Europe's Rural Future – High-Level Policy Forum, Ireland 2026

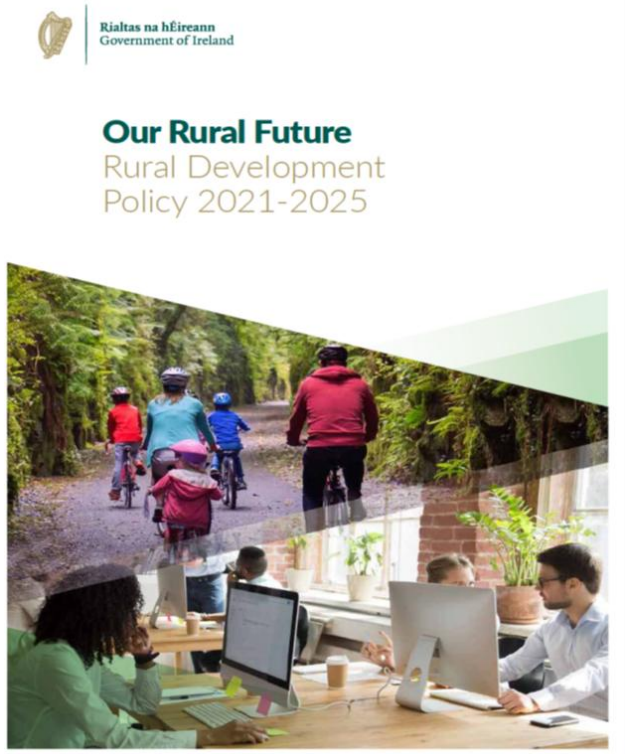
'Our Rural Future': Advancing integrated support to rural communities

Michelle McKiernan, DRCDG
03 November 2026

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Ireland's Integrated Approach to Rural Development

- Our Rural Future 2021-2025 represented an ambitious **new approach** to rural development in Ireland
- A **whole-of-Government** policy integrating **economic, social, and environmental** priorities
- Key principles:
  - Place-based policy-making
  - Participative approach
  - Policy alignment



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Our Rural Future 2026-2031

- **Building on the foundations** of *Our Rural Future 2021-2025*
- Informed by **extensive consultation** and an OECD review
- Responding to **emerging opportunities and challenges** facing rural Ireland
- **Five strategic pillars**, reflecting the diverse needs of rural communities
- Comprehensive **cross-sectoral** approach
- Over **230 actions** across a wide range of policy areas



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Translating Policy into Action

Governance

- Strong Political Leadership and Commitment
- Formal Government Approval
- Cross-Government Ownership and Buy-In
- Central Coordination and Oversight
- Embedding Rural Considerations in Policymaking

Implementation

- Action Plans
- Clear Departmental Responsibilities
- Regular Cross-Government Engagement
- Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement
- Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability
- Outcomes-Focused Delivery

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Translating Policy into Action

Investment

- Dedicated Rural Development Funding
- Cross-Government Investment
- Integrated, Placed-Based Investment
- Leveraging Complementary Funding Streams



Almost **9,000** rural regeneration projects allocated total funding of €960 million funded under the RDIP

Local Delivery

- Strong Local Delivery Partnerships
- Community-Led Local Development
- Place-Based Approaches
- Local Ownership and Responsiveness to Local Priorities

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Integrated Rural Development in Practice: Cappoquin



Sustained Investment

Complementary rural development funding programmes supporting regeneration over time.

Integrated Regeneration

Bringing vacant buildings back into use, alongside improvements to the public realm and recreational amenities.

Local Leadership and Partnership

Waterford City and County Council, working in partnership with local stakeholders and community organisations.

Long-Term Revitalisation

Creating opportunities for housing, enterprise and community activity, supporting a more vibrant and resilient rural town.

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Five Lessons from Ireland's Whole-of-Government Approach

- ✓ Leadership and Accountability
- ✓ Early Cross-Government Engagement
- ✓ Strong Delivery Partnerships
- ✓ Sustained Stakeholder Involvement
- ✓ Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

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Go raibh maith agaibh
Thank-You

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