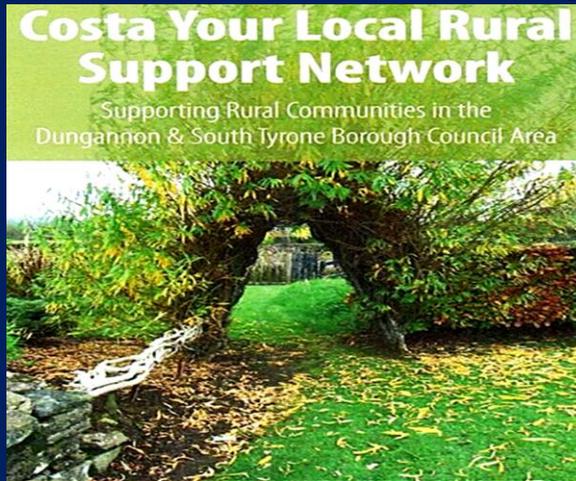


# COSTA Annual Report



## 2020 / 2021

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Community  
Organisations of  
South  
Tyrone &  
Area



## Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas Ltd

President Grant's Homestead  
45 Dergenagh Road, Dungannon, Co Tyrone, BT70 1TW

**T: 028 855 56880    F: 028 855 56881**

**E: [info.costa@btconnect.com](mailto:info.costa@btconnect.com)    W: [www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org](http://www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org)**

### **COSTA is funded by**

Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs via DAERA's Local Rural Community Development Support Service Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Programme, Mid Ulster District Council, Department for Communities and Peace IV

Registered Company in Northern Ireland No: NI 42832    Recognised Charity in NI No: NIC101598



## Chairperson's Address

**Hello and a very warm welcome to all for COSTA's 2021 AGM!**

As COSTA comes of age, I take great pleasure in presenting our Annual Report which showcases the level and diversity of our work both for and in the local community.

This time last year we rather naively believed we would be resuming a fairly normal life again quite soon and now we find ourselves in the situation of having to hold our second AGM via Zoom. Fortunately the development of effective vaccines and the fact that our region is powering through the Covid-19 vaccination programme means that bit by bit we can move closer to normality again.

The Voluntary Community Sector has proved its absolute worth not only in our own area but to government and right up to the very highest levels. This is something we must never allow the powers-that-be to forget. COSTA like so many other voluntary community organisations of all shapes and sizes have managed to very successfully adapt their premises and all their services to meet the challenges posed by the Coronavirus pandemic.

COSTA acknowledges and thanks our keystone funder the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DEARA), which makes the Network possible, and for their role in ensuring continuation of the Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Inclusion (TRPSI) Scheme, and the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme which has funded groups throughout the Mid Ulster District and the region for over 7 years now.

COSTA continues providing for the local community via our single staff member Development Manager Loraine Griffin. Indeed, both Loraine and also Conor Corr of CWSAN have successfully adapted and delivered the DAERA Local Rural Community Development Support Service (LRCDSS) contract throughout Mid Ulster District during what we hope will soon be the end of this Pandemic. COSTA is sub-contracted covering the Dungannon area under CWSAN (Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network) as part of 7 regional providers. Our partnership with CWSAN - covering Cookstown and Magherafelt - continues on strongly and we hopefully look forward to many more years of joint working across the area.

Many very positive developments for COSTA continued this year as we served on the Peace IV Partnership, Mid Ulster Community Planning, the Local Action Group and re-election onto the Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum.

A great success of the year was the additional £100k for the CWSAN & COSTA Warm Well Connected Programme for Mid Ulster which was very professionally delivered by Seamus 'Seamy' Donnelly from December 2020 to 31 March 2021. Truly great things were achieved in such a short space of time and we thank Seamy for his dedication.

I would like to also take this opportunity to give a note of thanks to all my fellow Board members, and off course to Mid Ulster District Council for their many years of dedicated support.

This year on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021 sadly we lost past Advisory Board Member Cllr Robert Mulligan who served on the COSTA Board for many years. Cllr Mulligan was a well-known and very highly respected member of the local community and a Councillor of 26 years' experience serving on Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough



Council from 1993, holding the office of Mayor and other senior positions on a number of occasions, until its reformation in 2014 and then served on Mid Ulster District Council from 2014 to 2019. ‘Bob’ as he was affectionately known by many was also a great community activist, an elder in Glenhoy Presbyterian Church, a member of the Loyal Orders and an activist within, and for the farming and rural community. He also had many years of experience within the agri-food industry having worked for the Department of Agriculture and the Livestock and Meat Commission. Bob was a true gentleman of life and we extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Cllr Robert Mulligan.

Despite our ongoing challenging environment, COSTA will hopefully remain here for the local community many more years to come. We remain here to support you all into much brighter times and I wish you, your communities, groups and villages all the very best for the future, and we hope to meet you all face-to-face again very soon.

**Richard Knox - COSTA Chairperson**



## Network Development Manager’s Report

**Welcome everyone as we celebrate our 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday!**

For the 2020 AGM I said “Out of challenges can also come great good.” Again this year I want to say the exact same thing. This year has certainly proved that the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) and our community volunteers are not just an add-on or a luxury, they are an ‘essential service’ for the most isolated and vulnerable in society. Without the VCS, the government simply could not have provided an effective response to Covid-19. I aim to ensure that the VCS is united and our sector is not forgotten, that we are treated as equals by government and resourced as the essential service we have proven ourselves to be.

“That which does not kill you strengthens you.” Indeed Coronavirus did not beat us and maybe it has greatly strengthened us. This year has seen very successful completion of the final year of the current DAERA-funded Local Rural Community Development Support Service (LRCOSS) for Mid Ulster. COSTA delivered: 24 Workshops to 311 participants. We worked with over 50 different agencies throughout the region on a wide range of initiatives. We have actively engaged with over 100 local groups and communities and our key activities can be viewed on pages 8 - 20 of this Report.



Both COSTA and our partners CWSAN worked very hard but very effectively to provide a co-ordinated response to the Covid-19 crisis by providing over 25 bumper Newsletters and a newsletter a week for 12 weeks. Our joint Small Grant Scheme of up to £150 for PPE, sanitizer, volunteer travel costs provided a total of £7,400 to 44 local groups.

Off course, and very unfortunately, some things just could not be done such as the Women Involved in Community Transformation (WICT) Programme and a few other related initiatives could not go ahead. However, we made

the very best of what we could do and fortunately COSTA has provided our full range of support, information, services, training workshops and the DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grants Scheme 2020 which moved towards digitization! Thank you to Conor, Marguerite, Seamy, Anita, Denise, Gerry, Josie, Jennifer, Fergal and everyone in CWSAN for working so hard throughout.

I extend thanks to Mid Ulster District Council for their continued funding and support of COSTA, to Philip Clarke as Statutory Representative, and Faye and Ted Sharkey who maintain US Grants so meticulously despite not being able to have visitors for some time.

A very big and sincere ‘thank you’ goes to the entire COSTA Board who have been so supportive and volunteer their time and expertise so diligently: Richard Knox COSTA Chairperson, Trevor Lockhart, Heather McLaughlin, Carmen Hamill, Rosina O’Neill, John Burrell, Raymond Harrison, Anthony McGonnell, Wilfred Mitchell and David McFarland. We have all been adjusting very well to the demands of holding all our meetings on-line. Thank you to our Council Members: Frances Burton, Sharon McAleer, Meta Graham, Dominic Molloy and Joe O’Neill for their guidance and wisdom. It was sad for us all to lose past member Cllr Robert Mulligan who was described as ‘a true gentleman’ by all who knew him.



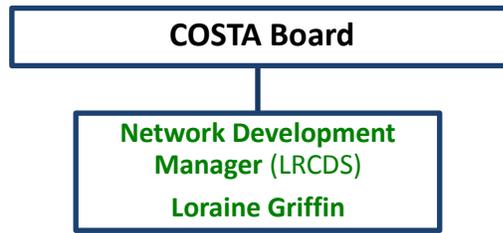
COSTA is still here for our local communities and one of the best ways to keep-up-to-date is via our Website and FaceBook pages. So please give us a call any time for assistance and to make good use of our newly developed capacity to also meet on-line as well as face-to-face which should resume again soon. We very strongly encourage groups to take advantage of this, to reach out, to stay in touch, to stay informed, and above all to stay safe and well.

COSTA aims to meet all challenges ahead and to see that we continue to have a local office and a local service here to support our local communities as **YOUR Local Support Network** for the Dungannon and South Tyrone area : )

**Lorraine Griffin – Network Development Manager**



## COSTA Staff



## COSTA Board of Directors

Richard Knox	<b><i>Chairperson</i></b>	Heather Nixon-McLaughlin
Carmen Hamill	<b><i>Vice Chairperson</i></b>	Raymond Harrison
Trevor Lockhart	<b><i>Secretary &amp; Company Secretary</i></b>	Rosina O’Neill
John Burrell	<b><i>Treasurer</i></b>	David McFarlane
Anthony McGonnell		Wilfred Mitchell OBE

## Associate Board Members

Cllr Meta Graham	Cllr Frances Burton	Cllr Sharon McAleer
Cllr Dominic Molloy	Cllr Joe O’Neill	

## Statutory Representative

Philip Clarke – Mid Ulster District Council – Community Development Manager

## Bankers

**Ulster Bank Ltd**  
Main Street  
Clogher  
Co Tyrone

## Accountants

**Mac Neary Rasdale & Co**  
Registered Accountants & Auditors  
Darling Street  
Enniskillen



# The Local Rural Support Networks

- Supporting rural living across Northern Ireland -

## A Unique Rural Infrastructure

COSTA is one of 7 independent Local Rural Support Networks networked together under a unique rural focus. This strong and unique rural infrastructure covers all of rural Northern Ireland.

The Local Networks draw members who are largely rural and cover a wide range of community and voluntary sector organisations in their area of remit including: community groups, social economy, play groups, farmers, women, youth, disability and older people etc.

The LRSNs have been officially recognised as an example of good practice and an essential conduit between rural communities and statutory bodies – providing communities with access to the decision making process, and decision makers with a means of tapping into the expert local knowledge on the ground.

We are membership based and our Management Boards are elected each year at AGM from our member groups. Our primary aim is to support local groups and organisations to achieve what they want for their community. **We help groups to help themselves by working *with* groups and *not for* groups.**

**Visit: [www.localruralsupportnetworks.org](http://www.localruralsupportnetworks.org) for further information.**



**View the Local Rural Support Networks RCDSS Video at:**

**<https://youtu.be/loUG-6T3tII>**

## COSTA Online

Follow us on our Facebook Pages for the latest NEWS on all forthcoming Projects, Events, Training and Workshops.

**All COSTA's Newsletters, Annual Reports and Leaflets can now be accessed on-line and downloaded as pdf documents.**

**COSTA Website: [www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org](http://www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org)**



# Local Rural Community Development Support Service (LRCDS)



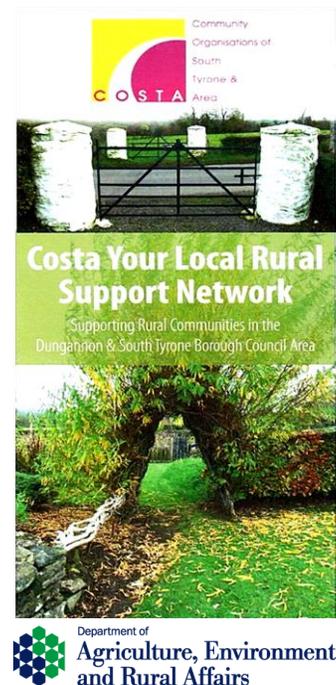
Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas (COSTA) in conjunction with Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network (CWSAN) have continued to work in close partnership. With over 10 years now already completed, we strive towards the start of our 11th year, from April 2021, delivering a newly updated 'Local Rural Community Development Service' for the Mid Ulster area covering the Dungannon and South Tyrone area (COSTA) and the Cookstown & Magherafelt areas (CWSAN).

The key themes of this current contract with the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) supported through their **Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework**:

- 1. Support for Community Planning;**
- 2. Support for Isolated Rural People;**
- 3. Support the Sustainability of Rural Villages;**
- 4. DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2020**

The LRCDS provides on-going practical Community Development support services - responsive local needs:

- **Community Office at U.S. Grants & Rural Outreach Service.**
- **Events / Workshops / Visits / Meetings.**
- **Signposting / Information / Practical assistance.**
- **Newsletters / E-Bulletins / Public Relations.**
- **Facebook Page / Website / Social Media.**
- **Funding / 'Grant-Tracker' searches.**
- **Assistance with funding applications.**
- **Networking & Sharing expertise.**
- **Capacity Building & Training.**
- **Good Practice Checklists & Action Plans.**
- **Governance & Board / Management Committee Skills.**
- **Office Services – access to photocopying, fax and email.**
- **Resources, Library, Equipment Loan.**
- **Community Audit (support), SWOTs, Profiles, Statistics / NINIS.**
- **Policies, Procedures, Good Practice, Guides.**
- **Needs Assessments, Skills Reviews.**
- **Wide range of Management & Leadership Support Services.**



The Local Rural Community Development Service is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) under the Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme.

# COSTA Rural Support Network - Snapshot of the Year



The new DAERA Local Rural Community Development Support Service has been awarded in 8 geographical catchments (Lots) to 6 providers plus COSTA. This ensures a Northern Ireland-wide service for rural communities which are largely defined as ‘people living in communities or settlements of less than 4,000 people’.

DAERA has a key role in the delivery of the cross-departmental outcomes and a particular emphasis on overarching outcomes: **We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment.** Of particular importance to DAERA and the Networks are Outcomes 2 and 3, Outcome 2 – A clean, healthy environment, benefitting nature and the economy. The LRDCSS is a key part of delivering on **Outcome 3 – A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and well-being.**

## The COSTA Local Rural Community Development Support Service (LRDCSS) delivered across the Dungannon & South Tyrone area of Mid Ulster District:

### 1. Support for Community Planning:

- 25 Newsletters and 10 Funding Bulletins to 500+ Groups.
- 83 Email-outs to 500+ Groups.
- 226 Website updates.
- 840 posts on 2 Facebook Pages.
- 2 Facebook Pages: 507 Followers and 470 Page Likes.
- 100 LRDCSS groups supported / supports to groups.
- 27 Good Practice Checklists (Community Planning).
- 27 Community Planning Feedbacks / Opportunities / Linkages / Actions.
- 6 Engagements with MUDC regarding Community Planning.
- 1 Meeting: MUDC Community Planning – Clogher Valley DEA 23/3/2021.



**COSTA Rural Community Development Support Service**

**KEEP CALM AND CALL US**

Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas

We continue to follow ongoing advice from the PHA on how to handle the current Coronavirus situation.

The COSTA Office remains closed to the public (restrictions in place). Anyone displaying symptoms of illness must self-isolate from the office.

**We are still delivering all our services**

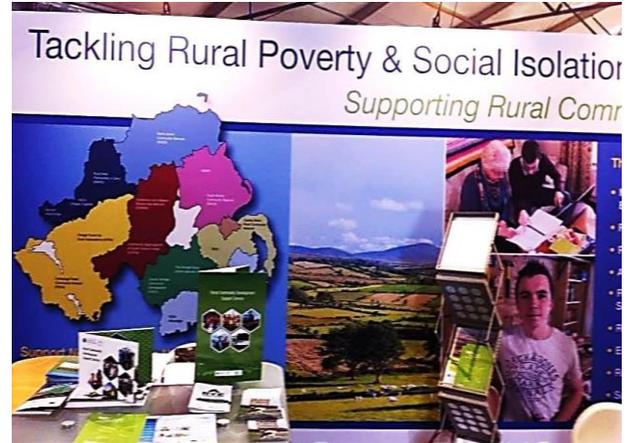
**If your group requires any assistance or has any queries**

**Tel: 028 855 56880**  
Email: [info.costa@btconnect.com](mailto:info.costa@btconnect.com)



## 2. Support for Isolated Rural People:

- **27 Good Practice Checklists** (Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation).
- **27 Checklist Follow-ups to Groups' needs.**
- **59 Groups supported / mentored on Capacity Building.**
- **45 Groups supported / mentored on Governance.**
- **Covid-19 Guidance & Risk Assessments: 41 Groups.**
- **138 New Database Entries / Updates.**
- **24 Workshops with 311 participants.**
- **1 Health & Wellbeing Workshop with SHSC Trust: 23/10/2020 (15 attendees)**
- **2 Charity Annual Returns Workshops 14/10/2020, 17/10/2021 (9 attendees).**
- **183 COSTA Member Groups.**
- **126 Interagency Engagements:** MU Community Navigator, MU Coronavirus Support Forum, SHSC Trust Social Care Hub, Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation (TRPSI) Promotions / Signpostings / Referrals: MULN, DAERA, ARTS, CYPSP, Agewell MU, Health Alliance, CDM Community Transport, Rural Support, SUSE+ / DEL / FarmSAFE, Libraries NI, Farm Family Health Checks.
- **63 Regional Links & Engagements:** (Covid Wellbeing NI, DFC Emergency Response Group, NIVCA, DAERA, RCN, RNNI, Rural Action, JVCs Forum etc).



## 3. Support for the Sustainability of Rural Villages

- **1 Meeting with MURDP LAG Manager: 8/7/2020.**
- **5 MURDP Local Action Group Meetings attended.**
- **7 MURDP Local Action Group Applicants contacted and supported for Basic Services.**
- **7 MURDP Local Action Group Applicants supported Basic Services Match Funding.**
- **2 Applicants Mentored on NIRD Programme Compliance.**
- **6 Rural Villages Supported.**
- **12 Villages identified for Support in Dungannon area of MUD Council.**
- **1 Rural Village Plan Reviewed.**
- **1 Rural Village Hub / Shared Resources Plan.**
- **130 Groups funded under DAERA Micro Capital Grants Scheme 2020 (Phase 7).**



- 31 Groups supported to submit DAERA ‘Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme’ Applications / submit Claims.
- **10 DAERA ‘Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme’ Workshops:**
  - **4 DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Pre-Application Workshops** (83 attendees).
  - **6 DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Application LOO Workshops** (110 attendees).

#### 4. **Governance & Sustainability**



- **1 Programme of Evaluation** in place for Regional LRCOSS.
- 4 COSTA RCDSS Case Studies (Aug 2020).
- 1 RCDSS Regional Case Studies Document (Sept 2020).
- 12 CWSAN / COSTA LRCOSS Meetings.
- 26 LRCOSS Contract Meetings (Rural Support Networks).
- 4 LRCOSS Monitoring Reports / 4 Audit Certificates.
- 3 LRCOSS / DAERA Financial Visits & Monitoring Visits.
- 1 Company House Annual Return: 26/03/2021.
- 1 Charity Commission NI Annual Return: December 2020.
- 4 COSTA Board Meetings.
- **1 COSTA Annual General Meeting (20<sup>th</sup>): 6/8/2020.**
- **1 COSTA Board Zoom Training Session: 5/6/2020 (16 attendees).**
- **1 COSTA Board Workshop: ‘Covid-19: Director’s Duties & Legal Responsibilities’ 15/12/2020 (9 attendees).**
- **6 Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum Meetings.**
- **1 Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum Workshop ‘Shaping the Relationship Between Government and the Voluntary & Community Sector’: 24/3/2021.**
- **1 Joint MUDC-wide Programme with CWSAN (2 staff) Peace IV Engaging Rural Communities Programme.**

**Covid-19: Directors Duties & Legal Responsibilities**  
 Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
 COSTA Board

***COSTA is still on-hand as ever to meet the needs of our membership and local groups – call us any time!***



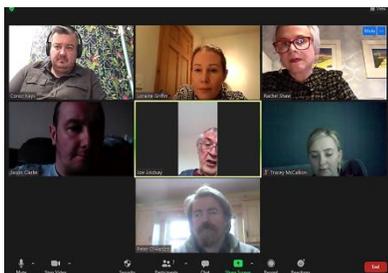
# COSTA Project Partnerships & Representation 2020 / 2021

- Mid Ulster District Peace IV Partnership.
- Mid Ulster District Community Plan - VCS Member / Clogher Valley DEA.
- Mid Ulster LAPN – Local Anti-Poverty Network.
- Mid Ulster Seniors Network (MUSN).
- Community Sector Training - Management Group.
- Rural & Urban Community Networks Forum.
- Rural Network Northern Ireland (Member).
- MUD Council Fair Trade Steering Group & Chairperson.
- Southern Health & Social Care Hub.
- DAERA Rural Policy Framework – Social Wellbeing Sub-Group Member
- Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum.
- Game Changer Project Management Team.
- Agewell Mid-Ulster Partnership.
- CYPSP - Children & Young People Strategic Partnership Locality Group: Dungannon & Clogher Valley.
- RCDSS / Local Rural Support Networks Officers Forum.
- MUD Peace IV Engaging Rural Communities.
- DFC Covid-19 Emergency Response Group.

## COSTA Workshops

This was a bumper year for COSTA delivering Workshops as we moved all our delivery to on-line via Zoom: 24 Workshops with 311 participants:

- 2 'Reopening Your Community Facility – A Practical Guide': 17/9/2020, 23/9/2020 (14 attendees).
- 7 Planning & Running On-line Meetings & AGMs During Covid-19': 10/9/2020, 15/9/2020, 16/9/2020, 28/10/2020, 3/11/2020, 14/12/2020, 15/01/2021. (44 attendees).
- 2 Charity Annual Returns Workshops: 14/10/2020, 17/10/2021 (9 attendees).
- 1 Health & Wellbeing Workshop with SGSC Trust: 23/10/2020 (15 attendees).
- 1 COSTA Board Zoom Training Session: 5/6/2020 (16 attendees).
- 1 COSTA Board Workshop: 'Covid-19: Director's Duties & Legal Responsibilities': 15/12/2020 (9 attendees).
- 10 DAERA 'Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme' Workshops:
  - 4 DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Pre-Application Workshops: 8/9/2020, 9/9/2020, 16/9/2020, 23/9/2020 (83 attendees).
  - 6 DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Application LOO Workshops: 7/12/2020, 7/12/2020, 9/12/2020, 10/12/2020, 11/12/2020, 18/12/2020 (110 attendees).



	Likelihood					
	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely	
Negligible	1	1	2	3	4	5
Minor	2	2	4	6	8	10
Moderate	3	3	6	9	12	15
Major	4	4	8	12	16	20
Severely Extreme	5	5	10	15	20	25



## DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2020 (DRMCG 2020)



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
www.daera-ni.gov.uk



**CWSAN**  
Rural Support Services  
The Crieve Centre, 2 Hillhead,  
Stewartstown, BT71 5HY



**COSTA**  
Community  
Organisation of  
Township  
Associations  
of  
Northern  
Ireland

### Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2020

#### Guidance Notes for Applicants

The Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme funded by DAERA provides grants of up to 85% of the total cost of a small project, up to a maximum grant limit of £1,500, and are designed to address local issues of:

- **Access Poverty**
- **Financial Poverty**
- **Social Isolation**

Phase 1 was first piloted in May 2015, since then Phases 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and now the 2020 Phase (7) was launched in September 2020. CWSAN and COSTA jointly deliver the DRMC Grant Scheme throughout the Mid Ulster District Council area along with the other 7 Networks regionally. There has been a huge uptake in the scheme from all manner of local groups wishing to carry out small capital projects which can fall under one or more 3 Key areas:

- **Modernisation (of premises / assets)**
- **Information Communication Technology**
- **Health & Wellbeing**

The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has spoken in the NI Assembly about how pleased the Department is with the positive difference these small grants have made to groups, not only in capital value, but in confidence building.

Under the 2020 Phase (7), around 130 eligible projects in the MUDC area were funded and we hope that a further Phase (8) of DRMCG will open again soon.

During 2020 the Scheme was delivered virtually with all applications being submitted digitally and all Workshops and support was provided either on-line via Zoom, or via email or telephone.

## Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2020 (RMC GS 2020)

### Letter of Offer Workshops

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 @ 11:00am  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81663030900>  
Meeting ID: 816 6303 0900

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 @ 7:30pm  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89961634661>  
Meeting ID: 899 6163 4661

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020 @ 7:30pm  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83147275284>  
Meeting ID: 831 4727 5284

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 @ 10:00am  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81357315122>  
Meeting ID: 813 5731 5122

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020 @ 11:00am  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83696846075>  
Meeting ID: 836 9684 6075

Via Zoom



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
www.daera-ni.gov.uk



**COVID-19**  
RESPONSE

## COSTA Mid-Ulster Covid-19 Pandemic Response

COSTA continues to acknowledge the huge and absolutely essential response of the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) and grass-roots volunteers on the ground to the Coronavirus crisis. Without the VCS there is no doubt that many of the most isolated and vulnerable members of our communities would have faced considerable hardship.

The VCS proved to be an absolutely vital part of the economy that provided essential workers and essential volunteers when and where they were needed most. The VCS is clearly not just an add-on or a luxury but is in fact a critical part of our community and civilised society.

COSTA has continued delivering all services to local groups, although this has largely been done virtually from mid-March 2020 onwards. Since the global pandemic was declared COSTA has produced over 25 bumper edition Newsletters and Funding Bulletins to keep local groups informed of key information and funding.

*"Another amazing Newsletter"*  
*"The hard work of COSTA is very much appreciated"*  
*"A gentleman who needed help came across the COSTA information"*  
*"What a totally amazing Newsletter!!"*  
*"Always full of great information – well done"*

COSTA was involved in numerous initiatives throughout the pandemic including the Department for Communities Emergency Response Group and has provided feedback to Government Ministers and Officials on the importance of the Voluntary/Community Sector throughout.

**Covid-19 Recovery: What can we learn from other disasters?** Webinar Thursday 15 April 2021 @ 4:00pm.



# Local Rural Support Networks



Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas (COSTA) is one of 7 independent Local Rural Support Networks networked together under a unique rural focus. This strong and unique rural infrastructure covers all of rural Northern Ireland.

**T**he 7 Local Rural Support Networks (RSNs) are a strong and unique rural infrastructure which provides support to communities in all rural areas of Northern Ireland.

The Local Networks draw members who are largely rural and cover a wide range of community and voluntary sector organisations in their area of remit including: community groups, social economy, play groups, farmers, women, youth, disability and older people etc.

## A Unique Rural Infrastructure

Covering all of Rural Northern Ireland, the RSNs have been recognised as an example of good practice and an essential conduit between rural communities and statutory bodies – providing communities with access to the decision making process, and decision makers with a means of tapping into the expert local knowledge on the ground.

Each Rural Support Network is independent and therefore directly accountable to, and fully representative of, the communities they serve. We are membership based and our Management Boards are elected each year at AGM from our member groups. Our primary aim is to support local groups and organisations to achieve what they want for their community.

We help groups to help themselves by working with groups and not for groups.

Rural communities across Northern Ireland have been pro-active since the early 1990s, looking for ways to support themselves and to create independent, sustainable environments. People in rural communities quickly realised there is strength in numbers and that by co-operating with each other they can achieve much more than they could in isolation.

Over the past 25 years, communities within rural Northern Ireland have established a number of Local Support Networks of



*The Local Rural Community Development Service is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) under the Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme.*



*The LRCDS provides on-going practical Community Development support services - responsive local needs:*

their own. They have moulded, shaped and cultivated these organisations in the manner that best works for them. This community focused outlook led the Rural Support Networks; a series of interconnected branches that exists to service rural communities. So how do the networks help the people who work so hard to make this a better place to live? We engage with the local community. Over the last two years we have travelled throughout Northern Ireland to deliver nearly 700 training and community events. By offering these services we provide the tools that allow rural communities to develop strong working relationships with one another. In essence, this equates to some 12,000 people being empowered within a structure of community support that exists solely to meet their individual and collective needs. In just three years we have levered in some £53 million of investment to rural communities.

The DAERA Local Rural Community Development Support Service ensures a Northern Ireland-wide service for rural communities which are largely defined as 'people living in communities or settlements of less than 4,000 people'.

Within this time we have provided many new programmes and services including:

- Mental health and suicide prevention
- Health and well-being
- Maximising Access in Rural Areas (MARA)
- Physical Activity

#### What We Do

The local rural support networks enable empowerment, capacity, and future sustainability through the provision of a wide range of support services to assist local groups and organisations.

- Information
- Signposting
- Capacity Building & Training
- Networking
- Funding Information / Forms assistance
- Policy Consultation
- Information & Resource Library

- Monthly Newsletters / email-outs
- Events / Workshops / Meetings
- Advice & Mentoring
- Group Support / Assistance & Start-up
- Public Relations / Advertising
- Group Facilitation
- Action Planning
- Community Audits / Surveys
- Good Practice Visits
- Equipment & Room Hire
- Management & Group Skills
- Needs Assessments
- Desk Top Publishing
- Strategic / Sustainable Development

#### Where

Groups are facilitated by experienced staff based in local offices who know the local area and will meet and work flexibly with groups at a time and place that suits them.

Contact Your Local Rural Support Network  
The local rural support networks cover all of rural Northern Ireland. Find your local network and get in touch for help in your area.

The Local Rural Support Networks work to a strong community development ethos and principals of empowerment. We don't work for groups we work with them.



The Local Rural Support Networks work to a strong community development ethos and principals of empowerment. We don't work for groups we work with them. Helping groups to help themselves.

## COSTA & CWSAN Mid-Ulster “Warm, Well and Connected” (WWC) Programme

In Autumn 2020, Department for Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey released £6.5m additional support for vulnerable people over the Christmas period. This was **match funded to the tune of £100,000 by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for a programme delivered by the Rural Support Networks in rural areas right across the entire region.**

The WWC Programme ran from 1 January to 31 March 2021 and aimed to reach out to vulnerable people and those that have been acutely affected by COVID-19. The target groups ranged from babies, children right through to older people and the **4 key themes included: physical activity, mental health, nutrition and tackling isolation.**

The programme was delivered in partnership with local councils, health trusts, charities and the community and voluntary sector, to ensure support is directed swiftly to those most in need. The programme consisted of providing a very wide range of different types of activities – often virtually on-line – including social, recreational, gardening, environmental, historical, cultural, arts, crafts, exercise, cookery, physical and mental health and well-being, signposting, support, training and workshops covering almost any and every topic imaginable! The programme was totally needs-led and local community groups had the opportunity to gain micro funding to deliver activities designed to cater for their area’s needs. **Regionally, almost 75,000 people participated in WWC!**

**The WWC Programme in Mid-Ulster was co-ordinated by Seamus (Seamy) Donnelly - Warm Well Connected Project Officer based at CWSAN. We thank Seamy for his dedication to and great success of this huge Project.**



### Warm, Well & Connected

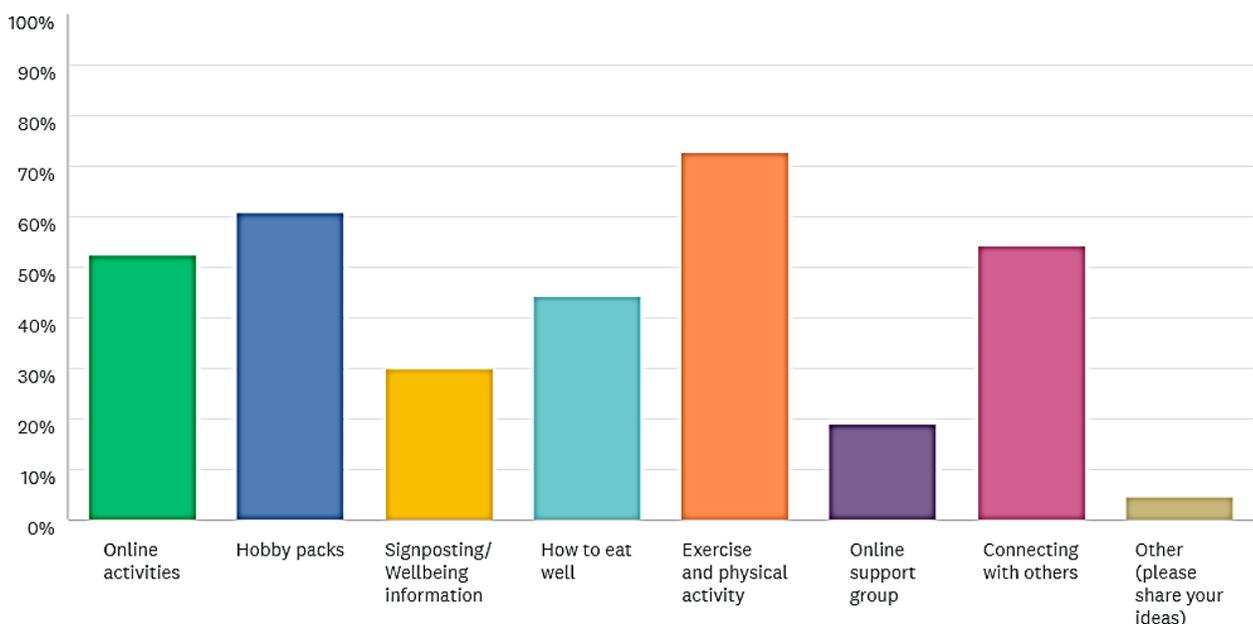
Exciting new Programme for Winter 2020  
Delivered by CWSAN & COSTA across  
Mid Ulster for local communities and groups

**CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**



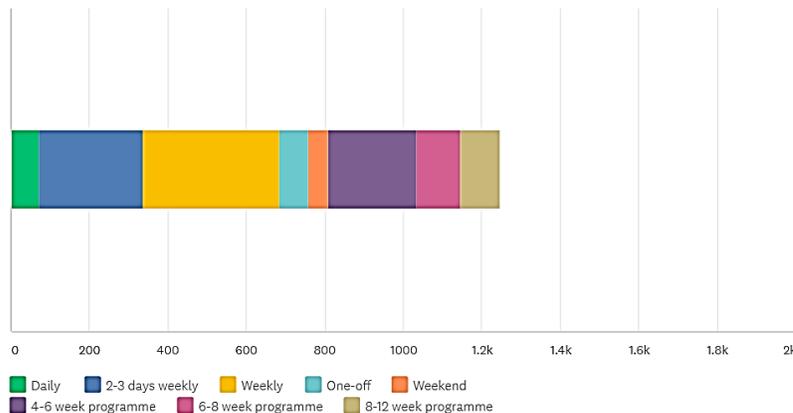
### What support would help you with your wellbeing? (please tick as many as you wish)

Answered: 732 Skipped: 0



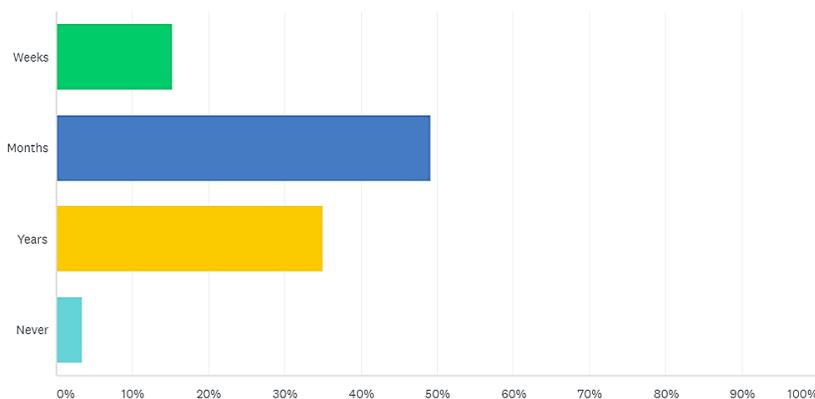
**How often would you like to take part in activities? (please tick as many as you wish)**

Answered: 732 Skipped: 0



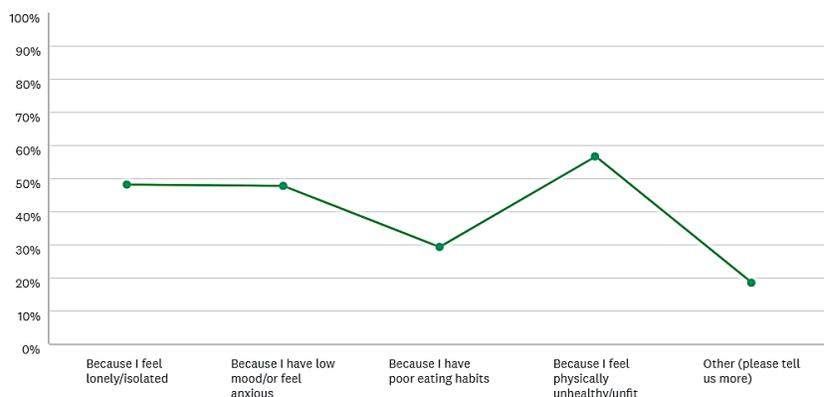
**How long do you think it will take you to recover from the pandemic?**

Answered: 732 Skipped: 0



**Why do you feel you need this support? (please tick as many as you wish)**

Answered: 732 Skipped: 0



**WWC Evaluation**

This programme was a fantastic opportunity to quickly support families and children during Covid-19 lockdowns. It helped support families to come together and have a fun, stimulating and interactive activity each week. It benefited babies, children, young people and adults of all ages. It helped people who were isolated, single parents, single child family units, those who had lost their jobs or had been affected by Covid-19, have mental health issues, new parent groups etc all came together in a group weekly. WWC has helped so many families during difficult times. Many community groups shut their doors during Covid, and as they are run by volunteers many did not apply for funding. Therefore WWC offered a way for groups and families negatively affected by covid-19 to access the support they needed when other community groups did not offer this service. The programme was so appropriate for the challenging times faced by all. The outcomes achieved will strengthen participants and help them meet the ongoing challenges of isolation and lack of human engagement.

Our members were delighted with the project and the contents of over

**500 Warm, Well & Connected Packs that were welcomed and very much appreciated by recipients across Mid-Ulster and the region.** The Winter Warm Packs have encouraged our members to layer up and spend more time on outdoor pursuits such as walking, tidying up gardens and outdoor areas, as well as on outdoor activities with their grandchildren. The Activity Packs provided toiletries, a new year’s diary, puzzle books and a blank note book to record personal thoughts - all essential items many of our members stated they were unable to source in their local shops. Members also stated that they felt isolated by the restrictions and were relieved that older

people were not being forgotten. The Warm, Well and Connected Packs helped to also address the emotional support many older people needed at the time.

The funding for WWC was very valuable and beneficial when supporting our participants, through connecting with them from a health and wellbeing stance, and being able to provide them with expertise who could offer information/advise/signposting in extremely difficult times. Without this funding the Networks would not have been able to deliver the high quality programmes which we did.

**Postcodes covered by the entire WWC Programme showing beneficiaries and feedback from participants:**



- “Fantastic event”
- “Really enjoyed the opportunity to get out of house and see people”
- ”Has brightened up my Christmas”
- “It was so uplifting to be able to leave the house and have face to face contact with other people”
- “A very enjoyable afternoon full of fun, laughter and companionship “
- “When can we have more of these activities?”
- “The support, advice, guidance and assistance received from the Networks in this project was amazing”
- “They made everything so simple and it was a seamless process from start to finish”
- “The positive feedback and thanks we received when delivering the packs will last long in our memories”
- “Thank you for allowing us to be part of this initiative”

Group #Total Reached	<b>74,689</b>	% population reached above target at completion	
Direct - 35,970 Indirect - 38,719		<b>+622%</b>	
<i>Target Groups</i>		<i>Themes</i>	
Children & Young People	25,152	Physical Activity	40,360
Older People	9,642	Mental Health	63,554
Loss of Income	2,536	Nutrition	14,658
Clinic Vulnerable	2,102	Isolation	60,292
Disables/ <u>carers</u>	1,913		
Ethnic Minority	374		
Additional info:			
Total No. Of Volunteers	3,757		
Total No. of Volunteer <u>Hrs</u>	24,034		

## COSTA Covid-19 Recovery to Normality

- ✓ Grant Tracker / Funding Searches
- ✓ CCNI Charity Registration & Charity Annual Returns
- ✓ Assistance with Zoom Meetings / Getting On-line
- ✓ Covid-19 Guidance
- ✓ Completing Funding Applications
- ✓ Information & Updates
- ✓ Signposting
- ✓ Training Sessions / Governance (*very wide variety of topics*)



Costa Costa  
@costa.network

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Follow our FaceBook Pages  
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&

**COSTA Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas**

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COSTA Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas

**To keep fully up-to-date with the latest Newsletters, Grants, Guidance, Information and Events go to our Website:**

[www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org](http://www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org)

**COSTA Newsletters & Email-outs**

*ALL RECENT NEWSLETTERS & ANNUAL REPORTS CAN BE ACCESSED BELOW*

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Web: [www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org](http://www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org)  
Facebook: Costa Costa <http://www.facebook.com/costa.network>  
OR Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/COSTA-Community-Organisations-of-South-Tyrone-Areas-595993680543963/>

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Email \*

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## Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum

Since April 2017 and also now again in April 2020 (2<sup>nd</sup> and final 2<sup>nd</sup> term) COSTA was successfully nominated to the Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum facilitated by NICVA. The forum meets with all the Department heads on a quarterly basis to lobby for the Sector. The Joint Forum is comprised of representatives from across government and the voluntary and community sector. It facilitates an open discussion about the relationship between these two sectors. Members of the panel are from the following organisations:

**COSTA**  
**Rural Community Network**  
**Evangelical Alliance**  
**NI Environmental Link**  
**Volunteer Now**  
**Womens Resource and Development Agency**  
**Sandy Row Community Forum**  
**East Belfast Community Development Agency**  
**Diabetes UK**  
**Carers NI**  
**NI Youth Forum**  
**Start 360**  
**Voluntary Arts Ireland**  
**Children in NI**



The Voluntary and Community panel meets with the membership from government departments three times per year as the Joint Forum to facilitate regular dialogue between the voluntary and community sector and government, and to support effective collaboration between the two.

**As a key rural representative from west of the Bann, COSTA has attended 6 meetings this year to date** and the important issues currently being tackled by the Forum include: Manifesto For Change, identifying strategic and work actions ahead, Welfare Reform, Suicide, Drugs and Health issues, Funding issues for the Sector including the Department of Finance's proposed cuts to the Rural Affairs budget and refreshing 'The Compact' between Government and the Third Sector.

## Mid Ulster District Community Plan

From 1 April 2015, the new Mid Ulster District Council assumed responsibility for Community Planning which is about the public, voluntary and community sector working together to design and deliver services which make a real difference to the lives of local people. Over 40 partners are working closely together on the plan and Mid Ulster now has a Community Plan which sets out a vision for our place as:



***“a welcoming place where our people are content, healthy and safe;  
educated and skilled; where our economy is thriving;  
our environment and heritage are sustained;  
and where our public services excel”***

The Mid Ulster Community Panel was set up in 2017 as part of the establishment of a governance structure to oversee the delivery of the Mid Ulster Community Plan. Since then, Panel members have been participating in thematic workshops which has saw the development and publication of short term delivery plans in April 2018 along with continued delivery of Community Planning actions. One member of the Community Panel also represents at the Mid Ulster Community Planning Strategic Board. The Plan has identified 15 outcomes encompassed across 5 themes:

- Economic Growth
- Infrastructure
- Education & Skills
- Health & Well-being
- Vibrant & Safe Communities



The proposed outcomes impact on all areas of life, from increasing access to affordable housing and caring for those who are most vulnerable, to creating vibrant towns and villages, safer communities and better skilled and qualified people.

**COSTA has been actively represented on the Voluntary Community Sector Panel and the Education & Skills Thematic Working Group. Work is very actively progressing and there is excellent progress towards addressing the work set out in the Thematic Action Plans.**

## Mid Ulster Community Planning Community Panel Review 2020



As per the Mid Ulster Community Panel Terms of Reference, A review of the Community Panel and its membership was carried out. This review commenced in December 2019 and was due to be completed in early 2020. However, the COVID19 pandemic had caused the publication of the review’s findings and recommendations to be postponed until early 2021. The review of the Community Panel consisted of the following process:

### Feedback from Panel Members on their participation in the delivery of Community Planning in Mid Ulster through questionnaire and focus group.

Members found their participation in Community Planning positive. Many see the benefit to organisations working together to achieve better

outcomes for the people of Mid Ulster. *“My brain is Mid Ulster. If I can affect change in areas such as education or transport, I think it is very positive”*

Several found the work at the thematic groups relevant to the work they are involved in, in the community and voluntary sector. *“Yes, it does have quite a lot of direct relevance to what we do as it links back to themes of tackling poverty”*

### 2. Review of Panel member’s attendance to Thematic Group Workshops and Community Panel Meetings as per Term of Reference.

### 3. Analysis of other Community Planning community & voluntary sector engagement structures across NI.

A workshop was held on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020 involving partners from across the community planning spectrum, where participants reviewed the findings from the report on all the various Community Planning engagement structures used across the UK and Ireland and discussed which models, they thought worked best. The majority of participants preferred the Open Call model (40%) followed by CVS Networks (38%), Task Group Workshops (36%) and Hybrid Model (36%). Interestingly, the directly elected model, which Mid Ulster has, was less supported (10%).

#### 4. Recommendations for future Community Panel structure and membership.

The contribution of the community and voluntary sector is paramount to the development and delivery of Community Planning, to improve the lives and achieve better outcomes for the people of Mid Ulster. In light of the information gathered, it was proposed to set up the following Community & Voluntary structure within Mid Ulster:

##### DEA Community Fora

- **7 DEA community consultative / engagement forums.**
- Invites through Expression of Interests sent to all Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) groups on Council database within each DEA geography.
- 1 – 2 meetings per year.
- Forum to update / inform CVS of any project / programme / grant etc being delivered by Council or Community planning partner.
- Community Voluntary Sector consultative / engagement body for council and statutory partners
- Networking opportunities for groups.
- Community Voluntary Sector can raise issues, which we directed to appropriate service for action.
- MUD Council will provide the structure to engage and deliver strategic programmes such as the new Rural Development Programme (RDP), Peace Plus and Council grants.

##### Strategic Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) Network

- Invite to following strategic CVS organisations: Rural Network Rep, Mid Ulster Disability Forum, Mid Ulster LGBT Group, STEP, Women's Group Rep, Mid Ulster Carers Network, Mid Ulster Youth Forum, Mid Ulster Seniors Network, Loneliness Network, Community Transport Rep, Shopmobility, Volunteer Centre.
- 2 meetings per year.
- Forum to update / inform CVS of any project / programme / grant etc being delivered by Council or CP partner.
- CVS consultative / engagement body for council and statutory partners
- Networking opportunities for groups.

##### Community Planning Thematic Group Representation

Direct representation model – partners are identified as per relevancy to thematic group and invited to participate.

## Mid Ulster District Peace IV Partnership

Mid Ulster District Council continues to actively deliver their **Peace IV Action Plan** to implement the current Peace IV Programme across the district. A number of programmes have been delivered directly by the Council and other key strategic voluntary / community organisations located within the area including CWSAN and COSTA. **COSTA sits on the Mid Ulster District Peace IV Partnership as a Voluntary Community Sector Partner and also as Partnership Vice-Chairperson up until 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020.**

Mid Ulster District Council has announced over £2.8m worth of funding under the European Union's PEACE IV Programme. The funding is being used to support a number of locally-based projects and initiatives to promote positive relations between people from different communities and backgrounds.

The Grant Programmes, also like the Peace IV Action Plan, are delivered under three key themes:

- **Children & Young People**
- **Building Positive Relations**
- **Shared Spaces & Services**



Mid Ulster's PEACE IV Project is supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). A new **Peace+ Programme** will follow on from the current Programme in due course.

## Peace IV Project – Engaging Rural Communities Programme (ERC)



COSTA, in partnership with CWSAN, are delivering a significant 'Engaging Rural Communities' Programme under 'Building Positive Relations' aimed at 'Targeted Rural Communities'.

Launched on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018, this project being delivered by local Rural Support Networks CWSAN and COSTA is supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme which is managed by the Special EU programmes Body (SEUPB) in partnership with Mid Ulster District Council.

Community Engagement Officers based in CWSAN have been working with local groups at early stages of development who are interested in growing their capacities to undertake cross community activities and shared projects in the same area, a neighbouring area or with a group of similar interest. A small grant was available for up to 20+ groups across mid Ulster rural areas to work on a partnership project. The Rural Communities Programme has been running over a period of over 3 years and takes groups through 4 phases of development, providing training sessions, facilitation and mentoring throughout. A range of training is available on offer and training can be designed specifically to the needs of community groups. Within this PEACE IV initiative there is a grant available to those groups participating on the programme.



## Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership Local Action Group

This year COSTA has remained on the LAG Partnership Board as a Social Partner since **September 2019**. At local level funding is being used to encourage the economic development of rural Mid Ulster and will be delivered across a range of schemes: **Rural Business Investment, Rural Services, Village Renewal, Rural Broadband and Co-operation**. COSTA is keeping the community fully up-to-date with rural development opportunities and information about the forthcoming new Rural Development Programme in the post-Brexit environment. For further information on MURDP LAG contact: Eamon Gallogly - Programme Manager, MUD Council Tel: 028 867 64714, Email: [rdp@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:rdp@midulstercouncil.org)

## Local Rural CD Support Service via COSTA Local Rural Support Network



Over the past 10+ years the Networks, like almost all organisations, have faced serious funding cuts of over 30%. **COSTA believes a local presence in the centre of the former Council area of Dungannon & South Tyrone is very important for our community particularly given the fact that the former Dungannon Borough area alone stretches for nearly 40 miles. Despite a future that appears to remain new and very uncertain – particularly now that we still continue to face into**

**Brexit - we remain very positive and pro-active along the great EU Frontier as *the Local Rural Support Network.***



COSTA delivers the  
**Local Rural Community Development  
Support Service (LRCDSS)**

**In the Dungannon & South Tyrone area of  
Mid Ulster District Council**

(sub-contracted under CWSAN as part of the  
7 providers of the Local Rural CDSS) - funded by the  
**Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA)**  
**Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI).**



COSTA is funded by  
**Department of Agriculture, Environment & Affairs (DAERA)**  
**Mid Ulster District Council**  
**Department for Communities**  
**The European Union's PEACE IV Programme managed by the**  
**Special EU programmes Body (SEUPB) in partnership with**  
**Mid Ulster District Council.**



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