

Examples of LEADER News Media 2022-23



Pictured at the presentation of a 'kick sampling kit', which includes waders, a net and tray, were Clare Conroy of Galway Rural Development's LEADER team, her little helper Sophia, and Stiofán Sopolza who completed the Water Biodiversity Training. Stiofán is a member of Gort River Walk Development Group and Gort Tidy Towns.



Some of the volunteers who took part in Galway Rural Development's LEADER-funded biodiversity training. The participants who completed a presentation on each of the action plans for their relevant sub-catchment area were Caitriona Cunningham, Eoin Butler, Alec Reid, Michael Waldron, Sean O'Donovan, Thomas McTague, Denis Healy, Michael Hutchinson, Frank Reynolds with Anne Kinsella (Chairperson of GRD), Kieran Cowhig (Ecologist with Veri), Maria Heneghan (Board member of GRD), Conor Ruane (LAWPRO Officer).

Connacht Tribune, 24 June 2022



Pictured at the signing of the LEADER contract at Monivea Rugby Football Club last week were Pat McGrath (Trustee), Pádraic McGarrn (Trustee), Claire Conroy (LEADER Officer with GRD), Sean Conneely (Trustee), Anthony Killarney (President), Cllr Shelly Herterich Quinn (Chairperson), Alan Burke (Club member), and Sean Shanley (Secretary).

Connacht Tribune, 5 August 2022



Pictured after discussing Mountbellew matters were Senator Aisling Dolan, John Cunningham of Smart Villages Mountbellew, Minister Joe O'Brien, Councillor Peter Roche, Paul Ruane, Kieran Flanagan of Smart Villages Mountbellew, Conor Carty of GRD LEADER, and Linda Cummins of GRD Tús.

Connacht Tribune, 16 September 2022



At the new Loughrea Comworks building in Loughrea is promoter of Comworks Jonathan Madden, with Frank Keane from Galway Rural Development's Leader team, after signing a contract which provides a grant from Galway Rural Development to set up the entrepreneur hub.

Connacht Tribune, 23 September 2022

Headford has the smarts

■ Village is second recipient of major rural development initiative



Maria Walsh MEP (second left) launching Smart Villages Headford on Saturday morning, joined by local reps and participants including CEO of GRD Steve Dolan, Cllr Andrew Reddington, Cllr Mary Hoade and Cllr Pete Roche.

A MAJOR rural development initiative, Smart Villages, has been announced for Headford with the aim of enhancing co-operation, building new alliances, and delivering funding for the town.

It follows a recent town meeting - attended by a capacity crowd - to discuss the potential for Headford as a 'Smart Village' destination, with all of the main town stakeholders present on the invitation of Galway Rural Development (GRD).

Following that meeting, and the subsequent response, GRD have now confirmed Headford as its second location for Smart Villages in Galway with MEP Maria Walsh visiting the town last Saturday to confirm the news. Across the EU, 'Smart Villages' have implemented improvements to the lives of millions of rural dwellers in terms of their economic, social, environmental, and cultural lives.

On the back of that proven record of success across Europe in terms of cultural and eco-



CEO of GRD Steve Dolan and LEADER Manager Conor Carty with Keith Finnegan of GBFM, as they formally announced Headford as being the county's second Smart Village.

nomie growth, and in-keeping with the aims of the national Our Rural Future policy; last year sixteen regions in the

country came together to develop a national Smart Villages programme. Led by Galway Rural Development, and with

partners in Kilkenny and Cork, the initiative has been described as 'a game-changer for rural areas'.

CEO of GRD Steve Dolan explained that the Smart Villages concept opened up new opportunities to improve the sustainability of rural areas.

"It reflects the principles and methods associated with being 'smart and competitive'. By any measure, Smart Villages Mountbellew has been an unqualified success and we've now had a wonderful beginning here in Headford," he said.

"As a start point, Smart Village training has been developed to address the needs of communities and businesses. This training will help up-skill the wider Headford community under a number of strategic themes in the areas of food, nature, smart towns, and transport. We will be out and about on the ground this winter and spring and the guidance given will ready the community for future investment."

Maria Walsh MEP was keen to acknowledge the potential for the initiative in Headford and praised the ambition.

"I've seen first-hand the success of the initiative in Mountbellew over the past twelve months and, given my own background in community work, I am intimately familiar with LEADER. Given the evidence of 'Smart Villages' successes across the EU, I'm delighted to see it embraced in Headford," she said.

And Ms Walsh said she looked forward to the fruits of the work over the coming months.

"Sharing ideas, sharing experience, and building intercommunity relationships are core concepts of Smart Villages which aims to deliver for communities. If we are to build a vibrant rural future for Irish citizens', then proven initiatives like this must be central to our endeavours and I know how committed the team at GRD are to its goals," she said.

NEWS

Solution Squads getting to work in Mountbellew

• Smart Village to seek charity status

By Mark Walsh

THE Town Development Plan and improving the broadband connection are a sample of the items on the agenda for Mountbellew Smart Villages in 2023.

The town was chosen to be part of the Smart Villages EU initiative in November of 2021, and the volunteers that make up the Mountbellew Smart Villages group have identified several projects and tasks they wish to complete this year.

"The group is split up into several 'Solution Squads'. The Town Plan solution squad is hoping to finalise the details of the Town Development Plan in the second half of 2023, and a feasibility study on The Riverside Park is also in the offing.

"We have partnered with Mountbellew District Development Association to get an ORIS Grant in order to have a feasibility study done to improve The Riverside Park," said Marilyn Fleming, Secretary of Mountbellew Smart Villages.

The project for The Riverside Park forms part of Mountbellew Smart Villages' Action Plan, which they launched last July. These projects will be carried out in surrounding areas such as Moylough, Cal



THE Directors of Mountbellew Smart Villages are Kieran Flanagan, Ann O'Brien, John Cunningham, PJ Farrell and Anne Marie Cunningham.

tra, Castleblakeney, as well as Mountbellew.

Funding for the Action Plan projects will come via a variety of means, including Galway County Council seed kit in monies, and LEADER grants administered through Galway Rural Development (GRD).

Mountbellew Smart Villages is currently a start up business or CIC (Company Limited by Guarantee), but they will be seeking to alter this and obtain charity status this year.

It is no secret for those living in Mountbellew and closeby that the broadband service in the town is not good, and this is something that is being looked at.

"Galway Telecom, Mountbellew, is pushing for improv

ing the broadband in the middle of the town. They've finished their mapping stage and have done surveys on where it is good and where it is bad in the town," explained Marilyn.

"They are working with the broadband providers, with Vodafone and others. They are looking to get Mountbellew put onto the NBI (National Broadband Ireland) Project and are looking at some interim solutions at the moment to try and get it right."

A Women's Shed and a Men's Shed were set up last year, and growing those respective groups is something those involved with Mountbellew Smart Villages are seeking to

do in 2023. Mental health days were also run last year, and more will be held this year.

As well as the Town Plan Solution Squad, there are squads for Comm, Amenities, Telecoms, Arts and Culture, Energy and Environment, Business and Employment, and Education and Skills.

"The Park Run is being done every Saturday in Mountbellew Woods, and it runs by itself now. It was through the heading of Smart Villages and the Quality of Life squad that helped to first facilitate it, and Sean O'Boyle is the main person behind it," offered Marilyn. "That is where Smart Villages can help people and groups out."



**MOUNTBELLEW
SMART VILLAGES**
Inclusive + resilient + resourced

MOUNTBELLEW Smart Villages is always interested in taking on volunteers and can be contacted by emailing smartvillages@mountbellewsmartvillages.com

Three stages to net zero carbon future for Mountbellew

By Mark Walsh

"TWO TO FOUR" climate-friendly business options will be provided to the town of Mountbellew later this year as part of its involvement in the 'People's Transition Project'.

A meeting of local people, groups, and business owners was held in The Malt House pub and restaurant in the centre of the town at the beginning of the month, where details of the project were presented.

TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change) are leading the project's delivery across 30 areas nationwide and have teamed up with Galway Rural

Development (GRD) and Mountbellew Smart Villages to see it administered in the town.

Set up in 2018, TASC work with communities nationwide to carry out justice research, with the aim of helping areas make the change to a net zero carbon society.

"TASC are going to come back to us with two to four businesses we could launch in Mountbellew that will contribute to the climate solution, create jobs, and help improve the quality of life in the locality," offered Marilyn Fleming, Secretary of Mountbellew Smart Villages.

The People's Transition Project will be completed across three phases - Mapping, Lis

tening and Solutions. It is being sponsored by AIBand is being delivered to towns free of charge.

MAPPING PHASE

The Mapping Phase began in Mountbellew in November. Employees of TASC did research work in the locality, combining it with information from the Census and OSI (Ordnance Survey Ireland) maps.

"The meeting in The Malt House was part of the Listening Phase. We had 30-plus people who showed up, about 34 in all I think," said Marilyn.

"It was a lot the first week after Christmas. It was a focus group meeting. People wrote down their ideas and talked

to each other about them. The information has now gone with the TASC group to be analysed, along with them completing their Mapping exercise.

"The Solutions Phase ends in June. They will come back to us then, and tell us what it will cost approximately to get the business ideas going.

"They will tell you what businesses you can start up, as well as doing the research into them for you. It's a mini business case. The locality owns it.

"It has to help the climate, fit the economic reality of the locality, and it has to improve the quality of life in the area. That's why it's called climate justice research."

A follow-up focus group meeting is planned for Thursday February 9.

TASC researchers are due to finish their report into the potential business ideas for Mountbellew in June. They will return then to Mountbellew to present their findings as part of the conclusion to the Solutions Phase of the process.

An example of TASC's work in a community comes from Ardara in Donegal. The Ardara's People Transition Project began in March of 2021, and one of TASC's recommendations was to set up a biochar plant in the area.

Biochar is a carbon-rich material produced by the burning of biomass products

like industrial organic waste, crop, and forestry residue. Plants such as hazel, heather, and rushes can also be used as biomass.

Kieran Hamrhill is a Senior Researcher with TASC, and commenting on the People's Transition Project in Mountbellew, he said: "If climate is to be enduring then it must be inclusive and equitable.

"The People's Transition aims to design climate solutions that give local communities, like those here in Mountbellew, ownership of assets of transition and thus enhance public support for climate action by tackling inequality and delivering on real opportunities for growth," he concluded.

COUNTY COUNCIL HUBS EVENT



DR Ann O'Brien of Smart Villages, Mountbellew, Cllr Mary Hoade of Smart Villages, Headford, and Damien Quinn of Galway Rural Development at the Galway County Council Hubs event in the Claregalway Hotel on Thursday evening.

Tuam Herald, 1 February 2023



Ciara Dolan, GRD CEO Steve Dolan, and Cllr Michael Connolly at the opening of Bunowen Bakery's new facility, supported by LEADER. GRD are holding public consultations on LEADER, across East Galway, during March.

Connacht Tribune, 3 March 2023

New LEADER programme to support job creation

GALWAY Rural Development (GRD) has been selected by the Department of Rural and Community Development to develop a local strategy for the LEADER 2023-2027 programme.

In order to develop an inclusive strategy, GRD will be commencing a series of community consultations and focus group meetings.

GRD Chairperson Anne Kinsella said: "GRD has 30 years of experience implementing a top-class LEADER programme in East Galway and we look forward to developing a LEADER plan that delivers for our people, place and planet.

"The upcoming community consultations are an important step in that direction."

The new LEADER programme will support enterprise, job creation, rural



ANNE Kinsella, Teresa Roche, Minister Martin Hayden and Steve Dolan.

infrastructure, social inclusion, rural environment, and climate action.

Conor Carty, LEADER Manager, said: "Our community consultation meetings are an opportunity for us to listen to, and learn, from community volunteers and groups with regard to their local assets, needs and priorities."

"The meetings will be open

to all and we are inviting the public to attend in order to shape the future of rural development in East Galway.

"We begin in Athenry on March 14, followed by Loughrea and Ballinasloe, and then Gort and Tuam. Details of all our community consultation meetings are available on our website and across our social media platforms."



Some of the community group leaders and individuals who attended Galway Rural Development's LEADER consultation in the Lough Rea Hotel last week.



Paul Sexton from Galway Rural Development, Cllr Michael Connolly, and Dr Christy Cunniffe at GRD's LEADER consultation in the Shearwater Hotel last week.



Blaithnaid Gallagher from the Galway Wool Co-op and Anne Kinsella from Teagasc at Galway Rural Development's LEADER consultation in the Shearwater Hotel last week.



Some of the community group leaders at Galway Rural Development's LEADER consultation in the Shearwater Hotel last week.

Coffee Morning

The Ballinasloe Traveller Women's Group are hosting a Coffee Morning & Bake Sale in aid of Pieta House next Tuesday morning, April 4, at Galway Rural Development's office on Dunlo Street from 11am to 1pm.

The ladies will also be running a free raffle on the morning for all attendees. The event forms part of the 'Hello, how are you?' campaign, supported by GRD and SICAP.

Community Gathering

The largest of the county's in-person LEADER consultations took place in the Shearwater Hotel last week. Dozens of community organisations gathered to have their say on the needs of the wider area during the next programme. Further consultations followed this week in Gort (Tuesday) and Tuam (Wednesday).

LEADER MEETING IN TUAM



DONNA Gleeson, Anne Cassidy, Deirdre Maloney, Melinda Coen-Ryan, Damien Quinn, Anne Marie Doyle and Joseph Shevlin at the Tuam LEADER consultation last week.

Tuam Herald, 5 April 2023

Communities surveyed on new LEADER

GALWAY Rural Development, which is preparing a Local Development Strategy to deliver the next LEADER Programme for the municipal districts of east Galway, has launched an online survey to give the people of East Galway their say on the priorities for the 2023-27 programme.

GRD has already held a number of well-attended community meetings in Athenry, Ballinasloe, Gort, Loughrea and Tuam in order to gather ideas - and it has now launched an online community survey to ensure that everyone in the region has an opportunity to give their views and ideas etc.

"We have been really pleased at the level of engagement and the ideas that we received at the different consultation sessions, but there may be people, organ-



Some of the community group leaders at Galway Rural Development's LEADER consultation in the Shearwater Hotel in Ballinasloe.

isations and businesses that missed the opportunity to attend so we would encourage them to log to it and have their

say," said Steve Dolan, CEO of GRD.

"The key to a good plan is to make sure it reflects the needs,

opportunities and aspirations of the community, so getting insights and creating ownership of the plan at community level

is important. The survey can be accessed across our social media platforms or at survey-monkey.com/t/KVFNGVN," he added.

GRD's LEADER Manager, Conor Carty, pointed out that, this time around, the programme has a bigger focus on the environment, on climate change, as well as on rural infrastructure, social inclusion, business, and tourism.

"We at GRD are keen to encourage developments in these areas over the coming years," he said.

The LEADER programme is a European Union initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs. The LEADER team can be contacted by email at leader@grd.ie.

Connacht Tribune, 5 May 2023