



Irish Rural Link

1st October 2024

Irish Rural Link Broadly Welcome Announcements made in Budget 2025

Irish Rural Link (IRL), the national network representing the interest of rural communities, has given its reaction to Budget 2025 Announcement this afternoon.

While IRL welcomes some of the announcements today in relation to social protection; such as the €12 increase in core social welfare rates, including the contributory and non-contributory pension and increases in Qualified Child Allowance, we know this will not be enough for low-income rural households to meet the continued cost of living challenges. In its Pre-Budget Submission IRL called for an increase of a *minimum* €20 per week in core social welfare payments in Budget 2025 to restore the real purchasing power of payments and begin to lift people out of poverty.

We also welcome the one-off payments in fuel allowance, living alone allowance, disability, carers allowance, etc. we know these are not sustainable and will not lift these households out of poverty in the long-term.

IRL are concerned about the amount of funding available to the Department of Rural and Community Development. The allocation of €472m to this department pales in comparison to the amount of money available in the Budget but also for any meaningful development be made in rural areas and to ensure the sustainability of the Community & Voluntary Sector.

The C&V sector have continued to struggle not just from the current cost of living crisis but from the recession nearly 15 years ago. This sector delivers many essential services to people in rural areas and continue to be the less funded to do this.

We await more details on the break-down of the budget on Public transport and if Local Link services will see an increase in their budget. Rural households' dependent on cars, continue to be impacted by increase in carbon tax each year. With no alternative available, a large percentage of household income is spent on keeping a car on the road.

The free transport for children under the age of 9 and the introduction of the Universal Companion Pass for over-70's is welcome, but again for rural households, they will be unable to make full use of these.

Speaking about today's Budget Announcement CEO of Irish Rural Link said: *“There are some welcome measures announced today that will go some way to help rural households. However, we are concerned about the low amount of funding allocated to the Department of Rural and Community Development. We believe that this allocation will have limited impact on the*



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development of rural communities or for the community and voluntary sector and the services they provide”

A full analysis of Budget 2025 and its impact on rural households will be available in the coming days on the IRL website www.irishrurallink.ie

Ends

For further information, please contact (anytime):

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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 nearly 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level