

€2.3M DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR RURAL LIMERICK

A €2.3 million Rural Development Fund, which was recently allocated by Limerick City and County Council to key projects across rural County Limerick, has the potential to leverage additional funds for the projects of around €15 million.

Coupled with other funding streams already announced such as the LEADER funding of €9.3m, Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) of €3.8m, Hinterland funding of €3m and other funding schemes (€5m), a total of around €40m is due to be invested into rural parts of County Limerick over the next few years.

The €2.3m Rural Development Fund allows Limerick City and County Council to develop a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to supporting rural communities in key strategic projects, town and village renewal, dereliction and rural tourism in co-operation with Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources.

The €2.3m fund has been agreed by the councillors as part of the annual budget process over the past number of years, with just over €500,000 from the budget being allocated to Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources as a contribution towards their work.

LIST OF PROJECTS

Extension of the Greenway from UL to Montpelier: Funding is provided to commence the process of extending the greenway from UL to Montpelier via Castleconnell. The proposed route will go through the village of Castleconnell, which will result in economic regeneration for the village.

Newcastle West Regional Athletics Hub: The project stemmed from a local group representing a cross section of athletics and related activities, for the council to consider purchasing a site and developing a Regional Athletics Hub, and it was proposed that this athletics hub should strive to the gold standard on a phased basis.

Barnagh Tunnel incorporated into existing Great Southern Greenway Limerick (GSGL): This will be the latest development since GSGL was brought under the control of the council in recent years. This will increase the safety of those using the GSGL who cross the N21 to the Barnagh viewing/picnic area and tunnel.

Lough Gur Bouchier's Castle: Bouchier's Castle is seen as a key structure in the potential visitor experience at Lough Gur. While access is currently restricted, limited works have been on-going over the years. Maintenance works need to be carried out on the castle and an associated building, which may be 17th century.

Stone Mansion Interpretative Centre, Kilmallock:

The project involves the conversion of the stables, courtyard and the central Victorian building at the rear of the 16th century Stone Mansion (National Monument) to create a tourism hub, interpretative centre, café, retail outlet, exhibition area and multi-purpose space and to develop the adjoining plot to provide an on-street entrance and open air seating space with a medieval garden and outdoor activities.

Lough Gur Solstice Park: Adjacent to the Lough Gur Heritage Centre, it would offer a dual-purpose space as an environmentally sensitive playground for children during out-of-school hours and would also offer an ideal respite area for visitors with special needs.

BUILDING CRITICAL MASS

Gordon Daly, Director of Services with Limerick City and County Council, said: "This Rural Development Fund shows the council's commitment to the development of rural Limerick from an economic and social perspective.

"We are focusing on projects that will be of lasting benefit to the people of the localities and those from further afield who will visit Limerick. The €2.3m allows the council to leverage additional funding for the projects of around €15m from other sources such as Fáilte and Tourism Ireland and the government. We can build critical mass when it comes to the realisation of the aims of the council and the local communities."

He noted that this funding does not include the council's ongoing commitment in relation to social housing in the county, the upgrading and improvements in the county's road network and the new Town and Village Renewal Scheme.



Gordon Daly, Director of Services with Limerick City and County Council.