



Providing a vision for Energising Ireland's Rural Economy

Supporting Economic Development in Rural Areas

€2 Million for Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) Pilot Initiative

In October 2012 Minister Phil Hogan, former Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government and Minister Simon Coveney, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine established the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas - CEDRA who were charged with assessing the potential for economic development in rural Ireland and making recommendations on how best Government can support this to 2025. The Commission believed that the vision for Rural Ireland as presented in the CEDRA report is tangible pragmatic and practicable while also being strategically focussed, ambitious and challenging. The Report contained 34 recommendations focussed on supporting the medium term economic development of rural areas in the period to 2025.

Ms. Ann Phelan, T.D. has been appointed as Minister of State for Rural Affairs with special responsibility for Local, Community and Rural Economic Development issues including the implementation of the CEDRA Report.

CEDRA Expert Advisory Group

Minister Alan Kelly and Minister Ann Phelan established the CEDRA Expert Advisory Group in March of 2015. The aim of this group is to support and provide practical advice on rural development issues and the implementation of the CEDRA report. The group is chaired by Mr. Pat Spillane and contains a number of prominent business leaders, academics and a serving Local Authority Chief Executive. Since its establishment the group has provided support to the CEDRA Interdepartmental Group (IDG) and the Ministers regarding practical considerations around the implementation of the CEDRA recommendations.

An Interdepartmental Group (IDG)

An Interdepartmental Group (IDG) was also established with representatives from all relevant Government Departments. The group meets on a regular basis and continues to work together to ensure that Rural is at the heart of policy design and implementation going forward. The IDG is working to ensure that all initiatives in place across Government that will have an impact on rural Ireland are working together to maximise this impact.

Rural Policy Statement

In addition to this, both Ministers have agreed to advance the implementation of recommendation one of the CEDRA Report, which calls for the development of a *Rural Policy Statement*. Work on this will begin shortly and will provide a framework to ensure that due consideration is given to the challenges and issues facing rural communities and will support the alignment of policy design and implementation frameworks.

Rural Innovation and Development Fund

€1 million was allocated in the Budget for 2015 to establish a Rural Innovation and Development fund in line with CEDRA recommendations to support innovative, small scale pilot initiatives. The four main areas selected were

- i. Female Rural Entrepreneurs,
- ii. Social Farming Operations,
- iii. Community Based Food and Artisan Markets, and
- iv. Agri-food related Tourism initiatives.

A call for proposals issued for each of these initiatives and the selection and funding decisions have been made for all schemes all with the exception of the agri-tourism scheme whose closing date was 11th September.

The Government is committed to reversing the very serious economic and social setbacks that rural Ireland has experienced in recent years with a long-term plan that will deliver

jobs in rural Ireland and rich, active vibrant communities. The vision for rural Ireland is of vibrant, inhabited areas that experience a quality of life at least as high as that experienced in the urban centres of the country, including easy access to a necessary range of services.

Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ)

In May 2015 Minister Phelan launched a pilot scheme for the Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) identified in the CEDRA report. REDZ are functional rather than administrative geographic areas that reflect the spatial patterns of local economic activities and development processes, i.e. they are the sub-county zones within which most people live and work. The aim of this initiative is to support a number of REDZ projects throughout Ireland with a view to determining best practice with regard to how such projects are structured and implemented on the ground. It is envisaged that using the potential funding available through the REDZ initiative, individual Local Authorities in co-operation with each other across administrative boundaries will be able to assign other funding from their own resources or indeed work with private stakeholders on the ground to provide the matched funding to implement the project.

The criteria for the scheme will require projects to outline how they propose to access matched funding in order to implement the pilot in specific REDZ areas. This will not only foster a local sense of ownership of the project but also ensure that local authorities and other interested stakeholders work together to develop and implement their project proposals.

The allocation of this €2 million euro will enable the funding of 18 REDZ projects throughout Ireland on a regional basis and at different levels of scale also. The pilot projects are expected to be announced before the end of September 2015.

Further Information

Further information is available on www.environ.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/CEDRA/. If you have any questions in relation to the CEDRA process please email cedra@environ.ie

**Rural Development Section
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Government Offices**

**Ballina
Co. Mayo**

Email: cedra@environ.ie

Tel: 096-24200

Website: www.environ.ie

