



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



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Town and Village Renewal Scheme



Town and Village Renewal 2021 Scheme Outline

All queries should be emailed to: townandvillage@drcd.gov.ie

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Introduction

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme was introduced in 2016 and is one of a number of measures designed to rejuvenate rural towns and villages throughout Ireland.

The programme is funded under Project Ireland 2040 as part of “*Our Rural Future – Ireland’s Rural Development Policy 2021-2025.*”

Our Rural Future will see increased investment out to 2025 in remote working infrastructure to provide an opportunity for people to continue to live in rural communities while following their career ambitions. It will also see continued investment to support town centre living. It will ensure cross government investment to support rural towns and villages as hubs of economic and social activity.

Since the launch of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2016, almost €93 million has been allocated to more than 1,300 projects across Ireland. The Scheme has supported towns and villages the length and breadth of the country.

The 2021 Scheme will place particular emphasis on projects supporting remote working and enhancing town centre living. The maximum grant available in 2021 will increase to €500,000 to permit projects of additional scale to be funded.

Projects that support the economic and social recovery of our towns and villages in response to COVID-19 will continue to be supported.

1 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme supports small to medium capital projects which enhance the environment of town or village centres. Grant funding for projects will range from €20,000 to €500,000.

The 2021 Scheme will place particular emphasis on projects supporting remote working and enhancing town centre living as outlined in “*Our Rural Future – Ireland’s Rural Development Policy 2021-2025.*” The Town and Village Scheme will support these objectives and will encourage more people to return confidently to town and village centres to work, shop and socialise.

Grant Levels

For the 2021 Scheme, the minimum grant which is available is €20,000. The maximum level of grant funding available is being raised to €500,000 in respect of one application from each Local Authority. A maximum of €250,000 will apply in respect of 2 applications and €100,000 in respect of 4 applications.

The increase is being made to align the scheme with the type of projects and level of ambition identified in “Our Rural Future”. A limited number of these larger scale projects will be supported this year. It is envisaged such projects will generate significant positive impacts. It is expected that the number of larger scale projects which will be supported will increase out to 2025.

Project Development Measure:

A new Project Development Measure (up to €50,000) is being introduced this year. This Measure is being introduced on a trial basis in response to requests from Local Authorities for such an intervention.

The new Project Development Measure is similar in nature to Category 2 projects under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). The purpose of this Measure is to assist Local Authorities to contribute to a pipeline of significant, well developed projects which might be subsequently progressed to construction stage, subject to the availability of further funding. It is proposed that applications would involve:

- Development costs for one strategic large scale project that may be subsequently progressed with funding from the Town & Village Renewal Scheme e.g. detailed design, preparation for the planning and/or procurement, appropriate assessment etc.
- Funding of up to €50,000 at a 90% rate of aid
- Maximum of one proposal to be submitted by any Local Authority

The approval of funding under this category does not automatically guarantee future support under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme for delivery of the emerging project – the resulting projects will need to be submitted as normal under the competitive Town & Village Renewal process.

2 Categories of Towns

The 2021 scheme will be targeted at two categories of Towns/Villages as follows:

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

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

Larger towns with a population of up to 15,000 people may be eligible where the application is of a high quality and outlines a strong need for the investment, good value for money and positive outcomes that will have a substantial impact on the town. The inclusion of these towns is being introduced on a trial basis in 2021 and will be reviewed thereafter.

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

3 Application, Assessment and Approval Process

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

The selection of projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2021 will be by means of a competitive process. When selecting the successful projects, the Department will give consideration to the past performance of the Local Authority in delivering previous projects under the scheme. Excessive delays in project delivery, (which have not been due to the Covid 19 emergency) may lead to a reduction in the number of projects approved in a county under the 2021 Scheme.

Final project selection will be made by the Department on the basis of proposals submitted by the Local Authorities.

Local Authorities will be required to submit:

- **An Individual Application form for each project.**
- **An Application Overview sheet.**
- **An Expression of Interest Overview sheet.**

Applications must be submitted by close of business on 16th July 2021.

The following guidelines apply to the application process:

- Local Authorities will be required to advertise for expressions of interest from towns/villages in their area and to select up to 8 proposals for development into detailed applications to be submitted to the Department.
- The development of these proposals must be undertaken in consultation with local town/village community and business interests. Full involvement by community interests and/or business interests will be an essential feature of successful projects. Ideally, projects will have been identified as part of a masterplan, or similar, produced for the town or village.
- Only one application can be submitted in respect of any individual town/village, including towns that may be under the remit of more than one Local Authority. However, an individual application may include several linked components to support the rejuvenation of the town/village.
- Where a project application in respect of a town/village is submitted for funding under this Scheme and is also the subject of a Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) application, the Local

Authority is required to explain the rationale for submitting the application to the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and how this links with the RRDF application.

- The assessment and approval of all projects will have regard to a number of factors including: alignment with “***Our Rural Future***”, Department priorities; available funding; the range, mix, quality and impact of proposed projects; previous funding provided; and other relevant considerations.

4 Project Guidelines and Types of Activities Supported

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) is funded under Project Ireland 2040 as part of Ireland's recently launched Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - *Our Rural Future*. This Policy will see increased investment out to 2025 in remote working, providing opportunities for people to continue to live in rural communities while following their career ambitions. It will also see continued investment to support town centre living, address vacancy and dereliction, and promote cross government investment supporting rural towns and villages as hubs of economic and social activity.

Following the launch of *Our Rural Future*, TVRS objectives are being refocused to align with commitments within the Policy. Specifically, the 2021 Scheme will prioritise tackling vacancy in towns and villages, remote working and supporting town centre living.

Other projects which will be welcomed include regeneration projects that support active and vibrant town or village centres. These projects should be identified through a town health check, a more detailed masterplan or similar.

Other interventions referenced in *Our Rural Future* such as upgrading shopfronts and street facades, green spaces and parks, and promoting areas as destinations for remote workers will also be supported.

This year the scale of the projects to be funded is also increasing, with applications seeking up to €500,000 permitted, and this is a trend which is expected to continue in future years.

Under the 2021 Scheme, a **minimum of 2 applications** must be submitted from Towns/Villages that have not previously been approved for funding under the Scheme. Proposals in respect of towns or villages that have not previously applied, or have not been successful under the scheme, will also be prioritised by the Department where possible, subject to the overall quality of the project.

Projects must 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. Proposals identified in town/village plans and developed in collaboration with local stakeholders will be prioritised. Proposals must also be consistent with the County Development Plan, Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), town health checks, and other relevant local development plans.

Only proposals that are capable of being delivered within an 18 month timeframe should be submitted.

The following indicative list of activities (not exhaustive) will be funded under the 2021 Scheme.

Priority A1 Projects

- Projects that bring vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use as multi-purpose spaces and/or for residential occupancy. This includes former state owned property that is no longer being used and is made available to the community. Multi-purpose use includes enterprise spaces, arts, tourism, youth hubs and other community uses.
- Projects that bring vacant properties in Town Centres back into use as Remote Working Hubs. This also includes funding for the repurposing of existing community or publicly owned buildings in town or village centres to facilitate remote working. Successful applicants who receive funding for remote working facilities will be required to commit to a three year membership of the National Hub Network.

Priority A2 Projects

- Regeneration projects that support active and vibrant town and village centres; these projects should be identified in town and village masterplans (or similar) developed in collaboration with the local community, businesses and the other relevant stakeholders in the town or village.
(Footpath development/improvement projects or similar will not be supported as these can be financed by Local Authorities directly or through the Active Travel Investment Programme.)
- Projects to support the upgrade and enhancement of shopfronts and street facades in towns and villages. Local Authorities are encouraged to engage with local businesses and property owners to examine how group projects can add colour and vibrancy to main streets and improve the aesthetic of town centres. This may also be through support for appropriate murals.
- Projects to develop parks, green spaces and recreational amenities in town centres to make them vibrant hubs for community enjoyment, and to increase footfall for local businesses. Only applications for funding for public or community owned or leased properties and/or lands will be considered. Projects must be located in the town or village centre.
- Marketing campaigns targeted at attracting remote workers and mobile talent to their county/region; and promotion of specific town/villages to attract new customers and/or business investment.
- Projects that support and enhance the night-time economy in line with emerging recommendations from the Night-Time Economy Taskforce.

Priority B Projects

Other Projects that may be supported but of a lower priority under the 2021 scheme:

- Targeted actions to support town centre enhancement (addressing minor deficiencies in access, services or site development works (including housing or commercial development as part of an overall enhancement plan
- Conducting /commissioning Town or Village Health Checks
- Projects that demonstrate a REDZ-type component, to stimulate economic activity between a town/village and neighbouring townlands or hinterlands
- Car parking improvements expressly designed to increase footfall in town centres.
- Town safety and accessibility enhancements (Note: Footpath and cycle routes in towns and villages should be funded under the Active Travel funding from the National Transport Authority).
- Enhancement of heritage assets located in towns and villages, including energy efficiency measures.
- Development of quality marks such as Purple Flag, Heritage Town, etc.

5 Types of activities which will not be supported

The following activities and project applications will not be supported.

Indicative list of ineligible projects (not exhaustive)

- Where the Local Authority is aware of difficulties in obtaining the appropriate planning permission or other permissions/leases necessary for the successful delivery of the project. A proposal should not be submitted if the Local Authority anticipates that there will be delays in securing the relevant permissions/ lease / planning.
- Footpath and cycle routes in towns and villages should be funded under the Active Travel funding from the National Transport Authority and are not eligible under the 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme
- Projects that are not located within the immediate vicinity of a rural town or village.
- Support for a single private enterprise – projects that collectively assist private enterprises within a town or village are acceptable.
- Incomplete projects - phases of projects are acceptable, however a project must be stand-alone and operable in its own right to be deemed eligible as a 'phase' of another project.
- Ongoing operational costs.
- Renovation and other works at community centres and sports clubs, except where the primary aim is to repurpose facilities located in town or village centres for remote working
- Projects to develop existing remote working hubs and Broadband Connection Points as part of the National Hub Network. (A separate €5million "Connected Working" call for proposals, managed by this Department is open for applications and is specifically geared for such projects)
- Projects that cannot demonstrate that a consultative process has been undertaken to ascertain the views of local community and businesses.
- Projects that are more appropriate for funding under CLÁR, the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), the Outdoor Rural Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) or Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF.)
- Projects that are more appropriate to Fáilte Ireland's Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme

6 Grant Level and Payment Schedule

The indicative budget for this portion of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme is €15 million. In light of the ongoing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, the maximum grant level has been set at 90% of the total cost of a project under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The remaining 10% match funding must be contributed by the Local Authority and/or the community and/or Philanthropic contributions - this can take the form of 5% cash contribution (minimum level) and 5% in-kind contribution (maximum level).

Local Authorities are invited to submit up to **8 applications** (up to €1.45 million per authority) under the 2021 T&V Scheme as follows:

- i. 4 applications funding €20,000 to €100,000
- ii. 2 applications funding €20,000 to €250,000
- iii. 1 application funding €20,000 to €500,000
- iv. 1 application funding up to €50,000 (New Project Development Measure)

2 applications must be in respect of Towns/Villages that have not previously received funding under the Standard Town & Village Renewal Scheme (Funding received under the 2020 Accelerated Measure will not be considered for these purposes).

All projects must be in a position to commence as soon as approval is granted and must be capable of being delivered in a realistic timeframe i.e. within a 12 to 18 month period.

7 Local Authority Costs

The default position is that works undertaken will be subject to a separate competitive tender process or involve drawdown of a contract under an existing framework agreement. The procurement process should be in line with EU Public Procurements Requirements (EU Directive 2014/24) and National Procurement Guidelines published by the Office of Government Procurement.

Where services or works are proposed to be undertaken in-house by the Local Authority, a breakdown of these costs must be included in the application form and a rationale provided for same. Where Local Authority staff costs are included, they must be proportionate to the overall cost of the project and identified at application stage. Only salary costs in respect of time spent directly on the project shall be deemed eligible. The proposed level of Local Authority costs will be assessed at application stage and the LA may be requested to reduce such costs if deemed to be excessive.

In addition, the reasonableness of the cost must be verified by the Local Authority i.e. the Local Authority must have evidence on the project file that the cost charged is in line with, or less than, the cost of engaging an external contractor. This evidence will be reviewed at project inspection stage. Failure to have this on file could deem the amount charged ineligible.

8 Funding Conditions

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

All expenditure under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme is subject to the terms of the Public Spending Code <http://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/> . The following requirements are also applicable;

Requirements

- 1 Projects will be expected to commence and be completed in line with the timelines set out in the relevant Scheme Outline.

The Department may de-commit funding allocated to projects under the Scheme where the project is not completed within the time specified, and where the express agreement of the Department to extend the funding arrangement has not been agreed in advance.

The grant funding for the approved project will be provided from the Department's capital budget. Administration and/or professional costs associated with the proposed project, where allowed for in the Scheme Outline, should be kept to a minimum.

- 2 A match funding contribution as set out in the relevant Scheme Outline is required. A minimum cash contribution of 5% is required. The grantee will be required to provide confirmation that the cash contribution is in place and retain a record of the source of the cash contribution.
- 3 Contributions in Kind, up to a maximum of 5% of project cost, can be provided by the community in various forms including the provision of plant and equipment and/or voluntary labour etc.
- 4 Voluntary Labour: If Contribution in Kind is in the form of Voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work), time spent on the project must be verified.
 - The rate applied should be for remuneration of equivalent work, up to a maximum rate of €14 per hour. The grantee must ensure that the rate per hour applied is properly justified according to the work undertaken.
 - Where Voluntary Labour forms part of a project, the grantee is advised that the requirements of all relevant Health and Safety legislation apply.

- Project administration e.g. attendance at meetings, preparation of grant application form, funding drawdown claims and management costs are not eligible as voluntary labour.
 - Labour provided by a participant on an RSS/ TÚS /other exchequer funded scheme is not eligible.
 - Voluntary labour must be completed prior to submitting the final drawdown claim to the Department. It may be included in phased payments, provided the work has been completed at the time the claim is submitted.
 - Details of all voluntary labour claimed must be maintained on a timesheet (1 timesheet per person) which has been provided by the Department. The time sheet will capture the following details;
 - The name of the person undertaking the work
 - The nature, time, dates of the works, quantity, hours worked and rate per hour,
 - The signature of the person who provided the in-kind work,
 - The timesheet must be signed off by the appointed project co-ordinator over the project.
- 5 Phased Payments: Funding may be drawn down in up to 3 phases. The minimum amount that can be drawn down at any time is 20% of project costs. Funding drawdown requests (Appendix 4 Drawdown Request Form) must be signed by the Director of Services (DOS) or an authorised official who should copy the DOS when submitting a claim.
 - 6 Projects must be completed in full in order to drawdown the full grant amount. Where it is established that a project has not been completed, the Department may request the grantee to repay any funding received on the project. Any changes to the proposed project must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance of the change being implemented.
 - 7 Where changes have been applied to an approved project without Departmental approval, the grant funding may be reduced to reflect the amended project.
 - 8 If the project involves works on buildings or lands that are not in the ownership of the grantee, a minimum 5 year lease must be in place from date of project completion.
 - 9 In the case of funding allocated to enterprises or facilities (i.e. community centre, hubs), it is a requirement that they must operate as funded for a minimum of 5 years following release of the final stage of funding, otherwise funding may have to be repaid. Where they do not operate as funded this must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance.
 - 10 All appropriate financial, Public Procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with and each grantee will fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.

- 11 Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure should be maintained in the project file and accessible by Department officials for audit purposes at all times, for a period of six years from the date of completion of the project.
- 12 Grantees will acknowledge the support of Project 2040 / Department of Rural and Community Development / Government of Ireland, and any other applicable sources of funding (as identified in the relevant Funding Agreement) in all public announcements, advertising and signage, as appropriate, relating to the project. In addition, the Department may seek to use the project in the broader promotion of its policies.
- 13 Grantees will provide any reports and information relating to the project as may reasonably be requested by the Department from time to time.
- 14 On-going monitoring and evaluation of the project outputs and outcomes should take place in the context of assessing the impact of the project. Grantees will be expected to collect appropriate data to facilitate this learning on an on-going basis. On request, a brief report (1-2 pages) on the outputs and outcomes of the project funded should be completed and made available to the Department.
- 15 Grantees will provide a contact point/points to the Department to facilitate payment and information requests. The Department should be updated on any changes to contact personnel in a timely manner.
- 16 A checklist confirming compliance with funding conditions relating to the grant aid will be required upon project completion.

9 Scoring Framework

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

The scoring framework below will be applied to all applications in order to ensure that successful projects are of a high quality.

Closing date for receipt of applications to townandvillage@drcd.gov.ie is by close of business on **16th July 2021**.

Selection Criteria	Explanation
Meeting the Scheme Objectives and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the proposal in line with the objectives of the Scheme?• Will the proposal have a positive impact on the town/village?• To what extent will the proposal support priorities outlined in the Scheme Outline?• Will the proposal have a positive impact in terms of place making and town centre regeneration?• Will the project encourage town centre living?• Does the project address the issue of vacant/derelict buildings in towns and villages?• Does the proposal create remote working opportunities?• Does the proposal support active and vibrant town and village centres?
Demonstration of Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the applicant identify a clear need and rationale for the proposal?• Does the proposal outlined address this need and to what extent?• Does the proposal include details on the public consultation to identify the need and support the rationale for the proposal?• Does the applicant explain why the funding is needed under this Scheme i.e. demonstrate that there are no other suitable sources of funding for this proposal.

Selection Criteria	Explanation
Value for Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the costings for the proposal clear and realistic? • Are the costings clearly explained and justified? • Has the applicant clearly justified the level of investment requested? • Is this project sustainable i.e. will this proposal continue to have an impact beyond the funding period in the town and village? • Overall does the proposal represent value for money?
Quality and Achievability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the proposal coherent and clearly set out in the application form? • Is the proposal realistic and achievable within the timeframes of the Scheme? • Has the project clear defined outputs and outcomes? • Are the outputs and outcomes clearly measurable?