DRAFT

Our Communities:

A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland

Based on a set of core values covering social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity, local and community development seeks to harness all the potential resources at the disposal of communities by bringing together people, groups, and agencies, voluntary and statutory bodies to make a positive difference in the development of sustainable communities. The notion of 'working with' rather than 'on' or 'for' people is central to progressive and proactive processes that seeks specific results in terms of desired changes in individuals, groups, neighbourhoods and social and economic conditions.

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Introduction

Ireland has developed a strong history of local and community development activity since the emergence of integrated approaches to some of the social and economic challenges which confronted the State in the 1980s. The foundations were based on initiatives that evolved over time from narrow, sector-specific interventions to broader mainstream programmes deployed on a much wider scale, and have ultimately resulted in robust local and community development sectors.

Given current changes underway and challenges in areas such as funding, it is important that we reflect on how the State engages with the local and community development sectors, the manner in which programmes and interventions are delivered, the extent to which communities are being optimally served by these sectors, and the coherence of the full range of public sector programmes and interventions in terms of benefits to the citizen.

This particular point was identified by an expert group[1] established by the then Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Phil Hogan T.D. The group operated from September 2011 to March 2012 and was tasked with exploring options, and making recommendations, for an enhanced alignment between local government and the local development sector. As part of its deliberations, this Alignment Steering Group identified the need for an overarching policy to underpin the State's engagement with the local and community sector. Specifically the Alignment Steering Group recommended that

> "*a national Local and Community Development Policy should be developed.*
> *This should set out national priorities and a framework for the realisation*
> *of a cross-government approach at local level.*"

This framework policy has been developed in response to the Steering Group's recommendation. It is an overarching, high level vision for the State's engagement with the local and community development sectors. It serves as the foundation upon which the range of State policies, programmes and interventions for local and community development will be developed and implemented. It sets out national priorities and provides a coherent framework for realising a cross-government approach to the provision of local and community development services and interventions.

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[1] The Local Government/Local Development Alignment Steering Group

The Policy Context

The policy context for the framework includes *inter alia*:

- Programme for Government 2011 - 2016;

- Statement of Government Priorities 2014 - 2016

- the need for more effective and efficient services, greater value-for-money and the Public Service Reform Plan;

- the measures for local government reform and development as set out in Putting People First: An Action Programme for Effective Local Government (2012) and underpinned by the Local Government Reform Act 2014;

- the progression towards a greater use of community-led local development across a broader range of EU funds;

- the government's policy on sustainable development as articulated in Our Sustainable Future: A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012);

- the Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007);

- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016;

- the work of the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising;

- the White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the relationship between the State and Community and Voluntary Sector (2000), and the White Paper on Rural Development (1999);

- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020;

- the work of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA);

- Social Housing Strategy 2020 – Support, Supply and Reform;

- Homelessness Policy Statement 2013;

- Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness 2014;

- Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019;

- Corporate Social Responsibility Plan, Good for Business, Good for the Community 2014-2016;

- Pathways to Work, 2015;

- Action Plan for Jobs, 2014;

- Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013–2025;

- The National Positive Ageing Strategy;

- The Irish National Dementia Strategy;

- National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013 to 2015;

- National Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2016;

- National Strategy for Traveller/Roma Integration;

- Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995;

- Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues 2006;

- Report of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee, 2009;

- Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989;

- The Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004; The Equal Status Act 2000; and

- 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010- 2030 and the Gaeltacht Act, 2012.

This framework policy seeks to reflect:

- the evolution of local and community development in Ireland to date;
- the reality of local and community development structures and their operation;
- the State's relationship with the local and community development sectors and the funding programmes which are supported by the State;
- the need to support citizens and communities in challenging economic times; and
- other developing aspects, such as:
  - public expenditure challenges and the continuing need to focus, into the future, on efficient and cost effective delivery of services;

  - the need for sustainable local and community development; and

  - the changing role for local government, with a greater focus on promoting economic development and social progress, including the well-being of communities, and local authorities being a key vehicle locally for delivery of national policies.

Evolution of Local and Community Development in Ireland

While local development and community development are interconnected, mutually influencing and, in many ways, interdependent it is important to trace their development separately as they have distinct identities, histories, priorities and approaches.

Community and Voluntary Sector

The community and voluntary sector has had an important role in Irish society since the earliest medical and welfare charities were established in the 1700's. From the formation of the State in 1922 the voluntary sector has encompassed the work of charitable organisations, providing health, educational and social services. With the rapid growth in community organisations in the 1980's, "community and voluntary" became the preferred title for the sector.

Today there is estimated to be more than 20,000 organisations within the community and voluntary sector,[2] most of which date from the 1970's onwards. New organisations continue to emerge in response to changing needs and social challenges. It is widely recognised that the community and voluntary sector plays a crucial role in sustaining and developing a vibrant and inclusive society.

Though it is a highly diverse sector, the organisations generally share the following features:

- Organised: distinguished from informal or ad hoc, purely social or familial groupings by having an institutional presence or structure;

- Non-profit distributing: do not return profits to a set of managers or owners;

- Independent: in particular from government and other public authorities;

- Voluntary: containing some element of voluntary or unpaid participation;

- Self-governing: in control of their own affairs; and

- Contributing to the public good: their activity aimed, at least in part, at contributing to the public good.[3]

Community Development

The term "community development" refers to both a sector within the overall voluntary and community sector and a distinctive approach to working for social and economic development and change. This approach involves enabling and supporting members of a community (of place, identity or interest) to work collectively to improve the quality of their lives, their community and their society. This "bottom-up" approach is often but not exclusively based on an understanding that those affected by poverty and/or

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[2] The Wheel (2005), *Discussion Document Building a Vibrant Civil Culture through Citizen Engagement*
[3] Government of Ireland (2000), *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*.

disadvantage are often excluded from society due to discrimination, prejudice, lack of resources, skills, confidence and/or education.

Community development in the Irish context originated in the rural co-operative movement and was promoted by Muintir na Tíre which led on to a wide variety of community self-help groups, including community social service councils in the 1960's. In urban areas community development, in the form of community action groups, development associations and community resource centres, grew out of local responses in the 1970's and 80's to high levels of unemployment, educational disadvantage, poor housing and lack of public services.[4]

Community development also led, and was in turn influenced by, the dynamic growth in women's groups from the 1980's, in response to the women's liberation movement, the changing nature of the labour market, the need for childcare and the isolation of women in deprived urban satellite communities.[5] It influenced the growth of Traveller's rights and disability rights organisations, anti-drugs support groups and, more recently, migrant rights groups. During the late 70's and 80's a number of health boards and local authorities employed community workers as distinct from social workers. In 1986 the government established the Combat Poverty Agency to promote and resource community development as a strategy to respond to poverty and social exclusion.

EU funding through the European Poverty Programmes and Community Initiative Programmes such as HORIZON and NOW in the 1970's, 80's and 90's had a major influence on community development in Ireland and the wider community and voluntary sector. It supported the expansion in the number of community and voluntary organisations, the professionalisation of the sector, the recognition of the important role of the sector in working with marginalised and disadvantaged groups, the role of the sector in confronting policy issues and contributing to policy development and led to better standards of governance, management and administration.[6]

The first nationally funded community development programme (CDP) was established in 1990 under the then Department of Social Welfare. The number of projects funded grew from an initial 15 to 40 by the end of 1993 and 185 by the end of 2008. Through this programme the State funded and supported independent community development groups working with the most disadvantaged communities throughout the country. The community development approach, with its emphasis on participation and collective responsibility for problem identification, analysis and solutions, has been adopted in a variety of settings within the wider voluntary sector and the statutory sector.

The community and voluntary sector was invited to join the government, employers and trade unions in the fourth social partnership[7] in the mid 1990's, at which point the issues addressed were widened to include social and economic development as well as tax and

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[4] Acheson, Harvey, Kearney & Williamson, 2006
[5] Tobin, 1990
[6] Acheson, Harvey, Kearney, Williams, 2006
[7] Fourth social partnership: process used to negotiate and achieve consensus on a range of social and economic policy issues.

wage agreements. This reflected a recognition of the sector's valuable perspective, role, contribution and expertise.

Local Development

The late 1980's and the 1990's brought an increased focus on local economic development involving partnership among representatives of local public and private socio-economic interests, including the community and voluntary sector. Local development promotes area-based, integrated, "bottom-up" interventions to address long-term unemployment, economic marginalisation and social exclusion. It recognises the interdependence of economic, social and cultural issues in working for sustainable and inclusive growth and social cohesion. Local development aims to provide the structure, funding and support for the partnership sectors to work together for the benefit of the area. It is about empowering local communities to sponsor innovative strategies and projects for enterprise, improving employment opportunities, education, training and community development.

The growing focus on local social partnership was influenced by the experience of community development in the previous decade and significant changes in EU policy. The Single European Act (1986) provided a context within which more effective approaches to dealing with the problems of persistent disadvantage could be considered. There were growing concerns that economic growth was not being evenly spread, that concentrations of deprivation were developing, and in the rural context, that the Common Agricultural Policy was not equipped to address growing inequalities.

In 1991 the LEADER Community Initiative, co-funded by the EU, provided for rural local action groups established on community-statutory partnership basis to join together to implement multi-sectoral, integrated development plans for their areas. Ireland vested the lead partner role of the local action groups in independent companies called LEADER Groups. Successive LEADER programmes saw an increase in the number of these groups to 38 and their development as key deliverers of local development programmes for rural areas over the period 1994 – 2006 became a central feature of national policy on rural development.

The second social partnership, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP), 1991-1993, provided for the establishment of partnerships in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage, in response to long term unemployment. These area-based partnership companies built on the anti-poverty community development programmes of the 1980s. The number of partnerships increased under successive local development programmes as part of the social partnership model to more than 60 by 2004.

Between 2005 and 2008 the Government embarked on a process of cohesion relating to local and rural development aimed at ensuring an integrated approach to service delivery at local level and improved democratic legitimacy, public accountability, governance, statutory agency participation, social partnership and local involvement. This resulted in the merging of Partnership and LEADER companies into 52 Local Development Companies. Subsequently, the roll-out of the newly designed Local and Community Development Programme resulted in an integrated delivery model which involved up to

140 groups funded under the former Community Development Programme integrating with the 52 Local Development Companies.

Now, in the second decade of the 2000's, both the community development approach and community-statutory partnership is central to the work of many bodies providing social, health and educational services and/or working for social, cultural and economic development. These bodies include Family Resource Centres, County Childcare Committees, Children and Young People's Services Committees, Citizen's Information Services, Money Advice and Budgeting Services, Youth Services and other disadvantaged youth projects, Drugs Taskforces, Traveller Support Groups and Migrant Support Groups

The past ten years have seen the local development sector grow and strengthen, although recent funding reductions have begun to impact on some local development bodies. Reductions across all areas have had a greater impact on community development organisations, the majority of which have smaller budgets and have become overly dependent on statutory funding. The more recent reduction in central exchequer and European funding poses a challenge for disadvantaged communities, and for both community development and local development in Ireland.

Local development and community development continue to contribute to economic, social and cultural development throughout rural and urban Ireland. Local social partnerships are working constructively across the country and have developed experience of how to cooperate in finding and supporting innovative solutions to the economic and social problems in their area. The new forms of participation in decision making and planning at local level are central to the renewal of local government and are influencing national and international concepts of local governance. In light of the challenges Ireland now faces, local and community development approaches continue to have an important role in local economic regeneration and social cohesion.

The Current Landscape

The local and community development sectors have contributed strongly to Ireland's more recent development, where communities are proactive in identifying their needs and finding the solutions to local problems. The community development sector has played a strong role in supporting and enabling marginalised communities to participate effectively in local development. The local and community development sectors continue to influence policy makers to ensure that communities are central to all decisions in relation to their future.

The contribution of both the local and community development sectors has happened, however, in the absence of an overarching policy for local and community development. Relevant national and EU policies to this area, including the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, the *White Paper on Rural Development (1999)*, the *White Paper on Supporting the Community and Voluntary Sector (2000)*, the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* and the *Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship*, address themselves to defined areas within the broader local and community development arena. They do not seek to underpin a 'whole of government' approach to local and community development or to fill the policy gap that has resulted in the ad hoc development of local and community structures across the country.

Given Ireland's economic challenges, there is an ongoing imperative to focus on economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It is intended that this framework will provide a structure to help manage expectations and to set realistic targets in line with available resources. At the same time the framework recognises the need to improve democratic accountability as stated in the 2011 *Programme for Government*:

> *"Government is too centralised and unaccountable. We believe that there must also be a real shift in power from the State to the citizen."*

While we have seen the growth of the local development and community sectors, Ireland also has a local government system that has a primary focus of promoting the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities. It has often had a peripheral involvement in local development programmes, an issue which has been commented on in several government sponsored reports, including the Report of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems (1998); the Local Government Efficiency Review Report (2010); and Strengthening the Connections in Rural Ireland – Plans for Restructuring the Rural Transport Programme (2013). Accordingly, the reforms in local government, as outlined in *Putting People First: An Action Programme for Effective Local Government (2012)* and enacted in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, now position local government as the primary vehicle of governance and public service at local level. In addition to structural, financial and representational reform, the reforms include measures which emphasise the need for more inclusive policy making processes and for local authorities to secure greater citizen engagement and involvement in these processes.

In September 2011, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government established the Alignment Steering Group to consider options for achieving greater collaboration and co-operation between local government and local development in the planning and delivery of local and community development programmes and interventions. The Steering Group's recommendations form a key part of the Action Programme for an Effective Local Government and this framework policy has emerged from those recommendations[8].

Greater alignment between local government and local development presents significant opportunities for the co-ordination of local and community development activities. It provides a more central role for local government in local and community development with the aim of strengthening the relationships between local government and local and community development sectors and bringing together the resources of both sectors in a constructive way for the benefit of citizens. It will also provide for greater responsibility at local level for identifying priorities for expenditure and matching available resources to these priorities. This has significant implications for policy in a field where some areas of activity are currently shaped by centrally determined goals and outcomes. The framework sets out national priorities and the foundations of a cross-government approach at national level, while allowing for a flexible approach at local level to customise service delivery to local needs and priorities.

At a European level, the European Commission proposes that the use of community-led initiatives be expanded, while it also promotes the delivery of integrated development strategies to facilitate the implementation of multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral approaches. In this regard, *Europe 2020* establishes the framework for the Commission's legislative proposals for Cohesion Policy 2014 - 2020, and provides an important backdrop to the framework. In the context of community-led local development, the Commission recognises this as a partnership approach involving public and private partners, such as local authorities, community interests and development bodies, working productively together to implement targeted and strategic responses to local challenges. The aim of the proposals is to:

- encourage local communities to develop integrated bottom-up approaches in circumstances where there is a need to respond to territorial and local challenges calling for structural change;
- build community capacity and stimulate innovation (including social innovation), entrepreneurship and capacity for change by encouraging the development and discovery of untapped potential from within communities and territories;
- promote community ownership by increasing participation within communities and build the sense of involvement and ownership that can increase the effectiveness of EU policies; and
- assist multi-level governance by providing a route for local communities to fully take part in shaping the implementation of EU objectives in all areas.

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[8]http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/AlignmentofLocalGovtLocalDev/

At OECD level, the LEED programme (Local Economic and Employment Development) identifies, analyses and disseminates innovative ideas for local development, governance and the social economy. Governments from OECD member and non-member economies look to LEED and work through it to generate innovative guidance on policies to support employment creation and economic development through locally based initiatives.

LEED has identified that Governments intervene in many ways at a local level, but rarely are these interventions co-ordinated effectively. As economies recover, a closer inter-agency working must be encouraged if limited resources are to be used more effectively to develop skills. LEED considers that:

- There has to be a greater focus on combined action between services and different government programmes.

- Any action has to be based on comprehensive local economic intelligence.

- Delivering public policy as 'one size fits all' is not effective. Local solutions to local problems are the key to success. Flexibility is needed so that local agencies can work together to respond to local conditions, seize local opportunities and build on local strengths.

Governments can break down barriers and increase flexibility in local policy delivery, without sacrificing accountability and the achievement of national objectives. LEED advises on taking an integrated approach to help improve skills and boost economic development.

This framework policy seeks to support and enable the key national objective of economic development, through action at the local and community level. All communities and localities will need to focus on this national effort as they address local and community development objectives. The framework affirms the contribution of local and community development to supporting broader economic activity and development, whilst at the same time tackling poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion, supporting the capacity of local communities to improve their quality of life, supporting training and up-skilling and creating and sustaining employment. The framework also acknowledges that local and community development enables economic activity in disadvantaged communities in ways that are both distinct from and complementary to the provision of mainstream training and employment supports.

These local and community development objectives will be supported by the preparation and implementation by the new Local Community Development Committees of the community element of the six year Local Economic and Community Plan. The economic element of the plan will be developed and implemented by local authorities in line with their wider role in promoting economic development for their areas. Both elements of the plan will be prepared in parallel and will be adopted by the council as an integrated plan.

By taking a clear cross-government and inter-departmental approach to local community and economic development, in the context of the national commitment to supporting economic development, this framework recognises the need to harness the role and experience of all Government Departments and State agencies at national and local level in these areas.

In summary, the framework provides a vision and overall direction for government activity, as well as for those who engage with and are supported by local and community development. It highlights the need to secure vertical and horizontal coherence and integration between three interrelated levels:

- Government departments and State agencies;

- Local government and agencies with a strategic and area-wide focus;

- Non-statutory local and community groups and agencies operating within specific neighbourhoods or to a specific brief.

Vision

Our vision is to create vibrant, sustainable, self-determining communities that have the social, cultural and economic well-being of all citizens at their core, built upon a shared understanding of their needs and aspirations, and where both participative and local democracy provides citizens with the opportunity, means, confidence, and skills to influence, shape and participate in decision-making structures and processes that affect them and their communities.

This vision will be realised, in the first instance, through empowering communities with the means to develop and sustain their own well-being using a broad range of local development supports and interventions. These interventions, built upon the 'bottom-up' approach to local development, will be coherent and reflect a collaborative, integrated and multi-disciplinary approach at national, local and neighbourhood level, and will reflect the needs and aspirations of the communities they seek to support. A strong local government system will be a key means of achieving this, and will also facilitate engagement and participation of citizens in public life and their right to influence the decisions that affect their lives and communities. This policy provides a framework for promoting, supporting and investing in community development actions and approaches that will bring communities together, empower them to identify their own needs, priorities and agendas and provide them with the skills, knowledge and experience to influence, shape and participate in decision making processes and bring about change for the benefit of people within those communities.

Principles

In seeking to fulfill this vision, the Government commits itself to the following principles:

1. Strong community participation and leveraging the capacity within communities to make a difference, with "bottom-up" or community development approaches retained as integral features of local and community development.

2. A strong local government system securing and supporting citizen and community engagement and participation in policy development, planning and delivery, and decision making processes in respect of local and community interventions and supports at a local level

3. Meaningful engagement with local communities, local development organisations and State bodies to ensure that the best outcome for the citizen is achieved;

4. Robust local collaboration structures that encourage transparency, democratic legitimacy, accountability, participation and evidence-based decision making;

5. Support for voluntary activity and active citizenship, underpinned by supporting the capacity of communities to pro-actively engage, as vital elements of flourishing communities.

6. Economic development, training and education opportunities are key drivers in creating self-sufficient vibrant communities.

Core Objectives of the Framework

The framework reflects a shared commitment by national and local government and the local and community development sector, to engage with communities and to work with partners in planning, delivering and evaluating interventions, and the policies underpinning those interventions, for the good of citizens and communities. The following interlinking and mutually reinforcing areas form the core objectives of the framework:

1. Engaging with Communities;
2. Working with Partners;
3. Planning for Local and Community Development;
4. Delivering; and
5. Evaluating, Monitoring and Reviewing.

These objectives and associated measures outlined in this framework seek to achieve the vision of vibrant, sustainable and self-determining communities.

Effective implementation, however, will have to be more than a series of measures to be implemented. Coherence between national and local policies will be critical. To this end, a co-ordinated, national and local cross-government approach, which embraces new models of government and which focuses on citizen engagement and participation, sustainable development and meeting the needs of communities, will be essential.[9] Complementary to this, is the importance of national and local government continuing to build its relationship with its citizens and communities. The expected outcome will be a successful 'co-production' of services, and a coming together of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches, which will result in more effective and appropriate responses to locally and mutually identified needs of citizens and communities.

Objective 1: Engaging with communities

Community engagement is the central tenet upon which the framework is founded. At its most basic, it seeks to introduce processes and structures that go beyond community consultation and community representation, and which provide local people with a real voice and real power in the development of policies and strategies that identify and seek to address their communities' needs.

Measures

In developing local and community development policies, interventions, programmes and actions, local government will directly, and Government Departments and agencies with the support of local authorities as appropriate, will:

1.1   involve communities in planning and decision-making in respect of those policies, interventions, programmes and actions that affect them; (DECLG; DSP; DCYA; DH; DJE; DAHG, DES; LAs; HSE; Solas; ETBs; LDCs; U na G)

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[9] Ó Ríordáin, 2012.

1.2   engage with communities directly or with the support/assistance of local authorities as appropriate, through meaningful consultation and participation/partnership approaches. This could include engagement via the Public Participation Network and other mechanisms including community organisations, focusing on meeting needs and addressing priorities identified by communities; (DECLG; DSP; DCYA; DH; DJE; DAHG, DES; LAs; HSE; Solas; ETBs; LDCs; UnaG);

1.3   support participative democracy approaches based on lessons from examples of best practice (DECLG; DSP; DES; LAs; Solas; ETBs; LDCs; UnaG); and

1.4   support and develop existing capacity of communities to help them become vibrant, self sufficient and sustainable. (DECLG; LAs; UnaG)

Objective 2: Working with partners

Structured collaborative actions at local level are fundamental to harnessing the energies, skills and capacity of stakeholders in the development, implementation and management of local development policies, interventions, programmes and actions which are based on identified needs and priorities. Collaborative approaches facilitate greater use of existing community infrastructure and resources, including networks and forums, in order to develop long-term assets in communities and foster dialogue between communities, local and community development bodies, local statutory structures and local government.

Co-operation and joined-up actions are also crucial at national level to ensure that the programmes and policies are appropriate to the needs of the relevant communities. No one programme or service alone can address all needs. Accordingly, a coherent cross-government approach at central government level, supporting and supported by local authority action locally, is essential to ensuring co-operation and collaboration between agencies in localities and communities.

Measures
In developing local and community development policies, interventions, programmes and actions, Government, including local government will:

2.1   pursue an integrated, 'whole-of-government' approach at central and local levels; (DECLG; DSP; DCYA; DH; DJE; DAHG, DES; DJEI; LAs; HSE; Solas; ETBs; LDCs; U na G; CYPSCs; JPCs; FRCs; SPs; CCCs; TIGs);

2.2   develop the resources and skills available within local government and local and community development organisations and to facilitate meaningful collaborative work at local level; (DECLG; Pobal; LAs; UnaG) and

2.3   establish and support county/city *Local Community Development Committees* that will bring a range of statutory, voluntary and private agencies together to work in partnership to find shared solutions to locally identified needs and challenges, through the development and implementation of a Local

Economic and Community Plan for their areas. (DECLG; DSP; DCYA; DH; DJE; DAHG; DES; DJEI; LAs; HSE; ETBs; LDCs; UnaG)

Objective 3: Planning for Local and Community Development

Effective policy development requires a continuing process of improvement, responsiveness and adaptability at local level – a process in which local people are meaningfully involved in the identification of needs, determining local priorities, policy development, decision-making processes and, ultimately, the implementation of actions. This means national and local government working with communities to build a shared vision based on a set of core values, including social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity, to turn that shared vision into goals and objectives that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people.

An integrated approach to planning at local level, involving local government, local statutory structures, local development agencies and communities, is essential to enhancing community engagement, developing effective local partnerships and building a shared vision that addresses the priorities of the communities involved. Effective planning can act as an agent of change at local level, bringing coherence to the range of services available to communities, identifying gaps in these services, fostering meaningful community involvement in the planning and targeting of those services, thus ensuring that resources are matched with locally identified needs and priorities.

A number of participative community-based planning initiatives already exist in counties around Ireland, co-ordinated by various local bodies. For example, the '*Mayo Community Futures*' programme, assists communities to prepare 'bottom-up' local community plans, informed by a process of consultation and involvement, which identify visions for the future of communities and priority issues and actions. Other communities have developed socio-economic action plans, integrated area-based plans or development initiatives, etc. Involving local communities meaningfully in planning requires suitably structured and supported processes. Capacity building ideally should take place in advance of a participative community based planning process in order to ensure that communities have the ability to contribute in a valuable way, while external facilitators at the community level, secretarial supports and appropriately trained volunteer leaders are all valuable to an effective participative process. It is essential for the success of community based planning initiatives that there is a commitment by local authorities, local development organisations and relevant state agencies to engage with the processes.

Measures

In developing local and community development policies, interventions, programmes and actions, Government will:

 3.1   support an integrated, coherent approach through *County/City Local Economic and Community Plans* that are adaptable to changing needs and which clearly identify the outcomes they aim to achieve; (LAs and LCDCs; DECLG; DSP;

DCYA; DH; DJE; DAHG; DES; DJEI; HSE; ETBs; LDCs; UnaG; CYPSCs; JPCs; FRCs; SPs; CCCs; TIGs)

3.2   ensure priorities, as set out in the relevant Local Economic and Community Plan for expenditure at local level across all community and local development programmes are based on appropriate needs analysis and matched to available resources; (LAs and LCDCs; DECLG; DSP; DCYA; DH; DJE; DAHG, DES; DJEI; HSE; ETBs; LDCs; UnaG; CYPSCs; JPCs; FRCs; SPs; CCCs)

3.3   ensure local planning is facilitated and supported by local authorities through meaningful partnerships approaches and drawing on the skills and experience of all stakeholders; (LAs; LCDCs) and

3.4   support local and community development sectors in mobilising community participation and engagement with local planning processes. (DECLG; LAs)

Objective 4: Delivery

A collaborative approach to policy considerations, between all tiers of Government and its citizens, is key to effective delivery of interventions at local level. Such collaboration allows approaches to engagement and multi-agency partnership to develop and underpins the delivery of effective services to communities. It brings local and central government, local statutory organisations, specific sectoral interests, and local and community delivery bodies together to build a vision for local and community development, to make decisions about which outcomes should to be pursued at local level, and to deliver effectively to citizens and communities.

National Level

Effective delivery requires central government to set out an overarching vision for local and community development, underpinned by clear goals, objectives and outcomes. It requires a joined-up approach at local level to ensure that policies, interventions, programmes and actions are consistent with this overall vision.

Measures

To provide for a joined-up, integrated cross-government, cross-sectoral approach in the development of local and community development policies, interventions, programmes and actions, Government will:

4.1   establish a National Policy Group on Local and Community Development (NPG), to oversee the development of effective arrangements for communication, consultation and co-ordination between national, local and community levels. In the course of this work, the NPG should engage appropriately with relevant stakeholders such as elected members and community bodies; (DECLG; DSP; DCYA; DH; DJE; DAHG; DES; DJEI; HSE; CCMA)

4.2   monitor and review this framework for local and community development in regard to the realisation of a whole of government approach; (DECLG and NPG) and

4.3   agree clear national priorities to be targeted by local and community development interventions, programmes and actions. (NPG)

Local Level: Local Government (working with State funded agencies)

One of the purposes of local government is to promote the well being and quality of life of citizens and communities. As the second tier of government, local government combines democratic representation and leadership roles to address a wide range of issues affecting the welfare of citizens and to implement actions for the betterment of local areas.

Local government is a key agent for delivery of services mandated by national and regional policy at the local level. Local authorities, together with other State funded agencies operating locally, will work to support the sustainable development of local communities.

Measures

In supporting communities and ensuring the implementation of locally identified and targeted services, local authorities will:

4.4   work with State agencies at the local level, and with local and community development bodies through the *County/City Local Economic and Community Plan* process to develop a local vision in line with national priorities; (LAs; LCDCs; NPG; HSE; ETBs; LDCs; CYPSCs; JPCs; FRCs; SPs; CCCs; UnaG)

4.5   exercise effective strategic leadership to ensure greater coherence of service delivery at local level; (LAs; LCDCs; NPG; UnaG)

4.6   through the *County/City Local Economic and Community Plan*, deliver an integrated approach to economic development and community development at local level within the local authority area; (LAs, LCDCs; NPG; HSE; ETBs; LDCs; CYPSCs; JPCs; FRCs; SPs; CCCs; UnaG) and

4.7   through the *County/City Local Economic and Community Plan*, manage the delivery of interventions that provide positive action programmes targeting those groups that are most marginalised, and support them to become involved in issues and concerns affecting themselves and their communities. (LAs and LCDCs; NPG; HSE; ETBs; LDCs; CYPSCs; JPCs; FRCs; SPs; CCCs; UnaG)

Community level work

The relationship between central and local government, local and community development and the community and voluntary sector is very important in terms of promoting active citizenship and democracy, including enhancing participative democracy. The strength of voluntary activity is that it emerges organically from communities, but it needs support if it is to flourish.

County/City Local Economic and Community Plans will build upon local community and neighbourhood planning processes. They will seek to address locally identified needs, issues, and gaps in service provision at local level. Through collaborative working and meaningful community engagement, the planning process will provide an enabling space for supporting local groups on issues that they determine to be important. It will accommodate locally determined objectives in response to the priorities of citizens and communities, and in doing so, will encompass innovative approaches to problems and issues where there is no obvious solution and resources are already stretched.

Measures

In working with communities to deliver locally agreed solutions to local issues, Government will, primarily through local authorities:

4.8   develop effective relationships between national and local government, and communities, and improve through the Public Participation Network and other relevant mechanisms, community participation in local area planning at county/city and municipal district level, policy development and decision making on issues that affect them; (NPG; LAs)

4.9   improve the targeting of resources to meet needs and priorities of communities through outcome focused interventions and enhancing links between practice and policy; (NPG; LAs) and

4.10   support voluntary activity and help communities to become more self-reliant in identifying their needs and developing solutions to those needs and bring about the desired change. (DECLG; LAs)

Objective 5: Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing

It is important that available resources are targeted where they will have the most impact and in response to identified need. To achieve this, appropriate systems must be in place to monitor and measure performance, assess the impact of interventions and facilitate decision making regarding the allocation of resources to those who need them most. To date, cross-government and cross-programme approaches have been relatively undeveloped and, accordingly, there should be a greater focus on developing systems to embed such approaches in the local and community development programming.

In developing local and community development policies, interventions, programmes and actions, Government, acting primarily through local authorities and LCDCs, will:

5.1   implement monitoring, evaluation and review approaches that focus on learning and feedback from performance and outcomes; (NPG, Pobal; LAs)

5.2   involve communities and citizens in monitoring, evaluation and review processes (NPG, Pobal, LAs); and

5.3   design outcome evaluation processes that have an appropriate balance between accountability, administration and the delivery of services. (NPG, Pobal, LAs)

Glossary of Terms

There are broad range of definitions covering the nature and scope of local and community development. With a view to developing a shared understanding and commonality of approach, the following are some of the key terms contained in the document and the meanings ascribed to them.

Bottom-up Approach
The 'bottom-up' approach to local development provides local communities with the means to participate in decision-making in relation to priorities to be pursued in their local area to deal with social, cultural and economic barriers to development, and strategies to address those priorities. The 'bottom-up' approach is intended to combine and interact with top-down approaches from national/regional/local authorities to achieve to achieve optimum results for local communities. This approach aims to bring together communities, economic and social interest groups and representative public and private institutions to develop integrated solutions to local challenges.

Community
Community refers to place (such as a neighbourhood or wider area), identity (such as belonging to an ethnic group), and interest (such as a commitment in common with others, for example, disability rights).

Community Assets
A community asset is anything which can be used to improve the quality of community life, including physical infrastructure and places, services, skills, networks and other resources.

Community Development
The term "community development" refers to both a sector within the overall voluntary and community sector and a distinctive approach to working for social and economic development and change. This approach involves enabling and supporting members of a community (of place, identity or interest) to work collectively to improve the quality of their lives, their community and their society.

Community-led Local Development
Community-led local development is a method for involving partners at local level including civil society and local economic actors in designing and implementing local integrated strategies which promote smarter, sustainable and more inclusive forms of economic development.

Participative community based planning
Participative community-based planning is a structured process through which members of a community are actively involved in identifying issues and setting priorities for action for their area.

Co-production
Delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change. (Boyle and Harris, 2009: 11)

Democratic accountability
Democratic accountability requires public bodies to be open and transparent in their dealings with the public and for government at all levels to explain and accept responsibility for its actions. Democratic accountability also entails government ensuring adequate opportunities exist for people to participate in and influence the policy making process.
(http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/revitalise/accountability.html)

Governance
The usual understanding of 'governance' can be defined as "rules, processes and behaviours that affect the way in which powers are exercised…particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence" (European Commission, European Governance – A White Paper, 2001).

For the purpose of this policy, 'governance' means combining elements of the top-down and the bottom-up where representatives of both can come together to promote agreed strategies. It necessitates building social capital so that members of communities can move up from the basic 'information' level, which means merely commenting on an agency's intentions, through consultative and representative stages, to the 'participation' level involving continuous engagement in decision-making *(O'Keefe; 2008: 28)*.

Local
Local refers to activity in the areas, communities and neighbourhoods where people live. This activity is carried out by a range of place based agencies which interface directly with citizens. Some of these agencies have a strategic or area wide focus, while others may be located small housing development or very local area, or may be 'interest-based'.

Local Development
Local development involves empowering local communities to sponsor innovative strategies and projects for enterprise, improving employment opportunities, education, training and community development as well as enabling them to focus mainstream programmes in a better way in their local areas *(Crickley, 2000: 17)*.

Multi-level Governance
The principle of multi-level governance is based on coordinated action by the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in partnership, taking the form of operational and institutionalised cooperation in the drawing-up and implementation of the European Union's policies (http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Pages/multilevel-governance1.aspx)

Participative democracy

Participative (or participatory) democracy relates to ways in which citizens have ways of influencing the determination of specific issues, including through referenda, discussion fora, committees, consultative procedures, opinion polls and other means of establishing the views of individuals and groups.
(Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government)

Public Participation Network

The Public Participation Network is a framework for public participation and engagement within each local authority area to enable the public to take an active formal role in relevant policy making and oversight activities of the local authority's areas of responsibility.

Social Innovation

Social innovations are new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations and provide innovative solutions to social or environmental problems.

Local Community Development Committees

New structures established within each local authority area on a statutory basis, which brings together representatives of the local authority, local and community interests and state agencies to find shared solutions to locally identified needs and challenges.

Acronyms

CCCs	County/City Childcare Committees
CCMA	County/City Managers Association
CYPSCs	Children and Young People's Services Committees
DAHG	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DECLG	Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
DH	Department of Health
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DSP	Department of Social Protection
DTTS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
FRCs	Family Resource Centres
HSE	Health Service Executive
JPCs	Joint Policing Committees
LAs	Local Authorities
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
NTA	National Transport Authority
SPs	Sports Partnerships
TIGs	Traveller Interagency Groups
U na G	Údarás na Gaeltachta