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

Digital Town Blueprint Report Courtown-Riverchapel, Co. Wexford

February 2025

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A study prepared for the Department of Rural and Community Development by the Irish Institute of Digital Business, University of Galway, and .IE

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1. *INTRODUCTION*

1.1 ABOUT THE DIGITAL TOWN BLUEPRINT

The .IE Digital Town Blueprint[1] (DTB) is an entry-level assessment for local authorities, chambers of commerce, and other local community groups interested in understanding the current digital readiness of their town. It was originally designed by the Irish Institute of Digital Business at Dublin City University (DCU) with funding from .IE. The DTB used in this report is an updated version based on Lynn et al. (2022).[2]

The DTB has been designed to help towns rapidly and cost-effectively:

- Understand their current digital town readiness and digital competitiveness
- Compare their town against Irish and international benchmarks
- Stimulate stakeholder engagement on digitalisation

The National Planning Framework[3] and Our Rural Future[4] policies set out a vision to develop thriving Irish Towns which are integral to Ireland's national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development. This vision is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and recognises the diversity of individual towns, the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in places and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain a shared environment. The Town Centre First policy seeks to support the delivery of this vision and complement a wide range of Government policies impacting on Irish towns. It provides a cross-cutting and collaborative framework for central government, Local Authorities, public and private sector stakeholders, and especially communities, to build sustainable vibrant town centres. The Town Centre First policy explicitly recognises that successful places utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle. The Town Centre First policy (p.19) states:

> *"There is also the opportunity to utilise technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, and to integrate digital technology into daily commercial and social life. Digital technology can improve the quality and accessibility of services, and can be used to address challenges faced by our towns, providing them with new roles in the digital economy."*

The DTB analyses digital readiness across seven dimensions. This is accomplished through a combination of primary research, desk research, secondary data, key informant interviews and automated data collection techniques. The findings of the assessment are synthesised into a digital town readiness score and assessment report. The seven dimensions are:

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[1] https://www.weare.ie/ie-digital-town-blueprint/

[2] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

[3] https://npf.ie/

[4] https://assets.gov.ie/132413/433aebac-f12a-4640-8cac-9faf52e5ea1f.pdf

I. Infrastructure for connectivity - the deployment of fixed and mobile broadband infrastructure and the availability of free public Wi-Fi and digital rural hubs.
II. The Digital Economy and Digital Business – the use of digital technology by local businesses and their level of sophistication.
III. Digital Public Services – the use and sophistication of digital technology by both local government and health, and the availability of local open data.
IV. Digital Education – the support for and use and sophistication of digital technology by education providers, and the provision of training and education in digital technologies across all levels.
V. Digital Technologies and Civil Society – the use and sophistication of digital technologies by community and voluntary groups in a town.
VI. Digital Tourism – the use and sophistication of digital technology to attract tourists and deliver a distinctive tourism experience.
VII. Governance of Digital Town Initiatives – the degree of coordination across the town on digitalisation including (a) integration across different elements of policy making, and across policy and other stakeholders, and (b) integration across different levels within the governance or policy sphere.

The selected dimensions and variables can provide towns with useful insights on their digital readiness, and allow them to compare across time and to benchmark against other towns.

As agreed with the DRCD, this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on e-government in Digital Public Services and analysis of pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Digital Education.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this report are:

- Assessment – to obtain an initial characterisation of the digital readiness of infrastructure and service providers in Courtown-Riverchapel.
- Comparative Analysis – to undertake a comparison of DTB assessments (a) between an initial selection of towns, and (b) regional, national and EU benchmarks, where appropriate and possible.

This report is an assessment of Courtown-Riverchapel, Co. Wexford. For the purposes of this report and to be consistent with Town Centre First, measurements are calculated within a 2km radius of the town centre for each town. Data was collected from June to October 2024 unless otherwise stated. Feedback and clarifications on a draft report were requested from Town Regeneration Officers in December 2024 and January 2025. Such feedback was included, as deemed appropriate.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CONNECTIVITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure for connectivity includes broadband and mobile connectivity, free public Wi-Fi, rural digital hubs, amongst others. Increased connectivity can contribute positively to economic growth and household income levels, and can result in increased employability, retail transactions, time-savings, and other community benefits.[5] Free public Wi-Fi provides both access to the Internet and consumer cost savings. Research suggests that free municipal public Wi-Fi access can provide benefits including economic development, community branding, collaboration between other public service providers in a municipality, provision of internet connectivity (and associated services) to low-income and underserved citizens, and revenue generating activities.[6] Free public Wi-Fi forms part of the European Tourism Manifesto for Growth and Jobs which encourages free Wi-Fi for visitors in tourist attractions, events and destinations.[7] Rural digital hubs have been proposed as a potential solution to improve broadband connectivity, improve digital literacy for individuals, workers and businesses, attract new residents and visitors, and stimulate economic activity.[8] Rural digital hubs are a physical space, which can be fixed or mobile, focused on digital connectivity, digital skill development and/or emergent technologies.[9] In 2021, the Irish government launched a National Hub Network and has supported funding for over 500 remote working hubs ('connected hubs') to date.[10]

The connectivity dimension of the DTB presented in this report consists of five indicators weighted as follows:

- Fixed broadband (35%)
- Mobile broadband (35%)
- Competition (10%)
- Free public Wi-Fi (10%)
- Rural digital hubs (10%)

No data at the town-level was available from Comreg or the CSO for broadband or mobile take-up at the time when this research was carried out. It is important to note that broadband coverage and quality statistics may not always reflect user experience due to disparities in actual vs. advertised speeds, the quality and setup of equipment, local interferences, building construction, network congestion, service outages, amongst other factors.

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[5] https://cebr.com/reports/tinder-foundation-and-go-on-uk-call-for-urgent-digital-skills-funding-to-support-government-2020-fast-broadband-for-all-pledge/

[6] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

[7] https://tourismmanifesto.eu/

[8] European Network for Rural Development. (2017). Revitalising rural areas through digitisation the experience of three rural digital hubs. https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/tg_rural-businesses_case-study_rural-digital-hub_0.pdf

[9] Rundel, C., Salemink, K., & Strijker, D. (2018). CORA diagnostic survey results: Results and guiding measures. https://northsearegion.eu/media/7485/corareport-diagnostic-survey-results.pdf

[10] Department of Rural and Community Development, 'Our Rural Future Progress Report 2' (2022) https://assets.gov.ie/133735/6bbb1ebf-2a7a-4948-9ae2-fe0e1f5e2805.pdf, p. 9

Table 1 Irish Broadband Coverage (DESI, 2022)[11]

	Ireland			EU
	DESI 2022	**DESI 2023**	**DESI 2024**	**DESI 2024**
Overall internet take-up (% of households)	97.50%	NA	93.92%	93.09%
Share of fixed broadband subscriptions (>=100 Mbps) (% of fixed subscriptions)	46.56%	53.46%	61.04%	66.17%
Share of fixed broadband subscriptions (>=1 Gbps) (% of fixed subscriptions)	4.27%	7.97%	9.48%	18.52%
Fixed Very High Capacity Network (VHCN) coverage (% of households)	89%	83.82%	86.99%	78.81%
Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) coverage (% of households)	62%	72.07%	78.48%	63.99%
5G spectrum (Assigned spectrum as a % of total harmonised 5G spectrum)	29%	62.50%	62.50%	73.40%
5G coverage (% of households)	72%	83.92%	85.32%	89.30%
5G coverage in the 3.4-3.8 GHz band (% of households)	NA	55.97%	56.68%	50.60%
5G SIM cards (% of total population)	46.56%	53.46%	24.43%	24.62%
Mobile broadband take-up (% of individuals)	98%	98.39%	93.07%	89.94%

2.2 DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

2.2.1 Fixed Broadband Coverage

A snapshot of fixed broadband coverage in Courtown-Riverchapel can be gleaned from the interactive mapping tool provided by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. As illustrated in Figure 1, commercial operators deliver high-speed broadband (colour-coded blue in Figure 1) in the urban centre around the Courtown-Riverchapel area. Areas in light blue, extending outwards from the urban centre, indicate areas where a commercial provider has committed to commercial rural deployment plans to roll out high speed broadband. The remainder

[11] https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?period=desi_2024&indicator=desi_iuse&breakdown=ind_total&unit=pc_ind&country=AT,BE,BG,HR,CY,CZ,DK,EE,EU,FI,FR,DE,EL,HU,IE,IT,LV,LT,LU,MT,NL,PL,PT,RO,SK,SI,ES,SE

of Figure 1, shaded in amber, are target areas for the State intervention under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).[12]

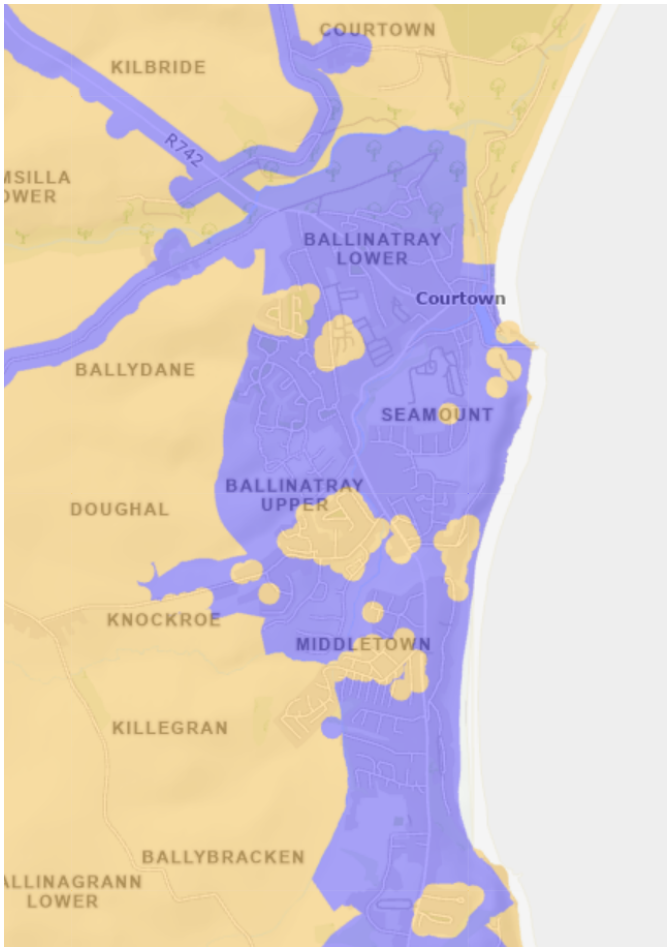

Figure 1 High-speed broadband rollout in Courtown-Riverchapel and adjacent townlands (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment)[13]

Table 2 provides further details regarding the number of premises in each townland which are either covered by commercial broadband or are designated as forming part of the intervention area. The figures provided in Table 2 indicate a 100% level of fixed broadband coverage across the Courtown-Riverchapel townlands in question. This figure compares favourably to the average fixed broadband coverage across EU member states (97.7%) and at a rural level (92.5%). Ireland's overall fixed broadband coverage was measured at 97.2% in June 2023.[14]

[12] https://nbi.ie/

[13] https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/high-speed-broadband-map/Pages/Interactive-Map.aspx

[14] Broadband Coverage in Europe 2023. Mapping progress towards the coverage objectives of the Digital Decade - Final Report: :https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/digital-decade-2024-broadband-coverage-europe-2023, p. 52.

Table 2 Townlands – Premises within commercial broadband coverage or NBP intervention (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment)

Townland	Premises	NBP Intervention	Covered by Operators
Ballinatray Lower	751	35	716
Seamount	406	19	387
Ballinatray Upper	781	144	637
Middletown	406	68	338
Glen	306	73	233
Parknacross	157	0	157
Ballinacur	11	11	0
Ballylusk	3	3	0
Ballybracken	1	1	0
Killegran	2	2	0
Knockroe	29	18	11
Ballinakill	17	12	5
Ballinagrann Upper	35	23	12
Doughal	1	1	0
Ballinageeloge	2	0	2
Ballydane	9	0	9
Tomsilla Lower	18	12	6
Total	**2935**	**422 (14.38%)**	**2513 (85.62%)**
Townland	**Premises**	**NBP Intervention**	**Covered by Operators**

2.2.2 Mobile Broadband Coverage

The European Commission's DESI measures mobile broadband coverage and take-up (see Table 1) as part of its connectivity dimension. In 2024, 90% of people in the EU used a mobile device to access the internet (up from 73% in 2016). During 2024, Ireland ranked eighth among the EU Member States for the uptake of mobile broadband with 93% compared to an EU average of 90%. Ireland has a higher 5G coverage than the EU average, however this is primarily in the most populous areas. Ireland ranks 18th among the EU Member States on the 5G spectrum indicator at 62.5% (the EU average is 73.4%).

Courtown-Riverchapel also appears to have near universal mobile broadband coverage. However, this coverage displays variability across townlands when classified in terms of data speed. The Commission for Communications Regulation (Comreg) provides an interactive mapping tool that visualises mobile broadband

quality across Ireland. For mobile technology types 2G (voice calls and text messages), 3G (voice calls, text messages and data), 4G (smart phone for data and voice), and 5G (data and voice) coverage provided by commercial providers is ranked as very good; good; fair; fringe; and no coverage (see Table 3 for descriptions of each category). There are eleven mobile service providers in total currently operating in Courtown-Riverchapel, though only four provide 5G broadband (see 2.2.3 below).

Table 3 Comreg classifications of mobile broadband coverage (Comreg)[15]

Rating	2G coverage	3G coverage	4G coverage	5G coverage
Very Good (=5)	Strong signal with very good connections	Strong signal with maximum data speeds	Strong signal with maximum data speeds	Strong signal with maximum data speeds
Good (=4)	Strong signal with good connections	Strong signal with good data speeds	Strong signal with good data speeds	Strong signal with good data speeds
Fair (=3)	Fair signal may be attained, but disconnections may occur at weaker signal levels	Fast and reliable data speeds may be attained, but marginal data with drop-outs is possible at weaker signal levels	Fast and reliable data speeds may be attained, but marginal data with drop-outs is possible at weaker signal levels	Fast and reliable data speeds may be attained, but marginal data with drop-outs is possible at weaker signal levels
Fringe (=2)	Disconnections likely to occur	Disconnections likely to occur	Disconnections likely to occur	Disconnections likely to occur
No Coverage (=1)	Likely to have no coverage in this area	Likely to have no coverage in this area	Likely to have no coverage in this area	Likely to have no coverage in this area

Eir offers 5G coverage in 460 towns and cities in all 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland, claiming to reach over 70% of the population.[16] Three claims to reach over 90% of the population.[17] The Comreg Outdoor Mobile Coverage Map shows that 5G coverage is available in Courtown-Riverchapel.[18]

In order to assess mobile broadband quality across commercial providers for each of the Courtown-Riverchapel townlands in question, we code the Comreg classifications from 1-5 (with 5 denoting “very good”). We then calculate the average coverage quality for each townland, as well as across townlands (see Table 4).

[15] See COMREG https://coveragemap.comreg.ie/faq/. Codes added by authors.

[16] https://eirevo.ie/communications/mobile/5g/#:~:text=We%20are%20Ireland's%20Largest%205G%20Network&text=We%20currently%20offer%205G%20coverage,of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Ireland.

[17] https://www.three.ie/why-choose-three/5g.html

[18] Comreg interactive broadband coverage mapping tool, https://coveragemap.comreg.ie/map

Table 4 Average classification of mobile coverage in Courtown-Riverchapel Townlands (Comreg)[19]

Townland	2G Coverage	3G Coverage	4G Coverage	5G Coverage
Ballinatray Lower	5	4.55	3.91	2.09
Seamount	5	4.55	4	2.09
Ballinatray Upper	4.64	4.55	3.82	1.91
Middletown	4.36	5	4	2.27
Glen	3.64	4	3	1.82
Parknacross	4.36	5	4	2.27
Ballinacur	4.36	4.18	4	1.91
Ballylusk	5	5	4.18	1.64
Ballybracken	4.36	5	5	2.45
Killegran	4.36	5	5	2.45
Knockroe	4.36	5	4.82	2.45
Ballinakill	4	4.55	3.82	1.82
Ballinagrann Upper	4.36	4.64	4	2.09
Doughal	4.36	5	4	2.27
Ballinageeloge	4.82	4.36	3.55	2.09
Ballydane	4.82	4.36	3.55	2.09
Tomsilla Lower	4.55	4.45	3.55	1.82
Ballinatray Lower	5	4.55	3.91	2.09
Seamount	5	4.55	4	2.09
Average	4.23	4.38	3.79	1.96
Weighted Average[20]	4.61	4.66	4.04	2.11
Rating	**Very Good**	**Very Good**	**Very Good**	**Fair**

Mobile broadband coverage in Courtown-Riverchapel may extend across townlands but broadband speeds decrease as one moves out from the town centre. In particular, focusing on 4G provision in Courtown-Riverchapel highlights variations in digital connectivity within Courtown-Riverchapel and surrounding townlands.

[19] Comreg interactive broadband coverage mapping tool, https://coveragemap.comreg.ie/map

[20] Weights = number of premises in each townland.

2.2.3 Competition

As can be seen from Table 1, broadband in Ireland (based on broadband price index scores) has become more competitive over time. Notwithstanding this, recent EU research carried out by Empirica and TUV Rheinland[21] suggests that compared to all EU27 countries:

- Prices for fixed broadband in Ireland are much higher than the EU average
- Prices for household broadband baskets in Ireland are somewhat higher than the EU average

In both cases, no commercial offers were found to be less expensive than the EU average. Prices for mobile broadband in Ireland show a different pattern compared to EU27 countries overall. Whereas consumers requiring 20GB mobile data with 300 calls find offers very much lower than the EU average, those seeking 0.5 GB mobile data with no calls find prices somewhat higher than the EU average.

Competition among Irish telecom providers is evident from recent consumer price movements. From January 2022 to September 2024 the communication prices component of the consumer price index (CPI) increased by 3.1 percentage points, while the overall CPI index Increased by 14.4 percentage points over the same price period (see Figure 2).

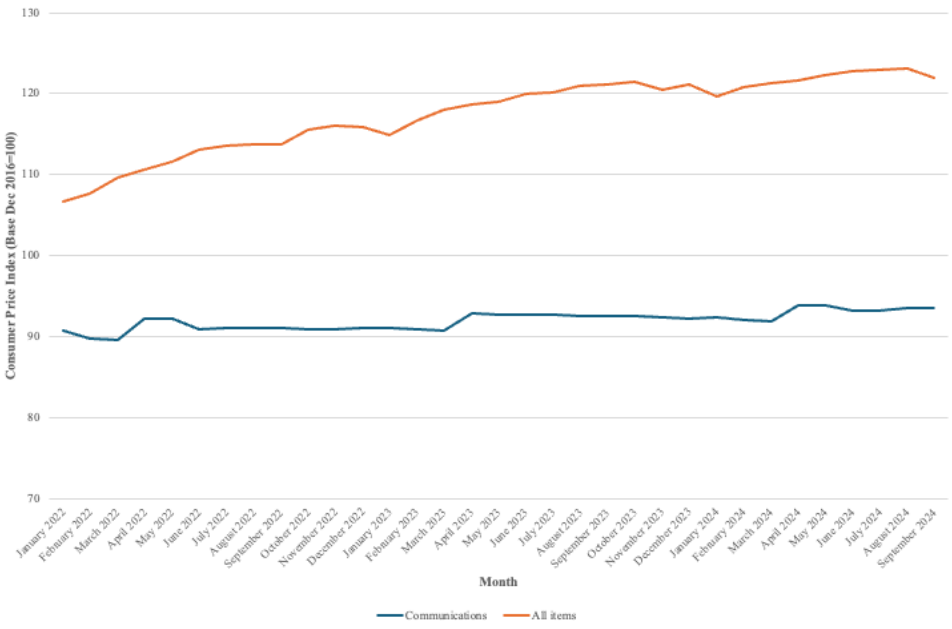

Figure 2 Consumer Price Index and Communications Sub-Component (Central Statistics Office) [22]

[21] Source: Mobile and Fixed Broadband Prices in Europe 2021: https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/88311

[22] Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Consumer Prices Monthly Series - CPM16 - Consumer Price Index: https://data.cso.ie/table/CPM16.

Courtown-Riverchapel is relatively well-serviced for both fixed broadband and mobile connectivity with seven fixed broadband providers, eleven 2G, 3G and 4G mobile providers, but only four 5G mobile providers (Table 5). It should be noted that Vodafone and other providers will sunset 3G access by the end of 2024. 2G is likely to be retained as a backstop network that uses low amounts of energy, and in the event that other forms of connection fail, 2G will be used to allow people to continue communicating using calls and SMS messages. The sunsetting of 3G may negatively impact members of the community with older phones and are likely to be members of marginalised groups, such as the elderly and those in poverty.

Table 5 Fixed Broadband and Mobile Providers in Courtown-Riverchapel (Comreg, Switcher.ie)

Provider	Fixed Broadband	2G	3G	4G	5G
48	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
An Post Mobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Clear Mobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Eir	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
GoMo	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lycamobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tesco Mobile	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Three	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Virgin Media	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Vodafone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Digiweb	Yes	No	No	No	No
Pure Telecom	Yes	No	No	No	No
Magnet Networks	No	No	No	No	No
Imagine	No	No	No	No	No
Rural Wifi	Yes	No	No	No	No
Sky	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

2.2.4 Public Wi-Fi

The Public Wi-Fi indicators (Table 6) in DTB measure the availability of municipal and free public Wi-Fi at various sites in a given town including municipal, retail, accommodation, hospitality and tourism sites. Penetration in tourism-related businesses is specifically measured i.e., for accommodation and hospitality.

Table 6 Public Wi-Fi indicators

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel
Availability of Municipal public Wi-Fi (outdoor)	No
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in municipal buildings (incl. libraries)	Yes
Availability of free public Wi-Fi at tourism sites	No
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in retail outlets	Yes
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in accommodation	Yes
Percentage of Tripadvisor accommodation listings with free public Wi-Fi (n=7)	57%
Availability of free public Wi-Fi in hospitality	Yes
Percentage of Tripadvisor hospitality listings with free public Wi-Fi (n=3)	0%

2.2.5 Rural Digital Hubs

Connected Hubs is an initiative under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme operated by the Department of Rural and Community Development.[23] The National Hub Network provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the economic opportunity of remote working. Four indicators are used to measure rural digital hubs - (i) the availability of a connected hub, (ii) the number of connected hub desks available for use, (iii) the number of connected hub meeting rooms available for use, and (iv) availability of other spaces dedicated to co-working (see Table 7).

[23] https://connectedhubs.ie/

Table 7 Rural digital hub indicators

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel
Connected hub in town	No
Number of connected hub desks available for use	0
Number of connect hub meeting rooms available for use	0
Availability of other co-working spaces	No

2.3 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for infrastructure for connectivity is **3.5**.

Table 8 Infrastructure for Connectivity Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Fixed broadband	35%	4.5
Mobile broadband	35%	3.6
Competition	10%	4.9
Free public Wi-Fi	10%	1.5
Rural digital hubs	10%	0.0
Overall score	**100%**	**3.5**

3. *DIGITAL BUSINESS*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The adoption and use of digital technologies provides clear benefits to businesses in rural towns including cost savings, operational efficiency, information technology (IT) resilience and scalability, easier access to new markets, and marketing effectiveness, amongst others.[24] Digital technologies can represent the basis for a competitive advantage for small to medium sized businesses and enable them to compete with larger firms.[25]

The digital business dimension comprises three sub-dimensions with equal weighting:

- Website Technology Intensity Score
- Digital technology take-up
- E-commerce take-up

No data at the town-level was available from Comreg or the CSO for digital business at the time when this research was carried out.

Research suggests that websites represent a 'digital footprint' of organisations and website data and metadata on technologies used in websites can be used to study the digital competences and sophistication of a given organisation (Lynn et al. 2020[26]; Mazzoni et al. 2023)[27]. We use an organisation's decision to use a website and associated technologies as a proxy for its degree of digitisation as per Thonipara et al. (2020). A Web Technology Intensity Score (WTIS) was developed to measure business-level availability of eleven different web technologies:

1. A website or homepage
2. A website with evidence of sophisticated functions (e.g., live chat, recommender system, online booking etc.)
3. A website with evidence of basic analytics (e.g., visitor tracking, advertiser tracking etc.)
4. A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics (e.g., A/B testing, conversion optimisation, customer relationship management (CRM) system)
5. A website with evidence of basic online advertising (e.g., transactional email marketing, remarketing etc.)
6. A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising (e.g., use of advertising networks, affiliate marketing, multichannel advertising etc.)

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[24] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

[25] Mehrtens, J., Cragg, P. B., & Mills, A. M. (2001). A model of internet adoption by SMEs. Information & Management, 39(3), 165–176; Richmond, W., Rader, S., & Lanier, C. (2017). The 'digital divide' for rural small businesses. Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, 19(2), 94–104.

[26] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Fox, G., Curran, D., O'Gorman, C. and Conway, E., 2022, January. Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on website technology penetration on businesses in rural towns. In Proceedings of the 55th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.

[27] Leonardo, M., Fabio, P. and Massimo, R., 2023. Measuring Corporate Digital Divide with web scraping: Evidence from Italy. arXiv preprint arXiv:2301.04925.

7. A website with evidence of selling online (e.g., payment acceptance, online shop, checkout functions etc.)
8. A website with evidence of social media integration (e.g., social management, blog, social video platform etc.)
9. A website with evidence of international activity (e.g., multiple languages, international currencies etc.)
10. A website with evidence of mobile targeting (e.g., mobile app, mobile optimisation etc.)
11. A website with evidence of cloud computing (e.g., cloud hosting, Platform-as-a-Service etc.)

The value for the score ranged from 0 to 11 where 0 (Non-existent), 1-2 (Very Low), 3-4 (Low), 5-7 (Medium), 8-9 (High) and 10-11 (Very High). Separately, presence on social media was collected. E-commerce adoption, use of cloud computing and social media presence are all measured at the EU level. Digital technology take-up was measured by the percentage of businesses adopting the different technologies in the WTIS in addition to a social media presence. A list of organisations within a 2km radius of Courtown-Riverchapel town centre was sourced from GeoDirectory, resulting in 131 businesses. Following data cleaning, 57 businesses had to be removed from this list due to duplication, non-commercial operation (e.g., public service or civil society), or inactivity. As well as a manual check, a commercial website profiler was used to extract technology information.

3.2 DIGITAL BUSINESS

89% of the 74 businesses analysed had some sort of online presence, that is they have either a website or a social media profile. While 32% of them are only on social media, 57% of them have both a website and social media accounts. There is significant room for improvement. Furthermore, mere presence does not infer successful online trading or marketing. Table 9 presents the relative frequency of businesses with a website in Courtown-Riverchapel by WTIS level.

Table 9 Businesses Website Technology Intensity Score - Businesses (n=74)

Website Technology Intensity Score	% of Businesses
Non-existent (0)	43
Very low (1-2)	6
Low (3-4)	11
Medium (5-7)	20
High (8-9)	12
Very high (10-11)	8

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of businesses by Website Technology Intensity Score level and by economic activity based on NACE Rev. 2 industry codes. The results are consistent with EU studies that suggest that relatively small percentages of firms in the agriculture, construction and transport and storage industries have high or very high Website Technology Intensity Scores. The high percentage of businesses in the information and communication industry with a non-existent level of sophistication is due to the low number of businesses included in this category (1).

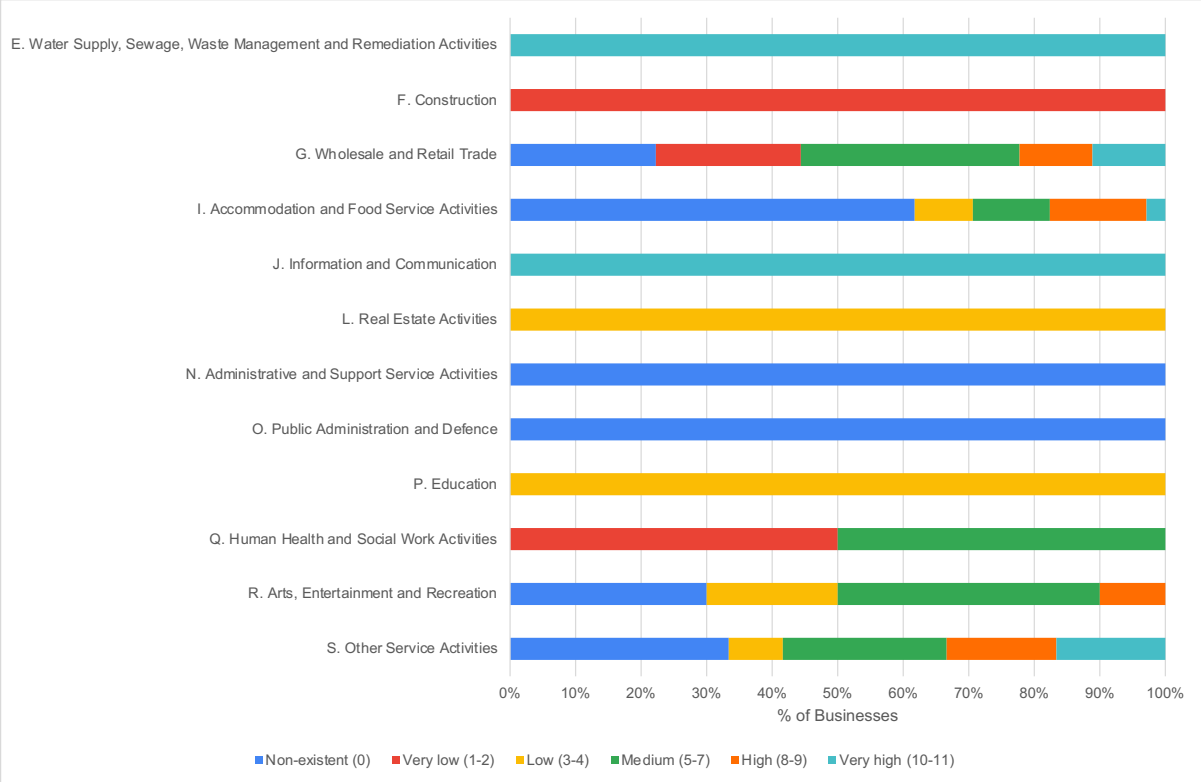

Figure 3 Businesses Website Technology Intensity Score by Economic Activity

Table 10 presents the degree of penetration of different digital technologies featured in the WTIS with comparative data, where available. It is important to note that DESI only includes firms that employ ten persons or more in their analysis. As rural businesses employ less than ten persons, they are typically under-represented in DESI analysis.

Table 10 Key Digitisation Take-up Indicators - Businesses (% of businesses) (n=74)

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel 2024	Ireland DESI 2024	EU DESI 2024
A website or homepage	57	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	24	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic analytics	38	37.10	33.20
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	36	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	22	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	5	NA	NA
A website with evidence of selling online	24	30	19.1
A website with evidence of social media integration	35	NA	NA
A website with evidence of international activity	32	NA	NA
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	50	NA	NA
A website with evidence of cloud computing	31	53.1	38.9
Social media presence	85	31.5	31.5

3.3 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital business is **2.3**.

Table 11 Digital Business Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Website Technology Intensity Score	33.3%	2.5
Digital technology take-up	33.3%	2.4
E-commerce take-up	33.3%	2.0
Overall score	**100%**	**2.3**

4. *DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Governments play a key role in our society by providing citizens and businesses with access to a range of essential public services. Digital technologies can improve transparency, responsiveness and efficiency in the delivery of these services. As discussed earlier, this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on e-government in Digital Public Services as per the full DTB and only includes analysis on e-health and open data.

E-health is a specific type of service that is a high priority for digitalisation, and this digitalisation accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local healthcare providers (e.g., general practitioners and pharmacists), play a central role in facilitating access to and delivery of care in rural areas as they represent the main point of contact between the healthcare system and citizens. Another aspect of digital public services that is often not considered explicitly is the availability of open data. This involves making data, in this case public sector information (PSI), freely available in open formats and ways that enable public access and facilitate exploitation. A host of benefits are associated with open data which includes providing the scope for faster government decision-making, better resource allocation, efficient and effective delivery of more personalised public services, increased citizen participation, and greater private sector innovation.[28,29]

Following DESI, the digital public services dimension comprises two sub-dimensions:

- E-health
- Open data

They are weighted as follows – e-health (66.6%) and open data (33.3%).

E-health was measured using the WTIS presented in Section 3 and an additional three domain-specific items:

- Support for e-prescriptions
- Availability of online consultations
- Electronic exchange of medical data

The additional items are based on similar items used by DESI. Unlike DESI, evaluation was not limited to general practitioners but also included pharmacies and other human healthcare providers. Healthcare providers were identified through GeoDirectory and manual searches on Google and local online directories.

[28] Ubaldi, B. (2013). Open government data: Towards empirical analysis of open government data initiatives. OECD Working Papers on Public Governance.

[29] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

Open data was assessed based on the extent to which an open data policy is easily accessible on the county council website, the publisher status of the county council on data.gov.ie, and the availability of local datasets specific to the town on five open data portals.

4.2 E-HEALTH WEB INTENSITY SCORE

2 healthcare providers were identified in Courtown-Riverchapel. These included general practitioners, pharmacists and other healthcare providers e.g. dental practices, opticians, and physiotherapists. Table 12 compares healthcare providers with the overall business community.

Table 12 Website Technology Intensity Score - Healthcare Providers (n=2)

Website Technology Intensity Score Level	% of Healthcare Providers	% of Businesses
Non-existent (0)	50	43
Very low (1-2)	50	6
Low (3-4)	0	11
Medium (5-7)	0	20
High (8-9)	0	12
Very high (10-11)	0	8

Table 12 presents the degree of penetration of different general web technologies featured in the Website Technology Intensity Score with comparative data against the general business population in Courtown-Riverchapel.

Table 13 Key Digitisation Take-up Indicators – Healthcare Providers (n=2)

Indicator	% of Healthcare Providers	% of Businesses
A website or homepage	50	57
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	0	24
A website with evidence of basic analytics	0	38
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	0	36
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	0	22
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	0	5
A website with evidence of selling online	0	24
A website with evidence of social media integration	0	35
A website with evidence of international activity	0	32
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	0	50
A website with evidence of cloud computing	0	31

2 health service providers were contacted; 1 responded to the survey. Since COVID-19, DESI has ceased reporting detailed e-health data. No EU data is available for online consultations.

Table 14 presents e-health services take-up by healthcare providers in Courtown-Riverchapel.

Table 14 E-health Services Take-up (% of healthcare providers) (n=1)

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel 2024	DESI Ireland 2019	DESI EU 2019
Use e-prescriptions	100	8	50
Using an electronic network to exchange medical data with other healthcare providers	100	63	43
Providing online consultations	0	NA	NA

4.3 OPEN DATA

S.I. No. 376 of 2021, the European Communities (Open Data & Re-use of Public Sector Information) Regulations 2021 emphasises that Irish public sector bodies should adhere to the principle that public sector data should be open by design and default, and requires that where data is made available for re-use in open format, this data must be linked to the national open data portal, data.gov.ie. These regulations apply to all public sector bodies including local authorities. There is a very limited amount of open data available on Courtown-Riverchapel. A review of the five main open data portals in Ireland identified only two data sets.[30] Wexford County Council is listed as a publisher on data.gov.ie, the Irish national open data portal.

Table 15 List of Town Open Data Available

Name	Description	Publisher	Source
Gorey (Courtown Hse.) Rainfall Data	Daily and monthly rainfall records for our station at Gorey (Courtown Hse.) in Co. Wexford. This station is now closed.	Met Éireann	data.gov.ie
Courtown Harbour G.S. Rainfall Data	Daily and monthly rainfall records for our station at Courtown Harbour G.S. in Co. Wexford. This station is now closed.	Met Éireann	data.gov.ie

4.4 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital public services is **1.7.**

Table 16 Digital Public Services Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
E-health	67%	2.0
Open data	33%	1.0
Overall score	**100%**	**1.7**

[30] The following sources were checked: AIRO, data.gov.ie, data.epa.ie, eHealth Ireland, OSI Open Data

5. *DIGITAL EDUCATION*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Digital education refers to the use and sophistication of digital technologies for teaching and learning in formal and non-formal education within a community, and the infrastructure required to support such provision.[31] The adoption and use of digital technologies in education is driven by a variety of rationales. They can help prepare citizens to participate, work and function more fully in a society permeated by digital technologies, increase accessibility to education, differentiate educational institutions, and increase the efficiency, cost effectiveness and quality of education delivery, amongst others.[32] As discussed earlier, this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on pre-primary childcare providers, primary education and secondary education as per the full DTB and only includes analysis on the availability of general training across the town.

This abridged digital education dimension comprises four sub-dimensions with equal weightings:

- Availability of digital skills courses for young people
- Availability of vocational and further education digital skills courses
- Availability of digital skills courses for seniors
- Availability of other digital skills courses

This abridged section examines the availability of digital skills education and training in Courtown-Riverchapel outside of the primary and post-primary education system at all levels from basic to advanced. Education businesses are included in Section 3 where appropriate.

5.2 DIGITAL SKILLS EDUCATION AVAILABILITY

Table 17 presents the digital skills education availability indicators for Courtown-Riverchapel.

Based on publicly available data, there is limited digital skills provision in Courtown-RIverchapel for any of the cohorts measured. As there is no library, citizens are limited to national or county online digital skills provisions which are not measured in this report.

The data limited resources concerning specific digital skills provision targeting young people. There is an afterschool programme for 5th and 6th class students in YOLOS Courtown which includes computer skills. Boosting the development of digital skills from an early age and in a continuous manner is essential for influencing the level of

[31] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.
[32] Ibid.

digital skills of the population and the number of male and female students that will consider studies and career in the ICT.[33]

Courtown Local Training Initiative is a community based training initiative funded by Waterford and Wexford Education Training Board (WWETB). In addition to the courses offered by WWETB, there is a specific QQI Level 4 course called Courtown Pathway to Employment which includes use of ICT applications Data from the EU's Agency for the Development of European Vocational Education and Training shows the importance of digital skills for jobs, and shows that digital skills are explicitly mentioned by employers in close to 40% of online job advertisements.[34]

Similarly, the data does not show any specific digital skills provision targeting seniors. Older individuals often need tailored digital literacy programs to overcome barriers like limited prior exposure to technology.

Table 17 Digital Skills Education Availability Indicators

Indicator	Availability
Availability of digital skills courses for young people	Yes
Availability of vocational and further education digital skills courses	Yes
Availability of digital skills courses for seniors	No
Availability of other digital skills courses	No

5.3 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for education is **1.3.**

Table 18 Digital Education Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Availability of digital skills courses for young people	25%	2.5
Availability of vocational and further education digital skills courses	25%	2.7
Availability of digital skills courses for seniors	25%	0.0
Availability of other digital skills courses	25%	0.0
Overall score	**100%**	**1.3**

[33] https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals/boosting-digital-skills-young-pupils-particular-girls_en

[34] https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/latest/briefs/digital-skills-deep-dive

6. *DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Salamon and Anheier (1998, p. 216)[35] define civil society as collection of entities that share five characteristics:

- organisations, i.e., institutionalised to some meaningful extent
- private, i.e., institutionally separate from government
- non-profit distributing, i.e., not returning profits generated to their owners or directors
- self-governing, i.e., equipped to control their own activities
- voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation

Civil society includes a wide range of organisations with varying roles and purposes including those involved in culture and recreation, education and research, health, social services, environmental sustainability, development and housing, law advocacy and politics, philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion, international activities and promotion, religion, business and professional etc.[36] They play an important role in society by promoting community engagement and citizenship values, advocating distinct interests and diverse points of view, delivering services, and creating economic value. For example, in 2018, there were over 19,500 such organisations registered in Ireland with nearly 200,000 voluntary directors or trustees and paid employees; they are a significant economic force with over €10.9 billion in annual turnover.[37] Civil society is a critical part of the social fabric throughout Ireland, and one might argue especially in rural communities whose identity may be linked to a local parish, sports club, or other social activity.

The civil society dimension measures the use of digital technologies by voluntary bodies or social groups serving the needs of the Courtown-Riverchapel community. It includes sports clubs, charities, political organisations, and other community groups. The civil society dimension comprises three sub-dimensions - WTIS, digital technology take-up, and e-commerce take-up as per Section 3.

Given the nature of these organisations, web intensity, digital technology and e-commerce take-up were weighted evenly at 33.3%.

6.2 DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY

A WTIS was calculated for each digital civil society organisation. Table 19 summarises the findings for digital civil society in Courtown-Riverchapel. 19 voluntary and social groups were identified. 47% had a discrete website. A small number featured on an affiliate website e.g. a political party.

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[35] Salamon, L. M., & Anheier, H. K. (1998). Social origins of civil society: Explaining the nonprofit sector cross-nationally. Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 9(3), 213–248.

[36] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

[37] The Wheel, 2018, Enabling Citizens - Powering Civil Society. https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-08/Powering%20Civil%20Society_0.pdf

Table 19 Website Technology Intensity Score - Civil Society and Businesses (n=19)

Website Technology Intensity Score	% of Civil Society Organisations	% of Businesses
Non-existent (0)	42	43
Very low (1-2)	0	6
Low (3-4)	38	11
Medium (5-7)	15	20
High (8-9)	0	12
Very high (10-11)	5	8

Table 19 presents the degree of penetration of different digital technologies featured in the Website Technology Intensity Score compared to businesses in Courtown-Riverchapel.

Table 20 A comparison of WTIS Indicators – Civil Society and Businesses (n=19)

Indicator	% of Civil Society Organisations	% of Businesses
A website or homepage	58	57
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	11	24
A website with evidence of basic analytics	16	38
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	16	36
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	5	22
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	0	5
A website with evidence of selling online	16	24
A website with evidence of social media integration	37	35
A website with evidence of international activity	21	32
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	58	50
A website with evidence of cloud computing	21	31
Social media presence	63	85

6.3 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for civil society is **2.2.**

Table 21 Digital Civil Society Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Website Technology Intensity Score	33.3%	2.7
Digital technology take-up	33.3%	2.9
E-commerce take-up	33.3%	1.0
Overall score	**100%**	**2.2**

7. *DIGITAL TOURISM*

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant economic sector in Ireland. It is often the only major source of employment outside of agriculture in many rural areas. It is a key element of Irish rural development policy and features prominently in both the National Planning Framework,[38] Our Rural Future,[39] and Town Centre First.[40] Digital tourism is often confused with smart tourism although they share the same goals i.e. supporting innovation and driving positive transformation within destinations using technology, data analysis and digitalisation. Whereas smart tourism is concerned with connecting the digital and physical world, digital tourism is building wider digital connections between organisations, people, and places. In this sense, digital technologies not only play an important role in helping visitors discover, experience, and develop a long standing relationship with a place, in this case, a rural town.

The tourism dimension seeks to measure the use and sophistication of digital technology to attract tourists and deliver a distinctive tourism experience. The digital tourism dimension comprises three sub-dimensions:

- Digital readiness of tourism businesses
- Smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure
- Tourism destination website and maturity

The digital readiness of tourism businesses was weighted at 60% with the other two dimensions weighted equally at 20%.

Digital readiness of tourism businesses is assessed using the WTIS, digital technology take-up and e-commerce take-up measurements as per Section 3 and comprises accommodation, hospitality and retail businesses.

Smart tourism and infrastructure assess the degree to which there is evidence of smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure in the town and at primary tourist destinations within the town. This includes public Wi-Fi, digital transport signage, digital information points/kiosks, availability of online itineraries, voluntary tourism alert systems, mobile apps, event websites, and use of augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) or QR codes etc.

Tourism destination website and maturity assesses the availability and maturity of a dedicated tourism website.

[38] https://npf.ie/

[39] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4c236-our-rural-future-vision-and-policy-context/

[40] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/473d3-town-centre-first-policy/

7.2 DIGITAL READINESS OF TOURISM BUSINESSES

A WTIS was calculated for each tourism business website. Table 22 summarises the findings for tourism businesses in Courtown-Riverchapel and compares the percentages for all businesses in the town. 43 accommodation, hospitality and retail businesses were assessed.

Table 22 Website Technology Intensity Score - Tourism Businesses (n=43)

Website Technology Intensity Score	% of Tourism Businesses	% of Businesses
Non-existent (0)	53	43
Very low (1-2)	5	6
Low (3-4)	7	11
Medium (5-7)	16	20
High (8-9)	14	12
Very high (10-11)	5	8

Table 22 presents the degree of penetration of different digital technologies featured in the WTIS with comparative data, where available. In addition, the degree of penetration of general businesses in Courtown-Riverchapel is provided to compare tourism businesses with business as a whole in the town.

Table 23 Key Digitisation Take-up Indicators – Tourism Businesses (n=43)

Indicator	% Courtown-Riverchapel Tourism Businesses 2024	% Courtown-Riverchapel Businesses 2024	% DESI Ireland 2024	% DESI EU 2024
A website or homepage	47	57	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated functions	23	24	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic analytics	33	38	37.10	33.20
A website with evidence of sophisticated analytics	33	36	NA	NA
A website with evidence of basic online advertising	21	22	NA	NA
A website with evidence of sophisticated online advertising	2	5	NA	NA
A website with evidence of selling online	23	24	30	19.1
A website with evidence of social media integration	30	35	NA	NA
A website with evidence of international activity	30	32	NA	NA
A website with evidence of mobile targeting	42	50	NA	NA
A website with evidence of cloud computing	26	31	53.1	38.9
Social media presence	81	85	31.5	31.5

As this report is designed to support the Town Centre First programme, tourism attractions and destination sites listed on TripAdvisor and Google Travel (Things to Do) within 2km of the town centre were also assessed for digital readiness. We recognise that this may exclude tourist attractions that benefit towns in the study however in many cases such tourist attractions also benefit other towns in proximity to the attraction. Consequently, a decision was made to limit it to a 2km distance from the town centre. The tourist attractions assessed include natural amenities or heritage sites, festivals and events, and commercial businesses, amongst others. The DTB assesses whether these destination sites have a discrete web presence and the sophistication of those websites based on the WTIS. 10 such attractions and destination sites were identified for Courtown-Riverchapel; 3 of which had a discrete website (Table 24).

Table 24 Website Technology Intensity Score - Tourist Attractions (n=10)

Website Technology Intensity Score	% Courtown-Riverchapel Tourism Attractions	% Courtown-Riverchapel All Businesses
Non-existent (0)	50	43
Very low (1-2)	0	6
Low (3-4)	0	11
Medium (5-7)	40	20
High (8-9)	10	12
Very high (10-11)	0	8

7.3 SMART TOURISM AND DIGITAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Smart tourism and infrastructure assess the degree to which there is evidence of smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure in the town and at primary tourist destinations within the town. Table 25 presents the list of Smart Tourism and Digital Tourism Infrastructure indicators.

Table 25 Smart Tourism and Digital Tourism Infrastructure Indicators

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel
Availability of free public outdoor Wi-Fi	No
Availability of other free public Wi-Fi	No
Availability of digital transport or other digital signage	No
Availability of tourism information outside of normal working hours e.g. via a digital kiosk	No
Availability of online itineraries	Yes
Availability of town-specific tourism mobile apps	No
Availability of voluntary tourism alert systems	No
Availability of augmented reality tourism services	No
Availability of virtual reality tourism services	No
Availability of QR code-based information services	No

7.4 TOURISM DESTINATION WEBSITE AVAILABILITY AND MATURITY

Tourism destination website availability and maturity measures the extent to which common tourist information and services are available through the town website (courtown.org) and the WTIS scores for the town website(s). Table 26 summarises the tourism destination website availability and maturity indicators for Courtown-Riverchapel, respectively.

Table 26 Tourism Destination Website Availability and Maturity Indicators

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel
Availability of town website or portal	Yes
Availability of contact form or contact details for town website	Yes
Availability of local tourist office information	No
Availability of town social media presence	Yes
Availability of accommodation information	No
Availability of hospitality information	No
Availability of retail information	No
Availability of information on tourist activities or attractions	No
Availability of information on transport to and from the town	No
Availability of information on public Wi-Fi	No
Ability to subscribe for town updates	No
Ability to complete transactions on the town website	No

7.5 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital tourism is **1.8.**

Table 27 Digital Tourism Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Digital readiness of tourism businesses	60%	2.2
Smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure	20%	0.3
Tourism destination website and maturity	20%	1.9
Overall score	**100%**	**1.8**

8. GOVERNANCE OF DIGITAL TOWN INITIATIVES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The delivery of complex and multifaceted policy objectives such as digitalisation requires significant coordination among a wide range of stakeholders. As such, it requires appropriate governance mechanisms that enable widespread participation while also guiding the implementation of the policy objectives. The Governance of Digital Town Initiatives measures two types of governance mechanisms - horizontal and vertical integration (Table 28). Horizontal integration refers to integration across different elements of policy making, and across policy and other stakeholders. Vertical integration of policy making refers to the integration across different levels within the governance or policy sphere.

Table 28 Indicators for the Governance of Digital Town Initiatives (Lynn et al. 2022) [41]

	Indicator	Description
Horizontal integration	Coordination of digitalisation	The extent to which different digitalisation initiatives within a town are coordinated
	Citizen participation plan	The extent to which there is a defined plan for involving citizens into digital town initiatives
	Representation and scope	The extent to which different stakeholder types are represented and involved in the planning phase.
	Technical expertise	The extent to which technical expertise is used to assist with the design and development of a community engagement strategy
	Commitment to public engagement	The extent to which digital town initiatives are accessible and communicated to the public
	Commitment to local capacity building	The extent to which digital town initiatives are committed to local capacity building by collaborating with other organisations and communities
	Town-level platform availability	Availability of an integrated town-level platform availability to promote digital initiatives
	Town-level platform maturity	Maturity of the integrated town-level platform availability to promote digital initiatives
Vertical integration	Cross departmental integration	The extent to which different administrative departments contribute to digital town initiatives and management
	Establishment within the local authority	The extent to which digital town initiatives are assigned to one department and resources allocated
	Monitoring and evaluation	The extent to which progress toward a digital town and compliance with requirements is being monitored and reported

[41] Lynn, T., Rosati, P., Conway, E., Curran, D., Fox, G., & O'Gorman, C. (2022). Digital Towns: Accelerating and Measuring the Digital Transformation of Rural Societies and Economies (p. 213). Springer Nature.

	Indicator	Description
	Multilevel government	The extent to which the local authority cooperates with other authorities from different levels
	Alignment	The extent to which digital town initiatives are aligned with government policy

For the purposes of the DTB, horizontal integration is weighted 75% and vertical integration is weighted 25%.

8.2 HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION

Coordination of digitalisation measures the extent to which different digitalisation initiatives within a town are coordinated. Courtown-Riverchapel has a destination website, courtown.org (which redirects to courtowncommunitycouncil.org), which was established and is managed by the Courtown Community Council. The website includes community information in Courtown-Riverchapel, including links to smart village initiatives. It is supported by Wexford County Council and other agencies. While there are links to social media accounts, two-way communication is limited to email and a single contact form. The website is promotional in nature and not integrated with county websites and portals. Courtown-Riverchapel has been selected as a target town under the Department of Rural and Community Development. A Wexford County Council Town Regeneration Officer has been appointed, and a Town Centre First Committee comprising local stakeholders has been established. This and the active nature of the Courtown Community Council, and in particular their Smart Village initiative, indicates coordination of digitalisation, access to technical expertise, and representation. They have specific statements relating to local capacity building. Funding for Courtown-Riverchapel has been allocated by the Department of Rural and Community Development to Wexford County Council.

Table 29 summarises the indicators for horizontal integration of digital town initiatives in Courtown-River.

Table 29 Indicators for Horizontal Integration of Digital Town Initiatives

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel
Coordination of digitalisation	Yes
Citizen participation plan	No
Representation and scope	Yes
Technical expertise	Yes
Commitment to public engagement	Yes
Commitment to local capacity building	Yes
Town-level platform availability	No
Town-level platform maturity	Yes

8.3 VERTICAL INTEGRATION

A wide number of local authority departments and state agencies contribute to digital initiatives that may impact Courtown / Riverchapel including Wexford County Council, the Department of Rural and Community Development, Fáilte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, amongst others. Furthermore, Wexford County Council has allocated funds to Courtown / Riverchapel to support their participation in the Town Centre First programme. Eight relevant plans and reports were reviewed for evidence of coordination with regards to digitalisation (Table 30). These included:

1. Wexford County Development Plan 2022 - 2028
2. Wexford County Council Corporate Plan 2019 - 2024
3. County Wexford Tourism Strategy 2019 - 2023
4. Draft Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 Public Consultation
5. Wexford County Council Arts Plan 2023-2027
6. Wexford Age Friendly Strategy 2022-2026
7. Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan 2015
8. Courtown Community Council Circular Economy Action Plan

Digitalisation is widely referenced in many regional reports however there are limited references of digital initiatives targeting Courtown / Riverchapel. For example, Wexford County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 makes a reference to Courtown / Riverchapel as requiring catch up in the provision of services and infrastructure considering its population growth. Explicit references to digital projects for Courtown / Riverchapel could be more established in other regional thematic reports for prioritisation. It should be noted that the Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan 2015 does make a reference to supporting older people in lifelong learning including training on digital communications, internet, mobile phones and computers, which is consistent with regional and national policies.

Table 30 Summary of Digitalisation References in Selected Town-related Reports and Plans

Document	Geographic Focus	Digital Reference
Wexford County Development Plan 2022 - 2028	County	• References to enhancing regional accessibility and connectivity through upgraded high-quality infrastructure and digital connectivity throughout the county including mobile infrastructure and facilitating the roll out of the National Broadband Plan. • References to supporting the implementation of a digital strategy for the county and supporting the role and initiatives of the Mobile and Broadband Taskforce. • Development of remote working hubs and smart hubs in line with Harnessing Digital – the Digital Ireland Framework and the National Development Plan. • Reference to Courtown-Riverchapel as requiring catch up in the provision of services and infrastructure considering its population growth.
Wexford County Council Corporate Plan 2019 - 2024	County	• References to supporting the provision of high-speed broadband across the county and working to ensure digital optimisation and adaptation of technology. • References to utilising the Library Service to promote learning and literacy at all life stages by providing informal learning opportunities including digital literacy support. • References to efficient customer services and the promotion of online services. • References to enhancing online service provision the use of mobile apps and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) is integral to operational efficiency. • References to developing the Council's website to ensure it continues to provide the best possible online service and information to meet the needs of citizens. • References to various metrics for online services and payment. • No reference to Courtown-Riverchapel
County Wexford Tourism Strategy 2019 - 2023	County	• Reference to the fact that digital touchpoints are growing significantly which provides an opportunity to access more data regarding traveller habits and preferences. • References to improving the county's digital footprint. • Reference to the development of digital storytelling capabilities (in partnership with Fáilte Ireland).

		• Reference to developing a marketing collateral and supporting a database which would include digital marketing guides. • Reference to ensuring that all key digital footprints have multilingual content. • References to developing a social media strategy with millennials in mind. • References to online travel agent (OTA) sites. • References to growing Ireland's Ancient East brand online. • Reference to the possibility of Google playing a larger role in travel distribution. • Reference to consumer trends moving ever closer to a complete dominance by technology channels in the research, planning and purchase of holidays. • No significant references to Courtown-Riverchapel.
Draft Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 Public Consultation	County	• Reference to digitalisation practices supported by the LEO national programmes to reduce emissions. • No significant reference to Courtown-Riverchapel.
Wexford County Council Arts Plan 2023-2027	County	• Proposes to partner with key stakeholders such as LEO, Hatch Labs and Technology parks. • Reference to the facilitation of collaboration between the technology and art sectors. • Reference to promoting Wexford as a premier destination for filmmaking. • Reference to literacy and the digital divide as a barrier to access to culture. • No significant reference to Courtown-Riverchapel.
Wexford Age Friendly Strategy 2022-2026	County	• Reference to the use of online workshops during the consultation process. • References to vulnerable groups (older people and Travellers) having difficulties using digital and technological resources. • References to statistics about older people's use of social media and digital technologies. Many of those surveyed would like more basic IT training courses in Wexford. • References to websites that can help older people and also websites that could be used to disseminate information to older people. • References to young people and volunteers teaching old people how to use technology. • References to poor broadband in some parts of Wexford. • No substantive reference to Courtown-Riverchapel
Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan 2015	Town	• Reference to supporting older people in lifelong learning including training on digital

		communications, internet, mobile phones and computers.
Courtown Community Council Circular Economy Action Plan 2024 - 2026	Town	• Reference to a pilot programme in tourism, hospitality and digital marketing.

Table 31 summarises the indicators for vertical integration of digital town initiatives in Courtown-Riverchapel. While the score for vertical integration is high, this reflects the fact that Courtown-Riverchapel was designated for Town Centre First and this DTB assessment is being completed in support of this effort.

Table 31 Indicators for vertical integration of digital town initiatives

Indicator	Courtown-Riverchapel
Cross departmental integration	Yes
Establishment within the local authority	Yes
Monitoring and evaluation	Yes
Multilevel government	Yes
Alignment	Yes

8.4 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for governance is **4.5.**

Table 32 Governance of Digital Initiatives Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Horizontal integration	75%	4.4
Vertical integration	25%	5.0
Overall score	**100%**	**4.5**

9. *DIGITAL TOWN SCORE*

A key objective of this analysis is to provide an insight into key indicators for improvement at a town-level. The numbers individually have very little meaning without comparators however as presented do show gaps between performance today and potential in the future. Table 33 provides a guideline for interpreting the readiness score and dimension levels in Figure 4 and Table 34. Please note that as this abridged report does not include subsections of analysis on e-government in Digital Public Services and analysis of pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Digital Education, the calculations for weightings for the dimensions (W2) differ from the full Digital Town Blueprint in TCF Phase 1. Specifically, Digital Public Services is weighted at 5% (compared to 15%) and Digital Education is weighted at 5% (compared to 15%). To counter this, Vertical and Horizontal Integration is weighted higher at 30% (compared to 10%) as this dimension recognises alignment with local and national government initiatives and priorities.

Table 33 Guideline Readiness Descriptions by Readiness Score and Dimension Level

Dimension Level	Readiness	Guideline Description
1	Non-Existent	**Digital Readiness is Non-Existent or at a Very Low Level.** The use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities likely do not exist. If they do exist, they are at very low levels of use and sophistication, largely informal and not documented, managed or measured at a town level. KPIs are significantly below regional, national or EU averages.
2	Ad Hoc	**Digital Readiness is Ad Hoc and Mostly Not Documented.** Some evidence of digital readiness in the use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities. Most are not documented and not managed. Performance may be measured and reviewed periodically but mostly informally. KPIs are below regional, national or EU averages.
3	Defined Competitive	**Digital Readiness is Clearly Defined and Documented** There is clear evidence of digital readiness. Use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities are documented and planned. KPIs are competitive relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages.
4	Significant Differentiating	**Digital Readiness is Clearly Differentiating and Significant** The use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities and levels of digitalisation are significant and clearly differentiating compared to peers. KPIs are higher relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages.

5	Leading	**Digital Readiness is Leading** The use and sophistication of digital technologies and sophistication and levels of digitalisation are best-in-class and approaching optimum states/full digitisation with clear plans for further optimisation. KPIs are at the highest levels when compared to peers and regional, national and EU averages.

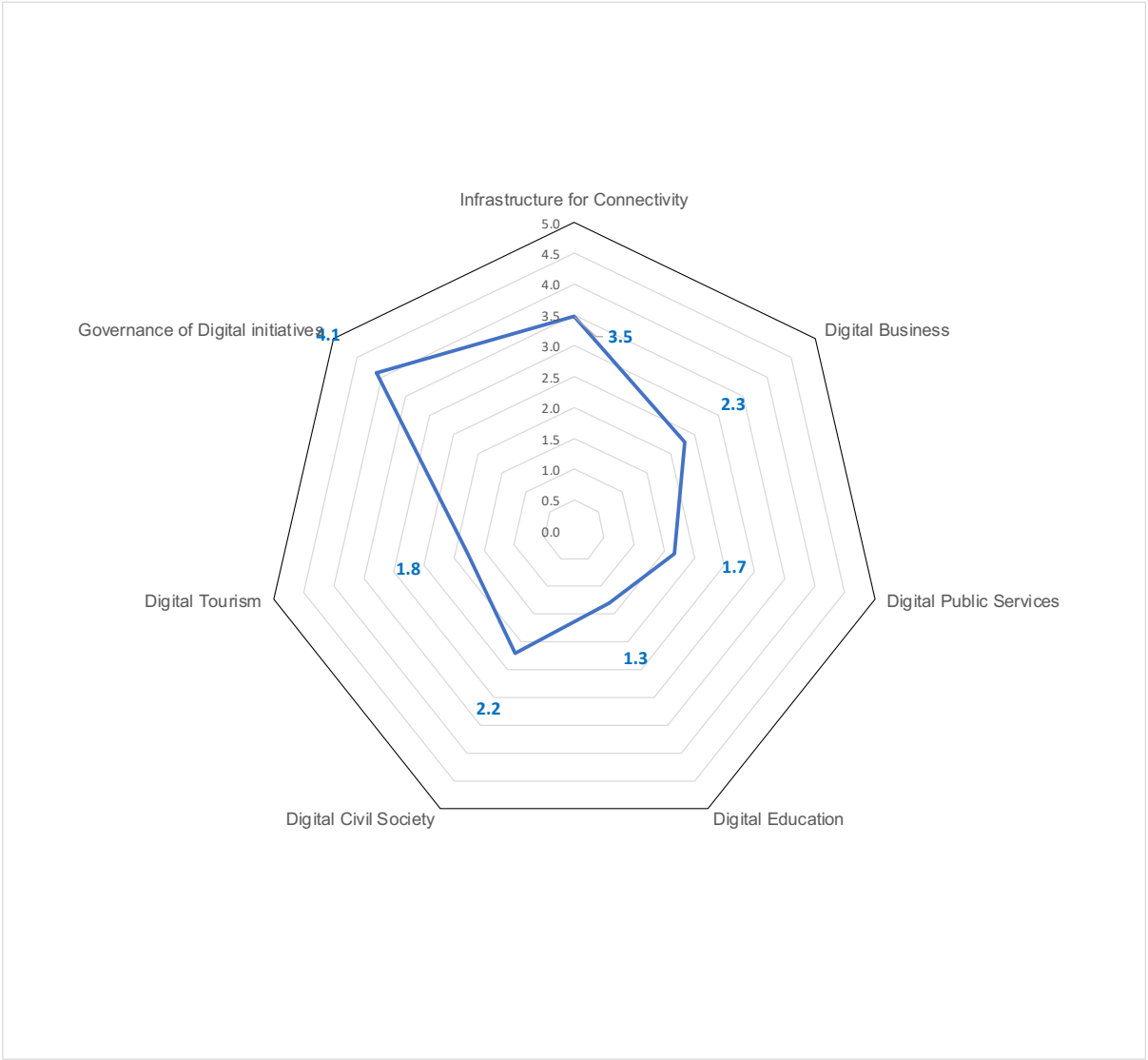

Figure 4 Courtown-Riverchapel Digital Town Readiness Dimension Score

Table 34 Digital Town Readiness Index with Weightings

Digital Town Dimension	Sub-dimension Score (out of 5)	W1 Weighting	Weighted score	Dimension Score		Readiness Score W2 Dimension Weighting	Weighted score	out of	Readiness Score Contribution by each dimension
Infrastructure for Connectivity									
Fixed broadband	4.5	35%	1.58	3.5		20%	0.7	1.0	13.9
Mobile broadband	3.6	35%	1.26						
Competition	4.9	10%	0.49						
Free Public WiFi	1.5	10%	0.15						
Digital rural hubs	0.0	10%	0.00						
Digital Business									
Website Technology Intensity Score	2.5	33%	0.84	2.3		20%	0.5	1.0	9.2
Digital technology take-up	2.4	33%	0.80						
eCommerce take-up	2.0	33%	0.67						
Digital Public Services									
e-Health	2	67%	1.33	1.7		5%	0.1	0.25	1.7
Open data	1.0	33%	0.33						
Digital Education									
Digital skills courses for young people	2.5	25%	0.63	1.3		5%	0.1	0.25	1.3
Vocational and further education digital skills course	2.7	25%	0.68						
Digital skills courses for seniors	0.0	25%	0.00						
Other digital skills courses	0.0	25%	0.00						
Digital Civil Society									
Website Technology Intensity Score	2.7	33%	0.90	2.2		10%	0.2	0.5	4.4
Digital technology take-up	2.9	33%	0.97						
eCommerce take-up	1.0	33%	0.33						
Digital Tourism									
Digital readiness of Tourism Businesses	2.2	60%	1.32	1.8		10%	0.2	0.5	3.5
Smart Tourism & Digital Infrastructure	0.3	20%	0.06						
Tourism destination website and maturity	1.9	20%	0.38						
Governance of DT initiatives									
Horizontal integration	4.4	75%	2.80	4.1	*	30%	1.2	1.5	24.6
Vertical integration	5.0	25%	1.30						
						100%	**2.9**	**5.0**	
							58.6		58.6