locally. 19 Countries participated which really put Lanesboro on the map and the event was supported by Fáilte Ireland.

Ciaran then spoke about various funding streams like the Village and Town Renewal Scheme and Agenda 21. He highlighted some interesting projects that groups were undertaking to develop their areas such as; in an area in Lanesborough where there was nothing, one group came up with the idea to put in 5 caravan ports which will promote tourism in the area.

He complimented the great work Granard Motte Enterprise were doing and wished them every success. He then made a presentation on Taste of Lakelands covering their strategy, vision and outcomes, strengths and opportunities, tourism destinations and marketing. He highlighted the importance of branding.

He said the Local Enterprise Office and both Local Authorities, Longford and Roscommon were instrumental in supporting the festival which led to the involvement of 44 local food producers. He also said Gary O' Hanlon, award winning Chef of Viewmont House participated in a live demo to promote the event.

He voiced his concerns about the process of applying for LEADER funding and said it needed to be changed at National Level. He said there was not enough consideration of voluntary hours. He said the PPN could play a part in bringing this message to the relevant structures.

Members of the audience agreed that there was too much bureaucracy and red tape. Others highlighted that they would not be where they are today without LEADER Funding.

Tess Murphy thanked Ciaran and opened the floor for questions. She then introduced Gillian Shaw, LEADER team.

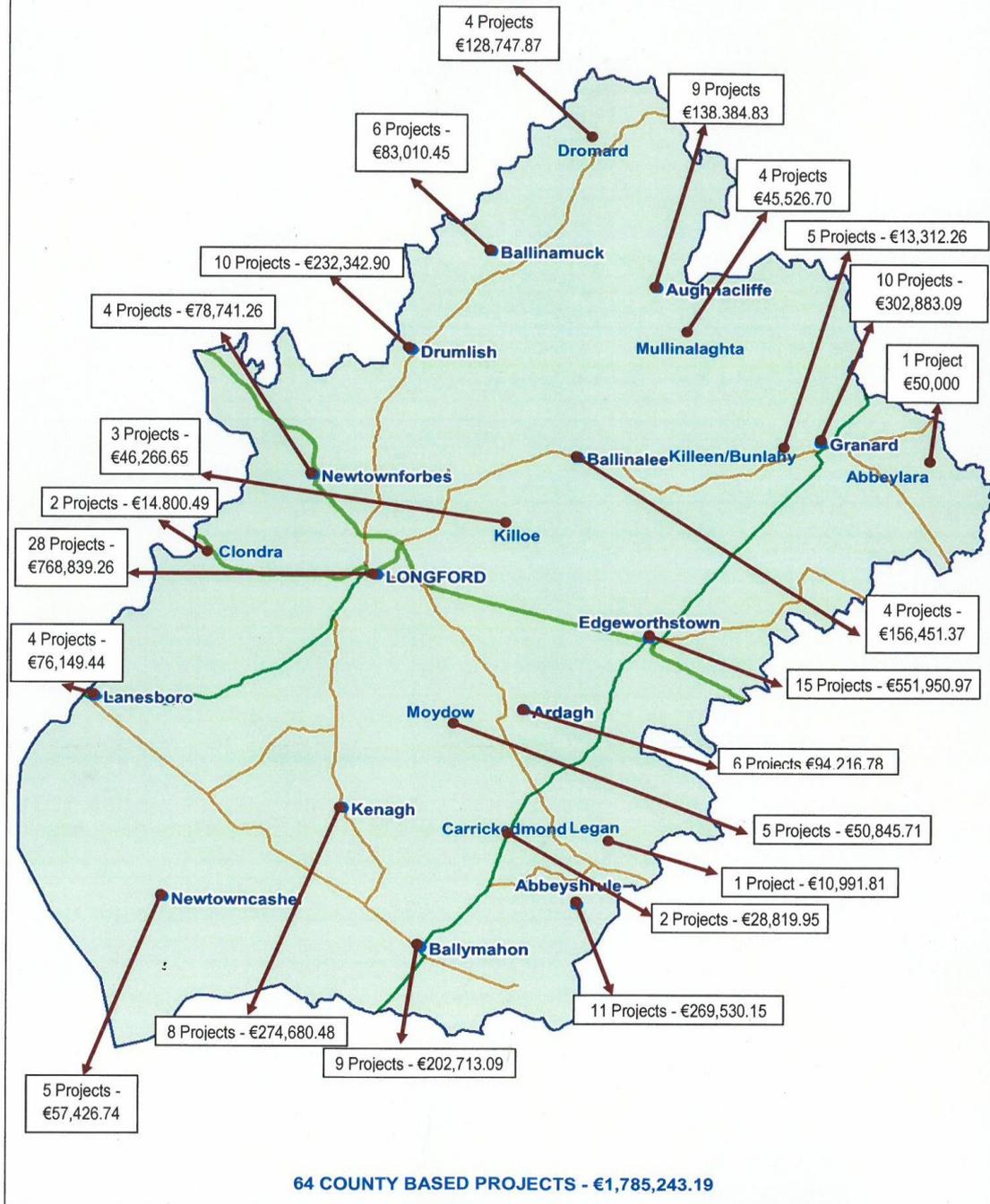
[Jillian Shaw, LEADER Team](#)

Jillian thanked all the speakers and said the LEADER staff fully appreciated the work that goes into applying for the funding. She said the team were delighted to meet with PPN members tonight and allay any fears they have. She said she highly recommended groups who are considering applying for the funding to arrange a pre-application meeting with a member of the team day or evening whether that's in the LCRL office or at a group meeting or a member's home.

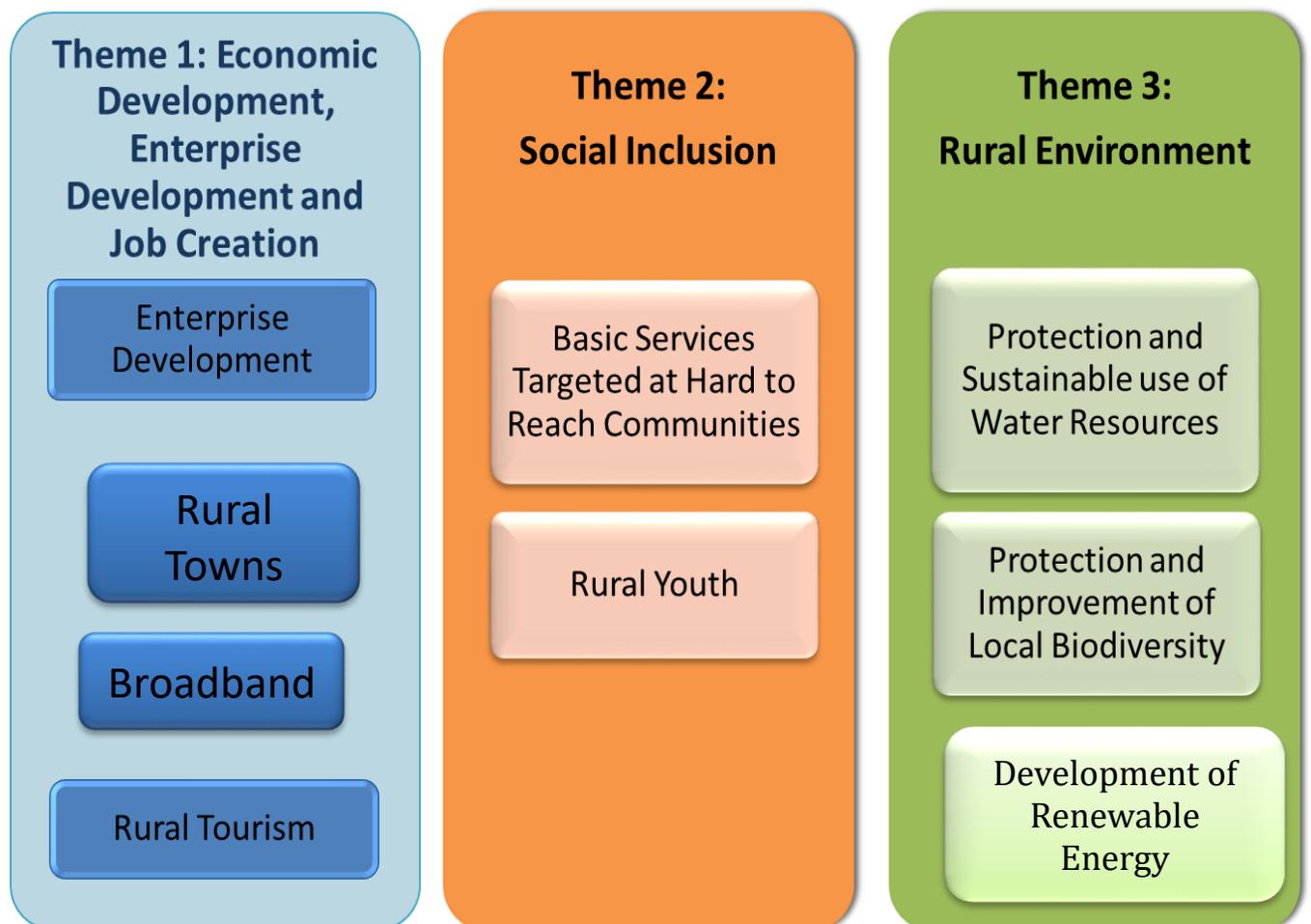
She explained that a lot of the paper work is there to protect you as a community group because of all the fraudulent cases in recent years and because the money was coming from Europe. She said it was important to note that all of the LEADER CEO's have made representation to the Department in terms of making the application process easier and she hoped that the Government would listen to them and community groups. She explained that the rules of LEADER are set by the Department and it was their job (LCDC, LCRL) to implement them.

The LEADER Team then handed out maps with all the community projects in towns and villages around the County that was funded by the LEADER programme. Jillian explained that this round of the LEADER Programme was different in there were now three partners; LCDC were the Local Action Group (LAG) with ultimate responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the LEADER programme and that the PPN have five representatives who sit on that LCDC Committee and are involved in directing the programme and making decisions on how the programme rolls out locally, Longford County Council is the financial partner and LCRL is the implementing partner. She also noted that the Evaluation Committee were an independent Committee.

RDP (LEADER) 2007-2013 Grants Paid Feb '09 – Dec '15
OVERALL – 220 Projects paid €5,461,875.44



Jillian pointed out that from 2009 -2015, 45 private projects were funded compared to 175 community projects. She also said that there was Themes and Sub themes to the Programme. See below:



She ended her presentation by thanking all those in attendance and inviting PPN members to speak with the team after the meeting.

Tess Murphy thanked Jillian and asked if community groups could join together and collaborate on a project. Jillian said absolutely and they would welcome PPN groups collaborating.

Tess closed the meeting by thanking all for attending, the guest speakers and Granard Library. She announced the raffle was about to take place and this would be followed by refreshments and an opportunity to meet with members of the LEADER team.

Finally she thanked Siobhán Cronogue, PPN Development Officer for organising such an informative meeting.

The results of the raffle were:

- 1st Prize: Lus na Greine FRC, Granard
- 2nd Prize: Lanesborough / Lough Ree Abgling Hub
- 3rd Prize: Leebeen Development Park Ltd.