

Quality of Life, Place and Experience Peatland Communities



Offaly Local Development Company

The Context

- With the decline of Peat Harvesting and the closure of the ESB Power Generating Stations in the Midlands; many rural communities will be decimated by both the loss of jobs and the loss of traditional employers in the area for many generations.
- While the impact of this is probably greater in Offaly, it also affects many other areas
- OLDC have been working with 12 communities in the most affected areas over the past 2 years to plan community responses to those imminent changes.



Community responsibility and response

Supported by both the LEADER Programme and SICAP; we have worked with these communities some with a population of less than 500 people and up to 1800 people where the former workers were based.

A Planning Process does not concentrate on what a Community does not have, on its difficulties and its challenges. It concentrates on its assets and seeks to identify ways in which these assets can be used and developed to the benefit of the community. In this it reflects what is known as Asset Based Community Development.

Many community development actions arise as a result of a perceived need in a community; they are a response to an issue that gains prominence at a particular time.

There are four key questions

What we as a community can do ourselves?

What we as a community can do with the help of others?

What our community can do to help others?

What can only be done by others?



Methodology

- Target community networks and leaders
- Prepare community consultations
 - Household survey
 - Targeted Meetings
 - Enterprise Questionnaire
 - Community and Voluntary Questionnaire
 - Deliver and collect results
- Analysis Data - to identify needs
- Community mapping and resource audit
- Present Consultation Feedback
 - Establish vision statements
 - Meet and engage with Stakeholders
- Articulate the Position - Strategic Actions



Clustering Solutions

- Plans focus on actions with timescales and costings.
- We are also bringing these communities together in clusters to make sure that linkages are developed
- To build a **collective capacity and power** that can:
 - Respond to the impact of major job losses; loss of industrial base and traditional employment opportunities;
 - Identify solutions to generational dependency;
 - Develop opportunities for individuals and communities that allows them to re-imagine their future;
 - Engage a critical mass that can then lever local, national and EU supports
- This has worked successfully in our communities
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- The crucial element is the buy in from the local community under the main heading of “local solutions to local problems”



