

MILLTOWNPASS

Village plan 2018-2023



This Action Plan was part-funded by Westmeath Local Community Development Committee under the Rural Development Programme (LEADER 2014-2020)



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EXPLANATION OF PROCESS

Blue Moss was commissioned by Westmeath Community Development to undertake an Action Planning Initiative for seven rural towns and villages in County Westmeath, one of which is Milltownpass. This initiative will act in support of the regeneration of these rural towns and villages and will prioritise projects for development in each of the seven areas.



Action planning for rural towns and villages has been set out in the LEADER Local Development Strategy for County Westmeath under the subtheme of Rural Towns. This sub-theme supports the regeneration of rural towns, promoting them as attractive places to visit, live and do business in. This is to be achieved by

building on the economic strengths and infrastructure of the area while also addressing the key challenges for business, community and recreation.

The process involving all seven villages took place over six months, between January and June 2018. They all followed a similar process based on a participatory model called Outcomes Based Accountability or OBA. Blue Moss have used this approach before as it is a process that is interactive and aimed at turning words into action. Each village went through the same stages however the number of meetings varied slightly depending on the availability of the group.

Process Stages:

- I. Development of a Vision Statement and underpinning values-
What is good about living in the village and what would the group like to see in the future.?
- II. SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of the village. The information gathered was then considered against statistical data, principally drawing upon a census completed in 2016
- III. Deeper consideration of the wellbeing that the group wanted to see in their village and the projects and activities that would be needed to create these. This led to the point of the first draft of the plan being developed which was circulated with the group.
- IV. Joint meeting of the villages where they considered aspects of their individual plans that overlapped and how the villages could support each other in reaching their goals.
 1. Castletown Geoghegan
 2. Collinstown
 3. Coole
 4. Milltownpass
 5. Multyfarnham
 6. Rosemount
 7. Streete
- V. Identification of potential partners and strategies-
representatives of some of the villages met with public bodies and agencies relevant to their plans
- VI. Joint launch of all seven community plans hosted by Westmeath Community Development

Milltownpass

Milltownpass is a small Village of less than 300 people but it has at its heart an active, vibrant community, again with plans to challenge the inadequacies they see within their community and plans to redevelop with the aim of rejuvenating their community going into the future.

It is located in the south of the county on the R446 regional road. It is the second largest village in the parish of Rochfortbridge. It was one of the first villages in Ireland to have its own electricity before the electrification of Rural Ireland. The Village came together to form a Company & powered by a turbine generator, built a mill on the Milltown River providing power to the village. The scheme in total cost £700 and involved local electricians in wiring the village for power and a local resident engineer supervising the project.

Milltownpass is a community that makes change happen from the inside out, it has shown great resilience and uses the skill set of local residents, taps into local social networks and uses its resources.

As stated by Professors McKnight & Cretsman: “ Milltownpass could be stated as a community that has shown through its history to identify its assets, connect and collect these and mobilize their community to make change happen.”

Milltownpass takes its name from the Irish “Bealach Baile an Mhuilinn meaning “Way of the Town of the Mill. The name is appropriate as several mills are known to have existed here. In 1812 the village was shown to be dominated by a large mill pond on the south side of the main road. Around this time it was recorded as having 11 houses and a population of 62.

According to the 2016 Census, the total population of the Milltown electoral division (ED) including the village is 299 persons, this is a decrease of 1 person since the 2011 census.

The Village has a significant light industrial and employment base for a settlement of its size. Wright Window Systems and Skyclad, both manufacturers and suppliers of construction materials, being long established in the village.

The Community Centre was built in 2012 through significant local funding and is now a base for 12 Active Community Groups.

In 2009 the Community had identified a need within their Community, for a Community Centre and after starting fundraising in 2009, using local resources in engaging in cross community participation they built & officially opened a Community Centre in Feb 2012, costing €450k. In Nov 2015 the Community Centre was Debt Free. This was a Collaboration between Community, GAA, & local Community Groups

There are many challenges facing life in Irish rural communities but Milltownpass is the type of community that comes together to face challenge, look for possibilities and make things happen. It is a Community that makes change happen from the inside out, it has shown great resilience and uses the skill set of local residents , taps into local social networks and uses its resources for the good of all the community. Moving forward it is a community that wants to grow and be a welcoming vibrant rural village.

Vision:

The people of Milltownpass live as a connected, thriving community. They are creative, innovative and achieving. They have a strong sense of pride in the village, support each other and feel safe.

Values

This Vision is nurtured by a strong sense of values in the village that include:

A strong sense of belonging across all generations and backgrounds

Social responsibility- people looking out for each other

Respect- for people, property and organisations

Pride in the community

Ownership – responsibility for the village by all

Welcoming and friendly to all

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND KEY FINDINGS

The community spent time considering the current context and status of Milltownpass. This included reflecting on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats connected to the village. This following is a record of the views of those who participated.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well located ▪ Community- GAA, Community Centre, Scouts, Leisure/ educational classes ▪ Educational facilities 1st level local and 2nd level accessible ▪ Good Employment ▪ Crime Free/safe ▪ Accessibility ▪ Engaged and willing community- strong fundraising and supporting events ▪ Debt free community ▪ Upgrading of GAA grounds and facilities ▪ Text Alert/ Community Neighbourhood watch ▪ Possibility of developing Eco Tourism- re: bog walks, River/stream- to create a picnic area. ▪ Physical infrastructure to work with and develop ▪ Cost of living – low ▪ Core family values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>No broadband/lack of quality</i> ○ <i>No shop/post office</i> ○ <i>Empty buildings/houses</i> ○ <i>Lack of vibrancy/activity on the streets</i> ○ <i>Sewage treatment plant needs upgrading</i> ○ <i>Lack of medical facilities</i> ○ <i>Lack of attraction/support for the local school</i> ○ <i>Aging population within the surrounds of the village combined with people moving to bigger towns/villages for work or college</i> ○ <i>Small village between larger villages</i> ○ <i>Lack of local job opportunities</i> ○ <i>Transport links fragmented i.e. good to Dublin but poor to Mullingar</i> ○ <i>Road conditions- drainage</i> ○ <i>No bus shelters</i> ○ <i>No playground or crèche.</i>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Twinning with another town in another country ➤ Utilising vacant premises for enterprise ➤ Village Plan- accessing funding which is now available to us ➤ Funding- grow our current hub e.g. further enterprise/business-clustering ➤ Well located- opportunity for attracting business and good road networks ➤ Transport Links ➤ Young/growing community workforce ➤ Attract inward investment from industry/niche business ➤ Good education system- Access IT/Uni etc. New investment in A.I.T-science park ➤ Willing community- work/try new ideas/innovative ➤ Government funding for towns and villages etc. Investment in Rural Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>National Planning Framework 2040- the impact is just unknown and small villages can get lost</i> ✓ <i>Motorway – crime/ bypassing of tourists/commuters- only village not having a slip road from the motorway</i> ✓ <i>Brexit- Unknown factors to industry and employment</i> ✓ <i>Lack of high speed broadband</i> ✓ <i>Lack of investment – i.e. sewage system, housing, Educational facilities, Health, Shops- all connected to employment, vicious circle</i> ✓ <i>Aging population- facilities/accessibility/isolation/vulnerability/infrastructure e.g. footpaths, lighting, ramps</i> ✓ <i>Depopulation</i> ✓ <i>Exposure to construction industry- downturns and upturns</i> ✓ <i>How big do we want Milltown Pass to be?</i>

CONSIDERATION OF COUNTY WIDE AND VILLAGE CENSUS INFORMATION

Participants also considered a range of census information connected to Milltownpass and to County Westmeath. The following were recorded as being points of interest:

- Number of single people- 165/299
- Age profile 13/14% over 65
- Less than 10% unemployment in the area of Milltownpass
- 103 at work
- 32 retired
- 32 students
- 60 not at work – unemployed, looking after home/family, unable
- Only 4 people defined themselves as farmers?
- Falling numbers of children and young people. What is the impact for the school?
- High education standards – third level
- Agriculture – 7/300 small number of a country area
- Number of homes built – 1991-2010: 31 2011-present:3. Only 4 in the village
- Vacant dwellings – 19 – Who determined what was vacant and how was it recorded? Does this indicate no demand for housing?
- No need for big development – 19 vacant dwellings- what are they like? How long have they been vacant?
- Housing/land available Table 12- 0.42 hectares
- Central heating – peat 48/92 homes, gas 2/92 homes
- Rate of crime in Westmeath higher than average
- 2012 – 160,000 visitors to Belvedere- how to attract some of these people to Milltown Pass?
- Majority of population leaving for work within 1 hour- not travelling far from the village to work.
- 6 houses with no car
- Good Health Ratio -257/299 reported very good health
- More children hospitalised than any other county
- 66/92 Broadband/internet access
- 32/92 households no computer

QUALITY OF LIFE CONDITIONS

In considering how they would like the village in the future, local people thought that the following elements were vital:

- There are places to meet and connect such as a playground, a post office, a community shop and youth amenities besides the GAA
- There are increased means and opportunities to live and work in the area of Milltownpass
- There are safe well-lit good pathways and footpaths
- There is good broadband to enable home life and create the possibility for remote working
- The village is welcoming for newcomers and visitors socially and physically.
- Family values are nurtured and relationships and integration between the generations is supported.
- The population is healthy with a strong sense of wellness.
- The village has the capacity to offer people housing.
- The population grows and feels energized.

OUR OUTCOMES:

The primary intention of this plan is to enable people across Milltownpass to achieve their intended vision for the village.

The people of Milltownpass live as a connected, thriving community. They are creative, innovative and achieving. They have a strong sense of pride in the village, support each other and feel safe.

This will be achieved through a focus on the three long term strategic themes across which fall 8 outcomes:

THEME 1: Health & Social Wellbeing

Outcome 1: All people from Milltownpass benefit from improved health and wellbeing

Outcome 2: All people from Milltownpass experience and contribute to better social connections

Outcome 3: All people from Milltownpass feel safe and secure in their homes and village

THEME 2: Sustainable Environment & Infrastructure

Outcome 4: All people from Milltownpass appreciate and value the local environment

Outcome 5: All people from Milltownpass will have increased opportunity to develop and sustain housing

Outcome 6: All people from Milltownpass will have a local infrastructure that supports a good quality of living.

THEME 3: Education & Economy

Outcome 7: All people from Milltownpass have benefit from and have access to good education and training

Outcome 8: All people from Milltownpass derive some economic benefit from life in the village

Part Two – Action Plan

Theme One: Health and Social Wellbeing

Outcome One: All people from Milltownpass benefit from improved health and wellbeing				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Develop a walking track and outside gym.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Improvements in health outcomes for local people</i> - <i>Increase numbers of local people participating in physical activity</i> - <i>Increased number of local people enjoying and make use of local environment</i> - <i>Development of walking groups</i> 	Short	Westmeath Community Development Dept. Of Transport Tourism and Sport	Leader Programme Sport's Capital Programme
Build two new pitches to also include an indoor gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase number of GAA players in the club.</i> - <i>Fitter and more energised teams.</i> 	Medium	Dept. Of Transport Tourism and Sport	Sport's Capital Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased participation.</i> - <i>Increase sense of community support for the GAA team.</i> - <i>Increased success for the club at a county level</i> 			
Establish a GP's wellbeing centre in the village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased good health in the village</i> - <i>Better supported community.</i> 	Long	Health Service Executive	Health Service Executive

Outcome Two: All people from Milltownpass experience and contribute to better social connections

Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
<p>Establish a community coffee shop/ community shop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase in social connections in the village</i> - <i>Increase in sense of community togetherness for village residents</i> - <i>Local craft makers displaying their wares.</i> - <i>Increase in community gatherings.</i> - <i>Increased attractions for people to spend time in the village</i> 	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Westmeath Community Development</p> <p>POBAL</p>	<p>Leader Programme Social Enterprise Grants</p>
<p>Develop a playpark in the village</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase in children playing together</i> - <i>Parents coming together to socialise</i> - <i>Increase in children's levels of fitness</i> 	<p>short</p>	<p>Westmeath Community Development</p> <p>Westmeath County Council</p>	<p>Leader Programme</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Decrease in stress</i> - <i>Decrease in obesity levels</i> - <i>Decrease in social isolation</i> 			
Develop the facilities at the existing community Centre to include a community kitchen, training facilities, office and admin support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase in use of community centre</i> - <i>Increase in number of courses provided</i> - <i>Increase in skill set</i> - <i>Increased opportunity for intergenerational connections to be made</i> 	Medium	<p>Westmeath Community Development</p> <p>Westmeath County Council</p>	<p>Leader Programme</p> <p>Town and Village Renewal Scheme</p>
Create a community newsletter (virtual and real)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase in numbers participating in community activities</i> - <i>Increase in knowledge of community activity among local people</i> - <i>Improvement in social connections in the village</i> 	Short	<p>Westmeath Community Development</p> <p>Westmeath County Council</p>	<p>Leader Programme</p> <p>Community Grants</p>

Outcome Three: All people from Milltownpass feel safe and secure in their homes and village

Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
<p>Build a safe and accessible pathway throughout the village extended to the speed limit on the Mullingar Road, the Rochfortbridge Road, and the Killucan Road</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased safety for people</i> - <i>Increased access for people to all areas of the village</i> - <i>Increase in numbers of people walking</i> - <i>Increase in social connections in the village</i> - <i>Improvements in health outcomes for village residents</i> - <i>Increase in sense of community togetherness for village residents</i> 	<p>Short</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council – Roads Section</p>	<p>Annual Roads Programme</p>
<p>Put up lighting outside the community centre in the carpark, walkway and play area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase in safety to use the centre at night</i> 	<p>Short</p>	<p>Westmeath County Council</p>	<p>Annual Lighting Programme</p>

Build a bus shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase people's comfort to use public transport.</i> - <i>Increase ease to use public transport</i> 	medium	Westmeath County Council, Roads Section Bus Eireann	Bus Eireann
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Theme Two: Sustainable Environment and Infrastructure

Outcome Four: All people from Milltownpass appreciate and value the local environment				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
The village is active in terms of recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase in recycling</i> - <i>Decrease in rubbish for landfill</i> 	Medium	Local Businesses An Taisce	
The village is landscaped	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Improved aesthetics throughout the village.</i> - <i>Increased sense of pride in the village</i> - <i>Increased desire to live and be in the village.</i> 	Medium	Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council	Community Enhancement Town and Village Renewal
The bog land is developed as a public amenity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased tourists to the areas</i> - <i>Increased opportunities for educational visits</i> - <i>Increased</i> 		National Parks and Wildlife Services	Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme

Outcome Five: All people from Milltownpass will have increased opportunity to develop and sustain housing

Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
<p>New Sewerage system required for the village to allow for a small population increase</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Current and emerging needs are met</i> - <i>Increased capacity within the village</i> - <i>Increased capacity to develop the village</i> - <i>Required population increase including increase in youth population</i> - <i>Survival & Growth of existing Businesses and community groups</i> - <i>New Business ventures in the village</i> - <i>Vibrant and thriving village</i> 	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Irish Water</p>	<p>Capital Programmes</p>

The empty houses in the village are made fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased housing within the village</i> - <i>Improved appearance of the village</i> - <i>Improved attractiveness of the village</i> 	Medium	Westmeath County Council, Planning Dept	
Improved planning which encourages building of houses within the village instead of ribbon development outside the village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased and sustainable housing within the village</i> 		Westmeath County Council, Planning Department	Dept of Housing, Planning and County Development Plan

Outcome Six: All people from Milltownpass will have a local infrastructure that supports a good quality of living.

Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Improve availability of bus services to Mullingar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Improved access to services</i> - <i>Improved opportunities for employment</i> 	Short	Local Link	
Improved quality broadband.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › <i>Increase in broadband speed and quality</i> › <i>Increase in mobile phone reception</i> › <i>Increase in quality communication options</i> › <i>Increase in ability to work from home</i> › <i>Decreased negative impact on work, family and social life</i> 		Westmeath County Council: Department of Communication	
Increased Mobile phone coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased connectivity</i> - <i>Decreased social isolation</i> - <i>Increased sense of safety in the home</i> - <i>Increased opportunities for home working</i> 		Mobile Phone Providers	

Theme Three: Education and Economy

Outcome Seven: All people from Milltownpass have benefit from and have access to good education and training.				
Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Establish a timetable of courses taking place locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased use of community centre</i> - <i>Increased capacity within the village</i> - <i>Increased people coming into the village</i> - <i>Increased skill sets within the village</i> 	medium	Longford Westmeath Education Training Board	
Establish a schedule of local talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased awareness of the history of the area</i> - <i>Increased knowledge on a range of topics</i> - <i>Increased opportunity for intergenerational learning</i> 	short	Local Action Group	Local fundraising

Establish guided walking tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased knowledge of the area</i> - <i>Increased knowledge about the wildlife in the area</i> - <i>Increased knowledge of the fauna and flora in the area</i> - <i>Increase physical wellbeing</i> - <i>Increased opportunities for connections and relationships to develop.</i> 	short	Tourism Officer – Westmeath County Council National Trail’s Office Local Action Group	Ireland’s Ancient East Recreation Fund
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Outcome eight: All people from Milltownpass derive some economic benefit from life in the village

Action Project	Indicators of success	Timeframe	Potential Partners	Strategy and funding programme links
Establish a local business hub, with affordable units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Number of new businesses established</i> - <i>Number of businesses that stay local</i> - <i>Lower number of younger people leaving the area</i> - <i>Increased opportunities for collaboration</i> 	Medium	<p>Approach existing owners of businesses</p> <p>Westmeath County Council</p> <p>Local Enterprise</p>	Local Enterprise Office
Develop local initiatives that support the village to thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased footfall in the village</i> - <i>Increased life in the village</i> - <i>Presence of shop/coffee shop</i> 	Long	<p>Westmeath County Council</p> <p>Community Development</p> <p>Small Businesses</p>	Town and Village Renewal
Keep up-to-date with the skills and knowledge in the village,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased awareness of the wealth of skills in the village</i> 	short	Village Action Group	

conducting a skills and local produce audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased opportunities for new businesses</i> - <i>Increased opportunities for collaborations and support</i> 			
Create a 'buy-local' campaign for Milltownpass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increase in number of people buying and supporting local products and produce</i> 	Long	Village Action Group Local Businesses	
Establish a local farmer's market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased business in the village</i> - <i>Increased revenue into the village</i> - <i>Increased footfall</i> - <i>Increased attractiveness to the village.</i> - 		Westmeath Community Development Westmeath County Council Westmeath Food Network	



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