



# Longford Municipal District PPN Plenary Meeting Minutes

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**Date: 14.06.17**

**Venue: Longford Library**

## Welcome and Introduction

Connie Gerety, PPN Secretariat and Chairperson opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and giving a brief background and update on County Longford PPN. She explained that the PPN was the structure in place to link community groups with Longford County Council and other decision-making bodies. She said that the PPN was now a network with over 200 community groups, 73 of which were in the Longford Municipal District (MD).

She then presented services available from Citizens Information's Service and explained that everyone is a citizen no matter which Country you originate from. The range of information the service covers is as follows:

- Social Welfare
- Employment
- Education and Training
- Travel and Recreation
- Housing
- Moving Country
- Money and Tax
- Family and Relationships
- Health
- Justice
- Consumer Affairs
- Death and Bereavement
- Government in Ireland
- Environment

Connie went on to explain that they also provided assistance with filling out forms and submissions. She said you would be surprised to know the amount of claims, reviews,

appeals, payments etc. that are refused or rejected by the application forms were not filled out correctly.

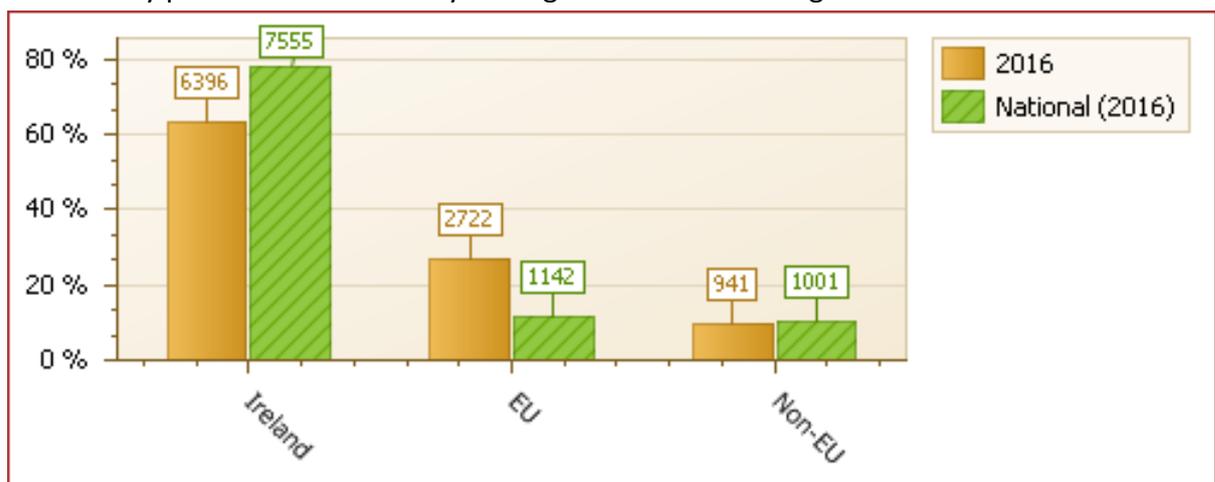
She continued by informing the plenary of the areas where they provide advocacy and representational support:

- Social Welfare - Hearings; Reviews & Appeals etc....
- HSE Services & Payments – Medical Cards; Drugs Payment Scheme; Cross Border Health Scheme etc..
- Employment Issues – WRC, Mediation; Adjudication Hearings; Labour Court
- Social Housing & Private Rented
- Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests & Appeals to Information Commissioner
- Local Authority Service Appeals
- Ombudsman
- Immigration

Connie then provided the following statistics:

- In 2016 Co. Longford CIS recorded 89 cases, 20 of which went to appeal or oral hearing within a more formal representational structure and 46 of which were resolved through written correspondence e.g. letters, submissions, application to ombudsman. (All cases were successful)
- The success from these cases yielded a total of - €465K in monetary value for clients
- For four consecutive years Co. Longford CIS attained the highest percentage of callers per population nationally which is a true reflection of the continued growth and development of the service. **17,582 Queries in 2016** = 43.08% of the population of Longford (40,810 population per 2016 census)

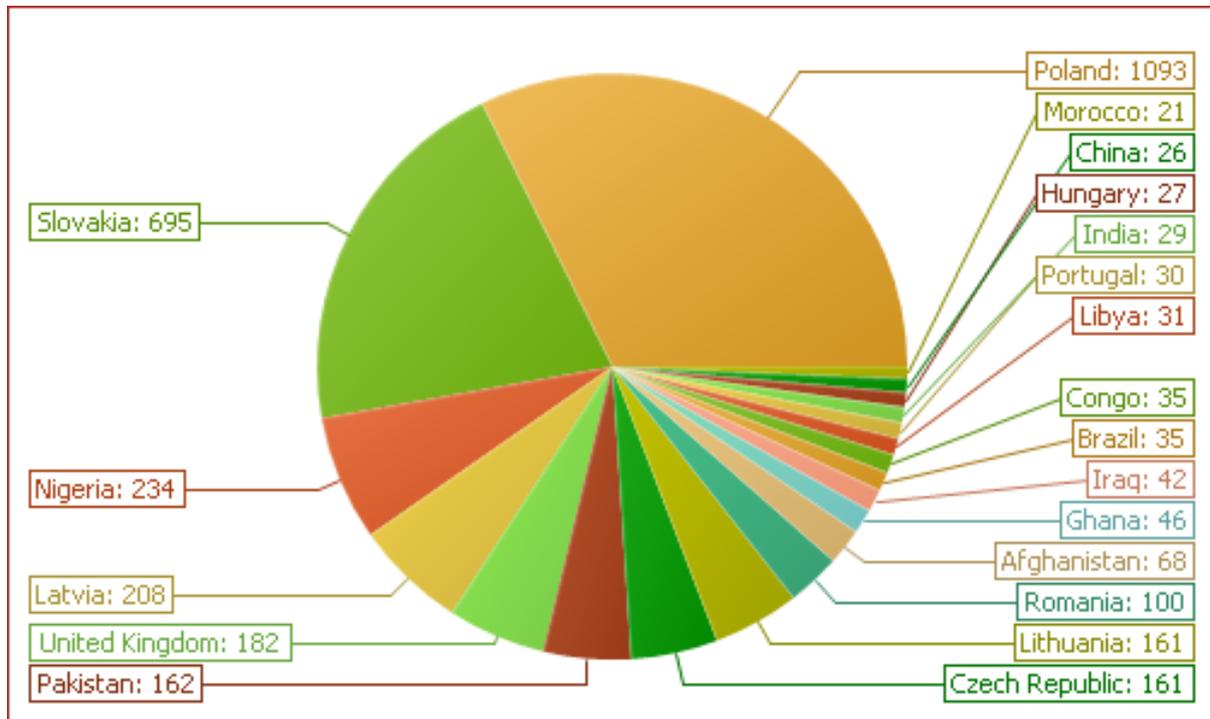
She visually presented the Country of Origins of callers to Longford CIS :



The figures in the above chart are based on the number of callers who divulged their nationality details, which was 90.05% in the current reporting period.

Out of 11,171 callers to the service 67.21% were Irish Nationals ,24.37% were E.U. Nationals, 8.42% were Non-EEA Nationals and 32.79% (3,663) 1/3 of clients were foreign nationals

She then listed the diverse nationality of callers. Please see chart below:



Connie ended her presentation by taking the Plenary through a list of CIS specialist services:

- Free Legal Advice Clinic (by appointment)
- CAVA (by appointment)
- Polish, Slovakian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian interpreting service
- Pensions Day (Wednesdays by Appointment)
- Outreaches By Appointment or Granard Thursday morning 10- 12
- Fair Deal Advice (Wednesdays by appointment)
- Advocacy Case Work by appointment

Connie opened the floor to questions and was asked if forms could be made available in a larger font size for those who are visually impaired. Connie said the Census was a standard form and could not be changed but other forms could be on request. Maria highlighted that this can be embarrassing for people to have to ask and wait while they are being printed. Connie said she will look into have forms available on the stands.

Connie then welcomed and introduced guest speaker Mona Considine, Backstage Theatre to speak about their experiences of applying for LEADER funding.

## Mona Considine, Backstage Theatre

Mona gave a brief introduction to the Backstage Theatre. She said it opened in April 1995 and is a not for profit organisation with charitable status. Eight staff are employed and four community employment participants. They are funded by the Arts Council and the Local Authority. She said they had a 212-seater auditorium, a studio performance space, which also serves as a rehearsal room/workshop space and a gallery (The Atrium Gallery)

She then listed the companies and artists who have performed at the theatre:

- Druid Theatre Company
- The Abbey Theatre
- The Gate Theatre
- Ballet Ireland
- Paul Brady
- The Fureys
- Bell X1
- Pat Shortt, comedian
- Tommy Tiernan Comedian
- Barry Norman, Film Critic

She said Backstage was a platform for local community groups, schools and festivals to create and present their work such as:

- Aisling Children's Arts Festival
- St Christopher's Services
- Backstage Youth Theatre
- Backstage Theatre Group
- St Mel's Musical Society
- Evolution Stage School
- Peelo School of Dance
- Drama Groups across the county
- Schools in the region

She said they were successfully in applying for LEADER funding in 2005. She the project funded a motorised winch system on all lighting bars above the stage at the theatre for more efficient rigging and a safer working environment. She said the total cost was €44,240 and the grant aid covered €22,120.



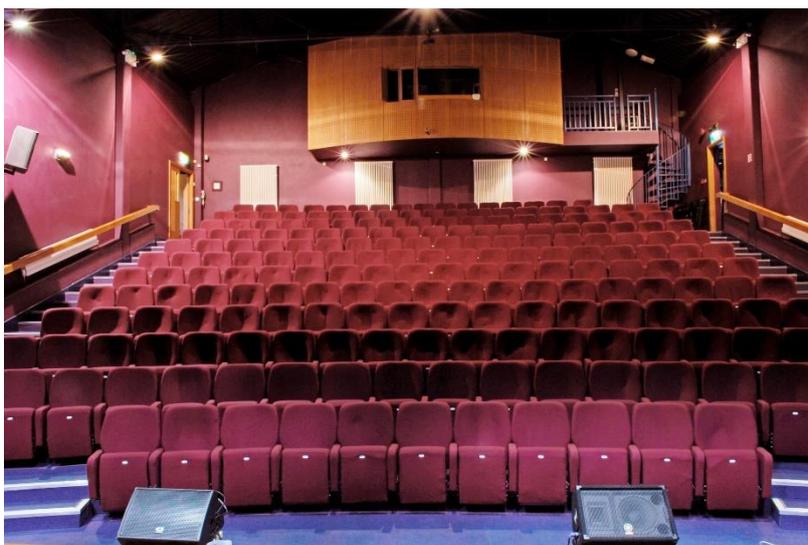
Pic A & B: motorised winch system

She said this was a great boost to Backstage and they were very grateful for the funding and to the LEADER Team for all their support.

In 2012 they applied again under LEADER funding 2007 -13 to upgrade facilities at the Backstage such as:

- The refurbishment and re-upholstery of all the seating in the main auditorium
- An upgrade of our IT and box office system
- A server and network of computers to support
  - Box office
  - Booking online
  - Tailored marketing campaigns.

Again, they were again successful and this enabled them to our source the re-upholstery work locally to Revamp 3R Store. The total cost of the project was €22,117 and Leader grant aid was €16,588.



Pic 3: of completed work through LEADER funding

Mona then outlined the challenges with applying for LEADER Funding followed by advice/tips:

- A lot of paperwork
- You must have all your organisation structures above board, your name, your tax details, bank accounts etc.
- It is difficult to secure quotes with all the correct detail from suppliers.
- A big-time commitment

Advise/ Tips:

- Talk to the team in LCRL at all points from the outset to the final stages
- Make sure you have plenty of support within your organisation
- Give yourself plenty of time
- Delegate

Mona ended her presentation with the following:

### **The Good News**

The Team in Leader!

- They are there to guide you on every aspect from what scheme is suitable for your project through to advice on your application
- They want you to get it right!
- No problem is too small

Questions & Answers followed. Connie thanked Mona and introduced the last speaker, Mary Mc Kenna, LEADER Team

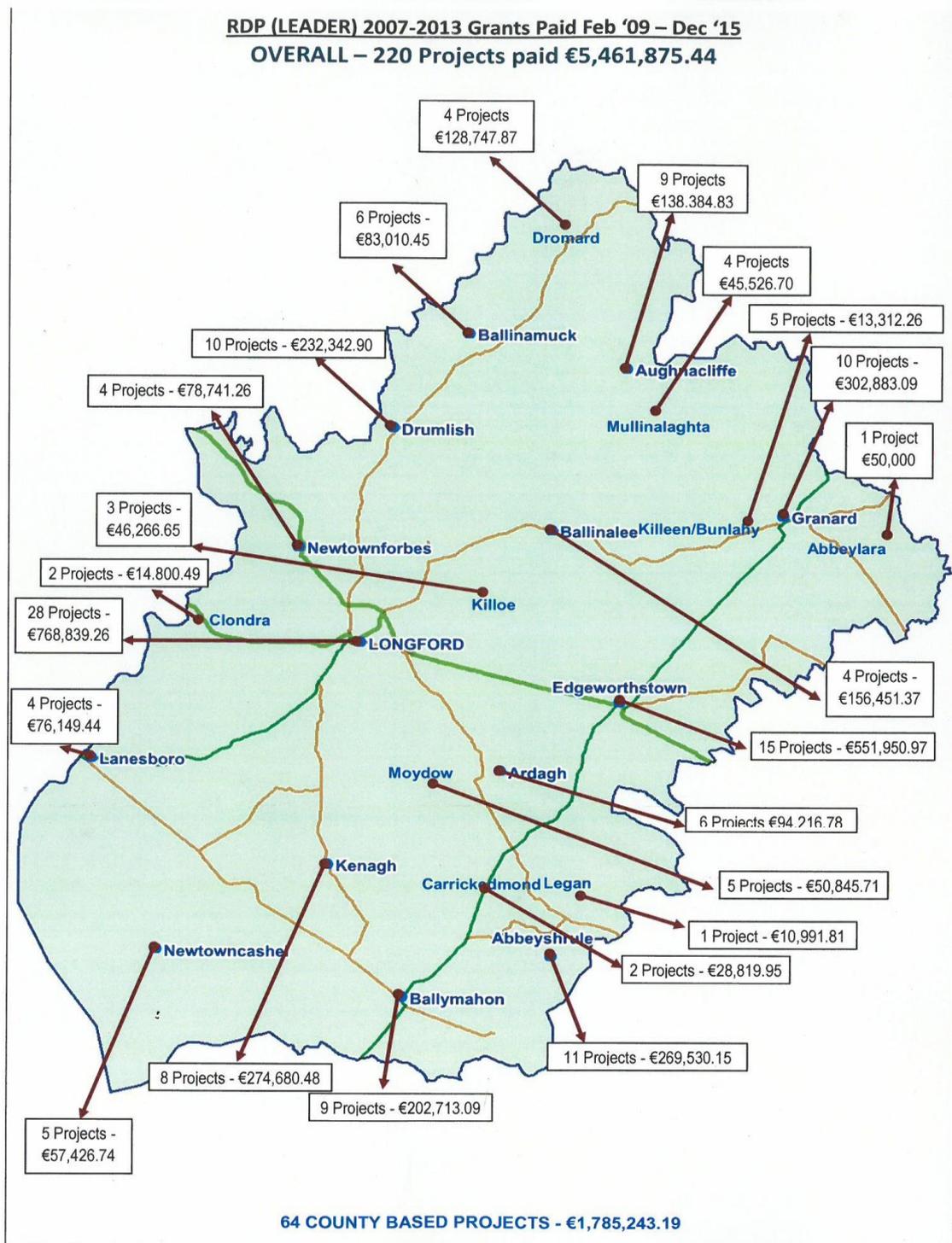
[Mary Mc Kenna, LEADER Team](#)

Mary thanked all the PPN for giving the LEADER team the opportunity to speak at the Longford MD Plenary Meeting. She said she was going to give an overview of the LEADER Programme and allay any concerns members had and answer any questions.

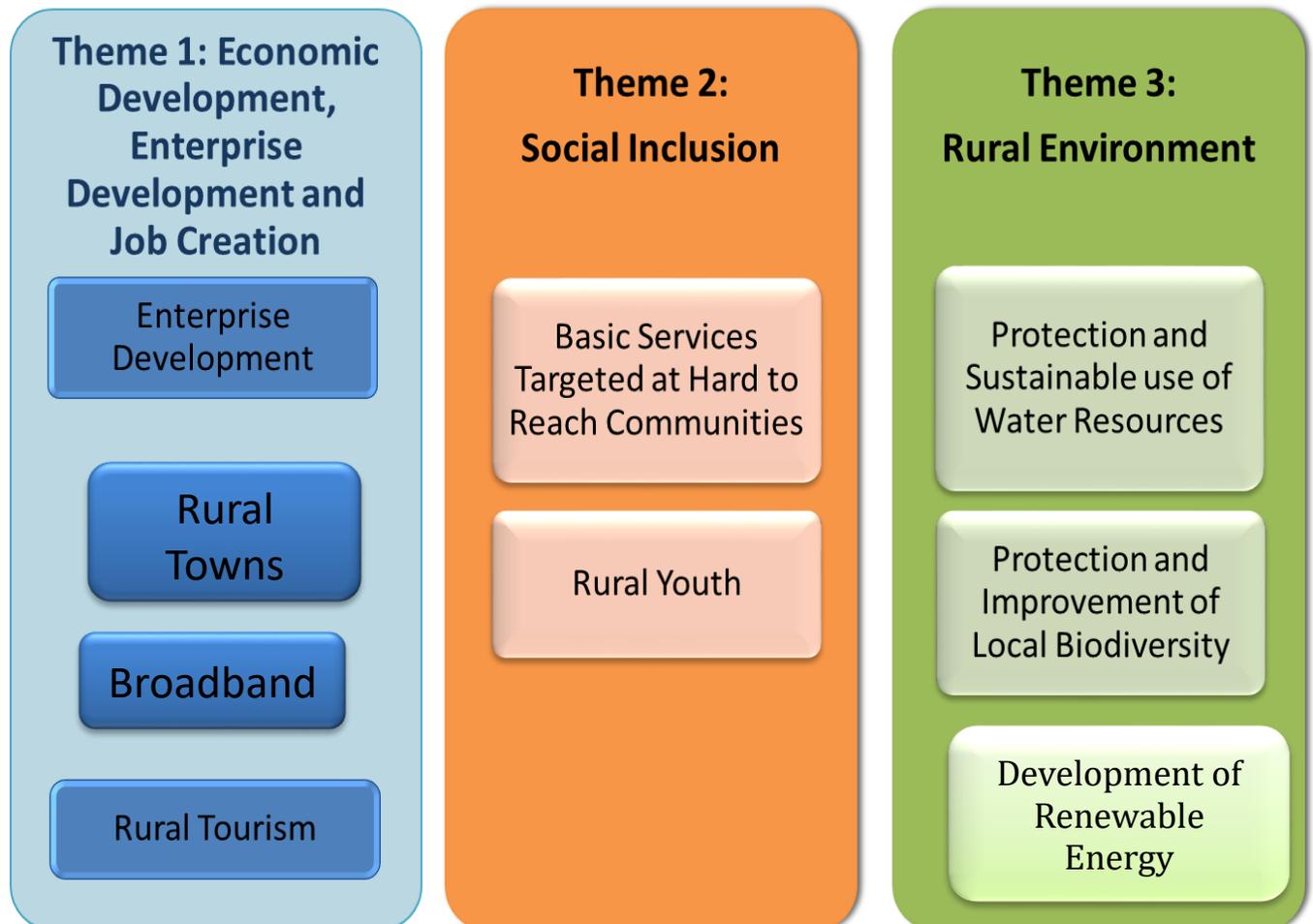
She said the team would be here after the meeting if anyone wanted to speak to them one on one.

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. Mary 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.



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

Connie thanked Mary and opened the floor to questions.

Q1: I am involved in a Residents Association and a disability group (Parkinson Association). How do we fit in to LEADER Funding?

A1: LEADER Funding is so broad and varied it can cover a vast range of projects. For example

Connie closed the meeting by thanking all for attending and the guest speakers. 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. She said Siobhán .....

The results of the raffle were:

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: Longford Writers Group

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: Cartrun Breac Residents Association/ Parkinson Association Longford Branch

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Club '89