



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

Town and Village Renewal Scheme



2019 Scheme Outline

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

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Department of Rural and Community Development

April 2019

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1. Introduction

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key initiative under the Action Plan for Rural Development and is part of a range of measures to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland under the Government's *Project Ireland 2040* Rural Regeneration Programme.

Towns and villages are at the heart of our rural communities and can play an important role in revitalising rural Ireland. In 2016, the Government launched a new Town and Village Renewal Scheme to start the process of rejuvenating Ireland's rural towns and villages to make them more attractive places in which to live, work and visit. Since then, almost €53 million has been allocated to more than 670 projects in towns and villages across Ireland under the Scheme.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme has become an integral part of the Government's drive to enhance our rural towns and villages. It supports the Mission of the Department to promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland. The Scheme will help build the resilience of rural communities in the face of Brexit and can help to contribute to the transition to a low-carbon economy.

2. 2019 Scheme

For 2019, the main focus of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme will be on public-realm type activities and the enhancement of town centre amenities. Measures to encourage town centre living will also be welcome.

Proposals in respect of towns/villages most in need of support and/or towns and villages which have not previously applied, or have not been successful under the scheme, will be particularly welcome in 2019.

Projects will be required to commence in 2019 and be completed by the end of Q2 2021.

3. Categories of Towns

The 2019 scheme will be targeted at two categories of Towns/Villages as follows:

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

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

The primary focus of the scheme will be on villages and towns with a population of up to 5,000 (Category 1) as was the case under the 2018 scheme. These towns/villages will receive at least 60% of funding available.

4. Application, Assessment and Approval Process

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

Selection of projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2019 will be by means of a competitive process. However, an objective will be to ensure that a reasonable level of funding becomes available to areas that most require it.

Final project selection will be made by the Department of Rural and Community Development, on the basis of proposals submitted by the Local Authorities. **Applications must be submitted by 28th June 2019.**

Full involvement by community interests and/or business interests will be an essential feature of successful projects. The following stages will apply to the application process:

- Local Authorities will be required to advertise for expressions of interest from towns/villages in their area and to select **up to 12 proposals** for development into detailed applications to be submitted to the Department.
- Local Authorities will also be required to complete and submit an Application Overview sheet and an Expression on Interest Overview sheet.
- The development of these proposals must be done in consultation with town/village community and business interests.
- Only one application can be submitted in respect of any individual town; however, the application may include several linked components to support the rejuvenation of the town/village.

- Where an application is being submitted as an element or phase of a larger plan, the Local Authority must justify the submission of that element/phase to the Town and Village Renewal Scheme rather than submitting the full scheme to the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. The RRDF is meant for large scale collaborative projects with a minimum grant allocation of €500k (representing up to 80% of total project costs).
- The assessment and approval of all projects will have regard to a number of factors including: available funding; the range, mix, quality and impact of proposed projects; previous funding provided; and other relevant considerations.

5. Selection Criteria

The following is a guide to the type of criteria (not exhaustive) which will be applied by the Department of Rural and Community Development in the selection process:

- Proposals in respect of towns or villages that have not previously applied, or have not been successful under the scheme, will be particularly welcomed.
- Proposals in respect of towns and villages that have successfully completed projects under previous schemes will still be welcome, particularly where new applications build on previous projects as part of a cohesive plan for the town/village in question.
- Successful proposals will include activities which have clear positive impacts on the town in terms of place-making and town centre regeneration.
- Proposals seeking to develop or implement initiatives to encourage town centre living will be viewed positively.
- Subject to the overall quality of the proposal, favourable consideration will be given to projects which demonstrate leveraging of, or linkages with, other schemes operated by Government Departments or agencies (e.g. in the areas of heritage, arts, culture, tourism, TidyTowns, recreational facilities, re-use of vacant premises, vacant sites, energy efficiency schemes, etc.) to maximise the impact of investment in the town/village.
- Projects that demonstrate a REDZ-type component¹, to stimulate economic activity between a town/village and neighbouring townlands or hinterlands, will be especially welcome.

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

- Initiatives aimed at achieving Purple Flag² or similar recognition will also be welcome.
- Successful proposals will demonstrate close collaboration between communities and business interests in the design and delivery of proposed projects and must have the support of the Local Authority. Successful town revival is most likely to be achieved where there is close partnership on projects between the community, public, and private sectors.
- Proposals must also be consistent with the County Development Plan, Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), town health checks, and other relevant local development plans.

6. Types of activities which can be supported

A general objective of the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme is that projects should, where possible, utilise or leverage other national or local government initiatives to maximise the impact on towns or villages. Measures which are taken under the scheme should be viable and have a positive and visible impact on the town/village.

It is proposed that the following indicative list of activities (not exhaustive) will be given priority.

- Enhancement of streetscape and town environment.
- Shop/House front enhancement (especially if done in parallel with other Local Authority Schemes focused on such improvements).
- The development of initiatives to encourage town centre living.
- Conducting/commissioning of Town/Village health checks³.
- Targeted actions to tackle minor deficiencies in access, services, site development works and other small infrastructural works that may be needed to support town centre enhancement, including housing and/or commercial development and which form part of an overall plan to enhance the town centre.

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

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

- Repurposing of existing buildings in town or village centres to facilitate remote working and/or other community use.
- Provision/enhancement of local recreational facilities (e.g. Town Parks, walking trails).
- Enhancement of heritage and/or other community assets.
- Tourism initiatives which attract increased footfall to the town/village.
- Development of quality marks, such as Purple Flag, Heritage Town, etc.
- Branding and promotion of the town/village to attract new customers and/or business investment.
- Town safety and accessibility enhancements.
- Car parking improvements expressly designed to encourage increased footfall in town centres.

Projects that support enterprise development may be submitted to the Town and Village Renewal Scheme if they are within the parameters of the scheme but projects of this nature may be more appropriate to the RRDF.

7. Types of activities which will not be supported

- Private Enterprise projects – the focus of the scheme is on community based enterprises and initiatives only.
- Purchase of land or property.
- Incomplete projects - Phases of projects are acceptable but the project must be operational after completion of each phase funded.
- Projects that don't demonstrate consultation with community.
- Projects that are more appropriate for funding under CLÁR, the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), the Outdoor Rural Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) or the RRDF will not be considered under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

8. Grant level

Up to 80% of the total cost of a project under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme will be provided for any individual project. The remaining 20% match funding must be contributed by the Local Authority and/or the community. The minimum grant which is available is €20,000 and the maximum is generally €100,000.

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

Up to 10% of the total cost may be provided in the form of “in-kind” contributions (e.g. land lease or voluntary labour⁴); a minimum cash contribution of 10% will also be required.

9. Payment Schedule

Subject to the grant levels outlined above, the payment schedule will be as follows:

- 50% payment on certification that at least half of the total project costs have actually been spent by the Local Authority in delivering the project, and
- 50% payment on completion, based on expenditure actually incurred by the Local Authority.

10. Funding Conditions

All expenditure registered through this scheme will be subject to the terms of the Public Spending Code which can be found at <http://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/>.

In addition to this, the requirements outlined below will apply to all funding approved through the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The need for adherence to all of the requirements will be reflected in the contractual arrangement between the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Local Authorities approved for funding under the scheme.

⁴ Contributions-in-kind can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work) which must be based on the verified time spent and the rate of remuneration for equivalent work. The Local Authority must ensure that the rate applied is properly justified in the application.

1. Projects will be expected to commence during 2019 and will be expected to be completed by end Q2 2021. The capacity to deliver this level of activity should be taken into account by applicant towns/villages and by Local Authorities in selecting their projects for submission to the Department of Rural and Community Development.
2. Funding will be provided from the Department of Rural and Community Development's capital budget.
3. Match Funding (1): Ongoing current costs (e.g. salary/wages cost of Local Authority staff directly employed on the project) are not eligible for funding from the Department. However, current costs will be considered eligible as part of the match funding to be provided, where they are directly linked to the implementation of the project and for its duration only. All such costs should be reasonable and proportionate to the overall project.
4. Match funding (2): In-kind contributions can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work) which must be based on the verified time spent and the rate of remuneration for equivalent work. The Local Authority must ensure that the rate applied is properly justified. Where Voluntary Labour forms part of a project, Local Authorities are advised that the requirements of all relevant Health and Safety legislation apply. Details of participant's names, dates, time spent, the work undertaken and hourly rate applied must be maintained.
5. Match Funding (3): A cash contribution of 10% is required. The Local Authority will be required to provide confirmation that the cash contribution is in place and retain a record of the source of cash contribution.
6. To be eligible for grant funding the proposed project, as agreed by the Department, must be completed in full. Any changes to the proposed project must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance of any change being implemented.
7. Where an element of a project is not carried out as per project application, grant funding may be reduced to reflect the amended project.
8. If the project involves works on buildings or lands that are not in the ownership of the Local Authority, a minimum 5 year lease must be in place from date of project completion.
9. In the case of funding allocated to enterprises or facilities, it is a requirement that they must operate as funded for a minimum of 5 years following release of the final

stage of funding otherwise funding may have to be repaid. Any changes within this timeline must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance.

10. All appropriate financial and Government procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with and each Local Authority will fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.
11. Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure should be maintained and accessible by Department officials for audit purposes at all times and for a period of six years from the date of completion of the project.
12. Local Authorities will acknowledge the support of the Department of Rural and Community Development/Government of Ireland in all public announcements, advertising and appropriate signage relating to the project. In addition, the Department may seek to use the project in the broader promotion of its policies.
13. Local Authorities will provide any reports and information relating to the project as may reasonably be requested by the Department of Rural and Community Development from time to time.
14. On-going monitoring and evaluation of the project outputs and outcomes should take place in the context of assessing the impact of the project and as part of the associated learning process. Local Authorities will be expected to collect appropriate data to facilitate this learning on an on-going basis and make this data available to the Department.
15. Each Local Authority will provide contact point/points to the Department to facilitate payments and information requests.
16. A final report detailing all elements of expenditure relating to the grant aid will be required upon project completion.

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

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

The scoring framework below will be applied to all applications in order to ensure that successful projects are of a high quality. A minimum threshold of 65% will be required for **each** criterion and the mark required to meet this is also outlined below.

Closing date for receipt of applications to townandvillage@drccd.gov.ie is 28th June 2019

Selection Criteria	Detailed Outline	Max Score	Quality Threshold
Demonstration of need and potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal include a clear statement of identified needs? Does the proposed plan of action address the needs identified? For projects exceeding €100,000 does the project demonstrate exceptional benefit to the town? 	300	195
Strategic nature of the proposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project complement or leverage other Government programmes and objectives? Is the project in line with the Department's objectives? Does the proposal add value to current initiatives? Did the application seek input from local community or business interests in identifying the project and in the formulation of the project proposal? 	200	130
Realistic nature of the proposal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a delivery mechanism been identified? Does the project demonstrate viable, positive and visible impacts on the town/village? Are a clear set of defined outputs and outcomes included in the proposal? Is there a process in place to measure outcomes and impact of the proposal over time? Is the project is line with the Scheme Outline? 	200	130
Value for Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which project is clear and include targets, realistic costing and timescales. Clear rationale for costs requested. The cost effectiveness of the proposal with regard to the level, range and quality of outputs and outcomes to be delivered. 	300	195
Total		1000	650