



**Rialtas
na hÉireann**
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

(Roads) Local Improvement Scheme

2025 Scheme Outline



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) is to fund the construction or improvement of non-public roads. This document sets out the terms and conditions for the delivery of the 2025 LIS and details the conditions which will apply to the payment of grants to local authorities in respect of road projects completed under the Scheme. It also seeks to answer the most common queries raised by local authorities in respect of the operation of the scheme.

This scheme outline will apply until further notice and is subject to ongoing review by the Department. The statutory basis for the Local Improvement Scheme is set out in [Section 81 of the Local Government Act, 2001](#). A glossary of terms is included in Appendix 1.

2. GRANT ALLOCATIONS AND PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Grant allocations to deliver the Local Improvement Scheme are notified to individual Local authorities annually. Each Local authority must submit a Priority List of eligible road projects which will be completed within this allocation. A Secondary List of eligible roads should also be submitted which can be used to select substitute road(s) in the event that a road on the Priority List cannot be completed. The selection of road projects is a matter for each Local authority to decide and may rely on existing lists of eligible roads and/or advertise for new applicant roads.

Local authorities should complete the projects identified on the Priority List in the first instance. Where this is not possible, it may substitute with projects from the Secondary List. However, the Department must be notified, and approval granted, in advance of any substitutions made.

Roads that have not been notified to the Department as part of the Priority or Secondary lists cannot be funded through the Scheme.

Once the Department has received and reviewed the lists of roads, a letter of offer is issued to each eligible local authority. It is required to sign and submit an acceptance of this offer. The local authority is provided with a defined period of time in which to complete the works and submit their funding drawdown requests:

- All works must be 100% complete at final drawdown stage, with all invoices received and payments made.
- Any unspent funds after completion of works at year end will be de-committed, and will not carry forward into the following year, unless alternatively agreed.
- The local authority must notify the Department as soon as it is apparent that an allocation will not be fully spent within the timeline notified.

- Any unspent funds may be reallocated, at the discretion of the Minister, to other local authorities with sufficient demand for additional funds.
- Any expenditure incurred, which cannot be met from the agreed local contributions and Department grant allocation, must be funded by the Local Authority.
- No over-expenditure should be incurred in anticipation of future allocations.

3. ELIGIBLE AND NON-ELIGIBLE ROAD PROJECTS

Eligible road projects are those that involve the construction or improvement of non-public roads which provide access:

- to parcels of land, of which, two or more are owned or occupied by different persons, one of which must be for agricultural purposes, or
- for harvesting purposes (including turf or seaweed) for two or more persons, or
- to at least one parcel of land owned or occupied by a person engaged in agricultural activities AND which separately provides access for harvesting purposes (including turf or seaweed) for at least one other person.

In addition, works can also be carried out on Amenity Roads. Amenity Roads are non- public roads leading to important community amenities such as graveyards, beaches, piers, mountain access points or other tourist/heritage sites. Such roads may not account for more than 25% of the annual allocation provided to each local authority. Proof of agricultural activity shall not apply to applicants if roads come within the scope of the Amenity Roads provision.

Applicants should provide local authorities with current (within the existing or previous year) documentation to verify that they are engaged in agricultural activities on the parcel of land accessed by the road project, e.g. a herd/flock number and a copy of the maps associated with their **Basic Income Support for Sustainability¹** (**BISS**) application provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, or equivalent documentation.

Individual applicants shall submit the required documentation supporting their eligibility. If alternative documentary evidence can be provided, the local authority may demonstrate a degree of flexibility in relation to this requirement.

¹ Which has replaced the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)

The Department recommends that the parcel of land being utilised for agricultural purposes, as part of the LIS application, is at least 1 hectare in size. It is a matter of discretion for each local authority to select and prioritise roads for inclusion in the Scheme.

Where the occupier of the land is not the registered owner, the occupier should provide a copy of the lease agreement in place for the land in question together with confirmation of the consent of the registered owner (or beneficial owner in the event that the registered owner is deceased).

Non-eligible road projects

The following road projects are not eligible for funding under the Scheme:

- A road serving only houses or buildings occupied or used by persons not engaged in agriculture save for those non-public roads that in the opinion of the local authority are necessary for use by the public.
- A road serving only local authority properties.
- A road leading to bogs developed commercially for large scale turf production.
- Projects involving drainage works only.
- A road leading to commercial enterprises.
- A road involving minor works which is within the competence of the applicants to do themselves.
- A road which, because of its small size, would involve work which the local authority would consider as being uneconomic to carry out.

4. SELECTION AND PRIORITISATION OF PROJECTS

The responsibility for determining the eligibility of road projects and for selecting priority road projects to be completed within each county is a matter for each individual local authority. To support a consistent and uniform approach by all local authorities;

- ✓ Projects most requiring attention in the county as a whole should be prioritised;
- ✓ In no circumstances should allocations be divided among elected representatives or between electoral areas on the basis of the number of elected representatives in those areas; and
- ✓ The selection of applications should not be based solely on the date the applications were received i.e. a first come, first served basis.

In prioritising projects, the local authority should have regard, inter alia, to the following;

- The local authority's funding allocation for the year;
- The number of applications on hand;
- The length of time an application is on hand;

- The condition of the road;
- The number of parcels of land served and the number of occupied houses served;
- The length of the road and extent of work required;
- The estimated cost of completing the works associated with each application; and
- Special circumstances such as hardship cases, or access for elderly or disabled occupants.

The applicable weighting is a matter for each local authority to determine.

5. TYPES OF WORKS

Funding may be used for the construction, improvement or reconstruction of roads or bridges on LIS roads. The works should not involve ordinary maintenance which the applicants could reasonably be expected to undertake, but should provide for essential works of a more substantial nature such as strengthening weak sections, rut filling, resurfacing and opening water channels.

Existing fences may be removed, or set back and new fences provided as part of the road project, where necessary and feasible at a reasonable cost. The provision of new fencing or replacement of existing fencing on its own is not eligible for grant assistance.

A road project may be extended to include a spur road or terminal section serving only one user if the particular road or section in question forms an integral part of the whole road and the cost of including it is not disproportionate to the cost of the overall road project.

Particular care should be taken with proposed works in designated areas, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), etc. Any necessary screening for appropriate assessments and/or other ecological assessments/ approvals/ planning permission/ Part 8 planning consent etc. that need to be obtained must be in place prior to any works commencing.

Regard should also be had to the requirements of section 47 and 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945, which impose restrictions on the erection, alteration, reconstruction etc., of certain weirs and bridges without the consent of the Office of Public Works (OPW). When carrying out drainage and bridge works, special attention should be afforded to the requirements of legislation in relation to the protection of fish life, particularly during the spawning and the nursery season from October to June. Inland Fisheries Ireland/Waterways Ireland/ the OPW or any other appropriate statutory agency should be consulted in advance where works are likely to affect fish life or waterways.

6. STANDARD OF WORK

The standard of work undertaken is a matter for the Local Authority to decide. That being said, funded projects should aim to provide a soundly constructed and well drained road capable of being easily maintained by the beneficiaries. The quality of the work should be such as to last for several years.

The cost should represent value for money and be commensurate with the benefits which the improved road will provide. Regard should be had to the cost of applications on hand and the allocation from the Department in a particular year.

Over-elaborate or disproportionately expensive improvements should be avoided. The width, bearing capacity and standard of finished surface should be related to the needs of the beneficiaries, with particular regard to the type of farm machinery using the road and the extent of tractor and lorry traffic.

No individual project supported under the LIS Scheme should be prioritised and considered for additional funding for a period of 3 to 5 years, except in the case of express prior written agreement from the Department.

7. RECOUPMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY EXPENSES

A local authority may claim up to 10% of the net cost of the project to defray a portion of costs associated with engineering and office staff, office accommodation and stationery.

‘Net cost’ comprises the cost of labour materials and equipment. It does not include ancillary costs including any sum for compensation or land or rights of way required for the purpose of undertaking a project.

8. LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The local contribution is an integral part of the Local Improvement Scheme and the local authority may not proceed with a road project where the local contribution has not been paid by the beneficiaries. Free labour or materials are not acceptable as part of the local contribution. The local contribution should be calculated after adding the 10% for local authority expenses to the estimated ‘net cost’.

The local contribution is set at 10% for eligible roads for up to, and including, five beneficiaries. It is set at 15% for those with six or more beneficiaries. The total contribution is based on the estimated cost of the project.

Provided that all beneficiaries are contributing to the cost of the works, the maximum amount that any beneficiary is required to contribute is capped at €1,200. Where all beneficiaries are not willing to contribute, the voluntary contribution should still be calculated on the basis that all of the beneficiaries are contributing as outlined in the following example:

A road with 5 beneficiaries where the cost of the works is €100,000 would require a local contribution of €10,000 based on a contribution rate of 10%. If all beneficiaries are willing to contribute, the maximum that each shall pay is set at €1,200 (capped amount) resulting in a total contribution of €6,000. If only 4 beneficiaries are willing to contribute, the total contribution shall still be €6,000 i.e. the beneficiaries that contribute would be required to contribute €1,500 each.

The local authority is responsible for paying the local contribution in respect of an Amenity Road. This contribution amount is set at 15%. However, if there are other beneficiaries on an Amenity Road, the local authority may seek a portion of the local contribution from the other beneficiaries, subject to the €1,200 cap noted above. This is at the discretion of each local authority.

The local contribution should be paid as a single sum - the arrangement for payment by the individual beneficiaries is a matter to be decided between those beneficiaries. In circumstances where the land/property is rented/leased, the local contribution may be paid by the landowner and/or the occupier/leaseholder. The decision in this regard is a matter of agreement between the landowner and the occupier/leaseholder.

Where the final cost of completing the works is higher than the initial estimated cost, the local authority must fund the shortfall in the local contribution provided. Where the final cost is lower than the initial estimated cost, the Local Authority must refund the excess in the local contribution provided.

A local authority should not contribute financially to the cost of projects (other than Amenity Roads) unless the road also serves local authority property, e.g., rented local authority houses, water or wastewater installations, cemetery etc. In such circumstances a local authority may pay a portion of the beneficiaries' contribution proportionate to its benefit from the works.

9. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

Each local authority is responsible for administering the Local Improvement Scheme in its area. All projects should be completed in their entirety within the calendar year.

In order to ensure best value for money is secured and following consultation with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the cost of **any individual project may not exceed 20% of the total annual Departmental LIS allocation to a local authority**, except in the case of written prior agreement by the Department. The existing ceiling applicable to Amenity Roads (25%) is to remain and will continue in 2025.

The Local Authority must confirm, in all documentation associated with the Scheme and provided to beneficiaries, that the funding under the LIS is being provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development, as appropriate.

Having regard to the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Local authorities are asked not to provide personal details in respect of householders/landowners to the Department. Such information should be retained locally in line with Department instructions for administrative and audit purposes.

10. LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFER TO COMPLETE WORKS

The procedure to be adopted when making an offer to complete the road project is primarily a matter for the local authority. The local authority should describe briefly the nature and limits of the work proposed.

The offer should:

- be subject to withdrawal or alteration without notice and subject to payment of the local contribution;
- be conditional on the provision of sufficient funding to the local authority under the Scheme, and
- Include a specific time limit on acceptance of the offer.

11. AGREEMENT WITH THE BENEFICIARIES

A prior written agreement between the beneficiaries and the road authority as well as detail of a financial contribution must be made by the beneficiaries to the road authority towards the planned works. A project cannot commence without such agreement being in place.

While the precise procedure in this regard is a matter for each local authority, a formal application form or agreement [hereafter both referred to as ‘the Agreement’] should be used in which the local authority is asked to undertake the work as agents of the beneficiaries.

The Agreement should provide for the planned works being undertaken by the local authority itself or by contractors it engages. The local authority must adhere to national procurement requirements in respect of the engagement of any third-party contractors.

A local authority may, at its discretion, allow the terms of the agreement to indicate where beneficiaries express an interest in undertaking part of the work themselves or through a third party. In exercising such discretion, the local authority will have due regard to its obligations under health and safety legislation. No grant payment arises in respect of such works.

The Agreement should be signed by all the proposed beneficiaries. The beneficiaries should nominate one of their number to act as lead representative to deal with payment of the local contribution and other project related issues.

The Agreement should indicate that the beneficiaries are required, when the project is completed, to thereafter maintain the work in good order and repair at their own charge and expense, and that the carrying out of any further works will not involve any liability on the part of the local authority for subsequent maintenance.

Written consent should be obtained from all parties whose land or interests are likely to be affected, including:

- in the case of road works, the owners of property on which the road is situated;
- in the case of drains, all riparian owners, owners of downstream lands likely to be affected by the carrying out of the work, and
- In certain cases upstream landholders who may have a claim that their interests would be adversely affected by the lowering of water levels.

Applicants must arrange among themselves for the provision of any land required for the construction or widening of a road for drainage works associated with a Local Improvement Scheme, and no compensation for such land may be charged to the project. Local authorities should not contribute towards compensation for land or rights of way required for the purposes of the project.

On completion of a project, the beneficiaries should be notified that the responsibility of the local authority has ended and all future maintenance of the works is their responsibility.

12. FORMS AND RETURNS TO THE DEPARTMENT

The following information must be submitted by the local authority.

- (i) Following notification of funding allocation for the year in question:

- A completed Excel template (as provided by the Department) outlining the proposed Priority and Secondary road projects. This must be authorised by the relevant Director of Services. This includes the estimated cost per square kilometer and the GPS co-ordinates for each road.
- (ii) Following letter of offer to each local authority approving priority list of LIS roads
- An Offer Acceptance Form signed by the relevant Director of Services.
- (iii) At funding drawdown stage, the drawdown request form;
- Details of the actual roads completed on an updated, pre-approved, version of the Priority List of Roads in Excel format. Once approved by the LIS unit a copy signed by the Director of Services should be submitted upon request.
 - A Funding Drawdown Sheet completed and signed by the Director of Services when all works are 100% complete and invoices paid.
 - A Compliance Sheet completed and signed by the Director of Services when all works are 100% complete and invoices paid.
 - Agresso or similar financial printouts which clearly itemise all invoices paid in respect of each individual project.
 - Shape files for each project completed.

Local authorities are required to have retained on file “Before” and “After” geo-coded photographs in respect of completed works when making a final claim, except in the case of prior written approval by the Department.

13. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

The Department may carry out on-the-spot post-payment checks on any selected project payment claims to verify adherence to funding conditions, project delivery and the reality of expenditure where appropriate.

Non-adherence to funding conditions may result in the de-commitment and recovery of funding by the Department. Other grant payments due may be reduced to effect recovery of such amounts from Local authorities.

Local authorities must comply fully with the Department’s inspection team in respect of any post-payment check or other controls being carried out. If the Department considers sufficient cooperation is not being provided, it may de-commit and recover the funding in question.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Agriculture:** The science or practice of farming including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool and other products.
- **Allocation:** The total amount of money allocated by the Minister for the scheme for the year. The total allocation is broken down on a county-by-county basis.
- **Amenity Road:** Amenity roads are non-public roads leading to important community amenities such as graveyards, beaches, piers, mountain access points or other tourist/heritage sites, or any other such non-public road that in the opinion of the Local Authority is necessary for use by the public.
- **Beneficiary:** Any owner or occupier of agricultural land or resident on the road that benefits from the improvement works.
- **Harvesting:** Harvesting is the process of gathering a ripe crop from the fields. In the context of LIS, this includes harvesting of peat and seaweed.
- **Herd/Flock Number:** The Herd/Flock number is required by law and issued by the Regional Veterinary Office (RVO) to the keeper of either cattle or sheep.
- **Householder:** the owner or occupier of a property.
- **Landowner:** the owner of a farm holding actively engaged in agricultural activities.
- **Non-public road** means a road which is not a public road within the meaning of the Roads Act, 1993. In practice, roads that are not normally maintained by the Local Authority.
- **Occupier:** the person(s) who, by agreement, is using the parcel of land for agricultural or harvesting purposes.
- **Owner:** the registered owner(s) of the land.
- **Parcel of Land:** is any owned or occupied land that is accessed by the road which is the subject of the LIS application. It is recommended that the parcel of land being used for agricultural purposes, as part of the LIS application, is at least 1 hectare in size. The local authority retains discretion to select and prioritise roads for inclusion in the Scheme.
- **Priority List:** The proposed list of projects to be completed within the funding allocation.
- **Public Road** means a road over which a public right of way exists and the responsibility for the maintenance of which lies on a road authority.
- **Secondary List:** A proposed list of projects to be completed and substituted in the event of a road on the priority list not proceeding.
- **Spur Road:** A spur road is a short road forming a branch from a longer, more important road.

ADDENDUM- 2025 SUPPORTING OFFSHORE ISLANDS

This addendum to the Scheme outline relates to supplementary ring-fenced €550,000 investment measure ring-fenced to support island LIS roads announced under the 2025 Scheme.

The provisions set out in respect of the main LIS scheme outline apply to this Supporting Offshore Islands measure including Grant allocations and project selection process (Section 2), Eligible and non-eligible road projects (Section 3), Selection and Prioritisation of Projects (Section 7), General Administrative Guideline (Section 9), Local Contributions (Section 10) and Agreement with the beneficiaries (Section 11).

Allocation Basis

Accordingly, the 5 relevant local authorities Galway (€250k), Cork (€140k), Donegal (€100k), Mayo (€50k) and Sligo (€10k) may apply for funding and submit lists in the same way as for other LIS roads (primary and secondary lists). The allocation is primarily informed by the 2022 census using a population based pro-rata allocation to each local authority island grouping.

Completion Date

The LIS completion date will be aligned with the date applicable to the DRCD Islands Unit minor capital works (island) programme. Accordingly, all claims should be submitted to the Department by 10th October 2025, unless otherwise agreed in writing by DRCD.

Letter of Offer

The Off Shore Island allocation is subject to a separate Letter of Offer which will issue via the DRCD Islands Unit.

LIS funding for Offshore Islands should be drawn down separately to other LIS funding and any funding balances not drawn down for Offshore Islands cannot be aggregated with other LIS funding. All funding must be drawn down by year end.

County	Island	Grant €
Co. Donegal	Árainn Mhór	€100,000
	Inis Bó Finne	
	Inis Fraoigh	
	Toraigh	
	Gabhla	
Co. Sligo	Coney	€10,000
Co. Mayo	Clare Island	€50,000
	Inis Bigil	
	Inishcottle	
	Inishlyre	
	Inisturk	
	Clynish	
Co. Galway	Inishbofin	€250,000
	Árainn	
	Inis Oírr	
	Inis Meáin	
	Inis Bearacháin	
	Inis Treabhair	
	Inse Ghainimh	
	Omey	
Co. Cork	Bere	€140,000
	Cléire	
	Dursey	
	Heir	
	Long	
	Sherkin	
	Whiddy	
Total		€550,000