



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil Shligigh  
Sligo Local Community Development  
Committee

# Sligo.

## Sligo Local Community Development Committee



# ANNUAL



# REPORT



# 2020



#sligoliveinvestvisit

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## Foreword from the Chairpersons of Sligo Local Community Development Committee

The Local Government Reform Act of 2014 bestowed particular responsibility on local government to provide strategic leadership at local level, with the establishment of Local Community Development Committees. LCDCs have responsibility for the planning and oversight of a substantial amount of local development spends on behalf of the State or by other local development agencies and structures and have brought a new collaborative approach which is reflected in the framework set out in the Local Economic Community Planning process.

Fortunately in Sligo there has always been a strong tradition of mutual co-operation between the local government and local development sectors both at an informal and formal level and the establishment of the LCDC has helped cement this partnership. The LCDC is a partnership I have valued and its programmes together with its sub-committee structures heralded much success in progressing discussions on social inclusion and community development together with lifelong up-skilling and learning opportunities.

The global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 has had a profound effect on our lives and has impacted on everything we do. Following the Government's announcement on St. Patrick's Day, Local Authorities were tasked with leading out on the Emergency response.

We've had to endure periods of lockdown when our schools and many businesses were forced to shut down and our elderly and most vulnerable people were cocooning, the community and voluntary sector have proven to be invaluable in their commitment to the local community response. On behalf of the LCDC, I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary commitment and dedication of all those involved in the delivery of essential services to individuals, communities and businesses in our community during these difficult times.



***Mr. Hugh MacConville, Acting Chairperson Sligo LCDC (March– September 2020)***

As current Chairperson of the LCDC, I wish to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of all members of the LCDC and support staff during this period. The input of Members has been crucial in the implementation of the community elements of the Local Economic & Community Plan, the oversight of our main programmes such as the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and the Rural Development Programme (RDP) through the Local Action Group. Members have also had an input into many other funding programmes such as the Peace IV Programme, the Community Enhancement Programme, the Healthy Ireland Programme & Community Resilience fund, and have always carried out their role with diligence, integrity and professionalism. I look forward to seeing the LCDC continue its good work in partnership with local stakeholders and the local community for the betterment of Sligo.

The past year has seen a strong resilience develop in the community and voluntary sector emanating from the Covid 19 burden. I look forward to working with the LCDC in 2021 in developing the new LECP for Sligo to take Sligo forward towards 2030.



***Cllr Dara Mulvey, Chairperson Sligo LCDC (October 2020 to date)***

## **A Statement by the Chief Officer, Sligo LCDC**

The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is required to prepare and submit a report to the Local Authority on its activities in the previous year. This report outlines progress in respect of the various LCDC functions over 2020 including a review of progress generally, details of meetings held, implementation of the Local Economic & Community Plan and details of the oversight, management and collaboration in relation to public-funded programmes under the LCDC's remit including the LEADER Programme, the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Healthy Ireland Fund and the Peace IV Programme.

Since the submission of the last report, Sligo LCDC and its sub groups have had a busy and productive year despite the challenges of Covid 19.

Under the leadership of Mr. Hugh MacConville who acted as Chairperson on the resignation of Cllr Chris MacManus in March 2020 and later Cllr Dara Mulvey who was elected Chairperson in October, the LCDC continued to embark upon an ambitious work programme which included the oversight of many funding programmes.

I wish to acknowledge the co-operation of all the members and partners of the Sligo LCDC over the past year which has seen the benefits of real partnership arising from the existence of the valuable structure and programmes of the LCDC. All LCDC meetings since April 2020 have been held virtually in keeping with Government guidelines. The pandemic has been so impactful for the community and has led to numerous changes in the way we deliver our programmes, in particular SICAP, Healthy Ireland and Community Grant assistance. The putting in place of the Collaborative Community Response Forum and Call Centre all centred in my Directorate has crossed over all community needs and the positive response from agencies and community groups working together particularly during the periods of lockdown has been remarkable. I would like to take this opportunity also to acknowledge the work of staff of the section and our colleagues in County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG who have been supportive and continued to implement the valuable Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme during these difficult times.

Sligo LCDC also acts as the Local Action Group (LAG) in Sligo for the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020. The LEADER Programme has added to the already significant role played by the LCDC in the oversight of public funding to bring about improved social, economic and community development of the County. The LEADER programme 2014-2020 was due to expire on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 however on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, T.D., announced an extension to the deadline for approvals under the 2014-2020 programme to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. A total of 166 projects were approved for funding under the RDP 2014 – 2020. Minister Humphreys also announced funding for a Transitional LEADER Programme in December 2020. The Transitional Programme commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and will run until the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022

In addition Sligo as a border region saw the successful close out of the PEACE IV Programme. The Programme had been due to expire in September 2020 but was extended to December 2020 with the outbreak of Covid 19 and its impact on programme delivery. A consultation process for the PEACE Plus Programme is currently underway managed by the SEUPB, (Special European Union Projects Board) which will shape the programme.

The period has been active and successful for the Sligo LCDC and I set out hereunder more detail in relation to this activity and other areas of progress which have continued throughout the Covid 19 pandemic.



***Dorothy Clarke, Chief Officer***

## 1. Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

The Sligo LCDC was formally established by resolution of the local authority on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014 for the purposes of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The committee is made up of representatives from the local government and local development sectors, public bodies and representatives of social, economic, environmental and community interests.

National policy envisages a central role for local government in the planning and oversight of local and community development programmes while maintaining a key role for local development entities in front line delivery.

Section 128B of the Local Government Act 2001 sets out the **functions** of LCDCs. These functions include—

- in relation to the **Local Economic and Community Plan**, to —
  - prepare and implement the community elements of a 6-year Local Economic and Community Plan (the Plan),
  - review and monitor on an on-going basis the implementation of the community elements of the Plan and, if appropriate, to revise the actions and strategies set to achieve the objectives of the Plan, and
  - consider a draft of the economic elements of the Plan and adopt a statement for consideration of the Council in this regard,
- to coordinate, manage and oversee the implementation of **local and community development programmes** that—
  - may be agreed between Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and other Government Departments or State bodies,
  - may be sourced through direct application by the LCDC or local authority on the LCDC's behalf (e.g. EU programmes), or
  - may be agreed by the local authority with relevant State agencies or Government Departments.
- to improve the **coordination of public-funded local and community development programmes** and reduce duplication, and to coordinate generally local and community development programmes within the LCDC's operational area, and
- to prepare an **annual report** on the performance of its functions.

The LCDC, like the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) and the Strategic Policy Committees (SPC), is a committee of the local authority. Unlike the CPG and SPCs, however, the LCDC is independent from the local authority in the performance of its functions. While these functions will be determined by Government from time to time as provided for under Local Government Act, how those functions are carried out and any decisions to be made by the LCDC when carrying out those functions are solely a matter for the LCDC.

This independence is provided for explicitly in sections 49A (2) and 128B (8) of the 2001 Act.

### 1.1 Dates and attendance at LCDC Meetings

LCDC/LAG meetings took place on the following dates in 2020 – meetings since April 2020 were held virtually;

27 <sup>th</sup> February	30 <sup>th</sup> April	23 <sup>rd</sup> July	10 <sup>th</sup> September	29 <sup>th</sup> October	17 <sup>th</sup> December
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Attendance of Sectors represented on Sligo LCDC at meetings during 2020						
Sector Represented	27th February	30th April	23rd July	10th September	29th October	17th December
Elected Member	Yes	Vacant seat on resignation of Cllr MacManus	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elected Member	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elected Member	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Local Authority Official	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Local Authority Official	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Agency - DEASP	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Agency - Health Service Executive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Agency - Education & Training Board	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Local Development Company	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trade Union	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Business	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Farming	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PPN - Environment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PPN - Community & Voluntary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PPN - Community & Voluntary	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
PPN - Social Inclusion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
PPN - Social Inclusion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

### 1.2 Sligo LCDC Membership 2020

Name	Sector	Organisation
Cllr Chris MacManus (Elected Chairperson 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2019) Resigned March 2020	Local Government	Sligo County Council
Cllr Dara Mulvey (Elected Chairperson Oct 2020)	Local Government	Sligo County Council
Cllr Joe Queenan	Local Government	Sligo County Council
Cllr Tom Fox (replaced Cllr MacManus June 2020)	Local Government	Sligo County Council
Mr. Ciarán Hayes – retired as CE of Sligo County Council in Dec 2020 Mr. Tom Kilfeather – Deputy Chief Executive since Dec 2020	Local Government	Sligo County Council
Mr. John Reilly	Local Government / Local Enterprise Office	Sligo County Council
Mr. John Kennedy	State Agency	Dept. Of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (DEASP)
Ms. Patricia Garland	State Agency	Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan HSE
Ms. Mary Brodie – Resigned Dec 2020 Mr. Peter Egan (from December 2020)	State Agency	Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim ETB
Ms. June Murphy (from Jan – Sept 2020) Mr. John Feerick (from Sept 2020)	Local Development Sector	Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG.
Mr. Hugh MacConville (Vice Chairperson)	Trade Union Interests	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Mr. Aidan Doyle	Business Interests	Sligo Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Kathleen Henry	Farming / Agriculture Interests	Farming / Agriculture Pillar
Mr. Michael Kirby	Environmental Interests	Environment Pillar (PPN)
Ms. Elizabeth King	Community & Voluntary – Social Inclusion	PPN
Mr. Gerald O'Connor	Community & Voluntary	PPN
Dr. Jennifer Van Aswegen	Community & Voluntary – Social Inclusion	PPN
Ms. Mary Murphy (March – December 2020)	Community & Voluntary	PPN
<i>In accordance with Department Guidelines on the Operation of LCDCs, a review of the Membership will take place in May 2021</i>		



*Virtual meeting of the LCDC in session – April 2020*

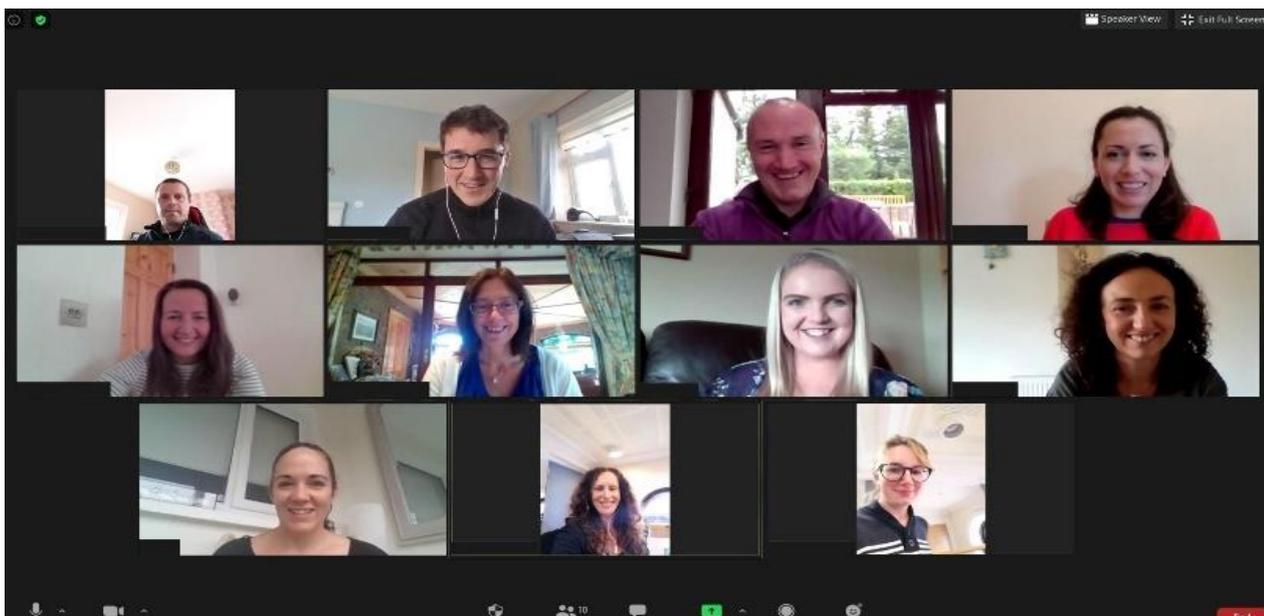
## 2. COVID 19 Community Response Forum and Community Call

In looking back at 2020 the biggest event we will all recall for many generations to come was the onset of a world pandemic. Different aspects of the work of the LCDC will touch on how the Community was impacted and supported by programmes throughout the year. It saw the establishment of the COVID 19 Community Response Forum, chaired by the Chief Executive, which held its inaugural meeting virtually on Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.

The purpose of the Forum as a collaborative entity was to lead and co-ordinate the response needed in the unprecedented immediate need to that all those most vulnerable and most impacted were supported. It had to build and nurture community resilience. Other functions included:

- Harnessing offers of assistance, collecting and mapping information
- Focusing on collaboration, addressing gaps, avoiding duplication, understanding and coordinating efforts
- National Governance oversight and reporting

The Forum membership covered agencies from a statutory perspective such as the HSE, the Gardaí, Dept Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Túsla, An Post, Local Community Development Committee, Civil Defence, Cranmore Regeneration, and other non statutory, voluntary, and community support organisations such as Sligo Leader Partnership, Public Participation Network, GAA, Sligo Volunteer Centre, Sligo BID, Local Link, Citizens Information, Alone, IFA, Sligo Traveller Support Group, Northside Community Partnership, Order of Malta and many more.



*Pictured above a screen shot of the Community Response Forum meeting in June 2020 with Ciarán Hayes, CE as Chair, and the staff of the section who acted as leads in manning the Helpline.*

## 2.1 Community Support Helpline

In tandem with the establishment of the COVID Community Response Forum, the Community Support Helpline was critically needed to provide a one stop shop to take calls, emails and texts from people in the community who were impacted due to restrictions imposed. The Corporate, IT and Community sections worked hand in hand and in haste to achieve this goal which was delivered largely from working remotely. The PPN developed a useful databank of community groups mapped geographically to easily identify

community and voluntary groups on the ground who were willing to assist callers to the support line from food deliveries, requests for hot food, pharmacy collections and many more queries.

Services covered were:

- Collection & Delivery
- Transport – later removed
- Social isolation and supports
- Meals and their delivery
- Garda related matters
- Other medical and health needs

The help desk built an information bank, carried out a mapping exercise in consultation with the PPN and the BID assisted in the co ordination of the volunteer groups on the ground, developed responses around services open and available and ultimately matched need with the appropriate response.

**Sligo COVID-19 Community Response Forum**

A helpdesk will respond to the needs of vulnerable members of our community

**Freephone:** 1800 292 765

**Web:** [www.sligococo.ie/covidsupport/](http://www.sligococo.ie/covidsupport/)

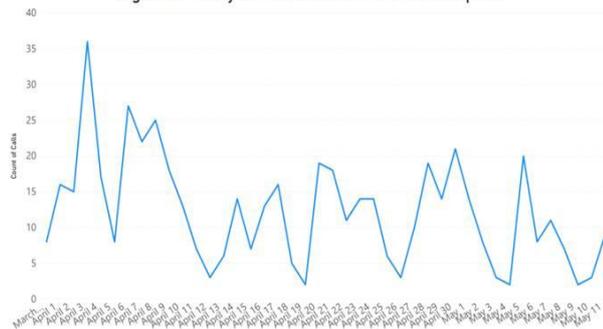
**Email:** [covidsupport@sligococo.ie](mailto:covidsupport@sligococo.ie)

**Free Text:** Text SLIGO to 50100 followed by request

**Available:** Monday - Sunday, 8am - 8pm



Figure 1 – Daily Breakdown of Calls to the Helpline



Above, details of the COVID Community Support helpline and a sample trend graph of daily calls to the helpline.

At its peak the desk was handling up to 40 calls per day and identifying the main emerging issues on the ground ranging across food poverty, isolation and loneliness, information gaps on Covid or health matters generally, wellbeing and need for physical exercise, transport issues, Income support, gaps where locations didn't have a volunteer and practical issues such as waste management and grass cutting.



*Above D Clarke, Chief Officer, with Council staff preparing supplies of health and safety equipment for distribution to community groups arising from Corporate Donations and food boxes at the Sligo Sports Centre for distribution by Sligo Leader Partnership CLG.*

## 2.2 Collaboration and LCDC structures

Delivering the Forum's objectives was greatly enhanced by the operating context of solid structures already in place in LCDC partners and programmes. Collaboration by way of the SICAP programmes and grants, the Covid Emergency Grant scheme, Healthy Ireland, Age Friendly, the PPN and voluntary donations from the business sector, enabled agencies on the ground such as Sligo Leader partnership, An Post, the GAA, the Gardaí, Alone, etc to deliver an effective and safe response with their extensive existing structures building community resilience and enabling a level of safe reopening of community spaces and services.

## 3. Local Economic and Community Plan (Community Elements)

### 3.1 Implementation & Monitoring of the LECP

In accordance with its primary function under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 of the preparation of the community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), the past year and in to 2021 will see the culmination of the implementation and monitoring of the current LECP. The next iteration of LECP planning will build on the strong foundation of this inaugural plan.

The LECP seeks to advance the overarching purpose of local government as being 'to promote the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens and communities' by;

- The promotion of local and community development.
- The promotion of economic development

The LECP 2016 – 2021 was prepared in a collaborative manner setting out the Policy framework and context, the vision and goals for the duration, and the Action Plan dealing with the 6 key themes.

1. Employment and Sustainable Economic Activity
2. Education and Training
3. Health and Well being
4. Social Inclusion, Equality and Poverty,
5. Environment and Climate Change
6. Collaborative Framework

In order to ensure that the preparation of the economic and community elements of the LECP are co-ordinated, and duplication avoided, (both in terms of effort and engagement with stakeholders) each local authority established an Advisory Steering Group to assist in the preparation, drafting, adoption, and monitoring of the LECP.

Monitoring of actions set out in the LECP has been carried out on an ongoing basis with methods of monitoring including:

- Ongoing liaison with key delivery agencies
- Presentations from Key agencies to AGS/LCDC
- The delivery of actions contained within Key programmes being linked to the progression of the LECP e.g. projects funded under the Community Enhancement Programme and Healthy Ireland.

## 3.2 The next LECP – Sligo: One Voice One Vision – Towards 2030

2021 has seen the commencement of the strategic framework: Sligo: One Voice, One Vision – Towards 2030 (Sligo 2030) – County Sligo’s Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) an integrated and strategic Economic, Social, Community and Spatial Framework – focusing on a modern Green and Smart Sligo.

In developing this framework, regard will be had to LECP guidance including extensive stakeholder engagement. The new Plan will, with the benefit of an updated socio economic profile and resultant needs analysis model, provide a vision and framework for Sligo to move forward into the next decade, and is expected to be completed by December 2021.

## 4. Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018 – 2022 was an important programme for 2020 especially given its valuable contribution in the Covid circumstances in addition to providing its standard contribution to tackling poverty and social exclusion at a local level through local

engagement and partnerships with disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG continues to deliver the programme on behalf of Sligo LCDC.

There are 2 goals under the Programme;

### **Goal 1: Supporting Communities**

To support communities and target groups to engage with relevant stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues, developing the capacity of Local Community Groups, and creating more sustainable communities.

### **Goal 2: Supporting Individuals**

To support disadvantaged individuals to improve the quality of their lives through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market supports.

### **Target groups to be supported under SICAP 2018 - 2022 are as follows;**

Disadvantaged Children and Families	People living in Disadvantaged Communities
Disadvantaged Young People (aged 15 – 24)	People with Disabilities
Disadvantaged Women	Roma
Lone Parents	The Disengaged from the Labour Market (Economically Inactive)
Emerging Needs Group*	Travellers
Low Income Workers/ Households	The Unemployed
New Communities	

\*Sligo LCDC agreed on the inclusion of ***Economically Vulnerable in need of Up-skilling*** under the Emerging needs Target group for 2020.

SICAP is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development with co-funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

## **4.1 Progress under SICAP 2020**

The allocated budget for 2020 was **€603,079** which represented a 3% increase on 2019.

The outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic impacted on the delivery of SICAP in 2020 with Local Development Companies having to adapt to meet the challenges faced by imposed restrictions.

The Department of Rural & Community Development and Pobal identified a number of ways in which flexibility could be adopted within SICAP to enable Local Development Companies to deliver responsive measures.

Local Development Companies (LDCs) were advised that clients could be registered over the phone during Covid 19 with face to face meetings to take place once the situation has improved. LDCs were also encouraged to consider using online supports to deliver training and reach out to clients and allocate grants / provide supports to local community groups engaging with vulnerable groups affected by this crisis.

County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG developed a range of online supports including Positive Mental Health videos featuring mindfulness, make-up tutorials, gardening and cooking tips, Job Ready videos and BTWEA Business Training. Life Long Learning activities are also being delivered online e.g. Arts classes, Creative Writing Initiative and Digital skills tutorials.

As part of the Sligo Community Response Forum, Sligo LCDC in conjunction with County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG (SLPC) introduced a Grant scheme under SICAP to support community groups and organisations directly responding to the COVID-19 emergency within County Sligo. A second round of SICAP Grants was introduced in August 2020 to provide funding to community centres/Men's sheds in order to assist them to re-open and continue to operate during Covid restrictions.

All progress under SICAP is recorded on the Integrated Reporting Information System (IRIS)

In accordance with the Programme Requirements for SICAP, continued funding is subject to positive findings from a mid-year and annual performance review by the LCDC and the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets being achieved.

Due to the impact of Covid 19 on Programme delivery in 2020, the annual target for KPI 2 was reduced by 15% from 431 to 366 Individuals. This was agreed by the LCDC at their meeting 29th October 2020 with approval confirmed by Pobal on 20th November 2020.

At the 2020 Annual performance review targets under both KPIs (below) were exceeded. The LCDC approved the 2020 SICAP Annual Performance Review reports at their meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Ref	Key Performance Indicator	Original Annual Target	Reduced Target agreed November 2020	Actuals as at 31/12/2020	% achieved at 31.12.20
KPI 1	Number of local community groups supported under SICAP	45	45	47	104%
KPI 2	Number of Individuals (aged 15 years upwards) supported under SICAP	431	366	378	103%
	Percentage of Individuals supported under KPI 2 living in disadvantaged areas (156 individuals)	18%	18%	28.69%	

### 4.2 SICAP 2021

The LCDC formally approved the 2021 Annual Plan for SICAP at their meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Targets for 2021 are outlined in table below. Due to the ongoing impact of Covid 19 on programme delivery, annual targets were reduced on previous years.

Ref	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Annual Target 2021
1.	Total number of local community groups engaged under SICAP	38
2.	Number of Individuals (aged 15 years upwards) assisted under SICAP on a one to one basis	366
3	Individuals under KPI2 living in Disadvantaged areas	18%

Sligo LCDC agreed on the inclusion of **Economically Vulnerable in need of Up-skilling** under the Emerging needs Target group for 2021.

### 4.3 Social Inclusion & SICAP Monitoring Committee

The Social Inclusion & SICAP Monitoring Committee continues to oversee the delivery of SICAP and to monitor implementation progress

Members of this Committee in 2020 were as follows;

- Cllr Dara Mulvey (Chair)
- Mr. John Kennedy (DEASP rep on LCDC)
- Ms. Elizabeth King (PPN Social Inclusion rep on LCDC)
- Mr. Hugh MacConville (LCDC)
- Dr. Jennifer Van Aswegen (PPN Social Inclusion rep on LCDC)
- Ms. Patricia Garland (HSE Rep on LCDC)
- Ms. Dorothy Clarke (Chief Officer)

The Committee met on the following dates to discuss progress on SICAP in 2020 with meetings from September – November 2020 convened virtually.

- 29<sup>th</sup> January
- 17<sup>th</sup> September
- 21<sup>st</sup> October
- 25<sup>th</sup> November

As part of the ongoing monitoring of the programme, it was agreed by the Social Inclusion & SICAP Monitoring Committee to carry out two site verification visits on SICAP projects per quarter. County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG suggest projects for verification and suitable dates and a notification e-mail is sent to all members of the LCDC allowing members the opportunity to visit projects selected. Unfortunately due to the impact of Covid 19, site visits could not be carried out from March – December 2020. But there are many instances to verify the work of the programme in 2021 such as the food run and associated video material at <https://youtu.be/XnutZ8I2Ark>



The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020

Some samples below of SICAP collaborative projects in 2020



## Friendly Call Service

- Sligo LEADER Partnership offers a **FREE** Friendly Call Service
- Your friendly caller offers a regular catch-up - a chat about your day and how you are doing
  - The service provides friendship and security; making you feel connected while you are at home
  - If you do not answer the phone, the caller will phone a member of your family, neighbour or friend



If you would like to receive a regular call from a friendly voice, just call Karen on **071 9141138** to register



Members of Sligo LCDC in attendance at a Return to Work Information event for Women (funded under SICAP in collaboration with the DEASP & Cranmore Regeneration) – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## 5. Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 (LEADER Programme)

Sligo LCDC, as Local Action Group (LAG) continued to deliver the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme in 2020 despite the challenges imposed by the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in March. The LAG working in partnership with the Council as Financial Partner and County Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG as Implementing Partner ensured that the community did not lose out on any eligible projects they were in a position to progress or seek funding for.

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) for County Sligo forms the basis against which all project approvals will be measured. The LCDC as LAG has final approval on what projects proceed subject to the recommendation of the Independent Evaluation Committee. The Council acts as lead partner in administrative and financial matters. Its role will also be to conduct verification checks, make payments to promoters and manage drawdown from the Department and funding to the Implementing Partner.

The LEADER allocation for Sligo 2014-2020 was **€7,655,648**. This allocation was broken down between;

- Preparatory Support for the Local Development Strategy - €15,000
- Administration & Animation Costs - €1,913,912
- Implementation of operations/Projects - €5,726,736

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) outlines the three main Project themes that were identified as overarching needs for the county and out of that fall nine sub-themes as follows:

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
<b>Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation</b>	<b>Social Inclusion</b>	<b>Rural Environment</b>
<b>Sub Themes</b>	<b>Sub Themes</b>	<b>Sub Themes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rural Tourism</li> <li>○ Enterprise Development</li> <li>○ Rural Towns</li> <li>○ Broadband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Basic Services targeted at hard to reach communities</li> <li>○ Rural Youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Protection and sustainable use of water resources</li> <li>○ Local Biodiversity</li> <li>○ Renewable energy</li> </ul>
<b>€2,224,459</b>	<b>€3,099,746</b>	<b>€402,532</b>

An additional budget of €184,696.05 was approved for Co-Operation projects under the LEADER Programme.



**Funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development**

## 5.1 LEADER Application Process



*\*\*Since the 1st February 2019, Local Authorities in their role as Lead Financial Partner (LFP), in each LCDC LAG area have been undertaking Article 48 Checks, on projects and claims, with the exception of “In-House” projects delivered directly by the LAG or Implementing Partner (IP) where Pobal will continue to perform Article 48 checks. Pobal will also carry out checks on Monthly administration claims.*

The LEADER programme 2014-2020 has been a success in Sligo. A total of 166 Projects have been approved under the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020, with Letters of Offer issued to Project Promoters, to the value of € €5,951,274.96.

Projects vary from the development of community playgrounds, Walking Tracks and all weather playing facilities to purchase of equipment, marketing and feasibility projects. As at the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021, a total of €3,103,334.56 has been paid to Promoters in respect of claims submitted on 102 No. projects and funds in the amount of €1,211,891.91 have been approved by the Department in respect of Administration of the LEADER Programme.

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, T.D., announced an extension to the deadline for approvals under the 2014-2020 programme to 31st March 2021.



*Cllr Gino O'Boyle SCC, Marian Harkin TD, Aisling Ni Cheallaigh- Performing artist, Cllr Tom Fox, SCC/LCDC, Lysette Goulden –Performing Artist, Cllr Dara Mulvey, Cathaoirleach SCC/LCDC Chairperson, Orla Buckley - Festival Director, Frank Feighan TD - Minister of State, Jenny Tufts - Performing artist, Neil O Connell - Festival Director*

*15<sup>th</sup> May 2021 - Pictured at a live recording at the festival site for the Wild Roots Music Performing Arts & Adventure Festival*

## 5.2 Transitional LEADER Programme

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, T.D., announced funding of €20 million for a Transitional LEADER Programme as committed to in the Programme for Government with a further €50 million funding announced in April 2021. The aim of the Transitional LEADER Programme is to allow locally-led rural development projects to continue to be delivered using the current LEADER model until the new EU programme commences in 2023. The new Transitional LEADER Programme commenced on 1st April 2021 and will run until the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

As advised by the Department of Rural & Community Development on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021, the indicative allocation for Sligo is €2,261,896 (€1,696,422 for projects and €565,474 administration costs).

## Priorities for the Transitional Programme

The Department Guidelines, issued in December 2020 stated that the *'Transitional LEADER Programme should seek to address the challenges facing rural Ireland in the coming period and to complement the forthcoming Rural Development Policy which will place an emphasis on job creation, remote working, and maximising the potential of broadband in rural communities'*. The following actions were listed as priorities under the Programme;

1. Supports to rural businesses seeking to reach new markets, expand, innovate and/or diversify in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or Brexit, with a particular emphasis on providing support to businesses in the food sector.
2. Community based projects that seek to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Supports and capacity building for communities that have not previously received assistance under LEADER or other rural programmes, using the Transitional Programme for the LAGs and Implementing Partners to engage directly with new applicants to develop projects and enhance collaboration within communities.
4. Support for new and innovative projects in the areas of climate change, environmental protection and the green economy.
5. Maximising the potential of broadband and the digital economy in communities, including through skills development and building awareness and usage of available remote working facilities.
6. Projects that develop the concept of the Smart Village initiative or Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZs) which could serve as proof-of-concept for more substantial proposals in the context of the next EU-funded LEADER Programme.

In Sligo the closing date for the first round of applications under the Transitional Programme is set for the 28th May 2021. Applications received will be assessed by the Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) at their June meeting and presented to the Local Action Group (LAG) at their meeting 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

## **6. Public Participation Network (PPN)**

A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a structure that brings together Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups in each local authority area.

PPNs were established following the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government Report published in 2014, which recommended greater input by communities into decision-making at local government level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the formal establishment of PPNs and they are now operational in all local authority areas.

The primary purpose of the PPN is to enable member groups to have both an influence on and input into formal decision-making structures of the local authority. The PPN is a key mechanism for local authorities to connect with groups active in their area.

Where the local authority requires public participation on committees, such as the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), or in a public consultation process, the PPN is called upon to select representatives from within its membership groups to perform these duties. PPNs therefore provide a mechanism to facilitate the two-way flow of information between the local authority and the PPN membership groups, and the wider community, to influence policy development and the delivery of services to the wider community.

Sligo PPN was established in September 2014 and has developed into an active and vibrant network which offers a valuable opportunity for groups to avail of training and networking to facilitate the community, voluntary and environmental sectors and enable their participation in local decision making.

## 6.1 Structure of the PPN

The PPN is managed by an elected Secretariat made up of individuals representing the 3 PPN Colleges of Social Inclusion, Environment and Community & Voluntary, Borough of Sligo MD, Ballymote/Tubbercurry MD and Sligo Drumcliff MD. There are currently 9 Secretariat members.



The role of the PPN is to facilitate structured input by the community through representation on various local policy making committees. Sligo PPN currently has community representation on the following committees: Sligo Local Community Development Committee, Sligo Strategic Policy Committees, Joint Policing Committee, County Sligo Heritage Forum, County Sligo Place Names Committee, Public Art Steering Committee, Disability Consultative Committee, Sligo Leader Partnership CLG, North West Fisheries Local Action Group.

The PPN is currently staffed by a part time resource worker and a full time support worker, funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

## 6.2 Influencing and Informing Policies and Programmes

During 2020, Sligo PPN directly fed into and influenced a number of policy areas including; Sligo County Council Corporate Plan, the national climate action plan, national PPN handbook, national PPN Structural Review, PIAB community consultation, DRCD statement of Strategy.

Sligo PPN also has a place on the National Advisory Group which is the oversight body for national PPN operation. This allows PPN resources workers to inform and influence the national direction and evolution of public participation policy and practice

With 10 seats overall on Sligo SPCs and 5 seats on the LCDC, Sligo PPN community representatives are working towards informing local policy development for the better, utilising an evidence base gathered through consultation with the local community.

### 6.2.1 Community Representatives

2020 saw a number of networking and training sessions for all PPN representatives to facilitate committee participation, understanding of the PPN and associated structures and to formulate recommendations for committee organisers which could facilitate the community voice being heard. PPN representatives took part in training with Social Justice Ireland in December 2020 and in 2021 and a national roll out of PPN training, commissioned by DRCD, further builds upon this framework. The DRCD training is aimed at supporting community representatives to fulfil their commitments and working to ensure a culture of true commitment to public participation exists at Local Authority level. This training is available to PPN representatives, Local Authority staff and elected members.

### 6.2.2 PPN Elections

One of the key PPN processes in 2020/21 was the election of new representatives to key committees in the county. The role of these representatives is to work on behalf of their local community, ensuring community input is heard at the committee level and reporting back to the community with key areas of information on programme and policy development.

The following representatives were recently elected to represent their community;

- Auriel Robinson nominated as Environmental Rep to Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG
- Wendy Lyons, Dr Robert Hensey, Angela Wallace nominated to Sligo Heritage Forum
- Padraig Meehan nominated to Sligo Place Names Committee.

By mid 2021, elections will also have taken place for community seats on Sligo LCDC, Sligo Independent Evaluation Committee and the PPN Secretariat.

### 6.2.3 Health and Wellbeing Vision

Wellbeing is an increasingly common term that can describe wider conditions than good physical and mental health, which individuals and communities require for a better quality of life, a healthier environment and increased prosperity. Some aspects of wellbeing are easily measured, such as the

number of pre-school places or the speed with which an ambulance can respond to a call. Others are more difficult to measure, such as our pride of place, heritage and how well citizens look after each other. All aspects of wellbeing are connected to each other.

Supports have been provided to all PPNs to develop a Vision of Community Wellbeing for their county. The Sligo PPN has been working to capture all elements of a community's wellbeing not just employment and infrastructure although these are both vital parts of building and maintaining a strong community.



Under this programme community wellbeing is reviewed under the following headings;

- ***Social and community development;***
- ***Environment and sustainability;***
- ***Work, economy and resources;***
- ***Health;***
- ***Values, culture and meaning;***
- ***Participation, democracy and good governance.***



Each of the 6 headings are assessed in an all county approach to identify if the issues and concerns are consistent across County Sligo. The community wellbeing initiative is run in conjunction with Social Justice Ireland, Irish Environmental Network and The Environmental Pillar.



The Vision for Community Wellbeing acts as a guiding framework for all PPN network activity. It is a benchmark for PPN Representatives and the Secretariat – feeding into policy decisions, strategy development and planning activities. It is a shared vision for the well-being of our communities for this and future generations.

Sligo PPN has conducted extensive consultation for the wellbeing vision for the county. An 'index' of issues will be developed that can act as a county baseline of wellbeing data and will provide useful information to create policy positions for committee representatives and to inform future planning and strategy development. A consultant has been engaged to work with PPN staff and the Secretariat to develop this large data source into the Wellbeing Vision.

## 6.2.4 Public Consultations

- The PPN Facilitated an online public information session on the EirGrid North Connacht 100Kv Project in October 2020

- ■The PPN engaged in initial consultations with Sligo County Council and consultants on Sligo Wayfinding Strategy in October 2020
- ■The PPN hosted an information session with Sligo County Council on the proposed N17 Knock-Collooney project in December 2020
- ■The PPN continue to promote to all members any public consultation and engagement processes that we are made aware of.
- ■The PPN hosted one of the pilot Climate Conversation exercises with DECC in April 2021

## 6.3 Responding to Community Issues

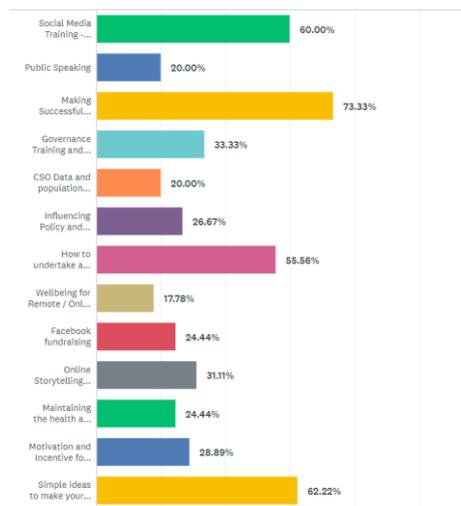
### Community Needs Analysis

In September 2020, Sligo PPN undertook a needs analysis to find out how to best support member groups over the following 6 months in terms of training and information.

### Key Issues to Emerge

Issues such as funding, governance, becoming more environmentally friendly, social media and group promotion were highlighted as important to members.

The PPN shared these findings with key partner organisations in the county including Sligo Leader Partnership CLG and Sligo Volunteer Centre to begin exploring how these issues could be addressed collectively. The PPN has co-ordinated a suite of direct responses to respond to identified needs across 2020 – 2021. Programmes developed include;



- Sligo PPN commissioned a Sligo based edition of the national Funding Digest on behalf of the local community sector and produced a funding best practice guide to support groups in their applications.
- From a governance perspective Sligo PPN has supported Sligo Volunteer Centre in a webinar series based on the 6 principles of the Governance Code.

**SLIGO PPN TIDY TOWNS SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

In the PPN 2020 Needs Analysis, the issues of support for Tidy Towns groups emerged as a priority. Specifically there was a call for a programme which would help groups to prepare for the 2021 national competition.

The Sligo PPN Network has commissioned local ecologists of Woodrow to deliver training for Sligo Tidy Towns groups involved with the National Competition.

Six Weekly Evening Sessions which will run from  
**Wednesday 14 April to Wednesday 19 May 2021 from 7-8:15 pm**

Training Programme Outline

- Session 1: Wed 14/04/2021 (see Information) Waste Waste Planning in Public Spaces
- Session 2: Wed 21/04/2021 Sustainability - doing more with less. Focus on Waste Reduction in Sligo Communities
- Session 3: Wed 28/04/2021 Wildlife & Habitats in Sligo Tidy Towns
- Session 4: Wed 05/05/2021 Tidying Sligo Towns Planning, Year planning & Community Involvement
- Session 5: Wed 12/05/2021 informed by participants
- Session 6: Wed 19/05/2021 Completing Your Tidy Towns 2021 Entry Form

How to register for the event

If you are interested in participating in this support Programme, please email [ppn@sligoppn.com](mailto:ppn@sligoppn.com) and please state the following:

- Full Name
- Email Address
- Which topics/areas (from) you looking to attend (which session you wish to attend. You can sign-up for all 6 sessions or some people may not want to attend a particular session.

- The PPN engaged consultants Woodrow Solutions to develop and deliver a Tidy Towns Support Programme. The aim of this initiative is to support Tidy Towns groups in the 2021 National Tidy Towns Competition. The programme consists a 6 online sessions which explore core aspects of the programme. There was also a dedicated session for participants to inform the content. Aspects of the programme were aligned to the SDGs and also

“ Just a quick message to say that we are really excited about moving up a few levels in the 'Social' context over the coming months thanks to the support and knowledge gained through our sessions with Joanne Sweeney.

Hopefully we can embrace the learning to reach a much wider audience improving the efficiency of our community safety initiatives.

Much appreciated and thanks to Sligo PPN

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS WHO TOOK PART IN OUR SOCIAL MEDIA MENTORING SESSIONS WITH JOANNE SWEENEY

digital Training Institute

WWW.SLIGOPPN.COM @SLIGOPPN

focused on how Tidy Towns groups could support the environmental priorities of the county.

- The PPN has devised a local Residents Association Guide to support local groups to get their governance requirements in order and also to suggest some ideas for community activity.
- Sligo PPN engaged The Digital Marketing Institute to deliver the Social Media Academy. This programme saw member groups apply to receive tailored mentoring to help take their operation effectively online and to adapt to the new way of working as a direct result of Covid-19.

## 6.4 Environmental Planning

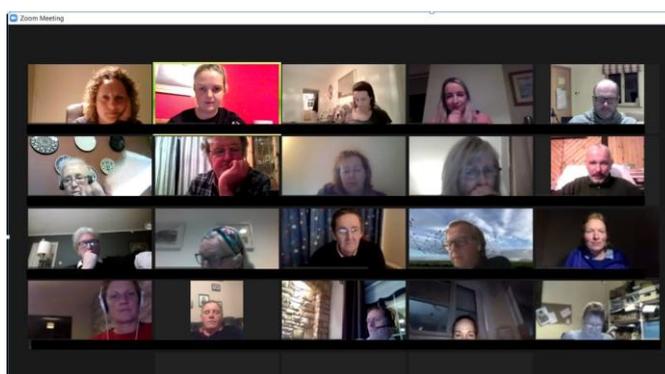
Climate Change is a key issue for the Environment College of the PPN, and indeed for the whole network. Some of the networks' activities include;

- Climate Conversations: Sligo PPN were selected to host one of the pilot Climate Conversations as a partnership approach between DECC and DRCD. Following a model devised by DECC, the PPN hosted an online consultation session which will feed directly into the National Climate Action Plan.



- Environment College Promotion: the PPN have developed an information brochure which outlines the work of the Environment College and profiles the Environment College members.

- Environment Academy: Sligo PPN are working with Sligo Environmental Network to devise an academy programme which introduces member groups to environmental action. The programme is aimed at any community organisations, no matter what their core nature, and explores with them simple and practical steps that they



can take to make their everyday action more environmentally friendly. The programme comprises of focus groups, one-to-one mentoring and the development of an environmental action plan. The culmination of the initiative will be the development of a guide that any group can pick up and select from a suite of actions that they can implement.

- PPN Environment Series: The PPN organised an online environmental series which dealt with some of the key environmental challenges as identified by members of the environment college. The initiative was intended to help PPN community representatives to learn more about key environmental issues that would be relevant at the decision making table and included a range of key note speakers including Professor John Sweeney.

## 6.5 Covid-19 Response

PPNs nationally undertook a series of initiatives to support the most vulnerable in the community in light of Covid-19.

### 6.5.1 The PPN Website

During the first Covid-19 lockdown a new section was developed within the PPN website dedicated to Covid-19. This contained; up to date official guidance and information, updates from the Sligo Community Response Forum, an interactive map featuring all listed emergency response groups and an interactive map and listing of all open businesses.

#### **Key Features of the Website**

Emergency Response Mapping – Due to the PPN’s existing database and connection with community groups, the network was able to immediately reach out to all member groups with a view to forming an Emergency Response Register to support community groups in providing essential services to the most vulnerable in the community.



This process began following the announcement, in March 2020, of a National lockdown. Within less than a week 84 groups had registered. This meant that when the official Community Call was launched and Community Forums developed at county level, Sligo PPN was in a position to work with Sligo County Council responding to callers once the county helpline was launched. Community groups were incorporated on an interactive map, detailing the services they could provide, as well as listings made available to helpline staff.

Business mapping – as the helpline got underway a high demand for information regarding local businesses and essential services emerged. Sligo PPN worked with Sligo BIDs Company and Sligo County Council to map and list key services that were open, noting possible adaptations to service and amended opening times.

Information Hub – to mitigate the large volume of information and direct organisations and communities to the information most suitable to them. Sligo PPN organised official information together under a series of key headings.

## 6.5.2 Sligo Community Response Forum

Sligo PPN were a member of the county community response forum, a collaboration of key local organisations who worked together to coordinate the Covid-19 response at county level. The group was chaired by Sligo County Council Chief Executive. The PPN also sat on a number of working groups under the forum dealing with issues such as allocating travel permission to volunteers, sourcing and distributing PPE and supporting community group re-opening.

## 6.5.3 Step up for Sligo

Sligo PPN received a large and immediate response from the Sligo Community to step up and help those most at need as communities adapted to life under Covid-19. While the PPN acknowledged that the volunteers who made such a difference in the lives of local people did not ask for recognition or thanks, it was felt that it was important to try and capture and preserve the huge contribution that the community sector made in the aftermath of initial Covid-19 restrictions. It is clear that the experience of the first lockdown would have been more difficult and further isolating, were it not for the efforts of community volunteers. Sligo PPN felt that this effort should be acknowledged, recorded and kept as a reminder to all. In response the PPN set up a website Step Up For Sligo (<https://stepupforsligo.com/>) as a portal for people to send stories about their experience of volunteering (formally or informally) under Covid-19. The Sligo Champion made contact with the PPN about the project and these stories were translated into a pull out keepsake edition, sponsored by Sligo County Council and Sligo Volunteer Centre.



**The PPN commissioned IT Sligo** to undertake a piece of national research looking at the societal and economic impact of volunteering under Covid-19

**Sligo PPN commissioned Kids Own** to develop a new children's book publication and manifesto which will meaningfully reflect the voices of Sligo-based children and their hopes for the future. In light of the current circumstances, it is vital to gather stories from children about their experiences of COVID-19 and how this

has impacted on their lives. This project will be framed under the broader constructs of health and wellbeing; local environment and sense of community, which connects with the wider objectives of the PPN. Through the manifesto, the children will put forward visions for the future and recommendations, which will contribute to the overall wellbeing vision for the county. This will give the project a strong legacy for local policy and infrastructure and support children in their role as change-makers and visionaries with the power to have a positive influence on their community.

## 6.6 Other Activities

- The PPN continues to work closely with organisations such as Sligo Intercultural Project, Kids Own and Comhairle na nÓg to try and ensure that the PPN becomes more reflective of the diverse community in Sligo
- Sligo PPN has developed a guide ‘100 ways to make Sligo more inclusive’ which makes recommendations for the engagement approaches that organisations can take when trying to connect with some of the more marginalised groups in the community. Because there is a focus in the book on in-person engagement the publication of this has been delayed until Covid Restrictions are eased.
- The PPN continues to support and work with the national Streetfeast initiative
- The online AGM was held in November 2020 in the Radisson hotel with approx 175 people virtually in attendance. On the night participants heard about the work of the PPN across 2020 and plans for 2021.



## 6.7 Sligo PPN statistics

As of May 2021 there are 483 FULL MEMBER groups registered with Sligo PPN. 174 of these were from the Borough District of Sligo MD, 194 were from Ballymote – Tubbercurry MD and 114 were from the Sligo – Drumcliff MD.

Of these groups 430 have registered with the Community & Voluntary Pillar, 40 with the Social Inclusion Pillar and 13 with the Environment Pillar.

Sligo PPN have also introduced an Affiliated Membership group which allows groups that do not meet the full membership criteria, to register with the PPN for information purposes Associate members are not eligible to take part in any election or voting processes. Sligo PPN has 19 Associate Members.

### 6.7.1 Communications

Sligo PPN has a growing social media profile and, especially across the March lockdown, PPN Facebook and Twitter accounts were used to distribute information



## General Communications

- Promotion of member activities via PPN website, email and social media platforms
- Production of quarterly Newsletter which goes out to around 1000 contacts
- Notification to member groups with regard to opportunities for informing strategy and policy development
- Promotion of all emerging funding rounds and circulars from Department of Rural and Community Development
- Promotion of PPN activities and opportunities through traditional local media
- Promotion of the work of LCDC partner organisations



Sligo PPN currently has 1,489 Facebook followers.



## 7. The Peace IV Programme

In its role as the oversight body for the Sligo PEACE IV Programme, Sligo LCDC established the PEACE IV Sub Committee in 2016. Organisations represented on the PEACE IV Sub Committee include Sligo County Council, Sligo Leader Partnership, Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education & Training Board, An Garda Síochana, the Public Participation Network (PPN), Irish Congress of Trade Unions and minority faiths.

An initiative of the EU, the PEACE IV Programme promotes peace building activities in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The Sligo PEACE IV Plan ran from September, 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020 and was administered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and implemented locally by Sligo County Council. With a budget of €969,000, the Sligo Plan set out a Programme of activity under three themes.

1. **Children and Young People**
2. **Shared Spaces & Services**
3. **Building Positive Relations**



## **1. Children and Young People**

All projects under the Children & Young People theme were completed during 2019. Project activities under this theme were varied and included outdoor activity camps, music, promotion of diversity, active citizenship, community leadership and understanding of The Troubles. On concluding activity, the Projects had engaged a total of 283 individuals which exceeded the target of 243 as set by SEUPB.

## **2. Building Positive Relations**

The Building Positive Relations theme featured projects focused on heritage, community placemaking and cross border literary connections. Also under this theme, the Small Grants Fund has supported five community led peace building projects. This includes provision of funding for the eight stone sentinels which will be the centrepiece of the Great War Memorial Garden being developed by Lest Sligo Forgets at Cleveragh Regional Park, Sligo.



*Pictured above – visual representation of the Great War Memorial Garden*

## **3. Shared Spaces and services:**

As part of the Shared Spaces & Services theme, a cantilever was constructed on the site of the Stephen Street Cultural Plaza on the banks of the River Garavogue in Sligo. This piece of infrastructure which is a legacy of the Peace Plan was completed in November 2020. It will enhance the centre of Sligo and provide the local community and visitors with a meeting place and viewing point accessible to all.



*Pictured above - visual representation of the cantilever shared space*

## **Marking the Close of PEACE IV**

The Sligo PEACE IV Programme was completed in December 2020. In lieu of a traditional closing event which was not possible due to Covid19 restrictions, a video showcasing the projects, activities and achievements of the PEACE IV Programme was produced. The video features contributions from beneficiaries and stakeholders including Sligo LCDC's Chair and Chief Officer. It also featured inputs from distinguished guests including Heather Humphreys TD, Minister of Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands in Ireland, Northern Ireland's First Minister Arlene Foster, Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill and Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive of the SEUPB. The video was promoted via traditional media and the Councils social media. Please click link to view: [Sligo Peace IV Programme - YouTube](#)

## **PEACE Plus:**

The PEACE PLUS PROGRAMME is currently being developed by SEUPB with a statutory public consultation to follow in late 2021. SEUPB have confirmed that Local Authority led Peace Action Plans will continue to be a feature in this new programme.

## **8. Healthy Ireland Fund**

The Healthy Ireland Framework (2019-2025) is a roadmap for building a healthier Ireland and a call to action to improve the Health and Wellbeing of the Irish population through a wide framework of actions that will be undertaken by Government. Its four goals are. (1) To increase the proportion of people who

are healthy at all stages of life. (2) To reduce health inequalities. (3) To protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing. (3) To create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.

### 8.1 Update on the Healthy Sligo Plan:

Under Round 3 of the Healthy Ireland Fund, Sligo LCDC was awarded €246,010 for the development and delivery of a Healthy Sligo Programme. The Healthy Sligo Co-ordinator, took up position in August 2020 and the Programme consists in the delivery of 6 main projects under the themes, Physical Health, Mental Health, Nutrition and Spaces and places for Health and Wellbeing. The Programme has to be delivered by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2021, having been given an extension by the Department of Health and Pobal in November, 2020, due to the COVID Pandemic.

Projects funded under the Programme are currently either underway, or to be delivered in 2021. Projects were reviewed in September, 2020 at the request of Pobal and the Department of Health to reposition elements that could be run in a COVID environment. This resulted in project leads considering alternative options to deliver activity to participants, including online delivery and the use of mediums such as radio to reach those who are self isolating/social distancing. Projects include the following:

Lead Agency	Project Details
<u>Muintir na Tire/ Lend a Hand,</u> Mental Health	Supporting older people to become digitally connected, training on devices, radio features on home/community safety. The 1-1 training element of the project was paused in 2020 due to COVID restrictions with delivery to be reviewed as restrictions lessen.
<u>SLPCo &amp; Sligo FRC.</u> Mental Health	<u>Ways to Wellness (SLPCO).</u> A series of activities to promote Health and wellbeing amongst target groups such as; older people, unemployed people, disadvantaged communities, asylum seekers/refugees and new communities. This element of the programme is complete. <u>Social Prescribing (Sligo FRC)</u> – development of a referral system to signpost people to health and wellbeing options. This project was paused in 2020 due to COVID restrictions with delivery to be reviewed as restrictions lessen.
<u>Lifestart:</u> Nutrition	<u>Breastfeeding Friendly Sligo.</u> To improve the health & wellbeing of mothers, babies, families via development and promotion of a more supportive physical/social environment. This project was paused in 2020 due to COVID restrictions with delivery to be reviewed as restrictions lessen.
<u>Sligo Sports and Recreation Partnership.</u>	<u>Stronger for Longer</u> aims to promote and increased levels of physical activity among adults 50+ who are currently not meeting the national guidelines of 150 minute of physical activity per week. Focuses on building strength and

Physical Activity	fall prevention. Virtual programmes being delivered twice weekly 45 adults participate in each phase from across the county.
<b>Sligo Arts Service:</b> Spaces and places for Health and Wellbeing	<u>Take a walk for Me:</u> A creative project for Older people using radio to select 4 walks people most remember and to recreate using 4 artists using different art forms e.g. visual, written and sound. Radio will be used to communicate the finished pieces along with postcards which will be circulated for Bealtaine.

10 small grants to address mental health were also awarded by the LCDC following a competitive process and assessment. These projects will advance as the public healthy restrictions lessen.



*Pictured above at the launch of the Stronger for Longer Project funded under the LCDC's Healthy Ireland Programme Left to Right: Shayne Hayes SSRP, Hugh MacConville, Acting Chairperson Sligo LCDC, Paul Toland, Oxfeld Community Centre, Deirdre Lavin SSRP, Aisling Smyth, Community & Economic Development.*

## 8.2 Promotion of the Governments Keep Well Campaign. (National and Local):

Healthy Sligo continues to promote the Governments Keep Well Campaign at a local level by promoting initiatives that are in-keeping with the campaign messages through the Councils website <https://www.sligococo.ie/Wellbeing/>

and via social media, the Keep Well campaign is promoted through actions of the Healthy Sligo Plan and also through the actions set out in the Community Resilience Plan. Campaign messages include:

- i. **Keeping active** - and being outdoors even during the winter is a really good way to improve your mood and is important for your physical wellbeing too.
- ii. **Keeping in contact** - staying connected with people and addressing isolation, as person-to-person connection is important to our wellbeing.

- iii. **Switching off and being creative** - or learning something new, getting back to nature and finding ways to relax can help our general wellbeing.
- iv. **Eating well** - by nourishing your body and mind we can positively impact our physical and mental wellbeing.
- v. **Managing your mood** – equipping people with information on where to go if they need support

## 8.3 The Sligo Community Resilience Plan:

The Healthy Sligo Team is also responsible for the delivery of Community Resilience Plan. Local Authorities were allocated €67,225.00 under the Community Resilience Fund to activate and deliver on key actions under the themes of “Your County” “Staying Connected” and “Switching off and being creative”. The Sligo Plan was developed by the Healthy Sligo Co-ordinator in collaboration with members of the COVID Community Response Forum. It sets out 16 practical, collaborative actions to be delivered by the extended timeframe of June, 2021. Actions under the Plan which will be delivered in include a Virtual Christmas Tree and in 2021 a Virtual Cook Along for older People, Live at 3, Acorn Pad Programme for Nursing Homes. The community resilience fund will continue until June 31<sup>st</sup> 2021.



*Pictured above at the launch of the Virtual Diaspora Christmas Tree, an initiative of the Community Resilience Fund. Left to Right: Dorothy Clarke, Director of Services & Chief Officer Sligo LCDC, Marcella McGarry Healthy Sligo Co-ordinator, Aisling Smyth, Community & Economic Development, Cllr Dara Mulvey, Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council and Chair of Sligo LCDC and Des McFadden, Champ Cloud.*



## 9. Funding Opportunities - Community Enhancement Programme

On foot of the success of the 2019 Programme which saw 71 Community Groups in Sligo share in approximately €144,555 of small capital grant aid, the Dept of Rural & Community Development (DRCD) again made provision for this very welcome scheme to run again in 2020. The allocation available to Sligo LCDC for 2020 ultimately was €173,472 in total, which was an increase of approximately 18% on the sum provided in 2019.

Notification of an initial sum of €56,540 was made in June 2020. This was disbursed in small general purpose grants averaging €1,000. Thereafter, there followed a further allocation amounting to €116,932 made in September 2020 specifically targeting a 'Community Centres' and other such facilities like Parish Hall, Parks etc. It aimed to stimulate local economies by providing capital grants towards the maintenance, improvement and upkeep of community centres, and community buildings, with particular reference to adaptations required by covid restrictions

In a change from previous years, a requirement was put in place that applicants were to discuss first with LCDC support staff the nature and scope of their funding request. These pre-submission discussions aimed to assist and advise applicants thus seeking to ensure that small scale deliverable projects benefit from the limited funding available

A total of 49 groups were successful in their applications(s) to this further specific 'Community Centres' round of funding. Grants ranged between €1,000 and €4,000.

An example of groups supported - Ballinalack Community Park Ltd who were awarded €3,250 to install CCTV.



## 10. The Economic Agenda

In addition to the extensive Community agenda which the LCDC oversees the committee can include in its report other area of activity related to the performance of its functions including those contributing to the economic objectives of its main vision document the Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 - 2021. Therefore the LCDC would have received updates throughout the year on funding opportunities, inter agency proposals and the European JASPERS initiative in association with the new proposed Sligo 2030 Once Voice One Vision strategy.

A brief outline of some to the main activities that fall into the economic objectives are as follows:

### 10.1 Sligo Economic Forum

Under Action 1.1.1 of the Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 – 2021 the Sligo Economic Forum was set up in 2017 for the purposes of:

- Planning strategically and directing the economic vision for Sligo
- Collectively promoting Sligo in all its facets
- Sharing information and best practice

The Sligo Economic Forum consists of representation from Sligo County Council officials and members, LEO, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Chamber of Commerce, IT Sligo, Fáilte Ireland, St. Angela's College, BID, and representatives from the Business and Farming sectors. The Chair of the SEF is Mr. Aaron Forde. The work of the Sligo Economic Forum (SEF) continues to centre around supporting, co-ordinating and promoting Sligo as an ideal place to do business, to live, invest and visit.

The SEF met four times throughout 2020. The pre-pandemic meetings focussed on issues relating to BREXIT and schemes that were available to prepare businesses such as the Enterprise Ireland Border Region Stimulus Package. The issue of housing, vacant properties in Sligo Town Centre, the Digital Manufacturing Futures Centre at Market Yard were discussed.

### 10.2 Sligo: One Voice One Vision - Towards 2030 (Sligo 2030)

As is mentioned under the community activities the Council, working in partnership with Sligo Economic Forum, the strategic Policy Committee and Sligo Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), intends to put in place an overarching countywide Strategic Framework to guide the development of all of County Sligo over next 10 years. 'Sligo: One Voice One Vision - Towards 2030' (Sligo 2030 Plan) will act as an integrated multi-sectoral strategy based on the principles of smart sustainable development, economic and environmental sustainability, be climate change responsive and create an equitable society that will be socially inclusive. The ambition is to place County Sligo at the forefront of smart technology utilisation,

using its benefits to enable successful implementation of the climate action agenda, develop economic activity in Sligo and the North West region, improve social inclusion and create an environment which is an attractive place in which to live and work. The objective is to develop Sligo into a Smart City and County with the aim of realising energy efficient neighbourhoods, clean mobility and integration of current infrastructures. This will be achieved by working collaboratively with businesses, knowledge institutions and citizens while capitalizing on the potential of ICT, and the capability of using data analytics from smart technology to provide the information and processes which enables the ongoing improvement of all aspects of our city and county for the benefit of its citizens.

Sligo is nominated as a pilot town under the JASPERS European programme where supports will be provided in developing this strategic plan for the county. The JASPERS programme will also offer an advisory support in availing of opportunities around availing of EU funding. The North Western Region of Ireland has been reclassified in European Commission terms resulting in a downgrade from a “More Developed Region” to a “Transition Region” Sligo’s designation as a Regional Growth Centre under the NPF in a Transition Region is significant.

The process is currently commencing with the preferred bidder KPMG Future Analytics developing the strategy which will also form the new Sligo Local Economic & Community Plan.

### 10.3 Sligo: Live Invest Visit Brand

Following its launch in 2019 the promotion of the new overarching Brand identity for Sligo and further progressed with developing a Marketing and Communications strategy continued in 2020 supporting the brand. The SEF engaged with various stakeholders in developing Sligo specific messaging, centred upon the themes Live, Invest and Visit.



Sligo County Council have been working with Bua Consulting following a competitive quote process to develop a Sligo Brand promotional campaign consisting of a suite of 4 videos, 6 articles and 30 new images to provide content to Sligo.ie and to promote the **Sligo: Live Invest Visit** branding initiative to support Sligo’s aim to become a world class destination to live, invest or visit. The intention is that this material will

go towards targeting families, professionals, creatives, and innovators to entice them to make Sligo their home, their location to visit or invest. It is to attract and encourage start up businesses and investors to establish or expand operations in Sligo as a progressive destination to fulfil the needs of the great escapers, culturally curious and business development and investment. The first video element was launched for St Patrick's Day and focused on the Sligo Diaspora 'Do you often think of home...' was an outstanding success with a wide viewership and support at home and abroad.

Additionally, the brand supported the Sligo St Patricks Day Festival in association with Fáilte Ireland, Sligo BID and the local committee.

Other key events which are being supported by the **Sligo: Live Invest Visit** brand include the Re-imagining Our Town Conference 'RIOT: Sligo in March 2021. The event was launched by Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, and took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March. It involved 4 internationally curated conversations probing the role of culture and creativity in the development and regeneration of small cities and was a major success.

## 10.4 Atlantic Economic Corridor

The AEC concept is an initiative developed by Government to maximise scale for the region from Kerry to Donegal with a shared goal to create a unified, connected and competitive Atlantic economic corridor.



In line with the AEC **supports for hubs**, the awaited launch of the WDC hubs strategy, the launch of the National Remote working strategy, Government policy and husband BCP funding, the work of EI and the LEOs in this area, along with the growing endeavours in the community to realize hubs in local areas, it is considered that this is an important area for which to provide support and a sustainable framework. It is proposed to bring together the key stakeholders to ensure an integrated and collaborative approach to the process.

The AEC has successfully mapped 277 enterprise spaces along the western seaboard and work is progressing in forming a cohesive strategy for the Enterprise hubs available in each participating county.

The AEC is working with the WDC to develop an online platform called [connectedhubs.ie](http://connectedhubs.ie) which is being developed to provide websites, booking engines and online networking facilities for all AEC Hubs who are participating.

**The Smart Village Pilot Project** is an initiative of the European Network for Regional Development was launched under the AEC structure in September 2020. The aim of this project, funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, is to develop a number of pilot villages that will provide smart solutions to key regional challenges that have been identified within the regional development policy framework. Sligo County Council submitted an application in conjunction with community leaders of the Smart Community in Tubbercurry and in early December received confirmation that our application had been successful. Funding of €29,779 will provide for a smart education suite & a virtual shop front in Tubbercurry.

## **Back to business campaign to support businesses in Covid**



In conjunction with other business and Council initiatives as a result of the impact of Covid 19, the economic unit ran a **'Back to Business campaign'** in mid 2020 to promote the effort that businesses were making to open up and stay safe through their own efforts supported by grant assistance from the LEO and Fáilte Ireland etc.

*The following initiatives were undertaken:*

- *Website – new one stop shop 'Landing page' developed on Sligo.ie (and linked to front page slider on homepage of SCC own website) with full directory of suite of supports available to businesses.*

*All supports documented under 4 categories:*

- 1. Guidance & Information*
- 2. Financial & Enterprise*
- 3. Industry reports*
- 4. Evidence based resources*



*Photo shows Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, Cllr Dara Mulvey visited Michael Cryan, Ballymote, emphasising that the rural corner shops were often the life blood of the community offering a reassuring friendly face and vital service during the Covid crisis.*

A series of Newspaper articles, social media posts, and radio interviews, were developed focusing on leadership of the Council and other bodies, on rural examples such as Ballymote, Outdoor recreation businesses supported by LEO: Sligo Surf Experience/Island View Riding Stables, Pudding Row opening new cafe plus focus on BID member businesses opening up and their experiences under Covid and focus on staycation in Sligo/Tourism plus promotion of the Hubs (business and innovation and how AEC fund can assist)

## **10.5 Enterprising Towns Begin Together Awards 2020**

Sligo entered the Bank of Ireland Enterprising Towns awards competition again in 2020 despite all the Covid limitations and was very successful in reaching the last 2 towns nationally in our population category. The competition this year had a particular Covid slant and the number of applications was very high this year. Sligo was pleased to be a finalist. The presentation for the adjudication was on-line and took the form of an extensive collaborative effort under the aegis of the Council and the Economic Forum and involved video content with some speakers present in City Hall Chamber covering a range of topics from investment to education to community support. The engagement with the private sector and a multiplicity of agencies is key all partnering and assisting in presenting Sligo as an all-round desirable and enterprising place in which to live.



*Taken during the Presentation made to the Assessors under the Enterprising Towns Begin Together Awards 2020 in which Sligo took runner up prize*

## 10.6 County Sligo Diaspora Strategy initiatives

The Council developed a Diaspora strategy launched in 2019 to set out how the Council in collaboration with the LCDC and other partners link, liaise and collaborate with the wider Sligo family who do not live in the county. It is developed under the themes of Economic and job creation, Arts, Heritage and Culture and Sport and Community.



*Linking with the Diaspora from the Sligo Diaspora project 'Do you often think of home...'*

The Diaspora became an important sector in our society in the circumstances of the Covid Pandemic as many of our 'wider family' were unable to return home. In addition to the Diaspora video mentioned under Sligo Live/Invest/Visit above the Council engaged in a 'Back home to Sligo' project whereby speakers were invited to generate content for Sligo.ie from amongst those who returned to Sligo to base themselves here as a result of the Pandemic. In addition the Council and creative Ireland supported a Comhaltas Diaspora music project telling the story of well-known Sligo traditional musicians who emigrated to the US

developing with a trans-Atlantic dimension which linked Sligo with its Diaspora community in the US through music and storytelling.

## 10.7 Tourism Development

Tourism in Sligo in 2020 in the county similar to other areas was heavily impacted upon by Covid-19. The hospitality sector bore the brunt of the lockdown and business closures most directly. Sligo was promoted locally and regionally as a staycation destination in the summer of 2020 and did benefit well due to its attractive location and more rural location. Sligo County Council's ongoing collaboration with Sligo Tourism Ltd, Fáilte Ireland, and business interests developed the destination Tourism Recovery programme to prime Sligo for Tourism survival, recovery and Growth going forward.



*Yeats a key theme in the Sligo Tourism Strategy*

In addition a Co-Operation, project funded via the LAG programme, was underway in 2020 entitled the **International Marketing of Ireland's North West Focusing on Sligo, Donegal and Mayo**. The Council is working with partner Counties Donegal and Mayo, to develop an International Marketing Strategy for the North West. The Strategy will focus on the North West region in attracting overseas visitors. Funding was obtained under the Leader Co-Operation fund to carry out a feasibility study to set out recommendations and actions to promote tourism in Sligo and the NW from overseas to assist with the recovery. The feasibility study is complete and the counties are moving on to look at next stage which is full funding and implementation of the recommendations of the study.

The region is keen to avail of current LEADER funding as part of the new Transitional programme.

### **Festivals & Events**

The pandemic restrictions over 2020 impacted greatly on the festival offering and regrettably saw the cancellation of many festivals or the moving on line of those that could pivot and proceed. There are many festivals held on an annual basis in County Sligo from local festivals engrained in the community with a varying level of attraction for visitors to the larger festivals and events held which attract a substantial audience.



Events of a scale have the potential to attract visitors to an area and are a generator of income for that area, along with being a driver to instil civic pride in its inhabitants. In 2020, Festivals across the county revised their offer and were supported via a number of grant schemes including the Community and Voluntary Grants and the County Sligo Regional Festivals and Participative Events Scheme, the Contribution to the Arts scheme, the Creative Ireland fund and the LEADER programme. The County Sligo Tourism Strategy 2018-2023 looks at the concept of developing 6–7 larger events that demonstrate a uniqueness and ability to attract bed nights (overseas preferable) and grow business at off peak times.

The Council in conjunction with Sligo Leader Partnership had progress made over 2020 on developing a **Festival and Events Strategy for County Sligo**. The strategy endeavours to provide a framework and set of recommendations to help deliver on the key findings of the Tourism strategy by supporting and prioritising the strengths that Sligo has in its Festivals offer in order to secure and attract further visitors to the county. The onset of Covid-19 has dramatically affected the holding of festival and events over 2020 and 2021 which also has delayed implementation of elements of the Tourism strategy and the finalisation of this festivals and events strategy.

It is hoped that in looking past the pandemic that this strategy can be revisited and finalised.

The festival **new St Patrick's day festival** which ran from 13 to 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 was a great success for its first on-line iteration as part of a 3 year programme partnering with the Fáilte Ireland Regional

Development Programme. This year focused on destination greening with 30 buildings have been greened throughout the town, social and print media engagement and the development of a new website and branding. Future years will build in development planning and efforts to establish and strengthen international connections. The Sligo St. Patricks Day Virtual Parade was streamed on YouTube, featuring live commentary and pre-recorded performances and messages from Sligo people all over the world.

## 11. Conclusion

The LCDC has achieved another successful year in 2020 and continues with its work programme despite the ongoing challenges posed by Covid 19. While it has many aspects of work to consider, the fundamental function it carries out is ensuring collaboration and planning of services and funding at local level. This is ensured by effective contribution to and oversight of the local economic and community planning process and constructive attendance and debate at its meetings and sub-committees.

The LCDC looks forward to future changes, challenges and successes for Sligo in the years ahead in developing the new LECP to take Sligo forward towards 2030 and building on its promises to be a world class place to live, invest or visit.

