

Briefing Document

Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2017

In accordance with the Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2017, administered by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Sligo County Council has been tasked with the responsibility to produce applications for up to **15 no. towns and villages** in the county by the Dept. deadline on the **30th of June 2017**. **Expressions of Interest, available for download form the County Council website, for communities/applicants must be returned in advance for assessment by Wed 31 May.**

Scheme Outline

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2017 will focus on improving the economic development of our rural towns and villages and will be run in **two phases**:

Phase 1, which is the focus of this document, is the main scheme concentrating on projects to enhance and develop towns and villages socially, economically and culturally.

Phase 2 will involve a pilot to encourage residential occupancy in rural towns and villages. This phase will be launched in the second half of 2017.

Projects under Phase 1 will be required to commence in 2017 and be completed by the middle of 2018, with a total of **€20 million** approved.

The scheme will be targeted at two categories of Towns/Villages; Category 1: Towns and villages with a population of less than 5,000 people and Category 2: Towns with a population of 5,001 to 10,000 people. The primary focus of the 2017 scheme will be on villages and towns with population of less than 5,000 which will receive at least 60% of available funding.

Application Process

Selection of projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2017 will be by means of a **competitive process** at both local and national level. Full involvement by community interests and business interests will be an essential feature of successful projects.

The following stages will apply to the application process:

- Local Authorities will be required to **advertise for expressions** of interest from towns/villages in their area and will **select up to 15 proposals** for development into detailed applications to be submitted to the Department.
- Local Authorities, in consultation with town/village community and business interests will develop the selected expressions of interest into detailed applications to be submitted.
- A total of 15 project applications may be submitted by each Local Authority. Only one application can be submitted in respect of any individual town; however, the

application may include several linked components to support the rejuvenation of the town/village.

- The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will assess these proposals and **will approve up to 300 of the best projects** for funding, depending on the quality of the projects and the level of funding sought.

Project Types

It is an objective of the 2017 Town and Village Renewal Scheme that projects should, where possible, utilise or leverage other national or local government initiatives to create projects of scale and maximise the impact on towns or villages. Measures which are taken under the Scheme should also have a sustainable and visible impact on the town/village.

The following are indicative lists of the types of activities that can be supported (these lists are not exhaustive).

Projects which display the following will be considered High Priority by the Department for assessment purposes:

- Projects that support entrepreneurship (e.g. development of Enterprise Hubs, Hot Desk Facilities, Digital Hubs, Creative Hubs, training facilities)
- Integrated approaches to developing individual sectors within the town and/or its environs (e.g. artisan food hubs, craft hubs)
- Projects which demonstrate collaboration between town centre businesses and the surrounding area to produce economic benefit
- Tourism initiatives
- Enhancement of heritage and/or other community assets
- Town safety and accessibility enhancements
- Provision/enhancement of leisure facilities (e.g. Town Parks, walking trails)
- Conducting/commissioning of Town/Village health check
- Development of quality marks, such as Purple Flag, Heritage Town, etc.

The following types of activity are eligible for support, but will be considered a lower priority for towns with a population of over 1,000 people unless they can be shown to be an integral part of a higher priority project:

- Enhancement of streetscape and town environment
- Shop front enhancement
- Branding and promotion of the town/village to attract new customers and/or business investment
- Car parking improvements
- Targeted actions to tackle minor infrastructural deficiencies in access, services, site development works and other infrastructure that may be needed to support housing and commercial development

Grant Level

Up to 80% of the total cost of a project under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme will be provided for any individual project. **The minimum grant which is available is €20,000 and the maximum is €100,000.** Up to 10% of the total cost may be provided in the form of “in-kind” contributions (e.g. land lease or voluntary labour⁴); a minimum cash contribution of 10% will

also be required. A higher maximum of €200,000 will be considered for a limited number of projects where a robust case can be made demonstrating exceptionally strong economic benefit to a town.

Public Art Works

In addition, Local Authorities may seek further optional funding of up to €20,000 (in total) for art works to enhance public spaces, as part of one or more project proposals submitted in respect of their area. Local Authorities opting to apply for this funding are required to complete a separate Art Works application form for each project, this should include a brief outline of their proposals as part of their applications. It will be a matter for each Local Authority to commission and choose the works to be funded, ideally with an emphasis on participation by local artists.

Selection Criteria

The following is a guide to the criteria which will be applied by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the selection process:

- Successful proposals will include activities which have clear positive economic impacts on the town, rather than just public realm-type actions. In this context, some weighting will be given to projects that demonstrate a REDZ-type component², such as stimulating economic activity between a town/village and neighbouring townlands.
- Successful proposals will demonstrate close collaboration between communities and business interests in the design and delivery of proposed projects and must have the support of the Local Authority. Successful town revival is most likely to be achieved where there is close partnership on projects between the community, public, and private sectors.
- All project proposals should outline the consultation processes followed with local community and business interests
- Weighting will be given to projects which demonstrate leveraging of, or linkages with, other schemes operated by Government Departments or agencies (e.g. in the areas of heritage, arts, culture, tidy towns, recreational facilities, re-use of vacant premises, vacant sites, energy efficiency schemes, etc.).
- Towns aiming to achieve Purple Flag³ or similar recognition will also be viewed positively.
- Proposals should also be consistent with the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), town health checks, and other local development plans.
- The Framework for Town Centre Renewal, developed by the Retail Consultation Forum under the auspices of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, may also provide a useful guidance for the development of town centre plans.
- Towns approved under the 2016 Town and Village Renewal Scheme may be considered if:
 - All 2016 funding has been fully and satisfactorily expended by end-June 2017, and
 - A clear case is made that the new project offers value for continuing investment.

| Selection Criteria | Detailed Outline | Max Score | Quality Threshold |
|---|--|------------|-------------------|
| Economic Development Potential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project include activities that have clear positive economic impacts? Does the project complement or leverage other Government programmes and objectives? Does the proposal add value to current initiatives? For projects exceeding €100,000 does the project demonstrate a strong economic case? | 30 | 19.5 |
| Strategic nature of the proposal and coherence with local area plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is there that the project proposal is in line with the aims and objectives of local area plans? ? Did the application seek input from local community or business interests? | 20 | 13 |
| Demonstration of need and potential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal include a clear statement of identified needs? Does the proposed plan of action address the needs identified? Does the proposal show engagement with the local community and business interests in the formulation of the project proposal? | 20 | 13 |
| Realistic nature of the proposal? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are a clear set of defined outputs and outcomes included in the proposal? Has a delivery mechanism been identified? Is there a process in place to measure outcomes and impact of the proposal over time? | 15 | 9.75 |
| Value for Money | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which projects are clear and include targets, realistic costing and timescales. Clear rationale for costs requested. The cost effectiveness of the proposal with regard to the level, range and quality of outputs and outcomes to be delivered. | 15 | 9.75 |
| Total | | 100 | 65 |

Sligo County Council proposes to apply the **same criteria** in order to achieve the optimum level of success along with the **Settlement Strategy for County Sligo** contained within the Sligo County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 in order to focus funding strategically within the county:

The Settlement Strategy for County Sligo is set out in Section 3.2 of the draft SCDP 2017-2023 as follows;

“3.2 Settlement hierarchy

The distribution of future population growth into settlements is based on the settlements’ role and position in the spatial hierarchy. County Sligo’s settlement hierarchy is as follows:

Gateway City: *Sligo and Environs*
Gateway Satellites: *Ballysadare, Collooney, Coolaney, Grange, Strandhill*
Key Support Towns: *Ballymote, Tobercurry, Enniscrone*

Villages sustaining rural communities: Aclare, Ballinacarrow, Ballinafad, Ballincar, Ballintogher, Ballygawley, Banada, Bellaghy, Bunnanadden, Carney, Castlebaldwin, Cliffony, Cloonacool, Culfadda, Curry, Dromore West, Drumcliff , Easky, Geevagh, Gorteen, Monasteraden, Mullaghmore, Ransboro, Rathcormack, Riverstown, Tourlestrane, Rosses Point.

In parallel with their position in the settlement hierarchy, Strandhill, Rosses Point, Mullaghmore, Enniscrone, Easky and Coolaney and have a regionally-significant special tourism function.”

Within the context of the above there is a clearly defined rationale for the development of population trends within County Sligo over the coming years. This strategy creates a clear lens within which the future development of Co. Sligo can be seen.