



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council

How to get rural communities to embrace new sustainable forms of mobility

Policy Learning Platform Peer Review Date of Peer Review:
6th & 7th February 2025

Final Report

www.leitrim.ie

1. Motivation for Leitrim County Council to host a Peer Review

Profile of County Leitrim

Co. Leitrim is in the northwest of Ireland, surrounded by counties Cavan and Longford to the east, Roscommon to the south, Sligo to the west and Donegal and Fermanagh to the north. Co. Leitrim encompasses an area measuring approximately 1,590 square kilometres.

In 2022, the population of Leitrim was 35,199 making it the smallest county by population in the State. However, the County has seen consistent growth in recent years and recorded a growth rate of 9.5% between 2016-2022 making it the county with the fastest growing population in the West of Ireland and the fourth highest growth rate in the State. Leitrim is a county of unspoilt beauty with 90% of the population living in rural areas.

With a population density of 22.1 people per square kilometre, Leitrim has the lowest population density in the state. The low-density dispersed population base has created obstacles and challenges in the bid to reduce transport related carbon emissions.

Having trialled several initiatives, with little successes, Leitrim County Council reached out to Interreg for a Peer Review in a bid to learn from our peers' examples of successful Rural Mobility initiatives in their areas, which we could consider for adoption in Leitrim.

2. Specification on the policy challenge encountered

Leitrim County Council delivered several initiatives in a bid to embrace climate action and encourage more sustainable mobility with results of each outlined.

- The First and Last Green Mile study – indicated over reliance on car as main means of transport.
- Carpooling survey and coffee morning within Leitrim County Council – there was some limited interest in carpooling. However, the blended working options has meant that many staff are in office three days a week, reducing the costs of travel and carbon emissions. The convenience of driving own car appears to be the main reason not to convert to carpooling.
- Social Cycling events- there was a good interest in this event. It was organised as social cycling but also to encourage staff to consider sustainable travel options.
- E-Car tender request for provision of services – initially as a pilot scheme, the success of which has led to a tender going out for a 3-year period, to operate in two towns, Carrick on Shannon and Manorhamilton. No interest in tendering for this initiative.
- Bicycle provision of services request – the tender for provision of bicycle hire in the three main towns of Carrick on Shannon, Manorhamilton and Ballinamore. No interest in tendering for this initiative.

The economies of scale for the above initiatives, particularly in relation to a 3rd party supplying a service, such as e-car or e-bike/bike do not exist in Co. Leitrim, which in itself is a challenge if we are to meet the climate targets established for us. Through the process of trying and trialling the above, the opportunity to apply for a Peer Review arose. The objective of which was to gain an understanding of how other very rural regions with similar small, dispersed population bases have developed a sustainable mobility transport system.

Of particular interest to us was the promotion and buy-in to generate sufficient interest in sustainable mobility including direct interventions, soft supports, or marketing of particular regions as sustainable pilots. As well as hearing of the successes, we were also keen to hear what has not worked in other areas, and pitfalls to avoid.

Questions to Peers/Themes for sessions

The questions and themes for the Peer Review included two thematic blocks;

1st thematic block:

What is the sustainable mobility offer for thinly populated areas?

- Present the (newly introduced) sustainable mobility offer in your / other thinly populated areas
- What is the impact of new sustainable mobility offers in rural areas of less than 500 people?
- What does the rider pay, who pays the rest?

2nd thematic block:

How to secure ongoing and sustained buy-in, and engagement with the community?

- How to promote sustainable mobility options in very rural areas of less than 500 people
- How to educate on the benefits of sustainable mobility to encourage greater uptake
- What types of promotion/incentives have been used?

3. List of Participants

Members of the Beneficiary organisation

- Emer Connolly, Senior Executive Officer, Economic Development, Leitrim County Council
- Geraldine Reynolds, Administrative Officer, Economic Development, Leitrim County Council
- Briege Shannon, Administrative Officer, Economic Development, Leitrim County Council
- Fintan Coyle, Climate Action Co-Ordinator, Climate Action Co-Ordinator
- Emma Donohoe, Senior Executive Engineer, Active Travel, Leitrim County Council
- Pio Byrnes, Senior Executive Planner, Planning, Leitrim County Council
- Eric Gilroy, Senior Executive Engineer, Roads Department, Leitrim County Council

Local Stakeholders

- Aoife Fleming, Department of Transport
- Oilbhe O'Donoghue, Department of Transport
- Kirsty Naughton, Northern & Western Regional Assembly
- John Carr, Local Link

Peer Experts

- Brian Masson, Multi Modal Transport Solutions Ltd, UK
- Dr Darren McAdam-O'Connell, The Environmental Forum / Cork Transport & Mobility Forum, Cork, IE
- Jenny Milne, JLM & Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Community (SRITC), UK
- Jorge Brito, CIM-Coimbra, PT
- Malene Kofod Nielsen, Region Nordjylland, DK
- Sergio Caetano, CIM-Coimbra, PT

Interreg Europe

- Antoine Duquennoy, Thematic Manager
- Magda Michaliková, Thematic Expert Greener Europe
- Katharina KRELL, Thematic Experts – Greener Europe & More Connected Europe
- Mario Vadeplied, Platform Assistant

4. Policy Recommendations

The key recommendations were:

1. Better flexible products, attractive hubs, better buses, and trains
 - 1.1 Multiple mobility solutions
 - 1.2 Mobility hubs
 - 1.3 Up to date mobility data required
2. Newly introduced mobility solutions need time to unfold their impact
 - 2.1 Adopt a **long-term approach** (5 years +) and do not just judge the impact on a brief time pilot.
3. Economies of scale improve rural business cases
 - 3.1 Are there opportunities for economies of scale in joint tenders approach.
4. Social business models for rural settings
 - 4.1 The cost of providing mobility and accessibility must be weighed against the costs of not providing it.
 - 4.2 Small-scale new schemes, such as better intermodal hubs with bike parking and lockers etc. are not very costly but still useful.
 - 4.3 Social business models and more community-based mobility offers can work and offer an alternative. The different motivation mobilises often volunteering resources, making them more affordable. But even social business models often need some public funding to sustain their operations.
 - 4.4 There are tools to determine the social value of mobility solutions and translate it into Euros. This can help make the case for financing and opens up possibilities for non-mobility funding, e.g. from health budgets or charities.
5. Community buy in is a result of a mixture of measures
 - 5.1 Traditional communication is required for the promotion and marketing of newly introduced mobility offers.
 - 5.2 Need to understand people's motivations and barriers to change.
 - 5.3 Look at co-creation / co-design solutions with the community stakeholders as it brings the community on board.

1. Possible calendar of implementation

How to get rural communities to embrace new sustainable forms of mobility in Co. Leitrim, 6 th & 7 th February 2025												
Calendar of implementation of the proposed recommendations												
Applicability	Recommendations	Mar 25	Apr 25	May 25	Jun 25	Jul 25	Aug 25	Sep 25	Oct 25	Nov 25	Dec 25	Comments
<i>Highly likely to be applied</i>	1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1				3.1			1.1, 2.1,	4.2.4.3, 5.1			
<i>Depends on specific political decisions/conditions</i>	1.2, 1.3, 4.1, 4.4, 5.2, 5.3							1.2,1.3, 4.1	4.1,4.4, 5.2,5.3			
<i>Rather seen as not applicable now</i>												

2. Conclusions

The peer review was thought provoking. It was a useful exercise to identify opportunities that exist in other areas that could be piloted in Co. Leitrim. It was also interesting to hear of challenges faced by other countries in this area. We are particularly interested in the follow up opportunity that is available and will give this opportunity some consideration. Thank you for the opportunity to participate.