



Tionscatal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



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

Town and Village Renewal Scheme



2020 Scheme Outline

All queries can be addressed to: townandvillage@drcd.gov.ie

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Department of Rural and Community Development

27th May 2020

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1. Introduction

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme was introduced in 2016 and is one of a number of measures designed to rejuvenate rural towns and villages throughout Ireland under the Department of Rural & Community Development's "*Rural Development Investment Programme*". The programme is funded under Project Ireland 2040.

Since the launch of the Scheme in 2016, almost €68 million has been allocated to more than 830 projects across Ireland.

In 2020, the Rural Development Investment Programme, including the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, is being tailored to address the emerging challenges associated with COVID-19. For the Town & Village Renewal Scheme this means:

- A focus under the standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme on interventions that can respond to the new challenges associated with COVID-19 and support the economic and social recovery of our rural towns and villages;
- The introduction of a new strand of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2020 that focuses on immediate interventions that can be delivered in the short-term to assist towns and villages to adapt to COVID-19.

The standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme is covered by this Scheme Outline – the new strand is covered by a separate document.

2. 2020 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The 2020 Town and Village Renewal Scheme will operate on the same basis as has been delivered in recent years, albeit with a particular focus on projects delivering an economic dividend and enabling towns and villages to respond to COVID-19 challenges. The scheme will also continue to support public-realm type activities and the enhancement of town centre

amenities, particularly where this aids the economic and/or social recovery of a town or village.

The Department is committed to ensuring that towns and villages most in need of support and/or towns and villages which have not previously been funded under the scheme will benefit under the 2020 Scheme.

All projects must be in a position to commence as soon as approval is granted and must be capable of being delivered in a realistic timeframe i.e. within a 12 to 18 month period. Where possible, it is advisable that any relevant planning permissions, surveys or studies are in place prior to the submission of an application so as to ensure that there is no delay in the commencement of the project.

3. Categories of Towns

The 2020 scheme will be targeted at two categories of Towns/Villages as follows:

Category 1: Towns and villages with a population of up to 5,000 people.

Category 2: Towns with a population of 5,001 to 10,000 people.

The primary focus of the scheme will be on villages and towns with a population of up to 5,000 (Category 1) as was the case under the 2019 scheme. These towns/villages will receive at least 60% of funding available.

4. Application, Assessment and Approval Process

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and administered through the Local Authorities.

The selection of projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2020 will be by means of a competitive process. When selecting the successful projects, the Department will give consideration to the past performance of the Local Authority in delivering their nominated projects within agreed timeframes. Excessive delays may lead to a reduction in the number of projects approved in a county under the 2020 Scheme.

Final project selection will be made by the Department of Rural and Community Development on the basis of proposals submitted by the Local Authorities.

Local Authorities will be required to complete and submit:

- **An Individual Application form for each project.**
- **An Application Overview sheet.**
- **An Expression of Interest Overview sheet.**

Applications must be submitted by 28th August 2020.

The following stages will apply to the application process:

- Local Authorities will be required to advertise for expressions of interest from towns/villages in their area and to select **up to 6 proposals** for development into detailed applications to be submitted to the Department.
- The development of these proposals must be done in consultation with town/village community and business interests. Full involvement by community interests and/or business interests will be an essential feature of successful projects.
- Only one application can be submitted in respect of any individual town/village, including towns that may be under the remit of more than one Local Authority. However, an individual application may include several linked components to support the rejuvenation of the town/village.
- Where the town/village is submitted for funding under this Scheme and is also the subject of a Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) application, the Local Authority is required to explain the rationale for submitting the application to the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and how this links with the RRDF application.
- The assessment and approval of all projects will have regard to a number of factors including: available funding; the range, mix, quality and impact of proposed projects; previous funding provided; and other relevant considerations.

5. Project Guidelines

The following are general guidelines that should be considered when developing projects:

- There is a particular emphasis this year on projects that support the economic and social recovery of our towns and villages in response to COVID-19.
- Proposals in respect of towns or villages that have not previously applied, or have not been successful under the scheme, will be prioritised by the Department to the extent possible, subject to the overall quality of the project.

- Notwithstanding the above, proposals in respect of towns and villages that have successfully completed projects under previous schemes will still be welcome, particularly where new applications build on previous projects as part of a cohesive plan for the town/village in question.
- Successful proposals will include activities which have clear positive impacts on the town in terms of place-making and town centre regeneration.
- Proposals seeking to develop or implement initiatives to encourage town centre living will be viewed positively.
- Projects that demonstrate a REDZ-type component¹, to stimulate economic activity between a town/village and neighbouring townlands or hinterlands, will be especially welcome.
- Successful proposals will demonstrate close collaboration between communities and business interests in the design and delivery of proposed projects and must have the support of the Local Authority.
- Subject to the overall quality of the proposal, consideration will be given to projects which demonstrate leveraging of, or linkages with, other schemes operated by Government Departments or agencies (e.g. in the areas of heritage, arts, culture, tourism, TidyTowns, recreational facilities, re-use of vacant premises, vacant sites, energy efficiency schemes, etc.) to maximise the impact of investment in the town/village.
- The Department also favours initiatives that mutually benefit neighbouring or adjacent towns/villages or initiatives aimed at achieving Purple Flag² or similar recognition.
- Proposals must also be consistent with the County Development Plan, Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), town health checks, and other relevant local development plans.

6. Types of activities which can be supported

Projects funded under the 2020 Scheme must demonstrate a clear benefit and visible impact for the town/village concerned. Only proposals that are capable of being delivered within a realistic timeframe should be submitted

¹ Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZs) are functional areas that utilise synergies and interdependencies between rural towns and their townlands to generate economic activity in their local area.

² Purple Flag is an accreditation process similar to the Blue Flag for beaches. It leads to Purple Flag status for town & city centres that meet or surpass the standards of excellence in managing the evening and night time economy.

The following indicative list of activities (not exhaustive) will be eligible:

- Projects that can respond to COVID-19 challenges and aid the economic and social recovery over the medium term.
- The development of initiatives to encourage town centre living.
- Initiatives which attract increased footfall to the town/village, including those associated with tourism activities.
- Repurposing of existing buildings in town or village centres to facilitate remote working and/or other community use.
- Branding and promotion of the town/village to attract new customers and/or business investment.
- Town safety and accessibility enhancements.
- Car parking improvements expressly designed to encourage increased footfall in town centres.
- Projects that support improvements of Broadband Connection Points (BCPs), and enterprise and remote working hub facilities, to address factors contributing to low occupancy rates.
- Provision/enhancement of local recreational facilities (e.g. Town Parks, walking trails linked to the town/village).
- Enhancement of streetscape and town environment.
- Shop/House front enhancement (especially if done in parallel with other Local Authority Schemes focused on such improvements).
- Conducting/commissioning of Town/Village health checks³.

³ The Framework for Town Centre Renewal, developed by the Retail Consultation Forum under the auspices of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, may provide a useful guidance for the development of town centre plans. See <https://dbe.gov.ie/en/Publications/A-Framework-for-Town-Centre-Renewal.html>

- Targeted actions to tackle minor deficiencies in access, services, site development works and other small infrastructural works that may be needed to support town centre enhancement, including housing and/or commercial development and which form part of an overall plan to enhance the town centre.
- Enhancement of heritage and/or other community assets including through energy efficiency measures.
- Development of quality marks, such as Purple Flag, Heritage Town, etc.

7. Types of activities which will not be supported

- Where the Local Authority is aware of difficulties in obtaining the appropriate planning permission or other permissions/leases necessary for the successful delivery of the project.
- Support for a single private enterprise – projects that collectively assist private enterprises within a town or village are acceptable
- Purchase of land or property.
- Incomplete projects - Phases of projects are acceptable but the project must be operational after completion of each phase funded.
- Ongoing operational costs.
- Projects that don't demonstrate consultation with community.
- Projects that are more appropriate for funding under CLÁR, the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), the Outdoor Rural Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) or the RRDF.

8. Grant level

The indicative budget for this portion of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme is €10 million.

As a once off measure, in recognition of the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, the maximum grant level has been increased to 90% of the total cost of a project under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

The remaining 10% match funding must be contributed by the Local Authority and/or the community and/or Philanthropic contributions - this can take the form of 5% cash contribution (minimum level) and 5% in-kind contribution (maximum level).

The minimum grant which is available is €20,000 and the maximum is generally €100,000. A higher maximum of €200,000 will be considered for a small number of projects where a robust case can be made demonstrating exceptional benefit to a town. It is proposed that an indicative 20% of the overall funding available will be ring-fenced for such larger projects, subject to a sufficient number of good quality projects of this nature being submitted for consideration to the Department.

Professional costs and Local Authority administration costs associated with the proposed project are allowable but should be kept to a minimum. These costs must be clearly documented in the application and are only permitted up to a maximum of 10% of the overall project costs.

9. Payment Schedule

Town and Village 2020 funding may be drawn down in up to 3 phases. Any individual claim for payment must involve at least 20% of the total projects costs.

10. Funding Conditions for Rural Schemes funded under the Department of Rural and Community Development.

All expenditure registered through the Department's Rural Schemes i.e. Town and Village Renewal Scheme, CLÁR, Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) will be subject to the terms of the Public Spending Code which can be found at <http://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/>.

In addition to this, the requirements outlined below will apply to all funding approved through those schemes. The need for adherence to all of the requirements will be reflected in the contractual agreement between the Department of Rural and Community Development and the grantee approved for funding under the scheme.

1. Projects will be expected to commence and be completed in line with the timelines set out in the relevant Scheme Outline.
2. The Department may de-commit funding allocated to projects under the Scheme where the project is not completed within the time specified, and where the express agreement of the Department to extend the funding arrangement has not been agreed in advance.
3. The grant funding for the approved project will be provided from the Department of Rural and Community Development's capital budget. Administration and/or

professional costs associated with the proposed project, where allowed for in the Scheme Outline, should be kept to a minimum. These costs must be clearly documented in the application and are only permitted up to a maximum of 10% of the overall project costs.

4. Where allowed in the relevant Scheme Outline, in-kind contributions, up to the maximum set out in relevant Scheme Outline, can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work) which must be based on the verified time spent on the project.
 - The rate applied should be for remuneration of equivalent work, up to a maximum rate of €14 per hour. The grantee must ensure that the rate per hour applied is properly justified according to the work undertaken.
 - Where Voluntary Labour forms part of a project, the grantee is advised that the requirements of all relevant Health and Safety legislation apply.
 - Project administration e.g. attendance at meetings, preparation of grant application form, funding drawdown claims and management costs are not eligible as voluntary labour.
 - Labour provided by a participant on an RSS/TUS/other exchequer funded scheme are not eligible for use as an in-kind contribution.
 - Voluntary labour must be completed prior to submitting the final drawdown claim to the Department. It may be included in phased payments, provided the work in question has been completed at the time the claim is submitted.
 - Details of all voluntary labour claimed must be maintained on a timesheet (1 timesheet per person) which will be provided by the Department. The time sheet will capture the following details;
 - The name of the person undertaking the work
 - The nature, time, dates of the works, quantity, hours worked and rate per hour,
 - The signature of the person who provided the in-kind work,
 - The timesheet must be signed off by the appointed project co-ordinator over the project.
5. A cash contribution as set out in the relevant Scheme Outline is required. The grantee will be required to provide confirmation that the cash contribution is in place and retain a record of the source of the cash contribution.

6. Projects must be completed in full in order to drawdown the full grant amount. Where it is established that a project has not been completed, the Department may request the grantee to repay any funding received on the project. Any changes to the proposed project must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance of the change being implemented.
7. Where an element of the approved project is not carried out as per the project application, grant funding may be reduced to reflect the amended project.
8. If the project involves works on buildings or lands that are not in the ownership of the grantee, a minimum 5 year lease must be in place from date of project completion.
9. In the case of funding allocated to enterprises or facilities (i.e. community centre, hubs, vehicles under CLÁR etc.), it is a requirement that they must operate as funded for a minimum of 5 years following release of the final stage of funding, otherwise funding may have to be repaid. Where they do not operate as funded this must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance.
10. All appropriate financial, Public Procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with and each grantee will fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.
11. Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure should be maintained and accessible by Department officials for audit purposes at all times and for a period of six years from the date of completion of the project.
12. Grantees will acknowledge the support of Project 2040 / Department of Rural and Community Development / Government of Ireland, and any other applicable sources of funding (as identified in the relevant Funding Agreement) in all public announcements, advertising and signage, as appropriate, relating to the project. In addition, the Department may seek to use the project in the broader promotion of its policies.
13. Grantees will provide any reports and information relating to the project as may reasonably be requested by the Department of Rural and Community Development from time to time.
14. On-going monitoring and evaluation of the project outputs and outcomes should take place in the context of assessing the impact of the project. Grantees will be expected

to collect appropriate data to facilitate this learning on an on-going basis. On request, a brief report (1-2 pages) on the outputs and outcomes of the project funded should be completed and made available to the Department.

15. Each grantee, will provide a contact point/points to the Department to facilitate payment and information requests. The Department should be updated on any changes to contact personnel in a timely manner.
16. A checklist confirming compliance with funding conditions relating to the grant aid will be required upon project completion.

Non-Compliance with the conditions as outlined or any additional stipulations agreed during contract negotiations may result in the requirement to refund part or all of the grant aid awarded.

Note: All projects proposals must be supported by a fully completed Application Form. Only applications submitted by the Local Authority will be considered.

The scoring framework below will be applied to all applications in order to ensure that successful projects are of a high quality.

Closing date for receipt of applications to townandvillage@drcd.gov.ie is **28th August 2020**.

Scoring Framework to follow.