

rural MAKING
IT HAPPEN
ACTION



**People
Place &
Purpose**

**Strategic Plan
2026 - 2031**

People | Place | Purpose

Practical solutions

Strong communities

A thriving rural future

MAKING IT HAPPEN



Introduction

Rural Action exists to support rural people and places to thrive. We believe rural communities have extraordinary creativity and potential, and with the right support they can design and deliver powerful solutions to the challenges they face.

Our work is grounded in action, innovation and practical delivery. We work alongside grassroots communities, helping them turn ideas into reality. We partner with government and funders to ensure investment reaches the people and places where it can make the greatest impact. We shine a light on rural strengths by sharing stories, showcasing success and celebrating the difference rural communities make every day.

This strategy sets out how we are uniquely positioned as an organisation to be the trusted vehicle for rural solutions, a partner in delivery, a catalyst for community action, and a champion of rural development and innovation.



Chair's Foreword



Rural communities are full of creativity, determination and potential. This strategy reflects our commitment to helping them turn ideas into action. Our work is built on partnership, good governance and accountability, foundations that ensure we remain a trusted organisation delivering meaningful impact for rural people and places.

We understand the interconnected economic, social, environmental and cultural pressures facing rural communities, and we know that effective rural development requires coordination, partnership and a deep understanding of place.

This strategy is not a catalogue of challenges; it is a commitment to working with communities, government and funders to build capacity, unlock opportunities and support practical, community-led action.

Rural people know what their future should look like; our role is to help them shape it. Together, we will continue to make it happen.

Allen McAdam
Chairperson - Rural Action

CEO's Foreword



Every day, we see the strength and ambition that defines rural people and places, and we are proud to stand alongside them. We work with local groups, government and funders to deliver practical solutions that make a real and lasting difference.

This strategy strengthens our role as the trusted organisation for rural solutions. Through hands on support, programme delivery, skills development, grant management and direct investment via our Rural Action Awards, we will continue to champion community-led action and unlock the potential that exists in every rural place.

Our commitment is simple: to act with purpose, to build strong partnerships and to deliver excellence in everything we do. Rural communities deserve organisations that believe in them, invest in them and help turn their ideas into reality.

With shared ambition and collective effort, we are ready to deliver even greater impact, and to help shape a thriving rural future for generations to come.

Teresa Canavan
Chief Executive - Rural Action

Who We Are



Rural Action is a social-purpose organisation working across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. We are a registered Company Limited by Guarantee and a registered Charity, committed to supporting and strengthening rural communities.

Our work is overseen by a voluntary Board of ten members who provide strategic leadership, strong governance, and a breadth of professional and community insight that guides the organisation's direction and ensures accountability.

Our approach is rooted in people, place and purpose, and built on

partnership, creativity and action. We believe rural communities have incredible potential and our role is to help realise that potential.

Our Vision



Living, working, sustainable and shared rural communities where people, place and purpose come together to shape the future.

Our Mission



To inspire action and deliver practical solutions that strengthen rural people, rural places and rural purpose.



Back row – L - R

Joe Greaney
Anne Marie McAleese
Allen McAdam
James Healy
Damien O'Neill

Front row – L – R

Joanna Gray
Kim Addis
Eleanor McGillie
Ruth Megahey

Missing from photo

Louise McLaughlin-Borlace

Our Values



Open and Transparent

We work with honesty and clarity



Impartial and Fair

We treat all communities equitably



People and Teamwork

We collaborate to create impact



Solutions Focused

We make things happen. We turn purpose into practical action



Can Do

We bring energy and determination



Creative and Innovative

We pilot, test and spark new ideas



Supporting Sustainable Futures

We help rural places thrive for generations



Our Strategic Themes



1. Rural Solutions and Community Action

We help rural communities turn ideas into practical action.

What We Aim to Achieve

- Communities shaping their own solutions
- More grassroots projects making a visible difference
- Inspiring case studies that shine a light on rural development and innovation
- Stronger community-led initiatives
- Direct investment through our own Rural Action Awards

How We Make It Happen

- **Supporting communities** to design and deliver local projects
- **Piloting and testing solutions** that address real rural challenges
- **Showcasing rural development and innovation** through stories and shared learning
- **Providing hands on guidance** to community-led groups
- **Translating government priorities** into practical community-led local solutions
- **Providing accessible, small scale funding** to voluntary-led groups through our Rural Action Awards



2. Programme Delivery and Funding Partnership



We are the trusted delivery partner for government and funders.

What We Aim to Achieve

- High quality programmes reaching the right people
- Stronger collaboration between communities and government
- Increased investment flowing into rural areas
- Rural Action recognised as the trusted delivery partner and intermediary body for rural solutions and funding

How We Make It Happen

- **Managing programmes** with quality and transparency
- **Co designing solutions** with communities and government
- **Bringing a cross border perspective** to rural development
- **Ensuring investment reaches communities** where it has greatest impact
- **Building trusted partnerships** with departments, funders, stakeholders and communities
- **Providing a single, reliable point of contact** for funders seeking rural reach
- **Demonstrating impact** through evidence and success stories
- **Ensuring compliance, governance and accountability** across all funded activity

3. Community Capacity, Skills and Innovation



We build the practical skills and confidence rural organisations need to take purposeful action.

What We Aim to Achieve

- A Rural Action Training Hub offering accredited learning, bespoke courses and collaborative partnerships
- Targeted support for groups that own or manage community spaces
- Practical training in project development, business planning, social enterprise and investment readiness
- A recognised ‘Hallmark’ Quality Standard for rural organisations
- A network of trained facilitators and mentors supporting local delivery

How We Make It Happen

- **Delivering accredited and specialist training** through the Rural Action Training Hub
- **Supporting those who own or manage community spaces** with governance, operational guidance and sustainability
- **Building social enterprise skills** to help groups diversify income
- **Strengthening project development** through mentoring and tools
- **Preparing organisations for investment** with practical, action focused support
- **Sharing best practice** and strengthening knowledge exchange across the rural sector

4. Organisational Sustainability and Social Enterprise



We generate income so we can reinvest in and strengthen rural communities.

What We Aim to Achieve

- A thriving social enterprise generating unrestricted income
- Reduced reliance on short term grants
- Long term organisational assets
- Profits reinvested into rural community-led projects, including the Rural Action Awards
- A supported culture of creativity, experimentation and continuous improvement

How We Make It Happen

- **Developing social enterprise activities** aligned with our mission
- **Diversifying income streams** to strengthen independence
- **Exploring long term assets** that support sustainability
- **Reinvesting profits** into rural development, innovation and community action
- **Strengthening internal culture** through collaboration and learning



Our Commitments

- **Inclusive**
Ensuring people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can participate meaningfully
- **Sustainable**
Supporting long-term community wellbeing, financial resilience and rural development
- **Vibrant**
Fostering energetic, creative and future-focused community activity
- **Community-led and evidence informed**
Grounding decisions in lived experience and robust research
- **Cross border by design**
Embedding North–South collaboration as a core principle
- **Action orientated and solutions focused**
Prioritising practical outcomes that address real community needs
- **Collaborative**
Working with partners across sectors to maximise impact
- **Encourage responsible practice**
Promoting ethical, transparent and socially responsible approaches

Our Strategy . . .

. . . is underpinned by a commitment to partnership working, strong governance and clear accountability. We take pride in operating with professionalism, transparency and integrity, supported by robust corporate management and a dedicated team.

These foundations ensure that Rural Action remains a trusted, reliable and future ready organisation, one that continues to make it happen for rural people and places, today and in the years ahead.



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