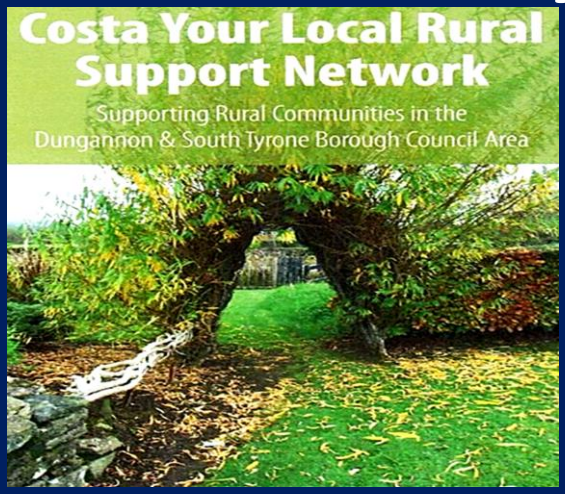
COSTA Annual Report



2025 / 2026

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Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Area

COSTA

Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas Ltd

President Grant's Homestead
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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, The Executive Office
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 2026 AGM!

You are all very welcome the Brantry BARD Centre which is certainly very rural literally nestled within green and leafy drumlins.

We are so glad to be back in the Brantry again following a successful Networking Visit back in September 2023. Since then the BARD Centre has undergone quite extensive repairs and upgrades while preserving the unique character and heritage of the building. COSTA was delighted to attend the re-opening event on 22nd November 2024 (both events are featured in our 23/24 and 24/25 Annual Reports). The BARD Centre is a fantastic community venue and our sincere thanks go to Gael, Geraldine, Colm and all those involved with the group and tonight's event.

We are also delighted that later on Hanna McCabe from Mid Ulster District Council is joining us as Guest Speaker tonight to provide a much valued update on the new Community Development structures, personnel and Grants that have come into play over the past year.

Linked to that, we were very sad to hear that the longest-ever serving member of COSTA's management board, Philip Clarke who was Mid Ulster Council's Community Development Manager retired on 31st January 2026. We sincerely thank Philip for 26 years of advice and guidance as an Official Advisory Member, and most of all we wish him a very long and happy retirement ahead. Philip was literally there from the very start of COSTA's set-up back in 2000 so we will miss him very much indeed.

We also this year have very sadly seen two long-serving Board Members retire. Both Anthony McGonnell and Sharon McAleer originally came to the COSTA Board as Advisory Members as serving Cllrs, and then later chose to join our Board as Directors. Both have served very loyally for well over 10 years each and we appreciate their local knowledge and links to the communities from which they are drawn. Their contributions are very definitely appreciated. We wish them all the very best and the door is always open in future but no doubt our paths will cross again soon.

As one door closes another usually opens so we look forward to welcoming a new Member, Rebekah Allen from Busy Bee Parent & Toddler Group in Ballygawley. Rebekah is very welcome and new input is always a great thing.

Loraine our Manager and Seamus Donnelly of CWSAN must barely have been at home any evening over the summer of 2025 with the number of Village meetings held as part of the Pilot Project to Test & Learn collaborative ways of working between the Statutory and community sectors. To date, all 10 rural villages and areas in the Clogher Valley DEA have been engaged in a process of networking communities and refreshing Village Plans with the aim of ultimately improving the local physical and community infrastructure of their respective areas.

Sincere thanks go to the Department for Communities, The Executive Office and DAERA for their financial and practical support in making this all possible. You can read more about what has been going on and the proposals for moving forward in our Annual Report.

COSTA most definitely thanks and acknowledges the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DEARA) our Keystone Funder for almost all of our 26 year history. DAERA's support makes the Network and provision of staff possible for the Rural Community Development Support Service (RCDSS), a key part of the Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation (TRPSI) Scheme. Indeed, in the last couple of weeks DAERA have just confirmed a further extension of the current RCDSS Contract, until 30th September 2027, which is all very welcome news.

DAERA also funds the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme (DRMCGS) which has provided much-needed micro capital support to groups throughout Mid Ulster and the entire region for over 11 years now. There was a new tranche in 2025 and now again in 2026 which is wonderful news. The Scheme just keeps getting bigger and better in Mid Ulster each year with take-up locally being the highest in the region.

I give a note of sincere thanks to all my fellow Board members, and of course to Mid Ulster District Council for their many years of funding and dedicated support.

This year we were delighted to hear that long-serving Board Member Trevor Lockhart won the Mid Ulster District Council 2026 Community Champion Award. Congratulations to Trevor on this very well-deserved award for decades of unflinching support for local communities especially in the Bawn and Clonaneese areas.

COSTA continues providing for the local community via our staff member, Development Manager, Loraine Griffin. Along with Conor Corr, Seamus Donnelly and Marguerite Quinn of CWSAN, a further year of the DAERA Rural Community Development Support Service plus a further Tranche of the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme in 2025 have been very successfully delivered throughout Mid Ulster District as part of 7 regional providers.

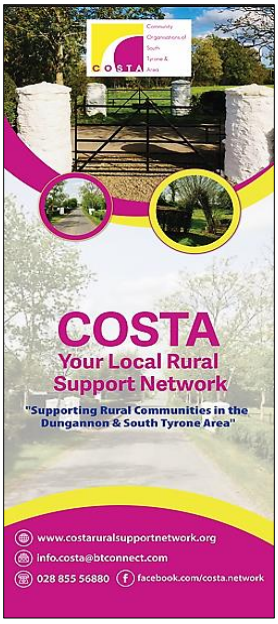
Our close partnership with CWSAN – who cover the Cookstown and Magherafelt areas - continues on stronger than ever. We look forward to many more years of joint working on several Programmes across Mid Ulster District and from our Office at President Grant's Homestead which continues to be an invaluable community resource.

I present our Annual Report which showcases the level and diversity of our work both, for and in, the local community and I hope you take time to have a look through it. It can be accessed and downloaded straight off the COSTA Website.

We hope that tonight will be highly informative for all as well as enjoyable and ideal for some informal networking and celebration.

I wish you, your communities, groups and villages all the very best going forward. COSTA is here to support you all.

Richard Knox - COSTA Chairperson



Network Development Manager's Report

Welcome everyone as we celebrate our 26th Birthday!

Thank you and it's great to be back out at the Brantry BARD again for our 2026 AGM and we know we will be very well looked after.

As ever it has been a busy year, under DAERA's Rural Community Development Support Service, COSTA has delivered: 11 Newsletters to over 500 contacts, over 11,000 Emails to local groups, 193 Website updates, and 260 posts on 2 Facebook pages with 1,100 Likes and Followers. We have actively supported and engaged over 617 times with local Groups, Communities and Villages including: 570 Governance & Capacity Building supports, 61 Funding Application supports and 63 Interagency Forums and Engagement meetings (e.g. the Charity Commission NI) and 260 attendances at COSTA Events, Training and Workshops.

Over the past year COSTA and CWSAN delivered the 2025 Tranche of the DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme which saw 277 applications and 215 local groups successfully funded in Mid Ulster - beating all previous records. Regionally, a total of 1,042 groups received funding representing an investment of nearly £1.7m into rural communities.

Under the Test & Learn Programme – as Richard mentioned earlier - there were 20 Village Plan Meetings up to 31 March 2026 alone, with more still ahead.

Thank you to Conor Corr, Seamus Donnelly, Marguerite Quinn, and all the staff and Board members in CWSAN for working so hard with COSTA throughout.

Indeed Seamus Donnelly has been absolutely essential in co-facilitating the Test & Learn Rural Village Renewal initiatives and delivering the Minority Marginalised Communities (MMC) Programme along the border so thank you very much Seamy.

Indeed special thanks are certainly due this year as I was off for scheduled major surgery from the 12th September to 15th December 2025 so a big 'thank you so much' for all the kind messages, flowers and support at that time.

A huge 'thank you' goes to the entire COSTA Board who are so supportive and volunteer their time and expertise so diligently: Richard Knox (Chairperson), Carmen Hamill (Vice-Chair), Trevor Lockhart (Secretary), Heather McLaughlin (Treasurer), Sharon McAleer, Anthony McGonnell, Rosina O'Neill, Raymond Harrison, Wilfred Mitchell, Katrina McCaughey and Lisa McFarland.

Thank you also to our Council Representatives Cllrs: Eugene McConnell, Gael Gildernew, Dominic Molloy, Meta Graham, and Karol McQuade for their knowledge, experience and contacts.

I really want to wish Sharon McAleer and Anthony McGonnell a long and very happy retirement, I thank them so much for their contributions to COSTA for so many years, we are very sad to lose you from our Board.

Rebekah Allen, we welcome you on board to COSTA and look forward to working with you.

It is not the staff but it is the Committees, Boards, Trustees, Member Groups and Volunteers in the community who are truly worthy of thanks. Without these individuals giving up their own time, experience, expertise and often personal resources, there

would be no Third Sector - especially out in rural areas - and so much could simply never be done without these volunteers.

I extend sincere thanks to Mid Ulster District Council for their continued funding and support of COSTA. I will truly miss Philip Clarke as our Statutory Representative because he started in the Council around the same time as I started in COSTA – as the very first-ever member of staff - way back in 2000. I really wish Philip all the very best for the future.

As ever, Ted and Faye Sharkey continue their hard work in keeping President Grant's Homestead such a beautiful and welcoming place. This year we very happily signed a lease with the Council to remain at the site which is great news.

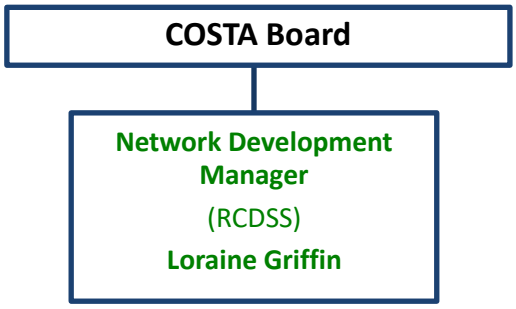
Back in May we had another brief visit to U.S. Grants Homestead from the American Consulate who planted a tree to celebrate 250 years of the founding United States of America.

As ever, we warmly encourage our membership and local groups to make contact for any assistance required. So please give us a call any time as we encourage everyone to reach out, to stay in touch, to stay informed, and keep-up-to-date via our FaceBook Pages, Website and E-Newsletter Updates.

COSTA aims to meet all challenges ahead and to see that we continue to a 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 of Mid Ulster **;)**

Loraine Griffin – COSTA Manager

COSTA Staff



COSTA Board of Directors

Richard Knox ***Chairperson***

Carmen Hamill ***Vice Chairperson***

Trevor Lockhart ***Secretary & Company Secretary***

Heather McLaughlin ***Treasurer***

Prof Wilfred Mitchell OBE

Sharon McAleer ***(Resigned 30 April 2026)***

Lisa McFarland

Raymond Harrison

Rosina O'Neill

Katrina McCaughey

Anthony McGonnell ***(Retired 2 Sept 2025)***

Associate Board Members

Cllr Meta Graham

Cllr Dominic Molloy

Cllr Eugene McConnell

Cllr Gael Gildernew

Cllr Karol McQuade

Statutory Representative

Philip Clarke – Mid Ulster District Council – Community Development Manager ***(Retired 31 Jan 2026)***

Bankers

Ulster Bank Ltd
14 High Street
Omagh
Co Tyrone
BT78 1BJ

Accountants

Mac Neary Rasdale & Co
Registered Accountants & Auditors
30 Darling Street
Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh

The Local Rural Support Networks

- Supporting rural living across Northern Ireland -

A Unique Rural Infrastructure

COSTA is one of 8 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 for further information.**

View the Local Rural Support Networks RCDSS Video at:

https://youtu.be/IoUG-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

Rural Community Development Support Service (RCDSS)

Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Area

COSTA
Local Rural Support Network
Rural Community Development Support Service
(Mid Ulster Zone)

CWSAN
(Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network)
Rural Support Network

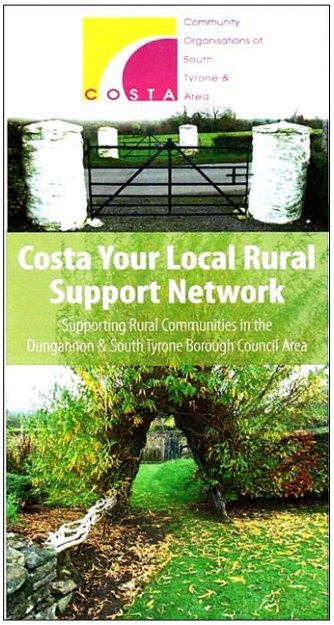
Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas (COSTA) in conjunction with Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network (CWSAN) have continue to work in close partnership. With over 15 years now already completed, we strive towards the start of our 16th year, from April 2026, delivering a newly updated '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 (TRPSI):**

1. **Support for Community Planning;**
2. **Support for Isolated Rural People;**
3. **Support the Sustainability of Rural Villages;**
4. **Support for Marginalised Minority Communities in Rural Border Areas (MMC);**
5. **DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2025**

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.**



Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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 Rural Community Development Support Service (RCDSS) 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'.

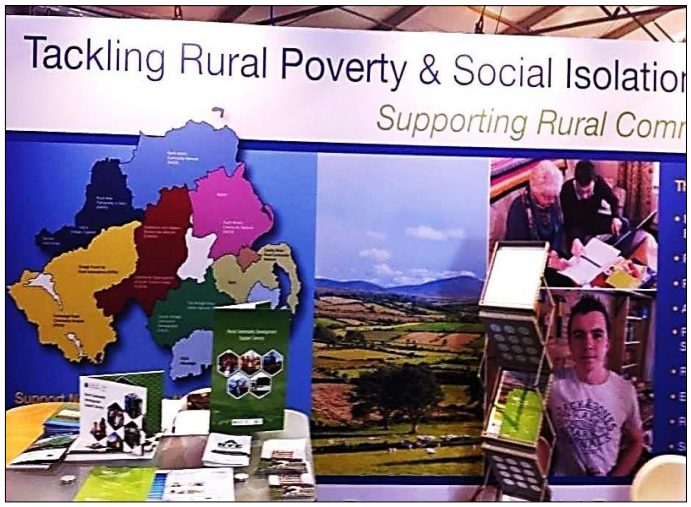
DAERA has a key role in the delivery of the cross-departmental outcomes and a particular emphasis on overarching outcomes: **We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment.** Of particular importance to DAERA and the Networks are Outcomes 2 and 3, Outcome 2 – A clean, healthy environment,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

COSTA and CWSAN secured funding to continue to deliver the Rural CD Support service in Mid Ulster from October 2024 hopefully into early 2026.

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

1. **Support for Community Planning:**
   - **11 Newsletters to 500+ Groups.**
   - **22 Email-outs to 500+ Groups.**
   - **11,000 Emails sent out to local communities.**
   - **193 Website updates.**
   - **260 posts on 2 Facebook Pages.**
   - **2 Facebook Pages: 593 Followers and 507 Page Likes / 659 Check-ins / 1,435 views.**
   - **753 LRCDSS supports to groups.**
   - **22 Good Practice Checklists.**
   - **61 Community Planning Feedbacks / Opportunities / Linkages / Actions.**
   - **83 Linkages / Engagements regarding Community Planning.**
   - **57 Meetings: MUDC Community Planning-linked meetings / Local Networks.**

2. Support for Isolated Rural People:



- **184 COSTA Member Groups**.
- **1,197 Database entries**.
- **128 Database updates.**
- **16 Good Practice Checklists** (Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation).
- **16 Checklist Follow-ups to Groups' needs.**
- **452 Groups supported / mentored on Capacity Building.**
- **61 Groups supported with Funding Applications.**
- **118 Groups supported / mentored on Governance.**
- **5 DRMCG LOO Workshops: 256 Participants** 16/12 (61), 17/12 (42), 17/12 (66), 18/12 (34), 18/12 (53).
- **63 Interagency Engagements:** MU Community Navigator, 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+ / FarmSAFE, Libraries NI, Farm Family Health Checks, NIVCA, RCN, Rural Action, JVCS Forum etc.
- **360 attendees at Events & Workshops / Training.**

3. Support for the Sustainability of Rural Villages

- **1 Rural Village Supported / 3 Meetings in Benburb on: 15/01/2026, 26/02/2026 and 24/03/2026.**
- **2 Village Expressions of Interest outside Clogher DEA area: Cappagh and Moy.**
- **DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2025: 1 Phase Launched 12/9/2025 with 277 Application in MUD Council area.**
- **10 DRMCGS Meetings:** DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2025/26.
- **20 Village Plan Meetings for Test & Learn: c140 Groups / c350 attendees and representatives.**

4. ## Governance & Sustainability

- 6 DAERA / LRCDSS / LRSNs Contract Meetings.
- 4 LRCDSS Monitoring Reports / 4 Audit Certificates.
- 4 LRCDSS / DAERA Financial & Monitoring Checks.
- 1 Company House Annual Return: March 2026.
- 1 Charity Commission NI Annual Return: December 2026.
- 5 COSTA Board Meetings.
- 1 COSTA Annual General Meeting (26/6/2025) (20 attendees).
- 3 COSTA Board Training & Support Sessions for The Company Directors Digital Identification verification Process with 19 attendees: 5/11 (3), 13/11 (7), 4/12 (9).

COSTA Project Partnerships & Representation 2025 / 2026

- **Charity Commission NI -- Stakeholder Forum.**
- **Mid Ulster District Community Plan - VCS Member / Clogher Valley DEA / Education & Skills Thematic Working Group.**
- **Mid Ulster Seniors Network (MUSN).**
- **Mid Ulster Loneliness Network (MULN).**
- **Age Friendly Mid-Ulster Alliance.**
- **Agewell Mid-Ulster.**
- **Community Sector Training - Management Group.**
- **Linking Generations NI**
- **MUD Council Fair Trade Steering Group (Chair).**
- **NI Ambulance Service - Partner Voice Forum.**
- **SAOG Group (Southern Area Outcomes Group)**
- **ENCOMPASS Programme - Engagement Council Panel**
- **Agewell Mid-Ulster Partnership.**
- **CYPSP - Children & Young People Strategic Partnership Locality Group (Armagh & Dungannon) & Chairperson.**
- **RCDSS / Local Rural Support Networks Managers Forum.**
- **Southern Area Outcomes Group (A&D Rep).**
- **Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group (Dungannon).**
- **Collaboration Test & Learn Pilot Project Clogher Valley**

DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme (DRMCG) 2025

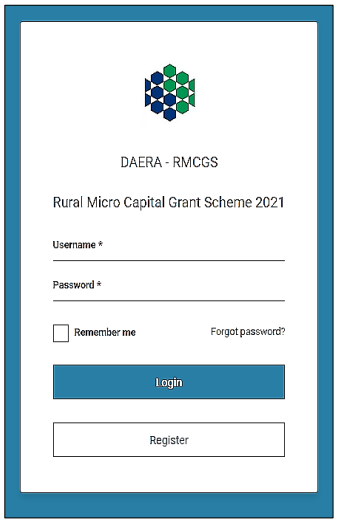
The Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme funded by DAERA provides grants of up to 85% of the total cost of a small project from £500, up to a maximum grant limit of £2,000, and are designed to address issues of:

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

Phase 1 was first piloted in May 2015, since then Phases 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and now the 2025 Phase (11) was launched on 15th September 2025. 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 4 Key areas:

- **Modernisation (of premises / assets)**
- **Information Communication Technology**
- **Health & Wellbeing**
- ***Energy Efficiency / Environmental Improvement***

The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Mr Andrew Muir MLA 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.



During 2025 the Scheme was delivered with all applications being submitted and managed digitally via a further revised 'purpose-built' online portal through the NI Direct (and Government Gateway) website. All Workshops were delivered on-line via Zoom with extensive support given in person, via phone and email too.

***For the 2025 Phase interest has yet again significantly increased as it has done year to year ever since the very first tranche. In Mid Ulster alone,* 216 applications were received, an increase from the previous year! In 2025 over 200 eligible projects in the MUDC area were funded. 95 people attended the Pre-Application workshops and 256 people attended the 5 Letter of Offer Workshops between 16th – 18th December 2025.**

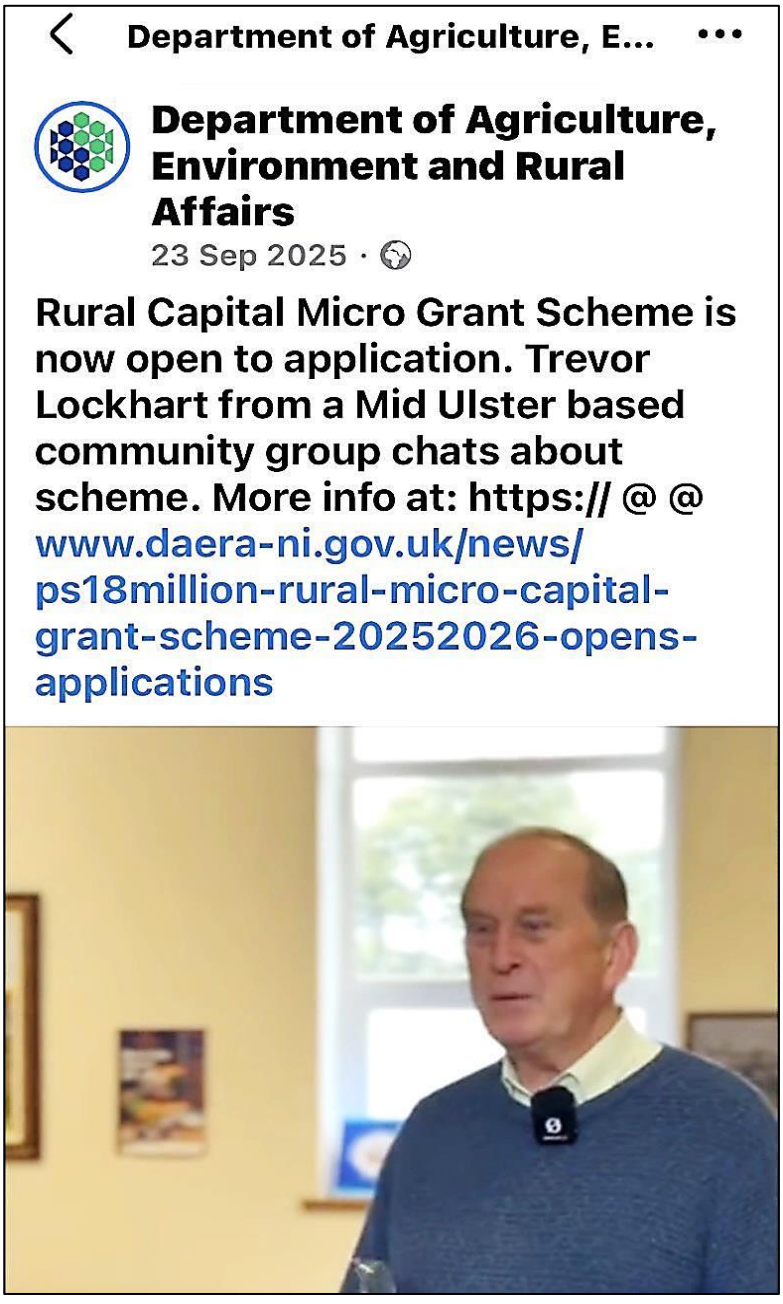
Regionally, 1,042 grants were awarded to the value of £1.7million with grant total paid to the value of £1.51milllion.

We expect that a new DRMCG Scheme will open again in 2026. We will keep you updated at: FUNDING: Rural Micro Capital Grant Programnme

DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme (DRMCG) 2025 Promotion

COSTA was delighted that Trevor Lockhart of Bawn Development Association (BDA) was one of the DEARA Micro Capital grant Projects selected to do a promotional video for the Departments Social Media sites. The BDA has benefitted from several Micro Grants plus numerous other groups in the local area and within The Bawn have also benefitted.

To view the video click here: [COSTA Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas | Facebook]



Mid Ulster District Council Community Champion 2026

On Thursday 21 May 2026 Trevor Lockhart won the Mid Ulster District Council Award for Community Champion 2026.

Trevor was nominated by COSTA and he has served on the COSTA Board and as Company Secretary since June 2016. We congratulate Trevor and below we have some examples of Trevor's tireless work for the community over the last 25+ years which includes being instrumental in establishing Halls in Bawn and Clonaneese.

Creating a lasting Memorial to Lt Fred Barton

Trevor Lockhart was a key part of the team involved in this fitting Memorial to a WW2 Pilot who crashed locally near President Grants Homestead.

BBC TV News Report - Memorial

VIDEO-2025-07-07-17-46-19.mp4

Good Morning Ulster Radio Article

VIDEO-2025-07-07-17-45-25.mp4

Memorial Stone erected near to U.S. Grants to remember Lt Fred Barton

Rural Village Renewal Plans (RCDSS)

Work has been actively ongoing with CWSAN engaging with communities in villages throughout the rest of the legacy Dungannon District area. From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 the following 3 meetings have taken place in Benburb on 15/01/2026, 26/02/2026 and 24/03/2026.

COSTA and CWSAN will be working with all Villages throughout Mid Ulster that are interested in reviewing their plan - so contact us at any time.

Collaboration Test & Learn – Clogher DEA

Test & Learn Community Villages Update Breakfast Event – Friday 30 January 2026 at Corick House, Clogher. Approximately 350 people from local community Groups and Public Services representatives have taken part in T&L during the past year alone.

- A number of meetings have been held with Officials (hosted by COSTA in our Office) including a monthly support meeting with TEO and DAERA – **6+ monthly meetings were held at COSTA.**
- **20 Test & Learn Village Plan Meetings were held during the year.**
- **NICS, Political & Community Representatives Information Update & Networking Event 2:** Another update session for the local political reps in Clogher DEA was held in Corick House on **Friday 13th June 2025**. This event had great interest and was very well attended with over 60 present. An Information Presentation on the Test & Learn and discussions were held with a minimum of 2 reps from each Village. There was much continued positivity for the initiative.
- **Clogher DEA Political Breakfast Meeting 2:** A second Update Information Breakfast for local Political reps will be held on Friday 12th September 2025 at 8.30am in the Copper Kitchen, Quinn's Corner. We expect to finish up around 12 noon at the latest. It is hoped to then start planning a way forward on the Strategic Development Plan for the area. This next phase of the programme is when we will begin to engage Departmental representatives on the priorities identified across the area and also at each village level.

Test & Learn – Clogher DEA Villages & Public Sector Reps Update Event

13th June 2025 in Corick House, Clogher with 60 representatives in attendance.

The NICS Collaboration Test and Learn Programme, is a cross-departmental pilot initiative commissioned by the NICS Board. Its aim is to improve collaboration between government departments and local community structures to deliver better outcomes for those communities to deliver.

The Collaboration Test and Learn Initiative had a clear focus on the need for reform to deliver more effective and efficient interventions across Northern Ireland's communities by Executive Departments and wider public sector bodies and agencies. Central to the need for reform was to generate more effective and efficient means to produce better outcomes for communities, both rural and urban.

Central to the Collaboration Test and Learn Initiative is:

- **Identifying where more collaboration could help deliver value for money**
- **To seek opportunities for continuous improvement within government as to how it interacts with and meets the needs of the communities it serves across Northern Ireland, both rural and urban**
- **Bringing about a more effective people centred service design and delivery which is outcome focused**

Under the NICS Collaboration Test and Learn Programme, pilot exercises have taken place in three locations in Northern Ireland. These represent two urban pilots (North Belfast and the Moor DEA) and one rural pilot (Clogher Valley DEA). This has provided opportunity to compare and contrast urban and rural experiences, in addition to exploring new ways of working across government and engaging with local communities to streamline administration, including funding opportunities and associated monitoring requirements to improve service delivery.

Why Clogher Valley DEA?

Originally, Aughnacloy Super Output Area (SOA) was selected as the rural Test and Learn Collaboration pilot (phase one). As part of Phase One learning and evaluation it was recognised that the same government departments and public bodies have policy responsibility for both rural and urban communities. On that basis (and building on work conducted in the Aughnacloy Super Output Area (SOA) in Phase One it was determined that a rural DEA should be included as part of the Phase Two pilot; as a result the Clogher Valley DEA within the Mid Ulster District Council area was selected as the rural catchment to participate in Phases Two and Three of the pilot

An **Investment Prospectus** was produced by VentureI to provide a framework for the Executive's departments and agencies to collaborate and effectively respond to the issues and opportunities evidenced in it.

It recognises that the nature of that response from across the public sector can/should take a number of forms including:

- **Advocacy**
- **Focused research & action learning processes to better understand the issue or opportunity**
- **Direct delivery which will require time and resources from across a number of departments and public bodies(which departments will depend on the issue or opportunity)**

Investment Prospectus for Clogher Valley Test and Learn Collaboration Pilot Priorities

The processes leading to the development of this Prospectus (data analysis, community engagement and engagement with the public sector has established the following six priorities):

- **Access to Services**
- **Community Spaces (indoor and outdoor)**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Economy, Business and Income Generation**
- **Strategic and Enabling Infrastructure**
- **Sustainable Community Infrastructure and Capacity**

The Clogher Valley District Electoral Area (DEA) is one of seven DEAs within the Mid Ulster District Council and is a predominantly rural region in the south of the district. Its border proximity with County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland enhances scope for cross-border connectivity and collaboration. The Clogher Valley DEA covers the following nine villages/rural catchments:

1. **Augher**
2. **Clogher**
3. **Fivemiletown**
4. **Aughnacloy**
5. **Ballygawley**
6. **Caledon**
7. **Castlecaulfield**
8. **Eglish/Brantry**
9. **Killeeshill/Cabragh**

Investment and Collaboration Priorities and Actions

The following Investment and Collaboration Priority Action Plans have been developed based on the analysis and direction provided by the people and communities in the nine settlements which make up the Clogher Valley DEA. The appended Scoping Study sets out the detail leading to the following six priorities for investment and collaboration in the Clogher DEA:

- ✓ **Access to Services:**
- ✓ **Community Spaces (Indoor and Outdoor)**
- ✓ **Health and Wellbeing**
- ✓ **Economy, Business and Income Generation**
- ✓ **Strategic and Enabling Infrastructure**
- ✓ **Sustainable Community Infrastructure and Capacity**

Tributes have been paid to Cookstown woman Ursula Marshall who played an active role in many community organisations in Mid Ulster.

Very well-known local community activist Ursula Marshall who worked tirelessly for disability rights and Women's Aid sadly passed away suddenly on 19th March 2026.

Ursula had been at the forefront of the Cookstown and Mid Ulster communities for decades. Ursula was a founding member of Shopmobility / Mobility Mid Ulster, Chair of Mid Ulster Disability Forum, Town Centre Forums, and actively involved in Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid, Support for Children and Young People CYPSP, Mid Ulster PCSP, Mid Ulster Senior Network, Disability Action Northern Ireland, and many other organisations.

Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network (CWSAN) said in a social media post: “Ursula was a big part of our community, a figurehead, and a tireless advocate for inclusion and equality. Her dedication over many decades has helped shape a better, more accessible future for everyone.”

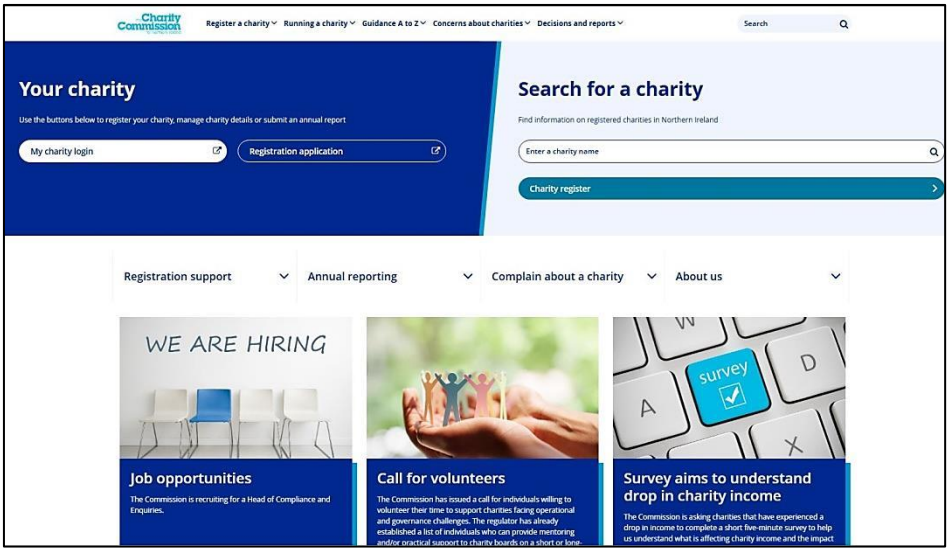
In a tribute Disability Action Northern Ireland said: “Ursula served on our board of Directors, and was involved in many organisations, including Chair of Mid-Mid Ulster Disability Forum and a founding member of Mobility Mid Ulster just to name a few. “Ursula was a dedicated activist, and a tireless advocate for inclusion and equality. Her service and dedication to championing disability has profoundly shaped a better, more accessible future for everyone in NI.”

Cookstown Ulster Unionist Councillor Trevor Wilson stressed she would be missed in Mid Ulster said he has known her for 20 years and she worked tirelessly for many causes, including disability rights and Women’s Aid.

The Charity Commission NI (CCNI) Stakeholder Forum

Loraine Griffin the COSTA Manager was appointed to the CCNI Stakeholder Forum for a term of three years, beginning on 17th February 2023. Since that time COSTA, an official Helper Group, has been actively representing and feeding back the rural voice to the Charity Commission. This includes the fact that COSTA has been actively involved in reviewing several CCNI Guidance Booklets, Vlogs, Tutorials, Website and online materials particularly in relation to the new Charities Act 2022 which will see new changes coming into force.

As well as keeping our own membership and groups up-to-date and enabled to meet their legal obligations, COSTA has also assisted groups with practical templates and provided updated information The CCNI now has a new Website and further changes to Charity Law in NI will mean things will keep changing for the sector. **The proposed changes to the Charity Registration Threshold will have major implications for the Sector but COSTA will be her to assist as always - contact COSTA at any time for any assistance required with CCNI Registration, Annual Returns or other queries: Tel: 028 855 56880 or Email: info.costa@btconnect.com**



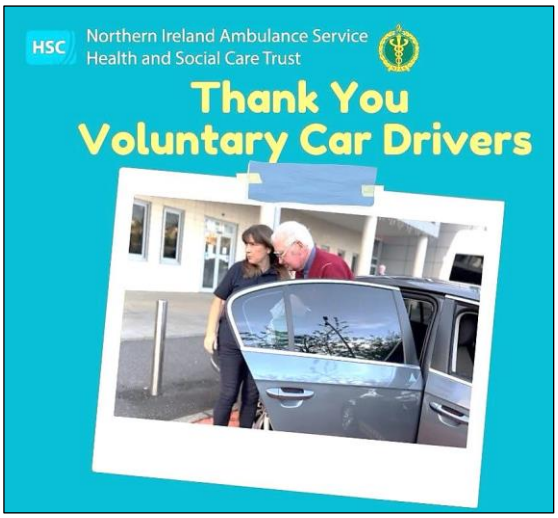
ENCOMPASS Programme – My Care

Since the Spring of 2022, COSTA has been very actively involved in the new **£300m ENCOMPASS Programme Engagement Council Panel**. ENCOMPASS is the new NI Health & Social Care ICT system devised by EPIC a global American leader in healthcare records software.

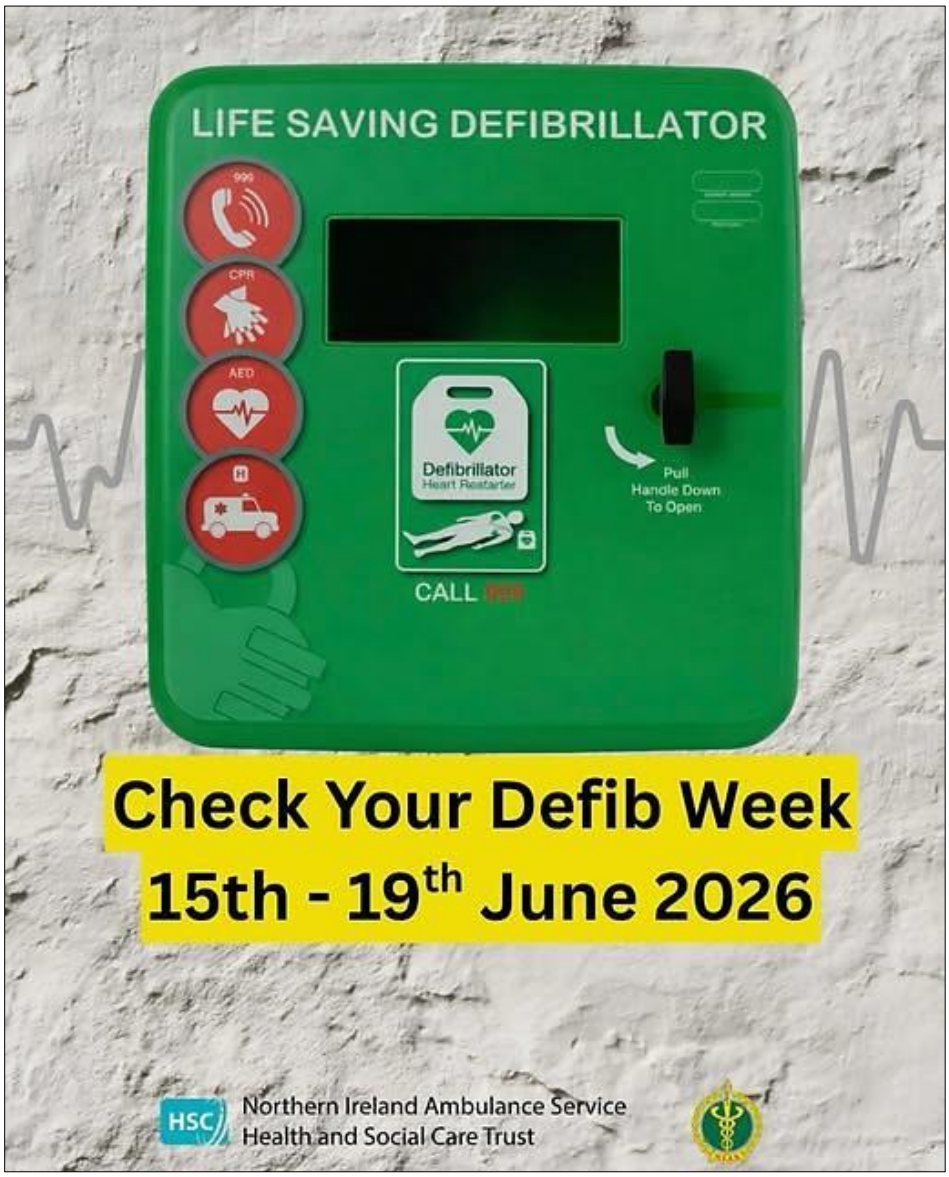
By now many of you will already have downloaded the **My Care App** to your phone or device and this gives access to certain information like a health summary, messages, letters, test results, appointments, notes and notifications linked to your Secondary Care Medical Records (Hospitals).

Indeed many GP practices have now also updated their computerised records systems which - unfortunately for now at least – remain totally separate.

NI Ambulance Service Partner Voice Forum



COSTA was specifically asked to become involved in this Strategy and Consultative Forum due to our knowledge, interest and experience, and also to utilise the excellent connections held by all the Rural Support Networks to promote community representatives onto the Panel. We continue to feed in to initiatives that will hopefully help improve services and waiting times which is a real issue for all like helping with getting the word out about practical initiatives like **recruitment of Volunteer Drivers**.



This **Check Your Defib Week**, help us keep public access defibrillators available when every second matters. During a cardiac arrest, a public access defibrillator can help save a life.

When a NIAS Emergency Medical Dispatcher directs you to retrieve a defibrillator, remember: Retrieve. Respond. Return.

After you have responded to the emergency and you have finished with the defibrillator, please return the device to its cabinet as soon as possible. This allows it to be checked, any used equipment to be replaced, and ensures it is ready for the next emergency.

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 8 providers of the Local Rural CDSS) – funded by

Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA)

Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI).

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Comhairle Ceantair Lár Uladh Mid Ulster District Council

Department for Communities

The Executive Office

Northern Ireland Civil Service

Collaboration Test and Learn

Dormant Assets NI

Delivered by THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

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