

## **SUBMISSION TO THE OIREACHTAIS JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS ON ITS EXAMINATION OF THE ISSUE OF ‘WHAT IT TAKES TO SUSTAIN A VIABLE RURAL COMMUNITY.’**

Meath LEADER Partnership, Kildare LEADER Partnership and Monaghan Integrated Development very much appreciate the invitation from the Joint Committee to contribute to addressing the important policy question of **‘What it takes to sustain a viable rural community’**.

We are conscious of the complexity of this important question which has attracted significant research attention over decades. We have taken account of our collective experience in delivering LEADER, Social Inclusion and labour market and social programmes over the last two decades, (effectively delivering CLLD long before the phrase was coined by the EU in the current programme period) in forming our comments.

We are also conscious of the fact that the CEDRA Report commissioned by the Government in 2012 and its associated recommendations now form an important blueprint in shaping rural development policy for rural Ireland.

Therefore we propose to focus our collective contribution to the most relevant recommendations of the CEDRA Report and its overall vision for the Rural Economy. In addition, our respective Board members may wish to make some additional contributions in relation to the role of the Boards of LDCs at this time.

We welcome and acknowledge CEDRA's priority given to the importance of “An Integrated Approach to Rural Economic Development and on Facilitating Economic and Community Participation. CEDRA “believes that Recommendations 1-6 are the necessary foundation for the development of dynamic rural communities to 2025”. Equally important is the acknowledgement that “The remaining recommendations are offered to facilitate full participation of both enterprise and community in a fully participative integrated approach to rural economic development.”

Our analysis will focus on the Recommendations, their core rationale, and will include our collective thoughts on how best the policy recommendation can be advanced.

### **Proposed Format:**

Gabriel O’Connell, CEO Monaghan Integrated Development will speak to CEDRA Recommendations 1-6, 11-14

Justin Larkin, CEO of Kildare LEADER Partnership will speak to the CEDRA Recommendations 15, 16, 18, 33, 34

Michael Ludlow, CEO Meath Partnership will speak to CEDRA Recommendations 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

Mary Mullen, Chairperson Monaghan Integrated Development will speak to the role of LDC Boards in delivering Rural Development Programmes post Alignment.

Chris Byrne, Former Chairman and board member of Kildare LEADER Partnership – 20 years’ experience in rural development

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b>            “That the Government reinvigorate their approach to support for Rural Economic Development by preparing a clear and committed Rural Economic Development Policy Statement. This statement should outline in detail how the Government proposes to support integrated rural economic development to 2025”</p>	<p>We note the Commission’s view that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>given that many of the issues facing rural areas are part of a “long-term economic and social transformation” and</i></li> <li>• <i>that rural economic development is not amenable to simple or single sector strategies and that new integrated approaches to rural economic development are required” (p.11).</i></li> <li>• <i>that “the interrelated nature of the challenges can only be addressed through an integrated strategic and operational approach that aligns the goals of national level economic plans with regional, county and local (bottom-up) strategies.” and</i></li> <li>• <i>Rural economic development requires a matrix of economic and social supports if they are to contribute to their own, and thus to the national recovery”. (p.12)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LDCs broadly welcome this recommendation, in particular the need for a clear policy statement on an integrated approach to rural economic development.</li> <li>• We would very much agree with this conclusion but would point out that currently there is no mechanism or national framework to support an integrated approach.</li> <li>• LDCs currently deliver a broad range of economic and social initiatives as part of an integrated response at a local level.</li> <li>• However the funding Departments we deal with tend to take a single programme approach and therefore miss the totality of the integrated services being delivered.</li> <li>• We believe a core competence of LDCs is in facilitating community learning, capacity-building, effective engagement and stimulating local ownership and buy-in. This is a core yet somewhat undervalued competence available to Rural policymakers.</li> <li>• This should be formally recognised and utilised at a local level through a One-Stop-Show approach. (See Fig 1 attached)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b>            “The setting up of a policy delivery and coordination mechanism ...”            “Creation of a Ministerial function for the coordination of Rural economic development”            A High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC), involving key Departments and relevant stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The HLIC will draw up a work programme which specifies actions to implement Government Rural Economic Development policy.</i></li> <li>• <i>The work programme to be monitored by the Minister.</i></li> <li>• <i>Departments, Statutory bodies, Regional &amp; Local governance structures and Local Development entities will be required to make provisions for implementing rural economic development policy in their work.</i></li> </ul>	<p>We welcome the establishment of a Ministerial function with responsibility for Rural affairs.</p> <p>We believe the Rural Ministerial portfolio may not be ideally configured :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We would like to see this function covering SICAP as well as LEADER programmes to improve consistency.</li> <li>• The portfolio brief needs to be of a manageable scale</li> </ul> <p>We welcome the proposal for a HLIC, but see little evidence of the functioning of this group to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At a local level no other Government community funded activity is going through the LDCs, other than Prog’s delivered by LDCs.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> Government and relevant stakeholders should be required to maximise the potential of available funding mechanisms to support the economic development of rural areas ....</p> <p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> The Commission recommends the continuation of a CLLD approach to the delivery of rural development initiatives utilising resources available through all of the European Structural and Investment funds to support the integrated approach to rural development presented here and advocated in Putting People First.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Relevant authorities in charge of national and EU funding mechanisms for economic development should proactively consider specific support for an integrated approach to Rural Economic Development</i></li> <li>• <i>Full and complete consideration should be given to maintaining the LEADER funding at 10% of the RDP for initiatives outside the farm gate that support the diversification of the rural economy.</i></li> <li>• <i>A “Community Led Local Dev approach” (CLLD) i.e. LEADER has been successful in Ireland since 1980s. EU has recognised the value of CLLD approach and encouraged all MSs to use it across all the EU funds as an effective way to channel funding into communities.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We welcome the plan for greater commitment to the integrated approach principal and the new Regional approach being undertaken. But greater coordination and use of existing Bodies on the ground is required to maximise value for money.</li> <li>• LEADER funding was set at 7% of the RDP and exchequer co-funding was set at 38% unlike the rest of the RDP at 46%. There is scope to address this imbalance.</li> <li>• We believe strongly that a huge opportunity was missed in the ESI Partnership application to EU not to apply for the CLLD method utilising all the funds (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD) in an integrated way.</li> <li>• The door is still open to make greater use of CLLD and channel the ESI funds for rural areas through one strand into local delivery mechanisms like LDC. (Rec 11.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b>  Piloting of a selected number of Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZs) to enhance the capacity for local communities to contribute to and take ownership of local economic development by creating local strategic economic development plans ....</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“It is the Commissions view that an important and effective means of ensuring that economic development happens is to facilitate local community involvement in the design and implementation of development strategies.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“CEDRA research has shown that rural towns have felt the impact of the economic downturn more acutely than cities and larger urban centres ... with higher rates of unemployment</i></li> <li>• <i>..”Should include support for the development of community capacity with initiatives that develop skills in community leadership, governance, community development planning and rural economic development in order to support the participation of all communities in the preparation of local strategic economic development plans”</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive community consultation has happened in the development of the LEADER LDSs which was led out by LDC on behalf of our respective LCDCs.</li> <li>• We see little rationale in developing separate Rural Development strategies for these additional small funding streams which have broadly similar objectives to LEADER.</li> <li>• In addition, if the rational for the establishment of coordinating structures like LCDC is sound, then all these additional funds into rural development should flow through the LCDC and be delivered by the implementing structures, i.e. there is already a ‘Towns Theme’ in the LEADER Programme through which the REDZ and Rural Towns objectives could be delivered.</li> <li>• A more integrated and coordinated approach can be achieved in channelling all available Rural Dev funding through one coordinated Rural Dev Strategy (i.e LEADER) - (In line with Rec 1-4)</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<b>Recommendation 6:</b> Rural Town Stimulus Programme that focuses on Rural Towns / villages and their hinterland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>“It is critical that coordination is also improved at regional and local level which is reflected from the perspective of linkages from the national, regional and local development frameworks</i></li> <li><i>The Rural Towns Stimulus Prog should be led by local stakeholders working in partnership with local authorities and state bodies to develop an integrated socio-economic action plan for their area.</i></li> <li><i>“It should be led by local stakeholders working in partnership with local authorities and state bodies to develop an integrated socio-economic action plan for their area”</i></li> <li><i>Locally-led, place-based development – “there needs to an alignment between, on the one hand, national, regional and local authority strategic economic development plan and associated supporting programmes and initiatives”</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under the current approach, there is real danger of fragmentation of funding into rural development.</li> <li>The delivery of REDZ and Rural Towns &amp; Villages Initiative needs close alignment with the LEADER LDS to avoid duplication, to ensure value for money and to get maximum buy-in from the community</li> <li>A one-stop-shop approach to ensure integration, coordination and economy of scale by making maximum use of the local coordination (LCDC) and delivery (LDCs) mechanisms on the ground already working with rural communities (See Fig 1 – CLLD model)</li> <li>LECP Plan → One Stop Shop delivery Model of Local &amp; Rural Development (i.e LEADER LDS + SICAP Strategy, Volunteering Progs by LDCs under coordination of LCDC.</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<b>Recommendation 12:</b> CEDRA “ recommends the development of a programme of capacity building for rural communities initiated and implemented by local government in partnership with local development structures ...” “Such a capacity building programme should include support for leadership and governance training, for development of community structures and participative planning, as well as support for specific training initiatives”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>“The Commission also acknowledges the significant capacity building that is already in place in rural communities developed particularly through the delivery of the LEADER .... Since 1990”</i></li> <li><i>“The skills and experience of both communities and Local Development organisations are valuable resources and should be used to support the development of a more integrated approach to rural economic development”</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both the CEDRA report and the ‘Putting People First’ acknowledged the central role and competence of LDCs in supporting rural communities and the bottom-up approach.</li> <li>Government should further acknowledge and recognise the community capacity building, integrating and delivery role of LDCs in rural and local development.</li> <li>This should be embedded in a CLLD ‘One Stop Shop’ approach where LDCs are the go to entity for local community &amp; Rural Development initiatives under the coordination of the local LCDC.</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 13:</b></p> <p>“Efforts should be made through the enhanced processes of enterprise support to ensure that social enterprises are ‘investment-ready’ at all stages of their development including start up, early stage development and growth phases”</p> <p><b>Recommendation 14:</b></p> <p>“The Government should introduce a funding mechanism either stand alone or in partnership with other instruments, to incentivise and support the early development of social enterprises”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“CEDRA consultation process highlighted the potential of social enterprise to make a valuable contribution to rural economic development in the future and the need to build the capacity of rural communities to avail of opportunities in this area”</i></li> <li>• <i>Forfas Report on Social Enterprise in Ireland identified the potential for the creation of 25,000 jobs by 2020</i></li> <li>• <i>The EU outlines the importance of social enterprise and innovation and its potential to contribute to Europe 2020 target, inc job creation and social inclusion.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We welcome CEDRA recommendation 13. &amp; 14 and the fact that Government has chosen to include Social Enterprise under the brief of LEADER and SICAP.</li> <li>• However we believe there is a need for a national framework of support for social enterprise through both LEADER &amp; SICAP</li> <li>• This framework should include additional financial resources and the funding of a specific role of Social Enterprise support Worker in LDCs to lead the capacity building of the sector with a view to making local groups ‘investment-ready’ and able to access the funding available through LEADER.</li> <li>• We believe there is considerable potential for the elaboration of the Co-op model using a social enterprise mechanism and framework in the areas of local services, health, disability, transport, alternative energy and the environment.</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 15:</b></p> <p>“In the context of the strategic role of broadband, particularly from an enterprise perspective public funding for the provision of next generation services to rural areas (minimum 30mbps) needs to be ring-fenced and should be delivered as soon as possible. Considering the widespread availability of speeds of 50mbps and higher in many rural areas, the priority must be the delivery of <u>30mbps minimum to all</u> rural areas by the end of 2015.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Physical access to markets, suppliers and services is critical for enterprise start up and development. However, this can present a challenge for rural areas generally and particularly in remote areas.</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to and cost of high quality broadband emerged from the CEDRA consultation process as one of the most significant challenges faced by rural communities particularly from a business perspective.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to high speed low cost broadband is a significant inhibiting factor for the development of viable rural businesses and communities. We note the CEDRA recommendation that a minimum of 30mbps should be available in all rural areas by 2015.</li> <li>• We very much welcome the proposed state investment in the National Broadband Plan. We are concerned that this vital initiative is scheduled for rollout in June 2017. In terms of the specifications issued, there is an expectation that it will take between three to five years from roll-out to achieve 100% coverage.</li> <li>• While the procurement process is complicated and time consuming, any more delays in the rollout will further disadvantage already marginalised rural communities and businesses in terms of next generation access.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Recommendation 16:</b></p> <p>“For population centers of more than 1,500 and in the absence of commercial investment, further state investment should be used to support the deployment of fibre networks to these areas, enabling next generation speeds of 100mbps as soon as possible and not 40mbps, as is the current target. The aim is to ensure small urban areas and rural towns are not at a disadvantage in attracting and retaining enterprises and employment compared to the principal urban areas.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>In a significant number of areas the quality and types of services that are currently available are not sufficient to support efficient and effective business practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>As technologies develop, the minimum of 30mbps should improve proportionally and all possible measures should be employed to ensure that access to high speed internet in rural area is prioritised as an essential component of contemporary living and doing business.</i></li> <li>• An analysis of fixed line and wifi broadband was carried out by price comparison website Switcher.ie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Broadband speeds can be up to 36 times slower in some rural parts of the country.</li> <li>○ Longford, Leitrim, Roscommon, Monaghan and Mayo have some of the slowest BB speeds.</li> <li>○ The average broadband speed across the country was 24 Mbps, with Drimnagh in Dublin 12 with an average speed of 72.15Mbps</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you consult the National Broadband Map for any county in Ireland, you will see that the rural areas in particular are coloured ‘Amber’, and therefore subject to the state intervention. It is interesting to note that the Department has had to add an additional 170,000 households to the ‘Amber’ Areas (originally they were classified in ‘Blue’).</li> <li>• We welcome the rollout of the MAN’s network to 94 of the larger urban centres and towns throughout Ireland. On the down side, this development adds to the urban/rural divide that continues to grow in terms of next generation access.</li> <li>• We welcome the Schools initiative, where state investment has ensured that all national and secondary schools in the country have access to 100mbps.</li> <li>• We welcome the establishment of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce recently established by the Minister and look forward to the identification of more immediate solutions to the provision of telecoms and broadband infrastructure.</li> <li>• We believe the new LEADER Programme should be given a more imaginative and expanded role in the matrix of state interventions to provide next generation access, particularly in supporting community owned / led initiatives such as the B4RN project in England.</li> </ul>
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CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 18:</b></p> <p>“The Commission supports the Government’s initiative to improve and integrate the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) into the overall public transport system. The Commission recommends ongoing and comprehensive monitoring of the programme in order to ensure that it is meeting the transport needs of rural Ireland going forward.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to public transport in some parts of Ireland can be problematic and local and secondary road networks can often be in need of improvement. This can have a negative effect on rural populations in the context of access to services and this is particularly critical when looking at very remote and vulnerable populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The restructuring to the Rural Transport Programme into 18 new Transport Coordination Units has been cited as important in terms of overall integration with the wider public transport system and to protect the provision of rural transport services.</li> <li>• As highlighted in the consultations for many of the LDC’s in the formation of the new LDS under LEADER 2014 – 2020, the availability of appropriate rural transport remains a key underpinning factor in the survival and maintenance of vibrant rural communities, particularly to access services that are increasingly being withdrawn from rural locations.</li> <li>• We welcome the commitment in the Programme for Government to rural transport and the recognition of the value and benefit of rural transport to communities, in particular for older people and those vulnerable to social inclusion.</li> <li>• We welcome the additional allocation of €850,000 in 2016 and the Minister’s announcement of a funding increase of €2.19m for the Rural Transport Programme in 2017 as part of the overall increase of €31m for public transport services in Budget 2017. A continued and increased investment in rural transport is a very practical demonstration of the Government’s commitment to rural Ireland.</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 23:</b></p> <p><b>Food &amp; Beverage (Artisan and Speciality)</b></p> <p>“The Commission recommends that support provided to the food industry at present should focus on the expansion of the speciality food and beverage sector through the implementation of initiatives that will facilitate product development and access to export markets”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The speciality food sector, valued at approximately €615 million in 2012 with about 350 producers employing more than 3,000 people, represents significant economic potential.. evidence would suggest that this sector can have significant impact on local economies.</i></li> <li><i>CEDRA cite UK studies which shows that every £1 spent on local food in a local outlet generates £2.50 for the local economy.</i></li> <li><i>Growth prospects for this sector are positive, driven by increased consumer interest in the provenance of food, environmental concerns, health and a desire to support the local</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the period 2006-2013 the speciality food and drinks sector of the rural economy was heavily supported through LEADER grant aid and technical support aligned with developmental input from both Bórd Bia and Teagasc.</li> <li>During this period the number of artisan producers has risen significantly.</li> <li>Barriers to further growth in scale of production include the need for a fair deal access arrangements to mass market outlets, technical and legal assistance in respect of export opportunities and synergistic arrangements with essential partners in product distribution, product care and point of sale requirements.</li> <li>Local initiatives to restructure and shorten the food chain are objectives of the European RDP and should be supported.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 24:</b></p> <p>In the context of a more streamlined approach, the Commission recommends that the Food Harvest 2020 High Level Implementation Committee and the CEDRA High Level Implementation Committee examine the possibility of a more coordinated role among the agencies currently supporting the agri-food sector that maximise its impact on the economic development of rural Ireland. Such an examination should draw on examples of existing best practice such as that identified in the case study “Scotland Food and Drink</p>	<p><i>There was some evidence that a more streamlined approach to support for the agri-food sector was required in order to maximise its potential for Rural Ireland. In particular, the existence of a number of different agencies providing services to the sector was highlighted.</i></p> <p><i>There is a need to increase the size of the speciality food and beverage sector and to improve its export performance which can be facilitated by expansion of measures such as the Food Works Programme.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The collective involvement of Bórd Bia, Teagasc and Enterprise Ireland in rolling out the Food Works Programme is to be welcomed.</li> <li>There remains a serious requirement to engage speciality food and drink producers at the earliest point in the enterprise development lifecycle, it is in this space that LDCs continue to demonstrate considerable effectiveness.</li> <li>In a properly integrated support framework the most appropriate body should be facilitated in serving the needs of the sector predicated on stage of development and specific need.</li> <li>This support framework should emerge from a streamlining of support to the food sector in general as it is not possible to amalgamate existing EU or nationally funded programme into one homogenous initiative.</li> </ul>



CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 25:</b></p> <p><b>Creative Industries</b></p> <p>The Commission recommends the development of a coordinated strategy for the Creative Industries that places a specific focus on its potential to contribute to the development of the Rural Economy.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to a specific mechanism that combines the creative economy support competencies of the relevant Government Departments (Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Enterprise, Trade and Innovation and Environment, Community and Local Government) with existing lead agencies (Western Development Commission, Craft Council, Arts Council, Film Board etc.) to introduce a more integrated approach to funding in line with the overall approach advocated by the Commission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Creative Sector in Ireland draws upon our rural image and capitalises on our creative strengths and is a potential source of value added employment in rural areas. The creative economy is a globally significant sector which has demonstrated in the ten years to 2005 growth which was 12.3% higher than that of the overall economy.</li> <li>• The above average growth trend suggests that this sector is a unique and potentially critical and sustainable growth area for rural Ireland with 17000 jobs forecast for the western region alone. The issues faced by the creative sector are in the main similar to those impacting on enterprise in general and include broadband, skills and support for marketing and finance.</li> <li>• CEDRA recommends a cross agency strategy for all elements of the creative industry sector and highlights the need for inter-departmental coherence and coherent voice for the industry. CEDRA points out that no single Government Department or State Agency has overarching responsibility for the sector. Addressing this deficit would place the creative industries in a strong position to contribute to rural development into the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Amsterdam Declaration of 2010 which fed into European policy making addressed the need for localised creative clusters to which can be attached on a collective basis the pool of resources required. This approach should be considered in an Irish context.</li> <li>• Across the EU-28 the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) contribute 2.6% to EU GDP and provide quality jobs to around five million people. CCIs are knowledge driven industries that tend to gravitate towards specialised labour markets.</li> <li>• In rural areas new business models and developed approaches to the creative sector can help bring innovation and sustainability to traditional forms of employment and enhance rural economic viability.</li> <li>• Ireland's performance in accessing available EU funding for the creative sector in the 2007-2013 period is remarkably disappointing. In this period:</li> <li>• Ireland drew down only €200,000 out of a total budget of €400 million under the Culture Programme, by far the lowest allocation of any country in Europe</li> <li>• In respect of the FP7 Research and Development Programme carrying €57 billion in funds only a very small number of cultural and creative organisations in Ireland such as the Science Gallery and NCAD have managed to discover this Programme.</li> <li>• There were no Irish funding applications submitted to DG Enterprise and Industry in response to its new Creative Industries Alliance Initiative</li> <li>• Management of EU funding is not a new concept for LDCs, significant sums in available funding are not being applied for because of the need for specialised officers on the ground with a new era funding and development remit. LDCs already work with necessary entrepreneurs (unemployed &amp; underemployed) through the BTWEA scheme. With some targeted resources there is scope to prime early creative enterprises and facilitate their establishment and development</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 26/27/28:</b></p> <p><b>Tourism &amp; Recreation in Rural Areas</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation 26:</b></p> <p>The Commission recommends the preparation of a national plan for the development of tourism in rural areas as a distinct part of the national tourism planning process. This plan should identify a clear strategy for an innovative approach to the promotion and product development of tourism in rural areas. It should be informed by research and provide for ongoing linkages between research and innovation in tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In 2012 tourism represented 4.1% of GNP with a value of 5.4 billion. Employment was estimated at 185000 of which 123100 were employed in accommodation and food service activity.</i></li> <li><i>The CEDRA consultation process indicates that tourism in rural areas is a complex yet largely untapped resource with strong potential.</i></li> <li><i>In order to realise this potential rural tourism must be given a clear identity and valued economically. This lack of identify inhibits the identification of an explicit market for rural tourism which has not benefitted from recent growth and is viewed as somewhat secondary 'sight-seeing territory'.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We welcome CEDRA recommendation 26 as the importance of tourism as a source of sustainable economic activity in rural Ireland is widely acknowledged. Authenticity, real experiences, interaction with people and places are key aspects of rural tourism and should be embodied in the identity recommended by CEDRA. Tourism providers invest strongly in their own industry, LDC experience demonstrates a private investment of €5000 for every €1000 of public funding provided.</li> <li>CEDRA's recommendation for cross sectoral collaboration must become a reality if its vision for rural tourism is to be realised. The intended role of the LDCs in bringing a greater level of coordination to the investment of public funds needs to be prioritised and progressed.</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 27:</b></p> <p>The Commission recommends that national State owned infrastructure that can support national, regional and local tourism initiatives should be prioritised for development. The Commission believes that this is essential to build on the success of initiatives such as the Green Western Greenway in Mayo and the O'Sullivan Beara Way from West Cork to Leitrim.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The development of rural tourism and recreation infrastructure in Ireland has to date been spread across a range of government departments and agencies. Assets with huge capacity for development in rural areas e.g. canals, rivers, lakes, railways, heritage sites, woodlands, trails and interest villages to name a few would if developed allow for the delivery of tourism and recreation infrastructure providing an economic stimulus to very many local areas. Similarly such assets would lend themselves to secondary development spurs off national primary routes.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We warmly welcome CEDRA's recommendation 27 and are familiar with such undeveloped and underutilised assets. Such assets when developed can provide an economic lifeline to the many towns and villages to be found within the footprint of such important sites. Multi-agency partnerships have been difficult to progress and many iconic sites remain in a state of near dereliction. An enhanced inter-departmental and cross agency approach is required if the value of these assets is to be realised.</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 28:</b></p> <p>The Commission recommends that Local and Regional Tourism Destinations to complement National Destinations should be developed through a multi sectoral approach. This should be complemented by a destination management and marketing initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There is little doubt that tourism in rural areas has enormous development potential. However in order to realise that potential target research, innovation, capacity building, cross sectoral organisational supports and capital investment is required if it is to grow its contribution to the rural economy.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CEDRA recommendation is central to the success of rural tourism, many elements of this recommendation are already in place or being actioned as we speak. What is clearly missing is cross sectoral organisational coordination and alignment of input. There are critical partners such as LDCs who must be at the table, otherwise there will be a deficit of information, capacity and capital in respect of the development of local tourism initiatives in parallel with regional and national destinations.</li> <li>• In respect of the information deficit CEDRA references the need for research, innovation and capacity building. LDCs through LEADER have already conducted research on community tourism heritage trails, development of lakes and rivers, making the most of our scenic vistas, countryside recreation, cutting edge technology and equine tourism to name but a few. This research must be taken into account in a broader context.</li> </ul>

CEDRA Recommendation	CEDRA Rationale	LDC Comments
<p><b>Recommendation 33:</b></p> <p>“In line with the overall integrated approach advocated by CEDRA the Commission recommends the elaboration of a comprehensive national framework for the development and growth of indigenous renewable energy businesses with a particular focus on their potential for the economic development of rural Ireland”.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 34:</b></p> <p>“Public policy instruments (including financial) should be further developed to encourage the production of energy from renewable sources fulfilling environmental obligations and supporting sustainable development. Initiative emerging from these instruments should be designed in a way that realises direct benefits for rural areas in terms of increased income, additional employment, indirect benefits (e.g. amenity, rural tourism) and direct community benefit. The initiatives must be of sufficiently long timeframe to be of benefit to allow the enterprise to get off the ground”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Green Economy is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing markets in the world. For Ireland, the green economy covers activities as diverse as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable food production, tourism, ‘green’ financial services and energy efficient products and services. As the resource is largely rural based, the sector has significant potential for economic development in rural areas.</li> <li>• Research indicates that the three renewable energy areas with the most significant potential to contribute to the rural economic development are Wind Energy, Marine Energy and Bioenergy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We welcome the Government’s commitment to energy related goals in the policy programme published by the new Government. In particular, we support the commitment to use the Energy White Paper (2015) as a framework to guide policy between now and 2030.</li> <li>• In particular, we welcome the Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty 2016 – 2019.</li> <li>• We support the commitment to developing a framework by which local communities can share in the benefits of substantial new energy infrastructure.</li> <li>• We welcome the intention to accelerate the updating of the regional planning guidelines for wind farms.</li> <li>• We welcome the proposal for the Department of Agriculture to facilitate the development of solar energy projects with a view to providing a community dividend.</li> <li>• All Local Development Strategies have recognised the importance of the green economy and renewable energies as potential employment creation opportunities for rural areas and the improvement.</li> <li>• Local Development Companies are well positioned to facilitate the implementation of Government policy and to facilitate rural communities to participate more fully in the development of renewable energy projects that will derive community benefit.</li> </ul>

Fig 1

# COMMUNITY LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Delivered by National Network of Local Development Companies



## Integrated Local Development Strategy

Matching unemployed with local employers and job opportunities	Stimulate creation of Rural Enterprises & farm diversification
Keeping unemployed close to labour market through relevant skills development, work experience and personal development	Addressing under-employment and seasonality through support for off farm employment opportunities
Self-employment support and training for unemployed	Work experience opportunities in private/community sectors
Proactively supporting Social Economy to provide important social services, and public goods	Supporting equality of access to Education, Training and Lifelong learning opportunities
Promoting Active Citizenship & Linking Volunteers with local community & voluntary groups	Stimulating cultural/artisan food and place-based Tourism
Building local 'social capital' through developmental supports to groups & individuals	Supporting Community & voluntary groups access community employment opportunities