

Question 5.046: To ask the Minister for Rural and Community Development his views establishing a special fund, including insurance cover, for communities and neighbourhoods to run street festivals when the lifting of restrictions are eased and such events are allowed.

Holly Cairns T.D.

REPLY

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Michael Ring)

I am acutely aware of the severe challenges facing communities as a result of COVID-19. My Department is supporting communities and individuals across the country in these unprecedented times through the Community Call initiative, working with Local Authorities and a range of other organisations.

In addition, all of my Department's programmes aimed at supporting communities, as well as the economic and social development of rural areas, are continuing to operate. Funding for festivals is available through programmes such as LEADER, but clearly, the holding of any such events in the foreseeable future will be subject to public health guidelines and must be in line with the Government's Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business.

It should be noted that operational costs such as insurance expenditure are not eligible to receive financial support under the LEADER programme.

My Department has also provided financial support for the running of Agricultural shows since 2018, including the allocation of €600,000 for shows that were scheduled to take place in 2020. I have agreed with the Irish Shows Association that any of this funding which is not used this year can be held in trust for shows to be held in 2021.

While recognising that the economic and social recovery of Ireland post COVID-19 will require a whole of Government approach, my Department is looking at how it can contribute to the rejuvenation of towns, villages and communities in the recovery phase and will continue to work with relevant stakeholders, including Local Authorities and Local Development Companies, to determine how best this can be achieved.