

Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)

Rural Stakeholder Consultation Event, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Woodford Dolmen Hotel, Carlow.

Messrs. Noel Stacey and Jonathan King attended this event on behalf of Wexford County PPN.

The event commenced with a brief outline of the activities which the community and rural sector has achieved with the aid of Departmental funding. Over 40 attendees were from community and voluntary sectors, PPNs', staff from local authorities and local development companies.

The Meeting was designed to allow attendees to discuss two questions in a round table format, with each table of 8 being chaired by a representative from the Department.

Each table then appointed a Note Taker and a Spokesperson.

The objective of the event was to garner the thoughts and expectations as to what and how people can be encouraged to remain or move to the rural domain.

The first question posed was:

*What are the challenges facing rural Ireland in the next 5 years, and what solutions are needed to address these challenges?*

After the roundtable discussion, chaired by a member of the DRCD staff, each table reported their findings.

The consensus of opinion was that in order to reduce the migration of the youth and persons to the urban areas and make rural living compatible with urban dwellers expectations the following is needed:

The infrastructure of the rural domain needs to be drastically improved, namely better Childcare, Broadband, Public transport, more employment/ business opportunities, revitalize rural retail and services (Post offices, pubs). Broadband can facilitate working from home and help to reduce rural isolation. Security must be addressed especially for the older person living alone. Continuing development of sports for all ages is needed as well as other outlets such as music etc. to make rural living worthwhile and interesting.

Villages need to be redesigned to allow for small waste water plants, a mix of housing types, and related matters to form a concentration of living in a small area, which will create the need for retail in these villages.

The second question was:

*What are the opportunities available to rural Ireland in the next 5 years, and what steps need to be taken in order to realise these opportunities.*

The feedback was a comprehensive list of topics which included more localized investment to improve the answers to question 1.

Encouraging people to live and work in rural Ireland by creating or expanding employment is key.

Greater emphasis on trades training and horticulture for selective food production is needed to provide services and job opportunities locally. The advent of Environmental concerns will create jobs in Biodiversity, food production and development, traditional rural skills (hedge laying, woodland management), heritage development, tourism, etc. It is crucial to analyze what assets are available and adapting or utilizing them to open up rural Ireland.

The information gathered from the consultation will be added to the conclusions from the other meetings to be held throughout the Country and help drive a policy to improve and develop rural Ireland.

Ends.