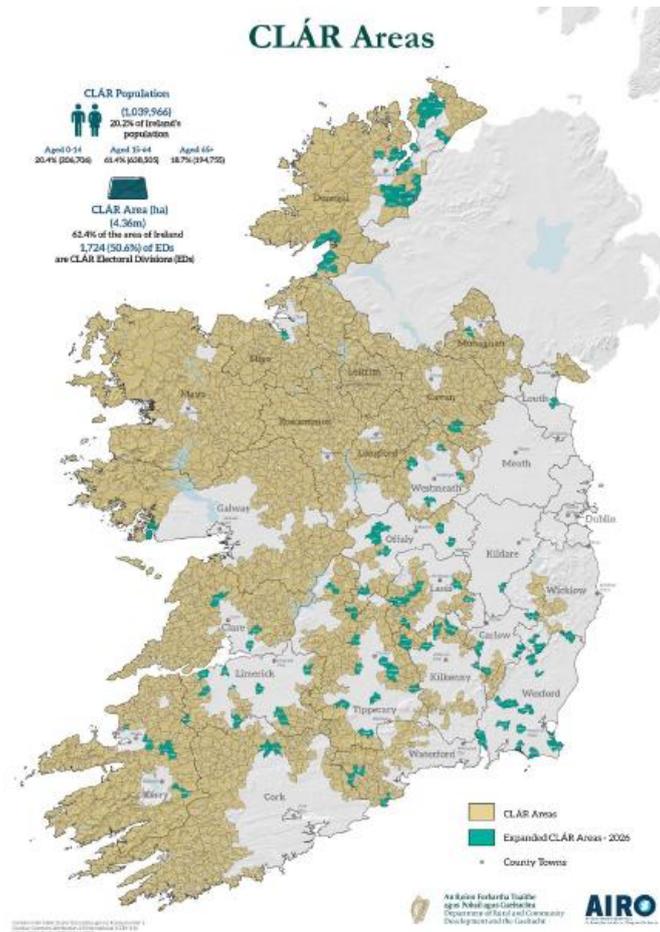




CLAR 2026



Scheme Outline

Measure 1

Developing Community Facilities

& Amenities

Contents

1.	Overview of the 2026 Scheme	3
2.	2026 Application Process	4
3.	Eligibility & Minimum Project Requirements	6
4.	Local Authority Selection of Projects	7
5.	Funding Available	8
6.	Eligible & Ineligible Projects	9
7.	Eligible Costs	11
8.	DRCDG Assessment Criteria	12
9.	Project Delivery	13
10.	Funding Conditions	14

1. Overview of the 2026 Scheme

Background

CLAR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in designated rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population and/or socio-economic disadvantage and geographic remoteness. The programme is delivered by the Department of Rural & Community Development & the Gaeltacht (DRCDG) and the funding assists in building the resilience of these rural communities

CLAR Programme for 2026

The CLAR Programme allocation has increased from €11 million to €12 million in 2026. The 2026 programme will be delivered through three separate Measures as follows:

Measure 1: Developing Community Facilities & Amenities

Measure 2: Mobility, Cancer Care, Community First Responder and Meals on
Wheels Transport

Measure 3: ‘Our Living Islands’

This Scheme outline refers to Measure 1: Developing Community Facilities & Amenities which are projects delivered via local authorities (LAs).

2. 2026 Application Process

All applicants must apply for this funding to their local authority (LA).

Application Process for 2026

The 2026 programme will allow for applications to be submitted to the local authorities from schools, community and voluntary groups and Local Development Companies under this Measure. **Local authorities may also self-deliver projects, but these must be developed in partnership with the local community.**

Community groups can include local sporting organisations where the infrastructure being supported through the application is for the benefit of the community generally (not just the sporting organisation) and is made **freely available to all members of the community.**

Local authorities must establish an expression of interest process at county level to facilitate applicants expressing an interest in applying for CLÁR funding. It is then a matter for each local authority to assess these expressions of interest and prioritise applications for consideration by the Department.

Local authorities must advise the Department at application stage of the number of EOIs and associated funding request that they have received. There is no need to submit a list of EOIs unless requested by the Department but these need to be retained on file by the local authority.

Up to **14 project applications**, may be selected by the local authority for onward submission to the Department for consideration.

To support our Gaeltacht areas, local authorities can submit two additional applications in respect of eligible Gaeltacht areas located in their county. These counties can therefore submit 16 projects. The following documents should be submitted:

1. A completed 'Application Overview' (MS Excel), is required to be completed by each LA. This is a list of each project application. Projects should be prioritised (1 to 14) as part of this overview or 1-16 where eligible Gaeltacht areas are included.
2. The local authority is required to submit a 'Project Application' form (MS Word, not in PDF format) in respect of each individual project. The LA must ensure that the forms are fully completed and comply with the 2026 Scheme Outline.

All of these documents are provided directly to each local authority by the DRCDG

Please ensure applications are fully completed and all required supporting documentation is submitted as the Department may not be in a position to follow up regarding missing documentation or incomplete application forms.

Incomplete applications may not be considered.

Applications should be submitted directly by local authorities to the Department at CLAR@DRCDG.gov.ie by **3rd July 2026**.

All applications are submitted for competitive assessment and consideration by DRCDG in the context of available funding: all applications will not be funded.

Queries

Any queries should also be submitted to CLAR@DRCDG.gov.ie.

Project Timelines

Scheme launch	9 th March 2026
Applications due into the Department from the Local Authorities*	3 rd July 2026
Funding awarded (indicative)	November 2026
Projects completed and drawn down	18 months after announcement

***Applicants are encouraged to contact their Local Authorities with regard to closing dates for expressions of interest and relevant forms. It is the local authorities that administer the CLAR programme Measure 1 on behalf of the Department.**

3. Eligibility & Minimum Project Requirements

Eligible Applicants

Schools, community and voluntary groups and local development companies can apply to their relevant local authority. Local authorities are also eligible to apply if they are in partnership with a community organisation – this must be clearly demonstrated in the application form.

The local authority must ensure that funded facilities are publicly accessible and available for use/booking with clear arrangements to insure and manage the facility. Any facility funded must be available to the public without a requirement to be a member of a club, enrolled in a school etc. **Facilities on school grounds must be open to the public outside school hours.**

The local authority must ensure that facilities funded are operational for at least 5 years from completion of the project.

Minimum Project Requirements

Landowner consent, planning permission, necessary screenings (if applicable), and the required match funding must be confirmed and in place at the time of application. The Department may request evidence of same during the assessment process. Such documentation must be held on file by the lead applicant for a period of 6 years from the date of application.

Please note, the applicant must own the premises/property or have **at least 7** years remaining under a lease or licence for the premises/property.

4. Local Authority Selection of Projects

The measure will be implemented via the local authorities. Projects proposed to the Department by the local authority must be selected on the basis of:

- being located in a CLAR area
- an application by a community or voluntary organisation, school or local development company to the local authority
- clear evidence of need
- alignment with the County Development Plan/Town Plan, the Local Economic and Community Plan, and the Climate Action Plan
- evidence that all necessary permissions are in place at the time of application.
- Where applicant does not own the premises, evidence, that minimum 7-year lease/licence is in place
- comprehensive estimated costs including local authority professional fees, if applicable
- evidence that match funding is in place at time of application
- evidence that the funded project will be open to the public without appointment, and that the necessary insurance is in place
- a single facility (not multiple locations).
- only 1 application per organisation/facility.
- project must be accessible to all.
- projects must be shovel ready.

5.Funding Available

Grant Funding and Rate of Aid

A minimum grant of €5,000 and maximum grant of €65,000 will apply to this measure. To facilitate projects of a slightly greater scale, each local authority can submit 2 applications seeking grant funding of up to €100,000. This means that each local authority can submit the following:

For counties **without** a Gaeltacht area, up to 14 applications with,

- 12 applications seeking funding of between €5,000 and €65,000
- 2 applications seeking funding of between €5,000 and €100,000 if required.

For counties with a Gaeltacht area, provided those areas are designated CLÁR areas, they can submit up to 16 applications with,

- 14 applications seeking funding of between €5,000 and €65,000
- 2 applications seeking funding of between €5,000 and €100,000 if required.

The scheme will provide up to 90% of the cost. The remaining 10% or balance of the cost must be provided in cash through local authority/community/other resources. Philanthropic contributions will be accepted as full or part of match funding costs. This funding must be in place at the time of application.

Please note that match funding cannot come from other DRCDG Schemes or other public funds other than local authority own resources.

6. Eligible and Ineligible Projects

Eligible projects

Measure 1 will support a variety of capital projects provided that they contribute to the enhancement of existing, and/or the development of new, accessible community recreation facilities and therefore further build the resilience of rural communities, including in preparing community facilities for use during emergency events.

All community facilities and amenities funded under this programme must, in so far as practicable, be accessible to all abilities and ages. Applications under this Measure may include a number of different elements in respect of a single facility.

The list below provides an indication of the types of projects that may be supported, **but is not exhaustive**:

- Small scale renovation works to community facilities open to the wider community such as community centres/sports centres/clubhouses of sporting groups/youth centres/men's sheds etc. This includes external works such as parking and accessibility enhancements
- Multi-use gaming areas (MUGAs)/Astro-turf facilities including upgrades (see information box in respect of astro turf surfaces below)
- Playgrounds/skateboard parks/pump tracks/cycling tracks/teenage spaces
- Walking/running /athletics tracks
- Handball alleys/tennis courts/basketball courts/cricket grounds/ outdoor bowling areas
- Community gyms/community cinemas
- Sensory gardens/Community gardens/ allotments/ biodiversity planting
- Access to unique local heritage sites / areas of natural beauty
- Enhanced outdoor toilet and changing facilities
- Car parking
- Community focussed traffic safety measures
- Improving access at sports grounds e.g. development/upgrade of spectator stands at local sports grounds with a particular focus on improving access for people of all abilities and ages
- Toilets/showers in community facilities but not sports team changing rooms or showers.

- Emergency Generators. These must be mobile to allow for shared community use. There must be confirmation that the facilities that will use the generator have changeover switches in place and the cost of installing these switches in these facilities can be included as part of the generator project application
- Actions to remediate light pollution (terrestrial and marine) through restorative lighting strategies to protect and/or restore Ireland's dark skies
- Solar Bins

For proposed development or enhancement works on Astro pitches or surfaces

We would like to draw your attention to EU regulations relating to the sale of certain synthetic polymer microparticles that are often used for granular infill for use on synthetic (Astro) sports surfaces. A ban is to take effect in 2031 that limits the materials used to refill Astro surfaces. For applicants considering submitting an application under the 2026 CLÁR programme for the development of, or works on, any type of Astro surface, they should in the first instance discuss these regulations with their contractor or surface supplier to ensure that their development is fully compliant with relevant legislation and is future proofed so as to ensure best value for money and longevity of the surface for users.

The application form must clearly outline the need and rationale for the projects put forward.

The local authority is advised to contact the Department in respect of any queries regarding project eligibility.

Ineligible Projects

The following projects will not be funded:

- Footpaths
- Bus shelters
- Works to current school buildings which are not open to the public after school hours
- CCTV
- The purchase of land or buildings

7. Eligible Costs

Applications should detail the eligible costs associated with the proposed project. Please note only items of a **capital** nature, integral to the project, are eligible. Professional costs are limited at 12.5% of total project costs.

- DRCDG funded local authority Capital Delivery Teams (CDTs) will support the delivery of CLAR projects. CDTs are in place under a funding agreement that precludes the claiming of overhead/salary/administration costs against any DRCDG capital investment scheme unless the costs have already been incurred prior to signing the agreement and are eligible under the relevant scheme/project funding agreement and/or terms and conditions, or with the written agreement with DRCDG.
- Where specialist services or works are proposed to be undertaken in-house by the local authority, and the skills to provide these services do not lie within the CDT, a breakdown of these costs must be included in the application form and a rationale provided for same. These costs must be reasonable and proportionate to the overall cost of the project and identified at application stage. Such costs will be assessed at application stage, and the local authority may be requested to remove or reduce such costs if deemed to be excessive.
- In addition, the reasonableness of the cost must be verified i.e. the local authority must have evidence on the project file that the cost charged is in line with, or less than, the cost of engaging an external contractor. This evidence will be reviewed at project inspection stage. Failure to have this on file could deem the amount charged ineligible.

8. DRCDG Assessment Criteria

In assessing applications and selecting projects for funding, a number of factors will be considered including the local authority indicated order of priority; the range, mix, quality and impact of proposed projects; previous funding provided, and other relevant considerations.

Successful applications will be concise and focussed. The quality and clarity of completed applications, in particular the need / rationale outlined in the application are important in the assessment process.

The number of projects approved in each county may be determined with reference to the size of the CLAR area in the county and/or the size of the CLAR area relative to the overall size of the county.

Please note that a penalty may apply if public procurement guidelines are not followed.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In Ireland, a whole-of-Government approach has been adopted for implementation of the SDGs. CLAR applicants are requested to identify and list in their application the SDGs are being delivered through their proposed project. This can be up to a maximum of 3 SDGs. Further information on the SDGs can be found by visiting; <https://irelandsdg.geohive.ie/> The 17 SDGs are as follows:

Goal 1	No Poverty	Goal 6	Clean Water and Sanitation	Goal 10	Reduced Inequality	Goal 14	Life Below Water
Goal 2	Zero Hunger	Goal 7	Affordable and Clean Energy	Goal 11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Goal 15	Life on Land
Goal 3	Good Health and Well-being	Goal 8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Goal 12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Goal 16	Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
Goal 4	Quality Education	Goal 9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Goal 13	Climate Action	Goal 17	Partnerships to achieve the Goal
Goal 5	Gender Equality						

9. Project Delivery

It is expected that the local authority will take a lead role in the delivery of many of the projects approved by the Department. It is the responsibility of the party entering into contract with the Department, as appropriate, to meet any shortfall arising out of any project non-compliance.

All projects must comply with the National Public Procurement Policy Framework published by the Office of Government Procurement. Please see www.etenders.gov.ie for more details. Failure to adhere to these requirements may result in the associated expenditure being deemed ineligible.

Progression of Projects

It is the responsibility of the LA to ensure that the project will be completed, and funding drawn down within the above timelines. LAs will be asked to report on the progression of approved projects on an ongoing basis.

The Department may grant an extension under exceptional circumstances. Any extension request must be submitted in writing and **in advance of the contract end date** stating the reason for the extension and the new requested completion/drawdown dates. The Department reserves the right to allow or deny any extension request.

Grant Payment Arrangements

Funding may be drawn down in phases in respect of each project individually.

- The first claim may be submitted when at least 50% of the estimated project costs have been expended.
- The final claim can be made upon project completion and when all project costs have been incurred.

Drawdown requests for payment must only be submitted by the local authority when the local authority **have issued payment**, and the relevant works **have been completed**. It is not permissible to submit a drawdown request to the Department if invoices remain unpaid or where relevant works are not fully completed by either the community group and/or the local authority.

10.Funding Conditions

Non-compliance with the conditions of the scheme and/or and contract awarded and agreed may result in the requirement to refund part or all of the grant funding awarded.

Requirements

- 1** Projects would be expected to commence without delay upon approval and be completed in line with the timelines set out in this Scheme Outline.
- 2** Any project that has not commenced by the agreed completion date will automatically be de-committed, unless there has been ongoing engagement with the Department and the reasons for the delay have been accepted by the Department.
- 3** The Department may de-commit funding allocated to projects under the Scheme where the project is not completed within the time specified, and where the express agreement of the Department to extend the funding arrangement has not been agreed in advance.
- 4** Phased Payments: Funding may be drawn down in up to 2 phases. The minimum amount that can be drawn down at any time is 50% of project costs once these have incurred by the LA. Funding drawdown requests (Annex 4 Drawdown Request Form) must be signed by the Director of Services (DOS) or an authorised official who should copy the DOS when submitting a claim.
- 5** Projects must be completed in full in order to drawdown the full grant amount. Where it is established that a project has not been completed, the Department may request the grantee to repay any funding received on the project. It is essential that any changes to the project elements, or reallocation of funding between elements, must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance of the change being implemented (Annex 6 – Change of Purpose); the Department will not retrospectively approve changes to projects.
- 6** Where changes have been applied to an approved project without Departmental approval, the grant funding may be reduced to reflect the amended project.
- 7** Where retention applies the Department will retain a percentage portion of the grant payment, in line with the percentage cost withheld, until the retention period passes.

A conditional extension will be granted in these cases. LAs may then drawdown the remaining grant amount once proof can be provided of the final retention amount being paid over.

8 If the project involves works on buildings or lands that are not in the ownership of the grantee, a minimum of 7 years remaining on a lease/licence must be in place from date of application.

9 In the case of funding allocated to enterprises or facilities (i.e. community centre, hubs), it is a requirement that they must operate as funded for a minimum of 5 years following release of the final stage of funding, otherwise funding may have to be repaid. Where they do not operate as funded this must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance.

10 All appropriate financial, public procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with, and each grantee will fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.

11 It is a matter for the local authority to determine if grant recipients are VAT registered, and if so, the VAT amount is not to be claimed as a project cost at drawdown.

12 All projects may be subject to audit and inspection under standard Departmental processes. Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure must be maintained in the project file and accessible by Department officials for audit purposes at all times, for a period of five years from the date of completion of the project.

13 Grantees will acknowledge the support of Project Ireland 2040 / Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht/ Government of Ireland, and any other applicable sources of funding (as identified in the relevant Funding Agreement) in all public announcements, advertising and signage, as appropriate, relating to the project. In addition, the Department may seek to use the project in the broader promotion of its policies. Costs for the mandatory signage can be included in project costings at application stage.

14 Signage must be in place at all CLAR funded projects. These signs must be in a prominent location, of durable quality, acknowledge the CLAR funding and be of sufficient size to be clearly visible to the public. These signs must follow the Department's Branding Guidelines. The Official Languages (amendment) Act 2021 must also be adhered to, for example, signs must be in both Irish and English with Irish being displayed first. Updated signage guidelines for 2026 have been provided.

15 Grantees will provide any reports and information relating to the project as may reasonably be requested by the Department from time to time.

16 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project outputs and outcomes should take place in the context of assessing the impact of the project. Grantees will be expected to collect appropriate data to facilitate this learning on an on-going basis. On request, a brief report (1-2 pages) on the outputs and outcomes of the project funded should be completed and made available to the Department.

17 Grantees will provide a contact point/points to the Department to facilitate payment and information requests. The Department should be updated on any changes to contact personnel in a timely manner.

18 The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht have the right to launch/open projects supported under the CLAR programme. The Department should be notified a minimum of six weeks in advance of the proposed date for such events.

19 Infrastructure Guidelines - All applications must demonstrate detailed project costings and clear value for money. The complexity of the appraisal requirements and the methods used will depend on the size and nature of the project and should be proportionate to its scale.

20 All procurement processes must be in line with EU Public Procurements Requirements (EU Directive 2014/24) and national procurement guidelines published by the Office of Government Procurement. Please refer to www.etenders.gov.ie and www.constructionprocurement.gov.ie for more details.