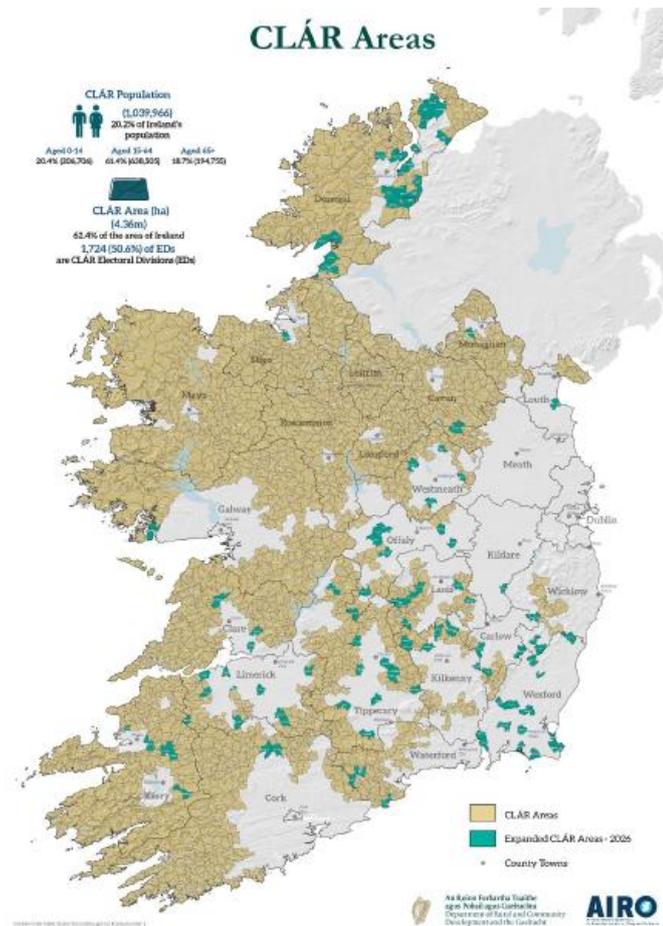




CLÁR 2026



Scheme Outline

Measure 3

‘Our Living Islands’

Contents

1.	Overview of the 2026 Scheme	3
2.	2026 Application Process	4
3.	Eligibility & Minimum Project Requirements	7
4.	Funding Available	8
5.	Eligible & Ineligible Projects	9
6.	Assessment Criteria	13
7.	Project Delivery	14
8.	Funding Conditions	16

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 €11million to €12million 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 3: ‘Our Living Islands’ which is delivered via direct application to the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

2.2026 Application Process

All applicants must apply for this funding directly to the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (hereafter “the Department)

Recognising the critical role that community and voluntary organisations play in the provision of vital services to vulnerable sectors of the community and particularly on our offshore Islands, CLAR 2026 has a specific measure to respond to the needs of these Island communities.

Like many of our other CLAR areas, the Islands have seen significant levels of depopulation over the last number of years and face specific challenges such as rural isolation, population decline, service accessibility and social disadvantage.

This Measure will fund interventions on inhabited offshore Islands under:

- 3a) Island Community Transport; and
- 3b) Island Community Amenities.

Application Process for 2026

The 2026 programme will allow for applications to be submitted to the Department from established representative organisations/groups that operate on the Islands.

Applications under this measure will be accepted directly by the Department from established representative organisation/groups that operate on the islands or from the relevant local authority. The applicant must ensure that the application form is fully completed and complies with the 2026 Scheme Outline.

The Department may not be in a position to follow up regarding missing documentation or incomplete application forms. Incomplete application forms may not be considered.

If you do not receive acknowledgment of receipt of your application within 10 working days, please contact the Department at Clar@drcdg.gov.ie

If you have any queries contact clar@drcdg.gov.ie

Eligible CLAR Area

This Measure will fund projects on inhabited offshore Islands. CLAR eligibility is based on being physically located within a designated CLAR DED.

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**.

Please ensure applications are fully completed and comply with the 2026 Scheme Outline, ensuring that 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 must be submitted on the Measure 3 – Our Living Islands application form.

Applications should include supporting information requested in the application form including a detailed breakdown of all costs, evidence of match funding and quotation.

Applications should be submitted directly to the Department at clar@drcdg.gov.ie by July 3rd, 2026

Project Timelines

Scheme launch	09 March 2026
Applications due into the Department from the Local Authorities*	03 July 2026
Funding awarded (indicative)	November 2026
Projects completed and drawn down	18 months after announcement date

On March 25th, Department officials will provide an online information session to support you in application preparation. In order to be included on this call, please email your details to; clar@drcdg.gov.ie before Monday March 23rd, 2026.

Queries

Any queries should be submitted to clar@drcdg.gov.ie.

3. Eligibility & Minimum Project Requirements

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must ensure that funded facilities are publicly accessible to all 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 applicant must ensure that facilities funded are operational for at least 5 years from completion.

Minimum Project Requirements

Landowner consent, planning permission (if applicable), and the required match funding must be confirmed and in place at the time of application in respect of each application. Such documentation must be held on file for a period of 6 years from the date of application. In the case of capital works, the applicant must own or have a valid 7-year lease or licence for the property.

4.Funding Available

Grant Funding and Rate of Aid

3a) Island Community Transport

Unless otherwise agreed with the Department, vehicles in receipt of CLAR funding must be electric in line with Climate Action Plan commitments to reduce emissions and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.

This measure will provide up to 90% of the total cost of an electric community bus/vehicle (including fit-out) with an electric charging point (powered by solar PV panels).

Maximum grant available of €100,000 for a vehicle, increasing to €120,000 where solar panel and charging point are included. Maximum one application per Island. A match funding contribution of 10% is required. Philanthropic contributions may be accepted as full or part of match funding costs.

Match funding must be in place at the time of application.

3b) Community Amenities

The scheme will provide up to 90% of the total cost subject to a maximum grant of €65,000.

A match funding contribution of 10% is required. Philanthropic contributions may be accepted as full or part of match funding costs.

Match 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.

5. Eligible and Ineligible Projects

The “**Island Community Transport**” element of this measure will cover the cost of:

- the purchase of electric vehicles (and fit out, where necessary)
- PV solar panels to be erected on community facilities which are generating electricity for a connected electric vehicle charging point. This must be in tandem with the purchase of an electric vehicle.

Priority should be given to the purchase of wheelchair accessible vehicles and vehicles that can service both community transport and emergency services transportation as required.

Applicants should provide full details regarding the costs associated with the purchase and/or fit out of vehicles, charging points and PV Solar Panels.

This is subject to the following conditions:

- Projects must be located on inhabited offshore Islands.
- Any vehicle funded must be in good condition and not more than 5 years old at the time of purchase.
- Any vehicle funded must be used solely for the activities outlined and not for any commercial transport routes.
- The Department’s support for the project must be acknowledged in signage on the vehicle in accordance with the Department’s Branding Guidelines. Department signage must adhere to the Official Languages (amendment) Act 2021.
- Only one vehicle per Island will be considered.
- The Department must be advised of the main location of the vehicle (where it will be parked overnight) and Eircode or XY coordinates provided.

The scheme will not cover any ongoing running costs such as insurance, maintenance or fuel. Applicant organisations will be required to outline how they will manage the ongoing operation of the vehicle.

The measure is open to established organisations/groups that operate on the Island on a voluntary basis, where possible. For this measure social enterprises may also be

considered eligible. In the case of community transport, the provision of transport services must be provided free of charge where possible (nominal fee may apply to passengers to cover the operating costs of the vehicle) where justified in the application form.

It is a policy of the Department that no displacement occurs with regard to existing services or economic operators.

Applications under Island Community Transport will be accepted directly by the Department from established representative organisation/groups that operate on the islands.

A hybrid or non-electric vehicle may be considered in exceptional circumstances where a suitable electric vehicle is not available. Applicants should engage with the Department in advance of submitting an application where the vehicle is not electric.

The “**Community Amenities**” element of this measure 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 building the resilience of rural communities.

All community 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 note 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
- Community Refuse Facilities

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 interventions put forward. 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.

Any prospective applicants should contact the Department directly if you have any queries in relation to 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
- Purchase of land/buildings

6.DRCDG Assessment Criteria

It should be noted that, in assessing the applications received, a number of factors will be considered including the indicated order of priority (where applicable); 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.

In the assessment process, DRCDG will prioritise projects that adopt an environmentally friendly approach, and projects that conserve or enhance biodiversity.

7. Project Delivery

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.

Procurement

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.

National Thresholds:

The threshold at which contracting authorities are required to advertise all contracts for goods and services on eTenders is now €50,000 (exclusive of VAT) and upwards on www.etenders.gov.ie.

Contracts for works with an estimated value equal or greater than €200,000 (exclusive of VAT) should be advertised as part of a formal tendering process on eTenders.

Progression of Projects

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the project commences without delay and is completed with funding drawn down within the above timelines.

Applicants 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

Community Amenities

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 project costs have been expended.

- The final claim can be made upon project completion and when all project costs have been incurred.

Community Transport

Funding may be drawn down once the vehicle has been purchased, any necessary fit-out has been completed and appropriate signage has been affixed to the vehicle.

Drawdown requests for payment must only be submitted by the applicant when they **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 the applicant.

Groups should note that the payment of the grant will be made on the basis of vouched expenditure i.e. grant will be paid after the group has purchased the goods. Groups may need to arrange bridging funding to cover the amount of the grant while awaiting this payment from the Department.

The goods/vehicles must NOT be purchased prior to the announcement of successful applicants.

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

8.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 It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the project commences without delay and is completed with funding drawn down within the above timelines.

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 for community amenities. The minimum amount that can be drawn down at any time is 50% of project costs once these have been incurred. Funding drawdown requests (Annex 4 Drawdown Request Form) must be signed by the Director of Services (Local Authority) or an authorised official within established organisation/groups. For Community transport, one payment should be claimed once all expenditure has been incurred.

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. The Department reserves the right to approve or deny any requests.

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. Applicant 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 7 year lease must be in place from date of project completion.

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 If grant recipients are VAT registered, 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 cost of appropriate signage may be included in the overall project costings. All signage must comply with the Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021 regarding the use of the Irish language, i.e. all text must be in

Irish and English (with Irish displayed first), or in Irish only. Updated branding guidelines will issue.

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 has 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.

