

## **Press Release: Immediate Release**

Irish Rural Link  
20<sup>th</sup> October 2023

### **Irish Rural Link Holds Information Day on Rural Services and Launches new Shared Island Project**

Irish Rural Link (IRL) – the national network representing the interest of rural communities held its annual Information Day on Rural Services in Buswells Hotel, Dublin on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October.

The aim of the event was to allow TD's and Senators to drop in to the event and talk with some of the service providers that were in attendance on the day to discuss the work they do in rural areas, the challenges they face but also how their services are allowing people to remain living in rural areas and reducing isolation and social exclusion.

Some of the service providers attending on the day included National Meals on Wheels Network, Rural Transport provider and passengers, Longford Women's Link, who provide education, domestic violence and other supports for women in rural areas and New Horizons, a voluntary organisation supporting Refugees and people seeking International Protection. The different projects and programmes IRL are delivery were also highlighted on the day.

As part of the event, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin, launched a new Shared Island Project IRL are partner on with Rural Action Northern Ireland. The project – Synergy: Rural Collaboration is funded through the Shared Island Civic Society Fund and will bring the two organisations together to consider current issues facing rural communities and more importantly to collaborate and devise possible solutions to address the issues identified. A survey to community groups and organisations as well as focus groups will take place as part of the research.

The launch of this project complements the work of the rural services that were highlighted at the information day, who continue to face many challenges in their delivery. The cost of living crisis has been particularly difficult for many of these services, with high running costs, hiring and retaining staff and volunteers and all the while demand for these valuable services continues to increase.

CEO of Irish Rural Link, Seamus Boland says: *“The community and voluntary sector has faced many challenges over the years, but the past number of years since Covid-19 has been extremely challenging. Many community and voluntary organisations have been stretched financially with little or no increase in funding to meet the growing demand of the services they provide. Without these services, we know there would be many more people in rural areas living in poverty and isolation”*.

Ends

**For further information about the event, please contact (anytime):**

Seamus Boland (Chief Executive) 0862491153 or Louise Lennon (Policy and Communications Officer) 0861069244

**About Irish Rural Link:**

Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of over 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level