

Rural Development

Strategic Actions

## **Agriculture & Food**

### **Summary**

Carlow can be considered to follow the national trends in relation to the Agriculture and Food sector as it follows national policy which is strongly influenced by EU policy. While there is a strong tradition of farming in the county, there is anecdotal evidence of continued decline in the number of farms throughout the County since 2000. The majority of farmers are mixed dry stock or specialist beef farmers which are most vulnerable economically. There is a disproportionate age structure and therefore reduced land mobility to younger trained farmers. An over reliance exists on more traditional and vulnerable employment sectors like construction for off farm employment. At present there are no perennial renewable energy crops such as Willow or Miscanthus grown in Carlow with the exception of research trial plots at Teagasc Oakpark Research centre. However it is essential to concentrate and build on the strengths and opportunities the county holds to ensure the sustainability of rural communities.

A strong base of speciality food production already exists within the county with an established Farmers Market and Country Market with scope to expand and develop enterprise opportunities in this sector as the market and demand for same expands. There is a wealth of on farm features to develop as recreation amenities such as old indigenous stone farm buildings, walking and cycling routes, trekking along river banks, etc as well as Carlow's own rich natural landscape. Since the closure of the Sugar Factory a land bank has opened up which is ideally suited to the production of renewable energy crops.

As few as 4% of farms in Ireland are currently involved in some form of farm diversification enterprise, a trend which is reflected in the number of farm diversification enterprises supported under the previous LEADER Programme 2000 - 2006. Using the reference year of 2000 (latest CSO Stats) 9 farms out of 1,874 received LEADER support for farm diversification enterprises which is 0.5% of the total number of farms in the County. Therefore, farmers must be assisted to realise and develop the potential they have in terms of skills and assets. The multifunctional nature of agriculture and the farmer's role as guardian of the countryside needs to be strengthened by considering complementary enterprises such as agri-tourism, speciality food production, recycling initiatives and renewable energy crops. The creation of new rural enterprises using indigenous resources will be a main focus under this Rural Development Strategy including actions to promote research and develop of new rural based products. Training and skills development for farm families, particularly farm women and farmers living alone will also be prioritised to increase the viability of the overall farm household.

### **Priority Strategic Actions under Agriculture and Food Sector**

- (1) **Flagship** Further development and promotion of the Speciality Food Sector in Carlow. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 1; Budget Required €50,000)
- (2) Development and implementation of a Renewable Energy Information programme aimed at farm households to stimulate supply of renewable energy sources and end users in order to stimulate demand (Measure 7; Budget Required €200,000)

- (3) Further development of on farm recycling initiatives. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 1; Budget €250,000)
- (4) Provision of a range of supports to sustain farm households including farm diversification enterprises and sourcing new markets. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 1; Budget Required €500,000)
- (5) Further development and promotion of Farmers Markets and farm shops selling locally grown/manufactured produce. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 5; Budget Required €150,000)
- (6) Establish an IT based information point for farm households wishing to diversify into non-agricultural activities, and for existing on farm Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SME's) wishing to expand enterprise activity in the County, including access to expert speakers and workshops (Measure 7; Budget Required €50,000)
- (7) Development and implementation of an Agri-Tourism Information programme aimed at farm households to stimulate the development of new agri-tourism facilities or up-grade existing agri-tourism facilities including farm walks, pony trekking, bird watching, etc. (Measure 7; Budget Required €300,000)
- (8) General Research and Development Budget for Agricultural based initiatives, including food and drinks product development (Measure 1; Budget Required €100,000)
- (9) Training and skills development, including IT training, for farm families, particularly farm women and farmers living alone (Measure 7; Budget Required €100,000)
- (10) Co-operation project at National Level: Promotion of speciality food producers at the National Ploughing Championships and other relevant national events in association with other LAGs (Measure 10; Budget Required €10,000)
- (11) Co-operation Project with Northern Ireland: Cross Border Speciality Food Initiative (Measure 10; Budget Required €50,000)
- (12) Support for other Agricultural proposals which progress the realisation of the objectives for the sector as detailed in (b) above. (Measure 1; Budget Required €500,000)

## **Tourism Strategy**

### **Summary**

Situated in the South East of Ireland approximately 90 kms from the ferry and airports of Dublin, Rosslare and Waterford, Carlow's central location offers a perfect base to explore the bordering counties of Wexford, Kilkenny, Wicklow, Kildare and Laois.

County Carlow has a wealth of rich, natural tourism attractions, it offers an array of outdoor activities ranging from horse riding and canoeing to hang-gliding and quad biking. Home to three of Ireland's key walking routes – The South Leinster, The Barrow and the Wicklow Ways, the county boasts hundreds of miles of excellent and varied walking routes. Steeped in historical and archaeological artefacts from pagan sites such as the Brownshill Dolmen to ecclesiastical settlements at St. Mullins, the County is also home to some of the most beautiful country towns and villages in Ireland.

Much of Carlow's natural resources are considerably underexploited in terms of their potential for development into tourist attractions. The deployment of resources such as capital outlay for signage, promotion and presentation is needed in order to maximise the potential of the waterways and walkways as an important natural and cultural resource. The sensitive development of walking routes, heritage sites, waterways and garden trails, along with targeted support of individuals and farm households who wish to develop tourism amenities and accommodation in 'black spots' in South County Carlow, would best promote the county's tourism legacy in the medium to long term.

### **Priority Strategic Actions under Tourism**

- (1) **Flagship:** Development of existing walking routes throughout the Town and County to international standards including Mount Leinster. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006 and will also be based on primary research completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 3; Budget Required €1m)
- (2) Establish an IT based information point for tourism providers wishing to establish or expand tourism accommodation and/or amenities, including access to expert speakers and workshops (Measure 7; Budget Required €50,000)
- (3) Provision of a range of supports, including grant aid, for new tourism amenities and up-grading of existing tourism amenities in the County. (Measure 3; Budget Required €500,000)
- (4) Provision of a range of supports to develop tourism accommodation in agreed 'black spots' around the county including Clonegal, Myshall, Kiledmond, Borris, Ballymurphy and Rathanna. (Measure 3; Budget Required €300,000)
- (5) Further development of the existing gardening trail throughout County Carlow including marketing, promotion and further signage. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 3; Budget Required €100,000).
- (6) Research the potential to develop forests for countryside recreation. (Measure 3; Budget Required €10,000)
- (7) Research the potential to develop the River Barrow as tourism amenity for the County. (Measure 3; Budget Required €40,000)
- (8) Develop St Mullins as a key Heritage Site in Ireland. (Measure 3; Budget Required €50,000).
- (9) Develop and support collective marketing campaigns for the tourism sector to British and domestic markets including the use of the internet and ecommerce facilities. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2002 – 2006. (Measure 3; Budget Required €300,000)
- (10) Provision of a targeted animation campaign to farm households to stimulate agri-tourism initiatives (Measure 1; Budget required €50,000)
- (11) A research and feasibility budget for other Tourism initiatives (Measure 3 €100,000)
- (12) Co-operation Project at EU Level: Support trans-national co-operation including actions to further develop the domestic and international market for

- river based tourism based on the River Barrow (Measure 10; Budget Required €77,000)
- (13) Develop and support other tourism proposals which progress the realisation of the overall aim for the sector as detailed in (b) above.(Measure 3; Budget Required €200,000)

## **Heritage And Craft**

### **Summary**

Carlow's heritage is its legacy. The county has a wealth of built, natural and cultural heritage. The potential for heritage to contribute to the local economy is significant given increasing popularity of heritage tourism at national and international levels. The County's built heritage includes archaeological sites and monuments, ecclesiastical sites, castles and houses. Some of Carlow's unspoilt historic towns and villages such as Ballymurphy and Fenagh are the essence of Carlow's tourism product offering.

Carlow's cultural heritage include traditional crafts such as lace making, basketry and hand knitting along with a range of other craft disciplines. Much of its heritage is considerably underexploited in terms of its potential as a tourist attraction. The deployment of resources such as capital for signage, improving access, presentation and interpretation of sites is needed in order to maximize the potential of this important natural and cultural resource. The sensitive development of a 'flagship' heritage trail drive would best promote the county heritage in the medium to long term. In addition to the foregoing the development of the craft sector in terms of investment in design training and the development of a permanent craft centre and workshops coupled with an effective marketing campaign would contribute considerably to the safeguarding of this legacy.

### **Priority Strategic Actions under Heritage and Craft**

- (1) **Flagship;** Development and up-grading of Heritage sites in the County to national and international standards in terms of road signage, improved access, parking and other facilities and information and interpretation. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006 and specifically will be based on the Carlow LEADER Rural Development Company Ltd feasibility Study 'Feasibility Study of Heritage Drives in County Carlow', January 2007. (Measure 6; Budget Required €500,000).
- (2) **Flagship;** Development of Heritage Drive Trails incorporating key heritage sites in County Carlow. Potential heritage drives might include Carlow Megalithic Drive, Carlow Barrow River Drive and Carlow Mount Leinster Drive. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006 and specifically will be based on the Carlow LEADER Rural Development Company Ltd feasibility Study 'Feasibility Study of Heritage Drives in County Carlow' January 2007. It is proposed that this strategic action would follow the key recommendations outlined in the aforementioned report in terms of developing specific Heritage Driving Trails. (Measure 6; Budget Required €300,000)
- (3) Establish an IT based information point centre for individuals/community groups wishing to preserve, develop or research heritage sites, including access to expert speakers and workshops. (Measure 7; Budget €50,000)

- (4) Develop and implement an awareness campaign through the media in order to profile County Carlow's heritage nationally. (Measure 6; Budget Required €150,000)
- (5) Actions to preserve and develop vernacular architecture, crafts, archaeology, cultural traditions etc (Measure 6; Budget Required €50,000)
- (6) Research and publish industrial and cultural heritage associated with the River Barrow (Measure 6; Budget Required €20,000)
- (7) A General Research and Feasibility Budget for Heritage Initiatives (Measure 6; Budget Required €100,000)
- (8) Support for other Heritage proposals which progress the realisation of the overall aim for the sector as detailed in (b) above. (Measure 6; Budget Required €100,000)
- (9) Promote the development of Craft Enterprises in the County (Measure 6; Budget Required €250,000)
- (10) Co-operation Project at Regional Level: Extend the Heritage Drive Initiative to other Counties (Measure 10; Budget Required €30,000)
- (11) Co-operation Project at National Level: Promotion of Carlow Crafts at the National Ploughing Championships and other relevant national events in association with other LAGs (Measure 10; Budget Required €10,000)
- (12) Co-operation Project at EU Level: Support trans-national activity under the Heritage Strategy including extending the Carlow craft market to other countries (Measure 10; Budget Required €65,000)

## **Environment and Renewable Energy Sector**

### **Summary**

County Carlow has a wealth of natural resources that contribute significantly to the economic and social well being of people living in the County. The natural resources include a favourable climate, two river catchments, the River Slaney and the River Barrow and soil types associated with land of good agricultural potential.

As regards renewable energy there is considerable potential to develop biomass infrastructure in Carlow for heat, small scale hydro and wind. The presence of Oak Park offers significant advantages for biofuel infrastructural developments into the future. In general Carlow demonstrates a poor track record for recycling waste with opportunities under this strategy to target investment at promoting renewable energy, recycling and composting projects in the county.

As the condition of the environment is paramount to the overall quality of life to the people of Carlow, key environmental actions needed to enhance the physical environment in Carlow include community energy initiatives, waste managements initiatives, renewable energy initiatives and environmental awareness campaigns.

### **Priority Strategic Actions under the Environment and Renewable Energy Sector**

- (1) **Flagship:** Promote the development of a 'Green Business' campaign where businesses in Carlow may be audited in accordance with green business requirements based on the company's commitment to renewable energy and efficiency options, waste management practices and procurement. It is envisaged that capital assistance would be a key element of this action. (Measure 2; Budget Required €500,000)

- (2) Establish an IT based information point for individuals/rural enterprises/community groups, wishing to gain access to information relating to the conservation and sustainable exploitation of natural resources including providing access to expert speakers and workshops (Measure 7; Budget Required €50,000)
- (3) Implement waste management initiatives aimed at community groups, households and schools throughout County Carlow. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 7; Budget Required €100,000)
- (4) Promote and install Renewable Energy Technologies in homes, enterprises and community centres. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 2& 4; Budget Required €100,000)
- (5) Develop and implement an environmental information and education campaign aimed at households, schools, enterprises and community groups. (Measure 7; Budget Required €100,000)
- (6) Community environmental actions to protect and restore the amenity value of local water resources and high value nature areas. (Measure 6; Budget Required €100,000)
- (7) Research and Development Budget for other Environmental Initiatives (Measure 2 Budget Required €100,000)
- (8) Promote the development of a ‘Community Energy Initiative’ that specifically targets support at small businesses, community groups and non-profit organisations, towards the establishment of small- scale renewable energy systems such as solar, thermal, heat pumps and biomass burners (Measure 6; Budget Required €50,000)
- (9) Co-operation Project at EU Level: Support trans-national activity under the Environment Strategy including extending the actions of the European LEADER Renewable Energy Network(ELREN) Project to other LEADER groups regionally, nationally and in the EU (Measure 10; Budget Required €100,000)
- (10) Support for other Environmental proposals which progress the realisation of the overall aim for the sector as detailed in (b) above. (Measure 6; Budget Required €500,000)

## **Community Development Sector**

### **Summary**

County Carlow has a vibrant and diverse community sector with progressive local development agencies resulting in significant development in community projects and activities over the past decade. However, not all areas of the county have benefited from local development with peripheral areas such as Rathanna, Marley, Coonogue, Glynn and Hacketstown experiencing rural isolation and inactivity where the provision of public rural transport is often fragmented. The provision of animation and capacity building at individual and community group levels will better equip communities to articulate their needs in accordance with their own priorities. In addition, capital investment into underdeveloped community facilities in order to provide required services will also contribute to sustainable rural development in Carlow.

### **Priority Strategic Actions under the Community Sector**

- (1) **Flagship:** Establish a viable FETAC accredited Community Training Centre which would facilitate the delivery of accredited training to individuals, community groups and enterprises within the targeted sectors under the Rural Development Strategy 2007 – 2013. (Measure 7; Budget Required €200,000)
- (2) **Flagship:** Establish Community Enterprise Centre in rural location, incorporating incubation units, office space, meeting rooms etc (Measure 2; Budget Required €500,000)
- (3) Establish an IT based information point for community groups wishing to establish or expand community centres or implement other community initiatives, including access to expert speakers and workshops (Measure 7; Budget Required €50,000)
- (4) Up-grade and develop existing Community Centres into economically viable community enterprises throughout the County. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2002 – 2006. (Measure 4; Budget Required €500,000)
- (5) Develop and design socio-economic Village Plans for specific geographical areas throughout the county. This action will build on work completed under the National Rural Development Programme 2000 – 2006. (Measure 5; Budget Required €100,000)
- (6) Development of amenity and leisure facilities, with a particular emphasis on cultural activities (Measure 5; Budget Required €200,000)
- (7) Support for other community development proposals which progress the realisation of the overall aim for the sector as detailed in (b) above. (Measure 5; Budget Required €500,000)
- (8) Co-operation Project at EU Level: Support trans-national activity under the Community Strategy including further development of the Sustaining Community Buildings Project (Measure 10; Budget Required €90,000).

## **FINANCIAL PLAN, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

### **Overall Financial Plan**

A statement of assurance is now given that Carlow County Development Partnership will give due cognizance to the rates of aid under this Rural Development Strategy and specifically note that the rates available cannot exceed rates to comparable projects under other grant aid schemes operated by Government Departments and State Agencies.

### **Financial Management and Indicative Resource Allocation Across Measures on a Year by Year Basis**

The following tables detail the resource allocation across measures for the entire Rural Development Strategy over the period 2007 – 2013. Tables 5.2 – 5.7 each detail the annual resource allocation for each year from 2008 – 2013 inclusive.

### Rural Development Programme 2008 – 2013 Financial Plan

<b>2008 – 2013</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Action/Measure</b>			
	<b>10,801,688.00</b>	<b>3,639,000.00</b>	<b>14,440,688.00</b>
1 Diversification into non-agricultural activities(farm diversification)	1,750,000.00	875,000.00	2,625,000.00
2 Support for creation and development of micro-enterprises	1,150,000.00	575,000.00	1,725,000.00
3 Encouragement of Tourism Activities(rural and agri tourism)	2,600,000.00	1,300,000.00	3,900,000.00
4 Basis services for the rural economy and population	550,000.00	275,000.00	825,000.00
5 Village Renewable and Development	950,000.00	190,000.00	1,140,000.00
6 Conservation and Upgrading of rural heritage	2,120,000.00	424,000.00	2,544,000.00
7 Training and information for economic actors	1,250,000.00	0.00	1,250,000.00
10 Networking and Co-operation	431,688.00	0.00	431,688.00
	<b>3,587,922.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>3,587,922.00</b>
11 Administration and Staff Training	2,877,922.00	0.00	2,877,922.00
8 Skills Acquisition and Animation	710,000.00	0.00	710,000.00
<b>NRDP Total</b>	<b>14,389,610.00</b>	<b>3,639,000.00</b>	<b>18,028,610.00</b>