

Limerick

Local Development Strategy

Rural Development Programme 2014—2020



Economic

Development



Social
Inclusion



Rural
Environment



Limerick

Local Community Development Committee

Local Development Strategy 2015-2020

Prepared By: Limerick LCDC
Submitted: 22nd October 2015
Feedback Incorporated: 20/4/2016

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Glossary

BDL	Ballyhoura Development Ltd.
DED	District Electoral Division
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in <i>Schools</i>
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
HSE	Health Services Executive
ICT	Information Communication Technology
LAG	Local Action Group
LCCC	Limerick City and County Council
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LCETB	Limerick Clare Education and Training Board
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
MIC	Mary Immaculate College
NEET	Not in Employment Education or Training
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
PAC	Project Appraisal Committee
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
SA	Small Area
SICAP	Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme
UL	University of Limerick
WLR	West Limerick Resources

Section 1: The LAG

1.1 Organisation and Contact Details

Organisation Details		Primary Contact for LEADER	
Legal Name of LAG:	Limerick Local Community Development Committee	Contact Person:	Seamus O'Connor
Postal Address:	Local Community Development Committee, Home & Community Section, City Hall, Merchants Quay, Limerick.	Postal Address:	Chief Officer to the Local Community Development Committee, Home & Community Section, City Hall, Merchants Quay, Limerick.
Contact:	061/407100 seamus.oconnor@limerick.ie	Contact:	061/407100 seamus.oconnor@limerick.ie

1.2 Legal Description of LAG

Date of establishment	February 2014
CRO No.	N/a
Tax Clearance Certificate No.	(1) 83267368-00196B Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) Financial Partner
Tax Clearance Certificate No.	(2) 08206973-28566K West Limerick Resources Implementation Partner (WLR)
Tax Clearance Certificate No.	(3) 06590417-28278m Ballyhoura Development Ltd. Implementation Partner (BDL)
Tax Clearance Certificate Expiry Date	(1) 31/12/15 (LCCC) (2) 14/1/2016 (WLR) (3) 31/12/15 (BDL)
Legal Structure	LAG - Public/Private/Community with the Local Authority as financial partner and Local Development Companies as Implementing Partners
Operational ethos	Community Led Local Development Committee with standing orders.

1.3 LAG Composition & Decision Making

The LCDC has a membership of seventeen and the membership consists of at least 50% private sector members. The membership represents a broad range of sectors, including social, community, environmental, agricultural and the local development sector in its' private membership.

The Local Community Development Committee has an oversight and decision making role on the delivery of community and social development programmes.

In its operation it will have full regard to local, national and European programmes and procurement requirements and will, at all times, have at its core the principles of human rights, equality and social justice.

A Chair and a Vice Chair have been selected by the members of the LCDC from within its membership.

The LAG membership is as follows:

Cllr. Eddie Ryan (Chairman)	Limerick City and County Council		
Cllr. Jerome Scanlan	Limerick City and County Council	Trish Forde Brennan	Environmental Pillar
Cllr. Daniel Butler	Limerick City And County Council	Marian Harnett	Limerick County Community & Voluntary Forum
Cllr. Seamus Browne	Limerick City and County Council	Nuala Rennison	Limerick City Community & Voluntary Forum
Conn Murray	Limerick City & County Council	Donal Cooper	Limerick County Community & Voluntary Forum
Jim Lynch	Department of Social Protection	Cathal McCarthy	Limerick City Community & Voluntary Forum
Tony Quilty	Health Services Executive	Carmel Fox	Ballyhoura Development Ltd.
George O'Callaghan	Limerick & Clare Education and Training Board	Anne Kavanagh	PAUL Partnership
Aidan Gleeson	Irish Farmers Association	Shay Riordan	West Limerick Resources

The membership of the Committee will be reviewed in 2019 and any new members will be appointed within the requirements for appointments for the particular sector with a balance of geographic, gender and socio economic representation. New members for the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental pillars will be selected by the Public Participation Network. Members from other sectors or organisations will be nominated by the said sectors.

The LAG will meet on a monthly basis (at least 10 times per year), minutes will be recorded and circulated in advance of each subsequent meeting. Working groups and/or sub committees will be established for specific purposes and will meet when appropriate.

The operation of the LAG will be in accordance with the operational procedures, required by the programme operating rules and adopted by the members. Where possible decisions are made on a consensus basis and if this cannot be achieved votes are cast in accordance with the Committee's Standing Orders. A minimum of 50% non-public sector representation must be present when decisions are being made and no one sector may have more than 49% representation at such times. The Board and subcommittees of the implementing partners will assist the LAG and make recommendations for decisions. See [Appendix 2](#) Governing Document of the LAG

The LCDC as the LAG is supported by a designated Chief Officer, support officer and administrative staff.

1.4 LAG Roles & Responsibilities

As part of the process of preparation for the LEADER programme 2014-2020, a formal agreement has been drawn up between the LCDC as LAG, Limerick City and County Council as Financial Partner and Ballyhoura Development Ltd. and West Limerick Resources as Implementing Partners. This LAG Agreement, included in [Appendix 3](#) sets out protocols, responsibilities and separation of duties for animation, capacity building, managing calls for projects, decision-making on approval or rejection of projects, the financial management and monitoring of projects and of the overall Local Development Strategy.



1.5 LAG Financial Management

Limerick City & County Council is the designated financial partner for the Limerick LAG. Limerick City & County Council uses the Agresso accounting system for the management of financial transactions and has a set of procedures for financial controls and management associated with the Agresso system. A dedicated LEADER Programme job code has been set up on the Council's Agresso system, through which all transactions relating to the LEADER Programme funding will be processed.

The local authority, as financial partner, is subject to audit by the Council's own internal auditor, the Council's audit committee, the Local Government Audit Service, the Public Accounts Committee, the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office and at local, national and European level with the designated bodies as appropriate. The Local Authority has a set of procedures for financial controls and management. See Appendix 4

There is wide ranging experience within the financial partner and implementing partner staff and the support staff for the LCDC with regard to public procurement requirements and such requirements will be strictly adhered to.

1.6 LEADER Staffing

The implementing partners will assign 7.39 FTE to the implementation of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020. The LCDC will provide the full 25% for the administration and animation from the available programme budget to the Local Development Companies as implementing partners for all elements of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 as outlined in the LAG Agreement (Appendix 3).

The Local Development Companies, as implementing partners, will prepare, collate and submit files to the appropriate body for Article 28 checks. The costs incurred in carrying out the Article 28 /48 checks and the associated administration costs will be borne by Limerick City and County Council as the lead financial partner.

The LAG will be supported by the Community Section of Limerick City and County Council consisting of 50% of a Grade VIII post and 50% of a Grade VII post and administrative staff. This equates to 1.5 Full Time equivalent staff.

The relevant Job Descriptions have been included in Appendix 45

Organisational Charts illustrating the Management & Staffing Structure of the LAG, LAG Financial Partner and Implementation Partners are contained in Appendix 6

1.7 Project Selection Procedures for LEADER

The LAG confirms that the required 40% minimum project budget will be allocated to "time limited" calls for proposals as required under the programme rules. Project and initiative calls will be designed and developed, as appropriate to local needs, by each implementing

partner, appropriate to specific Themes, Sub Themes and Actions to encourage engagement with the LEADER programme from communities, businesses and individuals. The LAG implementing partners, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources, will prepare and publish both time bound and open calls for project proposals under the local development strategy. The Project Appraisal Committee's (PAC's) of each of the implementing partners, will exercise powers as delegated to it and appraise projects and make recommendations to the LAG with reference to agreed criteria, budgets and targets. The PAC will proof projects in relation to key issues such as their impact on job creation, economic impact, equality, climate change, environment and social inclusiveness. Specific targeted calls, for example food business development or festival and events etc, will have dedicated criteria drawn up to accompany the call to make it clear to potential promoters the steps and procedures involved in the application and selection process.

See Appendix 6 for the Project Appraisal Procedure and App 7 for a sample Project Appraisal Score Card

1.8 Relevant Experience

A detailed profile of the implementing partners Ballyhoura Development Ltd. and West Limerick Resources has been included in [Appendix 6](#). In summary, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources each have the benefit of over 20 years experience in the management, planning, delivery and oversight of LEADER. The implementing partners have:

- Managed and administered calls for projects to local promoters.
- Developed area based approaches to economic social and environmental development.
- Delivered, and continue to deliver, a range of interventions in support of social inclusion and addressing poverty reduction.
- A breadth and depth of experience in targeting and supporting “hard to reach” communities
- Managed EU and National funding – LEADER programme and other programmes including training initiatives, labour activation programmes, targeted social inclusion programmes and volunteering support programmes– for many years.
- Been highly successful in securing additional funding supports from a range of other sources – National, European, and International.
- Developed internal capacity and processes to maximise synergies within a multi programme / sectoral operating environment.

The LAG partner organisations have wider ranging experience and expertise in the area of rural development (social and economic), social inclusion and poverty, project management, managing exchequer and EU funding, working with communities and their representative structures and leveraging additional match funding. Many of the LCDC members (community and social inclusion representatives, state sector representatives, local authority elected members, local development representatives) and the LCDC support staff have direct experience of LAG membership – having represented their respective organisations/sectors on the Boards of the Implementing Partners under previous Rural Development Programmes. This has engendered a clear understanding of the purpose of the Rural Development Programme in these members. In additions, the organisations/sectors represented on the LCDC have a long working relationship with the Implementing Partners through their involvement in multi-agency committees (e.g. the former County Development Board, VEC Youth Affairs Committee), as partners in a wide range of community /rural, enterprise development and environmental projects and, in certain instances, as beneficiaries of previous Rural Development Programme initiatives within their own communities.

- The Local Authority, Health Service Executive, Department of Social Protection and the Limerick Clare Education and Training Board provide a diverse range of services at local

level which includes programmes for hard to reach communities, social inclusion projects and communities projects.

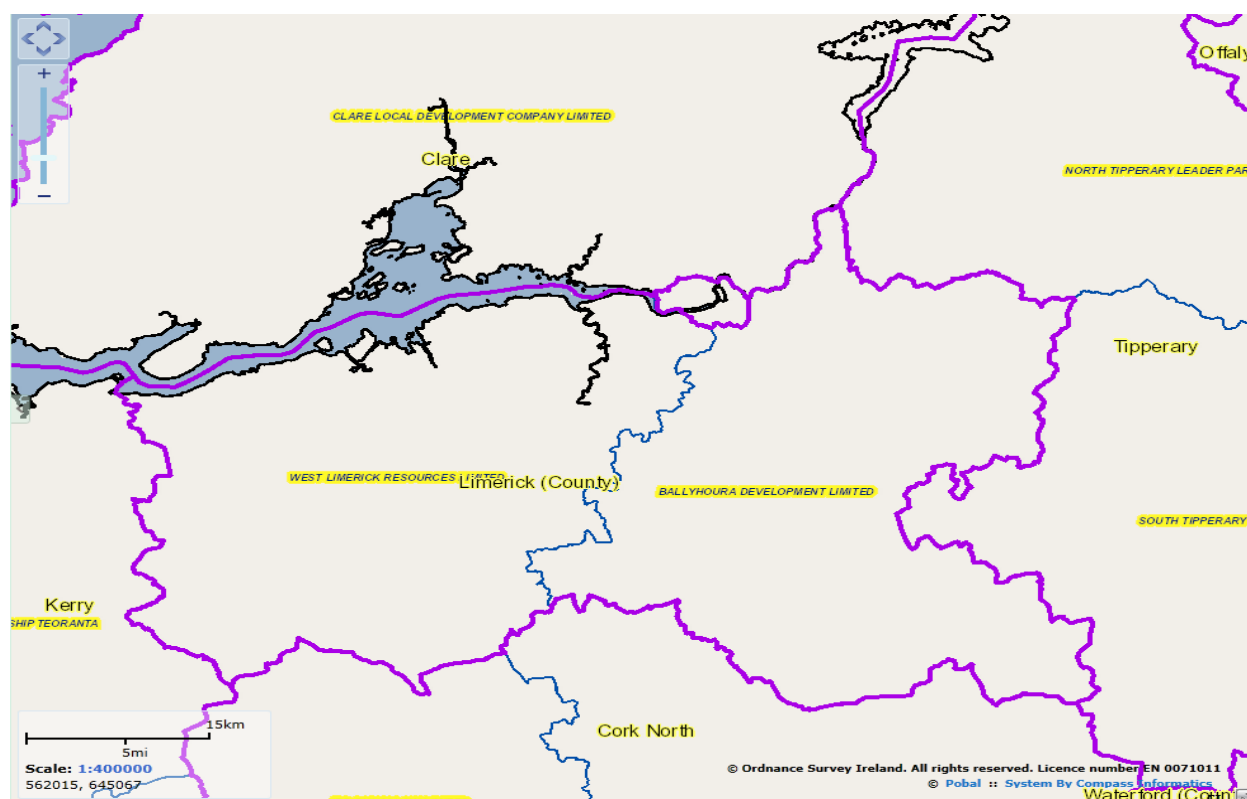
- As statutory agencies they manage significant exchequer and EU funding, including funding streams related directly to the provision of a broad range of community services (e.g. infrastructure, tourism, heritage, enterprise, health, welfare and education) and possess extensive project evaluation, project management and post-project evaluations experience across a range of economic, social and physical projects.
- The Local Authority, as financial partners will utilise the experience of key personnel in the Finance Directorate, to manage the income, expenditure and financial reporting arrangements of the Programme. This will include staff members with a combined 30 years plus experience in accountancy, financial management and accounting systems.
- The Local Development Sector has extensive experience of administering and delivering national and EU programmes which cover a diverse range of supports and services to local communities. The programmes include training initiatives, labour activation programmes, targets social inclusion programmes, volunteering, integration and childcare and health promotion.
- The elected members of the Council, community and social including representatives have first hand experience of working with communities and community organisations and have been involved in specific community and social projects. The agricultural and environment members of the LAG bring the expertise and knowledge of their sectors and specialise programmes to the LAG.
- In the development and implementation of the Local Development Strategy cognisance has to be and of the multi programme/policy environments that exists and the knowledge and expertise of all members of a wide range of existing policies and programmes provides added value to the process. The Local Community Development Committee is responsible for the development and monitoring of the community element of the Local Economic and Community Plan.

The LCDC responsibility for the development and monitoring of the community element of the Local Economic and Community Plan will ensure policy coherence during implementation of the LEADER Programme avoiding overlap and duplication.

Section 2: Area Profile

2.1 Area Selection

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) area covers a geographic area of approximately 2,700sq km. It is bounded to the north by County Clare and Limerick City, to the east by County Tipperary, to the south by County Cork and to the west by County Kerry [Refer to Map 1 below]. See Appendix 8 for map of LDS boundary area and list of EDs.



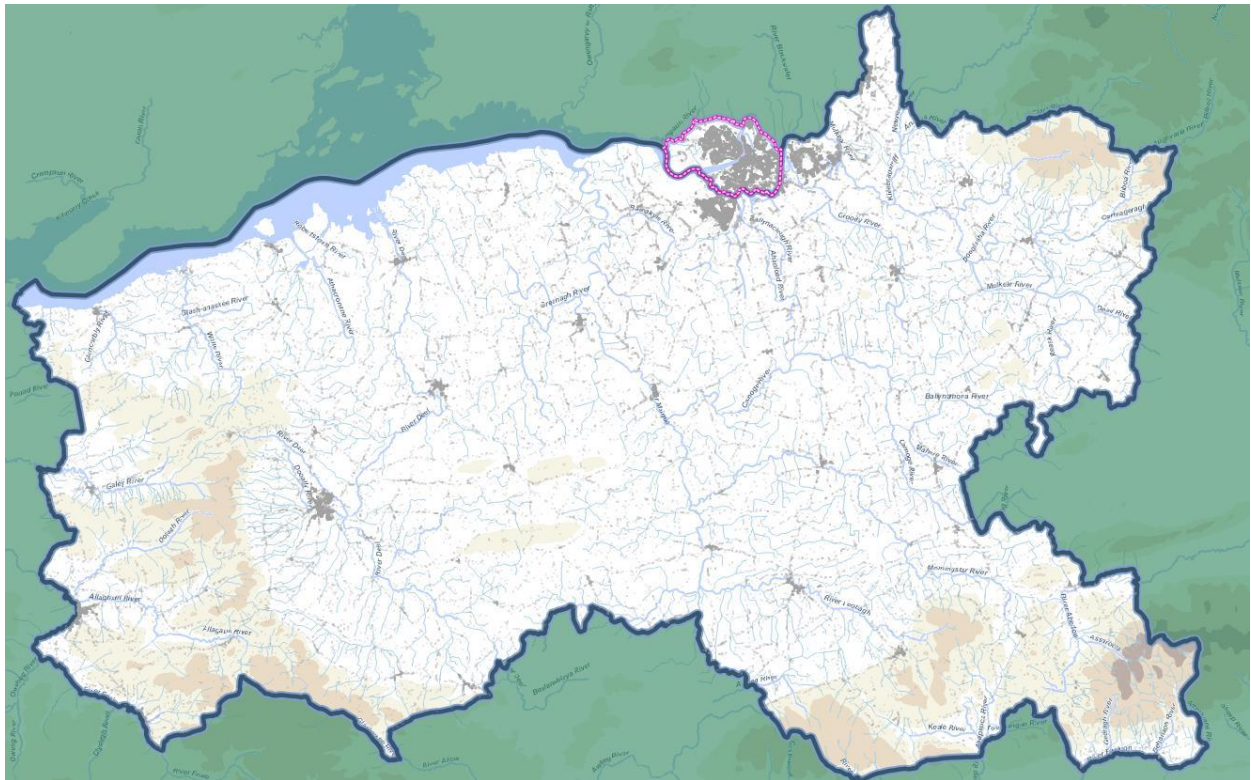
Map 1: Geographic Location of LDS area

The LDS area formed part of the former Mid-West Region and currently forms part of the newly established Southern and Eastern Region.

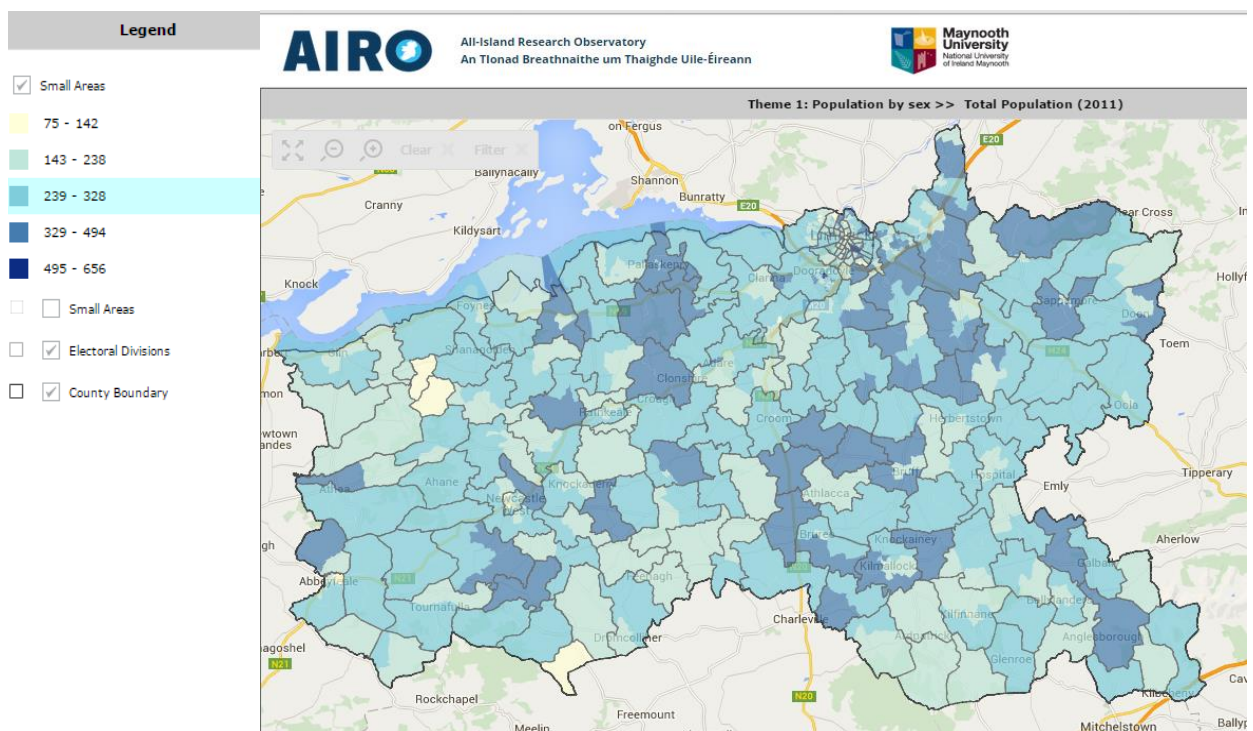
For the purposes of LEADER the LDS area is divided two areas – east Limerick and west Limerick, each with its own Programme Implementer. Both Ballyhoura Development Ltd. and West Limerick resources have full socio-economic profiles of both East Limerick and West Limerick that are available on request. The most relevant aggregated data for the LDS area is presented here.

Census 2011 records that the LDS area had a population of 134,703.

Physically, the LDS area is characterised by upland/mountainous regions on its north-eastern, south-eastern and western boundaries – the Slieve Felim, Ballyhoura/Galtee and Mullaghariern ranges respectively, and on its northern boundary by the Shannon estuary. The centre of the LDS area forms part of the “Golden Vale”, an agricultural area which straddles the County Limerick/County Cork boundary. The LDS area is drained by the Shannon, Deel, Feale, Morning Star/Loobagh/Maigue and Mulcair catchments. [Refer to Map No 2 – Physical Characteristics]



The settlement structure within the LDS area is characterised under five broad areas: a peri-urban area situated around Limerick City including the suburbs of Annacotty, Castletroy, Dooradoyle, Mungret and Raheen; a commuter belt within a 15km radius of Limerick City; a number of small to medium sized county towns with a population of 1,000+ - Newcastle West, Abbeyfeale, Kilmallock, Castleconnell, Adare, Rathkeale, Askeaton, Caherconlish, Murroe and Croom; a large number of small villages; and a dispersed rural population. [Refer to Map No 3 – Population Dispersal].



The LDS area is accessed by a network of national primary and secondary routes (M7, M8, M18/N18, M20/N20; N21; N24; N69), regional routes and local roads. There are two rail links between Dublin and Limerick City, but there is only one train station in the LDS area which currently provides services (Castleconnell). The Shannon estuary (including the deep water ports of Foynes and Limerick) is navigable to shipping up to Limerick port. The LDS area is served by Shannon Airport, which is situated 20km north-west of Limerick City in County Clare, Kerry Airport which is located 32km south west of Abbeyfeale and Cork Airport, 55 km south of Kilbehenny. [Refer to Map No 4 - Transport].

Map 4: Transport Links in LDS area

2.2.1 Population:

Census 2011 records the number of males in the LDS area as being 67,868 and the number of females as being 66,835.

Within the LDS area the percentage of the population between 0 and 14 years inclusive was 28,833 (21.4%); the population between 15 and 34 years inclusive was 38,669 (28.71%), and the population 65 years and over was 15,792 (11.72%), which is in line with the national average.

The trend is one of population increase in the LDS area over a long period of time (+40% over last 30 years) compared with the national increase (+33%).

2.2.2 Nationality and Ethnicity:

90% of the population of the LDS area reported their nationality as Irish, compared to 89% in the mid-west region and 87% nationally. 8.7% of the population of the LDS area have self-identified as non-Irish nationals, lower than the national rate of 12%. The Polish community is the largest group with 3,518 (30.4% of non-Irish Nationals), followed by the UK with 2,864 individuals (24.7%), those of Asian origin 1,288 (11.1%) and those of African origin with 635 (5.5%).

The large majority of the population of the LDS area self-identify themselves as White Irish (88.5%). The White Irish Traveller population forms 0.8%, while Other White forms 6.9%. Black or Black Irish (0.8%), Asian or Asian Irish (1.3%), Other (0.6%) and Not Stated (1.1%) complete the ethnic make-up of the area.

2.2.3 Settlement Patterns:

The percentage of owner occupied properties (76.51%) is higher than the national percentage of 69.7%. The corollary is that the percentage of rented properties (both from private landlords and from local authorities/voluntary housing bodies) at 22.25% is lower than the national percentage of 28.8%.

Table 1 below sets out the Household Occupancy data for the LDS area.

Type of occupancy	LDS Area	%	Mid-West	%	State	%
Owner occupied with mortgage	17,396	36.93	47,564	34.6	583,148	35.4
Owner occupied no mortgage	18,649	39.58	53,351	38.8	566,776	34.4
Rented from Private Landlord	7,037	14.93	21,873	15.9	305,377	18.5
Rented from Local Authority	2,250	4.77	9,244	6.7	129,033	7.8
Rented from Voluntary Body	354	0.75	1,159	0.8	14,942	0.9
Occupied free of rent	845	1.79	2,329	1.7	25,436	1.5
Not stated	590	1.25	2,064	1.5	24,696	1.5
Total	47,121	100	137,566	100	1,649,408	100
Rented Properties as % of All Properties		22.25		25.2		28.8

Table 1 Household Occupancy 2011 Source: CSO (2011) Census of Ireland

2.2.4 Education

Table 2 below sets out the level of education completed for LDS area and compares it to levels of educational attainment nationally.

Level Of Educational Completed15+ Years	LDS Area	LDS Area %	National %	% Variance
No Formal	1,302	1.49	1.41	0.08
Primary Only	11,267	12.93	13.80	-0.87
Lower Secondary	15,066	17.29	16.63	0.66
Upper Secondary	18,092	20.76	20.03	0.73
Technical/Vocational	7,554	8.67	8.61	0.06
Apprenticeship/Advance Certificate	5,816	6.67	5.72	0.95
Higher Certificate	4,012	4.60	4.50	0.10
Ordinary Bachelor Degree/Professional Qualification	6,905	7.92	7.39	0.53
Honours Bachelor Degree/Professional Qualification	7,432	8.53	9.03	-0.5
Post Graduate Diploma/Degree	5,599	6.42	7.48	-1.06
Doctorate	579	0.66	0.73	-0.07
Not Stated	3,534	4.05	4.66	-0.61
Total Education Ceased	87,712	100.00	100.00	
Education Not Ceased	18,712			

Table 2 Education Attainment 2011 Source: CSO (2011) Census of Ireland

2.2.4.1 Second level: retention and progression rates:

Retention rates to Leaving Cert in the LDS area was 92.7% for 2006 entry cohort. Retention rates to Leaving Cert are high and have improved in recent years. Table 3 below sets out numbers of students sitting the Leaving Certificate in the LDS area for the years 2006 to 2013, showing Non-DEIS and DEIS numbers.

	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013
All PP	1028	1100	1079	1158	1150	1144	1227	1155
Non-DEIS	871	894	923	945	963	909	1016	945
DEIS	157	206	156	213	187	235	211	210

Table 3 Leaving Certificate Students

80.3% of pupils sitting Leaving Cert in LDS area schools were offered places at third level colleges in 2013. Table 4 below sets out numbers of students transferring from post primary to third level in the LDS area for the years 2006 to 2013, showing Non-DEIS and DEIS numbers.

	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013
All PP	592	719	703	769	778	844	918	927
Non-DEIS	537	616	624	652	676	711	779	794
DEIS	55	103	79	117	102	133	139	133

Table 4 Number of Students Transferring from Post Primary to Third Level

It is to be noted that the percentage transferring to third level has increased year on year for both Non-DEIS and DEIS schools during the period. The percentage of students transferring from post primary to third level across the LDS area has seen an overall increase from 58% in

2006 to 80% in 2013, an increase from 62% in non DEIS schools and from 35 % in DEIS schools to 84% and 63% respectively. The overall transfer figures for all schools, Non-DEIS schools and DEIS schools for the LDS area is slightly lower than the transfer figures for the same categories for Limerick City. 60% of pupils in Limerick second level schools progressing to third level, choose colleges in Limerick: University of Limerick (UL), Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) and Mary Immaculate College (MIC).

2.2.4.2 Third level qualification:

Census 2011 records that 62% of 30-34 year olds in the Mid-West Region possess a third level qualification. In the Limerick LDS area 28.13% of the adult population have a third level qualification compared with 29.13% nationally (Census 2011).

2.2.4.3 Third level: capacity and profile:

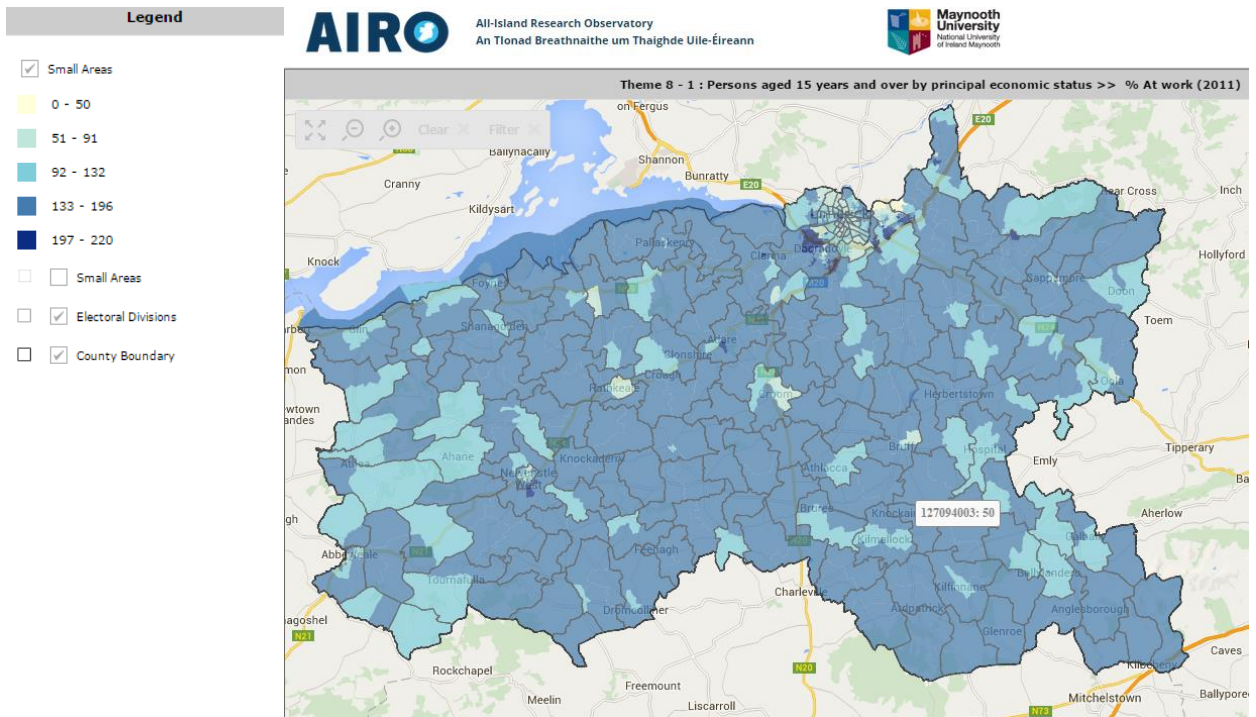
Over 20,000 students at under-graduate and post-graduate level are enrolled in third level colleges in Limerick and some 5,000 students graduate each year from Limerick third level institutions. The disciplinary mix of new enrolments is: science and engineering, manufacturing and construction (35%), business, social sciences and law (19%) and arts and humanities (21%).

2.2.4.4 Further Education and Training including Skills Training for Unemployed and Early School Leavers

Mid-West Region: Capacity of the Further Education and Training (FET) sector is some 6,460 places for PLC and LCETB/SOLAS-certified skills training (approximately 9% of FET provision in the state). There are 3,789 skills training places and 2,671 PLC places. This assessment includes second chance education (Youthreach), training for unemployed distant from the labour market (e.g., Community Training Centre, Local Training Initiative), offender reintegration projects and community education. Most PLC places are taken up by new entrants coming directly from second level education. While there has been some expansion in provision in general in the state (new programmes) due to high unemployment, capacity of the FET sector has not been adequate in view of the large numbers unemployed. The situation is likely to improve with changing demand for entry to FET due to the economic upturn.

2.2.5 Labour Force participation, employment and unemployment

There were 63,765 persons aged 15 years and over in the labour force in the LDS area in 2011 and of these, 82.5% (52,622 persons) were at work. The unemployment rate for the area was 17.5% compared with a national average rate of 19%.



Map 5: Percentage (%) Persons aged 15+ by Principal Economic Status

Of the 52,622 workers enumerated in the LDS area, 15,891 worked outside the area. The daytime working population (resident and non-resident) of the LDS area was 39,014 with professional services being the largest industry. Of the 42,105 persons aged 15 years and over who were outside the labour force, 32.9% were students, 23.7% were looking after the home/family and 31.5% were retired.

In 2011, the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was 60.2% in the LDS area (State 61.9%). The Male Labour Force Participation Rate was 67.8% (State 60.4%), while the Female Labour Force Participation Rate 52.7% (State 54.6%). The Employment Rate in the LDS area was recorded as 58% which compares with 59% as the national average (2011 Census data).

As of August 2015, there are approximately, 15,444 individuals on the Live Register in Limerick city and county DSP offices, 40% of which are female. 17% of the working age population in Limerick City and County are on a social welfare payment linked to unemployment / under-employment. The long-term unemployed account for approximately 60% of all unemployed based on Live Register data at national level.

2.2.5.1 Youth unemployment:

The unemployment rate (2011) for all age groups and both males and females for the LDS area stood at 18% and at 19% in the state. Table 5 below shows the labour force participation rates and unemployment rates across all ages and in relation to those under 35.

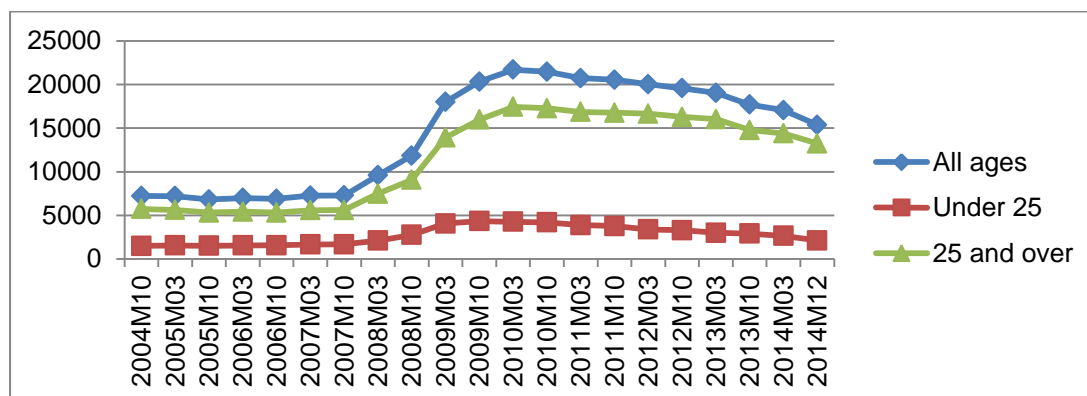
The unemployment rate for the youngest age group 15-19 years is highest for all units of analysis at 56% compared with other age groups. Linked to the low labour force participation rates in this age group, the numbers here are quite small. With the large majority of young people staying on in education for longer, unemployed young people who leave school early / with low education are highly disadvantage in the labour market.

Gender	Age Groups	LDS Area		The State	
		LFPR (%)	Unempl. (%)	LFPR (%)	Unempl. (%)
Males + Females	All Ages	60.2	17.5	61.9	19.0
	15-19 years	9.4	57.5	12.2	58.8
	20-24 years	51.6	34.6	59.8	34.7
	25-34 years	85.4	18.7	86.4	18.8
Males	All Ages	67.8	20.4	69.4	22.3
	15-19 years	10.6	57.4	14.2	61.0
	20-24 years	54.5	38.8	63.1	41.1
	25-34 years	90.1	23.1	91.2	23.3
Females	All Ages	52.7	13.8	54.6	15
	15-19 years	8.0	57.7	10.2	55.8
	20-24 years	48.5	29.5	56.6	27.9
	25-34 years	80.9	14.0	81.9	14

Table 5: Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR) and Unemployment Rates (2011) Source: CSO (2011) Census of Ireland

Live Register Analysis

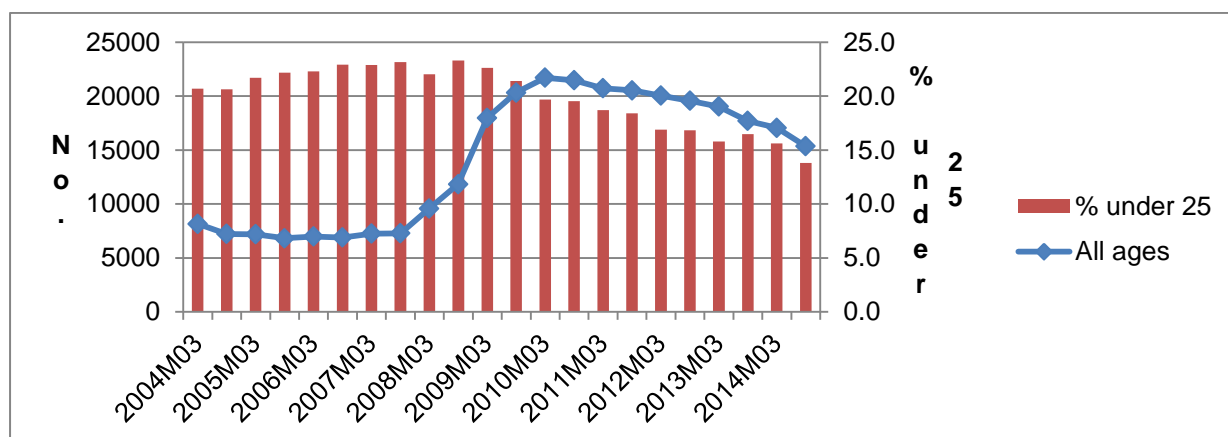
The number of under 25's on the Live Register in the LDS area broadly corresponds with the NEET population of Limerick City and County. A key concern with youth unemployment is the scarring effects of unemployment at the early stage of entry to the labour market, and particularly the negative effects of long-term unemployment for young people. In terms of the trend, there was a sharp increase in registrations of those 25 years and over from 2008 to 2010, reaching its highest point at 17,269 of those aged 25 years and over on the Live Register in March 2010. See Graph 1



Graph 1: Total Number under 25 years and 25 years and over on the Live Register 2004-2014: Limerick County (aggregate of all Limerick Offices), City and County Social Welfare Offices Source: Live Register, Department of Social Protection

Graph 2 below shows the percentage of under 25's on the Live Register with reference to all persons from 2004 to 2014. In the early period, from 2004 to 2009, when the overall numbers on the Live Register were low, person's under 25 years accounted for just under or just over 20% of those on the Live Register. These included young people entering the labour market for the first time. As the numbers on the Live Register increased, particularly, from 2010 with continued job losses (new inflows) and persons remaining on the Live Register for longer periods, under 25 years as a percentage of all person's on the Live Register began to decline.

Further factors impacting on the number of young people on the Live Register over the later years of recession are: the large reduction in labour market participation rate in the younger age groups, the tendency for young people to stay longer in education and emigration. Under 25's as a percentage of all persons on the Live Register was below 20% from 2009 onwards, and continued to decline as the overall numbers on the Live Register declined from 2012. Under 25's as a percentage of all persons on the Live Register was 14% (2121 persons) in 2014.



Graph 2: Percentage of under 25's on the Live Register relative to All Persons Registered 2004-2014: Limerick County (all SW offices), City and County Social Welfare Offices
Source: Live Register, Department of Social Protection

2.2.6 Social Exclusion:

Table 6 below lists the number of Small Areas in the LDS area under each category of the Haasse Pratschke Deprivation Index 2011.

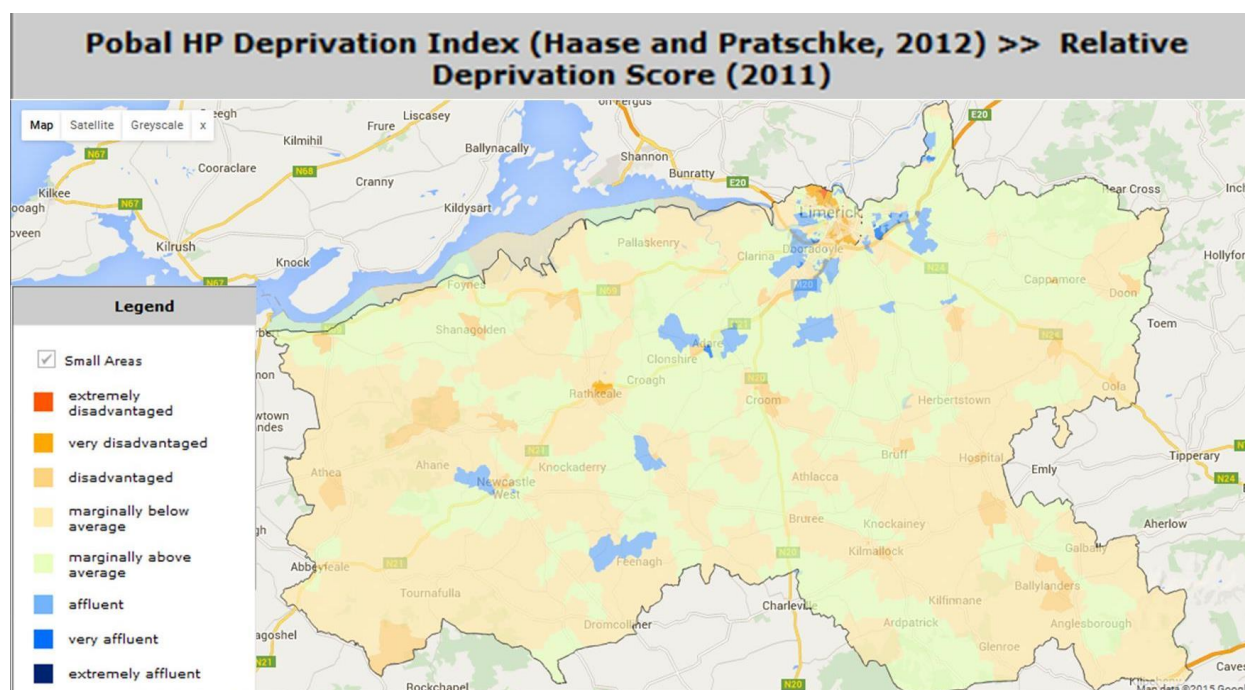
Classification	Small Areas, No.	Total Population	% of Population
Extremely Disadvantaged	0	0	0
Very Disadvantaged	4	911	0.7
Disadvantaged	50	11,683	8.7
Marginally below average	190	49,224	36.5
Marginally above average	205	55,238	41.0
Affluent	53	14,734	10.9
Very Affluent	12	2,913	2.2
Total	514	134,703	100

Table 6 Small Area Deprivation 2011

2.2.6.1 Deprivation:

0.7% of the LDS area population live in Small Areas classified as **extremely or very disadvantaged** based on the Pobal Haase Pratschke Deprivation Index (2011). Of the 514 Small Areas in the LDS area none is categorised as “extremely disadvantaged” and only 4 are categorised as “very disadvantaged” on the Deprivation Index. These are located in Cappamore town (-21), Rathkeale town (-24), and two SAs in proximity to Abbeyfeale town (-24 and -23 respectively). There are isolated pockets of EDs/SAs which are categorised as “disadvantaged” in both east and west of the LDS area and around the town of Croom. Those EDs and SAs which are categorised as “Marginally Below Average” are clustered around the boundary with Limerick City, and in the peripheral areas of the LDS sub-region, south, east and west. [Map 6]. Approximately 12,500 persons in the LDS area (or about 9.3% of the overall

population of the area) live in Small Areas classified as disadvantaged through to extremely disadvantaged.



Map 6: Deprivation in LDS Area

2.2.6.2 Affluence:

Those EDs/SAs categorised as “Marginally Above Average”, and “Affluent” are to be found clustered on the boundary with Limerick City, the north-east of the LDS area, in parts of the Estuary area, in the commuter belt around the city and around the county town of Newcastle West. There is a cluster of SAs situated to the north-east of Limerick City which are categorised as “Very Affluent” as well as isolated SAs on the southern fringes of the city and in proximity to Adare town. [Map 6]

2.2.6.3 CLÁR:

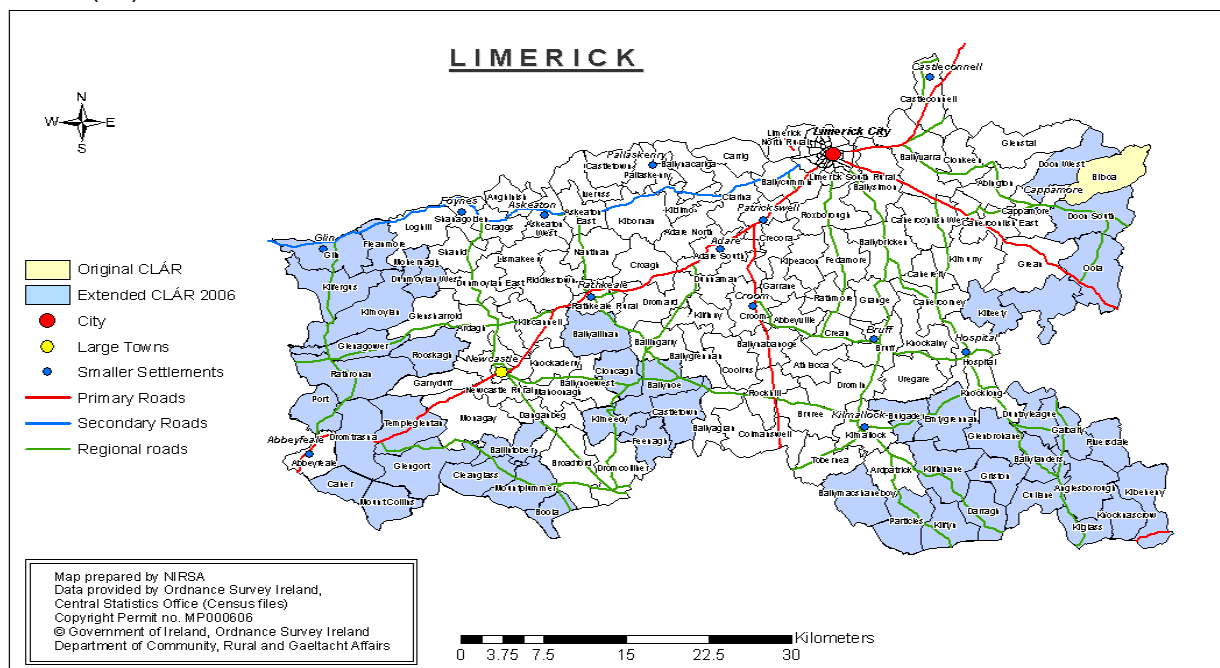
49 Electoral Divisions within the LDS area are designated as CLÁR areas. Areas eligible for inclusion in CLÁR are based on an average drop in population of over 35% per ED between 1926 and 2002. Table 7 below lists the EDs with CLÁR designation in the LDS area.

DED ID	DED NAME	DED ID	DED NAME	DED ID	DED NAME	DED ID	DED NAME
21008	Ballynoe	21040	Kilflyn	21080	Ballintober	21104	Rathronan
21009	Castletown	21042	Kilteely	21082	Boola	21105	Rooskagh
21021	Fleanmore	21045	Particles	21084	Caher	21106	Templeglentan
21022	Glin	21062	Doon West	21085	Cleanglass	21110	Ballyallinan
21023	Kilfergus	21069	Anglesborough	21086	Cloncagh	21117	Dunmoylan West
21024	Kilmoylan	21070	Ballylanders	21089	Dromtrasna	21124	Mohernagh
21027	Ballymacshaneboy	21071	Cullane	21090	Feenagh	21132	Bilboa
21030	Bulgaden	21072	Duntryleague	21092	Glenagower	21133	Doon South
21033	Darragh	21073	Galbally	21093	Glengort	21135	Oola
21035	Emlygrennan	21074	Kilbeheny	21095	Kilmeedy	21136	Templebredon
21036	Glenbrohane	21075	Kilglass	21099	Mount Collins		
21037	Griston	21076	Knocknascrow	21100	Mountplummer		

21039	Kilfinnane	21077	Riversdale	21103	Port		
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Table 7 ED's Designated as CLÁR Areas

Map 7 shows the dispersal of CLÁR EDs in the LDS area. There are 4 clusters of CLÁR EDs – on the north-east boundary (6), to the south and east of Kilmallock extending to the Cork and Tipperary boundaries (18), to the south of Rathkeale town extending to the boundary with County Cork (6), and an area of west Limerick west of Newcastle West extending to the Kerry border (19).



Map 7: CLÁR Areas in County Limerick

2.2.6.4 RAPID

There is one ED designated with RAPID status in the LDS area – Rathkeale Urban ED. The RAPID Programme focussed on areas of urban disadvantage and aimed to bring about significant improvements in the lives of the residents of its communities, under three main headings:

- Improving the delivery of public services through integration and coordination;
- Improving the opportunities for communities to participate in the strategic improvement of their areas.
- Giving, where possible, priority access to available resources to RAPID communities.

Based on 2011 Census data the Pobal Haase Pratschke Deprivation Index score for Rathkeale Urban was -24.

Regional level data show that the “deprivation” rate (lack of essential items considered the norm in society), at 21.2%, and “consistent poverty” rate (below the 60% median income threshold and lacking essential items), at 5.7%, in the Mid-West Region have been lower than the national average (26.9% and 7.7% respectively). The “at risk of poverty” rate (below 60% median income), at 17.1%, up until the most recent period (2012), has been higher than the national average (16.5%).

Based on national data, the “at risk of poverty” rate is higher in rural compared with urban areas. This highlights differences in experiences of poverty between urban and rural areas. In

rural areas, poverty is more strongly connected with low incomes (more persons below the 60% national median income threshold) while in urban areas, there is a stronger association with deprivation based on lacking items considered the norm by society.

2.2.6.5 Disability

Census 2011 records that 16,978 people – or 12.6% of the population of the LDS area - self-identified as having a disability/multiple disabilities. This is below the national figure of 12.97%. Of the total 5,863, representing 34.5%, were aged 65 and over. Of the people in the LDS area who have self-identified as having a disability just under 50% are males, and just over 50% are females.

2.2.6.6 Health

Tables 8 below set out the self-identified health status for the LDS area and compares it to levels of health status nationally.

Health Status Both Sexes (Self-Identified)	LDS area	LDS area %	National %	% Variance
Very Good	82,086	61.97	61.67	0.3
Good	38,271	28.89	28.58	0.31
Fair	10,351	7.81	8.2	-0.39
Bad	1,462	1.1	1.28	-0.18
Very Bad	296	0.22	0.28	-0.06
Total Self Identified	132,466	100.00	100.00	

Table 8 Health Status 2011 Source: CSO (2011) Census of Ireland

In general the self-identified health status of residents of the LDS area largely mirror the national statistics, with residents (both male and female) self reporting slightly better health than national average in the “very good” and “good” categories, and slightly less ill health in the “fair”, “bad” and “very bad” categories.

Health deteriorates as people move into the older age groups. However, a significant proportion of older persons (65 years and over, 80 years and over) rate their health as good / very good.

There is evidence of health inequalities linked to social class and socio-economic factors, including low education, in the LDS area. People living in relatively more disadvantaged areas have poorer health, particularly poorer mental health.

2.2.7 Economic competitiveness, enterprises and jobs:

Between 2006 and 2011, in the LDS area, 4,005 jobs net were lost, which equates to a 7.6% reduction in the intercensal period (census data) with the largest number of job losses in construction (-3,489), manufacturing (-3,008) and transport, storage and communications (-366) sectors. The education sector saw an increase of 26.1% in numbers employed in the sector in the same period, with double digit percentage increases also being recorded in the banking and financial services sector (10.2%) and in community, social and personal services sector (12.9%). Table 9 below details persons aged 15+ at work by industrial group in 2011 and 2006 for the LDS area.

Industrial Group	2006	2011	Change 2006-2011	% Change 2006-2011
	No.	No.	No.	
Agriculture, forestry	4,092	4,320	228	5.6%

and fishing				
Mining, quarrying and turf production	131	135	4	3%
Manufacturing industries	10,885	7,877	-3,008	-38.2%
Electricity, gas and water supply	334	322	-12	-3.7%
Construction	6,534	3,045	-3,489	-46.6%
Wholesale and retail trade	6,849	7,483	634	9.3%
Hotels and restaurants	2,367	2,472	105	4.4%
Transport, storage and communications	2,985	2,619	-366	-12.2%
Banking and financial services	1,377	1,517	140	10.2%
Real estate, renting and business activities	3,964	3,995	31	1%
Public administration and defence	2,186	2,599	413	7.1%
Education	4,329	5,494	1,165	26.9%
Health and social work	5,908	6,284	376	6.4%
Other community, social and personal service activities	1,825	2,060	235	12.9%
Industry not stated	2,861	2,400	-461	-19.2%
Total at work	56,627	52,622	-4,005	-7.6%

Table 9 Persons (aged 15+) at Work Per Industry Source: CSO (2006 & 2011) Census of Ireland

Analysis of change in the numbers of enterprises and jobs in private businesses in Limerick City and County over the years of recession (2007-2012) shows:

- Decline in the number of businesses by -1,123 (-13.9%)
- Decline in the number of jobs by -11,698 (-23.1%)
- Some recovery in jobs in the years 2011 to 2012 in the following sectors: accommodation and food, finance and insurance, real estate, transport and storage.
- Jobs in the construction sector were still declining while jobs in manufacturing stabilised between 2011 and 2012.

The ratio of active enterprises to the population of Limerick City and County (191,809) was 1:25.8 in 2011 (1 enterprise for every 26 persons), more or less the same as the ratio for the Mid-West Region and the state as a whole (1:26). The ratio of active enterprises to the total population dis-improved between 2011 and 2012, to 1:27 in 2012 (1 enterprise to every 27 persons).

Analysis shows the importance of micro and small enterprises in the local economy of Limerick City and County. In 2012, 90% of all enterprises and 33% of all jobs were in micro-enterprises (<10 persons engaged). Large enterprises (>250 persons engaged) account for only 0.2% of enterprises, but 23% of jobs (2012) in Limerick City and County.

Reflecting churn in the micro-enterprise category (enterprise start-ups and closures), the largest absolute decline in the number of enterprises by size structure between 2007 and 2012 was in firms with less than 10 employees (-870 firms), resulting in a significant decline in employment (-3,158). The largest decline in jobs by size structure was in enterprises with between 20 and less than 50 engaged (-3,271); there was also a significant decline in jobs in medium-size firms with 50-249 persons engaged (-3,047).

2.2.8 Agriculture:

While employment in agriculture now accounts for a relatively small proportion of jobs (8% of jobs in the LDS area), farming remains important in the local economy and to the society and culture of the LDS area. The average farm size in the LDS area is 34.5 hectares compared to 32.7 hectares nationally.

Trends in farming include the reduction in the number of farm holdings, consolidation of land to create larger farms and the ageing of farm holders. In the LDS area, in 2010, 23% were 65 years or older and 6.5% under 35 years.

The predominant system of farming in the LDS area is dairying and cattle rearing. Dairying is characterised by higher average farm incomes, lowest reliance on direct payments /agricultural subsidies and significantly higher rates of economically viable family farms compared with other systems of farming (especially sheep farming and cattle). However incomes on dairy farms have dropped significantly in 2015.

Poultry farming is a unique feature of farming in West Limerick, it is the second largest poultry producing area in the Country. 1,400,000 poultry units are processed in Ireland on a weekly basis with approximately 25% coming from West Limerick. There are 80 poultry growers in West Limerick plus 15 producing breeding stock. However while West Limerick produces 25% of all poultry units in Ireland, there are no jobs in the sector locally outside of the farmers themselves. Two West Limerick poultry processing plants, Kantoher Foods and Castlemahon Foods, closed in 2006 leaving only three main processors in Ireland - Western Brand in Co. Mayo, Cartons (Manor Farm) in Monaghan and Shannonvale Co. Cork.

Cattle rearing is amenable to part-time farming. There is a tradition of this in the LDS area where the availability of off-farm jobs in manufacturing, agricultural contracting, services and construction enabled the sustainability of family farms that, on their own, were not economically viable. Such off-farm employment opportunities were affected by the large job losses (particularly, in construction and manufacturing) over the years of the recession. However, based on Teagasc National Annual Farm survey data, the Midwest Region (Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary) proved more resilient in the face of the recession in terms of farm viability and sustainability compared with the weakest farming regions (the West and Border).

The situation in terms of farm viability and sustainability has improved in the most recent period (2013). Non-farm factors associated with vulnerability (not viable in their own right, nor sustainable linked to off farm income / employment) are: older age of the farmer, low education and low level of work-related skills.

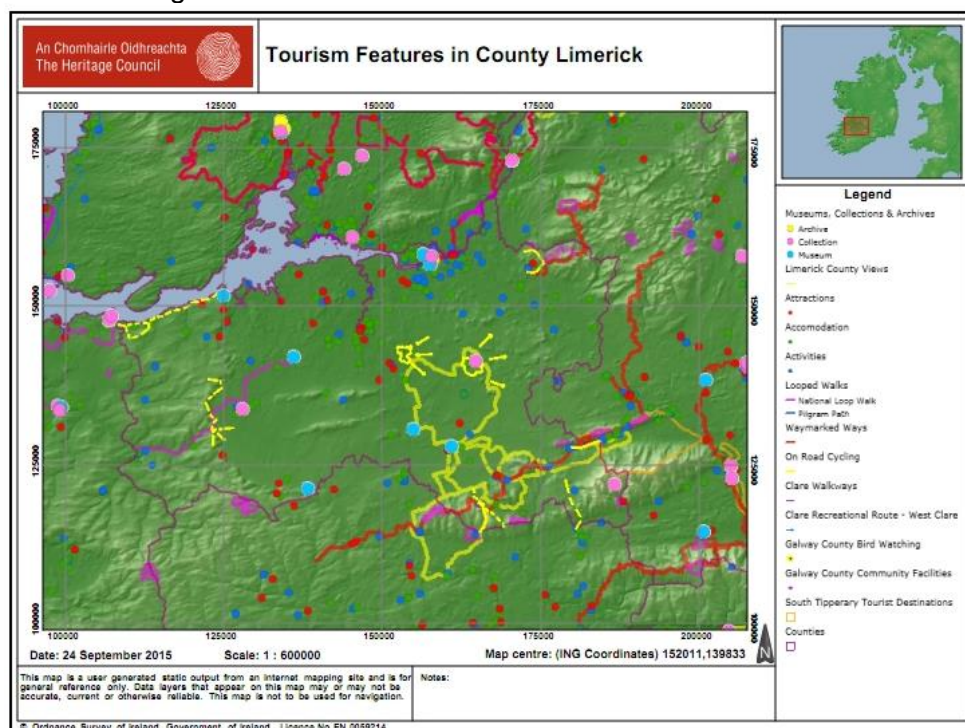
2.2.9 Tourism:

Tourism is integral to Limericks economic diversification, and the landscape, natural, cultural, heritage and human resources represent essential components in underpinning and sustaining rural tourism across the LDS area.

Tourism as an economic driver makes a significant impact on the local economy. Limerick City is the largest urban centre along the Atlantic Corridor and is an international gateway to the west of Ireland via Shannon Airport. The Limerick area is more dependent economically on Tourism than other city-regions in Ireland (Delaney & MacFeely, 2011). Limerick's Enterprise Tourism Dependency ratio (2009) is 12.6 per cent, while the Employment Tourism Dependency ratio (2009) is 17.9 per cent. Whilst domestic visitor numbers and expenditure are beginning to show an upward trend, tourism in Limerick continues to underperform. Of the top 30 fee and free paying attractions in Ireland, Limerick only registers one fee paying attraction near the bottom of the list in King Johns Castle at 84,819 visitors and two free attractions the Limerick Gallery of Art at 77,000 visitors and the Ballyhoura Mountain Bike trails at 70,000. Of these only the Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails are located in the LDS area.

The most recent study on the Ballyhoura area conducted by Limerick Institute of Technology suggests that the area attracted more than half a million visitors in 2012, resulting in a total spend locally of €42 million. This research, combined with Ballyhoura Development's experience over thirty years in promoting rural tourism suggest the potential to further expand the sector, including through specific strategies to attract Sightseeing and Culture Seekers and Adventure/Activity Enthusiasts. The implementing partners experience in rural tourism, their individual and collective capacities and the stock of landscape and human resources represent strategic infrastructure not just in tourism, but for the development of other sectors.

There is significant scope to increase both overseas and domestic visitor numbers to Limerick by tapping into under-utilised or latent tourism resources though greater co-operation and collaboration between the public and private sector. In achieving this, local differentiation is best delivered through an adequately resourced, bottom-up approach, to market a cohesive and clear brand and message.



Map 8: Tourism Features in LDS area

2.2.10 Transport:

The LDS area is the location of, or is within short distances, of key access transport infrastructures including Shannon and Cork Airport and Foynes Port. Because of its location and with motorway connections from the northern and southern parts of the LDS area to Dublin,

Limerick is within relatively short commuting time to the Dublin. The remaining gaps in completion of the motorway networks to Galway, Cork, Waterford and onto Rosslare, and in the secondary roads infrastructure within the county, has negative implications for economic (location of businesses and commuting) and tourism development.

Shannon Airport, now an independent company in state ownership, is running significantly under capacity, though there has been some improvement in passenger numbers in the most recent year (2013). In addition Kerry Airport is within easy commuter distance for those within the West of the LDS area offering a number of direct flights to UK and Europe.

Given the rural nature and the dispersed population patterns of the LDS area, it has one of the highest rates of car ownership in the state (89% of households). There is strong reliance on the car for commuting to school, college or work (accounting for 68% of all journeys) while only 7.3% use public transport. 12% of all journeys are “on foot” or by bike.

There is a low rate of both provision of and use of community and public transport. This is a negative factor vis-à-vis the environmental sustainability agenda and while three rail lines cross the perimeter of two sides of the county, there is only one railway station in the LDS area.

2.2.11 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Broadband:

ICT and broadband is part of the critical infrastructure for economic development, access to information and to many public, private and consumer services, especially as services move “on line”. Access to internet is also of social importance, to keep in touch with family, friends and social connectedness within communities.

There is evidence of a “digital divide” and gaps in coverage within the LDS area. Households with Personal Computers are recorded as 70%, which matches the national percentage. Broadband connectivity is recorded at 59.5% compared with national figures of 63.8%.

At local community level, there are very low rates of PCs in households and broadband connectivity in parts of the LDS area. This is associated with different factors: it is connected with low educational attainment and in the more rural areas of the county, mostly with lack of broadband coverage.

The end in August 2014 of the National Broadband Scheme has impacted on internet access in rural areas, where costs are now increasing and minimum speeds no longer guaranteed. However the Government's new National Broadband Plan was published in August 2012 following a detailed engagement with the telecommunications industry. It aims to ensure that all citizens and businesses have access to high speed broadband no matter where they live or work. This will be delivered through a combination of commercial and State led investment. Once completed, all parts of Ireland will have access to a modern and reliable broadband network, capable of supporting current and future generations. However, commercial operators have made it clear there are parts of the country they cannot address commercially. As a result, the government has committed to a range of actions to ensure that no part of the country is left behind. An initiative called Connecting Communities will extend reliable high speed broadband to every premises in the country where there is no current or planned high speed broadband network. This network will provide at least 30Mbps download and 6MB up load to homes and businesses across the country. It is too early to determine how quickly and effectively this will directly impact at local level however the latest estimates are that large parts of the country, where population density is low, will get no real improvement in broadband service before 2020.

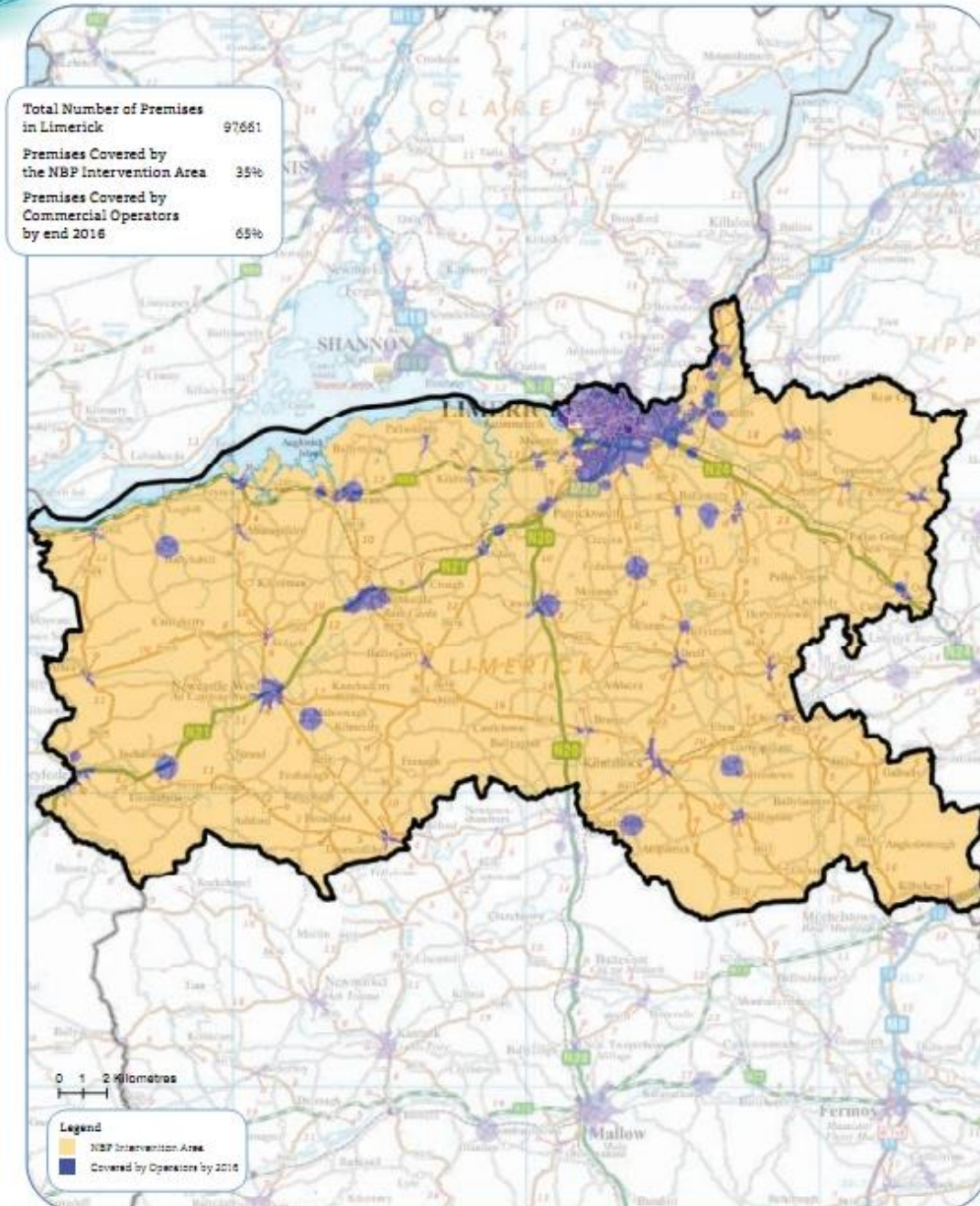


High Speed Broadband Map 2016

LIMERICK



Connecting
Communities
National Broadband Plan (NBP)



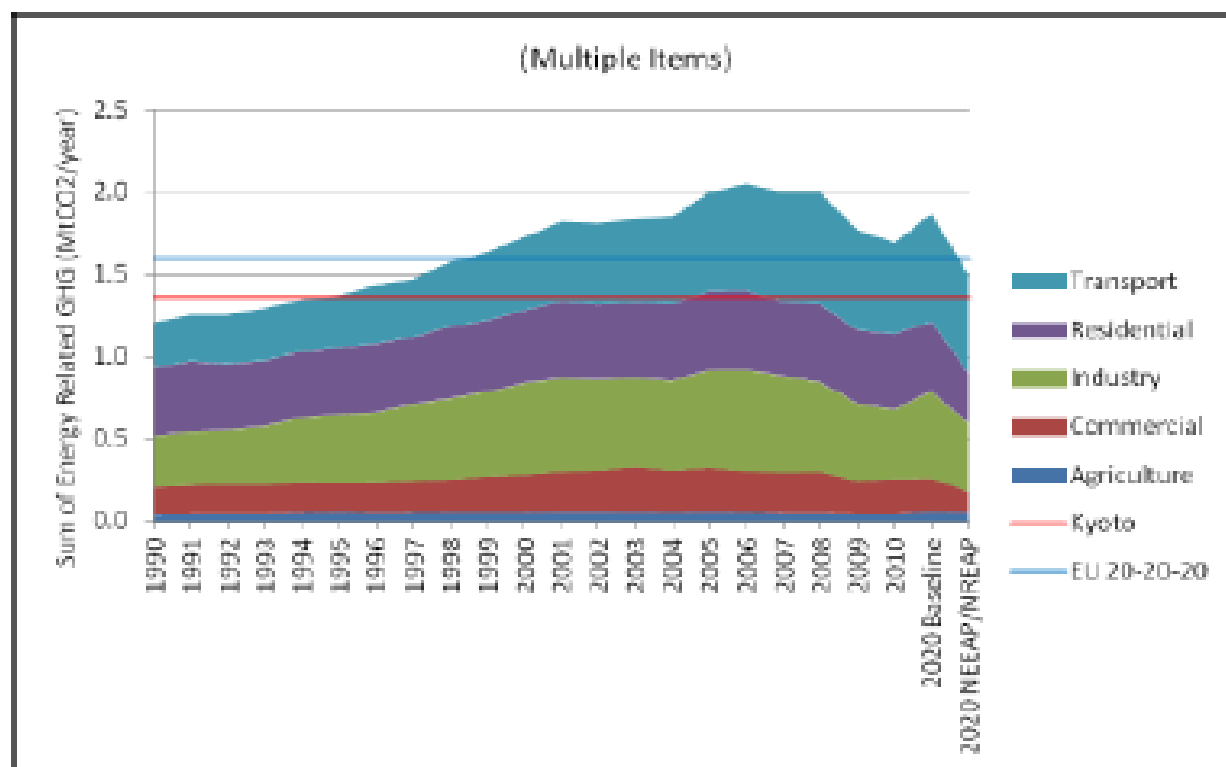
Map 9: High-speed Broadband Plan for LDS area

2.2.12 Climate Change

The table and chart below set out the energy related CO₂ emissions and their relationship to a notional “Kyoto target” or burden sharing with the EU and National targets on CO₂ reductions.

Energy Emissions – MT-CO ₂ based on TFC	2010 {E&EB}		2020 without measures, (Baseline)		2020 with measures, NREAP/NEEAP	
	Energy related GHG (Mt CO ₂)	% GHG Ireland	Energy related GHG (Mt CO ₂)	% GHG Ireland	Energy related GHG (Mt CO ₂)	% GHG Ireland
Ireland	41.7	100%	41.9	100%	35.4	100%
Limerick City	0.5	1.2%	0.5	1.2%	0.4	1.1%
Limerick County	1.2	2.9%	1.4	3.3%	1.1	3.1%
Limerick City & County	1.7	4.1%	1.9	4.5%	1.5	4.2%

Table 10: Energy Emissions Ireland and LCR – MTCO₂ - 2010 & Forecast to 2020



Graph 3: Evolution of Limerick City & County Energy related CO₂ emissions

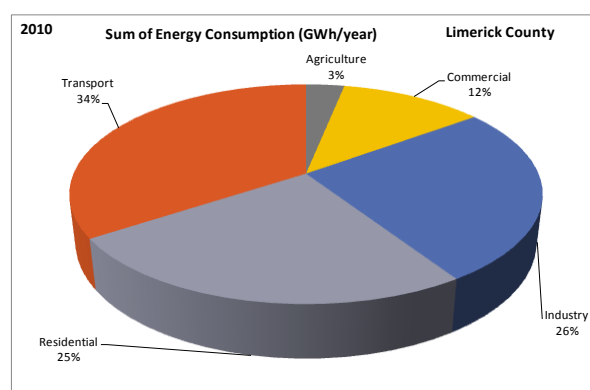
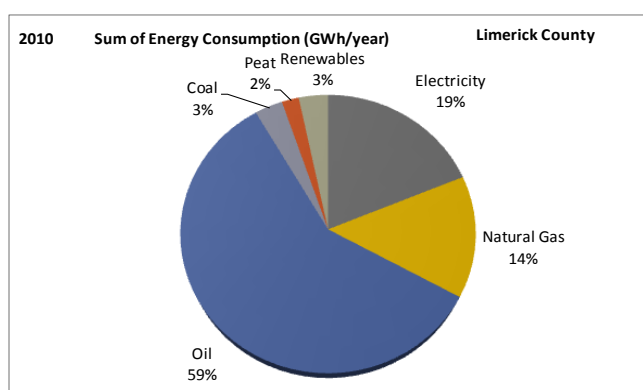
From the table and graph above it can be seen that Limerick City and County can meet and indeed exceed the EU 20-20-20 targets by 2020 if the actions outlined in the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and National Renewable Energy Action Plan are implemented in full. Indeed County Limerick has been a regional and national leader in promoting and implementing national energy efficiency and renewable energy plans for many years. The following section on Energy & Renewable Energy identifies some of the challenges and opportunities for the LDS area.

2.2.13 Energy & Renewable Energy

The following charts and tables illustrate the consumption of energy in Limerick County. The data clearly illustrates that our socio-economic development is heavily dependent (90%+) upon imported fossil fuels.

LDS Area TFC – GWh / Yr	2010	2020 Baseline	2020 NEEAP/NREAP
Electricity	872.3	1,046.9	1,020.7
Natural Gas	658.0	842.5	679.0
Oil	2,723.3	3,177.0	2,691.5
Coal	147.0	90.6	86.7
Peat	89.8	49.1	45.3
Renewables	153.2	169.5	431.3
Grand Total	4,643.5	5,375.6	4,954.5

Table 11 – Limerick County Total Final Energy Consumption by Fuel – GWh / Yr; 2010 – 2020



Limerick County TFC – GWh / Yr	2010	2020 Baseline	2020 NEEAP/NREAP
Agriculture	145.6	202.0	202.0
Commercial	545.6	577.6	468.0
Industry	1,203.9	1,578.9	1,555.6
Residential	1,155.7	1,121.8	897.3
Transport	1,592.7	1,895.2	1,831.4
Grand Total	4,643.5	5,375.6	4,954.5

Table 12 – Limerick County Total Final Energy Consumption by Sector – GWh / Yr; 2010 - 2020

The tables and charts above illustrate that Limerick County has a good mix of industrial, commercial and agricultural activity. However the majority energy resources of the county are presently consumed in the non-productive residential and transport sectors.

The short to medium term objective of the County is to transition to a low carbon society and economy. The transition to a low carbon economy can be identified in the 2020 figures where the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NEEAP/NREAP) objectives have been met in Limerick County.

Table 13 sets out the energy savings required in Limerick County across all sections of the economy in order to achieve the EU 20-20 -20 targets.

NEEAP 2 - Limerick County	Energy savings (GWh PEE)			%	CO ₂ savings (kt)		
	2010	2016	2020		2010	2016	2020
Public Sector	26	79	130	9.5%	6.16	18.24	29.16
Business	100.2	173.6	233	17.1%	24.72	41	53.28
Buildings	102	383	610	44.8%	25	91.72	145.92
Mobility-Transport	25	132	213	15.6%	6.4	33.7	54.4
Energy Supply	79	80	177	13.0%	19.52	14.56	23.88
Totals	332	847	1,362	100.0%	82	199	307

Table 13 – Limerick County Energy Saving Requirements

The requirement to achieve this increase in energy efficiency also presents considerable opportunities to build upon the existing range of products and services in the Limerick County that address the new build, building refurbishment and general energy efficiency market.

The development of a low carbon economy is also predicated upon a vibrant renewable energy market. Table 14 below shows the Total Final Consumption (TFC) of Energy in Ireland and Limerick County in 1990 and 2012.

Ireland & LCR Energy Mix- TFC GWh	1990			2012		
	Total Energy GWh	Renewable Energy GWh	% RE	Total Energy GWh - TFC	Renewable Energy GWh - TFC	% RE
Ireland TFC	84,329	1,256.0	1.5%	124,873	3,687.0	3.0%
Limerick County	2,657	40.2	1.5%	4,644	153.0	3.3%

Table 14 - Ireland and Limerick County – RE contribution to TFC – 1990-2012

Table 14 above shows that Limerick County is presently slightly above the national percentage of Renewable Energy to Total Final Consumption.

Table 15 below shows the predicted renewable energy contribution to Limerick County Total Final Consumption (TFC). The amount shown is based on:-

- 2020 – Business As Usual where 50% of the Limerick Renewable Energy Assessment is achieved.
- 2020 – With Measures where 100% of the Limerick Renewable Energy Assessment is achieved.

Ireland & LCR Energy Mix- TFC GWh	2020 - BAU			2020 - WM		
	Total Energy GWh	Renewable Energy GWh	% RE	Total Energy GWh - TFC	Renewable Energy GWh - TFC	% RE
Ireland TFC	153,400	5,889.0	3.8%	139,000	10,520.0	7.6%
Limerick County	5,376	340.0	6.3%	4,955	830.0	16.8%

Table 15 Ireland and Limerick County – RE contribution to TFC - 2020

The table above shows that if the Limerick County Renewable Energy Assessment is delivered in a strategic and zoned manner the contribution will be double that of the national average and it will be practical to establish specific areas of low carbon commerce & community,

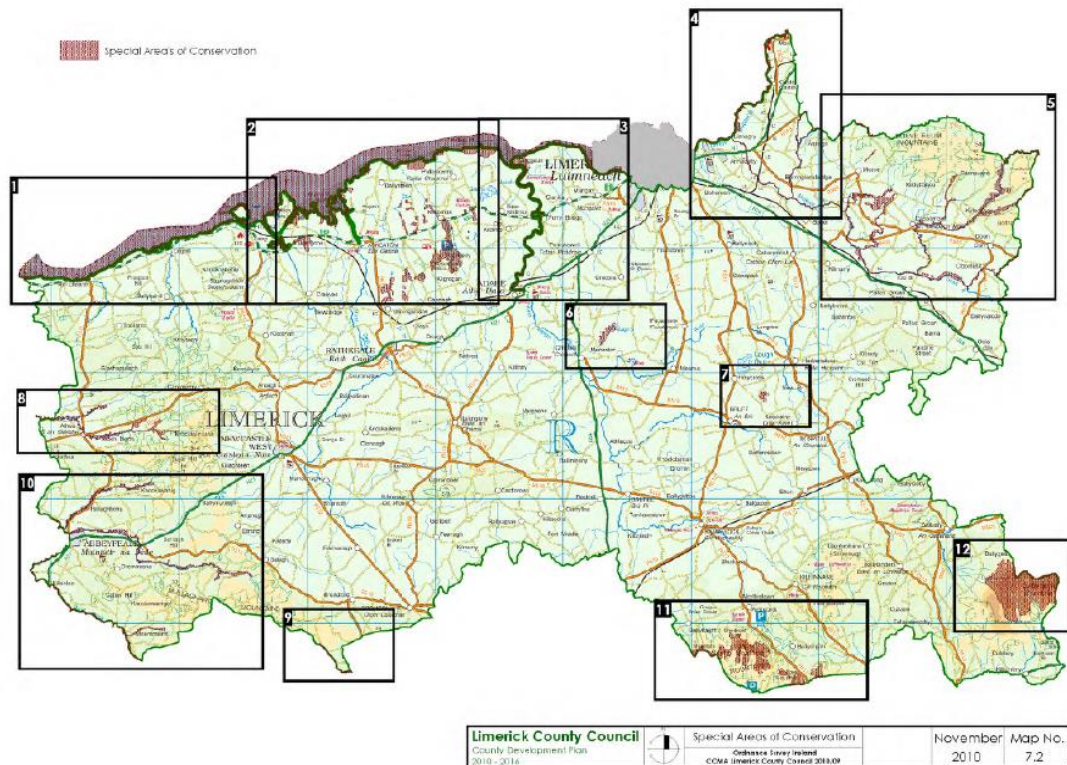
2.2.14 Biodiversity:

Within the LDS area there exists a wide range of habitats, some are natural but there are many others which have evolved and been maintained as a result of management over long periods of time. These range from the Shannon Estuary to the Galtee Uplands, with the central agricultural lowlands also being a valuable habitat. One of the habitats that is under the greatest threat in the LDS area is peatland habitat. This faces a range of threats, from afforestation, agricultural improvement and also the development of wind farms.

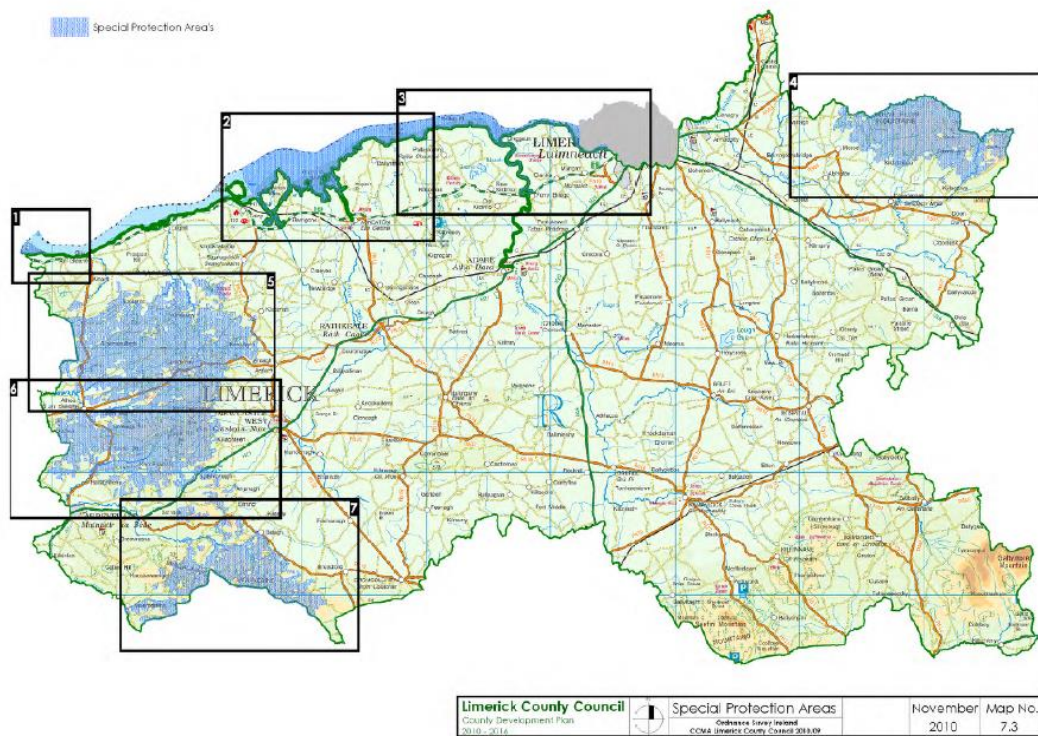
The Lower River Shannon SAC site is perhaps the most extensive riparian network in the LDS area. The estuarine habitats of the Shannon Coastal area are internationally important not only for aquatic species but also for migrating and locally breeding wildfowl and wader species. Other larger-scale sites are the Special Protection Areas in the West and Northeast of the LDS area. These have been designated specifically for the protection of the Hen Harrier. The Galtee and Ballyhoura Special Area of Conservations have been designated because of the presence of heath and blanket bog habitats. The river networks throughout the LDS area provide an important linear habitat network and wildlife corridor. The Stacks to Mullaghareirks, West Limerick and Mount Eagle and Slieve Felim to Silvermines Mountains Special Protection Areas are designated for the protection of the Hen Harrier. Also found in portions of these sites is the Merlin, another raptor and the Red Grouse. Both these sites are of huge importance for the conservation of the Hen Harrier and the LDS area currently possesses over 30% of the remaining population of these birds.

Site description	Special Protection Areas (SPA)	Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
Stacks to Mullagherirks, West Limerick and Mount Eagle 004161	X	
Slieve Felim to Silvermines Mountains 004165	X	
Curraghchase Woodlands 000174		X
Lower River Shannon site 002165		X
Askeaton Fen Complex		X
Galtee Mountains 00646		X
Ballyhoura Mts. 002036		X

Table 16 SPA's and SPC's in Limerick County Source: Limerick County Development Plan



Map 10: Special Areas of Conservation



Map 11: Special Protection Areas

2.2.15 Water:

Surface water quality in Limerick is variable in that some rivers have undergone a decline in water quality, while others have remained the same. Ground water too has suffered with Maps from the River Shannon Basin District Management Plan indicating that large parts of the County have polluted groundwater sources. Limerick has approximately 153 water bodies for which targets have been set under the Water Framework Directive. The targets to be achieved by 2015 were:

- That there would be no deterioration of water quality in the period to 2015
- The all water bodies would achieve a “good” or better status by 2015.

These targets have not been achieved and as a result the target dates have been extended to 2021 for water bodies in the poor to high quality groups and to 2027 for water bodies in the bad quality criteria. The most recent data indicates that 59% of water bodies are of good to high quality, 20% are of moderate quality, 20% of poor quality and only 1% of bad quality.

Wetlands throughout the County are also under increasing threat from filling and development works. Such wetlands are an important part of the ecology of Limerick County and play a part in the regulation of flood waters in the area as a whole.

The Shannon Estuary and other watercourses in the LDS area provide opportunities for water based recreational activity and alternatives for tourism and recreational development. It is considered that the Shannon estuary and Deel estuary are under-utilised for leisure purposes.

2.2.16 Rural Towns

Teagasc Research into rural towns and their surrounding districts that had a population of 1,500 or more in 2011, indexed towns based on their economic “strength” . The index was a function of the unemployment rate and the level of migration. The lower the unemployment rate, the stronger the town was and the higher the level of inward migration, the stronger the town was.

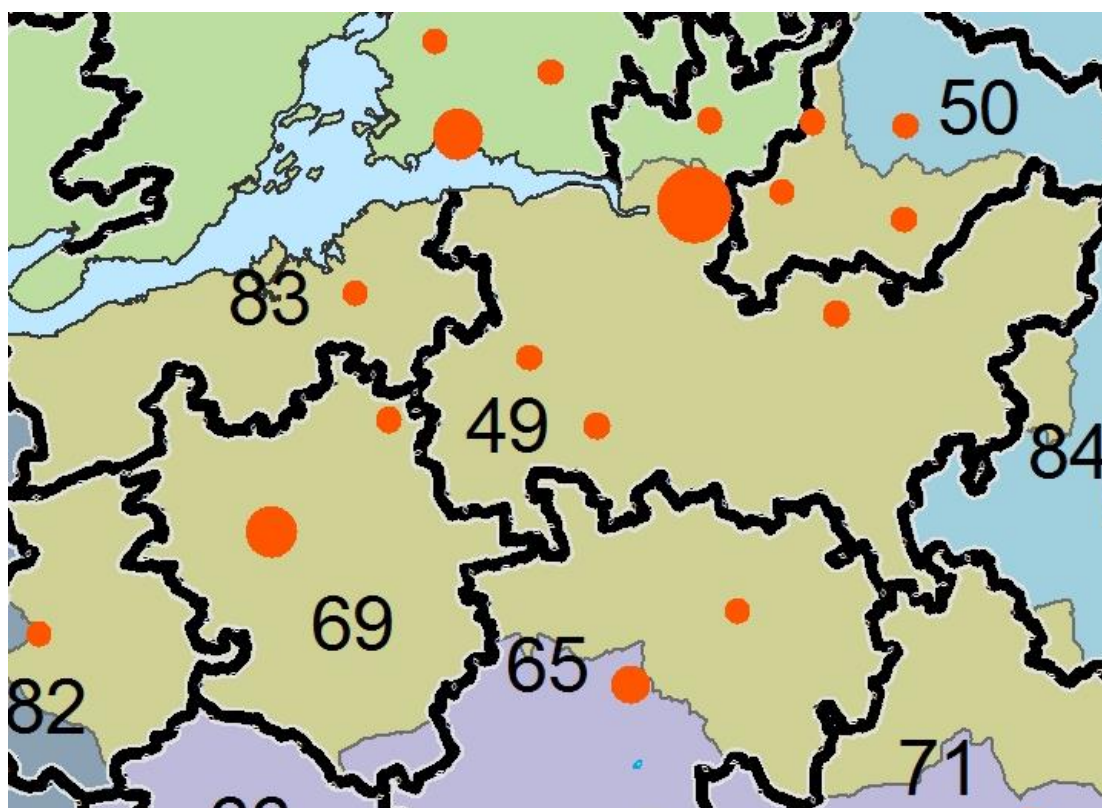
Of the 300 towns in the research, the LDS area had 10 towns listed. Four areas were in the top 100, namely Caherconlish (23), Adare (42), Castleconnell (47) and Ballybricken (83) with Clarina and Newcastle West just outside the top 100 at 102 and 103 respectively. The LDS area had four towns in the last 100 places of which Kilmallock was at (243), Croom (271). Notably Abbeyfeale at (298) and Rathkeale at (300) were two of the three towns with the lowest strength across the state.

2.2.17 Rural Economic Development Zones

Recommendation 5 of the CEDRA report for the establishment of Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZs) was “to enhance the capacity for local communities to contribute to and take ownership of local economic development by creating local strategic economic development plans”. The REDZ research identified functional areas where people live and work. The REDZ identify a need for a more tailored approach to planning at a regional and local level and recognise that the approach should not be restricted by administrative boundaries. This requires new systematic and cultural approaches to planning, focussed on participation and flexibility, while centred on evidence of where the potential for economic development is situated.

There are 6 REDZ identified, see map below, in the LDS area, they are 1) around Limerick City, 2) Annacotty, 3) Askeaton, 4) Newcastle West, 5) Abbeyfeale and 6) Kilmallock. The south east corner of the LDS area is linked to the Mitchelstown REDZ. While REDZ can provide a boost to specific initiatives in towns, the profile and experience of towns in the LDS area reveal that town development is best promoted from the ‘outside-in’ i.e. by strengthening and building-up the

rural hinterlands on whose purchasing power the towns rely, while also promoting polycentricity – infrastructurally and institutionally. The Rural Development Programme will be a key component of support to these approaches.



Map 12 Extract from the National REDZ Map identifying Limerick REDZ

2.3 Key Services/ Programmes

This section presents a list of the key statutory and community services in the LDS area, the level of linkage to the LEADER Programme and where the LDS envisages that LEADER may support a community led local development approach to services and facilities where gaps exist.

The LCDC, as LAG, and the Implementing Partners, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources, have participative planning approaches and structures that enable communication and networking with all of the key services operating within the LDS area. As part of the preparation of the LDS, these stakeholders would have been consulted to determine opportunities for collaboration across 2015-2020 and to identify areas where the LDS could have an impact in improving the services across the LDS area.

Below is the list of key service providers, as set out in section 2.3;

Key Services & Programmes	LEADER Economic Diversification		LEADER Social Inclusion		LEADER Environment	
	Linkage	Gap	Linkage	Gap	Linkage	Gap

2.3.1 Education Services	Strong	e.g. Outreach sector specific training	Strong	e.g. Outreach Access Programmes	Good	E.g. Outreach Environmental Awareness Programmes
2.3.2 Youth Services	Weak	e.g. 25-35 Youth Entrepreneurs	Strong	e.g. Progression of 18+ into relevant programmes	Weak	e.g. engaging youth in environmental activities
2.3.3 Health Services	Weak	Outside of LDS	Weak	e.g. community based positive mental health programmes	Weak	e.g. Outdoor recreation and Nature for Health
2.3.4 Disability Services	Weak	Outside of LDS	Weak	Outside of LDS	Weak	e.g. Outdoor recreation and Nature for Health
2.3.5 Child and Family Services	Weak	Outside of LDS	Strong	e.g. community socio-economic planning	Weak	e.g. Outdoor recreation and Nature for Health
2.3.6 Information Services	Strong	e.g. Outreach Enterprise and Employment Information supports	Strong	e.g. Community offices	Strong	e.g. Environmental Research and Dissemination
2.3.7 Services for Non-Irish Nationals	Weak	Outside of LDS	Weak	Outside of LDS	Weak	Outside of LDS
2.3.8 Income support and Employment Services	Weak		-----			
2.3.9 Enterprise Services	Strong	e.g. Enterprise Support Service	Strong	e.g. Community and Social Enterprise Support	Weak	e.g. Green Business Programme
2.3.10 Social Enterprise	Strong	e.g. Enterprise Support Service	Strong	e.g. Community and Social Enterprise Support	Weak	e.g. Green Business Programmes

2.3.11 Access and Transport	Weak	e.g. Tour Routes	Weak	e.g. integration of access into programmes	weak	e.g. development of greenways
2.3.12 Community Safety and Security	Weak	Outside of the LDS	Strong	e.g. Support to Community Organisations and Social Enterprises	Weak	e.g. Access and Signage at Forest Recreation Areas
2.3.13 Broadband Provision	Weak	e.g. Business IT collaboration and development	Weak	e.g. digital skills provision	Weak	e.g. Using it to monitor the Environment
2.3.14 Tourism Infrastructure	Strong	e.g. development of attractions	Strong	e.g. development of community tours	weak	e.g. development of eco tourism
2.3.15 Community Services	Strong	e.g. community hops	Strong	e.g. Youth Cafes	Weak	e.g. Community Energy Creation
2.3.16 Environmental Services	Strong	e.g. Green Business Infrastructure	Strong	e.g. Community Catchment Management	Weak	e.g. Energy Creation Measures

This section presents an overview of the key statutory and community services in the LDS area.

2.3.1 Education Services:

- **Primary Education:** There are 98 primary schools in the LDS area, 48 in east Limerick and 50 in West Limerick. 2 schools are in the Primary Urban band of DEIS status, Scoil Aine Naofa and Scoil Naomh Iosaf in Rathkeale. 3 schools are in the Primary Rural band of DEIS status Scoil Na mBraithre (Doon), Ballylanders NS and St Mary's Abbeyfeale; Small Areas in both Ballylanders and Doon are classed as disadvantaged. Two primary schools in Rathkeale are eligible for School Completion, in recognition of extreme educational disadvantage amongst its students. However, there is only one Home School Community Liaison Officer (covering the two primary schools in Rathkeale). The Courtenay Boys National School in Newcastle West has special facilities for children with mild learning difficulties and there is a Special School for children with autism in Patrickswell.
- **Secondary Education:** There are 13 secondary schools in the LDS area. The east Limerick area has 6 secondary schools, 3 of which are DEIS Designated: Scoil naTríonóide Naofa (Doon), Coláiste Chiarain (Croom) and Coláiste Iósaeif (Kilmallock). SAs in these 3 communities are classed as disadvantaged.¹ A shared School Completion programme operates between Coláiste Ciarain (Croom) and Coláiste Ipsae (Kilmallock). There are 7 secondary schools in the West Limerick Area, two of which

¹Under DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the HSCL Scheme is available to all DEIS Urban Band 1, Urban Band 2 and DEIS Post Primary schools.

have DEIS status (Desmond College, Newcastle West; Scoil Íde & Iosaf, Abbeyfeale). Both schools have a Home School Community Liaison Service and the School Completion Programme.

- Third Level Education: The LDS area is well serviced by third level institutes within easy commuting distance in Limerick and Kerry. The University of Limerick has four academic faculties and offers a range of programmes up to doctorate and post doctorate levels in the disciplines of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, Education, Health Sciences, Science and Engineering. LIT has three faculties and offers courses at Level 6 (certificate) through to Level 10 (PhD) whilst also catering for craft apprentices and adult and continuing education in the areas of Art & Design, Applied Science, Engineering Technology and Business and Humanities. Mary Immaculate College has two academic faculties, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education. IT Tralee has three academic faculties and offers a range of programmes in the areas of Business, Computing & Humanities, Science, Technology, Engineering & Manufacturing and Health and Social Science. There are also a number of privately run third level institutes in Limerick City including Pery Business School and Griffith College.
- Libraries: Libraries operate on a part-time basis in Caherconlish, Galbally, Hospital, Kilfinane and Dromcollogher. The libraries in Abbeyfeale, Adare, Dooradoyle and Kilmallock operate 5 days /week with services in Cappamore, Rathkeale, Glin, Foynes and Askeaton operating 4 days/week. Newcastle West library operates 6 days per week. Limerick City and County Council Mobile Library services Doon, Pallasgreen, Old Pallas and Murroe.
- The Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) provide a range of educational programmes and services in the areas of adult education, further education and secondary education. Accredited and non-accredited courses are aimed at those who wish to return to education. These include both full – time (Post Leaving Certificate, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach) and part time courses (Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), community education, literacy services, prison education, evening courses).
- Full-time QQI accredited Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are offered in East Limerick College of Further Education - Cappamore, Kilmallock College of Further Education and Colaiste Chiarain, Croom. At present there are no PLC courses running in the West Limerick area. A full-time VTOS programme is offered in Kilmallock with a Youthreach Centre in Hospital. Youthreach is also provided in the Shanagolden Education Centre as well as a full-time VTOS programme. The ETB also provides a free Adult Education Information and Guidance Counselling Service.
- Local Training Initiatives are delivered / supported by Local Development Companies with the support of the LCETB in targeted communities across the county offering additional options for young people with low levels of education progress to further education and training. Currently there are four Local Training Initiatives (LTI's) operating in West Limerick including a Childcare & Social Care LTI and a Horticulture LTI in Kilmeedy, an Employability LTI in Abbeyfeale and a Sports and Recreation LTI in Broadford, providing a total of 68 places. All offer FETAC Level 5 major awards, with the exception of Abbeyfeale which offers a FETAC Level 4 Major Award.
- Pre-development style training programmes have also been run in Tournafulla and Newcastle West under the Equality for Women Measure (EWM). These programmes combine both accredited and non-accredited modules. Funding has also been leveraged from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) for the Towards Occupation Programme which provides training opportunities to the long term unemployed in the LDS area.

2.3.2 Youth Services:

- The ETB works with local youth work organisations and groups to support the development of youth work programmes and facilities. In particular, it supports drugs education and prevention projects through the Young Peoples Facilities and Services

Fund (YPFSF); it implements the Special Projects for Youth (SPY) Scheme and the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme.

- Foróige operates a Youth Café in Newcastle West which hosts 4 local clubs as well as meetings for two youth clubs from Athea. Foróige also supports a youth club in Broadford.
- The Limerick Youth Service (LYS) supports city and countywide Youth Clubs, Youth Cafés, Youth Projects, Comhairle na nÓg, Garda Youth Diversion Projects, Youth Intervention Programmes, and provides a Youth Information Service. The Youth Service also provides second chance and further educational training programmes including Youthreach and Leaving Cert Applied for early school leavers.
- The LYS has recently developed a new centre in Rathkeale. It also supports volunteer-led youth clubs in Kildimo, Killeedy, Newcastle West, Foynes, Askeaton-Ballingarry, Abbeyfeale, Pallaskenry and Ballingarry. It also operates a SPY Youth Project in Rathkeale which provides a broad range of activities and programmes to meet identified needs of young people.
- Macra Na Feirme is a voluntary organisation for young people between the ages of 17 and 35. There are 9 Macra clubs in the LDS area – Estuary, Boher/Limerick, Croom/District, Ballylanders, Kilmallock, Shannonside, Newcastle West, Inse Ban and Broadford.

2.3.3 Health Services:

- There are a large number of GPs working in the LDS area with ShannonDoc providing out of hours and weekend services
- In Limerick City, HSE Health Centres are located in communities such as Ballynanty, Moyross, King's Island and Southill. In East Limerick, Health Centres operate in Castletown, Bruree, Kilmallock, Kilfinane, Ballylanders, Galbally, Hospital, Bruff, Fedamore, Caherconlish, Cappamore, Doon, Murroe and Castleconnell. In West Limerick Health Centres operate in Abbeyfeale, Adare, Askeaton, Ballycummin, Dromcollogher, Foynes, Glin, Newcastle West and Rathkeale.
- Primary Care Teams are available in Abbeyfeale, Adare/Clarina/Patrickswell, Ballylanders, Croom, Dromcollogher Kilmallock, Glin, Hospital/Bruff, Newcastle West and Rathkeale.
- While the health centres provide a range of community services, many of them only open on a part-time basis.
- For mental health services, the following day and hospital services are available; Ivy Gate Day Centre, Kilmallock, Ivernia House, Croom with Day Hospitals in Kilmallock, Roxboro Road and Churchtown, Newcastle West.
- Pieta House in Raheen is a not for profit centre for the prevention of suicide and self-harm. GROW is a Mental Health Organisation which helps people who have suffered, or are suffering, from mental health problems. It operates an outreach service in Newcastle West on a weekly basis.

2.3.4 Disability Services:

- St. Joseph's Foundation, the Brothers of Charity, Sisters of Charity, COPE, Slí Eile, Limerick Centre for Independent Living, and the Butterfly Club provide services to people with disabilities and/or their families in the LDS area.

2.3.5 Child and Family Services

- Tusla is the statutory Child and Family Agency with responsibility for: child protection and welfare services; services for children in care and adoption; family support and early

years inspection services; educational welfare services; domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence services. TUSLA supported family support projects operate in Abbeyfeale and Newcastle West

- The Limerick Childcare Committee supports people involved in childcare, including childcare providers and parents. There are 17 community-based and 32 private childcare facilities in East Limerick and 12 community-based and 51 private providers in West Limerick.
- There are two Family Resource Centres (FRCs) in the LDS area – based in Croom and Hospital. Key services provided by the FRCs include: family support services, education and training opportunities, after-school clubs, and childcare facilities.
- Town Parks and Playgrounds – Parks and Playgrounds located in the LDS area are as follows: Abbeyfeale Pairc Cois Féile Playground, Askeaton Playground at the Askeaton Leisure Centre, Ballingarry Community Playground, Cappamore Community Playground, Newcastle West Castle Demesne Park Playground, Castleconnell Children's Playground, Ballylanders Town Park, Castletroy Neighbourhood Park Playground, Curraghchase Playground, Doon Community Playground, Foynes Community Playground, Glin Community Playground, Kilfinane & District Playground, Croom Town Park Playground, Kilmallock Playground, Murroe Community Playground, Rathkeale Community Playground, Broadford Community Playground, Pallaskenry Community Playground and Adare All Abilities Playground.

2.3.6 Information Services

- Citizens' Information Centres provide information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services, rights and entitlements. In Limerick, Citizen's Information Centres are located in Limerick City Centre, Kilmallock and Newcastle West.

2.3.7 Services for Non-Irish Nationals:

- Limerick Integration Working Group, (LIWG) operates under Limerick City and County Council to increase awareness of the value of diversity in Limerick's changing environment and to progress the development of integration measures and enhance social cohesion.
- Fáilte Isteach, volunteer led English Language Classes are run in Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale and support progression of clients to programmes operated by the Education and Training Board (ETB).

2.3.8 Income Support and Employment Services:

- The Department of Social Protection provides a wide range of income supports and employment services to job seekers, people on low incomes, lone parents, people with disabilities, older people, and people wishing to return to education. Department of Social Protection local offices are located in Limerick City Centre, Newcastle West, and Kilmallock. Some communities in the LDS area link with DSP offices outside the area e.g. Limerick city, Tipperary and Kerry.
- In particular, schemes such as the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Back to Education Allowance, and the Back to College Initiative for Job Seekers support unemployed people to progress from the live register to education or self-employment. The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme is implemented in the LDS area by West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development.
- Intreo Offices, managed by the Department of Social Protection, act as a single point of contact for all employment services and supports for both Jobseekers and employers, providing support regarding benefits entitlements, advice on training options and

assistance in securing employment/employees. Intreo offices are located in Limerick City Centre, Newcastle West, and Kilmallock.

- The Department of Social Protection also implements a number of work placement programmes, including the Community Employment Scheme; TÚS – the Community Work Placement Initiative; Jobsbridge; and Gateway.
- West Limerick Resources operates a Rural Employment and Education Service and Jobs Club in the west of the LDS area and has developed Jobseekers Networks in Abbeyfeale, Newcastle West and Rathkeale, to provide peer support to its members, all of whom are unemployed.
- Ballyhoura Development operate a Department Of Social Protection funded Job Club to unemployed people in the east of the LDS area.
- The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is a personal money advice service which aims to support people to address personal debt. A MABS office is located in Limerick City Centre, while the MABS office in Charleville, Co.Cork also serves the south east Limerick area. MABS does not offer an outreach service in the West Limerick area.

2.3.9 Enterprise Services:

- Based in Limerick City, the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), as the first stop shop for persons interested in setting up an enterprise, and provides support and services to help start, grow and develop micro businesses. Together with information on State supports, the LEO provides financial supports, management development, mentoring and business skills training.
- The Back to Work Enterprise Scheme (BTWEA) assists unemployed people to become self-employed. Individuals who are setting up their own business and who qualify for the BTWEA scheme may retain a percentage of their social welfare payment for up to 2 years. In the LDS area the Scheme is administered by West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development on behalf of the Department of Social Protection.
- An Enterprise Network operates in the West Limerick area to provide members with an opportunity to review their business activity meet with experienced business mentors, network with other entrepreneurs and explore opportunities to grow their business.
- Ballyhoura Development support a number of enterprise networks across Tourism, Food and Social Enterprise.
- Teagasc: Teagasc provides integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities; the LDS area is serviced by offices in Kilmallock and Newcastle West.

2.3.10 Social Enterprise:

- There are currently 133 social enterprises in LDS area operating across sectors such childcare, employment activation, health and social care, sport and recreation, training and education, transport, heritage and tourism, housing, animal welfare, retail, enterprise infrastructure and financial services.
- Social enterprises are significant employers of local people and a conduit for State programmes such as Community Employment and the Community Services Programme. In the LDS area the social enterprise sector employs in excess of 1,500 people. In addition, it is estimated that at least ten other people work on a voluntary basis for every social enterprise. It is estimated that social enterprises are at least 50% more labour intensive than the average enterprise. This has direct and indirect positive spin-offs for the local and national economy. A high proportion of the expenditure of social enterprises goes directly into the local economy both in wages and for supplies of goods and services e.g the 85 social enterprises in East Limerick contribute in excess of €20 million to the local economy.

- There are community enterprise centres operating across the LDS area in Hospital (food), Kilmallock (industrial), Bruree (food) , Murroe (food), Croom (office), Cappamore (craft), Broadford (manufacturing and office), Kantoher (manufacturing and office) and Newcastle West (office).

2.3.11 Access and Transport:

- Limerick Transport Co-ordination Unit: This unit co-ordinates and delivers transport in rural areas for specific groups in the LDS area. The unit operates 58 bus routes/services in the LDS area.
- Public and Private Bus Services: There are limited public bus services extending out to the countryside outside of the main intercity routes to Cork, Tralee and Dublin. Bus Éireann runs a number of daily services in Limerick linking the LDS area directly with Limerick City, Tralee, Killarney and Cork for which passengers can connect to both bus and rail routes throughout Ireland. Bus Éireann provides a service to the towns in the LDS area including Ballylanders, Bruff, Bruree, Caherconlish, Cappamore, Croom, Doon, Galbally, Hospital, Kilmallock, Kilfinane, Knocklong, Murroe, Oola and Pallas. In the west of the LDS area it services Patrickswell, Adare, Croagh, Rathkeale, Newcastle West, Templeglantine, Abbeyfeale, Kildimo, Askeaton, Foynes and Glin.
- Rail Services: There is a railway station in Castleconnell, with the stations in Limerick city, Limerick Junction and Charleville also providing services to citizens in the LDS area. The timings of the buses and trains are generally not conducive to facilitating access to education/training/employment opportunities.
- Shannon Foynes Port Company, Ireland's second largest port operation, has statutory jurisdiction over all marine activities on a 500km² area on the Shannon Estuary, stretching from Kerry/Loop Heads to Limerick City. The strategic location offers access to the economy and population of a large part of Ireland. Work has recently commenced on the first element of a major restructuring of Foynes port.

2.3.12 Community Safety and Security:

- An Garda Síochána: The Limerick Garda Division includes 4 Districts relevant to the LDS area including Bruff, Limerick City North, Limerick City South and Newcastle West with Bruff and Newcastle West as District Headquarters. The Bruff District has 9 stations (Ballylanders, Bruff, Bruree, Cappamore, Hospital, Kilmallock, Murroe, Oola, Pallasgreen). The Newcastle West District has 11 stations (Abbeyfeale, Adare, Askeaton, Athea, Ballingarry, Croom, Dromcollogher, Foynes, Glin, Pallaskenry Rathkeale). Limerick City South District has 3 stations (Ballyneety, Caherconlish and Roxboro Road) and Limerick City North has one station (Castleconnell). The stations in Emly (Co.Tipperary) and Ballingarry (Co. Limerick) cover small parts of the LDS area and many of the Sub-District Stations operate on a part-time basis only.

2.3.13 Broadband Provision:

- There is currently no Fibre to the Home project planned by any of the major telecoms providers for the LDS area. There is limited fixed line broadband coverage in the LDS area and satellite provision is variable.

2.3.14 Tourism Infrastructure:

- In the LDS area, there is limited access for visitors to tourism information offices with weekday only information points in Kilfinane. Up until recently, a full Tourist Office service operated in Adare but this has been downgraded to a Tourist Information Point. Tourism information points also operate in Askeaton and Foynes

- The LDS area has 71 walking, cycling and mountain biking trails listed under the Irish Trails Office approved National Trails.
- There are four national monuments open to the public with visitor facilities in the LDS area: Adare Castle, Desmond Hall (Newcastle West), DeValera Museum (Bruree) and Lough Gur Interpretative Centre.
- West Limerick Tourism was established in 2010 as a representative organisation for the tourism trade and as a means of promoting West Limerick as a visitor destination.
- Established in 2014, the West Limerick Heritage is a voluntary network of individuals and organisations that aims to preserve and promote the richness of the heritage of the West Limerick area in all its forms.
- Ballyhoura Fáilte, established in 1986 as a cooperative tourism development and marketing body, is a voluntary collection of tourism accommodation, activity, heritage and cultural providers from across east Limerick which co-operate in marketing the Ballyhoura area to local, domestic and international visitors.
- Ballyhoura Heritage and Environment is a voluntary environmental and tourism group that is focused on the development of activity and heritage trails and infrastructure across east Limerick.

2.3.15 Community Services

The LDS area has a well-developed community infrastructure. While statistics on volunteers were not recorded in the 2011 census, 21,860 people in the LDS area classified themselves as volunteers in the 2006 census with over 78% of these involved in multiple voluntary activities.

- There are currently in excess of 700 community and voluntary organisations based in the west of the LDS area including 20 Community Councils, 11 Development Associations, and 46 community facilities supporting or providing facilities to communities. There are approximately 900 community and voluntary organisations operating in the east of the LDS area.
- The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports social enterprises and community organisations to deliver local services to their communities and to employ people from disadvantaged groups. In the LDS area, the CSP provides funding to the following groups: Caherconlish Community Centre, Honey Fitz Theatre Lough Gur, Kilmallock Performance Centre, Croom Community Hall, Mobile IT Bruree, Dromcollogher Respite Care Centre, Knockaderry Resource Centre, Newcastle West Community Centre, Patrickswell Community Resource House, Rural Community Care Network, Desmond Ability Resource Complex, and Limerick Youth Service.
- In the west of the LDS area there are voluntary housing organisations in Broadford, Kilmeedy, Ardagh, Athea, Cappagh, Dromcollogher, Newcastle West, Ballyhahill and Feoganagh, and sheltered housing organisations in Abbeyfeale, Rathkeale, Glin and Adare. In the east of the LDS area there are voluntary housing associations with units in Bruff, Croom, Doon, Bruree, Drombanna, Dromin/Athlacca, Hospital, Killeely/Dromkeen, Knocklong and Murroe.
- Limerick Volunteer Centre is a collaborative countywide programme to enhance volunteering by providing support to community and voluntary organisations. It supports the sustainment and development of community responses by identifying and making connections with potential volunteers.
- Limerick Sports Partnership aims to support increased participation in sport and active recreation throughout Limerick by providing assistance in the areas of sports development, education and training, and general information on sporting activities.

2.3.16 Environmental Services

- Limerick Clare Energy Agency provides energy efficiency solutions to organisations seeking sustainable operation and development. The agency has a wide remit - to provide energy services to all economic sectors in the region.
- Limerick's Buzzing is an environmental awareness and action project focused on the protection of the wild bee population. The group works in collaboration with interested groups, business and individuals to achieve its aim.

2.4 Key issues emerging from socio economic profile:

2.4.1 Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Tourism: As the area profile demonstrates the LDS is well located from a tourism perspective with good transports links (air, road, rail) and on the main route from Dublin to Cork and Kerry. It also has links with the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East which can be capitalised on to attract visitors. As outlined in Section 2.2.9 and 2.3.14 the LDS area has a good selection of high quality tourism products and services, however many are underdeveloped with gaps in terms of accommodation provisions and tourism information points. As a result tourism in Limerick continues to underperform. It has been identified that there is potential to enhance the local tourism product from a heritage and recreational perspective by tapping into underutilised or latent tourism resources. However, key to the success of local tourism will be the enhancement of existing marketing networks to increase the local tourism profile. Priority areas therefore include: tourism product development, provision and regional marketing activities and development of niche accommodation.

Enterprise: The 192% increase in the number of rural unemployed, couples with the 114% increase in the number of urban unemployed has devastated local economies. Due to the prevalence of a narrow range of economic sectors that have declined during the recession as outlined in section 2.2.7 job creation is crucial. Remote areas that are accessible to urban centres have sent have the greatest impact of the 55% decrease in construction employment. However, the profile has demonstrated that a strong foundation exists within the agriculture, food, forestry, tourism, craft manufacturing and services sector which offer opportunities to capitalise on local resources. This may necessitate skills development through tailored locally based programmes and initiatives which may require support under LEADER due to the inadequate supply of Further Education and Training opportunities as outlined in section 2.2.4.4. In addition, farm family skills and agri-diversification area important to rebuild off-farm employments after the gains of 15 years were wiped out in the initial 3 years of the recession as discussed in section 2.2.8. Expansion on the existing social enterprise are outlined in section 2.3.10 also offers potential to increase employment opportunities, investments in local communities and services delivery. Priority areas therefore include: rural enterprise development; animation and skills development; agri-diversification initiatives.

Rural Towns: Section 2.1 of the profile shows a dispersed small settlement pattern and the prevalence of small market towns and villages that need to be strengthened at their core and in their hinterland. Many rural towns and villages are experiencing significant inter-generational disadvantage including considerable levels of unemployment and of jobless households, a higher percentage of young people not in education or employment, a significant percentage of families with no car (in larger towns), no computer or no access to broadband. This is

compounded by cuts to services in rural areas necessitating outward travel which is made difficult due to limited rural transport as outlined in section 2.3. These factors make rural areas less attractive places to live and have resulted in significant decline in recent years. However, many of these towns and villages have a well developed community and voluntary sector capable of playing a significant role in combating this decline having an existing track record in the development of infrastructural, service and social enterprise provision. In addition there is potential for development under REDZ of a number of key towns across the LDS areas which have multiple indicators of disadvantage. To capitalise on this potential it will be necessary to engage closely with local communities and with relevant agencies in both planning and implementation stages. Priority areas therefore include: animation and capacity building supports for community and voluntary groups in rural towns and villages; socio-economic planning actions for priority areas; capital investments in town and village enhancement.

Broadband: As demonstrated in sections 2.2.11 and 2.3.13 broadband provision is insufficient for modern living, business and leisure needs across the LDS area. While there is a proposal under the National Broadband Plan to address this infrastructural deficit, it may not make a significant impact in the more rural areas for a number of years. The profile also indicated that PC ownership is low in rural areas of the LDS area, especially in areas with an older age profile. There is a need to raise awareness of and increase the capacity of local communities and business to the potential of IT and broadband to counteract the challenges posed by rural isolation. However this may first necessitate some capital investment in basic equipment and boosters in key areas. Priority areas therefore include: IT animation and capacity building initiatives directed at isolated communities and rural businesses, small scale capital investment.

2.4.2 Social Inclusion

Basic Services: The area profile indicated the the LDS area lacks a critical mass of key services in relation to transport, retail and information provision as well as employment, enterprise and training services with limited outreach of existing services to rural areas also an issue. The trend of declining service provisions levels, in all sectors, looks set to continued and presents particular challenges in the areas where individuals suffer from high levels of social and economic exclusion. The centralisation of services, particularly retails and personal services, in the larger population centres, has a key implication for rural populations and could make rural areas less attractive in terms of the added costs associated with living in a rural area. The level of public transport and rural transport provision within and across the LDS area is low and declining as outlined in Section 2.3.11. While the areas close to Limerick city are less obviously affected by distances from mainstream services the provision of a range of services at local level is of vital importance in targeting and engaging disadvantaged target groups and declining rural areas. A renewed focus is required to provide supports in these communities to ensure that sustainable, inclusive projects led by communities, are developed and implemented. Opportunities exist to build on the improved levels of community capacity and community facilities to establish new services on a community ownership and social enterprise model. Responses to the service provisions shortfalls outlined require a committee partnership approach, with key service providers, to deliver effective solutions, centres on higher levels of integration and closer coordination between service providers. Priority areas therefore include capital investment in community facilities and services; capacity building supports to local communities.

Rural Youth: As the profile shows Rural Youth within the LDS area is well serviced from a mainstream educational perspective at primary, secondary and third level. However, gaps exist in locally based further education and training opportunities, employment and social activities. This deficit, combined with the limited provisions of local services is resulting in an out-migration of rural youth as discussed in section 2.2.1 where it was identified that the average age of the LDS area has increased by approximately 0.75 years between 2006-2011. There is a key need to develop responses which will encourage and enable rural youth to continue living, participating and contributing to their local communities. This is particularly a priority for the 18-35 age cohort. Priority areas therefore include: development of employment opportunities; development of recreational and amenities provision in rural areas; targeted training provision to address gaps in local provision, improved community engagement.

2.4.3 Rural Environment

Water Resources: Section 2.2.15 of the profile shows that limited baseline data exists on water resources in the LDS area and what does exist points to issues with water quality with targets for 2015 not being met. Threats to Limerick's wetland area also having an impact on our local ecology. It is therefore necessary to develop specific initiatives to protect local water resources addressing themes such as water quality, conservation and public awareness or related issues. It has also been identified that water resources within the LDS areas are under-utilised for leisure purposes and there is potential to develop water based recreational amenities that will boost the local tourism product.

Biodiversity: 2.2.14 of the profile again indicates that a lack of baseline data is a key issue in relation to biodiversity in the LDS area. While parts of the LDS area designated SPAs and SPCs the area's biodiversity is under threat as a result of habitat loss and the increasing prevalence of invasive species. Lack of knowledge and awareness of the impacts of human activity on the local environment is significantly contributing to this. Priority areas therefore include: education and awareness raising activities; baseline studies; capital conservation actions.

Renewable Energy: Section 2.2.13 of the profile indicates that the LDS area has a high level of dependency on imported fossil fuels despite the availability of local resources such as forestry which have potential for renewable energy production. The reasons for this are two fold – there is a lack of awareness of the potential benefits (both environmental and economic) of renewable energy usage in local communities and also a corresponding underdevelopment of renewable energy supply locally. Substantial potential exists to link with locally based third level institutes and the Local Limerick Clare Energy Agency to investigate the feasibility of renewable energy production and use in the LDS area and to build on the area's strong agricultural sector through diversification. Priority areas therefore include feasibility studies, installation of renewable energy technology, agricultural diversification.

Section 3: Participative Planning

3.1 Overview of Public Consultation Process

Both Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources have, over the last 2 decades, put in place structures and procedures which will enable on-going and inclusive participation by all sectors: community and voluntary, statutory, social partners, business, and socially excluded or disadvantaged groups and individuals. Limerick LCDC, in conjunction with Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources Ltd, employed several mechanisms to ensure that a broad consultation process was undertaken in preparing the local development strategy, reflective of local needs and fully participative of all views.

3.1.1 Consultation and Engagement

In keeping with the strong community led development tradition of active community participation, consultation and engagement, a series of consultation events was undertaken to enable and facilitate individuals, groups, community & voluntary organizations and businesses to participate in the preparation of the local development strategy. These events aimed to give democratic expression to the opinions, views, concerns and aspirations of locals and to ascertain the issues, opportunities, challenges and priorities for rural development. The consultation process was designed with a focus on transparency, consensus building and meaningful interaction between local communities and Limerick LCDC. The objectives of these consultative approaches were to:

- Raise public awareness and inform local communities of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020.
- Encourage participative and meaningful engagement between local communities (including interest groups and private individuals), the LCDC, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources in identifying local priorities and needs in the preparation of the local development strategy.
- Engage communities, individuals and businesses in defining how they would like to see the LDS area improved across 2015-2020 and what resources they are planning to commit to the implementation of the local development strategy.
- Enable communities, individuals and businesses to influence the design of the local development strategy, its content and direction together with the public, voluntary and private sector organisations.
- Facilitate dialogue and the exchange of ideas among different groups.
- Develop an understanding of rural development needs, challenges and opportunities in relation to local communities, agriculture, enterprise, environment and tourism development.
- Achieve consensus and commitment from the various service providers on the key aspects of the local development strategy, as identified by communities, individuals and businesses.

The consultation process was guided by the following principles of Rural and Local Development:

- Bottom-up development promoting participation, inclusion and empowerment of all client groups.
- Partnership approach.
- Innovative and responsive approaches to the needs of the area with a view to piloting of initiatives and transferability of learning.
- Strategic planning with a multi-sectoral approach.

As per the draft Operating Rules *“the provision of Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities sub-theme seeks to improve access to basic services, for people living in rural and remote areas and groups who are at risk of social exclusion.....in rural areas people’s experience of exclusion is often compounded by physical isolation.”*

Consultation for the LDS included people living in disadvantaged areas, people living in remote and less accessible areas, unemployed and underemployed people; farmers on small holdings, women, children, lone parents, people with a disability.

The consultations sought to identify the basic services currently available for people living in rural and remote areas and groups who are at risk of social exclusion, and where these groups felt there were gaps in provision of services and facilities. The type of services and facilities identified throughout the consultation included; community facilities; access to localised education and training; social, cultural and recreational; retail and finance and personal support. The consultations linked closely with the key socio-economic findings in relation to social inclusion, summarised 2.4.2 Social Inclusion.

The implementing partners, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources, support the principle that people who live and work in rural communities are best placed to decide what support is needed to facilitate the development of their communities. Partnership and participation as the guiding principles of the implementing partners are reflected in the processes and structures that have been developed. The implementing partners have evolved excellent competencies in engaging, animating and supporting rural communities, individuals and businesses in the design and development of local development strategies. These skills have been developed from collaborating on the design, management and delivery of a range of national and EU funded community, social and rural development programmes. Programmes managed to date include LEADER I, LEADER II, LEADER +, Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, Local Community Development Programme and the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme.

The community led design and development process is continually evolving to take account of social, cultural, environmental and economic changes to ensure strategies are targeted, inclusive, market-led and quality focused. The development strategy centres on a continuum which aims to support progression from initial engagement through personal development, education, training, employment & enterprise supports to both full community and civic engagement and participation and to employment or self-employment. This ensures a greater awareness and connectedness between the planning for and delivery of outputs.

Engagement to build participation was central to the design and development of the Local Development Strategy. The consultation and design stage takes account of clients’ skills, experience, learning and social needs with engagement provided at locations and times that facilitate the diversity of client needs. This was ensured through (1) the Implementing Partners’ governance structure (2) an extensive and intensive consultation in the strategy design phase (3) a process of planning, review and collaborative partnership and (4) an outreach, localised implementation model that increases awareness and participation.

The outreach approach is central to engaging isolated individuals and groups. The outreach service delivery model enables greater community contributions to strategy and policy development and increases awareness, accessibility, knowledge and uptake of services and supports available. The dispersed and rural nature of the area, with its many physical, social & cultural barriers, means that the neighbourhood, community and district targeted approach, used by the implementing partners increases trust between staff, volunteers and clients and improves the quality and quantity of participation.

The implementing partners are client-focused and each element of the local development strategy will be founded on community development principles, which are embedded in all work undertaken by the implementing partners, these being:

- Empowerment – increasing the ability of the target individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities;
- Participation – supporting members of the target groups to take part in decision making;
- Inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination – recognising that some people may need additional support to overcome barriers they face;
- Self determination – supporting the right of all individuals to make their own choices and empowering them to do so;
- Partnership – recognising that many agencies can contribute to community development

Consultations were undertaken with the following strands of local decision-makers to design the local development strategy:

- **Community**

Broad based rural development and social inclusion targeted consultations to determine the existing service provision and gaps/needs based on desired provision and the future potential of communities.

E.g. Community and voluntary groups across the LDS area -. Community Councils, Tidy Towns Groups, Social Enterprises, Disability Groups etc.

- **Enterprise**

Enterprise stakeholders and clients to develop a strategic approach to delivering enterprise supports, both financial and non-financial, and in identifying broader enterprise needs including infrastructure, mechanisms to encourage collaboration and clustering and to a co-ordinated approach to local enterprise development.

E.g. Businesses owners, farmers and farm families, social entrepreneurs and relevant sector groups and agencies.

- **Environment**

Groups involved in biodiversity, built and natural heritage, renewable energy, recycling and carbon reduction to identify local challenges and opportunities to improve the environment. E.g. Discover Science Centres, Bird Watching, Farming Groups, agencies.

- **Tourism**

Tourism, heritage, food, craft, genealogy and recreation stakeholders to identify community, business and individual support requirements and collaboration opportunities, both financial and non-financial.

E.g. Ballyhoura Fáilte, Munster Peaks, Slieve Felim Tourism, Galty Mountains Steering Group, Doneraile Steering Group; Lough Gur Development, Kilmallock Tourism, West Limerick Tourism, West Limerick Heritage Group, tourism product providers and agencies.

- **Unemployed people, Employers and Support Organisations**

Clients seeking employment, employers and employment and training stakeholders to develop a strategic approach to delivering rural employment supports and to identify mechanisms to strengthen initiatives that encourage development of quality local employment opportunities.

E.g. Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Clients, Employment Support Groups, Long Term Unemployed Clients, and Equality for Women Measure Participants, Employers, LTI participants and agencies.

- **Social Partners**

The main employer groups through their local organisations to identify the future needs of industry and businesses through consultations with the Chambers of Commerce, local economic partnerships and town trader associations.

- **Public Sector and Service Providers**

Public Sector and Service providers to agree roles and responsibilities of the various partners as well as opportunities for brokerage of further public and private resources including potential collaborations and complementary projects, thereby avoiding duplication.

E.g.: Individual agency meetings in order to share views, identify potential synergies and avoid conflict or duplication.

- **Local Representatives (Councillors)**

The 40 local representatives in Limerick City & County Council covering 6 electoral districts (1 metropolitan district encompassing 3 electoral districts, and 3 municipal districts encompassing 1 electoral district each), 5 of which are relevant to the LDS area, to inform of the local development strategy and to hear the views and opinions of local councillors who work closely with individuals and communities on the ground and are aware of the issues and challenges facing the LDS area along with their opinions on the priority areas for County Limerick.

- **Local Community Development Committee**

The Local Community Development Committee to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The members of Limerick LCDC have been integral to the development of the local development strategy, providing comment and feedback on draft documents as well as participating in dedicated workshops.

- **Local Development Companies**

The Board, sub-structures and staff of the LDC's to contribute and guide the development of the plan given their extensive experience in local and community development. This process agreed the key role of the organisations in animation, innovation, piloting and localisation of the programme and facilitated the incorporation of other strategies into the local development strategy e.g.: Board, Sub committees, Advisory Councils and Staff.

- **Engagement with Disadvantaged Groups**

Both Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources operate the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP). Staff working on these programme work closely with the target groups and consulted with them in small group workshops. These groups included older people, travellers, migrants, disability organisations, youth, education and training programme participants, parent & toddler and family support groups and social groups.

- **Limerick City & County Council Staff**

Limerick City & County Council employees with responsibility for strategic planning and development across the LDS area were informed about the LEADER programme and their

input sought into the development of the strategy. Staff who participated in the workshop were drawn from several Council directorates including Environment, Regeneration, Community, Planning, IT, Finance, Water Services and special projects/infrastructure.

3.1.2 Public Consultation Events

Three specific consultation events were promoted via advertisements in local newspapers, community notes in local papers, through the local community radio station - West Limerick 102, social media, newsletters and through a mail shot to all community and voluntary organisations. All members of the Limerick PPN were advised of the events and invited to participate and engage with the process. The consultation events took place as follows:

1. Rathkeale House Hotel – Tuesday 8th September 2015
2. Caherconlish Millennium Centre – Tuesday 8th September 2015
3. Charleville Community Centre – Monday 7th September 2015 (facilitated a number of communities from County Limerick to attend)

The meetings commenced with an introduction and brief presentation on the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 along with an overview of the specific themes of the programme. Following the presentation and an open question and answer session, those in attendance were invited to assemble into smaller groups. Each group was invited to discuss each of the three main themes with facilitators on hand to support discussions and answer questions.

Approximately 140 people attended the meetings representing a wide variety of community and voluntary organisations from across the sub regional area.

Summary of Consultation Events

Consultation Type	Number
Limerick LCDC Meetings	5
Ballyhoura Development Board Meetings	4
West Limerick Resources Board Meetings	4
Ballyhoura Social Inclusion & Community Advisory Council Meetings	2
West Limerick Heritage Network Consultation	1
Ballyhoura Tidy Towns Consultation	1
Ballyhoura –Munster Peaks Steering Group	1
Ballyhoura Biodiversity Consultation	1
Ballyhoura Heritage Consultation	1
Ballyhoura Social Enterprise Network	1
West Limerick Food Sector Consultation	1
West Limerick Tourism Sector Consultation	1
Loobagh Catchment Management Steering Group	1
Ballyhoura Cultural Tourism Consultation	1
Ballyhoura NEET Consultation	1
Ballyhoura Consultation with Unemployed & Under-employed	2
Ballyhoura Community Sub-Committee & Ballyhoura Enterprise Sub-Committee	1
Limerick City & County Council Senior Staff Consultation	1

Ballyhoura Environment & Agriculture Sub-Committee Consultation	1
Local Representatives Consultation Workshop	1
Public Consultation Events	3
West Limerick Resources Disadvantaged Groups Consultation	5
West Limerick Resources Staff Consultation	1
West Limerick Enterprise Consultation	1

3.1.3 Review of Expression of Interest Forms

Since August 2013, both West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development as implementers of the LEADER Programme 2007-2013 have issued Expression of Interest Forms to individuals and groups across the LDS area. These forms were issued to anyone who made a direct enquiry regarding the LEADER programme as well as being circulated at public events. As well as a tool for recording ideas and proposals, the Expression of Interest Form also afforded individuals and groups with a further opportunity to input into the development of the strategy by asking the following questions:

- What do you think will be the opportunities and threats facing the area over the next 5-10 years?
- What initiatives should be developed to improve the quality of life and/or economic well-being of the area

To date over 135 forms have been returned with projects of an indicative overall value of €16 million along with a diverse range of suggestions and commentary for the future development of the LDS area.

3.1.4 Summary of Outcomes regarding the key findings and areas/themes for local development

Key findings identified include:

Gap / Opportunities	Priority / Policy
Economic Development, Enterprise Development and job Creation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of appropriate investment in Broadband • Lack of appropriate investment in rural enterprise infrastructure • Not fit for purpose commercial units • Attractive heritage towns • Variety of recreational, cultural, heritage and natural resources • Unrealised tourism potential • Unrealised business and sectoral R&D and marketing collaborations • Lack of diversity in local employment • Lack of bespoke training. • Strong social enterprises leading an increase in social enterprise activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance sectoral / statutory collaboration • Animation, capacity building, technical support, feasibility studies and capital supports • Networking and co-ordination • Investment in rural enterprise, rural tourism and agri-diversification • Increase rural job creation • Support sustainable development in rural towns • Tourism co-ordination and marketing • Investment in rural broadband • ICT up skilling and capital investment • Training for communities and businesses

Social Inclusion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of local engagement within some communities and villages • Lack of localised approaches training • Lack of appropriate services, supports and infrastructure for rural youth • Inadequate or absent local infrastructure and transport services • Lack of childcare services • Attractive villages and landscape • Appearance upgrading required • Lack of recreation amenities • Unrealised potential – Heritage, culture, artistic capital and infrastructure • Inadequate support for community & voluntary sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animation, capacity building, technical support, feasibility studies and capital supports • Feasibility studies • Networking and co-ordination • Facilitate community participation • Investment in youth services and infrastructure • Investment in community infrastructure to alleviate exclusion • Investment in social enterprise • Investment in community services • Village enhancement • Training actions • Long term planning for communities • Improve access to information and networking • Build youth participation in the community
Rural Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of baseline studies and baseline data on water, biodiversity and Lack of community participation in environmental management • Lack of SME participation in environmental management • Lack of environmental awareness • Lack of Community Development approach to the management of key sites • Lack of demonstration models across biodiversity initiatives, water quality and catchment management and renewable energy production and energy conservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animation, capacity building, technical support, feasibility studies and capital supports • Promote community solutions to environmental management • Protection of water resources • Protection of biodiversity with a focus of SPC / SPA designated sites • Networking and co-ordination • Management and protection of resources • Investment in renewable energy • Training for communities and businesses. • Increase social enterprise activity in the area of renewable energy production and energy conservation. • Increase quality and quantity of green way infrastructure to benefit biodiversity and water quality.

3.2 SWOT Analysis

3.2.1 Details of Individuals who participated in the SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis was developed by Limerick LCDC and its local development strategy sub-committee which was established to prepare the strategy. The SWOT analysis was used as a tool during the consultation process outlined in Section 3.1, the findings of which were utilised in shaping the SWOT analysis, along with the data from the area profile. In addition, the SWOT analysis profiled in the draft Limerick Economic and Community Plan was referenced as part of the process.

3.2.2 Outcomes of SWOT Analysis

Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Strengths

• Enterprise

- The LDS area comprises eight local labour markets with linkages into Kerry, Clare, Cork and Tipperary with mixed economic structure of a small number of long established multinational companies, and local supply companies.
- Strong grass based agricultural and poultry sectors provide quality ingredients to related indigenous manufacturing and service industries with close proximity to Limerick and Cork markets and population.
- Good quality hubs showcasing local food and craft produce.
- Strong social enterprise base particularly in areas of childcare, care of the elderly, housing and disability.

• Tourism

- High quality natural, historic, heritage and cultural tourism assets and a good selection of nationally approved outdoor recreation trails.
- Established tourism, food and heritage networks with a strong alignment of the tourism proposition with Fáilte Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East platforms.
- Strong sporting, cultural and festival event base.
- Availability of key visitor access transport infrastructure including 3 airports, motorways to main urban centres and harbours/ports.

• Rural Towns

- Strong tradition of people living in the hinterlands supporting the local market towns.
- Dedicated and engaged local business communities with an upward trend in Tidy Towns engagement and performance.
- Strong service centres established in many towns with strong umbrella groups and businesses niches identified to drive towns forward.
- High quantity of on street residential and retail space available in county towns.

• Broadband

- Capacitated business community seeking to use broadband.

Weaknesses

• Enterprise

- Limerick City is the poorest performing of five cities with a loss of over 11,000 jobs in the city and county between 2007 and 2012 and no FDI investment in the LDS area (excluding the peri-urban areas) since 1990.
- Labour force participation rate of women is 52.7%, 2% below the national average.
- High dependence on narrow range of declining sectors.
- Lack of investment in food research, development and collaborative marketing or investment in clusters of other businesses.

• Tourism

- Lack of awareness and knowledge in the city of the county leisure offering with insufficient physical recreation linkages to the county from the city.
- Gaps in tourism, heritage and recreation infrastructure, signposting and information.
- Small scale of providers makes achieving a critical mass of marketing activity difficult with a very dispersed online promotion of the LDS area.
- Overall city, county, regional, national and international linkage and collaboration lacking coordination.

• Rural Towns

- Insufficient office, commercial and industrial infrastructure to attract industry.
- Low quality of on street residential, retail and commercial premises with high vacancies.

• Broadband

- Poor broadband connectivity and low levels of PC ownership and internet access in parts of the LDS area.
- Poor quality mobile phone coverage in many rural areas.

Opportunities

• Enterprise

- Regeneration of Limerick City and a single Local Authority for Limerick City and County should bring opportunities to the LDS area.
- Strong third level presence with potential for associated new niche industries.
- Potential to further develop entrepreneurial base with opportunities in areas such as eco-tourism, renewable energy, on-farm diversification and expansion of the creative and services sectors
- Establishment of Innovate Limerick and €35 million Venture Capital Fund for Limerick, Limerick Film Studios and the National Dairy Technology Centre in UL, bring new employment, training and enterprise opportunities.
- Grow the level and quality of community and social enterprises to fill existing service and product gaps.

• Tourism

- Potential to increase tourism including rural tourism & to connect to Ireland's Ancient East/Wild Atlantic Way and Lakelands Experience initiatives.
- Exploit underused high quality historic, cultural & natural assets and build physical linkages and marketing to the City and between key attractions.
- Exploit overseas interest in genealogy and heritage tourism including Palatine Heritage.
- Develop and expand the Tourism Office Infrastructure and information supports.
- Build on the outdoor recreation trail network to increase users and visitors.
- Support locally co-ordinated destination management to improve marketing.
- Grow local economic impact of increased cruise ships to Foynes.

• Rural Towns

- Co-operation at community level, tapping into national and international networks and wider funding and investment opportunities.
- Build on potential of Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ).

• Broadband

- Proposed national roll-out of rural broadband and local community led broadband initiatives

Threats

• Enterprise

- Gaps in motorway infrastructure to connect to Cork, Limerick and Galway.
- Lack of investment to improve the level of commercial, retail and residential vacancies in the main rural towns.
- Strong competition from other areas for investment, research and development.
- Traceability/labelling of country of origin of food products.
- Availability of disposable income impacting in local spend.
- Outflow of investment due to absence of rural tax designation scheme.
- Limited access to finance for entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs.

• Tourism

- The proximity of the LDS area to the Lakelands, Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East could make it a drive through and not the destination.
- Ability of community operated tourism products to continue in the absence of rural local tourism destination management support structure.
- Lack of continued investment in quality recreation and heritage products will not keep pace with industry trends.

• Rural Towns

- Insufficient private sector investment on the main street residential and commercial refurbishment.
- Pull of the cities for national and international business investment at the expense of rural towns.

- Retaining and attracting a talented workforce and local population as a market place.
- Online commerce and rural businesses being left behind in market trends.
- Services are reduced and people need to travel further to access services.
- **Broadband**
- National Broadband Plan does not deliver, and access to services, education, business and other opportunities facilitated by the internet are curtailed.

Social Inclusion SWOT

Strengths

- **Basic Services**
- Community led locally based education initiatives with strong partnerships among agencies to provide second chance education.
- Strong tradition of community development, co-operation, social networks and community involvement.
- Strong tradition of social enterprise initiatives to deliver local services with a high quality of community services and facilities in many communities.
- Indoor and outdoor recreational amenities spread throughout the LDS area
- Family Resource Centres, where available.
- Good demonstration projects across the LDS area as best practice in developing basic services.
- **Rural Youth**
- Strong, active local sporting, drama, music and social organisations providing services for youth both male and female.
- High and improved retention rates to Leaving Cert, 81% of pupils sitting Leaving Cert in County schools offered places at third level colleges in 2013 with improved progression rates to third level from disadvantaged (DEIS) schools.
- Excellent second level schools and strong third level education assets including UL, LIT, Mary Immaculate College and IT Tralee and associated research capacity including SFI centres.

Weaknesses

- **Basic Services**
- Need for multi-use civic spaces particularly in larger towns to enable and support cultural/social activity and cohesion
- Lack of strong representative structures in larger towns
- Dispersed hidden deprivation and pockets of deprivation in the LDS area.
- Loss of essential local services – shops, post offices, Gardaí etc.
- **Rural youth**
- Labour force participation rate in the LDS area is 60%, 2% lower than the national average.
- Unemployment rates are particularly high in certain age groups (15-19 year olds, 56% in the county, 59% in the state) and certain areas e.g. (male unemployment rates of up to 39% in Rathkeale in the county).
- Insufficient locally based training opportunities for unemployed/under-employed, youth enterprise and outreached third level facilities.
- Poor demographic structure in some areas and a lack of social opportunities and facilities for young people in small rural communities.

Opportunities

- **Basic Services**
- Opportunities to revitalise some communities, particularly CLÁR designated ED's
- Opportunity for greater use of recreational facilities within secondary schools for wider community benefit
- Partnership structures will facilitate integrated development and will complement or add value to activities of other support agencies
- Availability of public infrastructure such as former schools, Garda stations etc for community use

- **Rural Youth**

- High levels of voluntary participation, especially in sport and charitable activity, which could be mobilised for the wider community.
- Existence of Community Employment Schemes, Rural Social Scheme and TUS Schemes to support local initiatives and provide learning opportunities for unemployed

Threats

- **Basic Services**

- Some population cohorts, many of whom are dispersed and hidden, are characterised by health inequalities, low education, a long history of unemployment or underemployment and welfare dependence resulting in deep structural problems which make successful revitalisation complex and difficult.
- Continued loss of key services in rural areas, post offices, banks and Garda Stations and as more farmers move toward dairying, farming units may grow bigger taking over smaller family farms leading to further depopulation and increased loss of services.
- Extension of Commuting Zones and the impact on demand for local services.
- Limited access to health services is increasing health inequalities.

- **Rural Youth**

- The attraction of quality jobs and of social, cultural and recreational opportunities in urban areas resulting in out migration.
- Transport infrastructure is limiting opportunities for youth people.
- Increased pressure on volunteers (time, regulations, fundraising), reliance on volunteers to provide services and lack of new volunteers.

Environment SWOT

Strengths

- **Biodiversity**

- Increased participation and enthusiasm for initiatives such as Tidy Towns and increased emphasis and awareness of biodiversity under Tidy Towns
- Active school participation in Green Schools Initiative
- Large number of designated SACs and SPAs
- Active conservation organisations such as Bird Watch Ireland, Feale Biodiversity etc.

- **Renewable Energy**

- Availability of Renewable Energy resources and technologies within the LDS area
- Growing expertise and knowledge base in Renewable Energy
- Strong tradition in agricultural / business innovation
- Renewable energy production to be twice the national percentage by 2020
- Bioenergy availability, from wood and energy crops
- Commercial wind, wave, tidal energy
- Combined Heat & Power potential for urban / industrial / commercial areas
- Third Level Research & Development facilities

- **Water**

- Awareness and interest in local water resources.

Weaknesses

- **Biodiversity**

- Lack of biodiversity conservation initiatives
- Few financial supports for Biodiversity work which is particularly impacting on control and eradication of invasive species
- Dwindling number of volunteers particularly where activity must be ongoing and sustained
- Negative public perception of environmental concerns
- Inadequacy of informed information on environmental issues and concerns
- Environmentalists working in isolation without adequate supports
- Poor communication with and between environmental groups

- **Renewable Energy**

- Limited forestry processing in LDS area
- Energy infrastructure to harness renewable energy resources is not at optimal levels

- High level of residential buildings in the aggregate rural area that is almost twice the national levels
- 62% of houses in the rural areas of Limerick were built before 1990. Insulation and heating systems specifications were increased significantly after 1997.
- High dependency on imported oil to heat homes -73%
- High levels of poorly insulated buildings heated by imported fossil fuels are major contributors to fuel poverty and excessive CO₂ emissions.
- Need for energy distribution infrastructure in natural gas, electricity, and district heating.

- **Water**

- Underdeveloped co-operative Water quality initiatives

Opportunities

- **Biodiversity**

- Increase active participation in biodiversity initiatives though integrating into existing infrastructure such as recreation trails and though existing initiatives such as Tidy Towns.

- **Renewable Energy**

- The availability of third level research and development institutions will assist in the development of innovative low carbon solutions such as:-
 - Energy / Carbon trading and co-operatives
 - District heating for municipal areas based on resources in rural areas
 - Development of low carbon transport systems
- Low carbon transition communities already exist and there is an opportunity to build on this goodwill to develop sustainable communities and businesses
- Availability of funding for community initiatives from corporate sector e.g Airtricity Community Fund
- The regeneration of Limerick City offers an excellent opportunity to Limerick County to serve as the source of skilled labour and low carbon energy solutions.
- Diversification of agricultural activities into energy producers
- Continuation of substantial rebuild and refurbishment of existing buildings
- Potential to develop district heating systems and community wind farms in a number of communities
- Greater buy in for Green Public Procurement
- Strong third level research resources and innovation at UL and LIT

- **Water**

- Potential to capitalise on increased interest at community level in water conservation initiatives

Threats

- **Biodiversity**

- Low level of knowledge and information on the environment
- Low level of baseline data on biodiversity
- Continued spread of invasive species

- **Renewable Energy**

- Lack of investment in renewable energy projects at commercial scale due to unfavourable planning in suitable areas, poor energy infrastructure, and low Renewable Energy Feed In Tariffs.
- Reduction of small scale renewable energy projects due to standard of skills for installations and low / no compensation for energy exported, particularly electricity.
- Investment in low carbon commerce & community being “piloted” and supported financially elsewhere. This is quite probable on the east coast.
- Lack of affordable public transport between rural areas and major industrial / commercial centres necessitates the over dependence on private car ownership
- LDS area is over 90% dependent on imported fossil fuels to service the needs of society, commerce, transport, public services and local government facilities

- **Water**

- Pollution within catchments impacting on the social and economic life of communities.

3.3 The Key Priorities Emerging from the Analysis & Consultations

3.3.1 In analysing the consultations and feedback it is possible to examine communities, both geographic and interest, by dividing them into three;

- 1) those that are progressing well with plans and recent investment,
- 2) those that have plans or are engaging in planning for future projects and
- 3) those that are drifting along but not engaged in planning or programmes.

Across all community types there are variances in what they have identified as the key issues but in general some key priorities emerge that need to continue to be supported:

1. Entrepreneurship, Enterprise and Employment

In particular:

- Social enterprise models to provide local services
- Economic infrastructure to provide space to stimulate private/community sector activity
- Collaborative initiatives across sectors and geographic areas
- A focus on supporting the hard to reach communities.

2. Targeted Priorities

- Job creation based on (1) optimising rural resources such as agriculture, food, marine tourism, tourism, creative and renewable energy and supporting scaling export markets and (2) local services supplying rural economy.
- Rural Town Revitalisation, Basic Services in Communities, Youth 18-35, Broadband.

3. The Environment Information Gap

The Environment has not been strongly identified as a priority throughout the consultation and submission phases and in analysing why, it is evident that there is a knowledge gap. Limerick LCDC and its implementing partners need to resource the environment theme to improve both our and local community and business knowledge of the opportunities and challenges that exist. Initially this will mean creating baseline information that can support development of training, skills development, capacity building and feasibility studies for further investment in demonstrators and across other environmental programmes and optimising the existing funding through rural environmental schemes to create more local jobs.

In summary, the broad-based inclusive consultation process ensured that this Local Development Strategy reflects the needs of the constituent clients, communities and individuals, the commitment of the various partners and the involvement of the appropriate public agencies and sectoral representatives. The consultation process provided quality information on existing gaps and potential solutions to client and area-based issues and opportunities which facilitated the design of targeted priorities present in the strategy.

The outcomes of the consultation and needs analysis and the sub-theme rationale:

Key Issues emerging form socio-economic profile	Rationale for Investment
Tourism: as the area profile demonstrates the LDS area is well located from a tourism perspective with good transport links (air, road, rail) and on the main route from Dublin to Cork and to Kerry. It also has links with the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East which can be capitalised on to attract visitors. As outlined in Section 2.2.9 and	Niche cultural, heritage environment, food and recreation tourism is of key importance to the rural economy of Limerick. Further facilitation to improve and increase the supply of tourism experiences and boost demand from visitors has been identified as critical if community and private tourism interests are to achieve the significant

<p>2.3.14 the LDS area has a good selection of high quality tourism products and services, however many are underdeveloped with gaps in terms of accommodation provision and tourism information points. As a result tourism in Limerick continues to underperform. It has been identified that there is potential to enhance the local tourism product from a heritage and recreational perspective by tapping into underutilised or latent tourism resources. However key to the success of local tourism will be the enhancement of existing marketing networks to increase the local tourism profile. Priority areas therefore include: tourism product development, development of accommodation provision and regional marketing activities.</p>	<p>potential for increasing employment and creating cultural, recreational and social opportunities for local people. Feedback from tourism interests highlights research and information to support investment proposals, advice and support for start-up, expertise and support for co-operative tourism marketing and promotion, training and networking with industry colleagues and building wider co-operative destination marketing platforms as key areas for support. Strategic actions will be cognisant of 1) the market failures and investment barriers that exist in rural tourism 2) the opportunities to build capacity to optimise key market propositions such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Limerick City and Ireland's Ancient East 3) capitalise on increasing interest from the key visitor markets of France, Germany, the UK and USA, and 4) the extensive body of evidence gathered over the course of past rural tourism activities.</p>
<p>Enterprise: The 192% increase in the number of rural unemployed, coupled with the 114% increase in the number of urban unemployed has devastated local economies. Due to the prevalence of a narrow range of economic sectors that have declined during the recession as outlined in section 2.2.7, job creation is crucial. Remote areas that are accessible to urban centres have seen the greatest impact of the 55% decrease in construction employment. However the profile has demonstrated that a strong foundation exists within the agriculture, food, tourism, craft manufacturing and services sectors which offer opportunities to capitalise on local resources. This may necessitate skills development through tailored locally based programmes and initiatives which may require support under LEADER due to the inadequate supply of Further Education and Training opportunities as outlined in section 2.2.4.4. In addition, farm family skills and agri-diversification are important to rebuild off-farm employment after the gains of 15 years were wiped out in the initial 3 years of the recession as discussed in section 2.2.8. Expansion on the existing social enterprise base outlined in section 2.3.10</p>	<p>Small and micro enterprises are a key component of the local economy across the area. With unemployment remaining high at an average of 10% and some areas experiencing much higher rates, the consultations undertaken as part of the preparation for this strategy have prioritised the issue of sustaining existing, and growing local jobs, through private and community enterprise activities. Working in collaboration with the other enterprise support agencies, particularly the Local Enterprise Office, Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland, targeted actions supporting the development of both local individual and community entrepreneurial capacity are viewed as essential to capitalise on the potential for job creation. Actions will optimise the potential of the human and natural resources to strengthen innovation, production, distribution knowledge and infrastructure. Existing clusters of small and micro enterprises in such sectors as food, craft and social enterprises will continue to be supported and new networks for collaboration will be supported across agritech, engineering, craft manufacturing and other services.</p>
<p>Rural Towns: Section 2.1 of the profile shows a dispersed small settlement pattern and the prevalence of small market towns</p>	<p>Rural towns and villages are at the heart of local communities across the LDS area. Facilitation and support to local community</p>

<p>and villages that need to be strengthened at their core and in their hinterland. Many rural towns and villages are experiencing significant inter-generational disadvantage including considerable levels of unemployment and of jobless households, a high percentage of young people not in education or employment, a significant percentage of families with no car (in larger towns), no computer or no access to broadband. This is compounded by cuts to services in rural areas necessitating outward travel which is made difficult due to limited rural transport as outlined in section 2.3. These factors make rural areas less attractive places to live and have resulted in significant decline in recent years. However many of these towns and villages have a well developed community and voluntary sector capable of playing a significant role in combating this decline having an existing track record in the development of infrastructural, service and social enterprise provision. In addition there is potential for development under REDZ of a number of key towns across the LDS area which have multiple indicators of disadvantage. To capitalise on this potential it will be necessary to engage closely with local communities and with relevant agencies in both the planning and implementation stages. Priority areas therefore include: animation and capacity building supports for community and voluntary groups in rural towns and villages; socio economic planning actions for priority areas; capital investment in town and village enhancement.</p>	<p>partnerships to develop long term visions and implement socio economic strategies that optimise available assets, capitalise on each community's comparative advantages and build competitive advantages with surrounding towns and villages is required to strengthen the main streets, grow employment and create viable environments for new services. Towns and villages across the LDS area have been impacted to a greater extent by the economic downturn than nearby cities. Evidence indicates higher increases in unemployment rates, greater decreases in employment levels and increased levels of business closures. The Rural Towns objective is required to move from a reliance on industrial sectors with falling employment such as agriculture, construction and industry to one where towns and villages are more attractive to residents and visitors as both consumers and investors, based on growing sectors of employment. Feedback from consultations highlights that each town and village faces similar challenges, but there are varying solutions based on utilisation of local human, environmental and capital resources. For some, short-term job creation is required while others require long-term structural change to attract new residents, enhance skills, as well as create infrastructure to attract new entrepreneurs and services. Consultations highlighted strategic actions should focus on support to develop strong local Limerick Local Development Strategy 2015-2020 partnership structures, optimising available on-street retail, commercial and living spaces, increased entrepreneurial activity, adding value to existing businesses and supply chains, expanding local services and trade activity to reduce spending leakages outside the community, and development of new social and leisure activities as areas for support.</p>
<p>Broadband: As demonstrated in sections 2.2.11 and 2.3.13 broadband provision is insufficient for modern living, business and leisure needs across the LDS area. While there is a proposal under the National Broadband plan to address this infrastructural deficit, it may not make a significant impact in the more rural areas for a number of years. The profile also indicated that pc ownership is low in rural areas of the LDS area, especially in areas with an older</p>	<p>High-speed broadband is a necessity for modern living and working to enable people live, work and do business, yet this transformative infrastructure, with the capacity to change what people do and the way they do it, is not available in most of rural Limerick. As a result the area is missing out on innovation and growth. Supporting community, business and individuals to drive the broadband agenda locally will generate growth by increasing skills and access to</p>

<p>age profile. There is a need to raise awareness of and increase the capacity of local communities and business to the potential of IT and broadband to counteract the challenges posed by rural isolation. However this may first necessitate some capital investment in basic equipment and boosters in key areas. Priority areas therefore include IT animation and capacity building initiatives directed at isolated communities and rural businesses, small scale capital investment.</p>	<p>education, social and economic opportunities and reducing the limitations of peripheral rural locations. The evidence from the CSO data on computer ownership and broadband access within the LDS area, combined with the telecommunications infrastructure maps, highlight large deficits in quality and affordability and access to broadband. Consultations have highlighted that residents and businesses are frustrated by poor service levels, ranging from a lack of service availability to intermittent and inconsistent basic broadband and insufficient speeds. High speed broadband is one of the deficits inhibiting growth of businesses operating in the region, and discourages others from locating while also inhibiting residents from accessing education, social and entertainment opportunities. The strategic actions will be cognisant of the National Broadband Plan, but will aim to ensure that communities across the LDS area have capacity to actively innovate and lead locally how and when the infrastructure gaps are filled and to increase the capacity to optimise high speed broadband and reduce the carbon footprint. The actions will ensure wider economic benefits of better positioning in the global knowledge economy, job creation and enterprise development area all supported by quality, future proofed broadband.</p>
<p>Basic Services: The area profile indicates that the LDS area lacks a critical mass of key services in relation to transport, retail and information provision, as well as employment, enterprise and training services with limited outreach of existing services to rural areas also an issue. The trend of declining service provision levels, in all sectors, looks set to continue and presents particular challenges in the areas where individuals suffer from high levels of social and economic exclusion. The centralisation of services, particularly retail and personal services, in the larger population centres, has a key implication for rural populations and could make rural areas less attractive in terms of the added costs associated with living in a rural area. The level of public transport and rural transport provision within and across the LDS area is low and declining as outlined in section 2.3.11. While the areas closer to Limerick city are less obviously affected by distances from mainstream</p>	<p>The quality of life for individuals and communities across the LDS area can differ substantially depending on need and circumstances. Low population density, high levels of out-migration, distance from urban centres and commuting to work, school or college (accessibility), higher cost of living, decline in agriculture and traditional industries results in fewer employment options and comparatively lower service provision when compared to urban and suburban areas. In some instances the investment made under the last programme in providing community facilities, where vital rural services are provided and consumed, can mean that individual communities require support in managing and maintaining existing facilities, improving the range of services provided to the local community as well as recruiting and retaining volunteers. In other situations, communities will have been assisted in preparing plans for developing facilities or providing new services but are</p>

services, the provision of a range of services at local level is of vital importance in targeting and engaging	now at the stage of requiring assistance to bring these plans to fruition. In some situations, there will be traditionally weak communities or individuals experiencing social exclusion where intensive capacity building and governance initiatives will be required. Drawing on the area profile, public consultation and SWOT analysis findings, specific actions are to be targeted to address the needs identified across the LDS area.
Rural Youth: As the profile shows Rural Youth within the LDS area is well serviced from a mainstream educational perspective at primary, secondary and third level. However gaps exist in locally based further education and training opportunities, employment and social activities. This deficit, combined with the limited provision of local services, is resulting in an out-migration of rural youth as discussed in section 2.2.1 where it was identified that the average age of the LDS area has increased by approximately 0.75 years between 2006-2011. There is a key need to develop responses which will encourage and enable rural youth to continue living, participating and contributing to their local communities. This is particularly a priority for the 18-35 age cohort. Priority areas therefore include: development of employment opportunities; develop of recreational and amenities provision in rural areas; targeted training provision to address gaps in local provision.	From the area profile, Limerick County has 38,669 individuals in the 15-34 age cohort. At almost 29% of the overall population this makes up a significant proportion of the population. On analysing current service provision within the LDS area there are a range of supports and services available targeting those up to the age of 18. As a consequence, for the purposes of this Local Development Strategy priority will be given to those aged 18–35. In addition, retaining young people in rural areas was a key concern from the public consultation as well as harnessing the skills and abilities of young people for the benefit of their communities. From previous experience of delivering Rural Development and Social Inclusion programmes and arising from the consultations there are a number of areas of need registering among rural youth and rural communities including access to local training and employment opportunities and provision of social and recreational activities as well as encouraging youth participation in the community.
Water Resources: Section 2.2.15 of the profile shows that limited baseline data exists on water resources in the LDS area and what does exist points to issues with water quality with targets for 2015 not being met. Threats to Limerick's Wetlands are also having an impact on our local ecology. It is therefore necessary to develop specific initiatives to protect	Well managed water is essential for sustaining healthy and vibrant rural communities. Agriculture, rural tourism, nature and human health depend on the integrity of our rivers, lakes, groundwater and coastal waters. It is therefore an imperative that we address water protection, use and management as core to the social, economic, cultural and sustainable development of rural Limerick. Within the context of Climate Change and the need to think long-

3.3 Agreed LDS Priorities

3.3.1 Process to Agree the Priorities and Objectives of the LDS

A technical / working group was set up by the LAG, with responsibility for drafting the local development strategy. The membership of this group included: CEOs of the three Development

Companies in the membership of the LCDC, Chief Officer of the LCDC (local authority staff); elected members of the local authority that are members of the LCDC; and professional staff of the Implementing Partners and the local authority. This group was responsible for on-going development of the LDS. The approach was to work with the information being gathered against the framework for the preparation of the local development strategy as described in the Guidelines.

The process to agree the priorities and objectives of the LDS was undertaken with reference to the objectives of the local development strategy and the themes and sub-themes set out in the national programme. It utilised the analysis of the socio-economic conditions to identify and debate the key local needs, development challenges and opportunities. This facilitated specification of local priorities within each theme and sub-theme, drawing on the evidence-base.

The process of identifying priorities also drew on the extensive consultations undertaken as part of the preparation of the local development strategy – involving a community led and inclusive approach in identifying the needs and challenges of, and within, the LDS area. This informed the refinement of the SWOT (combining the findings of the socio-economic baseline analysis with the more qualitative information coming from the consultations) and the identification of local priorities.

The various inputs (objectives and structure of the LEADER programme; local needs analysis; emerging priorities) were brought for discussion and agreement of priorities to the meetings of the LCDC. A workshop was held for the full membership of the LCDC to review the local development strategy as it was nearing completion, to get feedback prior to preparation and agreement of the final local development strategy. This was the process of consensus building on the local priorities for the local development strategy.

Individual LCDC members also attended the local consultation meetings (sectoral, community, local authority, other stakeholders) so that they were involved in the debates and feedback “from the ground” (i.e., the bottom up).

3.3.2 Stakeholders Who Participated In the Prioritisation Process.

The stakeholders who participated in the prioritisation process included the full membership of the partnership-based structure of the LAG. The full membership of the LAG engaged at various stages in the prioritising process (at the start, during the development phase, in agreeing specific sub-themes / local objectives and priorities on LDS completion). In view of the bottom-up and inclusive approach adopted, as outlined above, the prioritisation process drew on inputs from: sectoral interests, Board and staff members of the Local Development Companies; local geographic communities across the LDS area; local authority staff and elected members.

3.3.3 Rationale for the Proposed Themes/Sub-Themes and LDS Priorities

Taking into account the opportunities for working with specific themes and sub-themes, as specified in the national LEADER programme, and the process of prioritisation in which the partners engaged in the LDS preparation, the LDS will address all sub-themes included in the LEADER Programme. This is in keeping with working with the integrated approach and the need for balance across economic, social and environmental objectives.

The rationale for each sub-theme (Local Objective) and LDS priorities is outlined in brief in the various sub-sections of Section 4. The local rationales have been agreed, drawing on findings of the socio-economic analysis, the synthesis of findings from consultation and debate / consensus building within the partnership structure of the LAG.

Using LEADER Methodology in other areas of the RDP

The LDS has sought to identify rural service and infrastructure needs that can be overcome through a community led local development approach and utilizing in full the other LEADER and RDP measures. These have been identified across the socio economic profile, the consultations, the SWOT, the objective statements and the actions.

Traditionally, across the LDS area, one of the characteristics of the LEADER programme has been its ability to support innovation. Often innovation emerges in the way challenges are addressed by local communities supported by the LEADER methodology. It is envisaged for the LDS, that the flexibility presented by the LEADER methodology will enable innovation in implementing some elements of smaller, locally focused agriculture schemes such as water quality/biodiversity/EIP groups, outcome based conservation projects and artisan food co-operation measures.

1. Targeted Output Based Agri-Environment Projects

To utilise the LEADER methodology to pioneer agri-environment programmes designed to conserve and support local communities, the environment and local heritage by testing community led local development models that offer potential new solutions to high nature value farmland management, landscape and cultural heritage management and water quality improvements.

2. Knowledge Transfer Groups and EIPs

To utilise the LEADER methodology to increase awareness, knowledge and uptake of the use of knowledge transfer groups to implement community led best practice improvements to water quality and biodiversity by developing the existing farm and community knowledge base.

3. Relevant Rural Development Priority

To utilise the LEADER methodology to increase awareness, knowledge and uptake of the opportunities to promote food chain organisation of distinctive local products and demonstrate the geographic distinctiveness through the EU quality regimes through developing group dynamic, agreeing specification and control protocols and marketing.

Section 4: LDS Action Plan

4.1 The LDS Vision

The vision of the Limerick Local Community Development Committee is for the LDS area to be a place that supports vibrant resilient and diverse communities to have a high quality of life while also capitalising on synergies that can be developed with Limerick City. This will be achieved by adopting a positive and sustainable approach to local development that creates and enables economic opportunities, that supports and develops strong socially inclusive communities, that protects and enhances the environment and that promotes and celebrates its history and heritage.

4.1.2 The Role of the LAG

The role of the LAG, as set out in the programme, is to develop the Local Development Strategy on behalf of residents and communities in the Limerick LDS area. The Limerick LCDC as LAG, and the Implementing Partners, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources will undertake the key roles of the LAG, namely, animation and capacity building; managing calls for proposals; decision-making on projects; financial management and monitoring of projects and the overall LDS.

The implementation approach will be on intensive animation and capacity building to enable communities to identify, develop and implement their solutions to their local challenges. The programme calls across each of the themes and sub themes will be designed and implemented, utilising the CLLD approach, to bring forward innovative approaches to the key challenges facing the communities, and businesses within the Limerick LDS area. Given the focus of the LDS on the CLLD approach, it is not possible to predetermine the specific geographic locations and primary target groups beyond what has been set out in the strategy, without compromising the CLLD approach.

4.2 Priority Objective Statements

Rural Tourism – Local Objective 1: To support and build community and business capacity to invest in and optimise outcomes from recreation, environment, food, heritage and cultural development to generate jobs for residents, revenues for businesses and income through increased visitor numbers to the LDS area across 2015-2020.

Enterprise Development – Local Objective 2: To support community and individual entrepreneurial capacity to strengthen innovation, production, distribution knowledge, infrastructure and networks to sustain and grow employment in the LDS area across 2015-2020.

Rural Towns – Local Objective 3: To animate and develop the distinctive human, social, environment, built character and commercial activity of rural towns and villages across the LDS area between 2015 and 2020, as centres of the wider economic and social hinterlands, to create attractive centres for living, leisure, services, business and employment.

Broadband – Local Objective 4: To build community, business and individual knowledge and capacity through improved access to and understanding of the opportunities and innovations presented by faster broadband and increase uptake and usage to optimise the social, economic and employment benefits from broadband investment in to the LDS area across 2015-2020.

Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities – Local Objective 5: To build the capacity of individuals and communities living in the LDS area, to sustain and improve their quality of life, through supporting them to provide increased and improved services (social, recreational, retail and financial) and educational, cultural and artistic activities across 2015-2020.

Rural Youth – Local Objective 6: To strengthen the capacity of young people, youth and community organisations across the LDS area between 2015-2020, through innovative programming, engagement, participation and partnership across local community, social, environment and economic development activities.

Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources – Local Objective 7: To build the capacity of local individuals, communities and businesses to innovate and enable effective, efficient, financially viable and socially acceptable ways to manage water resources in the LDS area between 2015-2020, including participating in public, private and community collaborative structures.

Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity – Local Objective 8: To improve the knowledge base for, awareness of and community innovation and activity in conservation, restoration, protection and sustainable use and management of biodiversity and ecosystem services across the LDS area between 2015-2020.

Development of Renewable Energy – Local Objective 9: To build community and business capacity to invest in research, development, testing and deployment of renewable energy and conservation technologies to minimise the impact of climate change, reduce emissions, reduce carbon footprint and reduce fuel poverty in the LDS area between 2015-2020, without negatively impacting upon the environment.

Rural Tourism Local Objective

Title of Local Objective: To support and build community and business capacity to invest in and optimise outcomes from recreation, environment, food, heritage and cultural development to generate jobs for residents, revenues for businesses and income to the area through increased visitor numbers to the LDS area across 2015-2020.

LEADER Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Sub-Theme: Rural Tourism

Brief Rationale for the Objective: Niche cultural, heritage, environment, food and recreation tourism is of key importance to the rural economy of Limerick. Further facilitation to improve and increase the supply of tourism experiences and boost demand from visitors has been identified as critical if community and private tourism interests are to achieve the significant potential for increasing employment and creating cultural, recreational and social opportunities for local people. Feedback from tourism interests highlights research and information to support investment proposals, advice and support for start-up, expertise and support for co-operative tourism marketing and promotion, training and networking with industry colleagues and building wider co-operative destination marketing platforms as key areas for support. Strategic actions will be cognisant of 1) the market failures and investment barriers that exist in rural tourism 2) the opportunities to build capacity to optimise key market propositions such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Limerick City and Ireland's Ancient East 3) capitalise on increasing interest from the key visitor markets of France, Germany, the UK and USA, and 4) the extensive body of evidence gathered over the course of past rural tourism activities.

Financial Allocation (€): €971,808.36

No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective: 2

Local Objective 1 - Strategic Action 1

Title of Strategic Action 1: Tourism Product Development

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: Targeted and innovative tourism product development that capitalises sustainably on local natural, cultural and heritage resources and supports the continued growth of rural tourism as a key economic driver in the LDS area. Local promoters will be animated to identify local opportunities and can apply for capital funding and/or access a range of capacity building and training supports. Key priorities within this action are:

Heritage and Culture: Links and trails will be developed between heritage, cultural, food and craft resources and the establishment of marketable products that improve the quality of the visitor experience and add value to the existing tourism product in the area.

Recreation and Amenity Products and Services: Building on the unique opportunities and resources of rural Limerick, the expansion and linking of existing and the development of new recreation tourism related products and services will be supported to address deficits in the area and enhance the tourism offering of Limerick.

Visitor Facilities and Services: Focus will also be placed on ensuring that the necessary tourism ancillary services are in place such as accommodation, information points and other infrastructure

Festivals and Events: In recognition of the intrinsic link between festivals and local cultural identity, their economic benefit to local areas and the potential to attract large visitor numbers and provide them with an authentic experience, festivals and events will be supported to enable their further growth and development.

Primary Target Group(s): Tourism Providers, community and voluntary groups e.g. angling/walking groups, Farmers, Hospitality Sector, local entrepreneurs

Geographic Area: This action will cover the entire LDS area

Organisation who will deliver the Action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Any collaborating Organisations: Limerick City and County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Coillte, National Trails Office, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Bird Watch Ireland, Tourism Ireland, West Limerick Tourism, Ballyhoura Fáilte

Timeframe for Delivery of Action: Q2 2016 – Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:

Number of new tourism business/initiatives supported - 17

Number of existing tourism business/initiatives supported – 17

Local Objective 1 – Strategic Action 2

Title of Strategic Action 2: Marketing

Brief Description of Strategic Action 2: Marketing is essential to ensure that Limerick is correctly positioned and accurately represented to key visitor groups (both domestic and international). This action will improve the tourism profile of the LDS area through the development and implementation of innovative co-ordinated and strategic marketing activities utilising existing and new networks and partnerships. Capacity building and targeted training supports will increase the skills set and ability of the tourism sector to capitalise on market development opportunities with a particular focus on the utilisation of ICT and new technologies. Key priorities within this action will be destination marketing, niche product marketing and co-operation.

Primary Target Group(s): West Limerick Tourism, Ballyhoura Fáilte, Tourism Providers, community and voluntary groups e.g. angling/walking groups, Farmers, Hospitality Sector, local entrepreneurs.

Geographic Area: This action will cover the entire LDS area.

Organisation who will deliver the Action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Any collaborating Organisations: Limerick City and County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Coillte, National Trails Office, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Bird Watch Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Limerick Marketing Company

Timeframe for Delivery of Action: Q2 2016 – Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:

Number of new tourism business/initiatives supported - 7

Number of existing tourism business/initiatives supported – 7

Enterprise Development – Local Objective 2

Title of Local Objective: To support community and individual entrepreneurial capacity to strengthen innovation, production, distribution knowledge, infrastructure and networks to sustain and grow employment in the LDS area across 2015-2020.

LEADER Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Sub-Theme: Enterprise Development

Brief Rationale for the Objective: Small and micro enterprises are a key component of the local economy across the area. With unemployment remaining high at an average of 10% and some areas experiencing much higher rates, the consultations undertaken as part of the preparation for this strategy have prioritised the issue of sustaining existing, and growing local jobs, through private and community enterprise activities. Working in collaboration with the other enterprise support agencies, particularly the Local Enterprise Office, Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland, targeted actions supporting the development of both local individual and community entrepreneurial capacity are viewed as essential to capitalise on the potential for job creation. Actions will optimise the potential of the human and natural resources to strengthen innovation, production, distribution knowledge and infrastructure. Existing clusters of small and micro enterprises in such sectors as food, craft and social enterprises will continue to be supported and new networks for collaboration will be supported across agri tech, engineering, craft manufacturing and other services.

Financial Allocation (€): 1,021,808.36

No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective: 1

Local Objective 2 – Strategic Action 1

Title of Strategic Action 1: Indigenous and Social Enterprise

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: Successful enterprises are a fundamental for successful and sustainable communities by contributing to the economic and social welfare of the population. This action will support the development and expansion of the indigenous and social enterprise sectors optimising environmental sustainability. Building on the existing enterprise base in the LDS area, supports will be provided to innovate to develop products and services, exploit the expertise and resources and provide required economic infrastructure. This will be achieved through capital investment, training and mentoring, research and development, networking and encouragement of the increased utilisation of ICT and new technologies. Priority sectors identified for investment will include food, creative industries, agri-business, engineering, craft manufacturing and social enterprise.

Primary Target Group(s): Indigenous enterprise, micro and small enterprise, community and social enterprise, community enterprise centres, Chambers of Commerce/Business

Associations, enterprise networks, farmers, local entrepreneurs.

Geographic Area: This action will cover the entire LDS area

Organisation who will deliver the Action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Any collaborating Organisations: Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, Limerick City and County Council, ISME, Innovate Limerick, Social Enterprise Taskforce

Timeframe for Delivery of Action: Q2 2016- Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:

Number of new indigenous business/initiatives supported - 26

Number of existing indigenous business/initiatives supported – 26

Rural Towns – Local Objective 3

Title of Local Objective: To animate and develop the distinctive human, social, environment, built character and commercial activity of rural towns and villages across the LDS area between 2015 and 2020, as centres of the wider economic and social hinterlands, to create attractive centres for living, leisure, services, business and employment.

LEADER Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

LEADER Sub-Theme: Rural Towns

Brief Rationale for the Objective: Rural towns and villages are at the heart of local communities across the LDS area. Facilitation and support to local community partnerships to develop long term visions and implement socio economic strategies that optimise available assets, capitalise on each community's comparative advantages and build competitive advantages with surrounding towns and villages is required to strengthen the main streets, grow employment and create viable environments for new services.

Towns and villages across the LDS area have been impacted to a greater extent by the economic downturn than nearby cities. Evidence indicates higher increases in unemployment rates, greater decreases in employment levels and increased levels of business closures. The Rural Towns objective is required to move from a reliance on industrial sectors with falling employment such as agriculture, construction and industry to one where towns and villages are more attractive to residents and visitors as both consumers and investors, based on growing sectors of employment.

Feedback from consultations highlights that each town and village faces similar challenges, but there are varying solutions based on utilisation of local human, environmental and capital resources. For some, short-term job creation is required while others require long-term structural change to attract new residents, enhance skills, as well as create infrastructure to attract new entrepreneurs and services.

Consultations highlighted strategic actions should focus on support to develop strong local partnership structures, optimising available on-street retail, commercial and living spaces, increased entrepreneurial activity, adding value to existing businesses and supply chains, expanding local services and trade activity to reduce spending leakages outside the

community, and development of new social and leisure activities as areas for support.

Financial Allocation: € 660,904.18

No. Of Strategic Actions: 2

Local Objective 3 – Strategic Action 1

Strategic Action 1 Title: Community Socio Economic Action Planning

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: This action will support communities to establish fora and re-energise existing fora to facilitate the overarching co-ordination of local approaches to new challenges and opportunities. Evidence confirms that regeneration and revitalisation is more sustainable and effective when communities come together to develop a plan for their area, take a lead role in making their plans in partnership with agencies, and have an inclusive community structure to oversee implementation of actions and monitoring of their plan. The participative socio-economic action planning will provide a facilitated process where the community/geographic area creates a vision for the community with specific realistic actions to achieve the vision which are based on available resources, from within the community and brokered from other agencies.

The process acknowledges that national and local governments do not have sufficient resources to solve problems in all areas, increases a sense of community through the process of working together and of achieving clear results, optimises available resources through communities knowing and understanding their priorities and harnessing new energy in an area, thereby enabling positive solutions to emerge at a speedier pace, greater scale and better quality than might otherwise occur.

Indicative actions will include: Animation, capacity building, training and technical support to encourage development of collaborative neighbourhood plans, sectoral plans and community socio economic plans.

Primary Target Group: The action will focus on the towns and villages, the residents and businesses that live and operate there and the agencies that deliver local services.

Geographic Area: The action will cover all towns and villages across the LDS area.

Organisation to deliver the action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action

Collaborating Organisations: Local Community and Trader/Business Associations, Limerick City & County Council, ETB, HSE, Sports Partnership, Fáilte Ireland.

Timeframe for Delivery: Q2 2016-Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs Indicators and Targets:

No. of Socio Economic Action Planning Initiatives Supported: 20

Local Objective 3 – Strategic Action 2

Strategic Action 2 Title: Village and Town Regeneration

Brief Description of Strategic Action 2: This action will support communities to implement their socio economic plans. It is envisaged that the action will support practical action within the local community to strengthen the economic base of local towns and villages across the LDS area. Indicative actions will include:

1. Local co-ordination to have everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement their socio economic action plan.
2. Promotion to improve consumer and investor confidence and activity in the area by creating a positive image of the unique local characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors through retail promotional activity, special events and marketing campaigns.
3. Design and build to improve the business and residential use of and physical appearance of town and village centres to capitalise on assets including historic buildings and create welcoming atmospheres through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, pavements, and landscaping to convey a positive visual message about what the town or village has to offer.
4. Local economy focus to strengthen existing economic assets, improve competitiveness and collaboration, attract compatible new businesses and create new economic uses for underutilized spaces to expand and diversify the economic base.
5. Local services focus to strengthen the range and level of service provision within town and village centres to retain local residents and increase use by people living in the hinterlands.

Primary Target Group: The action will focus on the towns and villages, the residents and businesses that live and operate there and the agencies that deliver local services.

Geographic Area: The action will cover all towns and villages across the LDS area

Organisation to deliver the action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Collaborating Organisations: Local Community Associations, Limerick County Council, ETB, HSE, Sports Partnership, Fáilte Ireland

Timeframe for Delivery: Q2 2016-Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs Indicators and Targets:

Number of Towns and Villages Supported: 23

Broadband - Local Objective 4

Title of Local Objective: To build community, business and individual knowledge and capacity through improved access to and understanding of the opportunities and innovations presented by faster broadband and increase uptake and usage to optimise the social, economic and employment benefits from broadband investment in to the LDS area across 2015-2020.

LEADER Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

LEADER Sub-Theme: Broadband

Brief Rationale for the Objective: High-speed broadband is a necessity for modern living and working to enable people live, work and do business, yet this transformative infrastructure, with the capacity to change what people do and the way they do it, is not available in most of rural Limerick. As a result the area is missing out on innovation and growth. Supporting community, business and individuals to drive the broadband agenda locally will generate growth by increasing skills and access to education, social and economic opportunities and reducing the limitations of peripheral rural locations.

The evidence from the CSO data on computer ownership and broadband access within the LDS area, combined with the telecommunications infrastructure maps, highlight large deficits in quality and affordability and access to broadband.

Consultations have highlighted that residents and businesses are frustrated by poor service levels, ranging from a lack of service availability to intermittent and inconsistent basic broadband and insufficient speeds. High speed broadband is one of the deficits inhibiting growth of businesses operating in the region, and discourages others from locating while also inhibiting residents from accessing education, social and entertainment opportunities.

The strategic actions will be cognisant of the National Broadband Plan, but will aim to ensure that communities across the LDS area have capacity to actively innovate and lead locally how and when the infrastructure gaps are filled and to increase the capacity to optimise high speed broadband and reduce the carbon footprint. The actions will ensure wider economic benefits of better positioning in the global knowledge economy, job creation and enterprise development area all supported by quality, future proofed broadband.

Financial Allocation: € 186,968.06

No. Of Strategic Actions: 1

Local Objective 4 – Strategic Action 1

Strategic Action 1 Title: Broadband Access and IT Skills Capacity

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: This action will focus on engaging with and up skilling individuals, communities and business to enable opportunities be realised from increase access to high speed broadband. Capacity building, training and technical assistance will focus on piloting co-operative based approaches to access, skill development such as digital literacy; business processes; communications; e-commerce and social media to create a heightened environment for IT enabled economic and social activity. Demonstration projects will be supported to highlight the available opportunities across various sectors and spaces.

Indicative actions will include:

1. Establish formal partnerships of agencies with interest in increasing access to quality broadband.
2. Develop local collaborative networks to guide use of ICT across community and business for sustainable growth.
3. Support demonstration projects to showcase the opportunities.
4. Support rural towns, businesses and services to trade online.
5. Support communities to develop collaborative online platforms for the inclusion of local content.

6. Support infrastructure to local communities to access high speed broadband.

Primary Target Group: The action will focus on the residents and businesses that live and operate in the LDS area.

Geographic Area: The action will cover all towns and villages across the LDS area.

Organisation to deliver the action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Collaborating Organisations: Local Community and Business Associations, Broadband Providers, Limerick City & County Council.

Timeframe for Delivery: Q2 2016-Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs Indicators and Targets:

Number of Broadband Projects Supported – 16

Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities - Local Objective 5

Title of Local Objective: To build the capacity of individuals and communities living in the LDS area, to sustain and improve their quality of life, through supporting them to provide increased and improved services (social, recreational, retail and financial) and educational, cultural and artistic activities across 2015-2020.

LEADER Theme: Social Inclusion

LEADER Sub-Theme: Basic Services for Hard to Reach Communities

Brief Rationale for the Objective: The quality of life for individuals and communities across the LDS area can differ substantially depending on need and circumstances. Low population density, high levels of out-migration, distance from urban centres and commuting to work, school or college (accessibility), higher cost of living, decline in agriculture and traditional industries results in fewer employment options and comparatively lower service provision when compared to urban and suburban areas. In some instances the investment made under the last programme in providing community facilities, where vital rural services are provided and consumed, can mean that individual communities require support in managing and maintaining existing facilities, improving the range of services provided to the local community as well as recruiting and retaining volunteers. In other situations, communities will have been assisted in preparing plans for developing facilities or providing new services but are now at the stage of requiring assistance to bring these plans to fruition. In some situations, there will be traditionally weak communities or individuals experiencing social exclusion where intensive capacity building and governance initiatives will be required. Drawing on the area profile, public consultation and SWOT analysis findings, specific actions are to be targeted to address the needs identified across the LDS area.

Financial Allocation: € 2,043,616.71

No. Of Strategic Actions: 2

Local Objective 5 – Strategic Action 1

Strategic Action 1 Title: Community Animation, Capacity Building and Training

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: Animation, capacity building and training will be an ongoing strategic component of the LDS to increase participation by all sectors and organisations and provide for tailored supports for marginalised rural communities to enhance participation, local engagement and improve outcomes from structures, services and infrastructure via capacity building, training, mentoring and technical support. The bottom-up approach will be adopted to encourage participation and engagement in local issues and organisations. This may include facilitation of local community meetings, awareness raising activities, intensive group supports, tailored project development supports, project development officer support and preparation of project applications. These supports will mobilise communities to innovate and engage in the delivery of innovative services, planning for the creation and optimisation of infrastructure, informed local engagement, participative planning, and the delivery of sustainable outcomes.

Primary Target Group: The action will focus on community organisations (incl. youth, community councils, economic partnerships, development associations, tidy towns, heritage, social/cultural & artistic), sport and leisure organisations; people living in remote and less accessible areas, unemployed and underemployed people, small holder farm families, women and older people.

Geographic Area: The action will cover all communities across the LDS area.

Organisation to deliver the action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Collaborating Organisations: Local Community Associations, Limerick City & County Council, ETB, HSE, Sports Partnership, DSP, Limerick Volunteer Centre

Timeframe for Delivery: Q2 2016-Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs Indicators and Targets:

Number of new services supported – 31

Number of existing services supported – 31

Local Objective 5 - Strategic Action 2

Strategic Action 2 Title: Community Services and Infrastructure.

Brief Description of Strategic Action 2: The LDS area is a diverse and vibrant region, with considerable economic, social and environmental assets, however, there remain hard to reach communities which do not have access to a range of basic services. Following on-going consultation, one of the most powerful features of the LDS area is the strength and vibrancy of the community and voluntary sector with a strong social enterprise approach to local service provision. LEADER will continue to support the community and voluntary sector to improve social inclusion through investment in basic community services and infrastructure. These investments will serve to improve access to services lost or create new services and infrastructure where previously gaps existed. Such investment will increase representation and participation among hard to reach rural communities. Following the profiling, significant analysis and local consultation a suite of supports for investment in local

services and infrastructure has been identified. Indicative actions include:

1. Support to upgrade existing community facilities across heritage, culture, social, environmental and economic sectors.
2. Support for new community infrastructure developments across heritage, culture, social, environmental and economic sectors where gaps exist.
3. Support to groups to innovate and create new sustainable local services within and/or between communities.

Primary Target Group: The action will focus on community organisations (inc. youth, councils, economic partnerships, associations, tidy towns, heritage, social/cultural & artistic), sport and leisure organisations; people living in remote and less accessible areas, unemployed and underemployed people, small holder farm families, women and older people.

Geographic Area: The action will cover all communities across the LDS area.

Organisation to deliver the action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Collaborating Organisations: Local Community Associations, Limerick County Council, ETB, HSE, Sports Partnership, DSP.

Timeframe for Delivery: Q2 2016-Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs Indicators and Targets:

Number of new services supported – 36

Number of existing services supported - 36

Rural Youth - Local Objective 6

Title of Local Objective: To strengthen the capacity of young people, youth and community organisations across the LDS area between 2015- 2020, through innovative programming, engagement, participation and partnership across local community, social, environment and economic development activities.

LEADER Theme: Social Inclusion

Sub-Theme: Rural Youth

Brief Rationale for the Objective: From the area profile, Limerick County has 38,669 individuals in the 15-34 age cohort. At almost 29% of the overall population this makes up a significant proportion of the population. On analysing current service provision within the LDS area there are a range of supports and services available targeting those up to the age of 18. As a consequence, for the purposes of this Local Development Strategy priority will be given to those aged 18–35. In addition, retaining young people in rural areas was a key concern from the public consultation as well as harnessing the skills and abilities of young people for the benefit of their communities. From previous experience of delivering Rural Development and Social Inclusion programmes and arising from the consultations there are a number of areas of need registering among rural youth and rural communities including access to local training and

employment opportunities and provision of social and recreational activities as well as encouraging youth participation in the community.

Financial Allocation: €1,000,530.74

No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective: 1

Local Objective 6 - Strategic Action 1

Title of Strategic Action 1: Youth Infrastructure – Facilities & Services

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: This action will facilitate and support the delivery of community based responses to meet the needs of young people in partnership with community organisations, youth organisations and other relevant agencies. The focus will be on supporting young people to develop their social, cultural, educational and life skills to enable them to continue living, participating and contributing to their local communities. Key priorities for this action include: 1) Innovative approaches to building capacity of youth through personal development/training 2) Capacity building support for organisations/services engaging with youth. 3) Encouragement to engage in entrepreneurship and 4) Provision of infrastructure and facilities in rural areas that cater for rural youth.

Primary Target Group(s): Young people aged 18-35, community & voluntary organisations, youth groups.

Geographic Area: This action will cover the entire LDS area

Organisation who will deliver the Action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Any collaborating Organisations: Limerick City & County Council, Foróige, Brothers of Charity, Limerick Sports Partnership, Local Industry, Macra Na Feirme.

Timeframe for Delivery of Action: Q2 2016- Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:

No. of Youth Projects Supported - 50

Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources - Local Objective 7

Title of Local Objective: To build the capacity of local individual, communities and businesses to innovate and enable effective, efficient, financially viable and socially acceptable ways to manage water resources in the LDS area between 2015-2020, including participating in public, private and community collaborative structures.

LEADER Theme: Rural Environment

Sub-Theme: Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources

Brief Rationale for the Objective: Well managed water is essential for sustaining healthy and vibrant rural communities. Agriculture, rural tourism, nature and human health depend on the integrity of our rivers, lakes, groundwater and coastal waters.

It is therefore an imperative that we address water protection, use and management as core to the social, economic, cultural and sustainable development of rural Limerick. Within the context of Climate Change and the need to think long-term, sustainable solutions are now recognised as necessary for the provision and protection of clean water. This requires that we look at how to prevent and reduce, where necessary, the negative environmental and unsustainable impacts of forestry, agriculture, domestic waste and drainage on water quality. Creative and innovative thinking should be supported where it restores, preserves and enhances ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry. So too, nature can itself help. Ecological Services (benefits arising from the ecological functions of healthy ecosystems) imply that nature can play a role in providing safe drinking water. Whether it is through natural filtration or source water protection the environment can work in collaboration with technology to provide water in a sustainable manner.

Public engagement and participation are key to successful outcomes. Under the EU Water Services Directive public involvement in water management is a legal requirement. Public awareness campaigns, workshops and initiatives profiling and promoting the use and conservation of water increase public support in achieving sustainability and efficiency in water supply systems. This can be further reinforced through community based and run projects demonstrating said principles.

Financial Allocation (€): 273,936.12

No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective: 1

Local Objective 7 - Strategic Action 1

Title of Strategic Action 1: Protection and Sustainable Use of Water

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: This action will promote an awareness of, and undertake actions to address, water conservation and water quality through technical assistance, capacity building initiatives and small capital investment. There is widening recognition of the importance of community-level water conservation programmes in reducing demand on the nation's water resources and wastewater infrastructure. An essential component of this is the need to educate the public about water conservation devices and practices. Working with local communities, animation support will be provided to encourage individuals, businesses and local organisations to work together in assessing water usage as well as to identify and implement innovative water conservation initiatives. Priority areas will include water conservation initiatives, catchment management and water based recreation.

Primary Target Group(s): Community and Voluntary Organisations, the general public, Tidy Towns Groups, Lough Gur, Loobagh Catchment

Geographic Area: This action will cover the entire LDS area.

Organisation who will deliver the Action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Any collaborating Organisations: Limerick City and County Council, NPWS, Inland Fisheries, OPW, 3rd Level Institutions, Teagasc, Waterways Ireland, Group Water Schemes, Irish Water.

Timeframe for Delivery of Action: Q2 2016 – Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:

Number of new water initiatives supported - 11

Number of existing water initiatives supported – 2

Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity - Local Objective 8

Title of Local Objective: To improve the knowledge base for, awareness of and community innovation and activity in conservation, restoration, protection and sustainable use and management of biodiversity and ecosystem services across the LDS area between 2015 and 2020.

LEADER Theme: Rural Environment

Sub Theme: Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity

Brief Rationale for the Objective: Biodiversity, which is the variety of all life forms on Earth, must be protected in order to maintain and enhance the stability of our life support systems such as wetlands, tree cover and peatlands. Our existence, our quality of life and our economy depend on it. They protect communities from flooding and improve air and water quality while conserving Ireland's natural habitats. Biodiversity can serve as a cost effective option for government to store carbon and offset greenhouse gas emissions. Biodiversity is worth €2.6 billion to the Irish economy in Ecosystem Services while agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors depend on biodiversity for the employment of 117,000 people. Significantly, protection and improvement of local biodiversity in rural Limerick and the public service it provides will aid our ability to deal with Climate Change. Key actions will be guided by: The U.N.'s new set of Global Sustainable Development Goals, titled "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under Goal 15.9 "By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts. " and 15.9a "Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems."

Financial Allocation: €423,936.12

No. of Strategic Actions for the Objective: 1

Local Objective 8 - Strategic Action 1

Title of Strategic Action 1: Conserve and Enhance Biodiversity

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: This action will support infrastructural and educational projects that raise awareness of the value and importance of conserving local biodiversity through capacity building, training, technical assistance and appropriate capital investment. Key to this will be the promotion of awareness and understanding of the natural environment among the general public as well as working with communities to ensure that protection of their local biodiversity is integrated into their local activities. Priority areas will include baseline studies, biodiversity action plans, education & awareness projects and initiatives and the development of green corridors.

Primary Target Group(s): Tidy Towns Groups, Community and Voluntary Organisations, conservation groups, land owners, outdoor classrooms

Geographic Area: This action will cover the entire LDS area

Organisation who will deliver the Action: The LAG member organisations, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development, will be responsible for implementing this action.

Any collaborating Organisations: Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Wildlife Trust, Teagasc, Birdwatch Ireland, Bat Conservation Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, An Taisce, Coillte, The Heritage Council, The National Bio Diversity Data Centre.

Timeframe for Delivery of Action: Q2 2016 – Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs/Indicators & Targets:

Number of new Biodiversity initiatives supported - 17

Number of existing Biodiversity initiatives supported – 3

Development of Renewable Energy - Local Objective 9

Title of Local Objective: To build community and business capacity to invest in research, development, testing and deployment of renewable energy and conservation technologies to minimise the impact of climate change, reduce emissions, reduce carbon footprint and reduce fuel poverty in the LDS area between 2015-2020, without negatively impacting upon the environment.

LEADER Theme: Rural Environment

Sub-Theme: Development of Renewable Energy

Brief Rationale for the Objective: There is an opportunity to realise significant commercial sustainable activity in one of the key areas for which the LDS area is suited, the generation of greater renewable energy for power, heating and transport fuel, while simultaneously decreasing use through energy reduction measures.

Research highlights that it is the transport sector which showed the greatest energy consumption increase and CO₂ emissions since 1990 for Limerick, accounting for 40% of total final (energy) consumption and 28% of CO₂ emissions, while energy consumption in buildings accounts for 37% of all energy consumption in Limerick. Currently the main source of alternative energy creation is wind.

Consultations highlighted that the LDS area is well suited for production of renewable energy with strong wind capacity, wave and tidal generation opportunities. There are also opportunities to develop a strong bioenergy presence particularly through anaerobic digestion and liquid biofuels.

The actions identified through the consultations and research focus on reducing carbon emissions in line with national targets through innovative energy reduction initiatives and renewable energy generation, creating sustainable employment through locally-based and where possible, locally owned, energy generation activities and supporting community based energy initiatives (eg: supply chain management, Energy Supply Companies, Energy Conservation Co-ops) that lead to more resilient local economies.

Financial Allocation: € 373,936.12

Local Objective 9 - Strategic Action 1

Strategic Action 1 Title: Renewable Energy Use

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: This action will provide animation, advice, guidance and financial support to communities and businesses investing in co-operative energy reduction measures, waste reduction measures, greater building efficiencies, tackling fuel poverty and increasing uptake of local energy supply solutions. Indicative actions will include:

1. Research, development and implementation of low energy / carbon community initiatives.
2. Support for waste reuse initiatives.
3. Support for low energy / carbon clubs.
4. Low energy / carbon benchmarking / tools / training for sectors e.g. agriculture/hospitality
5. Establishment of renewable energy consumer Co-ops.

Primary Target Group: Residents and businesses living and operating in rural Limerick.

Geographic Area: The action will cover all communities across the LDS area.

Organisation to deliver the action: The LAG member organisations, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources will be responsible for delivering this action.

Collaborating Organisations: Local Community Associations, Limerick County Council, Limerick Clare Energy Agency, SEAI, Teagasc. 3rd Level Institutions.

Timeframe for Delivery: Q2 2016-Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs Indicators and Targets:

Number of Renewable Energy Use Initiatives funded – 8

Local Objective 9 - Strategic Action 2

Strategic Action 2 Title: Renewable Energy Supply

Brief Description of Strategic Action 1: The action will focus on supporting communities and businesses to invest in the research and creation of more local sources of energy, which have a lower environmental impact. Indicative actions will include:

1. Micro generation using waste, wood, water and solar.
2. Community based approaches to anaerobic digestion.

Primary Target Group: Residents and businesses living and operating in rural Limerick.

Geographic Area: The action will cover all towns and villages across the LDS area.

Organisation to deliver the action: The LAG member organisations, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources will be responsible for implementing this action.

Collaborating Organisations: Local Community Associations, Limerick City & County

Council, Limerick Clare Energy Agency, SEAI. Teagasc. 3rd Level Institutions.

Timeframe for Delivery: Q2 2016-Q4 2020

Anticipated Outputs Indicators and Targets:

Number of renewable energy supply initiatives funded – 8

Section 5: Strategic Integration

5.1 Cross-Cutting Objectives

The preparation of this Local Development Strategy (LDS) has taken into account the three cross cutting objectives of the LEADER programme 2014-2020. This section sets out how the Cross Cutting Objectives were addressed in the preparation of the LDS and how they will be promoted in its implementation.

Innovation

Innovation is identified as one of the specificities of LEADER and, as such, is a defining characteristic of the LDS. The two Implementing Partners, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources, have consistently strived towards and delivered a high level of innovation in previous LEADER and other Local Development Programmes. Drawing on this experience, the Limerick Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), working in conjunction with the Implementation Partners, is well-placed to ensure that innovation continues into this new Programme (2014-2020). In the development of a cross-sectoral integrated strategy, as is required in this Rural Development Programme, innovation takes place at many different levels. Innovation features most prominently in the following processes of the programme preparation:

- **Planning of Programme Strategy**

The bottom-up development approach, engaging a wide range of actors, local communities and sectoral interests at local level and the methods adopted (consultation meetings, participatory planning, workshops etc.) to input into the development of this strategy is an important innovation in the preparation of the Local Development Strategy.

- **Engaging in a Partnership Model to develop new means of ensuring everyone in the local area has access to the Programme**

A key innovative aspect of this LEADER Programme is the partnership structure of the LCDC, as the LAG, working with the Boards of Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources in its planning and implementation. While the LCDC is a relatively new structure, the organisations involved have demonstrated an excellent record in developing strong networks and co-operation projects across partners both internally at Board level (in all structures) and externally with key local individuals, groups, companies and statutory agencies. This approach combined with an openness to developing new ways of initiating action provides a positive environment for experimentation and encourages innovation (bringing in new ideas, new perspectives and new ways of doing things).

- **Stimulating innovative ideas / responses to current issues that exist in the local area**

Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources, the Implementing Partners, traditionally have adopted a proactive approach to encouraging local project promoters across sectors to adopt innovative approaches to implementing projects. This is a particularly important aspect of the Animation and Capacity Building supports where individuals, communities and businesses are encouraged to come together to co-operate and participate in sectoral groups or networks and targeted training initiatives.

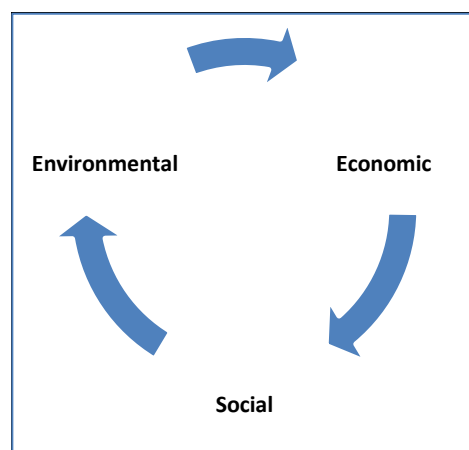
- **Developing projects from those innovative responses / ideas**

Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources provide project promoters with assistance to develop projects from initial idea stage. Having a base in the local area and providing supports that are easily accessible are key aspects of all the programmes administered at local level. Supports and financial assistance available from the LEADER Programme encourage promoters to progress from ideas to actual projects. From the first point of contact with the programme implementers, promoters will be provided with assistance to explore the various aspects of their project including financial to technical issues in project design and implementation.

- Learning from participation in transnational activities to ensure best practices across the various types of interventions is adopted and modified to the LDS area.

Environment

The Environment and the sustainability agenda are a key component of the LEADER programme, along with supporting the social and economic development of local communities. The internationally accepted definition of sustainability is: *“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*



The key challenge for Limerick LCDC in partnership with Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources in implementing the LEADER Programme is striking a balance between these three aspects of Sustainable Development. The programme structure prioritises a specific Theme addressed to the Rural Environment. However, throughout the planning process, the environment has been given careful consideration across the other two themes. The focus will be integrating environmental considerations to investments across the social inclusion and economic theme.

There is representation of the Environmental pillar / environment interests on the partnership structure of the LCDC and on the Boards of the Implementing Partners. This will ensure that the cross cutting theme of Environment and its processes will be taken into consideration in planning, delivery, monitoring and review and at all levels.

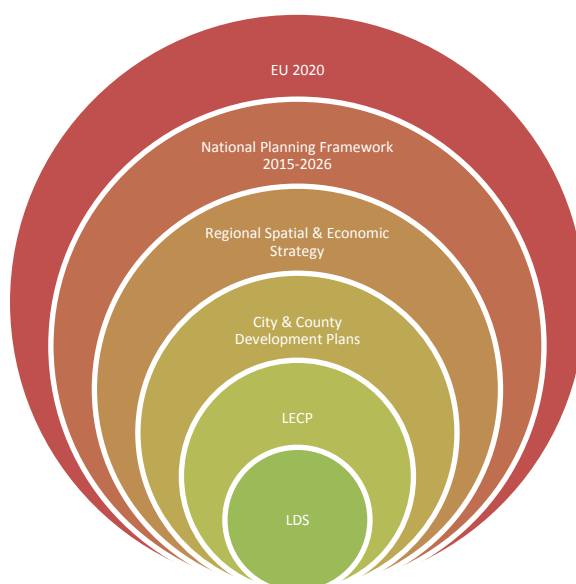
Climate Change

Climate Change is an increasingly important consideration impacting on development at local level. As far back as 2006, the Local Authorities working in conjunction with Local Development Companies in Limerick and Clare identified Climate Change as a priority and this led to the

establishment of the Limerick Clare Energy Agency. Working in collaboration with the Limerick Clare Energy Agency, a “Limerick Clare Energy and Emissions Balance” study was prepared. This was one of the first of its kind in Ireland; the study findings were updated in 2010 through funding from the LEADER Programme 2007-2013. This has provided a comprehensive overview of the climate change opportunities and challenges facing Limerick and these have been taken into consideration in developing the Action Plan across the three Programme Themes. The strong commitment to advancing a low carbon approach, as evidenced by actions to date, is expected to continue through to the implementation of the LEADER programme 2014-2020.

5.2 Policy Context

Limerick Local Development Strategy is positioned in the wider context of relevant EU, national, regional and local level policy frameworks as illustrated below:



The Local Development Strategy is situated in a complex policy context. This is particularly the case when taking into account the diversity of the LEADER Programme in terms of the issues addressed by the Themes and Sub themes. Over recent years, there has been considerable policy and institutional changes taking place. This is an on-going process, for instance, with a number of key National Regional and Local Policies currently under review or in preparation at present. It is critically important that the wider policy context is taken into account in developing the Local Development Strategy. This is in order to ensure consistency of the LDS with overarching policies at local, regional, national and EU level, and successful implementation over the period 2016-2020. Priorities derived from analysis of the policy frameworks within which the Local Development Strategy will be implemented include the following:

1. Sustainable development: this refers to balanced and equitable development between environment, economy and society. It prioritises quality of life as a key objective, strengthens the principles of partnership and participation, promotes holistic approaches and integrated strategies and highlights the need to mitigate environmental degradation and ecological imbalance.

2. Spatial significance of rural areas: rural areas constitute 90% of the enlarged EU territory and in Ireland about 40% of the population continues to live in rural areas. As such, the economic and social development of rural areas is important to balanced territorial development. Key issues for rural areas are to sustain populations, develop new opportunities for economic revitalisation and development, taking into account planning issues (settlement hierarchies, services and infrastructure) and environmental protection and enhancement.
3. Achieving growth that is Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable as set out in the Europe 2020 strategy. This translates directly into Ireland's National Reform Programme, and Ireland's Partnership Agreement (2014-2020).
4. Strengthening the rural economy: the need for an integrated approach to rural economic development at governance and co-ordination level, facilitating economic and community participation through targeting supports and adopting sectoral specific developments.
5. Tackling infrastructure deficits: social and physical infrastructure which impacts on competitiveness, regional development and quality of life. Supporting infrastructure is important to enhance accessibility to services and to economic, social and cultural opportunities for rural populations. Deficits to be addressed relate to physical and electronic (broadband) access infrastructures in rural areas.
6. Enterprise development including private and social enterprise: through the development of entrepreneurial and management skills, innovation in products, business, organisation and marketing; development of agri-food industry, tourism related enterprises, improved capacity and expansion of existing enterprises, and generally increasing the contribution of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to the rural economy.

Spatial Level	Key Emerging Themes and Priorities	
EU		<p>“Europe 2020 is the European Union’s ten-year jobs and growth strategy, launched in 2010. Key policy objectives are stated as delivering growth that is :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “SMART”, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation, • “INCLUSIVE”, by tackling job creation and poverty reduction • “SUSTAINABLE”, through a move towards a low carbon economy <p>Five headline targets have been agreed for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020. These cover employment; research and development; climate/energy; education; social inclusion and poverty reduction”²</p>
National	<p>National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020</p>	<p>The NSS identifies a number of avenues through which rural areas can drive the attainment of more balanced regional development. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversify rural employment & stabilise population - Protecting landscape, water resources and habitats - Develop and maintain cultural identities - Enhancing environmental protection and the preservation and conservation of sensitive sites <p>The NSS also highlights that in order for rural areas to maintain their populations a range of strategic measures are needed such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Settlement policies</i> for areas with declining populations as well as policies to deal with areas in which there are overspill issues associated with proximity to urban centres. - <i>Enhanced accessibility</i> must be linked with integrated settlement policy to revitalise rural communities.
	<p>Action Plan for Jobs</p>	<p>The Action Plan for Jobs was introduced in 2012, taking a whole of Government approach to support job creation.</p> <p>The Action Plan for Job's Five Strategic Ambitions are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To support 100,000 additional jobs by 2016 2. To get Ireland back to a top-five ranking in international competitiveness 3. To stimulate the domestic economy and generate employment in locally traded sector 4. To build an indigenous engine of growth that drives up the export market share of Irish companies 5. To build world-class clusters in key sectors of opportunity. <p>The Government’s target under the Action Plan for Jobs is to achieve full employment of 2.1m people in</p>

² Europa 2020

		2018.
	CEDRA Report	The report arising from the work of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas sets out a blueprint for the economic development of Rural Areas with 34 specific recommendations for action across a wide range of spheres. Strengthening the rural economy: the need for an integrated approach to Rural Economic Development both at Governance and Co-ordination level, Facilitating Economic and Community Participation through targeting supports and adopting sectoral specific developments.
	Food Harvest 2020	<p>Food Harvest 2020 is the major national strategy for the development of the agriculture, agri-food, fisheries and forestry sector to 2020. Its central theme is the delivery of smart, green growth within the sector. Smart growth in the agriculture / agri-food / fisheries and forestry sector is required to dovetail with policies that aim to develop the wider smart economy, and involve “developing new working relationships in the food chain, piloting new product streams, targeting its resources at new markets, enhancing levels of productivity and competitiveness, and developing leadership positions across a range of sectors.”</p> <p>Green growth reflects Ireland’s association with an unspoilt agricultural landscape and affirms the objective to minimise sectoral impacts on the environment and ensure growth is environmentally sustainable. Targets are established for specific action areas including: increasing the value-added in the agri-food, fisheries and wood products sector by €3 billion (a 40% increase compared to 2008); and achieving an export target of €12 billion for the sector (a 42% increase compared to the 2007-2009 average).</p> <p>LEADER objectives contribute to this by supporting competitiveness, diversification, innovation, market development, and other processes that also need public support and promotion in order for “green” growth to take place.</p>
	Our Sustainable Future a Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland	<p>This National Policy adopted in 2012 sets out a comprehensive range of priorities for sustainable development in Ireland. The green economy and sustainable development agendas are identified as key elements of Ireland’s economic recovery strategy and this Framework sets out the range of environmental, economic and social policy measures required to move these agendas forward from vision to reality. The priorities for action cut across many key challenges and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective framework for transition to an innovative, low carbon and resource efficient society. • Identifying and adopting policies that can help achieve

		<p>a shift towards a green economy, while maintaining fiscal stability and ensuring and ensuring sustainable public finances into the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and restoring our biodiversity and ecosystems so that benefits essential for all sectors of society will be delivered. • Securing health and social well being to enable full participation in society and economic development. • Effective governance arrangements to ensure delivery of sustainable development • A partnership approach to implementation of the strategy. • Developing a set of indicators to measure and report on progress <p>It is worth noting that the UN are currently in the process of finalising a set of Sustainable Development Goals which Ireland has signed up to in 2015. It is likely this will impact on future policy development and priorities in this area over the term of the LEADER Programme.</p>
	People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025	<p>The policy sets a framework for how Ireland by 2025 will have a vibrant, attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country, is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas, and is a sector that people wish to work in.</p> <p>Overall targets are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2025, revenue from overseas visitors, excluding carrier receipts, will increase to €5 billion in real • terms² (i.e. excluding the effects of inflation). • Employment in the tourism sector will be 250,000 by 2025, compared with around 200,000 at present. <p>There will be 10 million visits to Ireland annually by 2025.</p>
County	Limerick City Development Plan & Limerick County Development Plan (2015)	<p>The <i>Limerick City and Limerick County Council Development Plans</i> are part of a systematic hierarchy of land use and spatial plans, including the <i>National Spatial Strategy</i> and <i>Regional Planning Guidelines</i>. They are informed by the plans and strategies of Government and other public agencies in general. They have a very important influence on locational aspects of economic activity, the residential settlement pattern and associated social, community and economic infrastructure; these include key physical access requirements associated with quality of life in local communities. Environmental sustainability - protection and enhancement of the natural and build environment - is an underlying priority.</p>
	Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan	<p>Limerick 2030, is a strategy adopted by Limerick City and County Council to promote the economic development of Limerick, working in partnership with</p>

		<p>key stakeholders including the Higher Education Institutions and the private sector. It aims to position Limerick to take advantage of new economic opportunities, build a strong local economy with significant job creation and marketing Limerick effectively for investment, business location, tourism, retail and as a place to live. It includes a spatial plan for the city centre, focusing on renewal of the urban fabric and including transformative civic and economic projects. There is potential to extend strategic interventions, including sector-specific projects identified for development under Limerick 2030 into the county towns.</p>
	<p>Local Economic and Community Plan</p>	<p>The purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and local and community development of the local authority area, by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The overarching aim of the LECP is “to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”. The LECP involves two elements Economic and Community. The LECP is being prepared in parallel to the preparation of the LDS and is due for completion at the end of 2015. However a clear structure to the LECP is evolving based three interconnected sectoral pillars: Social, Economic and Physical/Environment. Currently nine high level goals have been set out as follows:</p> <p>HLG1 To promote equally vibrant communities with high quality of life, access to quality services in urban and rural Limerick, engaged in civic life and local decision-making.</p> <p>HLG2 To increase the population and incomes by creating conditions for, and promoting, new sources of jobs and enterprises in the local economy, retaining the young population and attracting in new talent and investment.</p> <p>HLG3 To increase the employment rate and reduce unemployment, particularly in the city where the employment rate is low and unemployment highest, and in areas of county with high unemployment, under-employment and economic inactivity.</p> <p>HLG4 To reduce the number of people living in deprivation, promote social and economic inclusion and a reduction of social inequalities particularly addressed to local communities and groups in Limerick with a profile of social disadvantage and / or at risk of exclusion</p> <p>HLG5 To create a strong urban core, thriving towns, attractive and socially sustainable villages and countryside, protecting and enhancing the environment for the current and future generations</p> <p>HLG6 To promote urban rural linkages across city and</p>

		<p>county, increasing social cohesion and extending economic opportunities to benefit the whole population</p> <p>HLG 7 To build networks of cooperation including local partnerships and regional, national and European and other international networks, to develop new economic, social and cultural opportunities and enhance the reputation of Limerick city and county</p> <p>HLG 8 To ensure the protection of the receiving environment in implementing the LECP.</p> <p>HLG 9 To promote the transition of Limerick City and County towards a low carbon future by 2030.</p>
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5.3 Guiding Principles

The preparation of the Local Development Strategy and the work and operation of the LCDC, as the LAG, are underpinned by a number of guiding principles, which are consistent with the European approach as articulated in Europe 2020 strategy and with key national and local policies/plans, some of which are mentioned above. These guiding principles include

- A developmental “bottom-up” approach;
- Respect for the democratic mandate and a strengthened role for elected members;
- A strong focus on social inclusion including providing opportunities for participation; by marginalised communities and social groups at risk of exclusion;
- Promotion of enterprise, employment, training and education;
- Integration of sustainable development considerations into the strategy and its implementation;
- Working in partnership and collaboration, harnessing existing local and community development infrastructure to make best use of resources as well as optimising available public and private resources and funds;
- Promotion of voluntary activity and active citizenship;
- Working with integrated evidence-based approaches to local service planning and delivery.

Section 6: Networking and Co-operation

6.1 Networking Overview

The two designated Implementing Partners in Limerick, Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources have demonstrated a strong commitment to engaging in networking throughout the previous LEADER programmes and it is planned that this will continue during the Programme period 2014-2020. This activity is an important aspect of the LEADER methodology supporting both the LAG and Project Promoters to engage with counterparts exchanging knowledge and understanding leading to best practise being developed and adopted and collaborative actions identified and animated. Networking takes place at various levels and an outline of this is provided below. The LAG will support all stakeholders to network and transfer learning at local, regional and national level.

6.1.2 Internal networking

The public private community partnership structure of the LCDC, as LAG, and the Boards of Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources as implementing partners, bring together key local actors across the pillars of Community, State Agencies, Social Partners and Local Government ensuring a shared understanding of the issues affecting the County and identifying appropriate initiatives to address these issues. The experience of managing a wide range of European and Government funded programmes including the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Equality for Women, TUS, Rural Social Scheme, Primary Health Care Programme for Travellers, Volunteering Support, Towards Occupation, Jobs Club have given rise to a deep understanding of issues at local level as well as a wide range of formal and informal networks and good levels of cooperation and collaboration.

6.1.3 Local Level

There are a number of ways in which networking takes place at local level and the LCDC, as LAG, intends to maximise the impact of these for the benefit of the local development strategy.

- **Public Participation Network:** The recently established Public Participation Network forms a new part of the Community Infrastructure at County Level taking up the role from the former Community and Voluntary Forum. It provides a structured forum to engage with over four hundred registered Community Groups and organisations in Limerick.
- **Community Area Fora:** Communities typically engage in networking in two ways on a Geographic Basis and Thematic Basis. At a geographic level communities in Limerick have been organised into sub county units to facilitate communication between Community Groups and Organisations. In total there are 8 Area Fora across Limerick County.
- **Community Councils/Resident Associations:** Citizens of many communities engage with the above on a geographic basis
- **Thematic Networks:** Working on a Thematic Basis, various specific interest themes are identified and relevant groups and organisations brought together to share experiences and develop collaborative actions. Examples of such Thematic Networks the Implementing Partners facilitate include: West Limerick Heritage Network, West Limerick Tourism, Ballyhoura Failte, Ballyhoura Heritage and Environment, Enterprise Networks, A Taste of Ballyhoura, (Food Network) Ballyhoura Social Enterprise Network Tidy Towns Networks, Rural Bus, West Limerick Family Support Network, Youth Committees. It is planned that these and other Thematic Networks would continue to be supported and developed over the course of the LEADER programme 2014-2020.

6.1.4 National Level

- **NRN:** At national level, the National Rural Network (NRN) has provided support for networking over the course of the LEADER Programme. It has yet to be determined who will deliver the NRN contract for this Programme period. However, it is expected that structured networking events including Seminars, Thematic workshops, online fora will form part of this contract and the Implementing Partners will engage proactively participating in such events and contributing where appropriate.
- **ILDN :** The network of Local Development Companies, Irish Local Development Network has played an important role in facilitating networking between LAG's at both a Regional and National level while also facilitating International Exchanges in co-operation with the European Network for Rural Development. The ILDN Mid-West Region is made up of Local Development Companies in Limerick, Clare and Tipperary and has provided a network for the exchange of knowledge and information within the Region. Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources are members of ILDN and play an active role in the networks' activities.
- **Department:** The LAG will engage with the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government in the delivery of, and participation in regional and national networking events for LAG members, support staff and LAG partners.
- **Inter-territorial Projects:** Participation in Inter-territorial projects will offer the opportunity to network and exchange best practice between project partners on identified themes.

6.1.5 International Level Programme Administration and thematic workshops separately or in conjunction with above:

- **ENRD:** As with the National Rural Network at national level, there has also been a European Rural Development Network, ENRD, established to facilitate networking in parallel with the Programming period. The LAG will engage with networking activities at this level on a needs basis where opportunities exist to gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and trends at European and international level.
- **Co-operation Project Partners:** Over the past 20 years there have been a wide range of Transnational and Inter-territorial projects undertaken by both Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources building up a range of connections and contacts throughout Europe and beyond giving rise to formal and informal networking opportunities.

6.2 LAG participation and contribution to influencing rural policy development.

At national level Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources are members of ILDN, The Wheel, Irish Rural Link and Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed and regularly contribute to the development of policy papers, presentations, focus group discussions as the opportunity presents. Over the lifetime of the LEADER programme 2014-2020 it is planned to continue this activity.

As referenced above both organisations are also involved in a wide range of networks at local level that give rise to opportunities to contribute to and influence policy across a wide range of sectors and topics.

The LCDC, as LAG will have the opportunity through its various structures to influence policy by working with and through member organisations in the development of policies and plans, including the Local Economic & Community Plan.

6.3 Co-operation

Co-operation projects, as learning and development tools, are viewed as an important aspect of the LEADER methodology and in preparing this Local Development Strategy it is intended that a proposals will be developed for a range of co-operation projects over the lifetime of the Programme. Drawing on the experience of administering previous programmes and the socio economic profile of the County there are a number of potential Co-operation proposals being explored.

6.3.1 Indicative Cooperation Projects

Based on the experience of working on previous cooperation projects, the following indicative Co-operation projects are being proposed:

Indicative Co-operation projects include:

Transnational

- 1) Peter Robinson Settlers Diaspora Project with North Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Canada.
- 2) Historic Graves Social and Public History Collaboration Project with North Cork, England and Scotland.
- 3) Mountain Bike Marketing with Ballyhoura MTB Trail and MTB Trails in Northern Ireland.
- 4) Broadband project with north Cork and Finland.
- 5) Water Catchment Management with north Cork and Northern Ireland.
- 6) Palatine Heritage Project with Limerick, Germany and US/Canada
- 7) Rural Youth Capacity Building Project with Croatia and Limerick
- 8) Strengthening Community Cohesion Project with Limerick and Northern Ireland
- 9) European Greenways Project with Limerick and France

Inter-territorial

- 1) Development and promotion of outdoor recreation in the Ballyhoura mountains area of North Cork and Limerick.
- 2) Development and promotion of the 'Munster Vales' tourism offering across Waterford, north Cork and Limerick.
- 3) Development and promotion of the Ballyhoura Military Heritage Project 1913-1916 across north Cork and Limerick.
- 4) Development and promotion of the Ballyhoura Outdoor Classrooms Project across north Cork and Limerick.
- 5) Development and promotion of the Ballyhoura Tidy Towns Network across north Cork and Limerick.
- 6) Development and promotion of the Ballyhoura Graveyard Survey across north Cork and Limerick.
- 7) Development and promotion of the Ballyhoura Tour Guide Network across north Cork and Limerick.
- 8) Development and promotion of the Ireland Reaching Out Diaspora Project across north Cork and Limerick.
- 9) Development and promotion of the Ballyhoura Memory Trails across north Cork and Limerick
- 10) Development of the Ballyhoura Social Enterprise Network across north Cork and Limerick.
- 11) Development and promotion of Great Southern Trail Greenway across Limerick and Kerry
- 12) Development and promotion of River Feale Biodiversity project across Limerick, North Kerry and North Cork

- 13) Development and promotion of Shannon Estuary tourism and heritage project across Limerick, Kerry and Clare.

6.3.2 How co-operation activity fits into the broader LDS vision

Co-operation projects form an integral part of how it is proposed to implement the Local Development Strategy. Where key initiatives are developed, at Local or County levels that have the potential to contribute to or benefit from participating in a wider Co-operation Project these opportunities will be pursued. Based on previous experience there must be a mutual benefit from participating in Co-operation projects for them to prove successful for those engaging with them and this will be a key assessment criteria for determining whether or not to proceed with becoming involved with a project.

Section 7: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

7.1 Monitoring & Review

The local system for monitoring (and evaluation) will be developed to conform with the requirements set out in the LDS / LEADER Framework Guidelines and LEADER Overview of Phase II (submission process).

Good management is associated with the three functions of (i) planning, (ii) implementation and (iii) monitoring and review being undertaken as an integrated process, with regular progress reporting. The purpose of the local monitoring and review system is to provide useful and timely feedback on progress with implementation to stakeholders in the LAG so that changes can be made to the strategy and / or approach to delivery if necessary. Monitoring and review systems are required for accountability, and to support transparency in project appraisal / selection and decision-making in the LAG. It supports the financial control and audit functions to establish sound financial management practices at the level of the LAG.

Working definitions of monitoring, review and evaluation are shown in the box below.

The **monitoring system** will provide a comprehensive picture of programme inputs and outputs, comparing progress achieved with reference to planned expenditures, actions, outputs and results. The monitoring data will feed into the periodic programme reviews and the overall programme evaluation.

Evaluation goes beyond monitoring to provide an assessment of what the intervention – the LDS / local LEADER programme in County Limerick - has achieved *that would not have been realised in the absence of the programme*. It seeks to establish whether the objectives were actually relevant to addressing the needs / challenges facing the rural area and the populations targeted for support; the lessons learnt and recommendations for action.

Reviews take on issues addressed in **evaluation** but stop short of full-scale impact evaluation (e.g., to establish net impact / net effects). In addition, programme reviews do not examine the issues to the same depth as thematic evaluations or informative evaluation (where the objective is specifically oriented to learning). Both reviews and evaluations seek to establish lessons learnt and good practice.

What is Monitoring, Review, Evaluation?

Monitoring: *A continuing function that aims to provide managers and main stakeholders with regular feedback and early indications of progress or lack thereof in the achievement of intended results. Monitoring tracks the actual performance or situation against what was planned or expected at the programme design stage (and updated / revised over time). Monitoring involves collecting and analyzing data on financial and physical progress (outputs and results) with implementation of programmes.*

Review: *Is a rigorous, systematic examination of how effectively a programme is running. Ideally, a programme review is implemented as an objective, impartial and expert-based assessment. The purpose of the review is to promote continuous improvement and development of the programme; to ensure that the quality of the strategy is high and objectives are right (meeting the needs); to show that the programme processes and procedures are appropriate and working well; to show that the programme is making a positive difference and impacting on the development challenges identified; to comment on the strengths and weakness, identifying areas for attention and recommendations for action by the programme management.*

Evaluation: *A time-bound exercise that attempts to assess systematically and objectively the relevance, performance and success of ongoing and completed programmes. Evaluation is undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers and/or programme managers, and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in programme development were valid, what worked and what did not work and why... Evaluation is a vehicle for extracting cross-cutting lessons from experiences and determining the need for modifications to the strategic results framework. Evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learnt from the experience into the decision-making process.*

7.1.1 Sources of Data and Frequency of Collection for Programme Indicators

The structure of the local data system and the timescales for data availability and progress reporting will mirror the indicator systems (for financial and physical indicators) at national level (LEADER under Priority 6 in the national RD OP).

The programme indicators developed for the LDS / LEADER programme (and the RD OP as a whole), draw on the intervention logic model (inputs-outputs-results-impact). The indicators at different levels correspond to the hierarchy of objectives of the LDS / LEADER. These are shown in Figure 7.1 below:

1. Higher level strategic objectives correspond to the longer-term impact on rural areas, from LEADER (and other interventions in rural development). These include: population and demographic change (growth, age dependency); the employment rate; unemployment rate; social inclusion in terms of poverty reduction; change in deprivation index scores at small area level, etc.
2. Local Objectives for each LEADER sub-theme across (i) Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation; (ii) Social Inclusion, and (iii) Rural Environment). A set of common programme indicators are identified for LEADER (LEADER: Overview of Phase II (submission process)).
3. Operational objectives, defined at the level of each of the Strategic Actions (project-based actions) under the Local Objectives for each of the nine LEADER sub-themes.

There is an express intention to develop and sustain a robust Programme Evaluation and Monitoring process throughout the delivery of the new Programme. It is confirmed that the Programme Indicators as provided in *Document 1: Overview of Stage 2 Invitation to Submit a Local Development Strategy* Appendix 1 (p29) will be utilised as part of the Evaluation and Monitoring Process. On review of the provisions in this document, it became apparent that a more comprehensive set of indicators will be required to adequately reflect the scale and breadth of activity expected under the Programme. For example under the Rural Towns Actions of the LDS one of the strategic actions is Community Socio Economic Action Planning. Under the current indicators provided for this sub-theme there are no indicators to capture this type of activity.

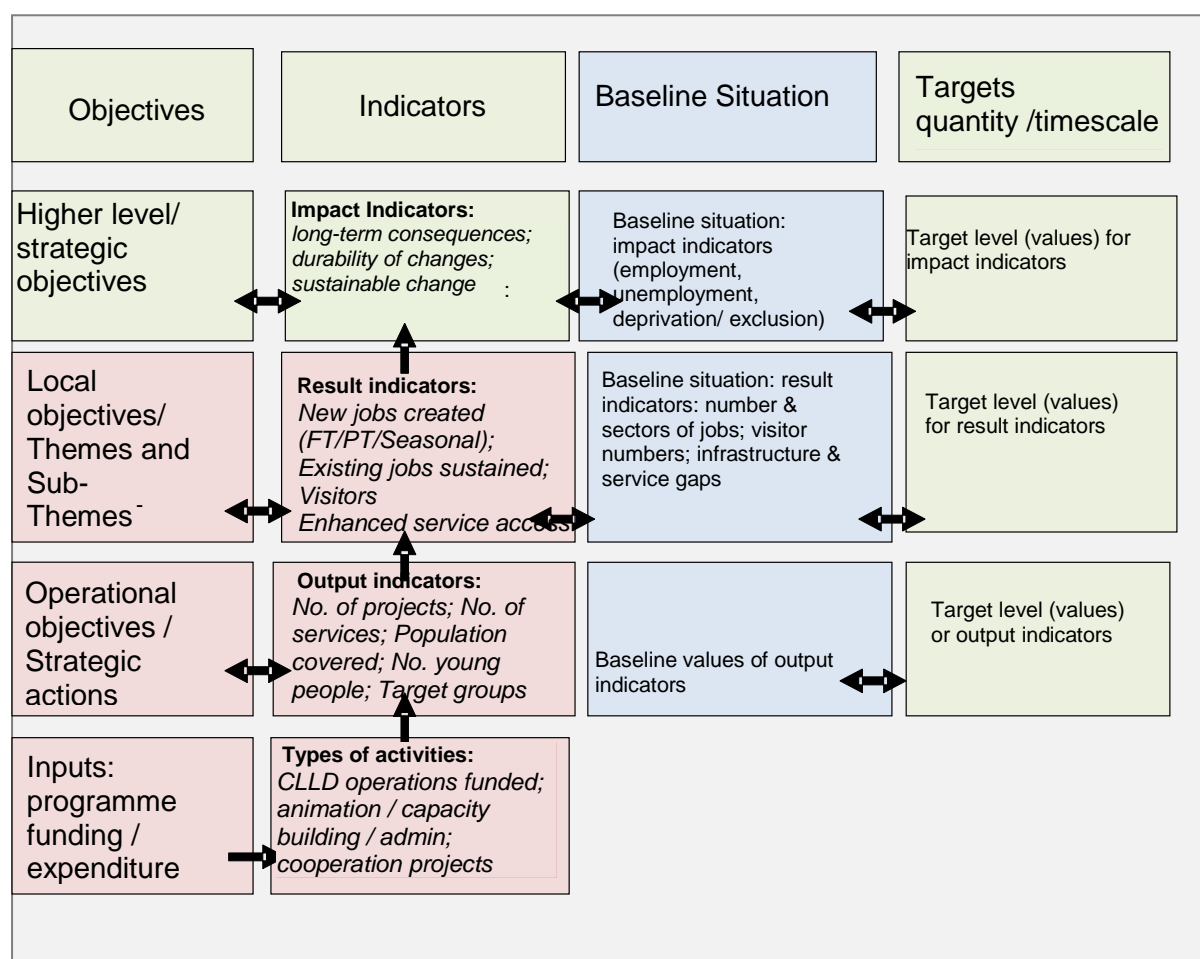
In preparing the LDS it was not felt appropriate to present new indicators without the National Framework being finalised in the first instance. (Indicative Indicators and Targets are attached in Appendix 1. For the purposes of the Strategy, estimates for the most appropriate indicators were utilised as an initial exercise (Section 4.3) It is expected this will be an iterative process as the Programme rolls out.

Programme monitoring data:

Sources of data: information related to inputs, types of activities funded, programme outputs and results will be captured by the local monitoring system. These data will be gathered routinely from three sources:

- (1) The applications submitted by project promoters focused especially on approved projects (descriptive indicators / programme activity indicators and programme output indicators).
- (2) The financial management system applied, and other records maintained by the LAG / Local Development Companies engaged in implementation (financial inputs and expenditure data; description, activities and results of networking and cooperation projects).
- (3) Activity reports (what has been done), income and expenditure reports and monitoring reports from project promoters. These will be required to be submitted linked to payments. This requirement will be stipulated in the project contract / service level agreements between the LAG and the project promoter.

Figure 7.1: Intervention Logic and Evaluation Framework



Data captured by the monitoring system

- (1) Monitoring data extracted from project applications and project approval dossier for all CLLD operations:** Suggested examples of these are identified in the table below. While subject to nationally agreed frameworks, these are either descriptive indicators (categorised

sub-themes), activity indicators (number of projects generated) or output (types of projects, services, target groups):

Indicator	Theme	Sub-theme
New project approved (CLLD)	Categorise to one theme	Categorise to one sub-theme / local objective
Existing project approved (CLLD)	Categorise to one theme	Categorise to one sub-theme / local objective
Enterprise sector including agricultural diversification (farm shops), food and beverage, creative industry, social enterprise etc.	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Enterprise Development, 1.2
Type of initiative including: activity / adventure / tourism; cultural and heritage tourism, rural recreation, eco-tourism	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Rural Tourism, 1.1
Types of initiative: youth café, youth entrepreneurship, sport / recreation, arts, youth development	Social Inclusion	Rural Youth, 2.2
Type of project including streetscape, Tidy Towns, Maintenance / restoration / upgrading built environment of the town etc.	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Rural Towns, 1.3
Type of project including: wind energy, solar power, education and awareness, impact assessment, recycling	Environment	All sub-themes
Value of funding under specific headings: Capital, Training, Marketing, Animation	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Rural Tourism, 1.1; Enterprise Development, 1.2, Rural Towns 1.3
	Social Inclusion	Basic Services for Hard to Reach Groups, 2.1; Rural Youth, 2.2
	Environment	All sub-themes
Small-scale equipment projects	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Broadband, 1.4
Capacity-building/training/information projects	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Broadband, 1.4
Type of service including transport, education, health, social amenity etc.	Social Inclusion	Basic Services for Hard to Reach Groups, 2.1
Nature of service including “a service that isn’t there”, “to enhance access to a service that is not in the locality”, “to enhance participation / outcomes of a service” etc.	Social Inclusion	All sub-themes
Primary / secondary Target Group including older people, people with a disability, children, migrants / new communities	Social Inclusion	Basic Services for Hard to Reach Groups, 2.1

Frequency: These data will be recorded and maintained on an on-going basis, linked to calls for proposals and following selection / approval of projects.

(2) Financial expenditure and data on activity recorded by the LAG / Local Development

Companies: Under CLLD operations, all applications received in response to calls for proposals are categorised by sub-theme. All approved projects will be recorded. Assessment of the number of projects submitted for grant aid compared with the number of projects approved will provide a measure of the level of demand. Analysis of demand for support by themes / sub-themes and other issues including geographic location, sector, type of project, target groups can inform strategic issues and processes. This could include, for instance, the need for further animation / capacity building to generate projects in thematic and geographic areas which are relatively weak.

Activities related to preparatory actions and programme-level capacity building and animation will be recorded separately, identifying time period (dates), location, purpose and numbers participating.

Cooperation and networking activities also will be recorded separately, categorised by sub-theme, purpose of networking activities, actions taken, results expected and actually achieved (e.g., exchange of information, joint project proposal, additional grant aid / investment).

In relation to **financial indicators**, the main categories for recording expenditure under the LDS / LEADER, as identified in the RD OP, are:

- Expenditure on preparatory support
- Public expenditure on implementation of operations under CLLD (LEADER)
- Expenditure for running costs / animation
- Expenditure for cooperation activities of the LAG.

The monitoring system of financial indicators will aggregate financial data using income and expenditure reports from project promoters. These data are necessary to confirm the actual co-financing rates achieved. It will also allow for assessment of funding / investment leveraged from other public, community and private sources in the implementation of CLLD operations (projects).

Frequency: These data will be recorded and maintained on an on-going basis. Expenditure on CLLD operations will be recorded following selection / approval of projects (amounts approved) and accordingly as grant aid is paid (payments made). Co-financing actually received / additional value of investment will be provided by project promoters as part of the monitoring – see (3) below.

(3) Activity / income and expenditure and monitoring data report from project promoters:

Linked to project approvals and the payment schedules, project promoters will be required to provide short structured reports on activities completed; project funding (income and expenditure, funds spent), sources of co-funding actually received; and monitoring data related to outputs and results (based on programme output and result indicators). As well as the quantitative output and result indicators specified in the LEADER Guidelines, project promoters will have the option of adding narrative text on a small number of qualitative indicators. Once the Programme Evaluation Framework has been finalised, these indicators will be developed for each theme / sub-theme with some suggested qualitative indicators shown in the table below.

Indicator	Theme	Sub-theme
Number of new jobs created by Full-time / Part-time / Seasonal	All	All sub-themes
Number of existing jobs sustained by Full-time, Part-time / Seasonal	All	All sub-themes
Number of visitors	Economic, Enterprise,	Rural Tourism, 1.1

Number of enterprise start-ups starting trading	Job Creation Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Enterprise Development, 1.2
Number of existing enterprises sustained / expanded sales	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Enterprise Development, 1.2
Number of research, feasibility studies, project / business plans completed	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	All sub-themes
Number of local broadband infrastructure projects implemented	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Broadband, 1.4
Number of actions from plans actually implemented	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	All sub-themes
Number of feasibility studies applied in enterprises / local development projects / internet-based businesses and services	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	All sub-themes
Number of energy reduction projects implemented	Environment	Development of renewable energy, 3.3
Population in towns (number of final beneficiaries) where projects were funded	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Rural Towns, 1.3
Population benefitting from enhanced broadband as a result of equipment funded	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Broadband, 1.4
Number of animation, capacity building and training events held	All	All sub-themes
Number of residents of towns engaged in participatory / action planning processes	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Rural Towns, 1.3
Number of individuals engaged in capacity building and training events	Social Inclusion	Basic Services for Hard to Reach Groups, 2.1
Number of individuals participating in capacity building / training / information activities in relation to broadband	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Broadband, 1.4
Number of persons participating in education and awareness programmes in environment	Environment	All sub-themes
Number of people availing of service provided, by type of service	Social Inclusion	Basic Services for Hard to Reach Groups, 2.1
Number of people availing of service provided by primary / secondary target group including older people, people with a disability, children, migrants / new communities, people living alone, unemployed, Travellers	Social Inclusion	Basic Services for Hard to Reach Groups, 2.1
Number of young people directly participating in new / enhanced services	Social Inclusion	Rural Youth, 2.2
Reduction in social isolation (qualitative)	Social Inclusion	All sub-themes
Improved mental health / well-being (qualitative)	Social Inclusion	All sub-themes
Improved motivation to engage in enterprise (self-employment/social enterprise) (qualitative)	Economic, Enterprise, Job Creation	Rural Tourism, 1.1 Enterprise Development, 1.2
Improved community spirit & willingness to	Economic, Enterprise,	Rural towns, 1.3

work together (qualitative)	Job Creation	
Improved knowledge and awareness of the environmental / low carbon agenda (qualitative)	Environment	All sub-themes
Greater willingness to work together on environmental projects (qualitative)	Environment	All sub-themes

Frequency: The timescale for the monitoring returns (financial and physical indicator data) will be linked to the schedule for the calls for proposals and approvals, the payment schedule agreed in the project contract / service level agreement and the scale and duration of the project. Projects will submit returns at the same time (e.g., a common annual cycle that will allow for timely completion of the End of Year reports, uploaded to the LEADER ICT system). All project promoters will be required to submit a final set of activity, financial and output and results-based monitoring data on project completion and ongoing thereafter during the required in operation period of five years.

7.1.2 Process for Data Collection

The process for data collection has been described, in part, in presenting the sources and frequency of collection for different types of data. The process involves:

- Recording and updating values using descriptors, financial data, physical indicators (outputs, results) based on the programme monitoring requirements.
- Maintaining paper files/IT records on all project applications and approvals
- Maintaining records of expenditures, activities and results on: preparatory actions, programme animation, capacity building and administration and networking and cooperation projects.
- Collecting and reviewing information relevant to implementation and to measuring achievements, etc. from existing sources including local studies.
- For the purpose of LDS Review, selective consultations with stakeholders including LAG members (and other personnel in organisations represented on the LAG), personnel involved in delivery of LEADER into rural communities, project promoters and representatives of the rural communities / groups targeted / assisted by the programme.
- Monitoring and reporting systems are being set up for the national level LEADER by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG). The LAG will co-operate with inputting key aspects of the LDS as required. The data will be provided to update progress with implementation (expenditures and outputs) and results over time so that this information can be collated centrally by DECLG for use in their periodic reporting on LEADER.

7.1.3 Responsibility for the Review, Collation and Maintenance of Data

Local data collection, maintenance, collation and review systems will be set up under the auspices of the LCDG as LAG in consultation with the Implementation Partners. The Programme ICT-based and paper record-based systems will be used by the Implementation Partners to record and update all of the programme monitoring data (financial and physical indicators). As such, the Implementing Partners of the LDS (Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources) will be responsible for the on-going updating (maintenance) of the ICT-based and paper records on programme implementation.

The Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) will be based primarily on the collation of the data recorded in the ICT-based system with supplementary information added drawing on other

sources of information (e.g., records of programme activities in animation / training / capacity building, opportunities for cooperation / networking and other issues relevant to implementation of the LDS). The data gathering from the project promoter level (co-funding, income and expenditure reports, outputs and results achieved) will be undertaken by the Implementation Partners – Ballyhoura Development Ltd. and West Limerick Resources.

7.1.4 Data Quality Control

Data quality control is an extremely important issue. Poor quality data (unreliable, incomplete, missing cases) or weaknesses in the technical design or implementation of reviews / evaluations will impact on the quality of the progress reporting / reviews; it will also mean that there are weaknesses in the evidence-base on which decisions are taken on the LDS and the approach to implementation.

Quality control is a resource-intensive task. Chasing monitoring returns, checking and “cleaning” data received, for instance, from the project promoter level can take time. This will be the responsibility of designated Implementation Partner staff. Staff already have experience in this area, working with Pobal (IRIS) and SICAP monitoring systems.

7.1.5 Compliance with the Data Protection Acts

The collection and maintenance of monitoring data will need to be mindful of requirements to comply with Data Protection Acts (i.e., any information which can identify individuals or households). In the design of the monitoring system (ICT and paper records), the LAG will obtain advice to ensure conformity with Data Protection based on the Implementation Structures in operation.

7.1.6 LDS Review

The ***purpose of LDS review*** is to assess the quality of the strategy and objectives (meeting the needs / development challenges); the appropriateness of the design and operation of the processes and procedures; effectiveness in relation to objectives (performance / results) and efficiency in generating a quantity and quality of project proposals to which resources may be allocated across all themes / sub-themes of the LDS/LEADER. In addition, LDS review should identify key strengths and weaknesses, areas for attention, where change is needed; and present recommendations for action by LAG.

The ***timescale for LDS Review*** will be influenced by requirements to report on progress with LEADER implementation and assess its performance in the national programming cycle including: the preparation of Annual Implementation Report (AIRs) and enhanced AIRs (providing assessment of complementary result indicators and common evaluation questions) for the years 2017 and 2019 and the national Evaluation Plan (RD OP).

It is proposed that a Limerick County LDS mid- term review be undertaken in 2017 such that it could feed into the reporting on the programme at national level at this stage. 2017 would be an appropriate timescale for other reasons. This would allow the time for a significant level of experience with implementation (i.e., not too early) to make some judgements on relevance, appropriateness of design and performance and also sufficient time to make appropriate adjustments to the strategy / programme processes and procedures if necessary (i.e., not too late to make any changes). In addition, analysis of 2016 census data should be coming available during 2017. This will allow for updating on changes in contextual conditions in the rural area.

In relation to **who will be responsible**, the governance of the Review will be with the LCDC working in co-operation with the Implementation Partners. The Terms of Reference for the LDS Review will be agreed by the LCDC. The LCDC will receive and agree the final report of the LDS Review and agree the communication strategy for the Review.

In relation to **sources of information / data**, LDS Review will draw on the information recorded by the monitoring system supplemented with additional data collection and analysis from secondary sources and selective consultations. The latter will be undertaken in order to get qualitative insights. As such, some primary data gathering is envisaged (workshops with stakeholders in the LCDC, individual interviews and focus groups engaging key stakeholders, visits to local communities to engage in community consultations etc.). Evaluation methods can include self-evaluation (e.g., notes / reflections on activities such as animation, capacity building, community engagement) as well as making full use of the body of secondary data available from the programme administrative dataset and other sources.

7.2 Evaluation

Considerations guiding the evaluation framework and approach

The evaluation framework, presented below, is informed by the following considerations:

1. It is developed with reference to the overall objectives of LEADER in fostering local development in rural areas (sustainable local communities in rural areas).
2. It takes into account that LEADER is one of a suite of policy interventions to support rural development across the LDS area. Changes in conditions in rural areas are likely to result from policy interventions including but also beyond the LDS/LEADER and also from the influence or impact of global / wider trends in the economy and society (i.e., beyond public policy interventions).
3. The local development strategy (LDS) is expected to apply an “*integrated approach to planning at local level ... to not only maximise the impact of available support but also to ensure that responsible bodies are working in a complementary way*” (Rural Development Operational Programme) and work with a wider coordinated effort. The local coordination function and working with a larger territorial area has been strengthened with planning and oversight of LEADER with the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) acting as the LAG. The LDS / LEADER is expected to operate in coordination with other agencies (e.g., LCETB, EI, LCCC), funding programmes (e.g., SICAP), local communities and enterprises.
4. It takes into account the distinctiveness of LEADER as an intervention to support “*community-led local development*” – the community participation and empowerment agenda – and other objectives including the cross-cutting objective of supporting innovation.

The evaluation of the LDS / LEADER is complex. Benefits of such programmes go beyond quantitative measures of results (such as job creation).

Methods of delivery and processes of local development, capacity of implementation partners in local communities as well as “soft” or more intangible factors (e.g., local leadership, history of local development, quality of the social capital in local communities) are important in the success or otherwise of local rural development programmes. These “soft” factors can be important in explaining variations in results achieved across different local communities (micro areas) covered by the LDS.

7.2.1 Evaluation Plan

What are the LAG's objectives for the evaluation of the LDS?

The LAG's objectives for the evaluation of the LDS are:

1. To provide sufficient information to meet requirements for assessment of the performance of the LDS / LEADER in promoting positive changes in rural areas in Limerick County in line with the LDS strategy and LEADER programme objectives and the needs and development challenges facing rural areas.
2. To make an assessment of achievements that are unlikely to have occurred in the absence of the LDS / LEADER programme (additionality).
3. To build up the evidence base for successful intervention strategies in local rural development (including process-related factors such as integrated action, bottom-up approach, local coordination, networking and innovation) and in thematic areas of specific interest in view of challenges now facing rural areas.

What are the governance and co-ordination arrangements for managing the process?

The LCDC is the body responsible for the overall governance of evaluation. The governance and co-ordination arrangements for managing the process are similar to those described above in relation to monitoring and review. The LCDC, working in co-operation with the Implementation Partners, will be responsible for ensuring that evaluations are completed to a high quality standard, that any commissioning of an evaluation adheres to rules of public procurement, and for agreeing the scope, timing, method of implementation, output of the evaluation (accepting the content of the report) and the communication and dissemination strategy.

Are there any specific LDS or LEADER topics or themes the LAG will wish to evaluate?

The LAG and the process of preparation of the LDS has involved investment in research and analysis to establish the baselines (socio-economic analysis). Programme evaluations in local development are complex. The "menu" of issues addressed in a programme evaluation are shown in the table below. These are structured around key evaluation questions and by making comparisons. From this menu, specific issues of interest could be identified as a focus for evaluation.

The evaluation questions highlighted in "bold" (red) are considered at this stage to be the key areas that could be examined in evaluation. Some of the issues have already been suggested for the Review (see Section 7.1 above). In addition, substantive issues addressed in LEADER sub-themes could be examined in some depth in thematic evaluations. These could address sub-themes of wide interest, that are relatively new priorities in rural development and which have not been the subject of much research to date (e.g., revitalisation of rural towns and villages; local communities in environmental action). The selection of specific substantive themes will be agreed by the LAG as well as the arrangements for undertaking such research.

What are the data requirements for evaluating the LDS?

LDS / LEADER evaluations will draw on the information in the monitoring system supplemented with additional data collection and analysis from secondary sources and primary research.

In the LDS / LEADER programme evaluation, it is proposed to select a sample of projects across themes / sub-themes for more detailed investigation using additional quantitative and qualitative indicators. As highlighted above, in the project contracts / service level agreements,

it will be stated that project promoters may be required to participate in evaluation studies. In thematic evaluations, the same approach (working with a sample of projects or focus on specific villages / towns etc.) will be applied.

Additional information may be gathered from project promoters, possibly using a mix of short questionnaires (quantitative) and consultations / interviews. Quantitative indicators will seek to establish in more detail benefits achieved as a result of support from LEADER reflecting the local objectives

What are the tools and methods to be employed?

The actual methods and tools to be employed in evaluations will be scoped out as part of the selection of themes. This will also be influenced by the level of resources that can be secured for evaluation. Overall, mixed methods of evaluation are envisaged. Quantitative approaches will draw primarily on the data gathered / collated in the programme monitoring system and perhaps some element of survey work (with a sample of projects / final beneficiaries or recipients of LEADER support). Additional data gathering for evaluations will involve mainly qualitative methods and tools. These will explore processes and results with project promoters (e.g., strategies for effective engagement of target groups, innovation) as well as with final beneficiaries (their experiences of participation and results from participation in LEADER projects).

In thematic evaluations, the preparation of case studies would be appropriate. In specific sub-themes (rural villages and towns, environment), use of participative research methods and on-going evaluation (working with identified local communities) could be appropriate and in keeping with the CLLD / LEADER approach.

What are the timelines for the evaluation and any relevant milestones?

Timelines for evaluation take into consideration the scheduling and requirements for evaluation of the national LEADER programme.

An indicative timeline for preparation of a programme evaluation is 2020– a final evaluation of the LDS / LEADER in County Limerick.

Depending on resource availability, up to three thematic evaluations are envisaged.

- One should be structured as an on-going evaluation working with participative research methods with identified local communities / target groups. This could start potentially in 2016, recording processes from the beginning of the initiative and progress over time (mapping progression, impact, learning etc.).
- More focused thematic evaluations of shorter duration could be undertaken: one at mid-term and one at the end of the LDS/LEADER programme.

What is the proposed approach to communicating evaluation activities/findings?

Evaluation findings will be communicated to different audiences. These include:

- Stakeholders in the LCDC who will be expected to use the findings to promote improvements in the LDS / LEADER programme and related activities; and to promote the LEADER approach.
- Other potential users of the evaluation findings including policy makers responsible for planning, funding and overseeing delivery of public policy (labour market, economic development, health, local government, environment, transport, energy etc.), and

practitioners in local development and community and voluntary organisations, especially those providing services to people / communities in rural areas.

- Local communities and groups in the rural areas covered by the LDS.

Technical / full evaluation reports will be made available as public documents, after they are finally approved by the LCDC. These types of reports, however, will be of interest to only some of the audience of the evaluations. In addition, lay / summary information on the key findings will be made available (e.g., summary documents of key findings, newsletter items, reports in the print and broadcast media).

Print / written material will be made available on-line – on the websites of the key partners (Implementation Partners, Local Authority) – and with links set up from other organisation's on-line presence / websites.

Other methods of dissemination could include a conference / seminars / training and capacity building on rural development or linking into such activities planned / hosted by other organisations.

What are the resources required?

Resources required for evaluation, potentially, are significant. However, it will not be possible to fund the level of evaluation, as suggested above, from the programme budget. Additional resources will be sought for this, through the LCDC. The potential to work in cooperation with third level institutions, research centres and research programme funders will be explored.

7.2.2 Indicative Evaluation Schedule

The indicative schedule for the evaluation activities are shown in the table below.

Task / activity	Timescale
Propose / agree evaluation themes LCDC with Implementation Partners	2016 Q2
Develop / agree Evaluation Plan including communication strategy	2016 Q2
Plan / set up thematic on-going evaluation (1)	2016 Q2
Review operation / adequacy of local ICT and paper-based monitoring system	2016 Q3
Prepare first Annual Implementation Report (2016)	2016 Q4
Plan / set-up / implement thematic evaluation (2)	2017 Q2
LDS Review	2017 Q2-Q4
Final Evaluation (Programme Evaluation)	2020
Thematic evaluation (3)	2020

Section 8: Financial Plan

See Appendix No. 9

Section 9: Additional Information

No additional Information is being submitted.

Section 10: Declaration and Disclaimer

See Appendix 10

Section 11: Appendices

- Appendix 1 Initial Indicators and Targets
- Appendix 2 Governing Document for LAG
- Appendix 3 LAG Agreement
- Appendix 4 LA Financial Procedures
- Appendix 5 Job Descriptions
- Appendix 6 Operational Procedures (WLR, BDL, LA organisational Chart)
- Appendix 7 Project Appraisal Score Card
- Appendix 8 Map and List of ED's
- Appendix 9 Financial Plan template
- Appendix 10 The signed Declaration and Disclaimer template
- Appendix 11 Signed copy of the minutes of the meeting in which all LAG members agreed to the content and submission of the LDS and Action Plan.
