Irish Rural Link

Sustainable Rural Communities

Irish Rural Link is core funded by the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development through Pobal.

Irish Rural Link

Campaigning for vibrant, inclusive & sustainable rural communities that contribute to an equitable & just society

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Irish Rural Link
About Us

Irish Rural Link
Sustainable Rural Communities

Irish Rural Link (IRL) is the national network representing the interests of rural communities across Ireland. Established in 1991, IRL advocates for equitable, inclusive and sustainable rural development by influencing public policy and supporting community-led action at local, national and European level. Today, the organisation represents more than 600 shareholder members with a combined membership exceeding 25,000 people.

As the recognised voice of rural communities, IRL works collaboratively with Government Departments, State agencies, local authorities, EU institutions, civil society organisations, researchers, and rural stakeholders to ensure rural perspectives are reflected in policy development and implementation.

35+ Years of Rural Advocacy

Representing 600+ Shareholder Members

25,000+ Combined Membership

40 Programmes Successfully Delivered

National and EU Policy Representation



Irish Rural Link
Our Guiding Principles

Irish Rural Link
Sustainable Rural Communities

OUR VISION

Vibrant, inclusive and sustainable rural communities that contribute to an equitable and just society.

OUR MISSION

To influence and inform local, national and European policies in favour of rural communities, particularly those affected by poverty, exclusion and isolation, while supporting communities to develop and implement strategic programmes that improve quality of life and strengthen resilience in rural areas.

OUR VALUES

Our values underpin every aspect of Irish Rural Link's advocacy, research and programme delivery.

Irish Rural Link's work is guided by principles of:

- Social inclusion and equality
- Community empowerment
- Participation and collaboration
- Sustainability
- Evidence-informed policy
- Innovation
- Rural proofing of public policy
- Partnership and shared leadership



Irish Rural Link
Our Strategic Themes

Irish Rural Link
Sustainable Rural Communities

Rural Development, Enterprise & Employment

Advocating for rural communities, influencing public policy, and strengthening local capacity. Promoting collaboration, training, research, and community-led initiatives. Helping rural businesses, social enterprises, and organisations access opportunities & improve resilience.

Supporting climate action and the environment by advocating sustainable farming, biodiversity protection, climate adaptation and rural livelihoods. Ensuring rural communities shape policies that balance environmental goals, economic resilience and inclusive rural development.

Environment, Climate Action & Agriculture

Social Justice, Education & Inclusion

Advancing social justice, education and inclusion by advocating for disadvantaged rural communities across Ireland. Influencing policy, strengthening community capacity, supporting learning initiatives, and tackling rural poverty, exclusion and isolation nationwide.

Strengthening public health, wellbeing and community services by advocating for rural communities, supporting local development, influencing policy and fostering collaboration. Helping ensure equitable access to healthcare, social supports, transport, and essential services across rural Ireland.

Health, Wellbeing & Community Services



Irish Rural Link
Our Services

Irish Rural Link
Sustainable Rural Communities

Advocacy & Representation at National & EU Level

Advocating for rural communities, representing their interests to the Irish government and European Union institutions. Influencing policy, promoting equitable development, social inclusion, sustainable services, and rural resilience nationwide.

Programme Delivery & Capacity Building

Leading and delivering a broad range of national and EU-funded programmes. Coordinating community partners, engaging rural stakeholders, providing training and capacity building, sharing best practice, monitoring progress, and ensuring initiatives effectively address rural needs.

Stakeholder Engagement & Networking

Connecting rural communities, policymakers, agencies, and organisations, fostering collaboration, representing rural interests and facilitating dialogue. Sharing knowledge, building partnerships, and influencing policies for effective, sustainable rural development nationwide

Membership Network & Shared Services

Membership amplifies rural voices through advocacy, policy engagement, networking, training, resources, publications and shared services, such as; finance, human resources, mediation and succession services, governance and compliance supports, group purchasing, community energy and rural future services.



Irish Rural Link
Our National Projects

Irish Rural Link
Sustainable Rural Communities

CAP Network Ireland

CAP Network Ireland
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL INNOVATION

A national membership network dedicated to supporting sustainable agriculture, rural development, and innovation across Ireland. Promoting networking, innovation and funding opportunities, and engaging all stakeholders in implementing Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan

National Meals on Wheels Network

NATIONAL MEALS ON WHEELS NETWORK

The National Meals on Wheels Network supports local providers through advocacy, training, resources, standards and collaboration, helping to deliver nutritious meals, welfare checks, and community support, while enabling older people to live independently.

Breeding Waders European Innovation Partnership

BREEDING WADERS EIP

A national project to secure existing Breeding Wader populations and support population recovery through landscape management and policy development, co-funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

AgriKids

AgriKids
BE FARM SAFE · STAY FARM SAFE

AgriKids engages, educates and empowers children to be farm safety ambassadors through curriculum-linked learning programmes. It develops age-appropriate resources to encourage and support educators and communities to build a sustainable farm-safe culture.

RISE - Rural Innovation & Social Enterprise

RISE
UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF RURAL INNOVATION AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

RiSE PEACEPLUS Project supports rural innovation & social enterprise in Northern Ireland and border counties, and creates conditions for rural communities, on each side of the border, from diverse communities, to come together to build rural sustainability and social enterprise.

Maximising Community Space

Maximising COMMUNITY SPACE
Inclusive & Connected Communities
rural ACTION · Irish Rural Link · NIRWN

Maximising Community Space (MCS) promotes inclusivity & diversity in the leadership & activities of rural communities that own or manage community space based on 3 key themes: inclusive leadership, inclusive spaces & connected communities & places.

Irish Rural Link
Our European Projects

Irish Rural Link
Sustainable Rural Communities

WaterLANDS

WaterLANDS

WaterLANDS contributes to the restoration of wetland sites across Europe which have been damaged by human activity and is laying the foundations for protection across larger areas.

Beyond NEET 2.0

BEYOND NEET 2.0

Beyond NEET 2.0 builds generational bridges, promoting the inclusion of young people in the job market and of older adults in technology. It creates training pathways that promote their active integration, strengthening digital and interpersonal skills, and fostering relationships between generations.

PEACE

PEACE

PEACE (Pact for Education, Active Citizenship & Engagement) supports small municipalities in fostering social inclusion, equality, and democratic participation, equipping local authorities and community actors to champion Active Citizenship and common European values.

RSEVL

Erasmus+

RSEVL (Rural Social Enterprise Volunteer Learning) develops volunteer staff training for rural social enterprises, serving capacity needs and emphasising digitalisation, while providing disadvantaged members of society with learning-based volunteer service opportunities.

Fast Food U Grow

FAST FOOD U GROW

Fast Food U Grow addresses the interrelated societal problems of obesity and the environmental crisis by promoting the growth and production of healthier, sustainable fast food, empowering the younger learner to fully 'own' the production cycle from seed to fork.

BIOGUARD

BIOGUARD

BIOGUARD supports climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection in northern forest landscapes, developing practical tools to identify biodiversity loss risks, strengthen ecosystem resilience and integrate ecosystem-based solutions into planning and decision-making.

Irish Rural Link
Our Partnership Projects

Irish Rural Link
Sustainable Rural Communities

Saolta

Saolta increases the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) within the Adult and Community Education sector in Ireland, exploring global issues such as poverty, inequality and climate change, and encouraging informed action.

Community & Voluntary Pillar

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

The Community and Voluntary Pillar is a government-established mechanism for engagement between the community and voluntary sector and state departments. Through membership, IRL works constructively with government to inform policy and legislation.

European Rural Community Alliance

EUROPEAN RURAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

ERCA supports the rural communities of Europe through our national and regional rural movements to develop connections, share experience and mutual learning, and take collective action to strengthen their position.

EirGrid National Advisory Committee

EirGrid

The EirGrid National Advisory Committee provides a structured forum for engagement between EirGrid and key stakeholders; representing farming, business, environmental groups, and civil society, facilitating dialogue and sharing information with the community.

EirGrid Celtic Interconnector Community Forum

EirGrid

The EirGrid Celtic Interconnector Community Forum ensures that stakeholder and community views are understood and considered, providing an opportunity for dialogue between interested parties and the project team. The forum advises on the Community Benefit Fund.

EirGrid Laois Kilkenny Community Forum

EirGrid

The EirGrid Laois Kilkenny Community Forum brings together people and organisations to consider public communication and engagement, considerations in project development, and delivering meaningful community benefit to areas hosting infrastructure.

Irish Rural Link

Our Past Projects & Partnerships

National Rural Network

A membership-based network that supported the implementation and impact of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

Community Wetlands Forum

A representative platform for community-led wetland conservation groups to share knowledge, ideas, research, and best practice.

Connecting Communities with Peatlands

A platform to encourage and motivate community-led peatland engagement, conservation, and sustainable management in the Midlands.

Farmers 4 Safety

A European Innovation Partnership and grassroots initiative to change farmers' attitudes and behaviours to farm safety, health and wellbeing.

FarmPEAT

A locally-led results-based pilot programme for farmers near raised peatlands in Ireland's midlands to deliver enhanced environmental outcomes.

COVID-19 Community Outreach

A programme to ensure that vulnerable demographics across Ireland have access to the highest quality information and support during the pandemic.

SEAI Deep Retrofit Community Engagement

An initiative in the Midlands and East Galway to raise awareness and provide guidance on SEAI energy efficiency measures and supports.

Digital Switchover Community Outreach

A programme to ensure that vulnerable and hard-to-reach demographics are supported in Ireland's transition from analogue to digital broadcasting.

Eircode Community Outreach

A programme to support the implementation of Ireland's national postcode system by reaching vulnerable households with support and information.

Getting Citizens Online /IT Skills for Farmers

Computer Training Programmes for rural citizens and farmers to build skills and confidence in using IT and the internet for day-to-day needs and activities.

Irish Rural Link

Our Past Projects & Partnerships

Farm Safety Community Champions

A ‘peer-to-peer’ mentoring and champion approach to engage farmers in an attitudinal and behavioural change to farm safety and emotional wellbeing.

DEW

Addressed challenges faced by female entrepreneurs by prioritising VET2, inclusion and flexibility in education and training and digital transformation.

MICRO 2

Supported microenterprises to embrace digital transformation, improve digital competences, and enhanced the responsiveness of the VET system in rural areas.

Sustain IT

Enhanced the competitiveness of the sustainable tourism sector by developing and delivering innovative, concrete and actionable training.

Beyond NEET

Empowered Civil Society Organizations to increase the civic participation of current or potential NEET youth in inclusive volunteering activities.

NICHE

Enhanced entrepreneurship in the Intangible Cultural Heritage sector through innovative training, enhancing competitiveness and sustainable growth.

MICRO

Sustained the growth and competitiveness of rural microenterprises through training resources, bridging capacity gaps and overcoming isolation.

RUBIZMO

Supported entrepreneurship and successful business models in high-potential sectors e.g. food, agriculture, bio-based value chains and ecosystem services.

DEAL

Communicated reliable, evidence-based digital entrepreneurship and business management tools to empower entrepreneurship for low-skilled adults.

DELSA

Developed immediate and concrete training and educational resources to advance the digital competencies and abilities of low-skilled adults.

Irish Rural Link
Our Membership

Irish Rural Link is a national network that represents and supports rural communities across Ireland. Its **membership includes community groups, voluntary organisations, social enterprises, and individuals committed to promoting sustainable rural development**. By joining Irish Rural Link, members gain opportunities to influence public policy, share knowledge, build partnerships, and access valuable resources. The organisation fosters collaboration, ensuring that the voices of rural communities are heard while strengthening local initiatives that improve social, economic, and environmental wellbeing across rural Ireland.

Membership Benefits

- Be a part of Ireland's Primary Rural Community Network
- Inform the Policies that Impact Rural Communities
- Be Represented at National and European level
- Join our Rural Innovation Hub
- Join our Rural Community Energy Group Scheme
- Join our Digital Town Hall Networking Programme
- Join our Fireside Chat Series with Sectoral Leaders in Rural Innovation
- Join our Sectoral Thematic Working Groups Addressing Key Rural Challenges
- Have your Voice Heard on Rural Matters
- Access Advice on Rural Organisations, Innovation and Social Enterprise
- Access Partnership Pathways and Networking Opportunities
- Access Governance, Compliance, Funding, Mediation & Succession Supports
- Access Stakeholder Engagement & Public Consultation Services
- Attend IRL Events including our Annual Conference & AGM
- Receive our Quarterly e-Newsletter
- Stay Up-To-Date on Government Policies and National Issues affecting Rural Communities

Unwaged Membership

Associate Membership

Ordinary Membership

Individual Membership





Irish Rural Link

Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann

Sustainable Rural Communities

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pobal
government supporting communities

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland