

Media Release

Friday, 13 October 2023



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

Budget 2024: Ministers Humphreys and Joe O'Brien deliver €431 million for Rural and Community Development

- **Our Rural Future: Over €205 million for rural development schemes such as Town and Village Renewal, LEADER, and the Rural Regeneration & Development Fund**
- **Over €225 million for community development schemes in both rural and urban areas including increased funding for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme**
- **€21 million available for upgrades and improvements to existing community centres and to help support the delivery of new centres where they are needed**
- **€11 million to support the community response to assist Ukrainian refugees**

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State, Joe O'Brien TD, today announced a Budget package worth €431 million for 2024.

Over €205 million in funding is available for the Department's Rural Development programme, including supporting schemes such as Town and Village Renewal, LEADER and the Rural Regeneration Development Fund.

This includes additional funding for the Local Improvement Scheme and CLÁR, bringing their funding levels to €13 million and €8.7 million respectively.

It also provides funding increases for the continued provision of lifeline transport services to our offshore islands and for capital investment on our islands.

This demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to rolling out *'Our Rural Future'*, with investment in rural development more than doubling since 2018.

Over €225 million has been secured for the Department's Community Development Programmes. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, and the Community Services Programme (SICAP), will have combined core funding of over €100 million.

These schemes support individuals and communities in both rural and urban areas, promoting social inclusion and supporting the provision of vital community services throughout the country.

Budget 2024 also provides €11 million to assist with the community response to the Ukraine crisis, under SICAP and through volunteering supports.

This will fund work to assist and help integrate arrivals from Ukraine into local communities throughout the country.

Funding of €10 million is also being provided to capital projects approved under the Community Recognition Fund, which was developed in recognition of the contribution being made by communities in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

The allocation for Community Development also provides funding of €21 million to support the Community Centre Investment Fund in 2024 – delivering upgrades to existing centres and allowing investment in new centres where they are needed, in both rural and urban areas.

Speaking today, Minister Humphreys said:

"This week's Budget provides €431 million in funding to help build strong, vibrant, sustainable communities and to further develop Rural Ireland.

This funding will ensure communities across the country can benefit from a range of supports, including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, LEADER, and the Community Centre Investment Fund, all of which are making a hugely positive difference in our towns and villages.

“This Budget will help promote the development of rural areas, through the continued rollout of remote working facilities, the regeneration our towns and villages, and providing support to rural economies.”

Minister of State O'Brien added:

“Budget 2024 demonstrates the Governments continued commitment to supporting social inclusion, community development, and the community and voluntary sector.

Increased funding for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme in particular will help to assist the marginalised in society, and will help to support new arrivals from Ukraine to integrate into our communities.

“In 2024, separate funding of €11 million continues to be available to support the community response to the Ukraine crisis. This plays a vital role in helping people settle and integrate within their new communities.”

Notes for editors:

The budget provision of €431 million for the Department of Rural and Community Development will provide over €205 million in funding for rural development and over €225 million in funding for community development. The Department will have €210 million for capital investment, with the remaining funding for current expenditure supports.

Budget 2024 will allow for continued strong implementation of Our Rural Future through:

- Significant capital investment in rural areas through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (€60 million), the LEADER programme (€44 million), the Town and Village Renewal Scheme (€19 million), CLÁR (€8.7 million), the Local Improvement Scheme (€13 million), and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (€16 million).
- Current funding supports which include ongoing support for areas such as the walks scheme; additional funding of €2 million to enable continued support for Tidy Towns and Agriculture Shows, and; an additional €0.5 million to promote remote working through the connected hubs initiative.
- Funding for lifeline transport services and the maintenance and upgrade of essential island infrastructure is increasing from €14.2 to €15 million.
- Our Rural Future is the whole-of-government policy for rural Ireland for 2021-2025, with details available on the Department's page on www.gov.ie/drcd.

The Community Development funding of over €225 million will allow for:

- €21 million in funding for the Community Centres Investment Fund – providing funding for upgrade and improvement of existing centres and to support new centres where they are needed, in both rural and urban areas.
- Combined funding of over €110 million for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and the Community Services Programme, including €10 million of supports under SICAP for new arrivals from the Ukraine.
- Increased supports for a range of community development areas, including an additional €1.5 million for Social Innovation Supports (increasing from €1 million to €2.5 million), an additional €1m for Local Community Development Committees (increasing from €2 million to €3 million), €0.5 million to promote responsible dog ownership, and an additional €0.4 million to support Water Safety Ireland (increasing from €1.4 million to €1.8 million)
- Further details on all programmes administered by the Department can be found at www.gov.ie/drcd