



"Celebrating 25 years"

Local Development Strategy 2014 - 2020

February 2016

Abstract

This Local Development Strategy (LDS) sets out a clear vision of community-led local development strategy for the Connemara region for the period 2016-2020. It takes into account local needs and potential as well as relevant socio-cultural characteristics and is focused on a clearly defined natural area. This Strategy contributes to the implementation of EU, national and local policy and is based on an integrated delivery model, designed, and to be implemented by FORUM Connemara Ltd., (The LAG).

The organisational structure of FORUM is balanced and has the necessary public, private and voluntary representation with no sector being greater than 49%. FORUM has an exemplary track record of managing public funding and delivering national and EU programmes, the veracity of which has been, and will continue to be, exuded by the FORUM approach to development and organisational ethos. This organisational experience extends over the last 25 years and incorporates many of the features of what is currently termed community-led local development, it being multi sectoral, participative, territorially based and cooperative in nature. FORUM has also demonstrated robust and transparent governance arrangements that have been in place from the inception of the organisation, operating and distributing resources in a fair and equitable manner. FORUM has a dedicated and committed management, administrative and staffing structure in place with the relevant competencies, expertise and experience to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of this LDS. FORUM has clear decision making processes in place including robust financial controls and project selection procedures, historically proven to be of the utmost probity through various independent national and EU level audits and inspections.

This LDS has provided a clear definition and description of the area and its population. It has identified priority target groups, communities and highlights three specific geographic areas. The robust area profile and extensive consultation process presents an accurate detailed analysis, including patterns and emerging changes, using up to date evidence including data from the CSO intercensal period 2006-2011. The outcomes of a comprehensive and in-depth local consultation process illustrate and present the extent of stakeholder engagement. This process informed needs, opportunities and the identification of priorities of the area, the culmination of which translates into a clear vision and a set of 9 clearly defined local objectives and 21 individual actions.

Coherent, logical, realistic and time bound local objectives and strategic actions are clearly set out in the action plan section of the LDS with a clearly defined mechanism for delivery, including staffing resources. The targets identified are tailored to address the LEADER programme indicators and are commensurate with the level of funding and budget proposed in this plan. The LDS expressly identifies that it will monitor and evaluate progress dynamically and in real time, aligned with contractual programme requirements and will include internal self evaluation, external professional evaluation with both quantitative and qualitative components.

This LDS clearly asserts that the priorities, objectives and actions are congruent with the LEADER programme priorities and particularly the themes and sub-themes and have been both proofed against, and seek to address, the cross cutting themes of innovation, climate change and environment.

The LDS describes clear alignment with other development strategies and plans and complementarity and integration in practical terms. Furthermore the complementarity with relevant local, regional, national and EU level policies is highlighted. The FORUM delivery model is ingrained in the fabric of the region, founded on a stakeholder based approach and including principles of the CLLD approach such as partnership, networking, co-operation. An area based emphasis ensures complementarity, synergy and added value with other local development strategies and plans. Finally the budget being pursued for this LDS is in line with the allocation for the sub-regional area; it is clear, logical and reflects the sub-themes and local objectives.

This LDS is a document that captures the needs of the area and translates these into a set of concise, achievable and deliverable actions which are aligned with relevant policy. This is coupled with demonstrating FORUM's capacity to implement LEADER and deliver added value and value for money.

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Glossary of Terms

BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
BTWEA	Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
CEDRA	Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CRO	Company Registrations Office
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSP	Community Services Programme
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ED	Electoral Divisions
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FLAG	Fisheries Local Action Group
FRC	Family Resource Centre
GRETb	Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IFA	Irish Farmers Association
IFA	Irish Farmers Association
INHFA	Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association
LAG	Local Action Group
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LCDP	Local Community Development Programme
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
NEETs	Not in Employment Education or Training
NHA	National Heritage Area
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
PPN	Public Participation Network
Promoter	Promoter of a project/beneficiary of funding
RDP	Rural Development Programme
REDZ	Rural Economic Development Zone
RSS	Rural Social Scheme
SA	Small Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SICAP	Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPA	Special Protection Area
WAW	Wild Atlantic Way
WDC	Western Development Commission

Section 1: The Local Action Group (LAG)

1.1 Organisation Details and Primary Contact for LEADER

Legal Name of LAG	FORUM Connemara Ltd
Postal address	Ellis Hall, Letterfrack, Connemara, Co Galway
Telephone number	095 41116
Email address	j.coyne@forumconnemara.ie
Website	www.forumconnemara.ie
Primary Contact for LEADER	John Coyne CEO
Postal address	Ellis Hall, Letterfrack, Connemara. Co. Galway
Telephone number	095 41116
E mail address	j.coyne@forumconnemara.ie

1.2 Legal Description of LAG

Date of establishment	11/06/1990 date of incorporation (change was made to company name and memo and arts in 2009)
CRO Number	160282
TCC expiry date	31/3/16 – tax clearance no: 06560282-28474F
Legal Structure	Company limited by guarantee with charitable status

1.2.1 Financial Status

FORUM Connemara Ltd. (hereafter referred to as FORUM) is a solvent organisation. Its external auditors confirm that it complies in full with best practice financial management and the requirements of the Companies Registration Office. At the time of this application, all accounts are in order for 2014. Accounts will be prepared for 2015 in early spring 2016.

1.2.2 Operational Ethos: Description of Main Activities

FORUM originated as a community development organisation, whose main aim was to tackle disadvantage through increasing the capacity of groups and individuals within the project area and has continued over twenty five years of existence to implement all its programmes using the principles of community development.

FORUM operates a unique approach, in the delivery of social inclusion programmes, which is flexible, caring, client centred and is responsive to the needs identified by communities and individuals resident in Connemara. In its 25 years of operation, FORUM has developed a deep understanding of the needs and challenges faced by those living in such a peripheral rural area. Thus FORUM is constantly adapting its approach, in response to an ongoing consultation process. Furthermore this informs the range and focus of interventions and services delivered by FORUM. The cornerstone of these principles is the participation of all relevant actors, statutory bodies, voluntary groups and representatives of the target groups in the identification of needs and the formulation of responses.

FORUM is essentially a hub around which community activity is organised or enabled in the project area. The Board of FORUM has strong community, business and statutory representation and staff who have expertise and experience in working with voluntary groups, disadvantaged individuals and business promoters to identify needs, mobilise responses, evaluate progress and assist in further progression. **The ethos of the work of FORUM has always been to promote access, openness, equality and participation in the services and programmes provided through the organisation.**

FORUM has a robust and effective track record, in terms of both on the ground impact and the high standards of administration for the range of programmes it delivers on behalf of the Government and various state agencies. These programmes are aimed at improving the overall economic and social well-being of stakeholders and the physical and institutional environments in which they live. The organisation works with community and private sectors, tourism operators, including farmers and fishermen. FORUM has forged very strong links with Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Gaeltacht Co-ops since 2012 while delivering the Local Community Development Programme (LCDP) in the Connemara Gaeltacht. It also works with those excluded or at risk of exclusion – families experiencing disadvantage, under and unemployed, those seeking refugee status, youth, older people and carers. Experience of delivery includes the following programmes:

- EU Anti-Poverty Programme 1989 - 1994;
- Community Development Programme 1994 - 2008;
- Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) 2002 - 2010;
- LEADER Programme (Leader) 2009 - 2015;
- Local Community Development Programme (LCDP) 2011 - to date;
- Adolescent Support Programme (1) 2000 – to date;
- FAS Community Employment Schemes (3) 1991-to date;
- FAS Job Initiative Scheme (1) 1999 – to date;
- Rural Social Scheme; (1) 2009-to date;
- TUS (4) 2011 – to date;
- Rural Recreation Programme (1) 2011 - to date;

FORUM adheres to the 'Guidelines for Governance' set out by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. The Board of FORUM have also adopted the 'Governance Code for Community Organisations', as recommended by the charities regulator in October 2014. A company procedures manual is in place, inspected annually by the Company's auditors and by external auditors for LEADER programme. FORUM will adopt the Procedures Manual as required (which contains all the existing policies to ensure the accountable and transparent running of the company) which is currently being developed by the Department.

FORUM has adopted a collaborative, partnership structure with local, regional and national stakeholders in all aspects of programme delivery. Implementation of the programmes involves extensive partnership and collaboration, such as with Galway County Council, Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRET), Fáilte Ireland, Dept. of Social Protection, and the LEO (Local Enterprise Office) and other statutory agencies. In addition, there was significant collaboration and funding from the HSE, FAS, VEC, LCDP, Dormant Accounts and others.

Through the core funding provided by the LEADER and social inclusion programmes, FORUM will continue its partnership approach in the delivery of the LEADER Programme. FORUM's chairperson is a member of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) thus ensuring collaboration at a County level. FORUM will continue its policy of representation of target groups on the Board of Directors and working sub-committees of the organisation, to ensure that the most disadvantaged have an opportunity to have their voices heard and impact on the management of the Company.

1.3 LAG Composition and Decision Making

1.3.1 Board of Directors January 2016

FORUM currently has a Board of Directors of 19 (up to 24 members set out in the guidelines) and is comprised of voluntary and community and statutory sectors, Local Authority representatives and the four Pillars. The voluntary and community sector representatives include community networks, groups representative of older people, young people, persons with disabilities and women. Other members include four County Councillors and the County Manager's nominee. The four Pillars - IFA, IBEC, Trade Unions and Environmental nominated their representatives and the statutory organisations include the GRETb and Teagasc.

Table 1: FORUM Board Members

Terry Keenan, Chairperson	IBEC	Business/Community
Kevin Heanue	Teagasc	Economics/Agriculture
Jim Cullen	Local Authority	Management
Eithne NicDhonnchadha	GRETb	Education
Anne Donald Joyce	Community and voluntary	Community
Jenny Conboy	Community and voluntary	Community/Elderly
Mary Kirby	Community and voluntary	Community/ Women
Martin Conneely	Community and voluntary	Community
Cllr. Thomas Welby	Local Authority	Local government
Cllr. Seamus Walsh	Local Authority	Local government
Cllr. Niamh Byrne	Local Authority	Local government
Cllr. Eileen Mannion	Local Authority	Local government
Emmet McGloin	IFA	Farming sector
Hugh Musgrave	IFA	Farming sector
Sean Heanue	SIPTU	Trade Union
Mary Gannon	Community and voluntary	Community / Family
Carmel Geoghegan	Community and voluntary	Youth
Josephine Lally	Community and voluntary	Community /Policy
Leo Hallissey	Environmental pillar	Environment/Community

1.3.2 Board Member's Expertise

The members of the FORUM Board of Directors represent community and voluntary sector, statutory organisations, Local Authority and the four pillars – Trade Unions, Farming, Business and Environmental sectors and bring a wide range of knowledge and expertise to the organisation in the area of community / rural development, project management, delivery of social inclusion initiatives and leveraging of match funding. The current members of the Board of FORUM, as well as the CEO and project staff, have experience in the delivery and management of the previous LEADER Programme and have a clear understanding of the mechanisms involved.

The statutory organisations such as Teagasc, GRETb and the Local Authority deliver a wide range of services to the local community, many of which are delivered in conjunction with FORUM, facilitated through the partnership structure of the company. These services are targeted at the most excluded, hard to reach communities.

The community and voluntary representatives have experience working in their own communities, on a voluntary basis and have in depth knowledge and understanding of local need. The Local Authority representatives, as local councillors, are experienced in working with individuals and community organisations. The trade union, environmental and farming representatives bring specialist expertise of their respective sectors to the Board and operate at both a local and regional level. The varied and wide ranging experience and knowledge of the constituent members of the Board of FORUM has and will continue to ensure the effective delivery of a wide range of programmes to combat social exclusion, rural decline and poverty in Connemara.

Note: The Board will undertake elections and appointments in early 2016, to ensure rotation as per the Memorandum and Articles and to ensure good governance. **This process was to have taken place before the AGM in March 2015, but was deferred as per guidance from the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (see appendix III).**

1.3.3 Board Procedures for Inviting Nominations on the Selection of Directors

The Company's Articles of Association provide that there must be no fewer than 8 Directors or more than 24 Directors. The composition of FORUM is drawn from Local Government; National Social Partners (NSP), the Community and Voluntary sector, Statutory Sector and the Environment pillar. **The FORUM constitution is transparent in its decision making procedures and neither the public sector nor any single interest group will represent more than 49% of the voting right.** The following is a summation with extracts from the Company Memorandum and Articles of Association, and the Nomination Policy, the full text of which is in Appendix XIII.

1.3.4 Rotation of Directors

At each Annual General Meeting, one-third of the Directors (except the Chairperson) retires and this is done by rotation, according to the date of appointment or co-option, with the option for re-nomination by the Company. Full details on the rotation of Directors are in Appendix IV.

1.3.5 Board Training

Any new Directors will be required to undertake induction training covering their roles and responsibilities as Directors and the requirements of LEADER implementation including understanding the importance of declaring interest¹. ***For full details on legal and operational procedures and compliance with Departmental guidelines, please see Appendix IV.***

1.3.6 FORUM Decision Making Structures

FORUM has a Board of Directors as set out in the guidelines with appropriate committees in place. They include: structures, personnel, LCDP sub committee, LEADER evaluation committee and strategy committee. To ensure all LAG decisions are representative and support a CLLD approach, FORUM will adhere to the requirement that at a minimum 60% of LAG members be present during decisions on project funding. See Figure 2 and Appendix XV for more information.

1.3.7 Frequency of LAG Committee Meetings

The Board of Directors of FORUM Connemara Ltd. meet on a monthly basis.

1.3.8 Quorum Compliance for LEADER Decisions

FORUM will ensure that there is a 60% attendance for all LEADER related decisions and that any one sector will not have more than 40% representation at a decision making meeting.

1.4 LAG Roles and Responsibilities

FORUM, in its role as the Local Action Group (LAG), will carry out implementation of the LEADER Programme. FORUM will have the operational role of programme delivery with the required experience and capacity. It will also have dedicated systems and procedures to undertake the delivery of the programme. FORUM will build the capacity of local actors to develop and implement operations including fostering their project management capabilities. The delivery model will be in keeping with the Operational Rules to include:

- Drawing up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria for the selection of operations, which avoid conflicts of interest, ensure that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by partners which are not public authorities, and allow selection by written procedure;

¹ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2006/en/si/0678.html>.

- Ensuring coherence with the community-led LDS when selecting operations, by prioritising those operations according to contribution to meeting that strategy's objectives and targets;
- Preparing and publishing calls for proposals or an ongoing project submission procedure, including defining selection criteria;
- Receiving and assessing applications for support;
- Selecting projects and fixing the amount of support and, where relevant, presenting the proposals to the body responsible for final verification of eligibility before approval;
- Monitoring the implementation of the community-led LDS and the projects supported and carrying out specific evaluation activities linked to that strategy.

FORUM adheres to the Guidelines for Governance set out by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and will implement LEADER in accordance with their requirements and in line with EU Regulation 1305/2013. A company procedures manual is in place; inspected annually by the Company's auditors and by external auditors for the LEADER programme. It contains all the policies in place to ensure the efficient, effective, accountable and transparent running of the company.

- The Board appointed auditors, prepare an annual audit to allow for checks and planning;
- Company annual accounts are prepared in accordance with best practice regulations and presented to the Board at the Annual General meeting;
- All FORUM accounts and LEADER files are open to inspection or audit by The Comptroller and Auditor General, the Programme's Certifying Body, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the European Commission or the European Court of Auditors.

FORUM is the subject of several audits annually on foot of the various programmes and has always been deemed to meet the highest financial and accounting standards.

1.4.1 Administration

FORUM will undertake the administration of the LEADER programme in compliance with the Department guidelines and will adhere to the requirements of the programmes as specified operating under the 25% ceiling on administration/animation in an efficient and effective manner.

1.4.2 Animation

Animation and processes involved such as calls for proposals will be managed and implemented by FORUM and core staff. Where outside expertise is necessary it will be utilised. Given FORUM's networks and working relationships it has extensive access to key professional advice if necessary at little or no cost.

1.4.3 Management of staff

The staff of FORUM includes:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| - CEO; | - 4 TUS supervisors; |
| - Assistant CEO; | - 1 RSS supervisor; |
| - 2 administrators; | - 52 CE participants; |
| - Secretary; | - 80 TUS participants; |
| - 6 programme staff; | - 11 Job Initiative; |
| - 3 CE Supervisors; | - 14 Rural Social Scheme Participants; |

In addition to their salaried employment, many staff are involved, on a voluntary basis, in their own local communities which in turn brings added value and local knowledge to their work in rural and community development. FORUM staff have expertise and experience in working with voluntary groups and individuals experiencing disadvantage and adversity, to identify needs, mobilise responses, evaluate progress and assist in further progression.

1.4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of LEADER will be a dynamic and an on-going process which will involve the identification of clear outputs, outcomes and where possible impacts, against which all actions will be reviewed on a regular basis. FORUM staff, currently working under LEADER, are trained and technically competent in the collection, input and monitoring of data for the LEADER IT programme and adhere to the guidelines set out in the company data protection policy.

The monitoring and evaluation process uses the following methods:

- Collection of information about programme indicators and target outcomes in line with FORUM strategy and contractual obligations around delivery.
- Quarterly self evaluation staff sessions on delivery around the programme of work which captures both target outputs – and outcomes, both planned and unforeseen.
- On-going monitoring and evaluation support and independent assessment of work programmes is provided to FORUM by Professor Chris Curtin, Head of School & Vice President for Innovation and Performance, NUI Galway. He meets with staff on a regular basis to review outcomes as set out in FORUM's work plans.
- LCDP IRIS system and LEADER IT system provide monitoring tools for FORUM.
- The collection of information provides a rich database for understanding the processes and models bringing success. It also allows for the collection of information on the added value and unforeseen benefits of FORUM's work, as well as an understanding of what isn't working so well.

1.5 FORUM Financial Management

FORUM produces monthly and annual reports on its activities. It also produces audited annual accounts, produced by Duffy and Company, public auditors.

1.5.1 Financial Controls and Management Procedures for the LEADER Programme (LEADER)

FORUM ensures that:

- Detailed financial statements are presented to the Board of directors on a monthly basis;
- Clear and separate systems for the ordering, approval and processing of orders and payments, this operates to a triple standard, project officer request for the order/purchase, administrator proofing and then final approval by the Chief Executive and for purchasing over €5000 to the Board other than for normal operational costs;
- A petty cash system and policy is maintained.
- Procurement policy (in line with Department and EU regulations).
- Payments to grant beneficiaries, in line with Department requirements.

1.5.2 Procedures for financial management of LEADER

FORUM is cognisant of the fact that LEADER is both a European and Exchequer funded programme. Therefore it will ensure its financial systems are in compliance with the Department's reporting requirements for the LEADER programme. FORUM will comply with Public Procurement requirements as required. For more detail on FORUM's financial systems see Appendix VI.

1.5.3 Financial Partner for LEADER

The FORUM financial partner for LEADER will be the Department of Environment Community and Local Government as per the latest guidelines. FORUM are aware that the operational procedures, guidelines and rules for the programme are still being prepared, but have expertise in the comprehensive adoption of LEADER operating rules and are committed to the implementation of all such requirements by the managing authority and Pobal, as its delivery agent.

1.5.4 LEADER Staffing

The LEADER staff:

- 2 x full time equivalent project workers
- 0.6 x full time equivalent finance/administrator
- 0.4 x full time equivalent of the Chief Executive's Time

- 0.4 x full time equivalent of administrative support
- Total – full time equivalents = 3.4

1.5.5 Organisational Structure

Figure 1 below gives a graphical representation of the overarching FORUM organisational structure. The ‘Structures’ and ‘Personnel’ sub groups of the Board were established to address the need for effective delivery, administrative and staffing arrangements of FORUM, as well as ensure the Company adheres to legislation and best practice in recruitment and personnel management. The Personnel sub group meet regularly to review staffing issues, personnel policies workload/staff capacity etc. and to recommend staff appointments to the Board of FORUM.

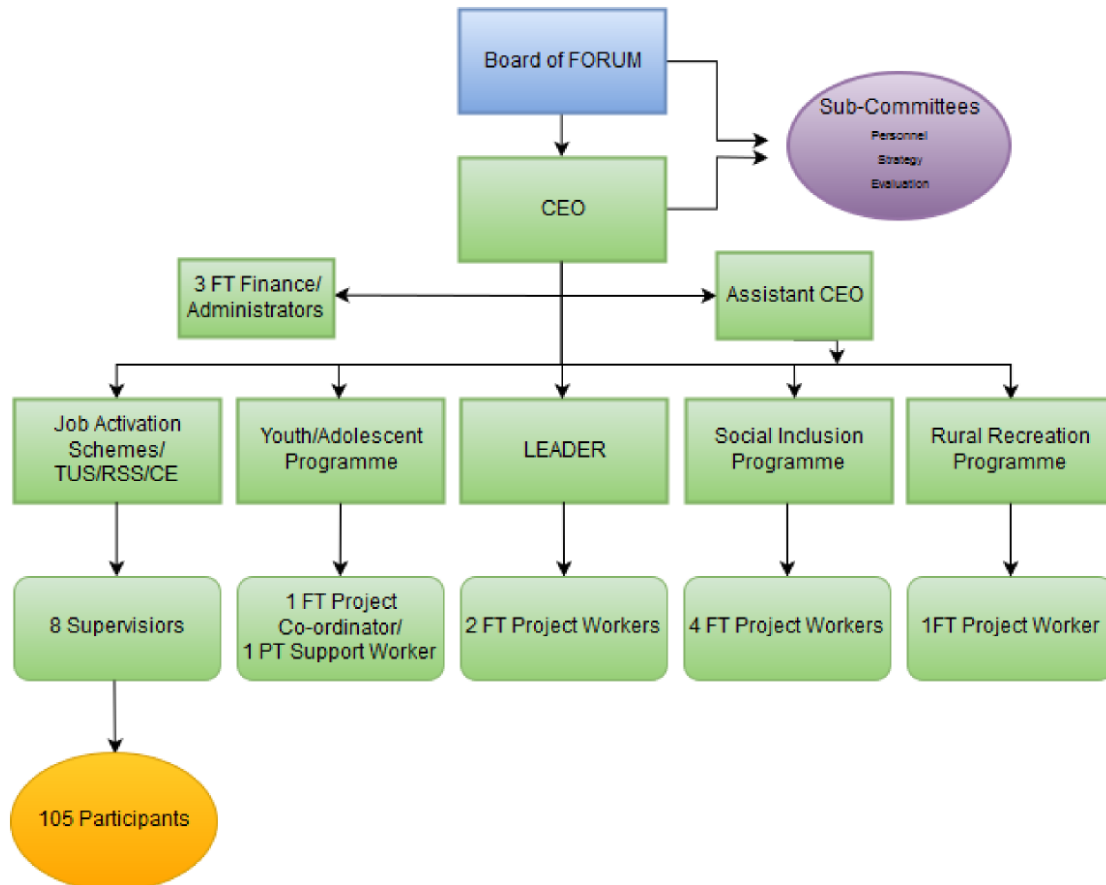


Figure 1: Organisational chart

Details on staff competencies is in Appendix VII

1.6 Project Selection Procedures for LEADER

The following outlines the process that FORUM will apply in calling for project applications and the handling and processing of applications. A full set of the processes used is in Appendix VIII and the draft letter of Offer is in Appendix IX and the FORUM Procedures Manual. Please note this manual will be updated as required under the LEADER Operational Rules. **Staff and Evaluation Committees will be trained in the application of these assessments systems.**

1.6.1 Procedure for Handling Applications

The Procedure for managing the call, and handling of applications is described in the following Figure 2. This process includes issuing calls for Expressions of Interest.

1.6.2 Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee, established by the Board of FORUM Connemara, will evaluate projects under the LEADER Programme. Members of the Evaluation Committee will not be Board members. The Evaluation Committee is comprised of the members from voluntary, community and statutory agencies. The Terms of Reference for the Evaluation Committee is in **Appendix X**.

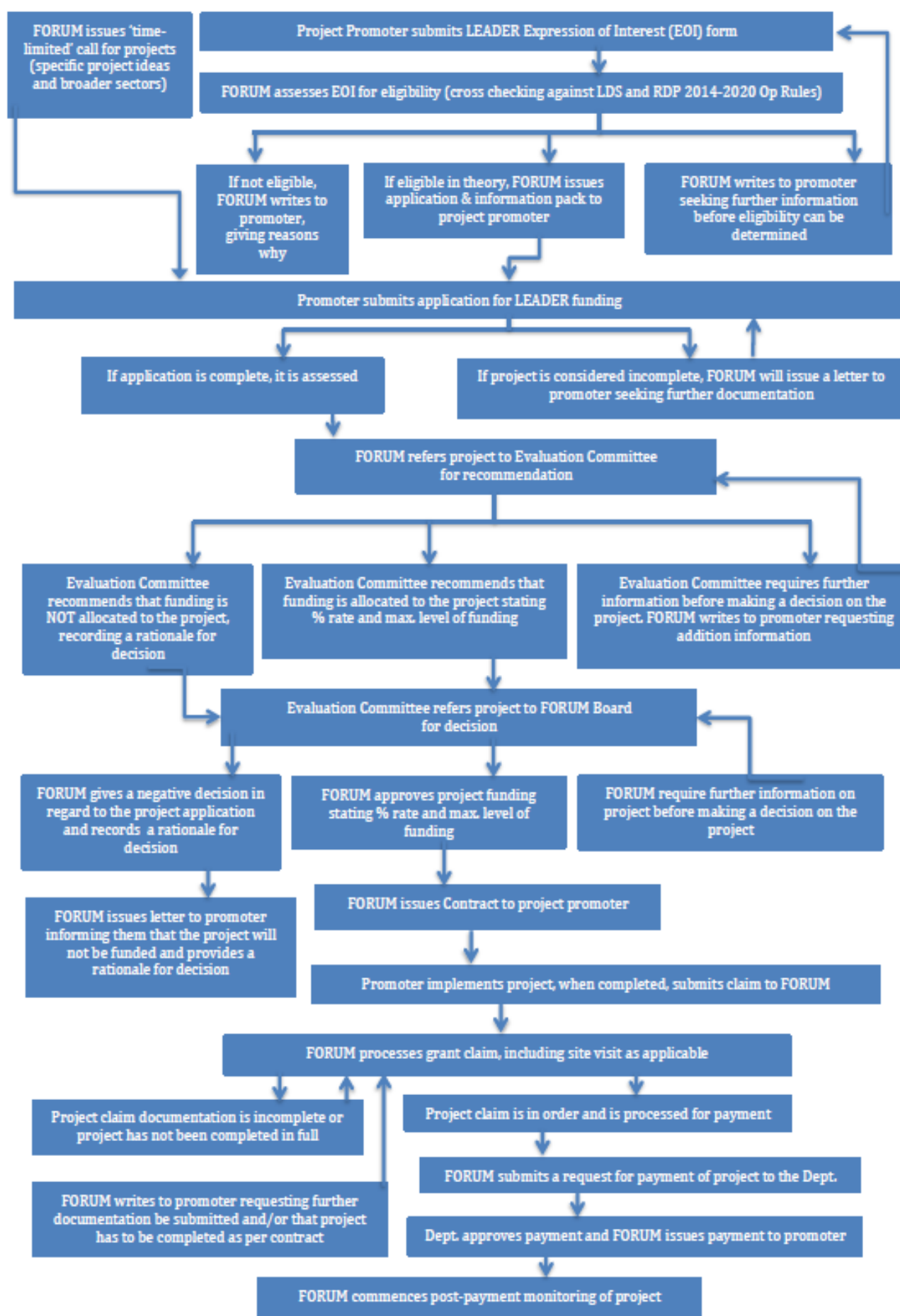


Figure 2: Procedure for managing the appraisal & selection process

1.6.3 Animation

FORUM is aware of the important role it has in animating the territory for LEADER. Where possible animation will be carried out by staff members and where necessary contracted third parties for areas requiring specific expertise. FORUM will follow the Programme Guidelines in respect of animation activities.

Potential promoters that may not have the necessary skills to deliver a project will be provided with training/capacity building to enable them to submit an application as part of the Call. The full targeted Call for Applications should be opened to those that had participated in the EOI stage and will involve complete applications and will include the proposed budget for each proposal, the themes for which the proposals are being called for, the qualifying criteria and marking scheme to be used, and the closing date for the receipt of such applications.

1.6.4 Self Applications

The FORUM LDS requires some delivery by FORUM through various support programmes. When these applications are prepared they will be submitted as written proposals to the evaluation committee for approval. There will be a clear segregation of duties between those preparing the applications and those involved in assessment. **To ensure value for money FORUM will carry out research and checks to determine whether a more cost effective delivery of the project/service may be available.** FORUM will ensure the process is competitive, cost effective, and produces the best impact.

1.6.5 Conflicts of Interest

It is recognised that in the delivery of FORUM activities, the commissioning of consultants, selection of contractors and appointment of staff, etc. may have the potential to draw Board members and staff into situations where a conflict of interest may be perceived to arise. Board Members, evaluation committee and staff will be required to declare any known potential conflicts at least once annually, at the earliest opportunity thereafter as additional ones arise and at any Board or Evaluation meeting should they arise. FORUM will collate and maintain these as a *Register of Interests* available for Departmental and Audit Inspection. Further details are in Appendix V.

1.6.6 Project Criteria and Scoring Framework.

Details on the scoring matrix and assessment process are in Appendix VIII, the following lists the essential criteria:

- Consistency with the Programme objectives and the specific theme and sub theme for which funding is sought;
- The objectives set out in the FORUM's LDS;
- EU and national regulatory requirements;
- All relevant requirements of the Operating Rules;
- The investment operations involved;
- Appropriate assurance that deadweight does not arise;
- The potential for similar businesses or jobs to lose out as a result of Programme aid, i.e. displacement ;
- The availability of funding from other State schemes and initiatives etc.;
- Viability of the project;
- Adherence to state aid and '*de minimis*' requirements;
- Evidence of title or leasehold;
- Level of innovation;

Thematic Criteria will include the following (this is not an exhaustive list, see matrix in Appendix X. There may be assessment tools developed by the managing authority which FORUM will adopt).

- How well does the project fit the content of the Local Objective and Strategic Action?
- For Training /Social Economy or Community projects only - how does this project meet social need and address excluded sectors?

- Will the project create new levels of excellence/innovation?
- How well does the project fit with rural enterprise trends and priorities for the FORUM region (e.g. Landscape based, heritage and culture, tourism or regional excellence)?
- Does the application demonstrate good knowledge of the proposed market or target sector?
- Degree of Innovation?
- Added Value?
- Job Creation/Enhancement?

An assessment tool will also be used as part of the process, to measure the ability of the promoter to implement the project.

1.6.7 Statement of Compliance Calls for Projects and Time Limited Calls

FORUM Connemara will advertise and promote calls for project applications and confirms that a minimum of 40% of the budget will be allocated to 'time-limited' *Calls for Applications*, the remainder will be for *Rolling Calls* (on-going calls). FORUM will put in place a *Call for Applications* of at least 60% for community type activities/ projects and at least 40% of revenue generating activities/projects. The *Call for Applications* shall be carried out at least once a year and shall be widely publicised including on the FORUM website, social media, at information meetings and published in the local media. The call should be preceded by an intensive animation campaign which should be targeted at the areas/communities which are in greatest need of funding as identified in the LDS.

1.6.8 Serving the Gaeltacht Community

This strategy will be published in Irish, for the launch of the programme. A summary document and all communications related to the calls for applications etc. will also be in Irish. FORUM has 5 staff that are fluent in Irish and will engage in LEADER delivery in Irish speaking communities.

1.7 Relevant experience of FORUM

Since its inception in 1989, FORUM has operated a rural development organisation which is firmly based on utilising community development principles to tackle social exclusion and disadvantage in Connemara. From 1989 to 1994 FORUM managed an EU Anti Poverty Programme aimed at targeting the most disadvantaged in the community. In 1994 FORUM was contracted to deliver the Community Development Programme (CDP), followed by Local Development Social Inclusion programme (LDSIP), the main target groups of which were older people, youth, people with disability, families experiencing disadvantage, community groups and under and unemployed. In 2009 FORUM was chosen for the implementation of the LEADER Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) in non Gaeltacht Connemara and amended its company structures and project area to facilitate this. In 2011, FORUM signed a contract with Pobal to deliver the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) in non Gaeltacht Connemara. In 2012, this contract was amended as Pobal requested FORUM to deliver LCDP in Gaeltacht Connemara also. FORUM has been implementing a bottom up approach to community development, in the Gaeltacht area, for the past three years and the range and number of beneficiaries of the LCDP programme are testament to the success of this approach.

The Board of FORUM has successfully allocated €4,876,222 through the LEADER Programme 2007-2013 - this was as a result of an intensive animation of the LDS area by project officers earlier in programme. The impact of this has included extensive employment outputs.

1.7.1 Examples of projects

Table 2 that follows demonstrates the types of projects/interventions implemented by FORUM and the outputs/outcomes/impacts and added value of the FORUM developmental approach.

Table 2: Project/Intervention Examples

Sub Theme	Project	Added Value Process(es)	Output	Outcome	Impact
Rural Tourism	Killary Sheep Farm	Client identified through Rural Recreation programme as he is on an established trail. Animated and mentored under LCDP to examine project viability. Animated and supported under RDP to develop tangible project.	New agri-tourism project developed along the WAW.	Young farmer diversified farm income making farm enterprise more viable.	Young farmer retained in a sparsely populated rural area contributing to rural renewal. Newly developed tourism project adding value to WAW and existing trail. Economic spin off to peripheral area.
	Clifden Arts Festival	Encouraging organisers to undertake economic impact study. Intimate local knowledge of project as FORUM staff are directly and indirectly involved.	Economic impact study complete.	Value of festival quantified and empirically validated. Greater credibility in applying for additional support funding.	Greater support from the wider community. Enhanced sustainability of event.
	Various Festivals and events	Cross organisational support given and identified through staff because of intimate knowledge through RDP application. Better co-ordination and reduced duplication/overlap.	Numerous festivals and events supported increasing visitor numbers, direct spending, increased bed nights etc.	Tourism season enhance and expanded. Economic spin-off to wider community.	More sustainable year round tourism product and visitor numbers. Enhanced profile of Connemara as a tourism, activity, cultural and eventful place.
	Marconi Site Feasibility	Project resulted through project worker animation on another project and identifying this project as well as identifying interested parties in pursuing it. FORUM assisted group to bring project to Fáilte Ireland's attention through relationship built on other strategic projects.	Feasibility study and basic drawings complete identifying the potential.	Project promoters motivated and encouraged to pursue a capital project.	Project had strategic potential that was recognised by Fáilte Ireland. Large scale capital project now under way.
Enterprise Development	Connemara Carpets Ltd.	Promoter felt comfortable enough to make an informal approach to FORUM when sounding out the idea. Promoter was assisted to develop project idea and navigate the programme rules to develop creative application that was eligible but unconventional.	Re-establishment of a closed enterprise.	Carpet production a long standing enterprise in the area was retained, employment was generated and skills retained within the area.	Sustainable enterprise developed employing 6 FTE and contributing to the wider local economy. Promoter now examining the development of a skills transfer/apprentice programme.
	Corrib Brewing Ltd.	Client centred development approach. Promoter was working full time and could only meet late in the evenings and at weekends. This was facilitated.	New craft brewing enterprise created.	Manufacturing of a local craft product in the region. Promoter's capacity built to develop enterprise. Supporting local economy through employment and suppliers.	Enhancing the Connemara brand and food culture through the development of a unique indigenous food offering. Food tourism enhancement and possible further product development.
	Purple Spade –(Mussel Purification Enterprise)	Promoter linked to local food festival and cross fertilisation of projects through project worker local knowledge and experience.	Existing enterprise enhanced adding value to existing low value shell fish created.	Development of a more sustainable business model with the opportunity for greater economic return and securing more sustainable local employment.	Local Connemara produce being utilised within the locality and nationally. Adding to the food culture and Connemara brand through the enterprises own brand promotion based around sustainability etc.
Rural Towns	Clifden Town Hall Refurbishment	Project animated historically through LCDP and assisted by various organisational supports.	Building refurbished and fabric secured into the future.	Building now utilised for a range of community activities. Enhanced community services and activities.	Promoter's confidence increased and capacity built to undertake a range of community initiatives large scale complex projects. Adds value to other events and activities such as Clifden Arts Festival, improvements in the streetscape and general town environs.
	Oughterard	Project supported by/and	Building refurbished	Building now utilised	Promoter confidence increased

	Courthouse Refurbishment	supporting a community work placement. This was initiated through the project workers intimate project understating the collaboration and internal communication wrap around support of FORUM as an organisation.	and conservation elements protected.	for a range of community activities. Enhanced community services and activities. New local study centre developed for school kids.	and capacity built to undertake a range of community initiatives large scale complex projects. Landmark project that adds value to the town environment and built heritage and culture. Has encouraged local private benefactors to contribute to local projects.
Broadband	Computer literacy for isolated rural men	Project initiated and supported by FORUM, through LCDP, based on needs identified by project workers as part of their engagement with community groups. Links with Age Action Ireland also identifies the digital divide experienced by older people and rural men and FORUM put in place an initiative in four areas to address this.	Computer literacy / basic IT/ access to internet training with 60 men in Roundstone, Recess, Clifden and Ballyconneely.	Enhanced IT capacity for 60 men who prior to these interventions were excluded from the use of technology in their everyday lives.	There is a cohort of previously isolated men with the ability to use IT and internet to enhance their daily lives – in business with online banking and Donedeal and personally with the ability to use Skype and e mail to keep in touch with family members abroad.
	IT / Social Media training with Co-op managers in Connemara Gaeltacht	Project initiated and supported by FORUM, through LCDP, in response to needs identified through network meetings with nine Gaeltacht co-ops and Udarás na Gaeltachta.	A two day IT training course was delivered, based around the existing IT structures of the co –ops. All co-op managers met and agreed the course outline based on their needs.	A comprehensive, needs responsive, tailor made IT programme was delivered, through Irish, to nine co ops and improved the running of the day to day business.	Managers and admin staff of nine Gaeltacht co –ops were up skilled in use of IT/ Internet in their daily business, thus enhancing the services they provide to community organisations in their catchment areas.
Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities	Therapeutic Riding	Project emanated historically from FORUM's work under social inclusions programmes and cross organisational problem solving on how to develop further.	Project steering committee formalised and 10 course deliverers trained.	Committee have now established a unique service in the locality and wider region. Project has also established a base and volunteer effort.	Project continues to expand with core programme funding now leveraged from the Dormant Accounts Fund. Project provides respite for parents and a vital service to those that physically or mentally challenged.
	Social Care Programme	FORUM initiated project. Supported by a suite of actions historically through FORUM. Cross organisational/ programme support.	Meals on wheels, laundry and active retirement services established.	Enhanced capacity of an aging population. Allows people to stay in their homes rather than enter full time residential care.	Increased health and well being of older people. Supports and maintains diverse resilient communities and independent citizens.
Rural Youth	Adolescent Support Programme	FORUM initiated project. Supported by a suite of actions historically through FORUM. Cross organisational/ programme support. Staff local knowledge and adaptable responsive nature of approach.	Programme with a number of key interventions - After School Activity, Junior Arts, Parents Education Workshops, Outdoor Adventure, Delivery of Child Protection Training and Summer Camps.	General improvement in school attendance and engagement. Expanded and developed range of voluntary based youth groups and clubs for young people.	Vulnerable families and at risk children supported. Many of those targeted as at risk of leaving school early having completed school and proceed to third level. Key stakeholder relationships established between state agencies and institutions with referrals both ways. i.e. social workers etc.
Protection & Sustainable use of Water Resources	Loch Hibirte Group Water Scheme Lettermullen	The project emerged under FORUM LCDP in the Gaeltacht area providing support to a community owned water scheme which was under threat due to poor management. Staff local knowledge and experience in the area of managing group water schemes was key to the success of this project.	Organisational support to set up a new co –op with support and training provided. Community awareness campaign highlighting the importance and necessity of a clean water supply.	Formation of a sustainable effective structure to manage local water resources.	A locally based water scheme is supplying good quality water to 520 households in the Lettermullen area.

Protection & Improvement Local Biodiversity	Connemara Bee-Keepers Association- (Native Bee Education Programme)	Project emanated historically from FORUM's work under social inclusion programmes and cross organisational programmatic development approach.	Promoters acquired equipment and knowledge that allows them to develop a native bee conservation programme.	Association has delivered the programme on a number of occasions & presented at various shows/events. 98 direct members educated on the native bee. With membership has grown by 17% to 98 members in 2015.	Greater awareness and understanding of the biodiversity and conservation importance of the native black bee. Association are contributing to national policy through Teagasc and lobbying the Department of Agriculture for greater bee importation control.
Development of Renewable Energy	Efficient Buildings and Renewable Energy Systems Course	Encouraging the use of renewable technologies particularly in the built environment FORUM using local knowledge targeted training at individuals and groups that were undertaking large scale capital projects.	15 individuals trained in basic energy efficiency and renewable technologies.	A number of home owners and community buildings applied learning to projects. i.e. installation of solar panels etc.	Enhanced private and community buildings with ecologically and environmentally sound principles used, reducing carbon footprint etc. Buildings used to showcase alternatives to other individuals groups.

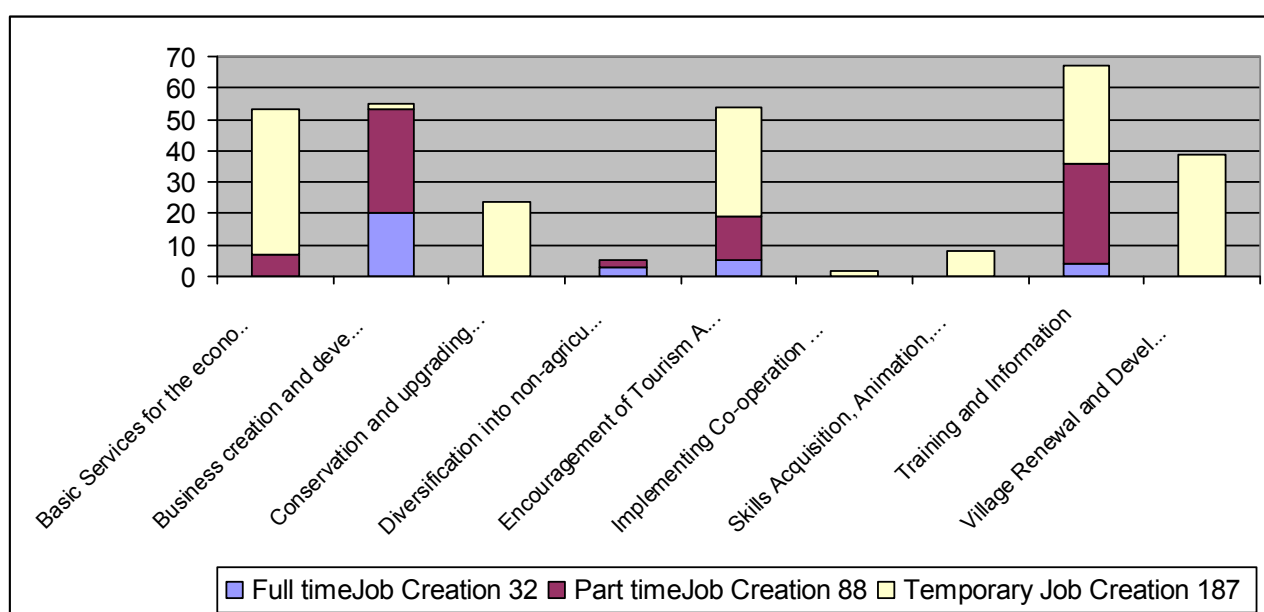


Figure 3: Job creation within the LEADER Programme 2007-2014

1.7.2 Experience of Delivering Social Inclusion interventions

FORUM has a wealth of experience in delivering social inclusion programmes. From 1989 to 1994 FORUM managed a European Anti-Poverty Programme (Poverty 3) aimed at targeting the most disadvantaged in the community. In 1994, FORUM was contracted to deliver the Community Development Programme (CDP), followed by Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP). In 2009 FORUM amended its company name, extended the project area, Board structure and memorandum and articles of association to take on the delivery of the LEADER Programme in non-Gaeltacht Connemara. In 2011, FORUM Connemara Ltd signed a three year contract with Pobal to deliver LCDP in non-Gaeltacht Connemara. In 2012, FORUM signed a contract with Pobal to include the Gaeltacht area of Connemara in the delivery of LCDP.

FORUM currently administers a range of programmes on behalf of the Government and various state agencies, aimed at improving the overall economic and social well-being of stakeholders and the physical and institutional environments in which they live. The target groups include Family Support/Disadvantaged families; Older people and Carers, Under and Unemployed, Asylum Seekers, Youth, Community Groups and Enterprise. FORUM has featured in policy reports and academic documents as a model of best practice in the delivery of community development programmes. These include: 'Healthy Ageing in Rural Communities' (HARC) report, (2012), Dr Kieran Walsh, Irish Centre for Social Gerontology; 'Evaluation of Poverty Three Programme in Ireland' (1995) Nexus Research Co-operative; 'Researching Rural Youth in the West of Ireland: A mixed-methods approach' (2001)

Brian McGrath and John Canavan. FORUM has a data base of 90+ community organisations and 60+ businesses for the purpose of information sharing and consultation on issues affecting local communities and will link in with community and voluntary organisations countywide, through the LCDC and Public Participation Network (PPN). FORUM has forged strong links with regional, national and EU organisations and networks since the third EU Anti Poverty programme in 1989 through to the delivery of RDP 2007-2013.

1.7.3 Management of Exchequer or EU programmes in the last 3 years

FORUM Connemara Ltd. administers the following programmes/schemes: LEADER Programme (LEADER) 2007 – 2013, Local Community Development Programme (LCDP), Adolescent Support Programme, FAS Community Employment Schemes (3), FAS Job Initiative Scheme (1), Rural Recreation Programme, Rural Social Scheme (1) and TUS job activation programmes (4). FORUM’s implementation of EU and Exchequer Programmes goes back over twenty years and with robust planning, implementation and governance have left a consistently successful track record.

1.7.4 Leveraging Match Funding

The organisational structure of FORUM facilitates the delivery of a wide range of programmes, with FORUM acting as the conduit through which locally based services are delivered in partnership with regionally based statutory bodies. This resulted in approximately € 9 million in leveraged funding over the past three years. FORUM, through core funding under LCDP has leveraged significant additional funding for social inclusion programmes in the Connemara area e.g. funding from HSE for support to older people, carers and youth; GRETB provide funding for work with young people and families.

FORUM has leveraged funds through Clann Credo and Credit Unions to assist with a variety of community projects including environmental projects. Through the Rural Recreation Programme FORUM has been able to plan and implement projects such as extended public access and developing trails. The total leverage, through LEADER, including private funding was over €6 million. This does not include the considerable benefit-in-kind achieved through community and agency partnerships.

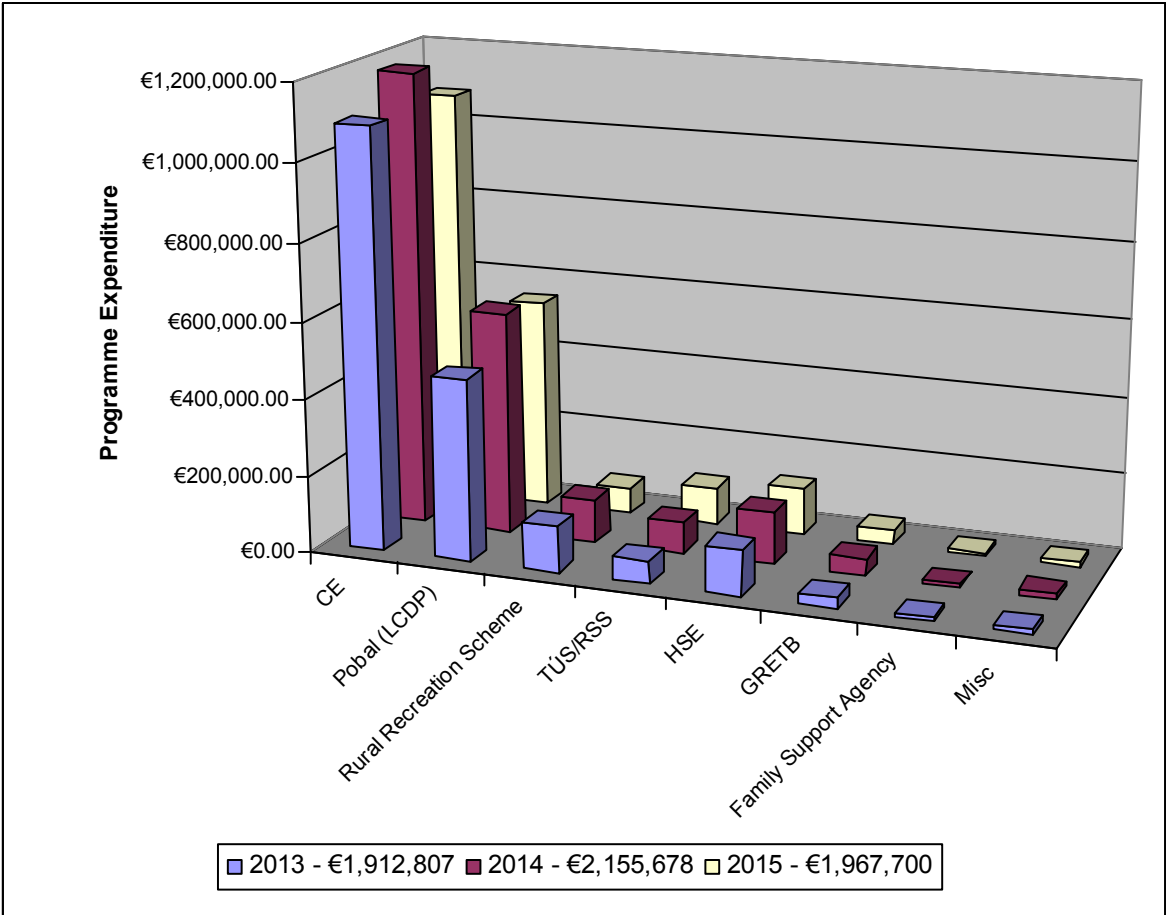


Figure 4: Financial expenditure on programmes by FORUM between 2013 and 2015

1.8 Summary

FORUM is a legally constituted and solvent organisation with over 25 years experience as an effective delivery organisation for local development in Connemara. As an exponent of the community-led local development approach before it became a mainstream European methodology, FORUM has been commended at EU Commission level for its approach to partnership and its outstanding record of delivery.

From its early success as the only rural project in the Poverty Programme using a CLLD model, the organisation continues to operate through principles of collaboration and integration, while also continually examining and reviewing actions to meet needs through programme management and monitoring and evaluation processes.

The FORUM Board of Directors is appointed using best practice methodology, in line with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government guidelines, which includes rotation of directors and ensuring no one sector has more than 49% representation on the Board. The Board meets once a month and also functions with sub committees dealing with issues from personnel and governance to strategic development. FORUM has an Evaluation Committee which appraises applications to FORUM. This committee is wholly independent from the Board of FORUM.

FORUM has extensive systems and experience in managing public funds, meeting the varied requirements, delivering value for money and avoiding duplication and deadweight. The Board of FORUM has a robust set of independently evaluated financial management policies and systems, in line with requirements of government departments and agencies on whose behalf it delivers local development and social inclusion programmes. FORUM's track record for financial management is demonstrated by consistently meeting and exceeding European and National audit standards and inspections. All FORUM's financial systems represent the highest standards of transparency and governance.

FORUM has specific processes and practices for the implementation of LEADER, in line with the Operating Rules for same. FORUM adheres to all administrative requirements including public procurement. FORUM proposes two full time project workers, two part time admin and finance workers and also has allocated 40% of the Chief Executive's time, all collectively covering the full range of financial and programme delivery and management expertise required for excellence and effective and transparent programme delivery.

FORUM has a clear and robust decision making system in place for the management and implementation of LEADER including systems for promoting calls, of which at least 40% will be time bound. FORUM has an assessment and appraisal process which includes consideration of all key requirements of the EU Programmes and national administration.

Finally, FORUM has a wealth of experience in working with the community, from those most excluded to businesses, community organisations and agencies. FORUM has a track record of partnership, adding value, effectiveness, efficiency, local development and successful implementation of EU and Exchequer funded programmes. FORUM has also leveraged considerable added value, in terms of financial, community animation and benefit-in-kind from its many partners.

In keeping with the principles of local community development and the LEADER approach, FORUM regularly researches and explores the needs and opportunities for economic development, community well being and environmental sustainability. The following section summarises the analysis and consultation carried out to guide the development of an effective and value for money programme that utilises the LEADER approach to best effect.

Section 2: Local Development Strategy Area Profile

2.1 Overview

This section of the LDS provides a statistical profile of the chosen territory. The extracts below are a summary of the Area Profile which accompanies this Local Development Strategy and captures the key findings of the analysis. *(Please refer to the comprehensive area profile document if seeking clarification on particular issues raised in the summary. This can be found on the FORUM website www.forumconnemara.ie)*

This area profile sets out a descriptive and statistical analysis of the chosen LDS area for the purpose of submitting an application for the delivery of the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme for Ireland 2014-2020. It is therefore informed and framed by the key target groups, issues, priorities and themes as identified within the overall programme and wider policy context. It looks at the territory in respect of key demographic and socio-economic indicators. It also represents a baseline against which development can be measured and evaluated. It must be highlighted that given the extent and diversity within the territory it is not possible to fully capture the complexity therein using a desktop methodology such is the case in this profile. FORUM is acutely aware that it must remain responsive and cognisant as work is carried out on the ground and address issues relevant to the programme and target groups as they become apparent.

The methodology adopted primarily examines the main themes evident, using CSO data and the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012), at Electoral Division (ED) and Small Area (SA) levels. ED level analysis is the predominantly used format as it can be used to show trends and patterns from the early census periods (Small Areas are a relatively new addition to boundaries having been introduced in the 2011 Census). As the small area statistics demonstrate the nuances of the urban areas more readily these were used in conjunction with an ED analysis where necessary.

This profile was developed primarily using a combination of statistics and data from the CSO small area population statistics for 2006 and 2011, Pobal online mapping system (HP Deprivation Index). Where another source is used this has been referenced accordingly.

2.2 Area Selection

Tim Robinson wrote of Connemara as being-

“The sound of the past, the language we breathe, and our frontage onto the natural world”.

Upon hearing this, a local man is credited to have quipped-

“....it’s hard to eat that”

Ultimately within these two statements lays the development paradigm. Connemara is undoubtedly an area of outstanding natural beauty and high nature value but its characteristic rugged features and peripheral location make Connemara a difficult place to make a living.

The FORUM LDS covers an extensive catchment area that extends from Lough Corrib on the outskirts of Galway City to Clifden on the edge of the Atlantic coast and from Killary Harbour which borders with County Mayo to Lettermullen on the South at the entrance to Galway Bay. It also has four inhabited off-shore islands Inishmore, Inishmaan, Inisheer and Inishbofin, a 35km border with County Mayo and a coastline which stretches from Leenane to na Forbacha, just west of Galway City. Another important feature is that the region contains the largest Gaeltacht area in the State (see Figure 5, and Appendix XII for a full list of Electoral Divisions). The territory is an innate functional area and corresponds naturally with the administrative area of the Municipal District of Connemara (here after referred to as Connemara). It has a surface area of 2050Sq/Km and a population of 39,238 (CSO, 2011). Clifden with a population of 2,613 is the main town in the area. It acts as a market town and service centre for the wider Connemara region and is an important focal point for tourism

activities. The area also has a significant peri-urban area that stretches from the outskirts of Galway City to Oughterard-Moycullen and south towards Spiddal, Barna and Furbo. This area displays the characteristics of a burgeoning conurbation which is curtailed by Lough Corrib to the north and Galway bay to the south. Other population centres include Carna, Ros Muc, Indrebhán, Carraroe, Roundstone, Ballyconneely, Letterfrack, Leenane, Cornamona, Clonbur and the Island settlements.

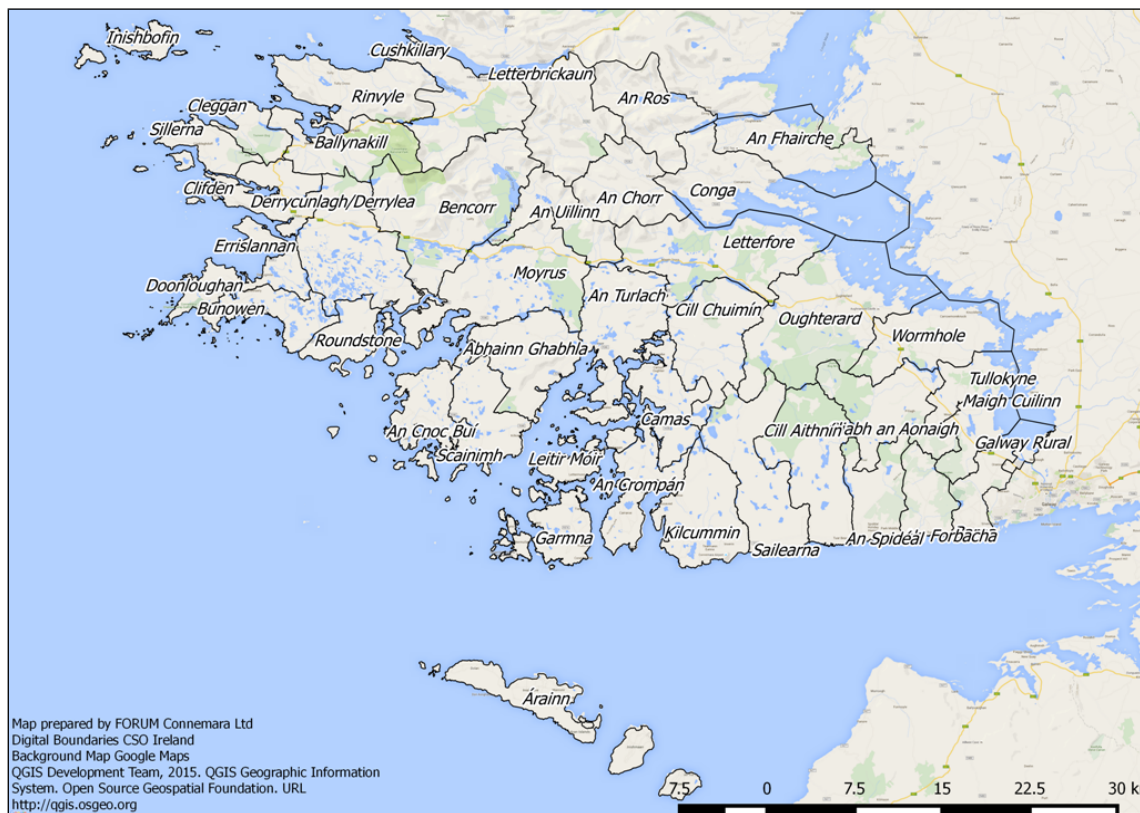


Figure 5: 43 Electoral Divisions (ED's) that constitute the chosen LDS area

2.3 Socio Economic Profile

FORUM's LDS area is well defined. It conforms to the characteristics of a functional area (NESC, 1993 and OECD, 2005), in that it is sufficiently small to enable area-based local development, and is sufficiently large to generate the critical mass that is necessary to promote the endogenous development of local resources and engage agencies in partnership approaches to sustainable development. This is further corroborated by the desire of the existing Board to pursue the strategy as laid out in this document. The area also satisfies the criteria as set out in the Common Provisions Regulation (Article 33 (6)) that stipulates the population of the LAG area is no less than 10,000 and not more than 150,000 inhabitants, as per the requirement in '*Document 2: Local Development Strategy (LDS) Framework Guidelines*' as issued by the Department. The area also includes a significant Gaeltacht area and off shore Islands. Connemara is unique in that it is one of the only areas in Ireland that is internationally recognised as a distinctive region in a geographic and socio-cultural context. It is therefore recognisable and cohesive both internally and externally. FORUM as an agent for development in the region therefore proposes that it is sufficiently cohesive to support a viable LDS and the objectives within this.

2.3.1 Demographics

The most recent census returns (2011 Census of Population) reveals that Connemara has a total population of 39,238. This represents an increase of 8.6% since 2006, which is somewhat below the increase of 10% experienced in Galway County and more in line with that experienced in the State as a whole at 8.2%. A clear spatial pattern can be observed in terms of population change in Connemara and is indeed reflected at a wider national level. Census data shows that population change and movements demonstrates a clear movement of population from rural to urban areas over the past twenty years and conforms with the rural to urban spatial pattern being observed regionally, nationally and indeed internationally. While many of the more rural ED's have stagnated or made modest

increases in population they have still not redressed the significant population malign that was systematically sustained since 1981 until the recent period of economic growth. Indeed the losses since 2002 are some of the most serious in the State. This is highlighted by the fact that 5 of the 6 ED's that suffered the most decline in Galway County over the Census period 2006-2011 are in Connemara (Inishbofin -19.6%, An Ros -9.6%, Maíros -8.9%, Doonloughan -8.7%, Cleggan -8.4%, Coos -18.4% is in East Galway). Figure 6 below demonstrates the population change between 2006 and 2011.

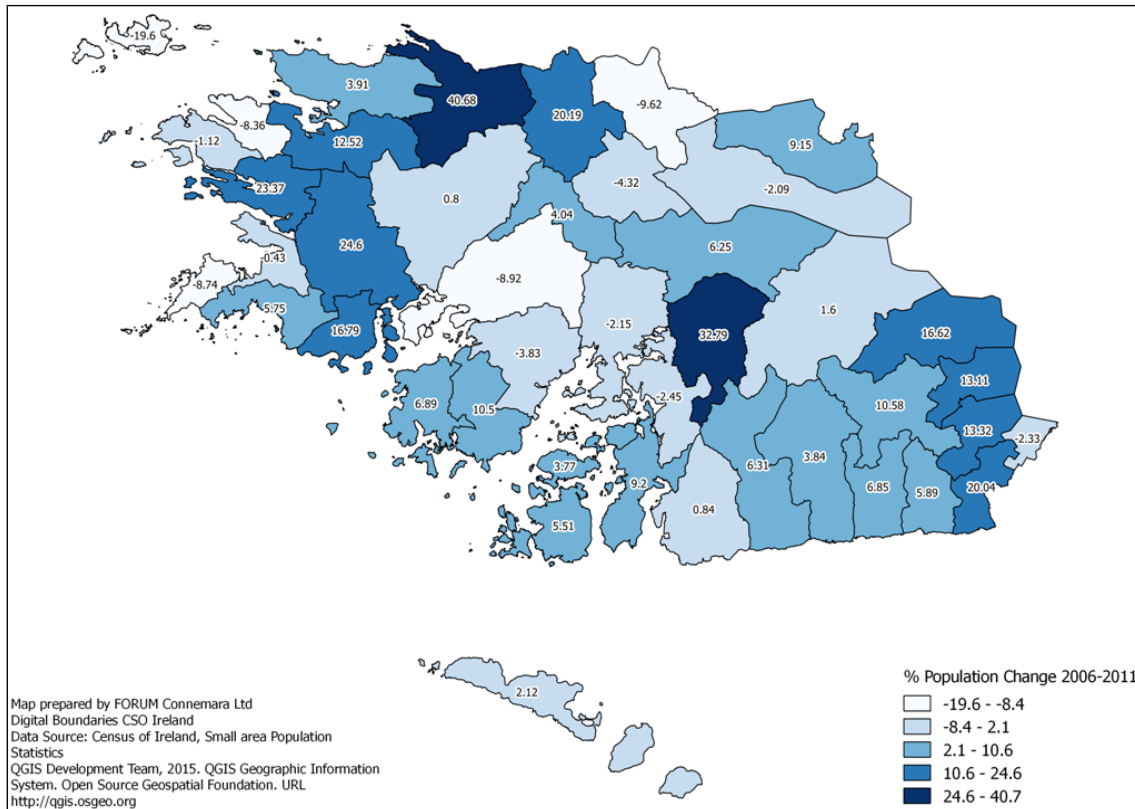


Figure 6: The percentage population change 2006-2011

The area has a relatively low population density of approximately 19 persons / km², compared to a national average of 66 persons / km² and a Galway County (excluding the City) average of 28.7 persons / km². The range in density from 1.6-157.1 persons / km², highlights the spatial mix of the region and presents the area as varying from rural to peri-urban contrary to perceived rurality. The ED's with the highest population density are concentrated to east of the territory from Oughterard to Galway City and follow the coast west up to Clifden. The areas of lowest density correspond largely to the Twelve Bens and Maamturk mountain ranges.

Connemara (29%) has a greater proportion of families with adult children than County Galway (26%) and the state (25%). This reflects possibly a higher dependency of adult children on their parents. This is probably something that has been exacerbated by the economic down turn, the lack of employment opportunities and affordable housing.

Census data shows that areas in the east of the territory have lower levels of older people, while most other parts have proportionately older people than the State and Galway County averages. In spatial terms there is a noticeable correlation in areas with a high proportion of one-person households and those with a high proportion of the population over 65 years of age. From this, and FORUM's own experience it is reasonable to assume that there a large proportion of one-person households within the older age profile (see data mapped in the full analysis). In these areas, it will be particularly important to provide outreach services for older people, and to engage with them through the development of older people's groups and social networks.

While much of the FORUM LDS area has an elderly age profile, and is experiencing population decline and outward migration of the younger population, there exists considerable potential to promote re-population and rural renewal. An analysis of the Census data for 2006-2011 demonstrates

that on average the number of families grew in Connemara (+10%), Galway County (+13%) and State (+12%).

In relation to new communities, while Connemara has for the most part lower proportions than Galway County and the State there have been significant cohorts of whom that have settled in Clifden, Oughterard and for the most part the more peri-urban parts of northwest Connemara. Returns from the 2011 Census of Population show that there are 357 Polish nationals (+114% on 2006), 86 Lithuanians (+91% on 2006) and 600 persons from other EU countries (+16% on 2006) (excluding the UK) resident in Connemara. The Census data clearly shows that the vast majority of the Poles and Lithuanians reside in the communities of Clifden, Moycullen and Barna. While they have their own social networks locally, there is a need for greater integration with the host communities, and this is something which FORUM will continue to encourage, facilitate and promote.

The wider territory is infrastructurally weak. It has poor transportation links and there is only one arterial road, the N59, which splits the territory broadly in two. The importance and influence of Galway City on the territory is not to be underestimated. It has shaped and continues to shape the East of the territory to a large extent. The East therefore exhibits many of the characteristics of peri-urban areas and is quickly becoming a conurbation. During the Celtic Tiger period there was a proliferation of low density housing and light industrial/commercial development. This particular part of the territory includes higher levels of employment in services, rural to urban commuting and pressures on land and services.

The centre of the territory that is adjacent to the N59 between Maam Cross and the Twelve Bens mountain range is sparsely populated. It has experienced a difficult time during the economic downturn with little economic development although some progress has been made by FORUM in the area of social development. It is characterised by an ageing population and weak demographic structure. It is however, an area of renowned natural beauty and breath-taking scenery.

The South of the territory, which largely corresponds to the Gaeltacht region, is an area that has traditionally been one of the most deprived in the County. It suffers from high rates of both male and female unemployment and a weak demographic structure. It has also suffered socially and economically due to the lack of a cohesive local delivery agent of key development programmes after the closure of Meitheal Forbairt na Gaeltachta (MFG) in 2011.

In Connemara, there are over 1378 people who are classified as 'disabled' or 'unable to work.' To date, FORUM has provided community development supports targeting people with disabilities, and the organisation plans to extend these supports over the coming years.

The West of the territory, namely Clifden and hinterland has benefited greatly socially and economically from the multi programme interventions of FORUM. The area has a relatively well developed community and voluntary sector and there is a strong commitment locally to addressing disadvantage and social exclusion. The islands, being removed from the mainland have an exacerbated sense of rural isolation and being on the periphery of economic and social development. There are many challenges that are synonymous with island communities such as accessibility issues, pronounced economic emigration among the working age etc. There is however a strong sense of cultural identity and a positive tourism industry.

The wider area has for the most part suffered economically from the declines in the traditional sectors of agriculture and fishing. Over recent decades, growth in the construction and service sector has outstripped other sectors in the Irish economy, and had been responsible for increased national economic output in the boom period (increased GNI and GDP). Since the downturn however there has been a refocus to look at more productive sectors within the economy to generate an economic recovery. At a national level much of the focus has been on tourism, productive agriculture, indigenous SME development as well as Foreign Direct Investment by bigger multinationals. There has also been an emphasis on export led growth as a net contributor to the Irish economy. Clearly, Connemara needs to secure investment in developing its economic competitiveness and broadening its economic base if it is to bridge the gap that currently exists between it and both the Galway County and the State.

A review of the 2006-2011 intercensal periods demonstrates that there is nearly a doubling of the unemployment rate for the area. Another notable feature is that the workforce has declined by 2% but the overall number of persons in this population category has seen a considerable growth rate of 9% which is on a par with Galway County but more than the average growth in the State at 7%.

The % classified as “at work” in Connemara is 46%, below that of Galway County (51%) and the State (50%). This mirrors the fact that the level of participation in the labour force in Connemara (59%) lags behind that of Galway County (62%) and the State (62%). The level of those classified as unemployed in Connemara however at 13% is somewhat higher, (Galway County 10%, State 11%). The actual unemployment rate for Connemara on a Principal Economic Status basis was 22.46% the commensurate figures for Galway County is 18.12% and the State 19.03%. (This is the census-based rate, which differs for methodological reasons from the official QNHS figures)

Figure 7 below demonstrates how Connemara compares in terms of the rate of employment per sector with that of Galway County and the State. What it clearly highlights is the importance of the ‘other’ sector for employment. This is can be attributed to the importance of tourism.

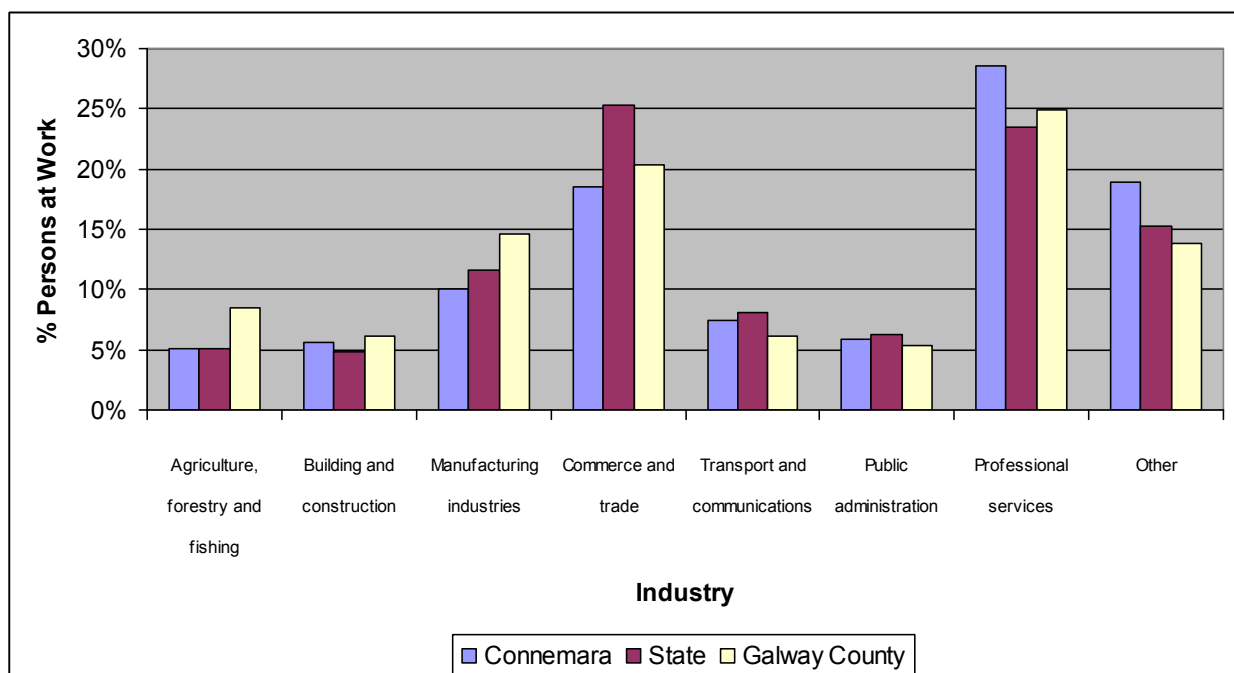


Figure 7: Sectoral composition of the workforce, Census 2011

Within the FORUM LDS area, there are five ED’s with an unemployment rate over double the State average (19%) these are Garmna, Scainimh, Camas, An Turlach and Letir Mor. Garmna has an unemployment rate of 52%. These ED’s are all adjacent to one and other. They correspond to the traditional Gaeltacht heartland. There is clearly a profound unemployment problem in this area. The EDs with the lowest levels of participation in the labour force are in the western extremities of the territory. These include the communities of Letterfrack/Moyard (Ballinakill) and Ballyconneely (Errislannan, Doonloughan and Bunowen). **Figure 8** demonstrates this spatially.

These areas are structurally weak on a range of socio-economic and demographic indicators, and they require considerable external support in order to be able to realise their potential and develop in a sustainable manner.

In the 2011 Census there were over 4,158 persons in Connemara, who are classified as unemployed or looking for first time job. In addition, persons on small farms and those engaged in small-scale fishing and other part-time and seasonal activities, constitute a significant number of under-employed persons.

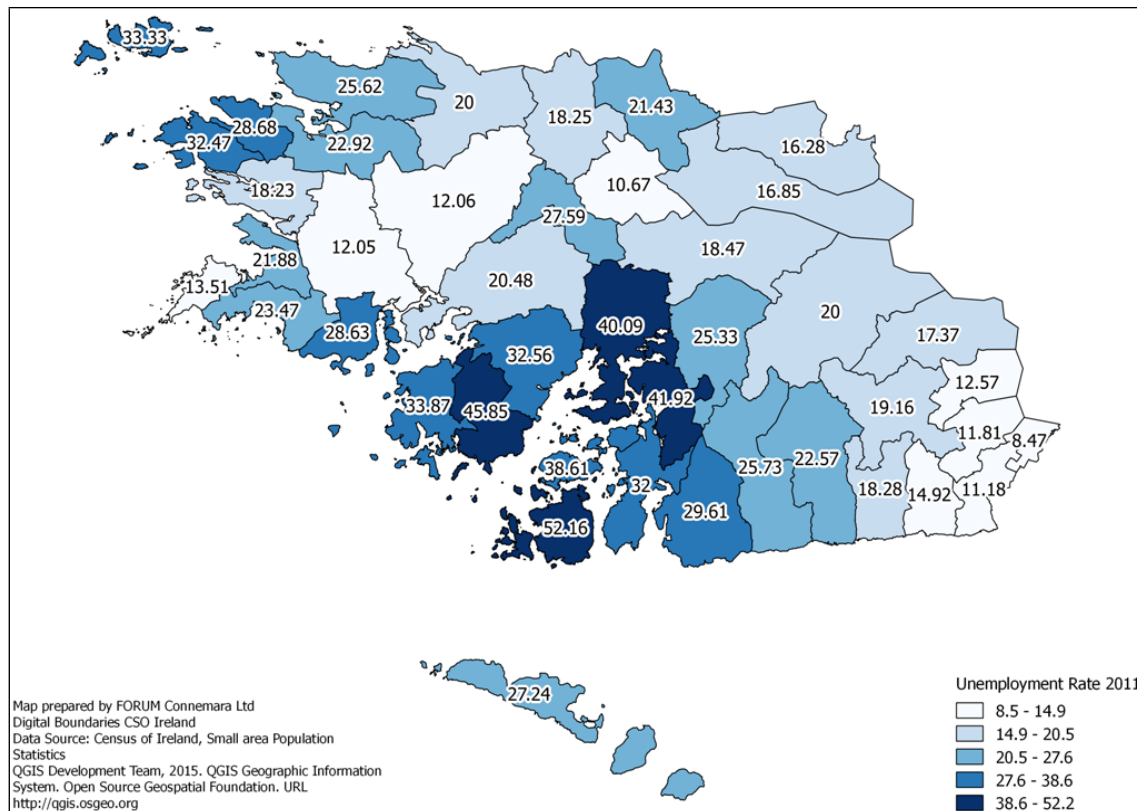


Figure 8: Unemployment rate, Census 2011

Figure 9 shows the numbers signing on the live register in Clifden Intreo Centre (Social Protection Office) from the period September 2008 (the point at which Ireland officially entered recession) to September 2015 (the most recent figures available). Broadly speaking the Clifden Intreo Centre deals with individuals west of Maam Cross and those east of this are dealt with by the Galway City office. The graph clearly shows a significant rise in those “signing on” during the period of the economic downturn. It also demonstrates a seasonality fluctuation in terms of the numbers “signing on”. During the summer months there is a noticeable dip in the numbers this can be attributed to people exiting a social welfare payment to take up paid employment in the tourism and hospitality areas. Overall the trend is relatively positive with numbers now back to levels similar to those at the start of the economic downturn. However some of this could be as a result of outward migration and an increase in the number of placements on work activation programmes such as “TÚS”.

A deeper analysis on the region again highlights the spatial disparity between the peri-urban and more rural type areas. At an ED level there are many areas that have a greater reliance on primary industry than that of the Galway County average (9%) and the Connemara average (5%). Two areas have over a 27% reliance on this sector. It is clear that those areas significantly above the average are the ED’s in the periphery of the region and largely coastal.

While the growth in the construction sector had absorbed much of the exit from employment in agriculture, there has been no noticeable “bounce” or recovery of those flowing back into agriculture from 2006-2011. This demonstrates that people see agriculture within the region as marginal and of a subsistence nature. This maybe something that can be addressed in terms of the re-shaping of agriculture as a viable option particularly for young males. To some degree this is already being addressed by the rolling out of agricultural education (green cert) at a local level facilitated by FORUM in conjunction with the Education and Training Board and Teagasc.

Primary production dependency correlates with the Pobal indicators of disadvantage in the Pobal HP Deprivation Indices (both relative and absolute) signalling sectors of importance in areas vulnerable to rural outmigration and low levels of demographic vitality. This information highlights the social as well as economic importance of these employment sectors (agriculture, forestry, fishing) in rural areas. It also underscores the critical need for local economic diversification across such areas and their vulnerability during down turn and probable low levels of income. Areas of particular concern include West and North Connemara and the islands.

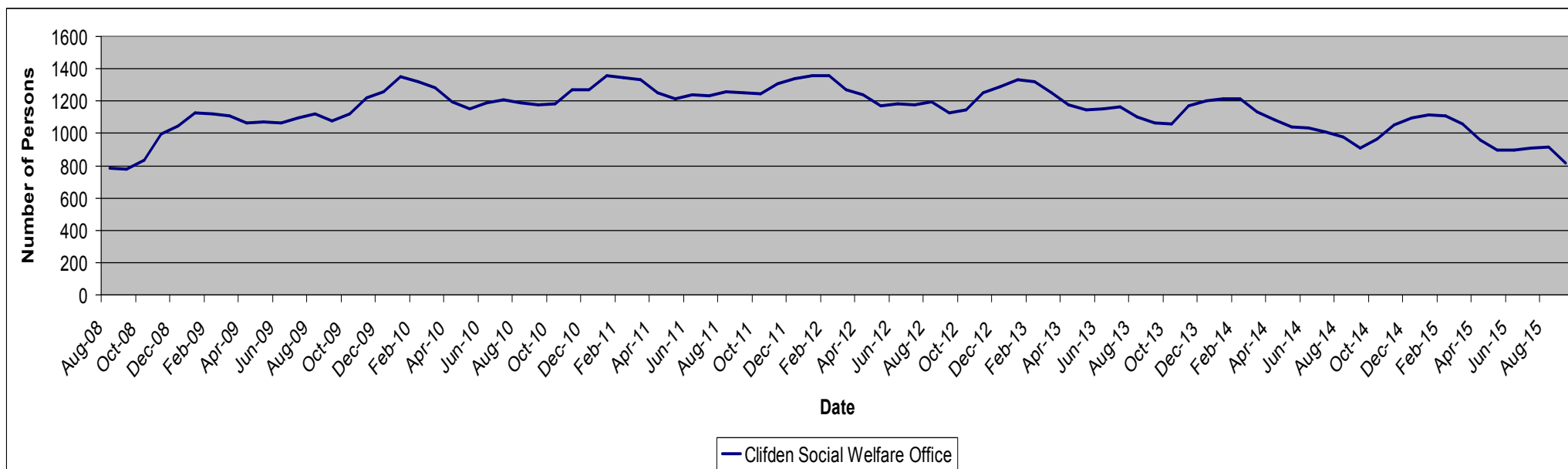


Figure 9: Persons on the live register in Clifden Intreo Office, both sexes all ages and by month, September 2008 to September 2015 (Source CSO)

In terms of deviation between male vs. female employment characteristics it's clear that in line with the National trend. Men are more likely to be in the labour force, and those looking after home/family are overwhelmingly female. Female labour participation is slightly less than the Galway County or State average. Male unemployment (27.47%) makes up a higher proportion of unemployment than female (16.26%), in the Connemara area. Female unemployment is notably less in the more affluent peri-urban areas and commensurate with the proportions of male unemployment. The highest female unemployment rates and lowest female labour participation rates occur in the traditional Gaeltacht heartlands and in the outlying rural areas. There are only 4 ED's in the Connemara area where the female unemployment rate is greater than male; these are Conga, Binn an Choire, An Chorr and An Ros. These areas correspond with the more mountainous regions where population density is lower and connectivity as well as access to transport is limited. In the intercensal period 2006-2011 while the male labour force participation increased from 66% to 68% there was a greater increase in the female rate from 49% to 53%. The female increase is a positive trend but does highlight that enhanced pathways to work for women including child care provision, flexible work opportunities etc. are required. This is in line with wider European and national policy intent.

2.3.2 Farming

There were 3,236 farms in the study area in 2010 with a total agricultural area farmed of 73,525 hectares – that is 36% of the landmass of 205,000 ha. Since the 1991 Agricultural Census the average farm size has grown from 14.85 hectares to 22.7 hectares in 2010 (there has been very little change from the 2000 Census year when average farm size was 22.13 hectares). The actual numbers farming has however dropped by 483 (13%) since 1991. The rate of decline has slowed in the intercensal period 2000-2010 when numbers dropped by a more modest 84 (2.5%). In the intercensal period 1991-2010 however the area farmed has increased from 55,281 hectares to 73,525 hectares an increase of 33%. It is clear that, there are a smaller number of farms in districts across the Twelve Pins and the Maumturk Mountains, indicating upland farms that are larger to compensate for a poorer land base. For example, the average farm size rises to 149 hectares in Letterbrickaun and 91 hectares in the ED of An Ros. Conversely there are a relatively large number of smaller farms on the offshore islands and in the South Connemara Gaeltacht heartland. For example, Leitir Móir 8 hectares, Inishbofin 9 hectares and the Aran Islands 14 Hectares are the average farm sizes in these areas. The intercensal pattern demonstrated above points to an overall consolidation in farm structures with a fewer number of farmers farming larger holdings. Figure 10 demonstrates the proportions of people employed in primary industry in Connemara. Its clear that the more deprived and outlying areas have a reliance on the primary industry and points at a need for possible diversification in these area.

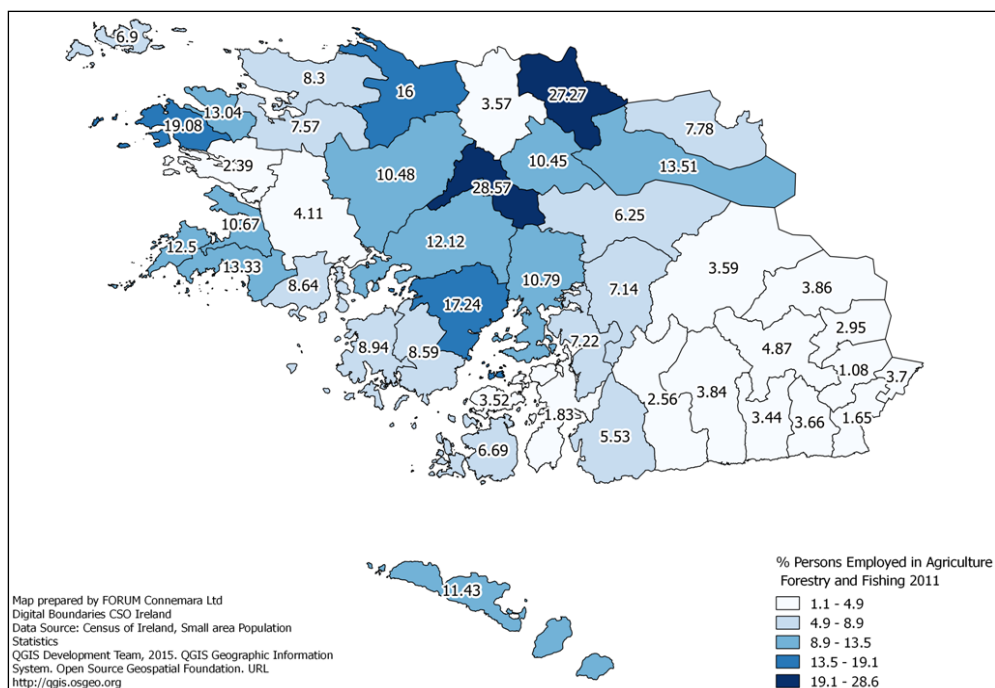


Figure 10: Percentage of persons employed in agriculture forestry and fishing, Census 2011

The Agri-data demonstrates that in line with national trends there are large proportions of farmers in the older age cohort. The propensity for this has increased 2000-2010 intercensal period. In 2010 65% of all farmer holders are over the age of 55 with 38% being over the age of 65.

In the FORUM LDS area even though agriculture plays a significant role as a livelihood strategy it falls behind the State in terms of those that pursue it as a sole occupation. Furthermore 55% of farmers combine agriculture with another income generating activity. This is greater than the State average of 46%. This would suggest that agriculture as an occupational pursuit in Connemara is marginal and that it is more difficult to make a living from farming than in other areas. This is further corroborated by the information from 2000 Agi-Census available for the economic scale of agriculture in the region. In the State the average economic scale of a holding was 20.7 ESU whereas in Connemara this falls to 4.6 ESU. The main type of farming in the region is specialist beef and sheep, when combined with the marginal nature of the land it goes a long way in explaining the poor returns from agriculture in the region. All of this coupled with the designation of land and fall in EU subsidies (particularly Agri – environment schemes) may lead one to believe agriculture has no role to play in the future of the

territory. This insight into the farming sector in northwest Connemara quantifies the many challenges that face the sector and in particular the ageing nature of farm holders.

There is a shift at a European and National level to embrace the value of more biologically diverse and environmentally important landscapes and Connemara is well placed to contribute to such an intervention with its unique high nature value landscape. Furthermore, the peatlands of the area may provide carbon sequestration opportunities. Some work has been carried out in this area already and could be expanded upon. All of this underscores the need for FORUM and the relevant agencies (Teagasc, Department of Agriculture, DSP, HSE, Co-Operatives and others) to work collaboratively to support smallholder families. FORUM proposes to utilise resources under the forthcoming RDP and SICAP Programmes to continue to implement and enhance support to farm families and to entice young people to consider agriculture as a career option. FORUM in co-operation with the GRETB and Teagasc successfully implemented a “Green Cert” programme in 2015 with approximately 60 people trained. There are also 40 people on a waiting list for 2016.

2.3.3 Seafood and the Maritime Economy

In the study area there is one major landing port that being Rossaveal. According to the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority 2014 statistics it is the 5th most important landing port in terms of tonnage landed with 4770 tonnes and in monetary value at €13,869,000. Although Rossaveal is the principal harbour area of the West Region, only a small percentage of vessel owners reside within the immediate harbour area. In total, 62 out of 438 (or one in seven) of the region’s vessel owners live in the narrowly defined harbour area. This equates to about one vessel owner per 100 population, or about one for every 30 households. Nevertheless, in terms of the number of owners per 1,000 population, fishing is about 20 times more important to the local economy as for Ireland as a whole². Outside of this the fishing industry is made up of small scale inshore fishing largely of lobster and crab. The aquaculture industry and in particular shellfish is probably a more developed industry even if it is made up of a number of smaller operators.

While the numbers employed directly and overall enterprise numbers are small the industry provides an ancillary economic benefit from the supporting businesses that service it. This would cover areas such as boat maintenance, marine engineering, harbour management, transportation services right through to the service industry. Other economic activities such as angling, leisure craft and coastal tours are undeveloped other than the activity cluster around Clifden. It could be possible to provide added value to any small scale works to harbours and facilities by interpreting the fishing industry for visitors and making facilities more user friendly for fishermen seeking to diversify into coastal tourism.

FORUM is cognisant of the development of the Fisheries Local Action Group that has a programme of similar intent to that of LEADER (a programme for the development of coastal communities using EMFF funding based on the LEADER approach). The programmes have the possibility to compliment and add value to the Connemara region and FORUM will avoid duplication. This will be achieved through a close working relationship with BIM something that has been initiated in the stakeholder consultations for the preparation of this plan (see the consultation section for further information).

2.3.4 Tourism

Tourism is a critical industry in the region. Connemara is internationally (and indeed nationally) recognised as a key tourism destination. There are a number of key reasons why this is the case. The natural environment provides a unique tourism experience and lends itself well to recreational, adventure and sight seeing activities. It has a unique cultural and heritage base which includes the Irish language, traditional music and dance as well as the built heritage. There are also a number of key tourism destinations and attractions within the region which include Kylemore Abbey (300,000 visitors 2015, reported directly from the marketing manager), Connemara National Park (169,960 visitors 2014, Fáilte Ireland, Visitors to Top Free Visitor Attractions, 2014), Pearse’s Cottage (4,615 visitors 2013, Fáilte Ireland, Visitors to Tourist Attractions, 2009-2013), Dún Aonghasa (121,001 visitors 2014, Fáilte Ireland, Visitors to Top Fee-Charging Visitor Attractions, 2014), The Sheep and

² (Hasse,T and Engling, F. (2013). The Rossaveal Harbour Centre. *A Socio-economic Profile of Ireland’s Fishing Communities.* , 6.)

Wool Centre (95,000 visitors 2014, Fáilte Ireland, Visitors to Top Fee-Charging Visitor Attractions, 2014), Aughnacore Castle (20,222 visitors 2013, Fáilte Ireland, Visitors to Tourist Attractions, 2009-2013). There were approximately 1.4 million overseas and 1.39 million domestic visitors to the Western region (the west is defined as Galway, Mayo and Roscommon) in 2014. While there are no specific figures for Connemara it is reasonable to assume, from those visiting attractions in the region, and the official figures for the Western region that visitor numbers are significant. As highlighted in employment data in this profile there are a larger number of people employed in “other” economic activities than that for either Galway County or State. All of this coupled with FORUM’s local knowledge of the area signifies that the tourism industry is of critical importance to the economic development of the region. The WAW concept has proved to be very successful and there has been a noticeable increase in tourist traffic in the region. FORUM has also forged a key stakeholder relationship with Fáilte Ireland through the upgrading of view points along the WAW using local employment schemes to carry out the upgrading works. FORUM will ensure a collaborative approach to tourism development and utilise the goodwill built up with Fáilte Ireland to achieve this. FORUM have already utilised the concept of the Blue Way to engage communities and potential business start ups. This has led to several new enterprises and should be an important component of the new programme.

In terms of rural towns, the last programme allocated just under €1million to 9 settlements in the non-Gaeltacht area; these included the towns of Clifden & Oughterard and the villages of Rosscahill, Leenane, Letterfrack, Tully/Tullycross, Cleggan/Claddaghduff, Ballyconneely and Roundstone. The need for town and village enhancement, based on a strategic approach is researched and set out in the O'Donnell report³. Given the inclusion of the Gaeltacht region in this LDS, FORUM believes there is potential to expand village and town enhancement throughout the area. Research will be carried out into opportunities within the WAW e.g. feasibility into the idea of deploying an electric car hire scheme for the route in Connemara, with charge points and pick up and drop off points.

2.3.5 An Ghaeilge

Connemara is traditionally associated with and recognised as an area where Irish is spoken widely. Indeed it has the largest officially recognised Gaeltacht in the State. Not all of Connemara however is Gaeltacht. Figure 11 below demonstrates the extent of the Gaeltacht in the LDS area.

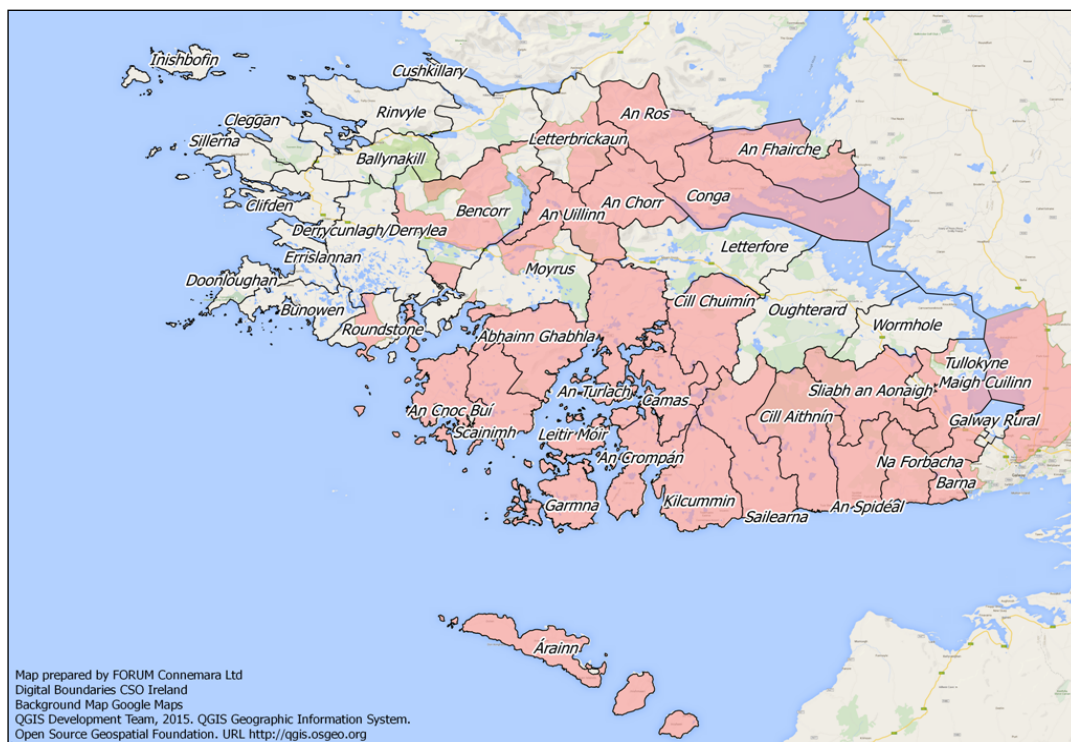


Figure 11: Gaeltacht areas of Connemara

³ The O'Donnell report resulted from a project carried out by FORUM in 2010 which assisted the towns and villages in the FORUM area to examine their development potential and priorities.

The Irish language is widely spoken throughout the territory with the traditional Gaeltacht area of South Connemara showing very high proportions with the ability to speak Irish. Connemara therefore has a much higher proportion of the population that have the ability to speak Irish than either Galway County of the State. The Irish language and the Gaeltacht is an important cultural resource in promoting development, and all across Europe there are several successful and innovative development projects that are based on local cultural and linguistic resources and distinctiveness.

Given the importance of this cultural attribute FORUM will try to promote and enhance its sustainability as well as leveraging it to promote the wider cultural, economic and social development of the region. This must be achieved in a sustainable way and the survival of the Gaeltacht area will be supported by the actions in this plan.

2.3.6 Broadband

The statistics and the Figure 12 below demonstrate that Connemara falls behind the State and Galway County in terms of internet penetration (therefore broadband). This is mirrored in terms of PC ownership. This requires closer examination to determine if it is because of a lack of provision or a decision by households to forego such. As demonstrated in the consultations it suggests this is mostly down to poor provision and consistency of service. There is a Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) in Clifden which was funded under the National Development Plan and is operational since 2009. There are 88 MAN's nationally and provide speeds of up to 1 Gigabits per second. This is on a par with any international benchmarks. The MAN's are state owned fibre networks that are contracted out to a company to operate as a wholesaler. The networks are open to carriers to provide a service to the end user. There are serious issues however in identifying and utilising the network for the local business community. There is no information widely available to explain to the community the potential of this infrastructure and how to access it. During the preparation of this plan FORUM directly contacted the ENET that operate the MAN in Clifden. According to a report from ENET⁴ there are 3 operators on the MAN (AirSpeed Telecom, BT Ireland, Vodafone Ireland) and 4 connections that are all public institutions. However the MAN is currently lying chiefly underutilised. The Islands also suffer from poor broadband provision and penetration. This is down to the cessation of the previous National Broadband Scheme and the lack of economic viability in service provision.

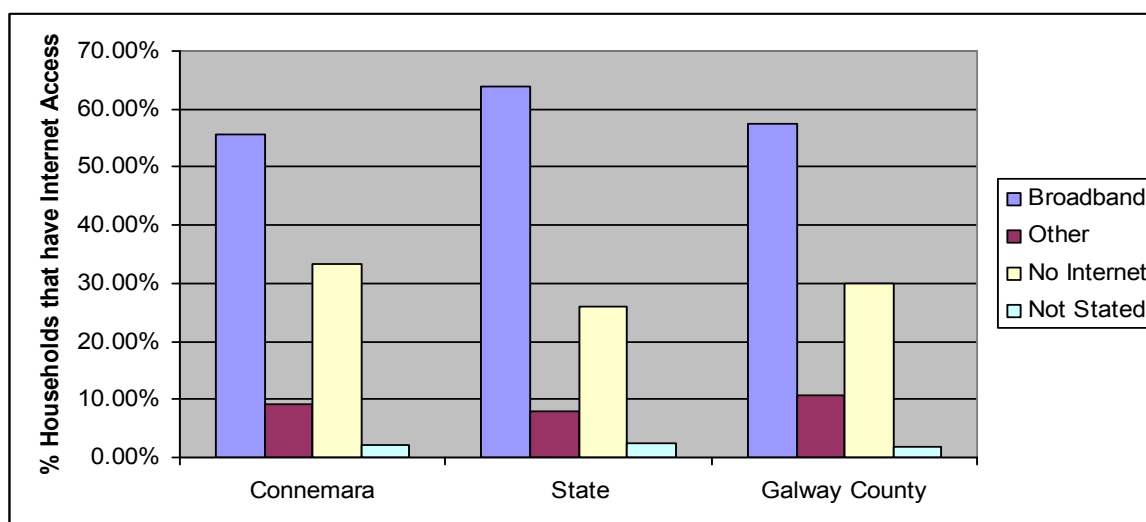


Figure 12: Broadband coverage in Connemara

2.3.7 Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012)

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index provides a metric for determining the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular Geographic region. It takes into consideration:

- Population Change

⁴ <http://www.enet.ie/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=108&cntnt01returnid=129>

- Age Dependency Ratio
- Lone Parent Ratio
- Primary Education Only
- Third Level Education
- Unemployment Rate (male and female)
- Proportion living in Local Authority Rented Housing

A scoring is given to the area based on a national average of zero and ranging from approximately -35 (being the most disadvantaged) to +35 (being the most affluent). As a broad metric the index and in particular the maps serve to highlight areas which immediately stand out in terms of disadvantage and provide an indicator for possible interventions.

Table 3: Index of Scoring Affluence

Relative Index Score	Label	Colour Scheme in Maps
over 30	extremely affluent	dark blue
20 to 30	very affluent	medium blue
10 to 20	affluent	light blue
0 to 10	marginally above average	light green
0 to -10	marginally below average	light orange
-10 to -20	disadvantaged	medium orange
-20 to -30	very disadvantaged	orange
below -30	extremely disadvantaged	red

The average relative deprivation score for the State is 0 and for Galway County is 0.4. As Figure 13 indicates Connemara has no ED's that are classified as "Extremely Disadvantaged" or "Very Disadvantaged". It has however 8 ED's classified as "Disadvantaged" these correspond broadly with the traditional Gaeltacht heartland and Inishbofin. There are a large proportion of the ED's classified as "Marginally Below Average" and these are generally away from Galway City and on the periphery of the territory. An analysis at Small Area level reaffirms those areas above and indeed there are two areas classified as "Very Disadvantaged", contained within the ED's of Garmna and Scainimh. Areas with a low deprivation scoring confirm much of the individual thematic analysis heretofore in terms of the areas that are lagging behind. The lower deprivation scoring corresponds with a trend in these areas of poor educational attainment, high dependency ratios, high unemployment, higher proportions of lone parents, greater instances of single person dwellings and higher proportions of the population at the younger and older age cohorts.

An examination of the change in deprivation from 2006-2011 particularly at Small area level is interesting in so far as there are no patterns discernable between those areas that improved and those that declined. Small Areas classified as affluent and disadvantaged in 2006 declined and improved in an ad-hoc manner by 2011. What is discernable however is that at an ED level there was a noticeable improvement in the deprivation classification in a large proportion of the region.

The deprivation index again clearly highlights the clear spatial divide in Connemara with the ED's and Small Areas close to Galway City showing a high degree of affluence. It again reaffirms the influence of the City on the eastern fringe of the territory. What this suggests is that a multi faceted approach and plan is necessary to address the spatial imbalances within the region to try and bring about more balanced social and economic development.

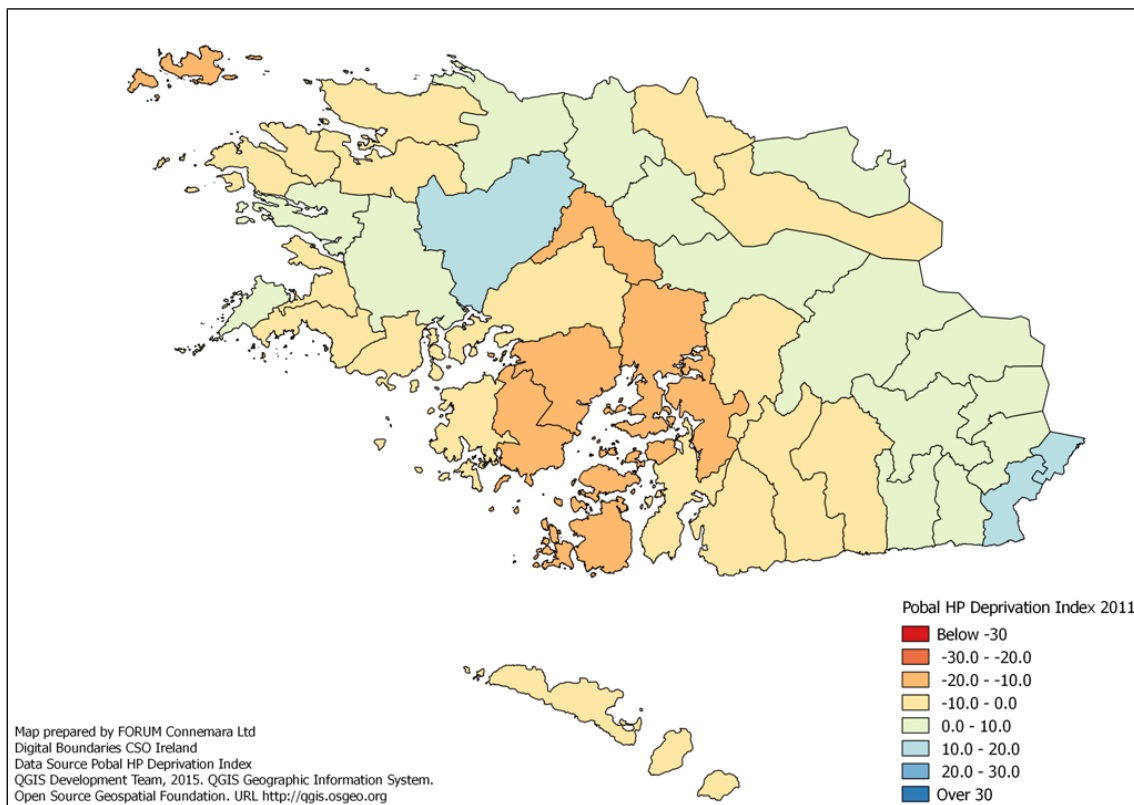


Figure 13: Pobal HP Deprivation Index

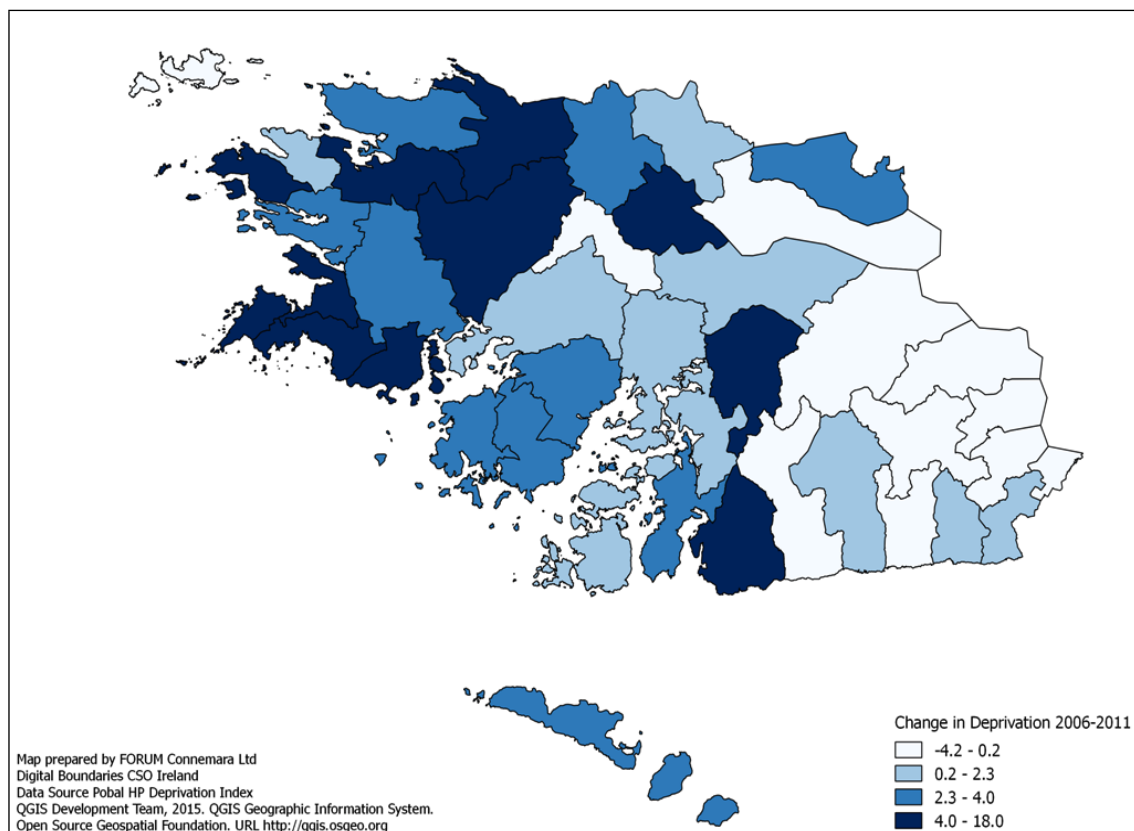


Figure 14: Change in deprivation 2006-2011

Figure 14 shows the change in deprivation during the period 2006–2011. The work of FORUM in addressing both social and economic disadvantage is likely to have played an important role in reducing deprivation with the best results evident in the areas they targeted with support.

2.3.8 Housing and Families

Unoccupied houses are a strong feature on the western boundaries of the area. They comprise over 65% of all houses in the ED of Doonloughan, over 61% in Roundstone and over 59% of houses in Derrycunlagh / Derrylea. While holiday homes account for the bulk of unoccupied houses, there are also a number of unoccupied houses in the interior of the area, due to immigration during the downturn and farm abandonment.

From a **Rural Town** perspective, the concentration of growth in urban centres may have contributed to their viability, but not where there are a large number of unoccupied houses. Many rural villages and towns have large numbers of vacant commercial properties, and continue to experience retail and 'village centre' decline in terms of commerce and services, particularly Clifden and Oughterard.

2.3.9 Caring

In terms of those caring for others, Connemara (4.7%) has a marginally higher proportion of care givers (as a proportion of the total population) than either the State (4.1%) or Galway County (4.5%). The data also shows that a larger proportion of those with a disability fall in the two older age classifications of 45-64 and 64+ for the region. Indeed the 64+ category accounts for 40% of all those with a disability versus the State average of 34% and Galway County average of 39%. A review at ED level demonstrates that many ED's are over 40% of all those with a disability in the 65+ category. There are noticeable concentrations in real terms in the ED's of An Cromptán, Clifden, Oughterard and Tulaigh Mhic Aodháin. A closer look at small area shows that the small areas within these ED's that have the highest numbers also have nursing homes or residential care homes contained within them. It is reasonable then to assume that this is what has the numbers high in these particular areas.

2.3.10 Elderly

As already highlighted in the demographics (see also population pyramids in Appendix II) the age distribution in the LDS area has a higher proportion of the population in the older age cohorts than either Galway County or the State. This is an important feature to highlight and requires specific focus as elderly people are often some of the hardest to reach disadvantaged groups, in development work and in the community. The elderly identified in this section are for the most part indigenous. When examining the elderly cohort (those 65 years and over) from Census 2011 population figures it is important to be aware that nursing/retirement homes can distort the interpretation of figures. With this in mind it is still a fact that some of the highest proportions of the population 65+ are in the more remote ED's Errislannan (26%), An Ros (23%), Leitir Breacáin (23%), An Chorr (22%), Inishbofin (21%), Abhiann Ghabhla (21%), Doonloughan (20%), Cloch na Rón (20%), Sillerna (20%), Maíros (19%) and Bunowen (18%). These areas correspond for the most part to outlying areas of the territory. They are also areas that have some of the highest rates of unoccupied housing, single person dwellings and lowest rates of car ownership. This compounds the feeling of isolation and loneliness which can have serious social issues for the wider community and ill effects on the health and wellbeing of those elderly individuals. Indeed the proportion of those that define their health as bad or very bad is also higher on average in these areas and above the State and County figures. Another worrying feature is that these areas also have higher proportions of disability and care givers. When set in the context of the dispersed nature and low population density of the general populous and accessibility issues which stem from the topography and transportation infrastructure, this creates a negative multiplier effect for this age cohort in these outlying regions. This impacts not only on the elderly but also has consequences for the wider community. The requirement therefore is to augment transportation, social care interventions, and the promotion of positive aging and active age clubs in the wider community. It is a fact that as people become older their reliance on social services increases however their ability to influence the provision of such services is weakened. With these types of undertakings it should be possible, with some support, to keep people living in their own homes for longer and enhance the overall quality of life for these people.

2.3.11 Young people

Connemara (29%) has a greater proportion of families with adult children than County Galway (26%) and the state (25%) (Figure 24, Appendix II). This reflects possibly a higher dependency of adult

children on their parents this may have been exacerbated by the economic down turn, the lack of employment opportunities and affordable housing.

The percentage of the population aged 0 to 14 years provides an indicator of the current demographic vitality, as well as future demographic trends in the area (Figure 25, Appendix II). Only four EDs in Connemara have levels that exceed the County Galway average (23%) at this age cohort and these are all located in close proximity to Galway city. In contrast, a number of EDs in the North, West and centre of the territory, including the areas of Leenane, Maam and Recess have particularly low levels of children in the population as well as the Árann Islands (15%) and Inishbofin (16%).

The areas in Connemara with the greatest proportions of families with pre-school children occur for the most part in the ED's with the greatest populations with some notable exceptions, for example Leitir Breacáin, An Uillinn and An Ros, which are closely grouped geographically and contain some of the lowest population numbers and actual family numbers, yet they have some of the highest proportions of families with pre-school children all being above 11.5%.

The communities with the highest proportions of families with children who are in the first cycle of primary school (Figure 26, Appendix II) are an area just east of Clifden (the ED's of Binn an Choire, Derrycunlagh/ Derrylea), the Rinvyle peninsula, Inishbofin and the peri-urban area around Galway City. These areas demonstrate clear pockets in a spatial sense. The proportion of families with pre-adolescent children in Connemara (11.5%) is slightly higher than the national and county average both of which are just over 11%. Some of the highest proportions and real numbers are evident in the area to the south aligning more or less with the traditional Gaeltacht areas and in the east of territory, highlighting the areas that have the greatest need / potential to develop youth activities and groups over the coming years. The Census data shows, the areas with the highest proportions of adolescents (10-19 years age cohort) in the population are in Leenane, Clonbur and the Aran Islands. There is also a pocket in the traditional Gaeltacht heartland of Kilkieran, Lettermore and Lettermullen.

FORUM will continue to focus on in-school initiatives, in partnership with the schools Completion Programme, to counter early school leaving and provide a focus on second chance education, both formal and informal. TUSLA acknowledge that FORUM, through its integrated approach to working with young people and their families, is already operating the Meitheal Model and the referral system in place with the Social Workers provides a safety net for families and young people at risk.

The age-cohort 20 to 34 years of age is very much under-represented in the population of Connemara with 23% nationally, 19% in Galway County and 17% in Connemara in this age cohort. Connemara also has a significant gender imbalance, due to the out-migration of young females. Thus, the territory is lacking the population cohort that plays the most significant role in generating new economic development and maintaining vibrant communities.

Overall, sport, art and outdoor education-based projects have been effective in improving self esteem, widening vocational skills bases and enabling personal development in Connemara through the work of FORUM. Particular successes have been the After School activity clubs and the Personal Development programme, both of which have seen high levels of youth participation and engagement in schools across the area. Feedback from the Personal Development programme suggests that a bottom-up, collaborative approach has proved effective, with teachers working with FORUM staff to analyse needs, set outcomes and identify priorities. Another strength in youth provision has been in the bringing together of service providers. This has been most evident in Jigsaw & Friends - a new mental health initiative for young people which has succeeded in meeting needs, sharing resources and information and saving on healthcare costs through the recruitment of a team of twenty people, including GPs, social workers and clinical psychologists. Other key achievements are the delivery of a child protection training scheme and the raising of funds through successful networking and events. FORUM has been pivotal in bringing together service providers and agencies to implement these types of programmes, and specifically through the Meitheal initiative.

2.3.12 Travellers and New Communities

The landscape of Connemara, and the area's culture and traditions have served to attract many visitors and newcomers to communities over many decades. In recent years, particularly during the growth of Ireland's economy post millennium, there was an influx of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. While Connemara has for the most part lower proportions than Galway County and the State there have been some of whom have settled in Clifden, Oughterard and for the most part the more peri-urban parts of northwest Connemara. Returns from the 2011 Census of Population show that there are 357 Polish nationals (+114% on 2006), 86 Lithuanians (+91% on 2006) and 600 persons from other EU countries (+16% on 2006) (excluding the UK) resident in Connemara. The Census data clearly shows that the vast majority of the Poles and Lithuanians reside in the communities of Clifden, Moycullen and Barna. While they have their own social networks locally, there is a need for greater integration with the host communities, and this is something which FORUM will continue to encourage, facilitate and promote. The data also points to the fact that UK nationals are more likely to be dispersed throughout northwest Connemara, with many having bought land locally. Although the numbers of UK nationals has actually decreased by 5% on 2006 figures.

In terms of ethnicity and cultural backgrounds, the Census figures for 2011 indicate that Connemara is a very homogeneous society, 91% of the population describing their ethnicity as White Irish (State 84%, Galway County 88%). On average it has less of a proportion of the population in all of the CSO ethnicity classifications in the Census 2011, than either Galway County or the State. One of the most distinct features is that Connemara has an extremely low representation of travellers 0.08% versus State 0.65% and Galway County 1.43%. In real terms there are only 32 travellers in the Connemara area. The majority of which (78%) are resident in Oughterard (5) and Clifden (20). Clifden also has the highest concentration in real terms of Black or Black Irish (56) and Asians or Asian Irish (57). The more rural ED's, particularly those on the periphery, demonstrate the highest proportions of those classifying themselves as Other White. As there are no significant Eastern European numbers here it maybe attributed to various European individuals such as French, German and Dutch that moved into the area as a lifestyle choice for its natural beauty and their desire to live in rural Ireland.

FORUM, through the Adolescent Support Programme, engages on an ongoing basis with the two traveller families resident in Clifden. The children of these two families participate on a regular basis in the project youth activities – Clifden primary and post primary school personal development programmes, summer camps, fun runs, parenting programmes. FORUM works closely with HSE social work Dept and teachers to ensure children at risk are engaged in programmes, in a non stigmatising way. FORUM's approach is cognisant of the unique needs of traveller families but takes care not to isolate them from their peers. FORUM's work with disadvantaged families also engages the adult members of the Traveller families.

2.3.13 Travel and Access

Connemara is broadly in line with the rest of Galway in terms of means of travel to work or study. An analysis at ED level also demonstrates that more people travel by buses that reside in the ED's along the N59 arterial route. This may be attributed to good bus services along this route. Some of the more rural ED's and particularly those of the South Connemara Gaeltacht areas have some of the highest instances of households having no cars. A feature that along with poor public or private transport infrastructure and services surely curtails economic opportunity and access to vital social services.

There is the need for the provision of sustainable transport options for commuters including increasing the appeal to choose walking or cycling as a means of commuting particularly in the peri-urban areas and larger towns and villages through education and enhancing the basic infrastructure. This is not likely to address the substantive combination of unemployment, lack of transport and other disadvantages related to isolation. The most apparent objective of FORUM however should be to utilise its resources to support micro-enterprise development in rural communities in a shared and concerted effort with other stakeholders to ensure that planning, infrastructure development and investment are facilitative of rural economic diversification and sustainable development which can contribute to the sustainability and viability of **rural towns and villages**.

2.3.14 Educational Attainment

The level of educational attainment in Connemara tells a dual story. In a spatial sense part of the territory lags behind that of County Galway and the State, and there are particularly high levels of educational disadvantage in the more rural parts of the territory. The most recent census returns for educational attainment at ED level (2011) reveals that in Connemara the proportion of those (aged 15+ with full-time education completed) with no formal education at all is a higher proportion at 1.97% than that of Galway County (1.6%) or the State (1.41%). While the proportions are small, given the importance of a formal education as a basic right and a route out of poverty and deprivation it is something that must be addressed by this and other strategies. Analysis of that same data also demonstrates that many of those ED's that display the greatest proportions and absolute numbers of those with no formal education align with the Gaeltacht heartlands the highest of which is Leitir Móir at 7%. See Figure 15 below.

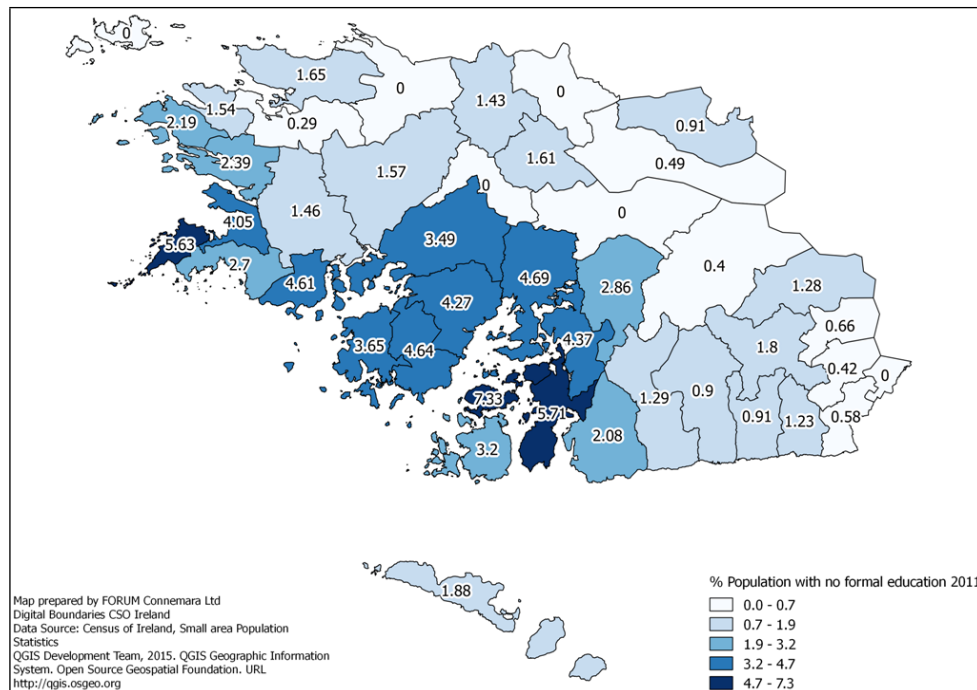


Figure 15: Percentage of population with no formal education 2011

When those (aged 15+ with full-time education completed) that have completed primary education only are examined in conjunction with those with no formal education the situation in some areas of the territory becomes even starker. In Connemara 17% of the population aged over 15 with full time education completed have primary education only. The figure for Galway County is 16% and the State average is 14%. There is a huge degree of deviation from all of these averages with over half of the ED's in Connemara over 20%. The need for services to support the personal development of young people, and add value to their education while giving them possibilities and aspirations for a future in Connemara is critical.

Low levels of educational attainment prevent many individuals from engaging fully in our society. There has been a societal shift in which there is an increasing reliance on digital technology and ICT. Therefore there is an expectation that citizens have a degree of computer and digital literacy. Thus, in addition to supporting conventional adult literacy and numeracy programmes, FORUM will examine ways of addressing further ICT training for adults across the proposed LDS area.

Educational disadvantage is a significant contributory factor to economic and social exclusion. Early school-leaving is frequently inter-generational. Thus, addressing under-achievement among young people requires supporting families, so that an environment that fosters learning and personal development is cultivated in the community and in the home. Thus, in approaching preventive education and youth development, FORUM is committed to a holistic community development approach. There is opportunity to work with the training institutions most notably GMIT and the GRETb.

2.4 Rural Environment

2.4.1 Areas of Designation and Conservation

A somewhat unique feature of the territory, particularly in terms of the scale of such, is the fact that a large proportion of the territory is designated or protected in some form. These designations are ultimately rooted in and emanate from National and EU conservation policy. They are adopted and implemented at a National level through the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). There are three main categories of designation in Ireland Natural Heritage Areas (NHA's), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) and Special Protection Areas (SPA's). NHA's are a national designation which for the most part overlap SAC's and SPA's. They are considered the basic designation for wildlife and habitat. SAC's are considered important wildlife and habitat areas in a European and Irish context and are designated by the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). SPA's are primarily focused on birdlife and habitats and are designated under EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). Figure 16 below demonstrates the prevalence of designated areas in the region.

These designations have major implications for landowners and workers engaged in natural resource utilisation as they curtail the type of activities that can occur in the protected areas or the actions that can be taken to control wildlife pests. Those particularly impacted by the designations are farmers, foresters and fishermen. A large proportion of Galway, west of the city, is protected by at least one of the designations. There are even overlaps in many instances, with SAC's co-occurring with either SPA's or pNHA's. As the designations cover both land and water they have major implications for the use of the regions natural resources.

The designations often have a negative connotation in the indigenous population as they are seen as restrictive and a burden on the development of the region. However the designations can also be used to the advantage of the region. Many farm schemes are now being targeted at environment conservation and preservation. This is often linked directly to protected sites where farmers receive a payment for contributing to the preservation of these sites. There is also a growing realisation that designation can be used to add value to products and services within the region. For example the Connemara Hill Lamb producers have attained Protected Geographical Indication Status for their produce and are leveraging off the natural environment and unique ecological conditions to add value to lamb produced within the region.

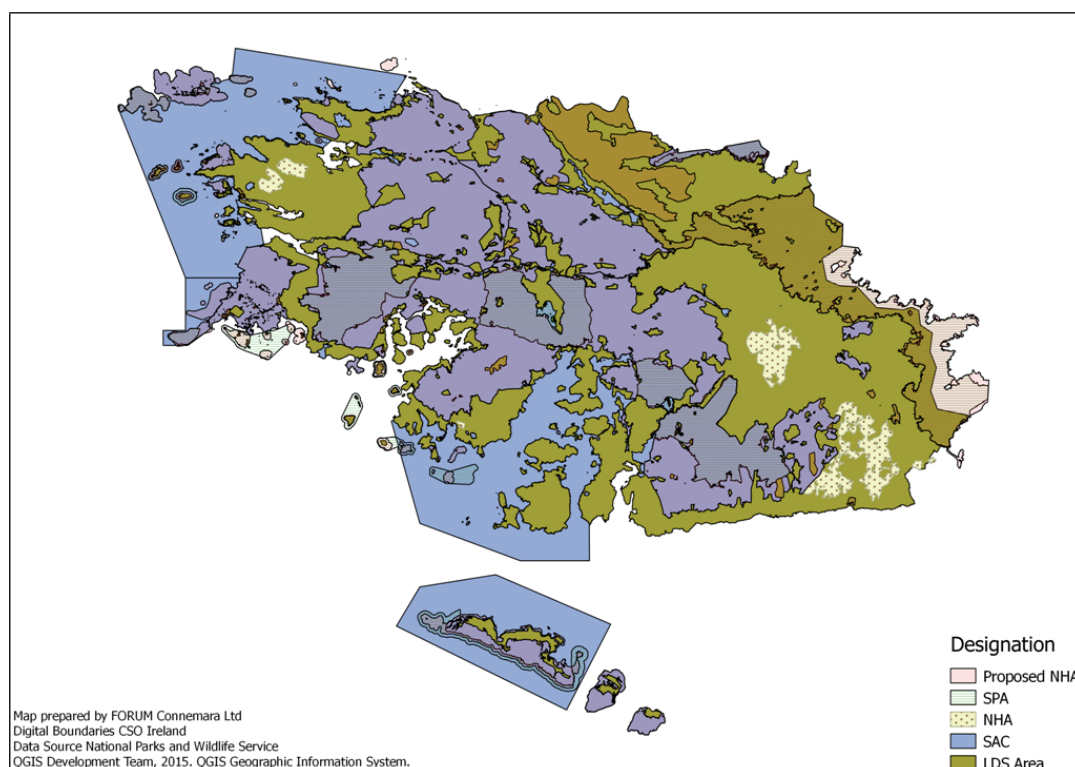


Figure 16: Designated areas

It was noted that during the public consultations designations were seen as a negative attribute by some. This is something that FORUM must address to try and utilise the designations for the benefit of the region rather than working against the local populations. There are many opportunities that could be explored such as linking conservation and the natural environment to food production and eco-tourism development.

The concept of pursuing GeoPark status has been explored by FORUM with partners and some progress has been made on this, which would afford a combination of environmental management with internationally recognizable and marketable tourism branding.

2.4.2 Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was adopted in 2000. It requires governments to take a new approach to managing all their waters: rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries (transitional) and coastal waters. Member states must ensure that their waters achieve at least good status by 2015 and that status doesn't deteriorate in any waters. To achieve good status and preserve the best waters, it is necessary to prepare and implement management plans for those waters.

In accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive, Ireland is committed to manage all waters through a catchment based process, and the River Basin Management Plan is the mechanism for achieving this. The Western River Basin area includes Clare, Galway, Mayo and Sligo.

A significant proportion of waters in the district are already protected under other legislation because they require special protection due to their sensitivity to pollution or their particular economic, social or environmental importance. All of the areas requiring special protection in the Western RBD have been identified, mapped and listed in a register of protected areas background document (available at www.wfdireland.ie). They include the Corrib systems (important freshwater fish systems) and Shellfish waters such as Inner Galway Bay South, Cill Chiaráin Bay, Killary Harbour, Lough Corrib. There are many special areas of conservation, including the Connemara Bog Complex, Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex. They also include four Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchments protected under the EU Habitats Directive, the Owenriff and Dawros catchments in County Galway. Invasive species causing concern in the Corrib system include Zebra Mussel and the African Curly Pondweed. Lough Corrib the second largest lake in Ireland (after Lough Neagh), is situated in Co. Galway in the River Corrib catchment. The main rivers draining into Lough Corrib include the Bealnabrack, Black, Clare, Cregg, Owenriff rivers and the Cong canal which joins Lough Corrib to Lough Mask. The lake can be divided into two parts; Lower Lough Corrib - a relatively shallow basin underlain by carboniferous limestone in the south and Upper Lough Corrib - a larger, deeper basin.

The Western River Basement Catchment Management Plan for the western region points out that wastewater from un-sewered properties is a critical issue in the WRB region with 10,096 un-sewered properties located in areas and with 70 rivers that have been assessed to be at risk of failing to achieve the required standards due to unsuitable hydrogeological conditions and the high density and location of unsewered properties in these areas.

From a tourism perspective, meetings with Inland Fisheries Ireland and Fáilte Ireland confirmed opportunities in lakes and rivers. This includes use of the Corrib for angling, boating, traditional rowing and bank based recreation. An important component is to engender community based catchment care and give ownership in a way that can enhance the management and sustainable use and care of inland waterways of Connemara.

2.4.3 Renewable Energy

Europe and Ireland have adopted ambitious environmental mitigation and energy efficiency targets. An Energy Policy for Europe sets out a policy context which although not binding, firmly commits the European Union (EU) to a low consumption economy based on more secure, more competitive and more sustainable energy. It has a specified target of saving 20% of the European Union's energy consumption compared to projections for 2020. This has also formed a key ingredient in the EU Energy and Climate Change Package agreed at the European Council in December 2008 (i.e. 20% efficiency improvement, 20% renewable energy penetration and 20% greenhouse-gas emissions

reduction by 2020). Ireland has reflected this commitment by adopting a national 20% target. Therefore at a national level the Government sets out in the 2007 Government White Paper, *Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland*, a target for a 20% improvement in energy efficiency across the whole economy by 2020. The White Paper also states an ambition to surpass the EU target of 20% with an indicative target of 30% energy efficiency by 2020.

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) details the current package of energy-efficiency policies and measures that will contribute to both the national 20% savings target for 2020, and the EU ESD 9% energy-savings target for 2016. Each year the Energy Policy Statistical Support Unit (EPSSU) of SEAI publishes a report that details Ireland's progress towards meeting national and international targets. According to Energy in Ireland 1990-2014 the contribution of renewables to gross final consumption (GFC) was 8.6% in 2014. This compares to a target of 16% to be achieved by 2020. In 2014, we were just over halfway towards each of the separate targets for contributions of renewable energy in electricity, transport and heat. The report also highlights that energy imports in to Ireland were worth €5.7 billion Euro.

Connemara has the natural resources that have potential to be utilised for many renewable energy interventions. The Marine Institute has used Galway Bay as a 'Smart Ocean' zone for testing of renewables using wave action with the 'wave bob'. The region has one of the best wind platforms in Europe and there are currently 3 operational wind farms in the region with a generation capacity of 44.86MW⁵. These are all commercial farms and there has been no instance yet of a successfully developed community developed farm, but there are some in the early development stage. One large turbine can generate up to €80,000 per annum in returns, enough to provide a community organization with a sustainable business model, and support a wide range of other community activities. There are also plentiful water resources such as mountain rivers and lakes that may pose some potential for micro generation.

Connemara has large tracts of woodland, and a lot of the semi deciduous timber larch is ideal for wood based biomass, either for heating or electricity generation. The market in Ireland is poor for much of the timber as it has too high a moisture content. Therefore drying systems, coupled with biomass installations (one works off the other, and is therefore economical) would be a viable approach to utilization of the timber in the area. A biomass wood drying and heating scheme would be ideal for a community based heating solution, for schools, service centres, hotels, swimming pools etc. The new Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) 2014 – 2021 includes subsidy for the installation of biomass heating in agriculture. There is an opportunity to work with Teagasc in informing the community about the options and technologies available, and also ensure clarity around which programme can be used to best advantage.

It is worth noting that the EnAlgae Project (INTERREG IVB 2007-2014) tested the growing of kelp as a biomass fuel. This demonstrated that kelp is an excellent, high energy and quick decomposition biomass fuel. It may be worth exploring the potential of combining kelp with other food waste products. Much work has been done on this by Sligo institute of Technology and it may provide justification to explore a networking partnership with Sligo LAG on combining kelp and other food and agri waste for energy production. GMIT is specializing in passive energy building technologies. They may be a good partner to develop bespoke training in building trades for passive buildings.

While it is clear there are many natural advantages for the region in terms of renewable energy development on both a micro and commercial basis there are a number of impediments to its development. The foremost of which are the environmental designations in much of the territory. Indeed even though the land mass has one of the best wind platforms in Europe, Galway County Councils 'Wind Energy Strategy' has classified areas where wind farm development would be considered from a wind potential and landscape sensitivity perspective. Most of the Connemara area has been designated as 'Not Normally Permissible' which hinders the potential of wind development. However the only areas classified as "Strategic Areas" and "Acceptable in Principle Areas" are in the Connemara area. There are approximately 6 sites in the region of scale with these designations.

The Irish Wind Energy Association. (1/05/2015). Wind Farm Details by County. Available: <http://www.iwea.com/index.cfm?page=bycounty&county=galway>. Last accessed 14th December 2015.⁵

Outside of these areas there would be great difficulty in establishing any significant wind development.

2.5 Review of Key Services and Programmes

FORUM has twenty five years acting as a hub in Connemara around which community activity in North West Connemara is organised or enabled. This has mainly been in the areas of social inclusion and economic development with the organisation playing a key role in enabling a full and effective implementation of the LEADER Programme from 2007 to 2013. FORUM has a solid track record in building relationships and contributing (not controlling) where possible. The success of the FORUM approach is evidenced in the number of strategic and action centred relationships in which it has been involved. **This exemplifies the FORUM delivery of added value.**

The key co-ordinating and decision-making structures and statutory services, working on a range of economic, social and environmental issues are tabulated below, with a summation of work carried out by and with these agencies during the lifetime of the last programme and the areas of desired cooperation and collaboration for implementation of this strategy. Key services and programmes were identified within the context that LEADER and this LDS has the potential to complement and support such initiatives. They are also programmes that have an impact on the cross cutting themes of environment, climate change and innovation.

Table 4: Key Services, Programmes and Collaborators

Key Services and Programmes	Agency / Organisation / Programme	Relevance to 2014 – 2020 Connemara RDP
Rural transport service.	Galway Transport Coordination Unit/Bealach na Gaillimhe.	Requirement for collaboration to address rural transport gaps.
Rural development initiatives in other areas of the county. (proposed)	Galway LCDC.	Important opportunities for cooperation in Connemara, eg. on rural town projects.
Environmental improvement works.	Galway Co Co in partnership with FORUM.	Continue cooperation with environmental works & tourism infrastructure projects e.g. beach clean-ups and construction & maintenance of Wild Atlantic Way viewing points.
Social inclusion programme.	LCDP/SICAP, implemented by FORUM.	Adds value, complements, but should not duplicate social inclusion component of LEADER. Helped by FORUM's role in implementing last time around.
Education and training outside of school /formal education sector.	GRETB – in partnership with FORUM.	Necessary collaborator in delivery of projects e.g. pre-apprenticeship programmes and bespoke training initiatives.
Financial and resources support for older people and young people's programmes.	HSE	FORUM will continue cooperation to add value and complement the social inclusion component of LEADER.
Job activation programmes such as TÚS, RSS & CE.	Dept. Social Protection implemented using FORUM as a implementing body.	Reciprocal and collaborative work adding value to a range of community initiatives, social, and environmental e.g. beach clean-up and care companion scheme.
Coordination of payroll for RSS & TÚS.	Pobal	Cooperate with Pobal's oversight role on SICAP & LEADER programmes.
Communication between community and the Local Authority.	Public Participation Network (PPN).	A useful, although broad based, feedback and communication channel.
Provision of financial support for families and young people's programmes.	Tusla – family support agency, delivered with FORUM.	Continue cooperation to add value and complement the social inclusion component of LEADER.
Addressing mental health issues with 15 – 25 year olds.	Jigsaw in cooperation with FORUM.	Has a role to play in additional mental health/ support work in conjunction with SICAP.

Provision of practical supports to people with disability through various schemes.	IWA, Ability West and Enable Ireland with FORUM.	Continue to support service programmes & interventions.
Short and bespoke academic courses.	NUIG and GMIT.	Collaboration in regard to accredited courses, bespoke training & short courses. The development of complementary courses.
Support and training for farmers, eg. delivery of green cert courses in the locality.	Teagasc, GRETB, FORUM.	Continue to cooperate to support farmers with a particular focus on young farmers.
Tourism strategy and policy. Providing direction for WAW, framework for local interventions.	Fáilte Ireland.	Continue to seek input on applications and projects. Work on strategic environmental, WAW and Blue Way initiatives.
Business start up, expansion support.	Local Enterprise Office (LEO).	FORUM works with LEO and this will be an essential part of assisting new and expanding rural businesses in pre application stage.
Cycling & walking trails on Coillte lands.	Coillte.	Continue to collaborate on rural recreational infrastructural projects and investigate with Coillte the potential for biomass in the region.
Conservation and environmental protection.	EPA.	Greater possibility for collaborative working re. Protection of water sources theme in LEADER.
Management of fisheries and aquaculture and implementing FLAG strategies.	BIM (incl FLAGS).	Potential for diversification training, enterprise dev. and coastal tourism. The FLAG strategy requires community animation which FORUM is well placed to provide.
National park and landscape management.	Nat. Parks and Wildlife (incl Connemara Nat Park.	Management of landscape with increased engagement in farming and tourism projects eg. Trails & Geopark. Growing engagement with FORUM.
Provisions of advice and information re renewables.	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.	A bigger role is envisaged with the increased focus on renewables.
Business mentoring and special initiatives to identify solutions to rural disadvantage.	Western Development Commission.	Mentoring enterprise start-ups and other targeted sectoral support for food, craft & creative businesses. Plan to work with FORUM.
Provision of finance for social enterprise and environmental projects.	Clann Credo.	More financing solutions of the type funded before are needed to implement more environmental projects and social enterprises. Working with FORUM.
Forum for hill farmers to network and influence policy.	Irish Natura & Hill Farmers Association.	Could be very important conduit to advance environmental and eco tourism measures.
Management of inland water catchments, including responsibility for Framework Directive.	Inland Fisheries Ireland.	Planned working together on use and conservation of Lough Corrib and river catchments and control programme for invasive species.
Dissemination of information and support on a range of citizen issues.	Citizens Advice – with FORUM providing referrals.	Continue to disseminate information and refer clients to CIC.
Financing facilities Banking Services Financial transactions.	Public/Private Banking Institutions.	Financing of projects will be critical to success of and viability of individual projects.
Provision of financial support to some RDP projects.	Credit Unions.	Strategic financial partner in new RDP.
Information and policy on farming and land use issues, and aquaculture.	IFA.	Continue to support membership – possible important conduit to advance environmental, farm diversification and eco tourism measures.
Support to Irish speaking communities re. employment, enterprise, culture & services	Údáras na Gaeltachta	FORUM will continue to collaborate in regard to SICAP and RDP projects
Work activation schemes; minor infrastructure works.	Cluid Housing Association.	Continue cooperation and complement the social inclusion component of LEADER.
Care for the elderly – specific care giving in remote and Gaeltacht areas.	HSE and FORUM.	FORUM currently provide support to older people and groups in the Gaeltacht under LCDP with discussions ongoing about extending this service.

FORUM are engaging in the new LEADER Programme from a position of knowledge, relevance and a track record of effective collaboration and partnership working. Their many partners are planning implementation of programmes in the expectation that FORUM will be there to assist, and add value through the implementation of LEADER. Evidence of some of this is included in the records of the agency consultation (available on request).

2.6 Strategic Importance of the Local Economic and Community Plan

FORUM will pay particular importance to the (draft at the time of writing) Local Economic Development Plan. The high level goals of this plan bear close correlation to the findings of the needs analysis, consultation findings, and agreed priorities in this plan. The high level goals are as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Theme 1 | Employment and Enterprise |
| Goal: | To Enhance the quantity and quality of employment and enterprise opportunities throughout County Galway. |
| Theme 2 | Poverty and Social Inclusion |
| Goal: | To reduce the levels and persistence of poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion in County Galway. |
| Theme 3 | Education and Training |
| Goal: | To improve educational attainment within County Galway and to ensure that access to training and lifelong learning opportunities is available for all. |
| Theme 4 | Health and Wellbeing |
| Goal: | To improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities across County Galway. |
| Theme 5 | Community Safety |
| Goal: | To make County Galway a safer place to live for all its citizens. |
| Theme 6 | Towns and Villages |
| Goal: | To revitalise and regenerate the towns and villages of County Galway and to improve the connectivity of communities, the built environment and public spaces. |
| Theme 7 | Balanced Sustainable Development |
| Goal: | To ensure that rural communities in County Galway are enabled to participate fully in economic and social development in their own area. |
| Theme 8 | Natural Environment |
| Goal: | To protect and sustain our natural environment for future social, cultural and economic well being. |
| Theme 9 | Culture and Language |
| Goal: | To ensure that the culture and language of County Galway remain a vibrant and unique part of our identity and are development to their full potential. |
| Theme 10 | Harnessing our Natural Resources |
| Goals: | To harness and manage our natural resources to support our unique agriculture and marine related sectors in a balanced and sustainable manner. |

2.7 Summary of the Area Needs Analysis

Significant Changes and Summary of the Key Gaps, Priorities and Potential Areas for Development

(Please note the identification and highlighting in colour by issue allowed emerging findings to be grouped – in line with the consultation outcomes.)

Table 5: Summary of Findings

Theme/Sub theme	Agents involved in delivery	Summary on Current Position	Significant changes	Summary of the key gaps, priorities and potential areas for development
Economic development and job creation Enterprise development	Youthreach GRETB Social Protection LEO WDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal employment trends Low paid employment, High unemployment levels - Peri/urban profile of work patterns nearer Galway and in larger towns Low educational achievement barrier to employment and enterprise. Transport and access problems. Low levels of entrepreneurialism Low levels car ownership in periphery west and north Connemara and lack of transport to work opportunities. Lack of enterprise connected to hill farming and natural resources. Dependency on natural and primary resources over 40% in peripheral EDs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployment levels are still critically high, especially youth unemployment. Emigration has lessened and some growth trends are emerging. The peri urban and rural divide is getting greater. Interest and growth of new and innovative businesses emerged in 2013-2014. Shift in EU Agri Policy. Decline of the construction industry. Low interest rates. Lack of access to credit. Significant unemployment increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical to engage target group and get them past stage one of an intro. to new skills and work opportunities. It should contribute to a feasible future in Connemara with meaningful employment opportunities. Training and support should reflect specific areas within Connemara – Gaeltacht, peri-urban and west and north. Targeted mentoring and follow through. Need for new and traditional trades offers potential. Opportunity to refresh trades with new technologies, e.g. renewables. Need for targeted support, business start and expansion financial support. Expose would be entrepreneurs to opportunities. Mentoring and networking will reduce isolation and provide opportunities. Utilise existing resources & find ways to make natural and landscape resources economically productive. Food, culture & tourism still important.
Broadband	GRETB Communities Galway County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor access or take up of broadband results in < 50% most Connemara. Low levels computer & internet use. Low levels of innovation & technology centres and businesses outside of urban & peri urban areas. Lack of access to broad band based services. Lack of information on what is available in terms of services, leading to poor decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some increase in broadband coverage. Major age gap in IT use with older people excluded and those in north and west. Few improvements re. hotspots. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to build demand, IT usage, and where necessary support broadband provision, through hotspots or group type schemes. Raise awareness of products and services available e.g. MAN network how to access etc. Specific interventions focusing on older generations and those at risk of digital exclusion.
Recurring Themes (colour differentiated)				(Orange) - Pre Enterprise Support And Training (Blue) - Enterprise Support - start, expansion (Green) - Broadband Demand And Services

Theme/Sub theme	Agents involved in delivery	Summary on Current Position	Significant changes	Summary of the key gaps, priorities and potential areas for development
Rural Tourism	Fáilte Ireland National Park Community groups Private Sector Specialist operators Coillte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more tourism amenities and services. Low levels of networking and communication between and among communities and tourism providers. • Exceptional resources in terms of landscape, heritage and marine. Long established tourism industry. • Landscape designations important, with National Park and SAC's offering potential for diversification. Wild Atlantic Way key strategic driver. Fáilte Ireland view the region as important for outdoor pursuits. • Tourism still very seasonal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Atlantic Way reversing decline in rural tourism. • Blue Way is starting to make an impact. • Improvement in music and cultural offering. • Making the landscape work, for tourism and land owners is challenging. • Opportunities through initiatives like the GeoPark emerging. • Growth in overseas tourism again particularly American and British markets. Currency rate changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve services, information. • Develop and network services, and product offerings • Build on outdoor reputation • Develop services that provide local returns and good visitor experience. • Innovative service solutions should include sustainable transport and touring accommodation. • GeoPark progressing • Expand shoulder season. • Improve and address access issues. • Add value, enhance local amenities and attractions to encourage visitors to explore villages, towns and countryside with emphasis on WAW.
Rural Towns	Community organisations FORUM Private sector Galway County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural and retail decline. • Poor environmental conditions in many towns. • Towns are not a valuable part of tourism offering. • Not using Connemara identity. • Inadequate services in outlying areas. • Peri-urban and rural divide growing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O'Donnell report scoped and researched improvement plans for 9 Connemara towns. • Recession driven decline slowing. Identification of sub regions important re. response to providing services. • Growth in successful festivals making an impact (e.g. Clifden stimulating artisanal food growth). • Vacant and unused commercial buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger towns – Clifden, Oughterard, meet wider base of local service needs. Gaps should be addressed in service provision. • O'Donnell plan needs expanding, with each town defining tourism and service contribution. Support needed for services such as play space. Other environmental projects should maximize community and tourism value. • Use festivals in a strategic way, growing iconic heritage/cultural factors • Flexible approach to utilise vacant and unused commercial buildings.
Recurring Themes Rural Tourism (colour differentiated)				(Red) - Improved tourism services (Teal) - Product development – mountains, outdoors, culture
Recurring Themes Rural Towns (colour differentiated)				(Brown) - Improved rural town services, environmental improvements, play space, festivals and tourism added value

Theme/Sub theme	Agents involved in delivery	Summary on Current Position	Significant changes	Summary of the key gaps, priorities and potential areas for development
Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities	HSE Dept. Social Protection GRET Bealach na Gaillimhe Pobal Nat. Learning Network. DVR Clann Family Resource Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable people in Isolated and remote locations, lack of transport/access. • NEETs is an issue in rural and peri-urban areas. High deprivation levels in Gaeltacht. • Slightly higher dependency and caring stats than county average. • The statistics are worse for males than females, but still challenging in areas where primary production dependency leaves females with few work options. • Low levels of educational attainment. Clear spatial divide. Poor literacy levels in specific areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No pattern of change between 2006 – 2011 except areas closer to Galway demonstrated consistent improvement in statistics. • Requirement to be specific and targeted in terms of ED and peri-urban situations. • Transport and access still a challenge in areas. • Early school leaving continues to be a problem and the long term endemic problems of social exclusion in rural areas continue. • Increase in rural population decline in peripheral north and west. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growth in Men Shed projects provides important routes to supporting vulnerable isolated and single men. • Care projects involving volunteering, youth support etc. has been successful. Social care/care of older people is an increasingly vital service build on existing Social Care • P/T seasonal skills/crafts programme introduced by FORUM for women seems to have made a positive change. Therapeutic riding is emerging as a successful model • Lack of basic services that enhance well being - leisure and fitness. • Lack of accessible transport is some areas. Poor facilities for less able bodied. Addressing these gaps through partnership, grant aid and programmes a priority. Provide services in villages and centres that enhance health and physical wellbeing.
Rural Youth	Youthreach Foroige Jigsaw Schools Clann Family Resource Centre Youth Clubs TUSLA HSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational underachievement in some parts of the region is critical, with 20% over 15s with no formal education in much of the Gaeltacht. • Employment opportunities are limited, pay poor, lack of access, transport and broadband a disincentive to staying in the area. • Lack of facilities to support a healthy life style – eg, gym and social activities. • Negative outlook coupled with cut backs and emigration in the past few years making the issues worse. • Outward migration for jobs and further education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes implemented by FORUM have engaged young people in training & personal development. Interests in hospitality careers, may be interested in skills that could contribute to work in those areas. The establishment of 2 Coder dojos is encouraging & important in terms of fostering technology and IT. • Intergenerational programmes last time around had good results. Significant amounts of youth emigration. • Resurgent interest in agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme for transition year, the youth options course – Youth reach and GRET and direct involvement school. • Coder dojo type projects expanded • Working closely with other delivery agents and stakeholders important. Engaging young people in on-going programme planning. • Specific programmes in each three sub regions may be useful. • Issues for unemployed and youth re. confidence and integration in society, - as much in peri-urban as rural areas. • Facilitating and encouraging agricultural education and opportunities.
Recurring Themes Hard to Reach Communities(colour differentiated)				(Red) – Services and support programmes, care, partnership based delivery , animation (Purple) - improved facilities,
Recurring Themes Rural Youth(colour differentiated)				(Green) - targeted programmes, improved services and activities, bespoke approach.

Theme/Sub theme	Agents involved in delivery	Summary on Current Position	Significant changes	Summary of the key gaps, priorities and potential areas for development
Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources	Inland Fisheries Ireland Angling groups Nat Parks and Wildlife Fáilte Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corrib catchment a major resource, good stock of fish. Lake threatened with invasive species. Extensive catchment system, important salmon & trout rivers. High grade rivers in Connemara privately owned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased pressures from zebra mussel, and gradual loss of coarse fish (pike and roach) in the Corrib system. IFI doing more on education in schools. Changes in national policy which effect water catchments i.e. Nitrates Directive and Septic Tank policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pearl mussel protection and control of invasive species important.. Utilise catchment care models to foster local stakeholder stewardship. Build partnership between anglers, community, IFI and other users.
Protection and Improvement of Biodiversity	Nat Park. GeoPark Irish Hill Farmers and Natura Assoc. Outdoor pursuits groups Specialist groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing research knowledge and mapping of Connemara is evident in plans, maps and emerging management proposals and designations. The designations gradually being applied on land/shore/sea. HNV approach to landscape & biodiversity adding value to understanding & management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GeoPark concept being advanced, may have more acceptance with farmers. National Park very open to partnership, more opportunities than in the past. Farmers looking back to less cost intensive farming methods e.g. Green cert achieved by 67 farmers through FORUM partnership with Teagasc. Changes in EU Agri. and environmental policy. New farming organisation established to reflect more accurately the views of Natura and Hill farmers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create tangible and beneficial pilot stakeholder engagement. Implement projects that protect rural biodiversity but have economic value. Farming continues to be challenging, and models to reward farmers for landscape management need to be viable Potential to add value to traditional Seaweed Harvesting can be indiscriminate. Advance a High Nature Value concept
Development of Renewable Energy	Coillte SEAI GMIT SSE Private Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of onshore wind energy through large renewable investors. Designations can impede development of renewable projects. Lack of validated independent information on renewable technology. 2 major wind farms developed in the last 5 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research carried out has identified potential electric car hire scheme for WAW in partnership with Car manufacturer and other stakeholders. New technologies in woodchip drying and more effective biomass boiler systems have made this energy source more viable. No knowledge of other current emerging renewables projects in the area. Potential for community/business renewable energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low value of timber produced in the area may provide opportunity to produce dried woodchip. Installation of effective biomass boiler systems. Explore electric car scheme. Encourage take up of other renewable schemes through SEAI. Provided case studies/validated information for groups considering renewable actions e.g. energy audits.
Recurring Themes - Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources(colour differentiated)				(Green) - species protection, invasives control, catchment care, foster stewardship
Recurring Themes - Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity(colour differentiated)				(Purple) - Pilot stakeholder engagement, protect biodiversity, biodiversity of economic value. Traditional farming systems , Seaweed harvesting
Recurring Themes - Development of Renewable Energy(colour differentiated)				(Dark Blue) – Use of timber with woodchip, biomass, electric vehicles, plus targeted renewables scheme take up

2.7.1 Concluding Statement

The FORUM LDS area has a population of 39,328 persons and covers 2050sq kms extending from Lough Corrib on the outskirts of Galway City to Clifden on the edge of the Atlantic coast and from Killary Harbour which borders with County Mayo to Lettermullen on the South at the entrance to Galway Bay and includes the Aran Islands and Inishbofin. It includes the biggest Gaeltacht in the State.

The Connemara LDS region falls into three quite distinctive areas, and these are explored below and demonstrated using Figure 17 below. They have relevance for prioritisation within the Sub themes and Strategic Actions within the overall LDS.

- **Peri-urban** - Oughterard-Moycullen and south towards Spiddal, Barna and Furbo displaying population growth and urban centred employment and also indicators peri-urban disadvantage. Clifden is also included in this regard.
- **South Connemara and Islands** - The population centres of Carna, Camus, Rosmuc, Carraroe, Ceantar na Oileáin and the Aran Islands, incorporates most of the Connemara Gaeltacht presenting very weak infrastructure and high unemployment levels, the disadvantage getting progressively worse the further west you go, until within reasonable commuting distance and service provision from Clifden.
- **North Connemara** - including Inishbofin, Recess, Maam, Renvyle, Cleggan, Roundstone presents some of the most isolated and sparsely populated regions of Connemara, and in the outlying areas also demonstrates critically high levels of unemployment and lack of access to services. Clifden is an important service town for this region, with Letterfrack demonstrating economic trends that illustrate the value of a functioning rural development hub.

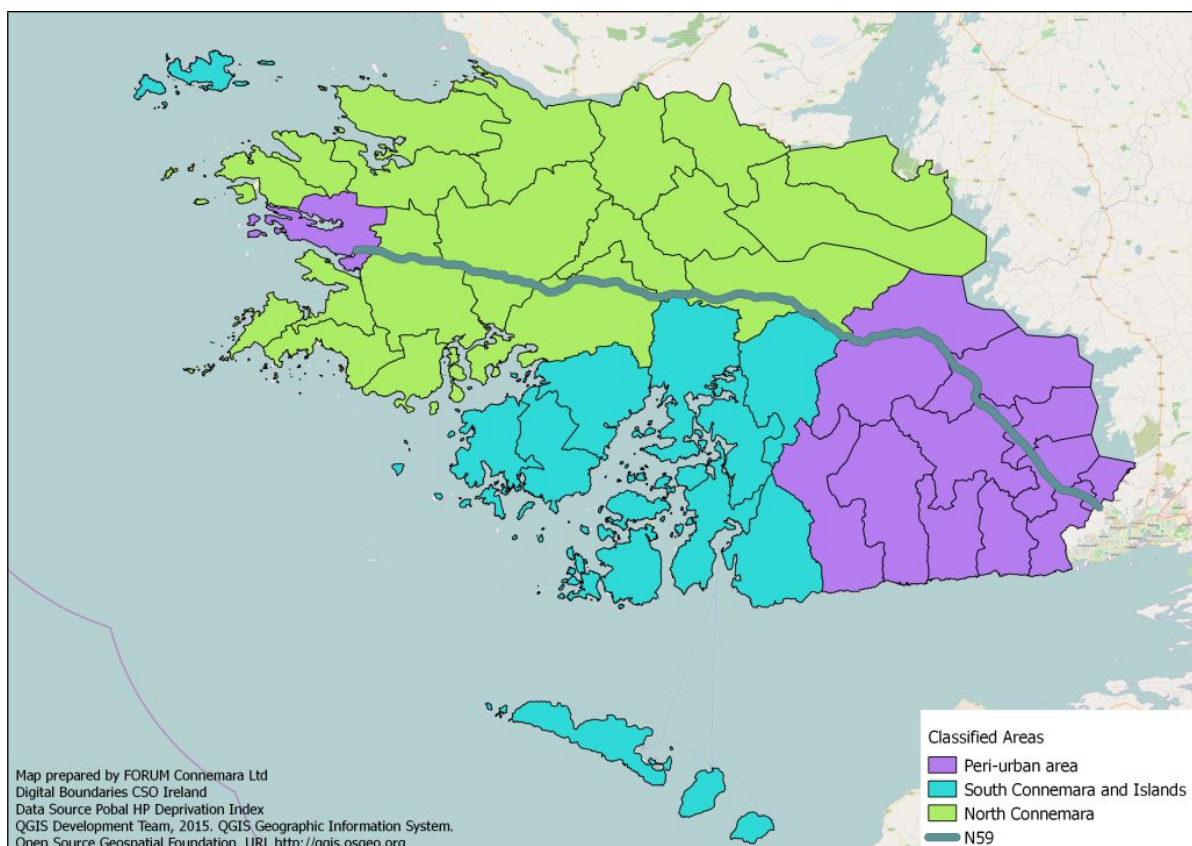


Figure 17: Classification of areas within the FORUM LDS area

The average growth in the number of families in Connemara in 2011 was +10% over 2006, less than the County or State average, but providing growth potential. At 29%, the number of adult children at home illustrates dependency and is 4% higher than the National average. The proportion of elderly is

also higher than the County and National average, with caring at 4.9% higher than the State average at 4.1%. This is greater in peripheral areas, where lack of access to services is likely to compound the issue. As such, isolated vulnerable and people with health or care issues are a priority for the LDS.

Connemara has a disproportionate number of vacant houses, for example Roundstone ED is 61%. Many are holiday homes, but others have been vacated through outmigration.

A division is evident in respect of educational achievement with up to 20% of the population in several ED's having no qualifications. There are notable geographical trends, with south Connemara worse affected. Addressing the lack of qualifications and skills must be a core issue for FORUM. And the figures confirm that youth must be a priority group for the LDS.

Persons at work in Connemara is 46% below that of Galway County (51%) and the State (50%). The level of those classified as unemployed is 13%. The actual unemployment rate for Connemara on a Principal Economic Status basis was 22.46% in 2012. In the South Connemara heartland unemployment rises to 52%. The need to identify pathways to skills development and work must be a priority for the Connemara LDS, and those most excluded from economic life should be a priority group. Where there are high levels of primary production dependency, there are low levels of female employment and poor opportunities for entry to the labour market. This is especially the case for women and should inform both measures and delivery models in the LDS.

The main employment sectors in remote areas are fishing, farming and tourism, with the latter marginal in many areas. The decline of the construction sector had a major impact on the region, with large increases in unemployment and emigration. Commerce and manufacturing are underperforming, while above average employment in the professional services reflects the commuter population. There is a need to stimulate a diverse micro enterprise base in Connemara, which offers opportunity and financial return to local people. Farming is marginal, with poor economic rates of return, and the need to provide a viable and sustainable way of life from areas classified as high nature value is essential if people and communities can continue to be the stewards of the land and the culture and heritage that is part of it. Fishing is a mixed story, with large scale shellfish aquaculture and the pelagic sector providing modest incomes, while small craft (often currachs), fishing pots for lobster and crab are marginal. As with farming, the coastal communities, skills, heritage, landscape and culture are special and place based resources that need to provide return to their dependent communities.

Under Pobal HP classification, Connemara has 8 ED's classified as "Disadvantaged" within the Gaeltacht heartland and Inishbofin as well.. There are a large proportion of the ED's classified as "Marginally Below Average" mostly in remote areas. At small area level analysis demonstrates that there are two areas in Garmna and Scainimh classified as 'very disadvantaged'.

Disadvantaged groups include; those with no qualifications, and not in training or work; long term unemployed; low earning workers based in the primary production sector (fishermen, farmers); carers and disabled, particularly in remote areas; socially excluded in 'peri urban' areas, young people at risk of exclusion, women in areas with high levels of primary production employment base (poor opportunities for economic activity) and isolated and vulnerable elderly. There are very low numbers of travellers in Connemara.

There is only one national road in Connemara, the N59, which has only single carriage ways, has no passing lanes, and few lay byes etc. Many of the road surfaces throughout the region are very poor. There is no train service, and the bus services, including the rural transport scheme buses do not service all the areas. This, coupled with low levels of car ownership in remote areas, has resulted in critical isolation for many, and lack of opportunity to travel to work. Addressing these service gaps and the lack of access to opportunity are key requirements for the LDS.

The rural environment, including inland waterways, are a key part of what makes Connemara special, and an important tourism destination. Conservation measures do risk alienating communities, but can also be a force for economic return where communities are engaged in the process with an innovative and collaboration approach within the LDS.

The Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas was established in early 2013 to carry out research and inform policy with regards to the critical state of rural Ireland. It reveals a western seaboard, experiencing twice the level of business failures of urban centres, increases of between 104.7% and 142.9% in unemployment in west Galway since 2006, a labour force typified by low value work, and a 37%+ decline in incomes and employment in fishing, farming and forestry. The data and the statistics analysed underpin what the feedback on the ground is in Connemara on the state of the economy, joblessness, particularly among youth, and the many barriers to enabling change. However, the figures for the 2006 – 2011 period show improvements in the Connemara area – and specifically those areas of Galway covered by the FORUM programmes. The area analysis has given some greater depth of insight into the dynamics at play, the variations and trends. It has also presented strengths, opportunities and resources. The LEADER Programme is a fundamental resource in helping address issues and enabling Connemara to have a viable and sustainable future, which meets the needs of all sections of society. FORUM is uniquely placed to deliver this work, with extensive knowledge, networks and delivery mechanisms embedded in the target region. The conclusions of the analysis are further supported by the findings of the consultation process and contribute to a clear rationale to shape a fit for purpose and specific, bespoke and deliverable Local Development Strategy for Connemara.

Section 3: Participative Planning

3.1 The Participative Planning Model

FORUM engaged in preliminary consultation sessions in 2014 designed to initiate discussion around a new LEADER programme. These were comprehensive but broad based in terms of input sought. This provided an in-depth understanding of community perspectives on the state of the region. In 2015 FORUM drilled down on issues and opportunities specific to the themes of the LEADER Programme and input was sought on how to address the specific issues that were evident in the area based on analysis and previous consultation work. These were accompanied by an extensive set of consultations with key agencies.

FORUM employed the following model in delivering on their participative planning obligations.

- a. Ensuring the consultation process was inclusive was a priority. All sectoral groups and community areas were listed. Public meetings were widely advertised. Target group consultation activities were carried out at meetings and events relevant to them.
- b. The consultation process was a multi-sectoral approach involving co-ordination with relevant sectors e.g. economic, social, cultural and environmental. As such, there was a comprehensive set of meetings with agencies. FORUM also invited submissions and many of these were important in identifying priorities for the plan.
- c. Specific methodologies for engaging with more difficult to reach groups included working through and with other agencies to gain their insights, engaging target groups in conversations, during project activities etc.

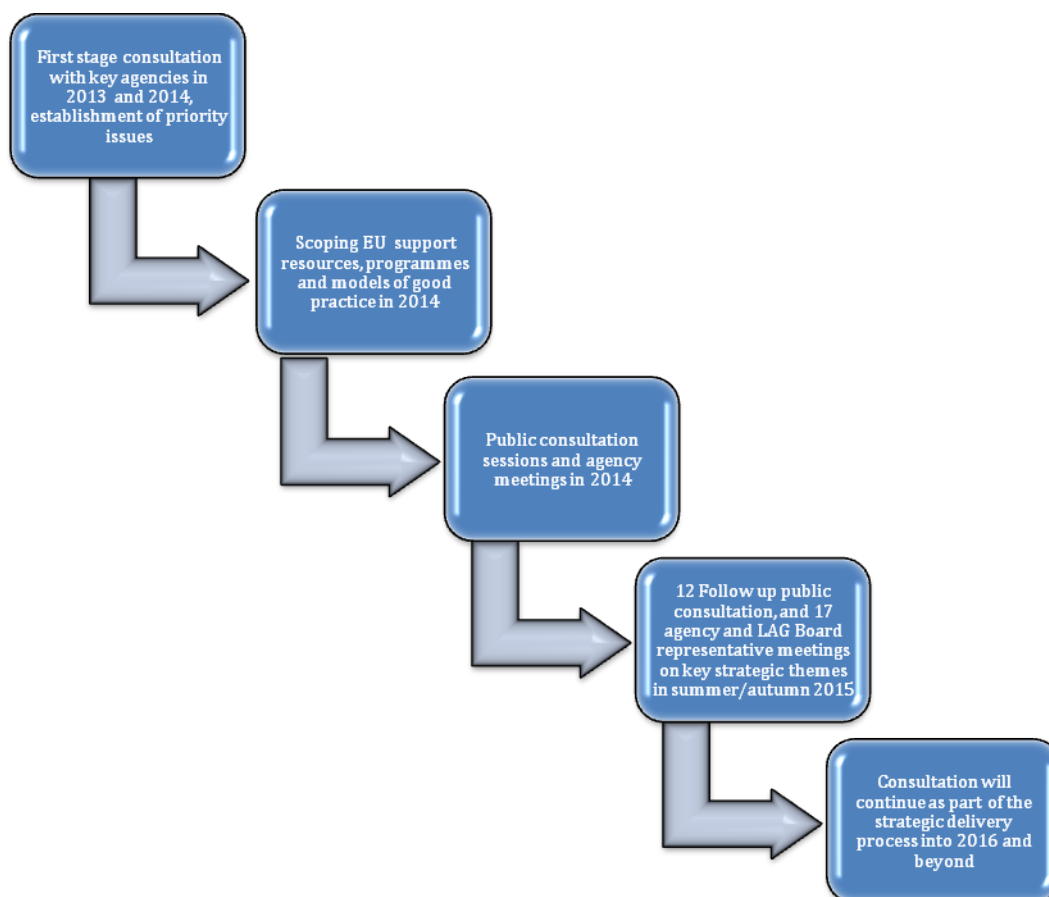


Figure 18: The FORUM consultation process

3.2 Participation in the Process

As well as 'word of mouth' and recruitment efforts by FORUM LAG members, agencies and network colleagues, the public consultations were also promoted through the following channels:

- Connemara Community Radio
- Raidió na Gaeltachta
- <https://twitter.com/FORUMConnemara>
- <https://www.facebook.com/SaveourConnemaraCommunity/?ref=hl>
- <https://www.forumconnemara.ie/>
- Press adverts- Connemara Journal and Connacht Tribune

Public consultations were held in the following locations (a full set of findings from the consultation sessions is an extensive document and is available on request). The consultations in the Gaeltacht areas were carried out in the Irish language. Figure 19 shows where the consultations took place.



Figure 19: Locations where community consultations took place Autumn 2015

3.2.1 Community Consultation Venues

The public/community consultation venues aimed to provide geographic spread and utilise the towns and villages which would be identified as local centres at community level.

Clifden	Maam/Leenane/Recess/Clonbur
Letterfrack/ Renvyle, Ballinakill	Roundstone/Cashel
Moycullen/Spiddal/Inverin	Lettermore/Lettermullen
Oughterard/Killannin	Cill Chiarain/Carna
Claddaghduff/Cleggan	Rosmuc
Furbo/Inverin	Carraroe

(There was also a large scale public consultation held in Maam Cross on the 12th March 2015)

Interest Group consultations were carried out by FORUM from its existing database and included:

Table 6: Interest Group Consultations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under and Unemployed - Young Farmers/Green Cert - Disability- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Paving the Way o Lámh Linn o FORUM Social Care Programme - GRETB Literacy Service - International – Marieke Leentvaar RDP manager in the Netherlands - Letterfrack Scouts - Connemara Pony Breeders - Connemara Community Radio - Age Action Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaeltacht Co-ops- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o CDC Teo. o Cornamona o Sailearna Co-Op o Comhlacht Forbartha an Spidéil o Comharchumann Mhic Dara Teo. o Comhlacht Forbartha Mhaigh Cuilinn. - Joyce Country Geopark - Connemara West PLC. - Lightnet- Private broadband provider - Domestic Violence Response - SSE- Renewables
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Individual submissions were also received see Table 7 below.

Table 7: Individual Submissions

Heather Greer- Individual Ecological Consultant- Geisler Kaule Archaeological- Michael Gibbons Connemara Carpets- Private Business The Vincent Wildlife Trust- Conservation

Key Points from Individual Submissions are captured in tables 9, 10, 11 and 12. The full content of the organisation and individual submissions are in an extensive consultation findings document, available on request.

Agency consultations were based on engagement with policy and programme director and focused on the opportunities and potential for collaboration and complementarity and strategic fit in terms of the FORUM plan as listed in Section 2.5 Table 4. The agencies consulted are as follows:

Table 8: Agencies Consulted

Local Enterprise Office BIM GMIT NUIG Galway Dept. Social Protection Túsla Údarás Na Gaeltachta WDC GRETb HSE Foróige and Comhairle na n'Og Cultural And Heritage Groups Irish Farmers Association Irish Hill Farmers and Natura Association Coillte Teagasc	National Parks & Wildlife Service - Connemara Nat Park Galway County Council (invited to input to plan in writing) Inland Fisheries Ireland Clann Credo Public Participation Network (PPN) Conservation Centre Letterfrack Connemara Environmental Educational and Cultural Centre (CEECC) North Connemara Local Learning Network Clann Family Resource Centre St. Pauls Secondary School Oughterard Clifden Community School Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Clúid- Housing Association Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
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3.2.2 Contribution to the Local Development Strategy Priorities

The consultation process was ideas and thematically driven. The dynamics varied from place to place, and some outcomes from the meetings were more general than others which were thematically and outcome specific. Consultations were carried out using a SWOT methodology which would allow for integration into the strategy.

There was a high level of cohesion and correlation between the community input, the input from other agencies and the findings of the Area Profile.

The findings are set out in the following tables (9, 10, 11 , 12) where emerging trends/themes and findings are highlighted in different colours which repeat the colours used to group findings from the spatial analysis in Section 2.7 Table 5. The continued identification and highlighting in colour by issue allows the findings to be grouped – and enable the setting, and agreeing of priorities with consultees and proofing against findings of the analysis. Therefore this ensures that the ranking of objectives is ‘evidence based’ and premised on the findings of the area profile and consultations.

Table 9: Theme 1- Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Rural Tourism, Key Findings From Consultations Red – Services; Teal - Tourism Products	Rural Towns, Key Findings From Consultations Brown – Services; Infrastructure And Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to build networks to connect food, craft, culture and services etc. - Not making enough of Connemara Pony resource and heritage. - Build wet day activities, use halls, refresh and grow festivals. - Irish language not generating enough opportunities. - Aquinas college comes to Tullycross – is an unexploited opportunity. - Revival of Connemara school of art – Inishlacken (from the 1950's). - Alternative and additional use of B&Bs and B&B space needed. - Traditional music- Potential for further development. - Walking remains key, suggest 'Mountain Hub' with network of facilities. - Develop riding trails. Need to make WAW winter attractive. - Not enough camper van places, or for camping. - Network attractions and link to trails – Pearse cottage, Marconi, Alcock and Brown, Lead Mining, Marble quarrying, Nimmo, Quiet Man. Spiritual, and pre Christian trail. - Grow Blueway tourism concept with products. - Showers (cyclists and surfers), marine heritage. - Therapy is an undeveloped market, also riding (and riding therapy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use heritage and the Connemara Brand. - Rural towns in decline. - Loss of services. - Retail decline. - Inadequate finance to refurbish and renew. - Clean up and low cost improvements with environmental enhancements needed. - Gym/outdoor gym needed for villages. - Need to refresh and support communities – provide animation community /volunteers tired. - Rural transport solutions needed over and above Rural Transport Programme, to meet gaps. - Overregulation (e.g. can't buy fish on pier). - Theming towns still good idea – need to pursue. - Make sure enough services for the population served by the towns. - Implement O'Donnell report but extend to new towns outside original 9. - Planning bureaucracy.

Table 10: Theme 1- Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation (Contd.)

Enterprise Development, Key Findings From Consultations Orange –Skills, Opportunities; Brown – Access; Blue Enterprise Development	Broadband, Key Findings From Consultations Green – Infrastructure, Demand And Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment opportunities limited, pay poor, lack of access, transport and broadband a disincentive to staying in the area. Very high levels unemployment and underemployment, especially youth, and unemployment/low incomes for farmers. Structured animation needed, support to get people to a first stage in training or employment. - Youth skills development critical, including for early school leavers. - Develop skills base in areas which offer employment – and also building individual capacity. - Training in sailing, riding, guiding, outdoor pursuits and off shore aquaculture and other activities that requires new skills. Training and support too generic from state agencies, not targeted for Connemara. - Opportunities with off shore aquaculture, and potentially renewables require skills in diving, boat handling - HACCP, forklift driving etc. Provide pre apprenticeship pathways. - Career guidance from those running rural businesses can help. Internships with local enterprises. Provide access points for people to enter careers/jobs that can work for them. PLC to include taster sessions, syllabus, and then delivery agents, needs a Training Coordinator. - Support enterprise growth, we need to find pathways to engage and grow innovation – technology. Support with idea generation required. Use more natural resources, seaweed and marine products. - Use Diaspora (ideas and inward/return investment), and also for tourism. - Incubation and enterprise space not being used/not available, enterprise space too expensive in some instances. Need to support women entrepreneurs and assist with businesses mentoring. Financing still huge issue - need micro lending funds for start ups and expansion. Marketing and sales support. - Overly bureaucratic systems- Planning, grants, financing etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No and poor broadband making it impossible to set up and run businesses effectively. - Poor digital services in the area. - Lack of digital marketing. - We need to establish digital hubs in halls and villages with hot desk space etc. - Community information campaign to promote internet use. - Encourage older people/people at risk of digital exclusion to use internet. - Where mainstream delivery of broadband is not being provided it is essential to develop local solutions. e.g. broadband boosters. - Disparity on views of broadband- some areas good, some bad. Lack of consistency.

Table 11: Theme 2- Social Inclusion

Services Targeted At Hard To Reach Communities, Key Findings From Consultations Red – Specialist Support; Purple – Facilities; Blue - Specific Target Groups	Rural Youth, Key Findings From Consultations Green – Facilities; Brown - Access; Purple - Training, Support And Specialist Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore potential to provide professional support to vulnerable people in remote locations. - Social enterprises are needed to support social cohesion and those most at risk, elderly, vulnerable families and lone parents. - Outreach training, basic IT and other programmes, eg photography and craft workshops may have value and make more use of facilities already there, e.g. school canteens in summer. - Use community facilities – facilitate programmes for disabled - Men's Shed great project, needs support. - Community festivals that enhance wellbeing add value should be supported. - Big problems with transport and access – including disabled. - Use heritage skills to engage the isolated. - Social Farming programme a good idea. - Development of a therapeutic centre including Therapeutic Riding. - Lack of services to help get elderly vulnerable people to hospital. - Care and companionship programme a great success. - Need to use food being thrown away. - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weekend retreats for youth, youth café, nightclub, drop in facilities would all be important. - Coder dojo projects expanded. - Programme for transition year, do a youth options course – Youthreach and GRETB with direct involvement community school. - Lack of facilities to support a healthy life style – eg, gym and social activities. - Negative outlook coupled with cut backs and emigration in the past few years making the issues worse. - Transport solutions needed. - A decline in interest in cultural activities by youth, is worrying. - Connemara specific training, guiding, outdoor pursuits, catering, boatbuilding etc. would be helpful. - Run major conference for young people from isolated communities. - Intergenerational projects successful last time around – repeat. - Programmes on Anti-bullying, parenting, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse.

Table 12: Theme 3- Rural Environment

Protection And Sustainable Use Of Water Resources Green – Facilities And Community Engagement	Protection And Improvement Of Local Biodiversity Purple – Valuing And Using Biodiversity And The Environment; Orange – Knowledge, Legislation, Education	Development of Renewable Energy Teal – Has Renewable Energy Potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect wells. - Boat cleaning facilities to avoid invasive species. - Community Catchment Care initiative – adopt a river. - Support new projects based on recreational use of waterways. - Rivers and waterways not perceived as ‘open’ to community. Lack of engagement in angling, boating etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilise Nat Park as education and training resource, linking in farming and ecological tourism. - Planning advisor, with specialist knowledge around development issues, legislation and renewables etc. - Ideas included bee corridors, support sustainable low cost building design. - Concerns around loss of protected and vulnerable species. - Plan needed - pilot area, stakeholder engagement, agencies, business, tourism, rural rec. NPWS, Teagasc etc., rural biodiversity and recreation project, top up for farmers, with the Glás programme, pearl mussel, red grouse management. - What is the value of the landscape – put a value on that, - Knowledge transfer – pass on the knowledge around their land. - Re. introduce traditional species, educational workshops, - exploring explore lost cost, low input, traditional farming models. - Management of seaweed harvesting practices, rotation and sustainability and business opportunities. - Designations- perceived as both positive and negatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recycling food and food waste catering and farm waste. - Energy audits for renewable energy alternatives - Link to SEAI for upgrading facilities. - Promote renewables for use in business and tourism ventures, e.g. solar for camping and accommodation premises (SEAI will support). - Explore bio-digestion use, including potential use of food waste and kelp as fuel (connect NUIG) and food waste. - Promote green fuels. - Explore Connemara as a model of sustainability with GMIT (Letterfrack). - Community wind turbines. - Use wood/biomass. - Electric car hire idea for WAW could be important flagship.

3.3 SWOT ANALYSIS

The following SWOT analysis was prepared by **the strategy working group, comprising staff, Board representatives and input from agencies** and is the final summary of the findings of the area and needs analysis, the consultation findings and emerging priorities. These priorities focus on the opportunities; however the strengths are evident throughout the findings and provide a foundation for the emerging objectives. The weaknesses and threats underpin the requirements. The agreed priorities are therefore something that must be addressed and lead to the establishment of Local Objectives and actions to achieve same.

Table 13: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-reliance & strong community engagement in civic life. - Long standing tourism sector & strong Connemara brand identity. - Wonderful landscape & attractive place to live. - Strong craft & food sectors. - Larger towns such as Clifden & Oughterard provide wide range of good services. - Good tradition of the social economy contributing to community needs. - Culture & heritage very strong, music, literature, coast, boats, sport, food & archaeology. - Widespread engagement in sports & walking contributes to health, wellbeing & sense of community. - Good communication channels eg. Connemara Community Radio. - Existing industry base active in creating opportunities. - Community festivals successful. - WAW very successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unemployment & underemployment. - Brain drain, unemployment culture. - Poor levels of services in places. - Lack of enterprise space in rural areas. - Poor broadband coverage & lack of IT usage. - Poor mobile phone coverage impacting business. - Poor infrastructure base to service industry. - Seasonal employment base. - Access & transport poor. - Lack of engagement in community life. - People with talent on the margins – not engaged in civic life & shaping solutions. - Self sufficiency lacking (including food). - Administration & Government system kills entrepreneurialism & flexibility. - National park concept needs refined. - Low entrepreneurial culture. - Lack of micro enterprise base. - Enterprise weaknesses e.g. selling, marketing etc. - Low levels of innovation /technology enterprises.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connemara Pony is not fully exploited. - Enterprise base focus on culture & landscape. - Important catalysts for growth – Furniture College, National Park, marine & coastal resources. - Underused skills within the community. - Use of landscape, HNV land, coast, & heritage as 'green' economic driver. - Specific Connemara Diaspora, e.g. Tullycross could facilitate growth in literary tourism. - Inland waterways potential for tourism & community. - Agri-environment / HNV opportunities could contribute to landscape management, sustainable use, & economic return. - Create/re-use space for enterprise development. - Strengthen/expand existing industry base, e.g. craft, tourism, food. - Strong social economy – intergenerational & creating employment opportunities & address social challenges particular to the area. - Marine resources provide opportunities (eg, off shore salmon farm Inisturk). - People energised, 'fresh blood' & active engagement in civic life – boards/committees etc. - Greenway mountains – outdoor centre of excellence. - Network resources e.g. Marconi, archaeology. - Make sustainable use of Lough Corrib. - Irish Language- possibilities to encourage greater use & utilisation as a resource. - Reimagining landscape designations for farmer & community benefit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment designations potential to divide the community. - Environmental designations viewed as blocks to stifle good & sustainable projects. - Regulation/legislation stifling economic growth, e.g. aquaculture licenses & not able to sell fish from pier. - Education gap, between generations, & within current younger generation (early school leaving) has potential to result in poor local outlook & increase emigration from Connemara. - Poor/no broadband will kill new business development in unemployment blackspots. - Poor information flow will contribute to fragmentation & low take up of opportunities. - Continued decline of fishing & farming income impacts on survival of a sector at the heart of heritage & community. - Lack of investment in infrastructure – villages, towns, environmental enhancement, rural transport etc. will result in village & rural life being unsustainable. - Growing peri-urban divide threatens balanced spatial development of the region. - Policy at EU level & National level. - Wider economic & macro environment e.g. currency rates, interest rates, etc.

3.4 Agreeing the Local Development Strategy Priorities

The strategic development process, as described in previous sections, has been comprehensive and focused on the themes of Priority 6 of the EU LEADER Programme.

The methodology to agree priorities, Local Objectives and Strategic Actions was as follows:

- Conclusions from the spatial and area needs analysis were tabulated and discussed with consultees, the Board and staff. This process led to the identification of specific issues and needs under the themes of Priority 6 of the LEADER Programme. **See Table 4 in Section 2.8.**
- In depth consultation including public meetings, focus groups sessions, targeted events for the hard to reach, meetings with agencies and organisations and submissions produced a body of information for analysis and a set of emerging priority issues.
- The findings from the public and organisation/agency consultation process were examined and recurring themes and issues were identified. These were discussed and agreed at focus group sessions. These are summarised as Agreed Priorities and are listed in the tables on the following pages Section 3.6.
- The Agreed Priorities were ‘proofed’ against Rural Development Priority 6 (LEADER) and relevant policy documents.
- The Agreed Priorities were used to shape Local Objectives. This was done during Autumn 2015 by internal FORUM working sessions with an external consultant and mentor from NUIG.
- The final SWOT analysis was put together and agreed in December 2015 in a working group session comprising staff, Board representatives, and consultant using the feedback and findings from the research and results of the consultation.
- The Strategy Group and the Board met to review findings at monthly meetings throughout the process.
- Internal team meetings explored delivery models and began to formulate the Strategic Actions and Local Objectives.
- Meetings took place with relevant delivery partners to proof the Local Objectives and proposed Strategic Actions between August and December 2015.
- FORUM staff checked the proposed Local Objectives, Strategic Actions and delivery methods against the LEADER Programme Priorities and Operating Rules for compliance and fit.
- The Strategy Group and Board reviewed the plan and approved it in February 2016.

3.5 Rationale for the Proposed Themes/Sub-Themes and Priorities

The LAG has decided to pursue all of the Themes and Sub-Themes as identified in the RDP. The rationale for this is rooted in the analysis and consultations carried out as part of the planning process. It was clear from both, that there were gaps to be addressed and opportunities presented in all of the areas. It was also felt that there is a clear synergy between all of the themes and that in effect there were direct links for complementarity. The priorities identified present the best opportunities for long term sustainable development and efficient use of financial resources.

In the following tables, the key findings from the area analysis, consultation and SWOT are grouped by theme to list the agreed priorities leading to the Local Objectives and Strategic Actions:

3.6 The FORUM Local Development Strategy Objectives

3.6.1 Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

	Rural Tourism Blue – products; Red – services; Black - animation	Enterprise Development Orange - training and support; Blue - Enterprise dev.; Back - animation	Rural Towns Brown - infrastructure environment and events	Broadband Green, - training and broadband hotspots
Agreed Priorities	<p>Focus on food, craft, Connemara pony and use strengths and heritage of the area, music, sports and arts. Products need to be refreshed. Stimulate and support therapy tourism, including riding. Build on success of WAW and Blue Way by adding to and networking attractions and develop outdoors and walking product. Wet weather activities needed.</p> <p>Refresh / theme services – eg. accommodation, address touring camper service void Network products and providers. More facilities for surfers, walkers, cyclists etc.</p> <p>The programmatic nature of these priorities will require animation to deliver.</p>	<p>Pre Training opportunities for young and underemployed to try things and build their confidence. Pre training should utilise the strengths of Connemara, in areas that have growth potential. On going mentoring and targeted individual support should assist participants to move to next stage in training or employment. 'Try it' and placements with employers through partnership.</p> <p>Pro active business development culture needed. Requirement to foster innovation, provide enterprise space, but use natural resources as well.</p> <p>New business and business expansions need support, as well as grant aid, financing, mentoring and marketing.</p>	<p>Support projects that build community renewal. Implement and expand O'Donnell report to south Connemara towns and villages.</p> <p>Enable communities to improve services and address gaps.</p> <p>Environment enhancements are needed, including play and fitness facilities. Projects to reward community effort and encourage participation, for example through refreshed festivals. Maximise benefits of music culture and sport.</p>	<p>Need to address gaps at community level; Increased demand will contribute to supply –stimulating internet use, e.g. farmers through training and local services.</p> <p>Training and local IT hotspots for excluded and elderly.</p> <p>Broadband Hotspot solutions in community facilities should be supported when no other solutions available.</p>
Local Objective	<i>New and Enhanced Services and Products Deliver Connemara's Tourism Potential</i>	<i>Pathways and Opportunities for Employment and Economic Growth through Partnership and Innovation</i>	<i>Rural Town, Village and Countryside Enhancement</i>	<i>Increasing Opportunities and Hotspot Services to Connect Connemara</i>
Strategic Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Heritage and Connemara brand 2) Sustainable Services 3) Adventure and Discovery Tourism 4) Tourism Business Development 5) Delivering Innovation, Partnership and Excellence (animation) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Threshold Programme 2) Growing Business Confidence and Capacity 3) Enterprise Connemara 4) Ensuring Opportunities for All (animation) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Vibrant Towns and Villages 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Connecting Connemara

3.6.2 Social Exclusion

	Provision of Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities Purple – facilities, equipment and infrastructure; Red – training and support	Rural Youth Green – facilities and training/support; Black - animation
Agreed Priorities	<p>Utilise and enhance facilities to service target groups</p> <p>Develop social enterprise solutions for vulnerable and isolated people to provide essential services.</p> <p>Address issue of food waste</p> <p>Transport and access solutions need to be provided.</p> <p>Therapeutic riding has the potential for considerable added value, with health and wellbeing, community and tourism benefits. It should be developed as a flagship model.</p> <p>Use non-formal training to enhance wellbeing and create opportunities. Bespoke support programmes need to be devised for those most in need.</p> <p>Farmers, older people, disabled, lone parents and very isolated need targeted and animation support. Programmes for these groups need to be developed with target groups and other delivery partners.</p> <p>Animation ensures targeted support for hard to reach.</p>	<p>Address access and transport issues are a barrier to youth participation in training, employment and social development. Provide facilities for young people eg. Gym, culture, youth café, musical equipment facilities, coderdojo etc.</p> <p>Deliver programmes that contribute to a healthy life style, address mental and physical health and wellbeing challenges. Outdoor pursuits, use the environment for life enhancing skills an experiences.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to participate in training and activities that build confidence, skills and opportunities. Utilise community and intergenerational work.</p> <p>Animation work essential if FORUM is to access and provide tailored support to those most in need.</p>
Local Objective	<i>Services and Engagement in Community Life Contributes to Community Renewal and Wellbeing</i>	<i>Personal Development and New Opportunities Ensures a Future In Connemara</i>
Strategic Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Essential Services 2) Health and Wellbeing in Connemara 3) Getting to the Hard to Reach – animation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Support and Opportunities for Youth 2) Facilities for Youth 3) Getting to the Hard to Reach Youth – animation

3.6.3 Rural Environment

	Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources Green – catchment care and recreational use	Protection and Improvement of local Biodiversity Orange – support and research programmes and projects (capital) Black - animation	Development of Renewable Energy Blue – strategic pilot approaches to Connemara resource based renewables Black - animation
Agreed Priorities	<p>Citizen science project on awareness and protection against spread of invasive species is important.</p> <p>‘Adopt a river’, work with schools as a transition year programme. This could include information, improvement works, clean ups and educational activities.</p> <p>Local people don’t use inland waterways enough for recreational purposes. More water based recreation is needed, but should be sustainable, and create community stewardship.</p> <p>There should be an emphasis on activities linked to Corrib.</p>	<p>Involve farmers, stewards of the land in projects that explore and develop a return from sustainable management of the environment.</p> <p>Put a value on the landscape – marine and land based.</p> <p>Implement projects that improve the environment, and provide information and education are important. Look to Geopark model for area management coupled with a place to live and work.</p> <p>Seaweed harvesting needs to be made sustainable.</p> <p>Advice, pilot projects and workshops that demonstrate sustainability and provide community rewards are important - animation.</p>	<p>Audits/professional advice on renewables options, requirements, and benefits are an important starting point in demonstrating what will work best.</p> <p>Support up to two projects to see if a community renewable project could be viable, by carrying out audit work, followed by businesses and technical planning for a renewables application.</p> <p>Emphasis on emerging opportunities for biomass as heating technology – with food and wood.</p> <p>Electric car idea/research for WAW a flagship opportunity.</p> <p>Animation important to support novel and flagship projects.</p>
Local Objective	<i>Community Catchment Care Protects and Utilises Connemara's Inland Waterways</i>	<i>Protecting and Realising the High Nature Value of Connemara as a Living Landscape</i>	<i>Piloting the Use of Connemara Renewables</i>
Strategic Actions	1) Connemara Catchment Care	1) Realising High Nature Value 2) Collaboration Community Engagement and Stewardship – Animation	1) Connemara Renewables

Section 4: FORUM Local Development Plan

The analysis, consultations and indeed all evidence presented to date suggests Connemara is a distinct geographical and cultural region. The summary findings confirm the potential and opportunities arising from the identity and beauty of the area, but also make clear the very real economic and other hardships that many face. Remoteness, lack of services, restricted business development opportunities and limited skills base must be addressed if Connemara is to have a sustainable and viable future that meets the needs of the communities.

The priority given to Realising Connemara's Tourism Potential through Enhanced Place Based Services and Products reflects the importance of **the sector for enterprise and job creation**. Delivery of the tourism sub theme will take cognisance of the **tourism potential of Connemara**, identified as considerable in the analysis process while also seeking to address the **skills, employment and low income level challenges**. Farming is marginal, with poor economic rates of return, and the need to provide a viable and sustainable way of life from areas classified as high nature value is essential if people and communities can continue to be the stewards of the land, and coast, and the culture and heritage that is part of it and use these place based resources to provide a return to their dependent communities.

The resources and opportunities should enable **meaningful employment, enterprise and career opportunities** needed to provide people with a viable future. The agreed priorities recognize the opportunity to fully utilize the **natural environment, heritage and archaeology**, including providing the **stewards of that landscape** with new opportunities for the future, fitting the LEADER focus on **place specific potential**.

This Enterprise Development and Job Creation Objective captures the ambition to offer all citizens of **Connemara a viable future** in the community. With the high unemployment rates, skills development, employability and employment opportunities are a singular priority, including for youth. **Access to sector specific training and employment opportunities of relevance to Connemara is a key strategic action in addressing employment issues**. The focus on supporting the establishment and growth of businesses that utilise **the strengths and potential of the region** and have the potential for growth in an area which is distant from the market and with poor infrastructure was identified as a key issue. There is a need to stimulate a diverse micro enterprise base in Connemara, which offers opportunity and financial return to local people. The **potential of artisanal food, culture/creative industries and the marine** are evident from the research and consultation. Priority 6 emphasises inclusive models of business development, and the agreed priorities identify specific and necessary interventions to create **pathways, opportunities and choices for unemployed, unemployed youth, under-employed and Women**. FORUM have particular strengths in terms of access and support for these groups which it will utilise to the full in implementing this work.

The strategic priorities and Local Objective fits the LEADER priorities in terms of the need for towns to **service the local community at a multifunctional level**. The analysis also made important distinctions between larger towns – Clifden and Oughterard (peri urban) and smaller towns and villages, in that a **level and scope of service** provided **should be viable** for the provider, and meet the wider needs of the rural community and **connect a balanced peri-urban and rural level of service**.

The broadband objective complements the other Local Objectives. **Business development, tourism apps, and greater access to services** all require access to **broadband and connectivity as well as increased demand**. The strategic actions focus on **increasing demand, enhancing IT skills (per priority 6)**, and funding for small scale hotspot infrastructure.

The objective to realise Services and Engagement in Community Life which Contributes to Community Renewal and Wellbeing calls out the intention to have both a sense of **renewed community purpose**, direction, and optimism accompanied by improved physical, mental and social wellbeing. The 'hard to reach communities' identified include those **who are or may feel excluded** in

society (**disabled people, older people, new communities, travellers**) and those who are **isolated, without resources to engage in activities to enhance their quality of life.**

This objective also addresses the priorities agreed in the strategic preparation process through both **capital and programmatic intervention** such as new and improved **community facilities** and programmes that develop **new skills** and **build capacity and confidence**, from **arts and outdoor pursuits** through to **social farming** type activities. New skills development in **riding, sailing, outdoor pursuits** and the development of a **Therapeutic Riding Centre** will provide local people with the opportunity to take advantage of what Connemara offers for the first time. FORUM will also explore the opportunity to utilise alternative transportation methods for meals on wheels such as electric vehicles or use biodiesel from recycled cooking oil.

For youth, the objective focuses on **well-being, mental and physical** and **enhanced social infrastructure**. In keeping with the Sub Theme Youth, the agreed priorities were specific around the need for **better facilities, particularly in outlying areas**. This objective also represents a major development in terms of FORUM's role. It will be demanding, but FORUM are probably the best placed organisation to lead such an initiative given their **foundation in community development** coupled with **experience ranging from youth work to business innovation**. This objective will need to be delivered with consideration for issues evident at a spatial level.

The Rural Environment Objective captures the focus on the **biodiversity of Connemara**, its **landscape and community** as one **ecosystem**, where the sustainable management of a **deeply special Connemara ecosystem** goes hand in hand with utilising it to provide for its residents. Conservation measures do risk alienating communities, but can also be a force for economic return where communities are engaged in the process with an innovative and collaboration approach within the LDS. The objective is to make the **environment a cohesive factor, rewarding dependent communities** with opportunities, and an **improved quality of life, through their engagement in its management**, making the landscape a **productive resource, providing economic and social return**. The '**valuation**' of the landscape was a key recurring priority. There is a need to fully understand what its value is, economically – through **tourism as well as its biodiversity and heritage value**. This Objective will fund this research, as well as provide funding for **environmental enhancement, information and education projects**.

Water quality in the Connemara catchment area is considered very good, however with the spread of **invasive species**, the environmental protection element of the objective focuses on **citizen science** to identify invasive species and learn about **the aquatic and riparian environment at community level**. Increased **community engagement in catchment care**, including low levels of use or enjoyment of waterways is viewed as a key requirement towards increasing responsibility.

The use of biomass for heating, using local timber, dried using sustainable technologies is Connemara specific in terms of existing and underused resources, while also presenting a demonstration model for a community renewables project.

These summary findings, and considerations underpin all of the Local Objectives, and the collective outcome of all the Local Objectives shapes the Strategic Vision:

4.1 LDS Strategic Vision

Fís Straitéiseach

'Aithníodh Conamara na féidireachtaí atá aici, chun deiseanna a sholáthar do chách a bheith páirteach i saol eacnamaíocht, sóisialta agus sibhialta an réigiún agus leas a bhaint as na láidreachtaí agus a chuid tréithe eisceachtúil chun eacnamaíocht áitiúil a fhorbairt agus 'tírdheach beo' a chinntiú le pobal bríomhar chuimsitheach.'

Strategic Vision

'Connemara will realise its potential, providing opportunities for all to grow and participate in the economic, social and civic life of the region and use its unique strengths and attributes to develop the local economy, ensure a 'living landscape' with a strong and inclusive community.'

4.2 Effective and Targeted Delivery

The core issues identified in the analysis and consultation centre on the need for increased opportunity, and access to opportunity, while encompassing a broad range of development and service needs. There are clearly identifiable spatial and demographic considerations which both shape the LDS actions and will inform delivery models and arrangements. The requirement to be both effective and equitable shapes the LDS as well as inform its implementation. Interventions must be accessible, appropriate, relevant to the communities in question and deliverable in terms of resources and partners, with support programmes devised in partnership with communities and organisations that can support and enhance engagement.

The need for a diverse but balanced approach are represented in the number of strategic actions being deployed and the diversity of those actions, some broad ranging allowing for different models to be employed relevant to need, and others very specific where the opportunity to address needs of a target group or/and area, can be offered a specific set of deliverables.

This approach, given the integrated and partnership model for delivery, ensures value for money and no duplication, as well as effective, efficient and equitable delivery. Equitable delivery presents real challenges, and the LDS sets out a mixed thematic and strategic action model to do this, with animation actions being a critical tool, with specific relevance to those actions which will most meet the needs of the 'hard to reach'. Animation will also be critical for the implementation of the very innovative, novel, and challenging.

FORUM is in a position to start delivery of this LDS immediately, ensuring maximum benefit to the community from the new LEADER Programme, and providing the Government with a proven, effective and notable model for local delivery.

The following summary (see Figure 20) and implementation tables present the LDS action plan with clearly defined local objectives that respond to the needs of the area as described heretofore.

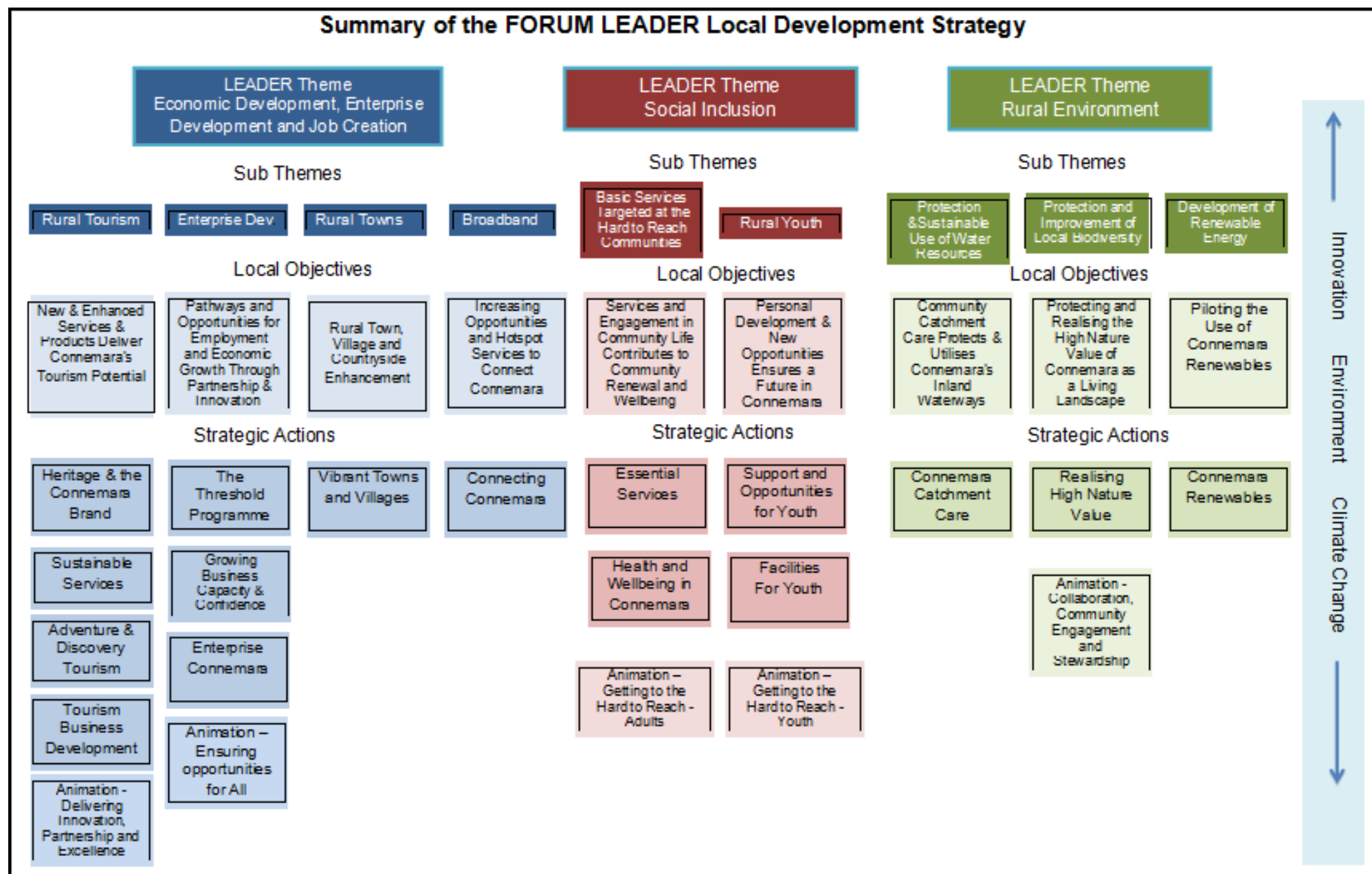


Figure 20: Summary of the FORUM LEADER Local Development Strategy

4.3 Local Objective 1: New and Enhanced Services and Products Deliver Connemara's Tourism Potential

Local Objective	New and Enhanced Services and Products Deliver Connemara's Tourism Potential		
LEADER Sub Theme	Rural Tourism		
Rationale for Local Objective	<p>There is a need for additional and enhanced amenities and services with the long established industry needing to be refreshed in many instances. Networking and communication between and among communities and tourism providers would do much to enhance the overall offering. Exceptional resources in terms of landscape, marine, the National Park and other designations offer unutilised potential. The Wild Atlantic Way is a key strategic driver, the Blue Way and Green Way should be the same. Outdoor pursuits are key tourism activities and other underused attractions and resources include, music, archaeology, geology, culture, which should be developed and marketed together. The Connemara pony is completely undersold yet has international identity. Research on the electric car hire pilot has been carried out and feasibility to be determined.</p> <p>The Rural Tourism Local Objective is underpinned with the thematic and strategic focus of green tourism, to be implemented through establishing a Mountain Hub with trails and networked services. The Aire de Service and electric car schemes and the Connemara pony show are all flagship projects.</p> <p>A purely open call approach for projects under the flagship themes is unlikely to be fully successful without animation, stimulation, and facilitation and so an animation objective has been included.</p>		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	x	Aire de Service model, Electric Car Hire
	Rural Environment	x	Outdoors/environment key driver for sustainable tourism
	Climate Change	x	Electric car reduces carbon footprint
Financial Allocation	€510,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	5		

4.4 Strategic Action 1.1: Heritage and the Connemara Brand

Strategic Action	Heritage and the Connemara Brand		
Description of Strategic Action	<p>Grow events and attractions including Connemara Pony Show as an international event through animation support and funding; Explore Gaelic sports as a tourism offering. Funding for festivals and events with focus on Connemara 'themes' including writing, marine and food. Specific project support for traditional music song and dance, in Gaeltacht and non Gaeltacht areas.</p> <p>Time Limited Calls</p>		
Primary Target Group	Tourism operators, sport, cultural and heritage based organisations involved/contributing to tourism industry		
Geographic Area	All Connemara		
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM		
Collaborating organisations	<i>Groups – Connemara Pony Breeders Society, GAA, community and tourism organisations, Island Community Groups, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland</i>		
Delivery timeframe	Q4/2016 – Q2/2020		
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connemara Pony show becomes major international event • Gaelic sports piloted as small but growing tourism product attracting >1500 • Number of projects funded 27 • Traditional music widely available in 20 venues throughout the region. Attracting 4000 tourists from 8 events per year • Numbers in tourism attendance in events over 50,000 • Jobs created 7 • Jobs secured 23 		

4.5 Strategic Action 1.2: Sustainable Services

Strategic Action	Sustainable Services
Description of Strategic Action	<p>Two specific projects will be researched and piloted;</p> <p>1) An Aire de Service approach to meeting gap in touring camper van services, using existing resources – e.g. community hall carparks and enhanced hall facilities and providing fresh water and disposal of grey and black water.</p> <p>2) Day Hire Electric Car Pilot Project, in partnership with Car manufacturer/hire company. A programme, with car hire operator, to establish pick up and charge points along the WAW for short term electric car hire.</p> <p>Touring Camper van sites through Connemara but with a focus on WAW.</p> <p>Electric car hire project on WAW</p> <p>Time Limited calls for applications.</p>
Primary Target Group	<i>Delivery organisations, private sector and providers on WAW</i>
Geographic Area	Touring Camper van sites through Connemara but with a focus on WAW. Electric car hire project on WAW
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Fáilte Ireland, private sector, Galway County Council, Car hire through partnership (Car manufacturer/hire company), SSE, ESB
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Aire Service locations, target overnights 2300 p/a • 1 electric car hire service, 20,000 users keeping additional 30,000 tourists in Connemara • 8 jobs created

4.6 Strategic Action 1.3: Adventure and Discovery Tourism

Strategic Action	Adventure and Discovery Tourism
Description of Strategic Action	<p>Continued development of trails, including Western Way, carry out resource audit and mapping of old roads, bridleways and pathways to enable on-going and future development of trails. Project carried out through a mixture of animation, partnership working and call for applications for grants. The strategic action will establish the area as a Mountain Hub, servicing hill walking businesses through an open themed call. Other grants will focus on the development of a network of attractions through a call for applications linked to trails and points of interest - Marconi, Nimmo, archaeological sites.</p> <p>The development of map trails, attractions and sites on an interactive app will be tendered out. South Mayo will be an important networking partner for this action.</p>
Primary Target Group	<i>Land owners/ farmers/ eco tourism providers</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	National Park, Fáilte Ireland, Private sector, outdoor pursuits sector, farming organisations, Coillte, Údarás na Gaeltacht, Heritage Council
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map and report on old roads with implementation plan • Number of visitors using facilities 14,000 • Slí Connemara audit with actions to be implemented. Western Way enhanced and extended, with 2 looped walks. Mountain Access advanced within context of other local initiatives. 5 attractions/mountain hub facilities established as cluster/network • 1 app with trail maps will be designed and operational. 24 jobs created, 24 sustained

4.7 Strategic Action 1.4: Tourism Business Development

Strategic Action	Tourism Business Development
Description of Strategic Action	Development of tourism products, services and attractions that add value to the Connemara brand. Specialist outdoor and cultural attractions and activities. Projects using landscape and heritage. Meeting service gaps. Building on mountain and eco tourism theme. Development of riding outdoor/indoor arena and sensory trails. Projects that contribute to WAW, Green Way and Blue Way product. Time limited calls
Primary Target Group	<i>Private sector operators and community groups</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Fáilte Ireland, LEO, Coillte, Údarás na Gaeltacht, Private Sector, Farming Organisations
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 new tourism businesses/business expansions in rural recreation, eco tourism, marine/health and wellness etc. • 17 jobs created • 2000 visitors benefit

4.8 Strategic Action 1.5: Delivering Innovation and Partnership (Animation)

Strategic Action	Delivering Innovation and Partnership (Animation)
Description of Strategic Action	The mountain hub, old roads, green tourism and Connemara Pony Show, Electric Car scheme and Aire de Service projects all require some animation to research, communicate, develop delivery plans and bring in partners where appropriate. On projects, such as the Old Roads, and Electric Car scheme the animation will coincide with aspects of the projects being contracted out through Open or Closed tenders, in accordance with the regulations. Animation
Primary Target Group	Agencies (eg. Nat Park) organisations (eg. Pony Breeders, Fáilte Ireland)
Geographic Area	All Connemara
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Fáilte Ireland, LEO, Connemara National Park, Galway County Council, Údarás na Gaeltacht
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q4/2019
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 major strategic initiatives • 2 robust service/product networks • 120,000 tourist beneficiaries • 18 jobs • 1 major new trail network

4.9 Local objective 2: Pathways and Opportunities for Employment and Economic Growth Through Partnership and Innovation

Local Objective	Pathways and Opportunities for Employment and Economic Growth through Partnership and Innovation		
LEADER Sub Theme	Enterprise Development		
Rationale for Local Objective	<p>Challenges stem from early school leaving with some not taking advantage of post school support. Underemployed in traditional sectors (farmers/fishermen) point to the need for new skills in areas which are familiar/accessible and have potential for new economic growth in Connemara, the green economy, outdoor pursuits, marine, HACCP, as well as new skills in traditional trades, such as passive building etc. There is a requirement to follow through introductory training by providing participants with employment and enterprise opportunities where possible. A focus on farmers reflects the critical issues of isolation, economic hardship and the decline of culture and heritage within that sector. The training aspects of this programme may also fund employment related training where it is not provided through mainstream delivery channels, for example commercial diving.</p> <p>High unemployment levels and low levels of business ownership in the peripheral areas is a critical issue. A coordinated approach involving extensive cross-agency networking, knowledge sharing and information transfer is key to growing and diversifying local business and employment opportunities at all levels. Clearer, more flexible pathways for business development and funding opportunities are key to increasing participation and tackling low expectations. Business-focused research, promoting a positive attitude towards risk-taking and efficient utilisation of existing resources within and between organisations could facilitate this. The widespread view is also that traditional resources, timber, seaweed, landscape etc. are underused and that there is also a need to use new technologies appropriate to the culture and landscape of the region in business development.</p> <p>Social Enterprise can both support enterprise development and deliver essential services, or services that have added value in terms of regeneration. Supporting social enterprise that address issues due to peri – urban conditions, and opportunities, such as information, cleaning, catering, transport etc. are included in the targets.</p> <p>An Umbrella funding model may be used if particular sector focused support is deemed to add value, this is likely to be for craft or artisanal food.</p>		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	X	Through the promotion of technology in enterprise to improve productivity, business efficiency and sustainability. New approaches and models of enterprise.
	Rural Environment	X	Focus on sustainable use of the environment for enterprise development and new skills.
	Climate Change	X	Through the promotion of new business technology which reduces the carbon emissions of business sectors.
Financial Allocation	€ 600,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	4		

4.10 Strategic Action 2.1: The Threshold Programme

Strategic Action	The Threshold Programme
Description of Strategic Action	<p>Participants engage in taster sessions, voluntary employment opportunities and 'on the job' training in target sectors. Business owner/operators offer specific placements and work experience opportunities etc.</p> <p>Pre-apprenticeship training programmes will provide participants with a pathway to mainstream training through vocation specific delivery. This will be accompanied by customized mentoring and support will be contracted to a 3rd party and may be delivered through the LCDP/SICAP.</p> <p>Support for employment related training outside mainstream provision will be available.</p> <p>Support for training in skills relevant to the Connemara resource and economic base – marine skills, outdoor, environment based economy, food and culture.</p>
Primary Target Group	<i>Unemployed, underemployed, early school leavers, farmers/fishermen, New Communities, Women</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara, particular emphasis on Gaeltacht, west and north. Training in peri-urban areas stronger emphasis on integration into workforce
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	GRETB, employers, farming groups, Dept of Social Protection Schools, LEO, GMIT
Timeframe for delivery	Q1/2017- Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers trained - 100 • Numbers move to mainstream training - 60 • Number securing employment – 20

4.11 Strategic Action 2.2: Growing Business Capacity and Confidence

Strategic Action	Growing Business Capacity and Confidence
Description of Strategic Action	<p>Programme with three strands; pre start-up, start-up and existing businesses including business mentoring; and business networking/clustering and collaborative marketing etc.</p> <p>Time limited calls</p>
Primary Target Group	<i>Successful and new rural entrepreneurs, youth business starts, traditional enterprise operators (farmers, fishermen), women entrepreneurs</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara, particular emphasis on unemployment black spots – north, west and Gaeltacht
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Local Enterprise Office (LEO) for business planning support. Networking and mentoring implemented through tendered service or through partnership with LEO. Western Development Commission partnership for the Mentoring component, SCCUL, Banks, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Private Institutions, FORUM's employment mediation service
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 people benefit from mentoring service • 10 Networking events or clusters with 3 sectors and 47 participating businesses

4.12 Strategic Action 2.3: Enterprise Connemara

Strategic Action	Enterprise Connemara
Description of Strategic Action	<p>This action will be targeted at entrepreneurs, new business starts and expansions. The call will be open, but in line with the Operating Rules. The allocation of grants will be dealt with through time specific calls.</p> <p>The LEO will play a key role in assisting new business starts to develop viable and effective business plans and FORUM and LEO will work on opportunities that maximise benefits of the rural enterprise grant scheme</p> <p>There will be particular emphasis on artisanal food, marine, culture and heritage businesses as well as those with the potential to grow employment.</p> <p>Time limited calls</p>
Primary Target Group	<i>Successful and new rural entrepreneurs, youth business starts, traditional enterprise operators (farmers, fishermen), women</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara, particular emphasis on unemployment black spots – north, west and Gaeltacht
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	LEO, WDC, Credit Unions, Enterprise Ireland, Banks, Micro Finance Ireland (through LEO), Údarás na Gaeltachta, private operators.
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of businesses supported – 40 • Jobs created 46 • Jobs secured 18

4.13 Strategic Action 2.4: Ensuring Opportunities for All- (Animation)

Strategic Action	Ensuring Opportunities for All(Animation)
Description of Strategic Action	<p>This animation action is specifically designed to ensure that unemployed, and underemployed are given the opportunities and support they need to take advantage of the training, placement and enterprise support programme of work.</p> <p>Animation</p>
Primary Target Group	<i>Youth unemployed, unemployed, underemployed, farmers/fishermen, Women, New Communities</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara, particular emphasis on unemployment black spots – north, west and Gaeltacht
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	GRETB, employers , Farming groups, schools, Dept. Social Protection, Local Enterprise Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q4/2019
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% take up on programmes • 70 long term unemployed/youth/underemployed recruited to programmes • Enterprise networking – cluster at a sector level with 47 businesses

4.14 Local Objective 3: Rural Town, Village and Countryside Enhancement

Local Objective	Rural Town, Village and Countryside Enhancement		
LEADER Sub Theme	Rural Towns		
Rationale for Local Objective	<p>A loss of services, retail decline and a general lack of relevance in a more mobile society has changed the face of villages and towns throughout Connemara, impacting on the appearance, tourism profile and providing fewer services for dependent communities. For the larger service centres – Clifden and Oughterard it is important to ensure a broad range of well delivered services. Where possible, this will be done with the County Council through the REDZ initiative. For smaller villages, it will be necessary to identify and maintain basic services and identify themes that can help them establish specialism's and enhance their tourism profile. The O'Donnell report reflects the local village group's own vision for the themed development of their village & its environs. This objective presents a mix of implementation of the O'Donnell report and delivery of key services through the larger service centres. An Umbrella funding model may be applied to the funding of festivals to push competition, innovation and impact. A framework agreement for professional services may be employed to implement specialised services, such as Environmental Improvement Planning</p>		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	X	The 'theming' of a network of rural Connemara villages represents a novel and innovative approach to ensuring viability and relevance for the future.
	Rural Environment	X	Renewal and environmental enhancement will improve the overall visual profile of Connemara.
	Climate Change	X	Promoting energy efficient solutions to all community activities and proofing projects against same.
Financial Allocation	€500,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	1		

4.15 Strategic Action 3.1: Vibrant Towns and Villages

Strategic Action	Vibrant Towns and Villages		
Description of Strategic Action	<p>Progress implementation of the O'Donnell report and extend project to the Gaeltacht area. Interpretation using Fáilte Ireland format to enhance tourism products and make villages and towns part of the visitor experience. Implemented through invitation to apply for small scale funds by village communities in Time Limited Calls. Support for landscape, visual and service enhancements (including play). Continue/build Clann Credo finance for lending scheme. Funding (grants) for critical service delivery in larger towns. Funding for tourism related events and festivals, where there is clear benefit to the wider local community. Explore potential uses for vacant/underutilised properties.</p>		
Primary Target Group	<i>Rural Towns and Villages</i>		
Geographic Area	All Connemara		
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM		
Collaborating organisations	Galway County Council, Clann Credo, Community organisations, Tidy Towns, Fáilte Ireland		
Timeframe for delivery	Q4/2016 – Q2/2020		
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 villages/towns benefit from the programme • 40 festivals/events with 16,000 participants • Streetscape improvements in 7 towns/villages • Improved recreation facilities in 3 towns/villages with 400 beneficiaries • Connemara brand being used in 8 towns and villages 		

4.16 Local Objective 4: Increasing Opportunities and Hotspot Services to Connect Connemara

Local Objective	Increasing Opportunities and Hotspot Services to Connect Connemara		
LEADER Sub Theme	Broadband		
Rationale for Local Objective	<p>There is very poor internet take up, below 50% in many areas; this is coupled with low levels of computer, internet use, low levels of innovation and technology centres and impacts on businesses outside of urban and peri-urban areas.</p> <p>Business effectiveness targeted, access to information, marketing activities and it also constrains the development of IT based business. While broadband infrastructure is poor throughout much of Connemara, lack of provision is exacerbated by low levels of IT use in areas, and lack of a demand. Therefore this Strategic Action is aimed at small level interventions which have the potential to enhance broadband services and ensure consistency and continuity of service in the area.</p>		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	x	There will be innovative solutions to broadband provision, through community based hotspots etc.
	Rural Environment	X	Enhanced access to services at a local level mitigates the need for people to travel to larger service centres.
	Climate Change	x	Enhanced access to services at a local level mitigates the need for people to travel to larger service centres. Provides educational opportunities.
Financial Allocation	€85,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	1		

4.17 Strategic Action 4.1: Connecting Connemara

Strategic Action	Connecting Connemara
Description of Strategic Action	<p>This Strategic Action has 2 components; fostering adoption through public information, training and community based hot spots and secondly through enabling hotspot delivery of broadband where it is not being provided through mainstream telecoms delivery.</p> <p>Time limited calls</p>
Primary Target Group	All community members in blackspot areas, rural businesses and service centres
Geographic Area	Broadband black spots – west and north Connemara, Island Communities.
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Communities, Potential Broadband providers. GRETb, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Galway County Council, other training providers
Timeframe for delivery	Q1/2017 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in internet users of 40% • 5 broadband hotspots/hot desks established with 300 users • No. of training projects delivered 15 with 180 participants

4.18 Local Objective 5: Services and Engagement in Community Life Contributes to Community Renewal and Wellbeing

Local Objective	Services and Engagement in Community Life Contributes to Community Renewal and Wellbeing		
LEADER Sub Theme	Social Inclusion		
Rationale for Local Objective	<p>The Connemara region experiences a mix of low skills levels, lack of qualifications post education, emigration, isolation, and increasingly, peri-urban type social disadvantage in the large towns and surrounding areas. Lack of services and isolation compound high levels of deprivation in north and west Connemara. Health, wellbeing, and opportunities to improve quality of life are limited, but should focus on the existing strengths of the region, landscape, culture and community.</p> <p>This objective focuses on a programme of support for those most in need, through opportunities and support to improve quality of life through new/enhanced skills, social and physical well being as well as providing for improved infrastructure for communities and those at risk of exclusion, eg. disabled. The Local Objective also includes an emphasis on using local resources, landscape, sea, heritage, culture and community, for personal and community development. The therapeutic riding centre will build specialism's that can both benefit local participants and centre staff, and also provide learning for other regions. This objective has considerable involvement with a range of delivery partners and also requires animation support.</p>		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	X	Therapeutic riding is a highly innovative and alternative therapy method.
	Environment	X	Use of the landscape in personal development will foster greater awareness and responsibility.
	Climate Change	X	Projects will be proofed to ensure a positive influence on climate change.
Financial Allocation	€550,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	3		

4.19 Strategic Action 5.1: Essential Services

Strategic Action	Essential Services
Description of Strategic Action	Funding for upgrading community kitchens, distribution and storage for a food waste pilot project. Connemara also critically needs transport solutions where no other services are available. There could be support for social car schemes and possible extension of the electric car hire. A key pursuit will be the development of a Therapeutic Riding Centre, which will include both capital and services costs, and will be an important flagship service offering in the region. This action will also aim to develop on the success of the FORUM social care model and care agency model with the HSE and local community groups. Explore a social car scheme pilot in collaboration with Bealach na Gaillimhe.
Primary Target Group	<i>Isolated, vulnerable, older population, unemployed and underemployed, people with health problems</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Tús, HSE, Farming organisations, Supermarkets, Bealach na Gaillimhe
Timeframe for Delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 community centres improved facilities –kitchens, bathroom facilities/equipment etc. for activities that enhance quality of life for vulnerable people • 1 Therapeutic riding centre with 30 beneficiaries per year • 1 social car scheme servicing 130 people on outlying areas

4.20 Strategic Action 5.2: Health and Wellbeing in Connemara

Local Objective	Services and Engagement in Community Life Contributes to Community Renewal and Wellbeing
Strategic Action	Health and Wellbeing in Connemara
Description of Strategic Action	Open call funding for projects that deliver essential services at community level including; Funding for men shed and social farming type projects. Enhancing access for disabled people; health and well-being courses, care and companionship/therapeutic services. Funding for capital equipment/facilities that contribute to community health and wellbeing such as kitchen, sports and music equipment in community facilities. Capital funding for the therapeutic riding centre.
Primary Target Group	<i>Isolated, vulnerable, older population, unemployed and underemployed, people with health problems</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Work placement programmes e.g. Tús, HSE, farming organisations. GRET, Dept. Social Protection, Clann Family Resource Agency, DVR, Tusla
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 recreational/community well being facilities • training for 120 people who provide services • 3 Men Shed/social farming projects • 1 Therapeutic riding service • 3 new services provided including potential social enterprises • sustainability of 5 existing services secured • 1 mental health project • Isolation reduced for 500 people

4.21 Strategic Action 5.3: Getting to the Hard to Reach – Adults (Animation)

Strategic Action	Getting to the Hard to Reach – Adults (Animation)
Description of Strategic Action	This animation action will provide support and build networks and partnership necessary to reach and engage the hard to reach. Animation work will include identifying target persons and putting in place programmes of activities to enhance the opportunities and quality of life of those most in need. Animation
Primary Target Group	<i>Isolated, vulnerable, older population, unemployed and underemployed, people with health problems</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Work placement programmes e.g. Tús, HSE, farming organisations. GRET, Dept. Social Protection, family resource agency, DVR, Tusla
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q4/2019
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 600 beneficiaries • 5 partnerships built/strengthened • 1 new innovative approach to addressing need developed

4.22 Local Objective 6: Personal Development and New Opportunities Ensures a Future in Connemara

Local Objective	Personal Development and New Opportunities Ensures a Future in Connemara		
LEADER Sub Theme	Rural Youth		
Rationale for Local Objective	<p>The analysis and consultation reveal issues around the exclusion and lack of opportunities for youth in Connemara. This has the potential to be very detrimental in terms of future opportunities in the region. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS) were identified as a particular issue in Connemara in the analysis. The remote nature of the region can make access to opportunity and engagement in civic and economic life challenging. Within the peri-urban areas the need for social integration is important and the issue is particularly acute in the south Connemara Gaeltacht. The need for strategic action, which reaches those most in need, and provides bespoke, relevant and results led support is obvious. This Objective divides that work into two areas, programmed delivery and support for facilities and solutions to issues including lack of access.</p> <p>The strategic actions for youth aim to provide opportunity in the form of facilities, access and resources, along with personalized support. The programme will utilize other partners, and programmes, such as transition year (post primary school) to carry out individual personal planning, exposure and engagement in a range of developmental opportunities.</p> <p>This Local Objective requires strong partnership, and investment in the youth of Connemara, from government, the youth themselves, the private sector and many agencies who all have a role to play through a mixture of capital spend and programmes of work needed to get to those most in need. A focus on the Connemara resource – landscape, culture, sea, craft. Encouragement of technology projects through establishing a fablab and coderdojo type projects.</p>		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	X	Therapeutic riding and Fablab represent high level of innovation.
	Environment	X	Use of the landscape in personal development will foster greater awareness and responsibility.
	Climate Change	X	Initiatives under this action will be proofed to ensure they aim to address climate change i.e. information, raising awareness etc.
Financial Allocation	€500,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	3		

4.23 Strategic Action 6.1: Support and Opportunities for Youth

Strategic Action	Support and Opportunities for Youth
Description of Strategic Action	This action will focus on mental health and personal development. It will include programmes of training and activity including arts, sports and technology programmes. This targeted programme will be for 15-35 years.
Primary Target Group	<i>Rural youth, unemployed, early school leavers, 15 – 35 year olds</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara with focus on areas with peri-urban problems and areas of high unemployment and early school leaving, the Gaeltacht and isolated areas.
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Youthreach, Foroige, TúsIa; GRETB; schools; community groups, Galway Music Generation Project, Gaisce, sports groups, arts groups.
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Services and personal development programmes benefiting 280 youth

4.24 Strategic Action 6.2: Facilities for Youth

Strategic Action	Facilities for Youth
Description of Strategic Action	This action will fund facilities for young people, youth centres, project equipment, gym/cultural equipment, art equipment/facilities, facilities for disabled young people. Time limited calls
Primary Target Group	<i>Rural youth, unemployed, early school leavers, 15 – 35 year olds</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara with focus on areas with peri-urban problems and areas of high unemployment and early school leaving, the Gaeltacht and isolated areas.
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Youthreach, Foroige, TúsIa; GRETB; schools; community groups, Galway Music Generation Project, Gaisce, sports groups, arts groups.
Timeframe for delivery	Q1/2017 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 youth cafes servicing 110 young people • 2 projects providing sports/cultural equipment and activities benefiting 300

4.25 Strategic Action 6.3: Getting to the Hard to Reach – Youth (Animation)

Strategic Action	Getting to the Hard to Reach – Youth- (Animation)
Description of Strategic Action	This animation Strategic Action is an essential programme of work to ensure maximum participation and beneficiaries from the LEADER Theme. The Strategic Actions will require proactive work with agencies and stakeholders who can support and engage ‘hard to reach’, such as communities and social care professionals. Projects that improve quality of life, such as transport, recreational courses, and therapeutic services will be planned with the community and other organisations, so that there will be full and relevant take up of funding through the other Strategic Actions in this Theme. A pilot project – using unsold but fresh food from retailers for community use will be researched. This may be contracted out, but some work is likely to be required in house with community organisations who may be interested in being part of a pilot. Animation
Primary Target Group	<i>Isolated, vulnerable, younger population, unemployed and underemployed, disabled youth</i> <i>Rural youth, unemployed, early school leavers, 15 – 35 year olds, NEETS</i>
Geographic Area	All Connemara with focus on areas with peri-urban problems and areas of high unemployment and early school leaving, the Gaeltacht and isolated areas.
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Bealach na Gaillimhe - transport Youthreach, Foroige, TúsIa; GRETB; schools; community groups, music generation, sports groups
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2016 – Q4/2019
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 new services provided • 180 targeted recruited to projects

4.26 Local Objective 7: Community Catchment Care Protects and Utilises Connemara's Inland Waterways

Local Objective	Community Catchment Care Protects and Utilises Connemara's Inland Waterways		
LEADER Sub Theme	Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources		
Rationale for Local Objective	This objective is based on the rationale that to develop community responsibility and stewardship requires information and knowledge, enjoyment and a sense of 'ownership'. Therefore the focus is on utilising the waterways for tourism, while fostering catchment care initiatives and citizen science. There is a specific focus on control of invasive species as well engaging young people and communities through educational activities, environmental improvement works and using them sustainably for recreation. It was clearly highlighted in the consultations that the Corrib which is the second largest water body in Ireland has potential for tourism amenity development. There are extensive catchment systems in the region which are renowned as some of the best fishing grounds in Europe and therefore must be protected and utilised in a sustainable fashion.		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	X	Use of new methods approaches for the control of invasive species
	Rural Environment	x	The project will involve the enhancement and protection of the rural environment
	Climate Change	x	Proofing all projects will be carried to ensure that they have a positive effect of climate change e.g. using low emission engines on boats etc.
Financial Allocation	€60,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	1		

4.27 Strategic Action 7.1: Community Catchment Care

Strategic Action	Connemara Catchment Care		
Description of Strategic Action	The action aims to increase use of waterways – rivers and lakes, while also encouraging greater community and individual engagement and stakeholder responsibility for their management. Increasing knowledge and awareness on the value of waterways, rivers and lakes will be implemented through animation and educational projects to include transition year students, angling groups and environmental organisations. Calls for applications to establish facilities on water ways that service and protect waterway use, e.g. boat cleaning facilities and launching steps. Funding may be available for new water based tourism and educational facilities and projects that meet the Theme aims. Community projects that protect and celebrate water resources and heritage, clean ups, and community events, interpretation. <i>Time limited calls</i>		
Primary Target Group	Farmers, anglers, tourism providers, recreational users		
Geographic Area	Communities close to catchment water bodies, specific focus on the Corrib.		
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM		
Collaborating organisations	Inland Fisheries Ireland, Galway County Council, angling groups, rural tourism/outdoor pursuits businesses, Connemara National Park, private river owners, community groups.		
Timeframe for delivery	Q3/2017 – Q2/2020		
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 infrastructure projects • 1 new service project • 2 angling clubs with 40 local beneficiaries • 3 community conservation projects build awareness and engagement 140 participants • Transition year programme in schools benefits 150 young people 		

4.28 Local Objective 8: Protecting and Realising the High Nature Value of Connemara as a Living Landscape

Local Objective	Protecting and realising the High Nature Value of Connemara as a Living Landscape		
LEADER Sub Theme	Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity		
Rationale for Local Objective	<p>Connemara has specific, special and extensive environmental assets, high nature value farming (HNV), landscape designations, a National Park, aspirant Geo Park and extensive coastal SAC's.</p> <p>These provide a major resource for 'brand Connemara' with associated benefits for tourism etc. but they also represent a challenge in terms of translating HNV to sustainable and valued economic and social return.</p> <p>The local objective is based on the need to re-introduce traditions that maintain biodiversity, educational workshops, explore lost cost, low input, traditional farming models, introducing more sustainable seaweed harvesting techniques.</p> <p>The Realising High Nature Value and Connemara Catchment Care Strategic Actions include animation work. This is in recognition of the sensitivity and requirement to give ownership of this work to the main stakeholders – the farmers and people whose lives are bound by the landscape. There will be clear complementarity with the other LEADER priority areas.</p>		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	X	The Objective specifies a very innovative approach to the use and protection of landscape and ecosystem based evaluation providing a model for other regions.
	Environment	X	The Objective is specifically focused on protecting and using the rural environment.
	Climate change	X	Objective can have a significant role to play in carbon sequestration through Agri-environmental actions.
Financial Allocation	€300,000		
Number of Strategic Actions	2		

4.29 Strategic Action 8.1: Realising High Nature Value

Strategic Action	Realising High Nature Value
Description of Strategic Action	<p>The Action includes running workshops that foster practices to celebrate sustainable farming traditions and heritage such as training for young farmers on showing livestock and heritage based diversification (activities not eligible under other CAP measures).</p> <p>The continued aspirant development of the GeoPark will be supported through contract and funding for research and interpretation etc.</p> <p>Funding for community interpretation/education projects will focus on community engagement in the landscape.</p> <p>An environmental resource economic study will be contracted out to put an economic value on the landscape of Connemara, the values from a tourism, economic and social and environmental perspective (possibly with international partner).</p> <p>A seaweed programme will deliver training in wild seaweed harvesting management (on contract).</p> <p>An audit into opportunities for seaweed (kelp and dulse) farming will be accompanied by engagement with interested fishermen (diversification), to include training and project visits.</p>
Primary Target Group	<i>Farmers, fishermen/coastal dwellers, environmental services and eco tourism businesses, community organisations</i>
Geographic Area	All of Connemara. With specific focus on SAC's, and the Connemara National Park
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Universities assist with researching actual value of the landscape and biodiversity; Connemara National Park; CEECC, GeoPark; Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association, BIM (seaweed), IFA, Tidy towns groups, environmental groups,
Delivery timeframe	Q3/2017 – Q2/2020
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Geopark development project funded, benefiting the whole community of Connemara - 14000 people • 8 environmental education/interpretation projects, 100 participants • 3 seaweed training programme, 45 participants • 1 research and pilot into seaweed farming – 20 participants • 5 tradition and heritage workshops and training with 100 beneficiaries

4.30 Strategic Action 8.2: Collaboration, Community Engagement and Stewardship- (Animation)

Strategic Action	Collaboration, Community Engagement and Stewardship (Animation)
Description of Strategic Action	Animation work will foster engagement of farmers and others in the landscape valuation process, exploring how traditions and heritage can be fostered – leading to applications to carry out projects. Animation
Primary Target Group	<i>Community, farmers, fishermen/coastal dwellers, environmental services and eco tourism businesses, anglers, community organisations, young people,</i>
Geographic Area	All of Connemara
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM
Collaborating organisations	Universities assist with researching actual value of the landscape and biodiversity; National Park; CEECC, Geo Park; Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Assoc. BIM (seaweed), SEAI, GMIT, Communities, GRETB, schools.
Delivery Timeframe	Q3/2016 – Q4/2019
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread engagement and support for landscape valuation and plans for heritage/landscape management involving the community • 300 people engage in process

4.31 Local Objective 9: Piloting the Use of Connemara Renewables

Local Objective	Piloting the Use of Connemara Renewables		
LEADER Sub Theme	Development of Renewable Energy		
Rationale for Local Objective	The renewables Objective is based on two specific opportunities, one being the use of local poor value timber as a biomass heat source, through drying and modern boiler technologies. This project may be delivered with a community services/school or civic facility. The second looks to enable communities to engage in a major renewables adoption to identify a best practice solution to reducing carbon footprint. Funding for research, audit, technical, financial and environmental impact components of the planning and development process.		
Fit to Cross Cutting Themes	Innovation	X	The objective includes innovative actions, both process and technology.
	Environment	X	The objective will assist in the preservation of the environment through environmentally responsible actions.
	Climate Change	x	This objective specifically addresses issues of climate change.
Financial Allocation	€320,425		
Number of Strategic Actions	1		

4.32 Strategic Action 9.1: Connemara Renewables

Strategic Action	Connemara Renewables		
Description of Strategic Action	<p>This specific approach to renewables aims to bring benefits of renewables use to make Connemara a low carbon footprint region. Energy audits would be carried out on community and service buildings to identify energy use issues and options to address impacts through use of renewables – tendered out.</p> <p>Renewables options that can be supported will include all energy generation approaches (including Environmental Impact and planning work). Specifically biomass heating will be offered through project grants with low value timber being chipped and dried using biomass heating and drying systems, and biomass boilers will replace oil in community facilities. The project will also be open to schools, hotels (swimming pool heating), and other service centres.</p> <p>Time Limited Calls</p>		
Primary Target Group	<i>Farmers, fishermen/coastal dwellers, environmental services and eco tourism businesses, anglers, community organisations</i>		
Geographic Area	All of Connemara		
Organisation who will deliver the action	FORUM		
Collaborating organisations	SEAI, GMIT, NUIG, Communities, Private Operators		
Timeframe for delivery	Q1/2017 – Q2/2020		
Anticipated outputs, indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 major energy audits • 2 renewables projects funded (probably biomass – dependent on outcome of audit) 		

Section 5: Strategic Integration

The following describes the Local Objectives in terms of strategic integration and the cross cutting themes. This includes integration from policy through to delivery. It sets out the strategic partnerships and added value involved in implementation as well as a brief summation of the fit to the cross cutting themes.

5.1 Value for money

Value for money (VFM) has always been an important feature of the FORUM approach to development. It is something that the organisation has placed great emphasis on at all levels. Even before it became a topical issue it was inherent in the culture of the organisation. The concept of VFM has become increasingly important during the broader economic down turn and particularly in the context of austerity policies and public expenditure cuts. In a developmental context VFM is concerned with how resources are best utilised to address unmet needs in society. While we believe that VFM is implicit in the overall LDS and particularly within the LDS action plan and budgets, this section will briefly set out FORUM's understanding of the concept and some of the key features we believe endorse the VFM of this LDS and indeed FORUM as an agent of development.

There are many concepts on the theory of VFM, FORUM's organisational understanding of the concept is clear and concise and in line with the national and EU concept of the three E's- Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness. FORUM also includes the principle of Equity in this understanding particularly as its interventions are targeted at some of the most vulnerable people in society. Briefly then FORUM understands that value for money development should:

- **Economic:** ensure the inputs have been procured at the lowest cost possible for the level of quality necessary.
- **Efficient:** ensure that inputs and process are implemented in a way that outcomes are appropriate to the level of inputs and resources used.
- **Effective:** pursue the achievement of program outcomes in relation the satisfaction of all stakeholders.
- **Equitable:** ensure that opportunities and benefits are distributed fairly.

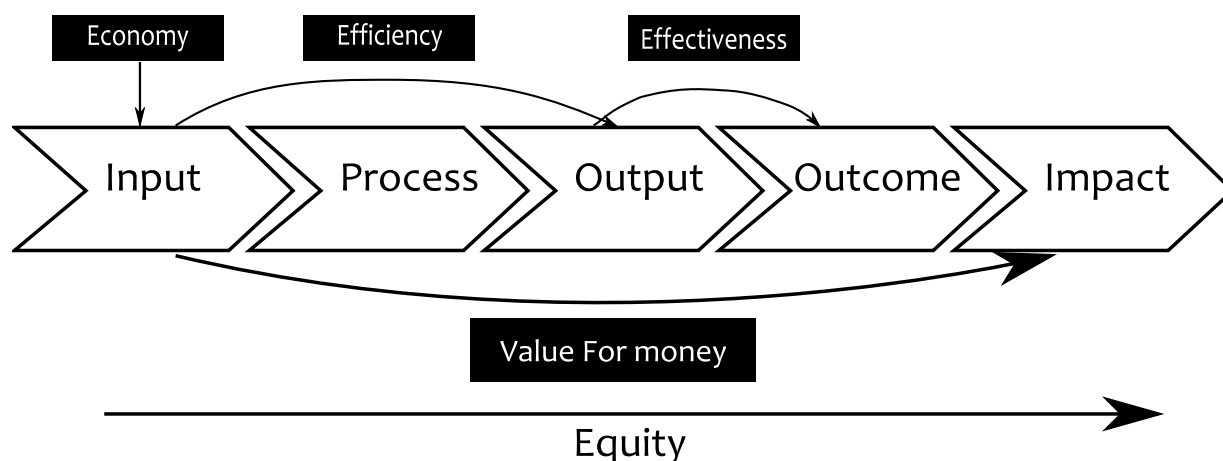


Figure 20: Value for Money Concept

FORUM's approach to VFM is pragmatic. It also occurs at an interventional, programmatic and organisational level. There are a number of procedures and organisational norms or practices that FORUM undertakes which we believe assists in determining and ensuring VFM. These are:

1. Strategic planning- In itself this LDS (as well as other strategic and wider organisational plans) will assist in striving for maintaining and improving VFM.
2. Governance- FORUM is governed by a broad representation of society with a range of skills, expertise and experience. This will ensure VFM in the broadest sense from a range of qualitative judgements including academic and practical.
3. Financial management- FORUM operates in an open transparent manner and has a strong financial management policies and procedures in place.

4. Performance monitoring- Is critical as it determines the level of satisfaction of stakeholders and the impact of interventions. Performance monitoring is inherent at all levels in the organisation and is conducted in many ways and is both qualitative and quantitative such as yearly and monthly reports to the Board and other stakeholders, programme level evaluations etc.
5. Risk assessment- FORUM is aware that risk has the potential to both add and subtract value to all undertakings for example through the success or indeed failure of innovative approaches. It is therefore something that must be monitored in terms of the level of risk of each intervention and potential impact on VFM. Risk assessment is carried out at all levels in the organisation and there is a graduated approach adopted for example where there is a potential high risk undertaking this is brought to Board level for decision.
6. Procurement- Staff have undertaken training and up-skilling in the area of procurement to ensure the organisation and programmes are attaining the correct quality of goods or services at the best possible price. Training and up-skilling will be ongoing to ensure procurement is carried out correctly with the maximum benefit and minimum bureaucracy for all stakeholders.
7. Use of local knowledge- FORUM has unparalleled local knowledge of the LDS area. This is particularly important from an efficiency and effectiveness perspective. As demonstrated heretofore Connemara is an extremely unique area. FORUM understands this intimately, and all the staff and the majority of Board members live in the LDS area. Many of the staff, and indeed the Board, are themselves volunteers in their respective communities. This ensures interventions, approaches and indeed this LDS is designed and will be implemented with this core concept in mind while also taking cognisance of ensuring against conflict of interest. It will ensure effective targeting of services and resources and the use of approaches which will be more readily accepted by stakeholders.

To this end FORUM is confident that its historical mindset, organisational culture, systems, processes, procedures and policies are an excellent foundation to provide value for tax payer's money. FORUM is also aware that VFM is not a definitive concept and requires learning, openness to change and organisational development in order for it to remain an important relevant organisational and programmatic feature.

5.2 Added Value

Added Value is defined as contributions that add to the impact of a programme or project, and may be financial, knowledge (human capital), in kind resources, informing policy, and extending services etc.

The following section outlines the specific integration, added value and relevance to cross cutting themes of each of the Local Objectives.

5.2.1 Local Objective – New and Enhanced Services and Products Deliver Connemara's Tourism Potential

The tourism priorities included several specific and **innovative ideas**, to both **enhance services and products** such as electric cars. **Culture and heritage of significance** include the **Connemara pony and landscape**, both underused resources, which could bring economic returns to rural citizens and this will also assist meet the goals of **Themes 9 and 10 of the LECP and the Údarás na Gaeltachta 20 year strategy**. The need to **protect the landscape** is also embedded in the agreed priorities. The priorities identified the Wild Atlantic Way and Blue Way as key drivers, with fit to **national and regional policy** and culture such as the Connemara Pony, Marconi story and landscape in the 'Mountain Hub' /Geopark as key products which needed developed. The **innovative nature** of the strategic actions, plus the **added value to be secured in networking products and services** requires pro active and **expert animation**. The opportunity to explore an islands trail as part of the Blue Way will focus on ecclesiastical remains.

Added Value

- It will be important to ensure tourism services and infrastructure enhance the potential of the Gaeltacht regions, and the southern Gaeltacht and islanders in particular. Údarás na Gaeltachta may be able to contribute additional resources as well as guidance for tourism development facilities and products.

- FORUM have met with BIM and will work together to promote seafood, marine events, facilities, and coastal infrastructure, with the option to utilise the EMFF FLAG funding. There is also potential for funding from BIM for FORUM to do vital animation work with fishing communities and enabling clear demarcation between the two programmes.
- FORUM will be seeking funds from Fáilte Ireland to carry out infrastructure development which assists with further development of the WAW and Blue Way. This will also include scoping and early development work on the Blue Way spiritual trail, with the Western (Galway) and NW FLAG and Mayo LEADER, based on the numerous ecclesiastical remains on islands in the region.
- FORUM will act as catalyst between the community/private sector working in the tourism arena, and will develop project implementation solutions (such as with the Connemara greenway in the last programme). FORUM's implementation approach with its comprehensive set of working relationships is a proven successful model.
- **The Aire de Service model** is based on a French system for touring caravans where access to water supply and pump out are provided. The supply can be unrestricted or metered (the norm in mainland Europe is €2 per 100 litres of water paid by cash, token or card). A drive over drain connected to the appropriate public waste water system allows for on board holding tank of grey water to be emptied. A dedicated access point to the public waste water system allows for on board toilet cassette to be emptied. These facilities are usually located in a parking area near towns/villages and will require partnership for implementation and add considerable value to the facilities and communities in which they are based.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ **Innovation** is addressed through the networking of new innovative products (eg. Marconi) and mapping old roads and trails, and networking both attractions and routes for an app., as well as development of the Aire de Service model to address shortage of tourism camper van facilities. New technologies will be promoted and utilised to enhance services and products, eg. through mapping, apps and interactive activities.
- ❖ **Rural Environment** and the sustainable management and use of **the landscape and natural resources** are a core part of the vision for product and service development, from mountain hubs to the Connemara pony.
- ❖ **Climate Change** is addressed in the Local Objective with the aim of **reducing the carbon footprint** of tourists through piloting an electric car scheme.

5.2.2 Local Objective - Pathways and Opportunities for Employment and Economic Growth Through Partnership and Innovation

Inclusive models of business support as per Priority 6 will be delivered through the Threshold and Pre apprenticeship actions, as well as specialist and **Sectoral Training Programmes**. Delivery will be **integrated with Theme 3 of the LECP and take account of learning from other agencies and past work of FORUM**. It should be noted that the Threshold and Pre apprenticeship Strategic Actions could have fitted under LEADER sub theme Youth, but FORUM made the decision to keep it under the first theme, so as to include older unemployed and underemployed, although the primary focus will be young people. **Agency partnerships** will be central in the delivery of these actions.

The focus on Connemara resources provides both a familiarity for people who may lack confidence, as well as contributing to **building both a skills and enterprise base** that utilises the unique attributes of the region including **solutions and opportunities for farmers and fishermen to diversify**, such as **refurbishment** and **alternative use of farm buildings**. However the priorities also identified the requirement for **greater technological innovation** in a region far from universities and innovation clusters.

The development and implementation of a **targeted Business** programme involving training, market research, business planning and grant support could help foster a **strong social economy**. Effective

promotion of the **economic** and **societal value of social economy activities** will be fundamental in all of this.

Added Value

- FORUM meetings with the Western Development Commission resulted in the invitation to submit a proposal for funding to carry out animation and mentoring.
- FORUM have a long standing and productive working relationship with LEO (and formerly the CEB) and will work closely with them at a number of levels, with business planning support, signposting, working up approaches for sector or target group development.
- FORUM implements the Tús Programme, and along with the LCDP and Social Inclusion and Adolescent Support Programmes, this will help identify and engage participants, and assist delivery on the social inclusion emphasis in Priority 6.
- GRETB, Tús and the Dept. of Social Protection and initiatives such as Rural Recreation will assist with delivery and adding value .
- FORUM will encourage Credit Union financing solutions, particularly for entrepreneurs who cannot get regular bank support.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ **Innovation** is targeted in its own right in recognition of the need to grow the technology based sectors, even within an economy predominantly focused on the natural and cultural strengths of Connemara.
- ❖ Sustainable use of the **Rural Environment** – seaweed, food and culture provide strategic focus under this objective to protect and sustainably utilise the natural environment.

5.2.3 Local Objective - Rural Town, Village and Countryside Enhancement

The importance of rural towns and villages maximising their potential as service centres appropriate to their catchment is a fundamental element part of sustainable rural infrastructure and in keeping with the CEDRA, REDZ policy and the LECP goals. Work done under the last programme included an analysis and village plan for nine Connemara Villages where opportunities to **enhance the environment**, and improve **community and business infrastructure** were identified and mapped presents a blue print for capital works. The positive work with Galway County Council in the last round will be extended, taking account of theme 6 of the LECP. The O'Donnell plan needs to be extended to cover the southern **Connemara Gaeltacht** area. Calls for tenders to meet service gaps could be an option. **Community events**, festivals and workshops, will **provide stimulus** and a **focus for business growth** and were promoted as important during the consultation process.

Added Value

- Local Authority funding, implementation of Environmental Improvement works, and the added value of engineering/professional support was important for delivery of this area of work last time around. FORUM will continue to work closely with the Council to continue and extend this work.
- Údarás na Gaeltachta may provide funding for implementation of the plans, and community based projects in the Gaeltacht areas and the islands.
- Clann Credo was brought in by FORUM for projects last time, and are interested in providing further support for similar projects. The LEADER project evaluation model meets their requirements demonstrating the value of the FORUM, model and experience of the staff.
- Local Agenda 21 funding was secured by Clifden Tidy Towns, FORUM will research further opportunities from this or similar EU based funding opportunities.
- Credit Unions and local businesses funded projects in the last round and would be expected to contribute and support again, particularly for festivals.
- FORUM will continue to utilise its full compliment of resources including TÚS and other Community Employment Schemes to support, resource and implement village projects.

- There may be a possibility to secure REDZ funding and FORUM will be ready to take advantage of this fund, should it become available.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ **Innovation** is represented in the development of a Connemara identity/brand work
- ❖ **Rural Environment** will be improved in towns and villages, improving the tourism profile of the region and engender community pride.

5.2.4 Local Objective - Increasing Opportunities and Hotspot Services to Connect Connemara

Implementing the Broadband sub theme requires partnership based delivery with communities and organisations that can assist with this process.

Added Value

- FORUM will work with Galway County Council to pursue public broadband projects for example public access in libraries, as well as community groups who can provide broadband internet and IT services in local centres.
- Engaging with social inclusion based NGOs in calling for applications will enable FORUM to target groups and areas most in need. The same will apply to funding for IT training.
- FORUM's social inclusion programme which works with disadvantaged groups, such as farmers, older people and vulnerable women etc., will provide a conduit to reach the hard to reach communities to address digital exclusion, provide IT training etc.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ The strategic actions include **Innovative** approaches to addressing broadband gaps, through hotspot facilities.
- ❖ Enhanced opportunities to work from home/locally, will reduce the commuter **carbon footprint and mitigate against Climate Change**.

5.2.5 Local Objective - Services and Engagement in Community Life Contributes to Community Renewal and Wellbeing

Partnership with agencies such as HSE, Túsla and Dept. of Social Protection will be a core part of the delivery model for this objective. The objective also requires **solutions on access issues**, both **transport, and disabled** provision and will involve a wide range of partners and contribute to delivery of Theme 2 of the LECP and in partnership with Bealach na Gaillimhe. Communities will play a key role in achieving the objectives. Skills and service delivery that utilise local resources, but also create specialism's, such as therapeutic riding, will be based on partnership working with organisations that can provide opportunities and resources.

Added Value

- FORUM have an existing and proven track record with a number of organisations including IWA, Age Action Ireland, Ability West and Túsla in carrying out this type of work. These relationships and resources will be utilised, through partnership based delivery, referrals, specialist support, and FORUM is a recognised conduit for this type of work.
- The North Connemara Local Learning Network is an example of FORUM's adaptability and willingness to work with other stakeholders to ensure cohesion.
- FORUM have the ability and proven track record to deliver in the behalf of other stakeholder for example through the delivering of Children First Training on behalf of statutory organisations.
- The Therapeutic Riding concept is a cross cutting and highly innovative project, having both social and tourism value. Originally animated by FORUM in the last round. FORUM will want

to develop this model through transnational connections and establish an accredited industry standard for Ireland.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ The Therapeutic Riding Centre will be an **innovative** project, offering tourism, community benefits and learning for other areas.
- ❖ This objective will include projects that improve the **Rural Environment**. It will also engage people in their environment, providing access and opportunities to enjoy and appreciate their surroundings, such as walking, rowing and sailing.
- ❖ **Climate Change** is addressed through the use of renewable transport for meals on wheels.

5.2.6 Local Objective - Personal Development and New Opportunities Ensures a Future In Connemara

The Youth Local Objective requires **targeted support work** delivered with **strategic partners**. This will include **anti bullying, mental health, suicide prevention and awareness** as well as delivered life enhancing experiences, **outdoor pursuits, creative skills, software code writing and a FabLab to enhance technical and design skills**. The social, health and wellbeing element will be delivered through **financial support to install equipment and enhance youth facilities**.

This Local Objective requires a **higher level of thinking, partnership, and investment** in the youth of Connemara from government, the youth themselves, the private sector and many agencies who all have a role to play. Planning their future is central to this work, and current careers advice within the education and employment advisory systems may be too standardised and possibly uninformed around new **economies or innovations specific to the cultural and natural resources of Connemara**. Provide support insights, information and being imaginative around emerging economic and business development opportunities will be important.

Added Value

- FORUM will deliver this Objective based on national policy (such as new plans for youth under the Minister for Rural Development), and collaborative working with its partners such as Foroige, GRET, community groups, schools. The Adolescent Support Programme will add value.
- Other FORUM programmes and relationships, such as in music education, will also add value and resources.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ The FabLab initiative is an **Innovative** approach to engage young people in software and engineering design work (There is currently only one other outside of Dublin in the country).
- ❖ The **Rural Environment** will be used as a resource for personal development and improved health and wellbeing.

5.2.7 Local Objective - Community Catchment Care Protects and Utilises Connemara's Inland Waterways

Given the objective of building community engagement and responsibility in the use and care of water resources means that community engagement, education and information are core components of this action. Working with **Inland Fisheries Ireland**, schools and user groups, protection (eg. cleaning facilities for boats) will be accompanied by funding for adopt a river type schemes. There will be a focus on the Corrib. FORUM will also review the direction of work to realise goal 8 of the LCEP to ensure coherence and added value.

Added Value

- FORUM have been meeting with Inland Fisheries Ireland and there is the possibility to work together to implement specific joint programmes. Community Employment staff may be available to assist and add further value to any programme. FORUM also has links with angling bodies along the Corrib and will utilise these to engage the community stakeholders. Transition year funding will also add value for participating schools. Work with stakeholders around upland farming could include education and mediation to encourage establishment of greater soak areas to mitigate against future flooding.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ This Objective is firmly embedded in the cross cutting theme to protect and enhance the **Rural Environment**.

5.2.8 Local Objective - Protecting and Realising the High Nature Value of Connemara as a Living Landscape

In keeping with Priority 6 and the requirements of this LEADER Sub Theme in Ireland the Objective should enhance and support delivery of national policy in respect of the national parks, and protection of biodiversity. FORUM will work closely with NPWS, Teagasc and environmental groups in its delivery.

Added Value

- The Strategic Action has utilised input from the report on High Nature Value in Galway. This study included a specific volume on north Connemara. While much of it relates to environmental and farming strategies, in respect of Departmental policies, there are also specific recommendations that have relevance to the LDS.
- Pro-active marketing of produce from HNV (high nature value) farmland is required to improve financial viability.
- Traditional farming practices are in danger of being lost and have a cultural and heritage significance.
- Diversifying into new farm enterprises could provide economic benefits to farmers and increase biodiversity.
- Control invasive species in Connemara.
- Mechanisms for increasing the benefits of tourism to farmers that maintains the landscape should be explored.
- Ensuring that rural populations are sustained and that any actions taken towards this goal are compatible with HNV farming.

HNV farming is a critical concept for Connemara. It will be important to understand what the actual values are, in monetary and quality of life terms, to fully take advantage of what HNV means for the area.

Added Value through the Geopark Initiative

The concept of a Geopark is really a model for sustainable rural development. The Geopark model of rural development works with rural communities to maximise the potential of the environment around them but must have a viable management and business plan (community driven) in place at the time of application. Interest has been expressed and some scoping and consultation has been carried out on a potential Geopark for Connemara and aspirant Geopark status has been established for part of Connemara (currently referred to as Joyce Country) which means it has all the natural assets to obtain full Geopark recognition. Dr Ronan Hennessy NUIG is acting as advisor to the project.

- Geological Survey of Ireland has recently backed the project to the tune of €25,000 per year for a period of 3 years
- There is a Steering Committee in place driving the project
- There is growing interest in a positive way in this project and FORUM are developing a process whereby local people act as ambassadors for the project

Other Added Value

- Existing work by FORUM with farmers through the social inclusion programme and the Rural Recreation Scheme provide an excellent platform to carry out this work. Working relationships with Teagasc will enable complementary actions on traditional farming methods, combined with projects that protect heritage and environmental diversification.
- The Inagh Valley Trust, established through philanthropy and supported by NUIG, wants to extend its current academic focus to environmental projects of more relevance to the local community. They can be an important resource for research work.
- Local Agenda 21 funding will be pursued by FORUM with partners for specific actions when it becomes available.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ The focus on a Living Landscape, and realising and protecting High Nature Value is very **Innovative**. Exploring the value of the ecosystem will be an important flagship project.
- ❖ This Objective focuses on sustainability and enhancement of the **Rural Environment**.
- ❖ In terms of **Climate Change** this Objective has the potential to truly demonstrate the value of the Connemara landscape as a carbon sink which is of immense value particularly in light of new carbon mitigation targets.

5.2.9 Local Objective - Piloting the Use of Connemara Renewables

As this action takes an 'action research' and demonstration approach and as such will hopefully lead to other projects by individuals that can take advantage of supports like TAMS and SEAI support schemes. It will have a competitive but partnership based delivery approach. There are direct linkages to theme 8 and 9 of the LECF in terms of environmental protection and harnessing natural resources.

Added Value

- Added value will be supported by FORUM's relationship with Coillte and GMIT and communities who may be interested in taking forward this pilot programme.

Cross Cutting Themes

- ❖ **Innovation** will be an important feature of the Objective. Actions and investments are likely to utilise innovative and cutting edge solutions to energy conservation and generation. Also innovation in terms of promoting project beneficiaries to consider innovative solutions to problems and issues particularly in relation to energy solutions and efficiency.
- ❖ This Objective focuses on **Climate Change** solutions, and will make more use of local low value timber, which is currently exported from Ireland for very low return and a high level of carbon footprint. It will also provide a model for renewables that focus on resources specific to the region
- ❖ **Environment** will be directly impacted through this Local Objective. This should be wholly positive through interventions that have a net benefit on the environment through physical investment in projects that reduce waste, save energy and enhance the wider physical environment.

5.3 Key Relevant Organisations and Methods for Ensuring Strategic Integration

The following lists the key relevant organisations, the relevant strategies and programmes, and how the strategic integration will be delivered:

Galway County Council

Relevance: Town, village and harbour/beach enhancements; Blue Way and WAW; tourism infrastructure (eg. charging points on WAW car parks).

Integration delivered through: Council representation on FORUM Board and engagement in sub-committees. Forwarding potential plans and projects to Council; organise meetings to discuss and arrange town enhancement programme and WAW type projects; scoping matched funding and added value opportunities.

Galway County Council Community and Enterprise Division

Relevance: Broad range of planning and programme development to support delivery of strategies and plans including LCDC, LECP, EU Programmes, INTERREG B and C measures; specific projects, eg. Greenway project. Integration and complementary projects will ensure strategic direction of projects, walking trails, town enhancements and social inclusion activities assist with the scoping and identifying of solutions for rural transport and access in partnership with Bealach na Gaillimhe.

Integration delivered through: Representation from Council on FORUM; regular discussions, communications on plans to implement programmes of work. Discussions on potential for added value and matched funding where appropriate (eg. environmental and tourism infrastructure)

Local Enterprise Office Galway;

Relevance: Enterprise development and support and strategic integration of activities to ensure delivery of the Local Community Economic Plan (LECP)

Three forms, a) support for potential LEADER applicants with business planning etc.

b) structured collaboration for enterprise support eg. placements or sectoral networks and clusters eg. crafts and food (as per the LECP strategy)

c) potential contracts to implement enterprise support projects eg. mentoring

Integration delivered through: Engagement of LEO staff with LAG and regular discussions and meetings re. projects. Referrals to and from LEO to FORUM.

Fáilte Ireland

Relevance: Setting policy for tourism development in the region. Leading on special initiatives such as WAW and Blue Way, E-cars project. Important to ensure projects fit policy.

Integration delivered through: an invite to sit on the Evaluation Committee and planning meetings with Fáilte Ireland staff on strategic projects, eg. WAW and tourist service information. FORUM Rural Resource Officer also funded through existing arrangement and relationship.

Teagasc

Relevance: Key delivery agent for farming support and assistance for the delivery of the other programmes within the Rural Development Programme of CAP. Important point of contact for recruitment and information flow to farmers re. LEADER initiatives. Opportunity to add value through collaboration eg. Green Cert.

Integration delivered through: Participation by Teagasc on FORUM Broadband sub-committees and regular engagement with FORUM staff. Joint planning for implementation of projects, and promotion/information flow to farmers. Ensuring maximum opportunities utilised.

Dept. Social Protection

Relevance: The agency is a central provider and player in terms of the Social Inclusion themes; providing and implementing policy and direction. They also implement projects that LEADER can add value to, or can be implemented jointly as well as provide referrals and engage in joint programme planning. Key partners in allocation of TÚS programmes, worker opportunities and placements

Integration delivered through: extensive engagement in place with regular contact and a productive working relationship with FORUM staff.

Túsla

Relevance: FORUM Youth Programme is funded by Túsla.

Integration delivered through: Existing model in place with delivery of services to young people with Túsla part of the management group. They also provide referrals, through their social work department and Galway Youth and Childcare Committee.

HSE

Relevance: FORUM works on a day to day basis with the HSE. They have delivered Care Courses and achieve close collaboration in planning and implementing projects.

Integration delivered through: HSE engagement on the Board, sub-committees, day to day working,

carers, work with older people, social worker referrals and collaboration around youth work.

GRETB

Relevance: Key provider of training and skills within the region and at community level. Key player in planning of training and social inclusion strategic actions.

Integration delivered through: engagement on the FORUM Board and sub committees, regular contact with staff, including joint project planning and implementation. Currently integrated relationship whereby GRETB part fund the FORUM Youth Programme.

Connemara National Park and Nat. Parks and Wildlife Service

Relevance: Focus on landscape management, on conservation biodiversity and for viable farming, trails development, infrastructure and interpretation. Fostering responsible countryside management practices; exploring sustainable farming options and continued development of the Geo Park concept

Integration delivered through: Meetings with Head of Connemara National Park or relevant person on the GEO park concept and any other relevant issue/opportunity.

Board Iascaigh Mhara

Relevance: Implementation of coastal tourism, supporting the coastal economy, skills development and environmental enhancement. Key aspects are to complement the FLAG (under the European Maritime Fishery Fund Programme), avoid duplication and provide animation support.

Integration delivered through:

Convened working group meetings in advance of calls for applications, referring applications – (both ways). Joint planning to implement specific programmes, eg. training (HACCP, commercial diving) and Blue Way projects.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Relevance: Protection of waterways and sustainable development and use of waterways for tourism and community benefit purposes.

Integration delivered through: Meetings to plan and promote implementation of the Strategic Actions – Connemara Catchment Care.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Relevance: Key agency for policy and support programmes for Irish speaking communities in FORUM areas. Identification of specific solutions and methods needed to ensure full access and take up of opportunities provided within the FORUM plan.

Integration delivered through: Engagement in project planning working groups where appropriate. Consultation in advance of calls for applications. Project referrals and participation on the Board or sub-committees.

Island Cooperatives and Community Development Companies

Relevance: Given the specific identity and community infrastructure of the islands, it will be important to engage with them in the development of programmes of potential significance, utilise the relationship to recruit islanders to programmes and where helpful, work together to address issues.

Integration delivered through: Working meetings/groups, and island based workshops. Specific efforts around calls for applications.

Western Development Commission

Relevance: Delivery of specific initiatives aimed at overcoming critical economic challenges in Connemara. Important to utilise this resource where possible, eg. mentoring programme.

Integration delivered through: Direct collaboration on economic development initiatives in particular a possible animation and mentoring programme.

5.3.1 Policy Context

This local Development Strategy for the Connemara region has been prepared with an ethos of complementarity and fit to national and regional policies and plans, while retaining the principal of subsidiarity and focusing the plan and the deliverables on the target groups.

The extensive needs analysis which informed this LDS provides spatial considerations, and recognition of all relevant CSO data, as well as all relevant reports and plans and emerging initiatives.

Integral to this approach was consideration of policies such as Pathways to Work and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, in which FORUM has been an active and effective delivery mechanism. FORUM have proofed (in so far as can be done with only high level goals available at the time of writing) this strategy against the LECP and identified a wide range of synergistic opportunities and it has also underpinned the effectiveness of the current FORUM delivery model and its history of collaboration and partnership working.

At a county/regional level, the various strategies, especially the LECP, emphasise the need for networking and cluster based models that could enable a shift upwards in terms of regional competitiveness, community vibrancy and environmental quality. People from marginalised communities should be able to participate in and benefit from all RDP themes.

In respect of arrangements between government and local delivery agencies/stakeholder organisations, FORUM are committed to ensuring clear synergies between rural services and mainstream exchequer and local authority supports and schemes and will provide a signposting and referral service.

FORUM are keen to ensure there is clarity with delivery of the RDP/LEADER. Making sure that the administrative burden of compliance and control requirements is made as user friendly as possible while having a robust administrative process will also be important to engaging communities and ensuring they have confidence in the process, the programmes and ultimately the policies.

The following table (Table 14) sets out the ten most relevant policies and strategies, EU, National, regional and county which informed the development of the FORUM strategy.

Table 14: EU, National, Regional and Local Strategies

Policy	National Policy Local/Regional Strategies	LEADER Local Objectives
EU	Europe 2020 strategy	<p>The EU policy for rural development five goals include innovation, education, poverty reduction, climate change and the FORUM strategy has founded its strategy on these goals and specifically the two objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; – the balanced territorial development of rural areas, <p>in that the strategy includes a range of mechanisms to ensure peripheral communities are afforded the same opportunities as those in urban areas. Furthermore the requirement for a smart, sustainable and inclusive focused approach has influenced the strategic planning process and content.</p> <p>Specific to EU CAP policy for rural development is Priority 6: promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas. These priorities have shaped the LEADER Programme in Ireland and FORUM have based their analysis, consultation and strategic planning work accordingly.</p>
National	Sharing our Future (FORFAS) 2025 (including reports on Innovation Competitiveness, Broadband, Waste Renewables, and Marine Innovation)	<p>Provides spatial context, embedded throughout the LDS, economic actions, broadband, renewables and innovation.</p> <p>National policy to promote innovation capacity in Fablab, renewables, and enterprise growth type actions.</p> <p>Strategic targets for renewables to assist focused delivery.</p> <p>Landscape and biodiversity specific resource for economic growth.</p>
	Pathways to Work	The FORUM LDS uses models and policy set out in the National Pathways to Work plan, providing for pre training, training, employment,

		and enterprise support measures with a focus on 'threshold' approach to training and entry to employment, plus using the landscape to provide for a future for its residents
	National Policy Framework for Children and Young People published by the Department of Children and Youth affairs in April 2014.	FORUM will implement initiatives under GAISCE and a range of other social inclusion programmes to work, to provide personal development and community activation programmes with young people and has a proposed pilot project which is designed to engage and build the capacity of young people, aged 18 to 25, in rural areas, in order that they can continue to live in their local areas and contribute to their communities in a meaningful way. This project is aimed at the young people who will go on to live and raise their families in rural Ireland. The proposed project will build the capacity of these young people so that they can live in healthy and vibrant communities.
	National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2016	FORUM's work uses principles set out in the National Action Plan, focusing on building sustainable communities, the focus on hard to reach communities and being deliberate and specific in targeting hard to reach communities
	National Action plan for Jobs	Among the five goals of particular relevance to the LDS for Connemara in the National 2012 Action Plan for Jobs are: generating employment in the locally traded sector, build indigenous engine of growth and build world-class clusters of opportunity.
Regional	Plean Straitéiseach Údarás na Gaeltachta	7 year plan setting out the objectives and priorities for intervention by Údarás na Gaeltachta. The focus on culture and heritage for social and economic growth, and the innovation in enterprise theme are of particular relevance.
	CEDRA- "Energising Ireland's Rural Economy"	CEDRA report national overarching guide fits under EU2020. FORUM introduces a more strategic and ambitious approach to growing the rural economy. Utilising and management of the environment in the plan is ambitious. CEDRA identifies the Letterfrack hub as a model for delivery (p 36). Key components of CEDRA relevant to the LDS includes: 'Strategy driven at community level, but takes cognisance of county, regional and nat. plans. Integration and collaboration is key with a focus on economic development and innovation in rural enterprise; Plan to address broadband gaps; Rural town's development focus with regional branding.
County	High Nature Value Report Smith G, et.al, Aran Islands and north Connemara 2010 The Heritage Council.	The High Nature Value report explores the landscape, its geology, biodiversity and value from both an environmental and community perspective. The plan provides an importance foundation for development of community led initiatives that both contribute to best practice sustainable management, and contribute to the use and management of the landscape for the economic and social wellbeing of its residents.
	Galway Local Economic and Community Plan	The LECP sets out strategic high level goals and operational level delivery across a broad scope of economic, community and environmental issues. FORUM has 'proofed' its Local Objectives and strategic Actions against the LECP and ensured that they provide strong strategic fit.

5.4 Summary

In summary, the FORUM LDS with its baseline priorities, Local Objectives and Strategic Actions, closely reflect the cross cutting objectives of the RDP, presenting a bespoke, evidence based, locally informed and area-based local development strategy. This bottom up approach is also embedded in a public-private partnership model, in terms of both the LAG and the partnership structures and models that will inform and influence delivery. The strategy is strong on innovation, enhanced through integration and partnership based processes and relationships and multi-sectoral actions.

FORUM has identified and set out specific networking objectives and opportunities, and will continue to be an enthusiastic participant in networking activities.

FORUM looks to co-operation opportunities to enhance and add value to local delivery as well as to engage, inform and develop cooperative based solutions to make substantive differences to local initiatives with other partners. Cooperation engagement will take place at a regional, national and EU level.

The FORUM LDS demonstrates strong integration in respect of design and delivery, taking into account the requirement and opportunities for diversification, new small enterprises and job creation. The strategy will promote local development in rural areas, utilizing the resources, knowledge and facilities that their partners can offer, while addressing specific gaps, such as access, use and quality of ICT in rural areas.

Given that the regulatory framework sets out FORUM's responsibility for animation, capacity building, managing calls for projects, decision-making on local projects that are awarded funding and the financial management and monitoring of projects and the overall LDS., FORUM will ensure that reporting (directly) to the Department on financial elements and to the Department agent on the oversight of the LEADER monitoring framework is carried out to high standards within both the spirit of LEADER and the robust requirements that accompany effective delivery.

FORUM has specifically researched, identified, and planned delivery which includes integration of the three cross cutting objectives that form common goals across the LEADER Programme; innovation; climate change and environment. The cross-cutting objectives do add value to the overall strategy and are a strong element in the FORUM plan.

In respect of Policy Co-ordination, FORUM have taken cognisance of a set of policy documents/plans. Key plans that have influenced and informed this LDS include the Local Economic Community Plan (LECP) for Galway as well as a range of EU, national and regional plans. Ten are listed, but there were others that have informed the FORUM LDS which there is not room to mention. The LDS will contribute to the Europe 2020 goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Section 6: Networking and Cooperation

FORUM will continue to be an active participant in wide scale networking but also in relation to specific requirements under the objectives of the LEADER Programme and wider rural development policy. FORUM has a track record in network participation and recognises the role of networking in sharing learning and informing policy. Where FORUM implements specific or very novel projects, or where there is specific learning emerging from its work, FORUM will identify opportunities to share this learning.

- By the Board – particularly around networking that informs policy, shares best practice at Board levels, and builds their expertise and commitment
- By the CEO and staff; with the CEO participating in National LEADER networking, playing an active role in making this effective, contributing learning from Connemara. Staff will participate in networking that contributes to specific areas of work.
- The Board and/or staff will participate in any European rural development/LEADER networking activities that assist inform and shape policy and provide Ireland with an opportunity to share best practice elsewhere in the EU.
- FORUM has a particular and proven operational model based on partnership and networking to enhance and target delivery.

6.1 Networking Organisations

6.1.1 Public Participation Network in County Galway

The Public Participation Network in County Galway provides an important forum for ideas and information flow. FORUM has engaged and will continue to play an active role within this forum, sharing ideas, best practice and adding the continued process of information and feedback that can enable better delivery of programmes.

6.1.2 The Irish Local Development Network – ILDN

ILDN has many years experience servicing networking of LEADER groups in Ireland. It has breadth, strong membership and considerable knowledge of the LEADER Programme, nationally and internationally. FORUM will continue to play active role in ILDN.

6.1.3 Irish Rural Link

FORUM is an active member of Irish Rural Link which is a national network representing rural communities. It contributes to campaigning for sustainable rural development in Ireland and Europe and shares learning and good practice across all rural development issues.

6.1.4 European Rural Development Network- ENRD

Playing an active role in LEADER networking at the European level is essential if the programme is to continue to evolve and be a priority for the EU and its member countries. Ireland has always had a strong influence and been seen as a model of best practice in delivery of LEADER. FORUM will continue to play its part in networking and contributing to the learning gained from LEADER and the shaping of policy for the future.

6.1.5 European LEADER Association for Rural Development- ELARD

FORUM is an associate member of ELARD- an international non-profit making organisation set up to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to maintain their population through sustainable integrated local development.

6.1.6 European Anti Poverty Network Ireland- EAPN

FORUM is a member of the EAPN Ireland and again contributes too and learns from the shared membership and experience.

6.2 Inter-territorial and Transnational Networking

A number of opportunities exist to add value, complement and learn from other programmes. The most relevant of these is the Inter-territorial and Transnational themes of the LEADER Programme.

Research and preparation of the FORUM LDS identified a number of opportunities and partners relevant to their programme. While some of these measures will not be implemented in the early stages of the programme, it will be important to develop contacts, and research potential projects relevant to Sub Themes and Strategic Actions within the Connemara LDS; At the time of writing these are as follows:

Table 15: Potential Co-operation Projects

Project Partner	RDP Action	Programme
Mayo LCDC	Development of Mountain Hub Development of Blue Way spiritual trail, based on inland and off shore ecclesiastical sites	RDP Inter-territorial
The Netherlands Potential Partner	Organisation of programmes that contribute to personal development and address mental and physical health challenges with Dutch partners. Cycling tours in Connemara and Holland. Coastal. Islands network with islands from the NL	RDP Transnational, contact Mariek Leentvaar
Arwain Leader (Powys Wales)/ Other partner to be established	Research into old roads and pathways for tourism trail development, networking heritage and other attractions into the trails with facilities, interpretation	RDP Transnational, contact Robin Dingle
Fermanagh and Omagh Local Action Group	Development of sustainable water based tourism (Erne and Corrib)	RDP Transnational Contact Barry Boyle
Monaghan LCDC Offaly LCDC Causeway Coast and Glens LEADER	Working with estate land and house owners to identify sustainable and innovative opportunities to both conserve the heritage and provide a viable future which can have important local impact	RDP Inter-territorial and Transnational (N.Ireland)
Kilkenny Leader Partnership Company Leitrim Development Company	Youth innovation project with focus on digital fabrication technology. Providing a forum for the sharing of experiences and skills, and engaging young people enhancing social interaction.	RDP Inter-territorial
France (to be identified)	Social services for the disabled. Particularly exploring the possibility of equine based therapeutic services.	RDP Transnational

Section 7: Monitoring Review and Evaluation

7.1 Monitoring

FORUM will utilise the monitoring system designed for LEADER programme by the Managing Authority.

Monitoring methodology will be used to collect data that can assist with measurement of achievements against a set of performance indicators.

These performance indicators may change when the monitoring system is finalised by the Department, but at the time of writing the following example model will be used.

Table 16: Monitoring and Evaluation System Example

LEADER Sub Theme Rural Youth	Personal development	New skills	Culture Heritage	Youth organisation	Sport/ recreation	Entreprene urship	Services	Mental health
No. Projects								
Investment LEADER								
Investment other list source								
FT Jobs								
PT jobs								
Participation								
Trainees								
Animation								
Facilities								
Impact re. cross cutting themes								
Unforeseen impacts/issues								
Synergy with other projects								
Totals								

Note that FORUM are keen to identify and record the added value outcomes that are typical of the LEADER model. The synergy with other projects, new partnerships, added value as well as constraints. Therefore the monitoring model will not just be numbers based.

All staff, Board members and LEADER participants will be asked to record any particular outcomes from their project, both those that are part of the indicators and others that are not.

7.1.1 Methodology for Collecting Data

The formal method for collecting data will be the requirement to complete monitoring forms by beneficiaries. The information required will be as set out in the Operational Rules, but FORUM may add to this for evaluation purposes.

The indicators in the Strategic Action templates include the likely data for RDP monitoring as per the operating requirements, but some of the specific actions are likely to be unique to the Connemara LDS and FORUM will want to collect this data.

All beneficiaries will receive training on implementing their projects, this will include training on monitoring requirements.

LAG staff will compile information on site visits to projects, this will be particularly useful for finding out the added value outcomes, or exploring particular challenges.

Information will be collated by a single staff person, on the RDP IT system, and also in FORUM's own monitoring system for evaluation purposes. FORUM will seek to develop monitoring and evaluation skills in house by taking advantage of any training opportunities.

It is envisaged that data will be collected at various stages in the project lifecycle. It is anticipated that this will include at a minimum the collection of data at- Application Stage, Site Visit, on project completion and at specific defined intervals post project completion most likely on an annual basis.

Some data will be easier to collect than others, the attendance at events, or increase in tourism numbers can be challenging to verify in terms of those directly attributable from an intervention of the FORUM LDS, however FORUM will do attendance sampling at key events, such as the Connemara Pony Show.

Board and Committee activities will also be monitored. This will include information on attendance, engagement in the process and their feedback on effectiveness of systems.

7.1.2 Quality Control

Checking on the validity of monitoring returns will be carried out by FORUM staff through site visits and verification of other data, such as numbers of trainees at sessions.

7.1.3 Strategy Indicators

Monitoring reports will be generated and working sessions of staff will take place on a quarterly basis to review progress. These reports and assessment will be presented to the Board. FORUM will review performance against indicators within the strategic plan, formally, on an annual basis. These indicators may be changed, with approval from the Department, where there is over subscription of some actions or less outputs from others, or a change in the timeframe for delivery. However, any proposed changes to indicators will be explained in full.

7.2 Data Protection Acts

FORUM Connemara Ltd Data Protection Policy

This policy is a statement of FORUM Connemara Ltd (FORUM) commitment to protect the rights and privacy of individuals and compliance with the Data Protection Acts. The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 (the "Data Protection Acts") lay down strict rules about the way in which personal data is collected, accessed, used and disclosed. The Data Protection Acts permit individuals to access their personal data on request, and gives individuals the right to have their personal data amended if found to be incorrect. FORUM's full Data Protection Policy is in Appendix **XI**, the following summarises the principles in the full policy:

7.2.1 Data Protection Principles

We will carry out our responsibilities under the Data Protection Acts in accordance with the following eight Data Protection principles:

1. Obtain and process information fairly - FORUM will obtain and process personal data fairly and in accordance with statutory and other legal obligations.
2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes - FORUM will keep personal data for purposes that are specific, lawful and clearly stated. Personal data will only be processed in a manner compatible with these purposes.
3. Use and disclose only in ways compatible with these purposes - FORUM will only disclose personal data that is necessary for the purpose/s or compatible with the purpose/s for which FORUM collects and keeps the data.
4. Keep it safe and secure - FORUM will take appropriate security measures against unauthorised access to, or alteration, disclosure or destruction of personal data and against its accidental loss or destruction.
5. Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date - FORUM will adopt procedures that ensure high levels of data accuracy, completeness and that data is up-to-date.
6. Ensure it is adequate, relevant and not excessive - FORUM will only hold personal data to the extent that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive.
7. Retain for no longer than is necessary - FORUM have a retention policy for personal data.
8. Give a copy of his/ her personal data to that individual, on request - FORUM adopt procedures to ensure that data subjects can exercise their rights under the Data Protection legislation to access their data when permitted by law.

7.3 Evaluation

7.3.1 Objectives for the evaluation of the LDS

FORUM has a number of objectives for the evaluation of the LDS. These are primarily:

1. Environmental Changes- FORUM is aware that evaluation will be necessary both internally and externally in order to establish any changes that may be occurring in the environment. Significant changes can have a serious impact on LEADER. For example in the previous programme there was a fundamental shift in the wider macro economic environment which brought about the necessity to change fundamental components of the LEADER programme. This LDS was written at a particular point in time and FORUM must remain cognisant of significant changes which may require a change of focus within the LDS.
2. Impact- The LDS has a specific set of actions and objectives which are designed in a programmatic way to ultimately create an impact within an area. Thus there is a requirement to evaluate the projects which stem from the actions and objectives to establish if the impact is in line with the LDS. This will largely be a qualitative exercise.
3. Relevance- Measure the extent to which objectives and overall impact of the LDS still congruent with the LEADER programme but also wider developmental policy. FORUM is aware that policy shifts are common place in a Local, National and EU context. Therefore evaluation in this context should assist in ensuring complementarity relevance with any changes that occur. This will be a quantitative and qualitative exercise.
4. Effectiveness- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the actions will establish the degree to which actions are successful in producing a desired result. This will be a quantitative and qualitative exercise.
5. Efficiency- Evaluation in this scenario will measure specific outputs. In particular it will examine outputs in relation to the inputs. The objective here will be to ascertain particularly in economic terms that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. It will also establish if the timeframes for delivery are acceptable and being met.
6. Sustainability- The objective here in terms of evaluations Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of the actions, objectives and general activity are likely to continue after the intervention(s)/funding have ceased. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable.
7. Lessons Learned- An important evaluation feature for the organisation and the LDS will be reflecting on the lessons learned and using this to assess in as broad as terms as possible what works and what doesn't. What works will be the foundation of future development and what doesn't work will be accepted and learned from. This information will be shared with others to establish best practice.

7.3.2 Governance and Co-ordination Arrangements and Management of the Process.

The Board of FORUM will have the overall responsibility for evaluation. However, there will be specific evaluation components within the LDS and indeed within the performance of the wider organisation. In relation to the LDS evaluation at project level will be carried out by front line staff and a committee appointed by the Board. This will also be true for Managing Authority evaluation requirements and requests. Higher level programme evaluation particularly in terms of overall impact, will for the most part be prepared by frontline staff but co-ordinated through management and ultimately assessed by the Board. The Board will also employ external evaluation consultation where necessary to assist and advise on high level LDS evaluation. The Board will also be responsible for evaluating staff performance over the course of the programme (annual performance evaluation).

In addition, Professor Chris Curtin, Head of School & Vice President for Innovation and Performance, NUI Galway will continue to provide evaluation support to FORUM.

7.3.3 Specific LDS/LEADER Topics or Themes that will be Evaluated

Evaluation will be carried out across all themes with a specific focus on Rural Tourism, Job Creation and Therapeutic Riding. This is in line with the strategic importance given to these areas in the overall vision and LDS.

7.3.4 Data Requirements for Evaluating the LDS

The data required for evaluating the LDS must be identified, gathered, verified, assessed, integrated/recorded and disseminated.

7.3.5 Tools and Methods to be Employed

FORUM envisages that both quantitative and qualitative data will be required for evaluating the LDS. This LDS and information therein will provide a baseline on which to measure progress. In quantitative terms the data requirements will be updated figures vis a vis what is contained within this LDS but also project level data collected from promoters. Thus this will draw on both primary and secondary research.

In terms of qualitative data this will primarily be gathered through primary research by the LAG e.g. case studies, interviews, feedback etc. Where validated qualitative information is available i.e. local reports from state agencies etc. this will also be drawn upon where necessary in the evaluation process. Where necessary and particularly in the case of high level LDS evaluation and external evaluator will be used to lend greater objectivity to the process.

7.3.6 Timelines for Evaluation and Relevant Milestones

FORUM will adhere to the National and EU requirements for evaluation and monitoring. There will be at least one large scale programme evaluation on completion of the programme. Internally FORUM will have at a minimum yearly comprehensive programme and LDS evaluation. At a project level evaluations will be carried out on a monthly basis and project staff will also monitor progress monthly on a number of levels including projects, budgets etc.

7.3.7 Proposed approach to Communicating Evaluation Activities/Findings

FORUM has always operated an open approach to the communication of evaluation activities and findings. It will communicate evaluation reports through its bi-annual newsletter, its ongoing weekly programme on the local radio stations, its social media platform which includes our website, Twitter and Facebook. Evaluation results will also be communicated directly to stakeholder organisations including statutory, voluntary and private organisations. FORUM will also contribute to National and EU level evaluations commissioned by the ILDN, Managing Authority and the EU Commission.

7.3.8 Resources Required

Monitoring, review and evaluation will where appropriate and efficient be carried out by FORUM staff. More comprehensive high level evaluation will be tendered out to external evaluators on programme conclusion. FORUM will manage this programme evaluation within the overall budget proposed.

7.3.9 Board and Committees

The activities and engagement in the LDS implementation process by Board and committee members will be reviewed. This will assist maintain and grow professionalism and expertise.

FORUM will carry out three levels of evaluation.

- They will continue with the self Evaluation model, with staff engaging in internal team consideration of both outcomes of the programme, and the methods being employed to implement the strategy. External evaluation is provided by Prof. Chris Curtin, he meets with the CEO and staff/Board representatives at least every two months to review progress.
- FORUM will carry out a formal Formative Evaluation, mid way through the programme, using an external evaluator. This mid term review will be a root and branch examination of progress, how well the original Local Objectives and Strategic Actions are both meeting need, and also being delivered as planned. The mid term formative evaluation process will allow for changes to be made where justified and approved by the Department.
- A final Summative Evaluation will be contracted out in the last year of delivery. FORUM may prepare a Terms of Reference for the evaluation process early on in the programme, so that the information required is being collected from the outset.

Section 8: Financial Plan

FORUM is pursuing an overall budget of €4.54 million euro for this Local Development Strategy. There are a number of factors that were taken into consideration in the formulation of the budget. FORUM is cognisant of the desire of all stakeholders to have national coverage of the programme. As a result of the design features for the contracting of the programme for this period the budget is reflective of the sub-regional indicative allocations. Should this LDS be successful, it allows for a clearly demarcated budget of €7.656 million for an alternative LDS in the remaining area of the sub-region. FORUM believes that this will provide the best value for money and in particular impact from the programme for all rural residents and the totality of the sub-regional area. As per Department guidance documentation at both stages 1 and 2 of the LEADER selection process, the proposed indicative minimum allocation for each LDS was between €2 and €2.5 million. Thus FORUM has allowed for a €2.5 million minimum allocation as a starting point for both this LDS and another potential LDS in the sub-regional area. Given the necessity to deliver the programme in Irish and on four off-shore islands it was felt that this minimum allocation was necessary to provide an equitable distribution given the real world programme delivery considerations. The remainder of the budget €7.196 million was then allocated using the LEADER Resource Allocation Model (LEADER-RAM) that has been jointly developed by Pobal and Trutz Haase. This model distributes resources on the basis of the relative deprivation or affluence of areas and is itself calculated on a number of deprivation variables such as social class, labour market growth/decline and demographic growth/decline. For FORUM's LDS area this resulted in a 28.35% share of the remaining budget.

Using this methodology has resulted in a total budget of €4.54 million for the FORUM LDS. FORUM believes strongly that this budget as proposed is in line with the allocation for the sub-regional area and is clear, logical and reflects the priorities, needs and local objectives of the LDS. See Appendix I for full budget breakdown.

Section 9: Form of Declaration and Signed Minutes Extract

Declaration and Disclaimer

Please read carefully:

By submitting the Local Development Strategy (LDS), the Local Action Group (LAG) authorises the submission and declares that the information provided in relation to the organisation described in this LDS is true and complete to the best of its knowledge and belief.

The LAG acknowledges that any funds awarded must be used for the purpose stated and not used to replace existing funding. The LAG also understands that information supplied in, or accompanying this application may be made available on request under the Freedom of Information Acts 2014.

The LAG accepts, as a condition of the award of a grant, that it involves no commitment to any other grants from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government or Pobal. The LAG is agreeable to ongoing programme monitoring by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and/or its agents and to allowing access to premises and records, as necessary, for that purpose.

The LAG also accepts that Pobal may contact other public funding organisations or Government Departments to discuss this application and previous funding awarded, as part of the appraisal process.

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Pobal wish to remind LAGs that the information contained in the LDS and supporting documentation may be released, on request, to third parties, in accordance with all obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

You are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by you in applying for funding under the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, should not be disclosed because of sensitivity. If this is the case, you should, when providing the information, identify same and specify the reasons for its sensitivity.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/ Pobal will consult with you about sensitive information before making a decision on the release of such information. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/Pobal will release, on request, information to third parties, without further consultation with you, unless you identify the information as sensitive with supporting reasons.

If you consider that some of the information is sensitive, you are required to clearly identify such information when submitting your LDS.

If you do not identify any of the information supplied in the LDS and supporting documentation as being sensitive you are acknowledging that any, or all of the information supplied, will be released in response to a Freedom of Information request.


Disclaimer

Please read carefully:

It will be a condition of any application for funding under the terms and conditions of the LEADER element of the RDP (2014-2020) that the Local Action Group (LAG) has read, understood and accepted the following:

- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government/Pobal shall not be liable to the LAG or any other party in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from:
 - The Local Development Strategy or the subject matter of the Local Development Strategy;
 - The rejection, for any reason, of any application.
- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, its servants or agents shall not at any time in any circumstances be held responsible or liable in relation to any matter whatsoever arising in connection with the development, planning, construction, operation, management and/or administration of individual projects.

By submitting this Local Development Strategy application the LAG acknowledges that it has read, understood and accepted the above points. The Declaration and Disclaimer should be signed by the Chairperson of the LAG.

Name (Print):	TERRY KEENAN
Signature:	
Position:	Chair
Date:	25 th February 2016.



FORUM

A rural development partnership

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CO. GALWAY, IRELAND

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**Minutes from Board of Directors Meeting held on Wednesday 24th February 2016 at 4.00 p.m.
in the FORUM offices, Letterfrack.**

Present:	Terry Keenan, Chairperson	Hugh Musgrave	Sean Heanue
	Mary Gannon	Jenny Conboy	Carmel Geoghegan
	Josephine Lally	Mary Kirby	Jim Cullen
	Kevin Heanue	Eileen Mannion	

Apologies: Leo Hallissey, Ann Donald Joyce, Tom Welby, Chris Curtin, Niamh Byrne

In attendance: John Coyne, Yvonne Keane, Anna Marie Mortimer

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Signed: _____

Secretary



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government



FORUM Connemara Ltd; Reg. No 160282. Reg. Office: Letterfrack, Connemara, Co. Galway, Ireland

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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.

Approval of Rural Development Strategy (LEADER)

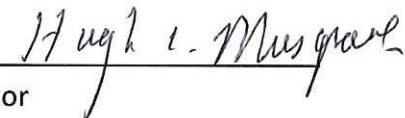
The RDP strategy (LEADER) which was presented to the meeting was discussed and agreed.

Proposed by Josephine Lally

Seconded by Hugh Musgrave



Director



Director