

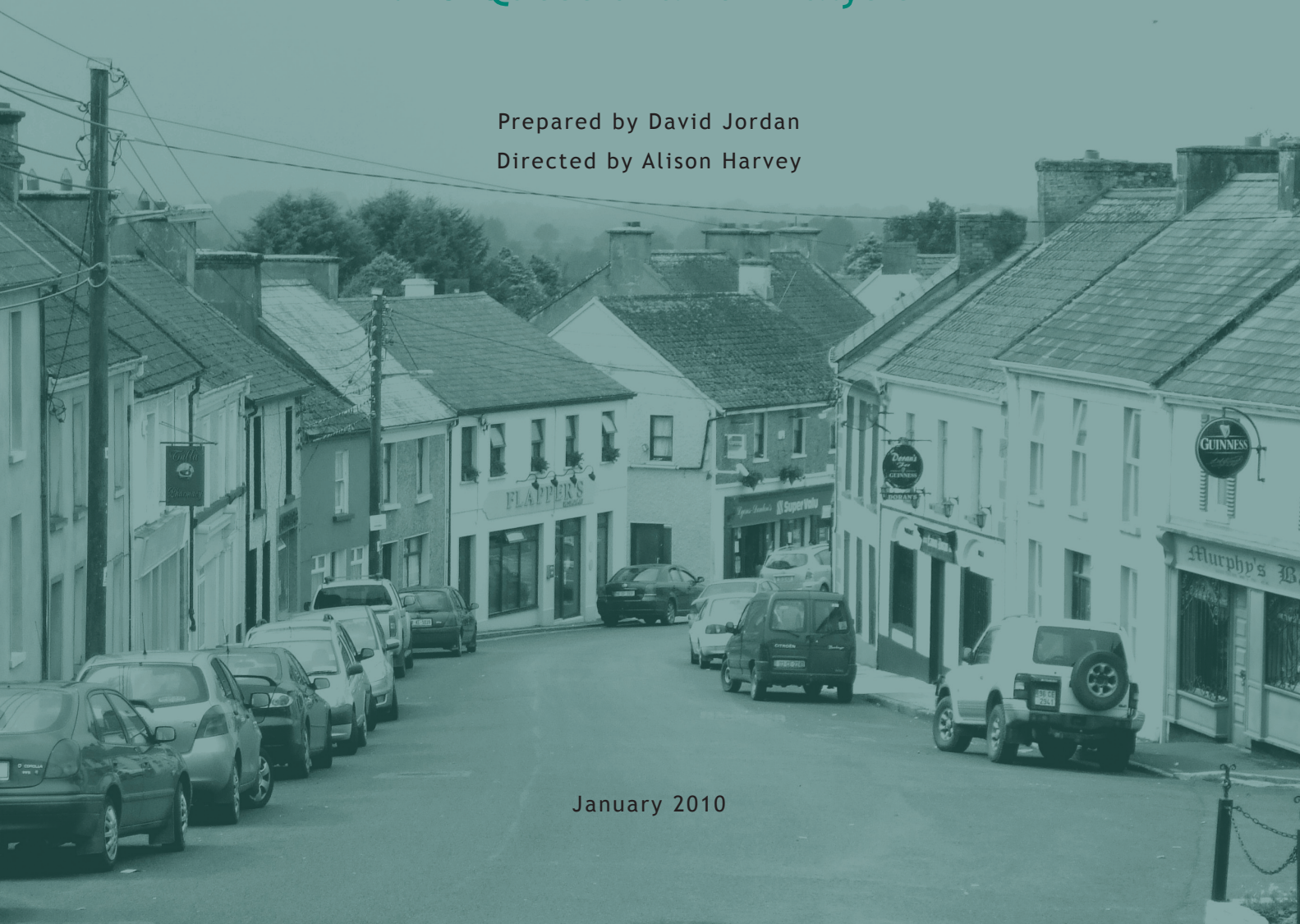


# Village Design Statements (VDS) in Ireland — The Way Forward?



## VDS Questionnaire Analysis

Prepared by David Jordan  
Directed by Alison Harvey



January 2010

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



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## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (VDS) STUDY

Village Design Statements (VDSs) were introduced in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s, as a tool designed to both counteract the widespread erosion of distinctiveness in village settlements (due to the development of generic type housing) and to celebrate their unique character. VDSs in the UK were largely successful with many being incorporated into Local Development Frameworks as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs). Within this framework they acted as a 'tool' for managing change while protecting and enhancing the historic fabric of a settlement.

The Heritage Council introduced the National Village Design Statement (VDS) Programme into Ireland in 2000, in order to promote the management and enhancement of village distinctiveness and character, with a particular emphasis on 'local heritage'. In the period since their introduction, an array of village design statements were prepared for villages in many Irish Counties (See *Appendix 1* Location of Village Design Statements (VDSs) prepared in Ireland, October 2008).

In 2006, the Heritage Council revised the existing National VDS Programme by designing and introducing a more participative process in the formulation of the Lucan (*Leamhcáin*) Village Design Statement<sup>1</sup>, than had previously been adopted. The Lucan (*Leamhcáin*) VDS was awarded the *Certificate of Merit for Participatory Planning* by the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) in February 2008. At this stage, the Heritage Council's Planning and Development Officer initiated a full evaluation of the National Village Design Programme and a National Village Design Steering Group was established to oversee the evaluation project. The Steering Group consisted of representatives of the key stakeholders involved in the programme including Local Authorities, the Spatial Planning Unit of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), representatives from NIRSA<sup>2</sup>, Mary Immaculate College, the Tipperary Institute and representatives from the board of the Heritage Council. The Heritage Council's Planning and Development Officer chaired the group.

Following the in-depth evaluation of the National Village Design Programme in 2008, the booklet – *Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages – Village Design Statements – The Way Forward?*<sup>3</sup> was launched by the Heritage Council at its National Village Design Conference held at Slane Castle on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2008<sup>4</sup>. At the Conference, the Heritage Council reiterated its commitment to the delivery of a new collaborative and participative National Village Design Programme II from 2009 onwards, which is community-led and enhances local character and distinctiveness in Irish villages in the short, medium and long-term.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.sdcc.ie/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=214&Itemid=54](http://www.sdcc.ie/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=214&Itemid=54)

<sup>2</sup> National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis - <http://www.nuim.ie/nirsa/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/publications/> - the final version was published in January 2009.

<sup>4</sup> The Slane Conference programme and presentations are listed on the Heritage Council's planning webpage - <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/events/>

The timing of the evaluation of the Village Design Programme I proved opportune and significantly, has fed into the development of Irish planning policy, with a number context at a national level, with a number of new national policy documents recently issued by the Spatial Planning Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) referencing Village Design Statements. These include, for example, *Guidelines for Sustainable Development in Urban Areas*<sup>5</sup> with accompanying *Urban Design Manual* was published in December 2008. The December 2008 Guidelines (pp 43-44) make specific reference to the preparation of village design statements (VDSs) and the importance of involving the local community in their preparation. The Guidelines (page 43-44) make specific reference to VDSs stating that:

*'Village Design Statements and other supplementary local development frameworks are usually best progressed by way of a partnership between technical resources of the relevant planning authority and the local knowledge of local communities and elected members and use of external facilitators.'*

It should be noted that the DoEHLG announced at the National Village Design Conference in Slane, that it intends to publish further national planning guidelines for Local Authorities on the preparation of Local Area Plans (LAPs) in the autumn of 2009. It is envisaged that the proposed guidelines will address the issue of supplementary local development frameworks and their relationship to city and county development plans and local area plans (LAPs).

The Heritage Council and the VDS Steering Group have worked closely with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) in this regard.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload,19164,en.pdf>

## 2. METHODOLOGY FOR VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (VDS) STUDY

Following the announcement to update and revise the National Village Design Programme at the Slane Conference, the Heritage Council is aiming to facilitate and enable unique village planning and design projects during the 2010-2012 period. In pursuit of this goal, it initiated a six month period of in-depth consultation with key stakeholders including Local Authorities, Tidy Town Groups, LEADER groups etc., in order to form the basis of a *Draft 3 Year Action Plan 2010-2012* for the National Village Design Programme II.

The VDS Steering Group was keen for a broad based spectrum of stakeholders as possible to be involved in this process, and has invited the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (CRaGA) and the Tidy Towns Unit of the DoEHLG to participate on the National Village Design Steering Group for the Village Design Programme II – these invitations have been accepted by all groups approached. It is intended that the *Draft Action Plan 2010-2012* will be circulated to all interested parties during the late 2009 before being finalised in January 2010.

In carrying out the preparations for the *Draft Action Plan 2010-2012* it was felt that an element of primary research was needed, in order to gain a clearer insight in relation to the various community building/ enhancing activities being carried out in small settlements around the country. The results from a questionnaire distributed to participants at the Slane Conference gave some useful insights on the issue of village design and management in Ireland.

Due to the positive results of this exercise despite limited resources, it was decided that the widespread use of questionnaires in a ‘mail-shot’ type exercise, was the most appropriate way to target the key stakeholders involved in the management, enhancement and development of small settlements and villages. The postal questionnaire approach to quantitative research (questionnaires – closed answers) according to Alreck & Settle (1985) has many advantages, as set out in *Appendix 2*.

It was also felt that this format could be used in a wider informative process, since it was also ideal for informing the key stakeholders of both the benefits of VDSs as well as raising the profile of the Heritage Council’s programme. Thus the ‘mail-shot’ exercise was to take the form of a village design information pack and included the following documents:

- i. Cover letter – Explaining the Heritage Council’s role in village design and it’s evaluation of the Village Design Programme. For example, a copy of the cover letter to the Tidy Towns groups is provided at *Appendix 3*.
- ii. One Copy of the Heritage Council’s National Village Design Booklet – *Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages – Village Design Statements – The Way Forward?* (January 2009) – Explaining the usefulness that VDSs can play in the management of a Village’s development<sup>6</sup>.
- iii. A Questionnaire – based on whether the recipient was part of the Tidy Towns Organisation or LEADER programme (See *Appendices 4 & 5*).

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/Planning/VDS\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Planning/VDS_Final_Web.pdf)

- iv. One stamped envelope labelled with the address of the Heritage Council – to improve the rate of response (The questionnaire was also available to download from the planning webpage of the Heritage Council website – [www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie))

In order to inform and raise awareness of the drafting of the 3-year Action Plan 2010-2012 for National Village Design Programme II, Village Design Information Packs were also sent to all the Local Authority County Managers, Local Authority Directors of Planning, Heritage Officers and the President of the Irish Planning Institute (IPI).

In the design of the questionnaire three key principles were adopted to ensure that it was a straight forward and as practicable an exercise as possible, namely to:

- i. Construct the questionnaire so that it is easy to analyse – question layout and design;
- ii. Ensure that the questions are concise and clear for the respondent to understand and answer –question content and wording; and
- iii. Keep the respondent interested – question layout and design / content of questions and wording.

Having kept the above considerations in mind, it can be seen (*Appendices 4 & 5*) that the format of the questionnaire is simplistic and clear. At one page, it was designed to be concise, yet long enough to glean all the relevant information. It was also important that any other comments that the respondents should wish to make be allowed for - this open-ended section was made use of by many respondents. There are two variations of the questionnaire: one for the LEADER/ Rural Development groups and one for the Tidy Towns organisations/groups.

In carrying out the mail-shot exercise, it was important to target potential recipients as to both yield the best results but also target our limited resources in an efficient manner. With the aid of the Tidy Towns Unit in the DoEHLG it was possible to get the addresses of over 750 participating City, Town and Village Committees. In addition, by analysing the 2006 Census and data from the Spatial Planning Unit in the DoEHLG, it was possible to exclude the larger towns and cities but include settlements that had undergone significant population change but due to their small size did not appear in the census tables. With the help of CRaGA it was possible to obtain the addresses for the thirty-seven various LEADER/ Rural Development Groups around the country.

The total amount of questionnaires sent in Village Design Information Packs and the response rates/ percentages are seen in *Table 1* overleaf. The average response rate of the sample population was 23%.



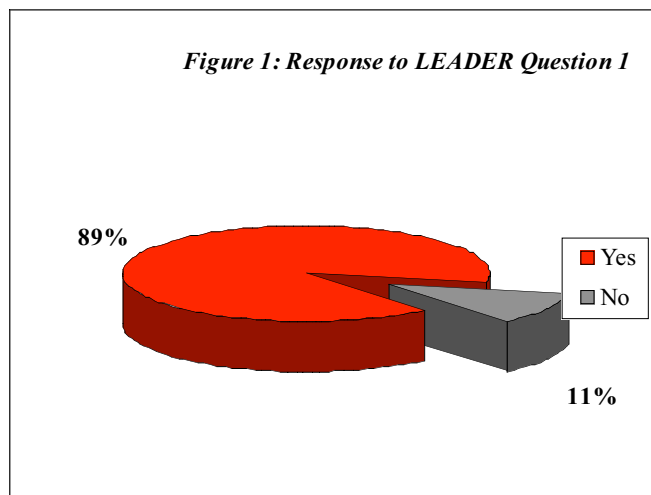
*Table 1: The Sample Size and Percentage of Respondents to the Questionnaires*

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage of Responses</b>
LEADER/ Rural Development Group	37	9	24 %
Tidy Towns	300	67	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>23%</b>

The analysis of LEADER/ Rural Development Groups and Tidy Towns questionnaires are set out in the following sections of the report: Section 3 deals with the analysis of the LEADER/Rural Development Group responses; and Section 4 examines the feedback from the Tidy Towns.

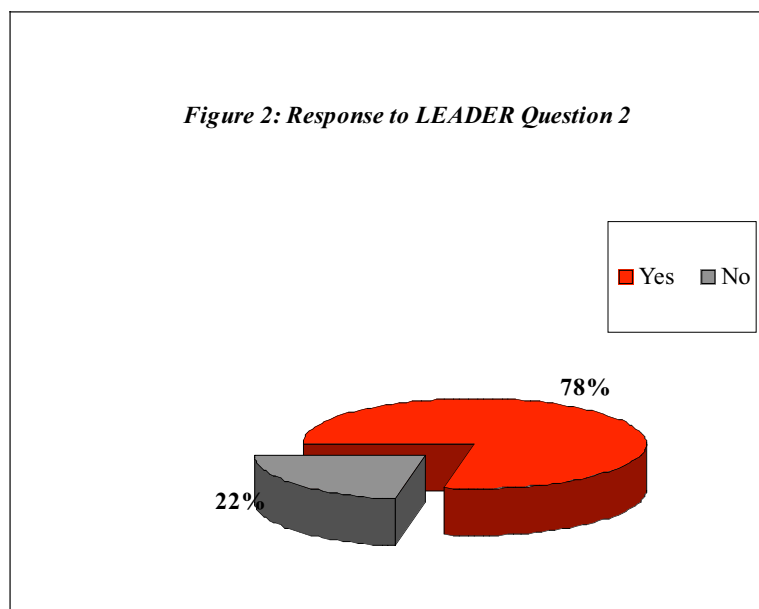
### 3. ANALYSIS OF LEADER/ RURAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP FEEDBACK

*Q1. Are you involved in any programmes for the improvement/ enhancement of villages and small towns in your area?*



All the LEADER groups answered ‘yes’ to this question (under the European Funds that are allocated to them during the period 2007-2013, there is specific provision for village enhancement/ improvement funding).

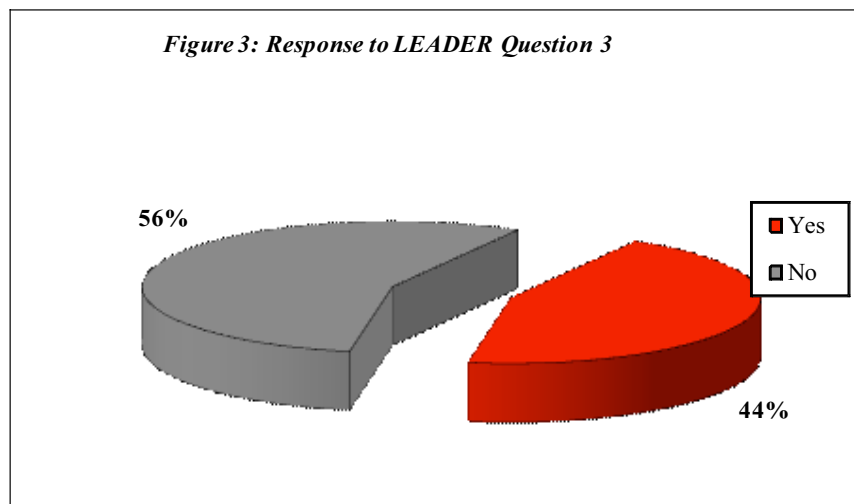
*Q2. Have you participated in the making of plans or frameworks either statutory or non-statutory for your area?*



In *Figure 2* on the previous page, the majority (78%) had been involved in the development of frameworks and plans for their area.

This ranged from making submissions on statutory plans such as Local Area Plans (LAPs) and County Development Plans (CDPs) to drawing up non-statutory village development frameworks, including village design statements (VDSs).

*Q3. Are there plans for the preparation of a statutory Local Area Plan (LAP) to be prepared for the area? Yes/ No?*



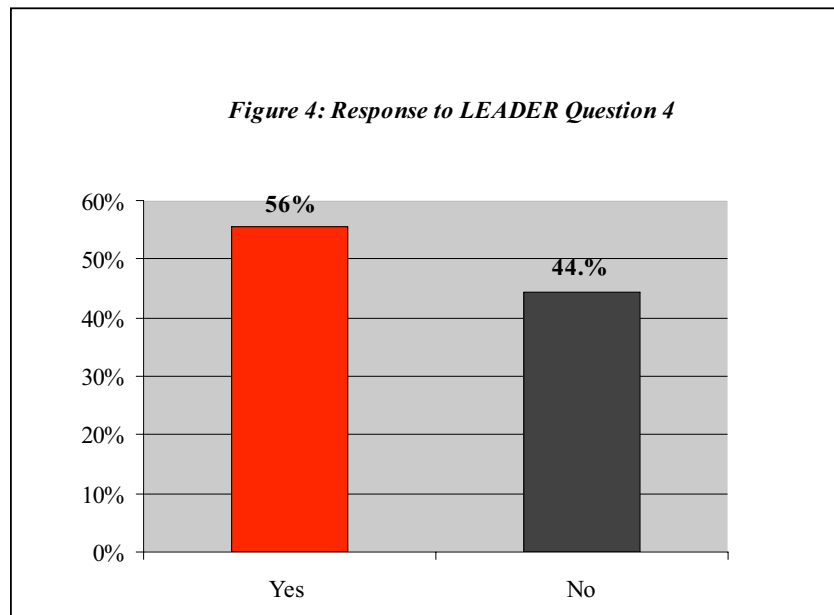
In response to this question, some respondents stated that Local Area Plans (LAP) did not cover their area, only larger settlements nearby. However, others stated that the LAPs covered the entire area including the surrounding rural areas. In relation to the latter, this was demonstrated by the respondents from County Clare for example, where LAPs cover the entire county<sup>7</sup>.

*Q4. Would you be interested in attending multi-disciplinary VDS training in 2009/2010?*

In *Figure 4* overleaf, the majority of respondents (56%) expressed an interest in attending multi-disciplinary training. Of the 44% who answered 'No', it was explained that it depended on factors such as timing, cost and the location of the proposed training.

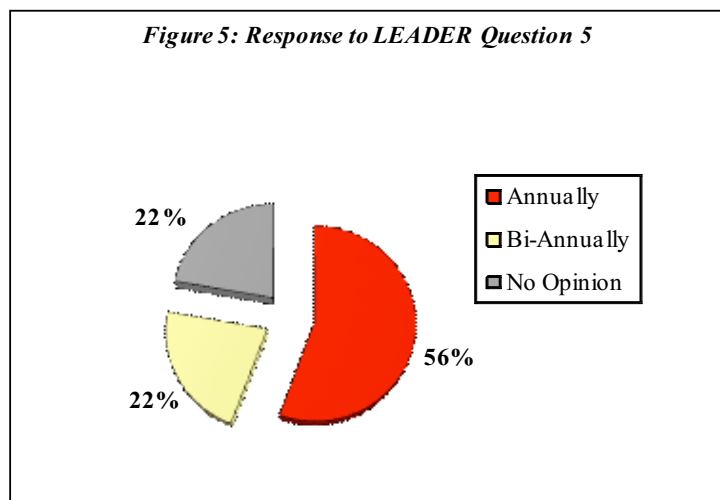
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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.clarecoco.ie/publications/publications.html>



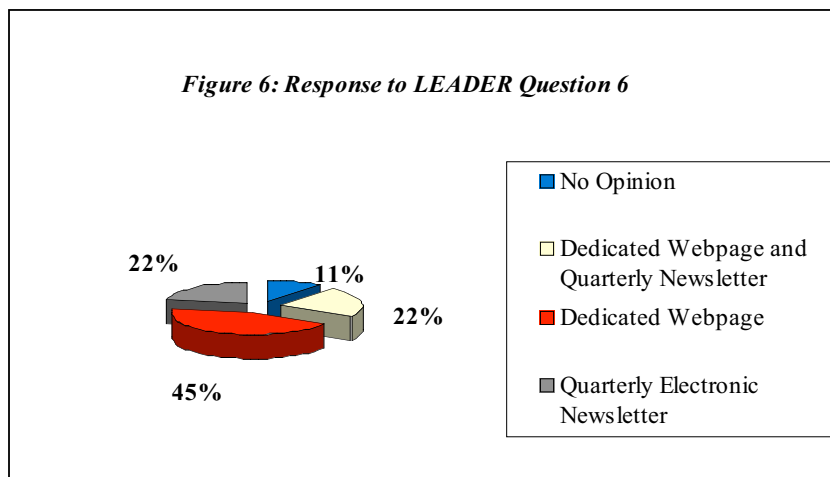
*Q5. How often do you feel the National Village Design group should meet in full – bi-annually? Annually...etc?*

In *Figure 5* below there is a clear majority (56%), which expressed a preference for an annual meeting of all groups involved in the national village design programme II. Some responses also stated a preference for an interactive web based approach (i.e. Blog or Forum) to maintain cohesion and momentum for the National Village Design Programme II.





*Q6. What would be your preferred method of correspondence between the various parties involved in the VDS Programme?*



There was a clear preference (67%) by the LEADER groups for some form of a webpage resource to be set up either with or without a quarterly newsletter. In *Figure 6* above, it was clear that the vast majority (89%) wanted to be informed in some way of the progress of the impending roll out of the National Village Design Programme II.

*Q7. Further comments in relation to the future delivery of the VDS Programme in Ireland.*

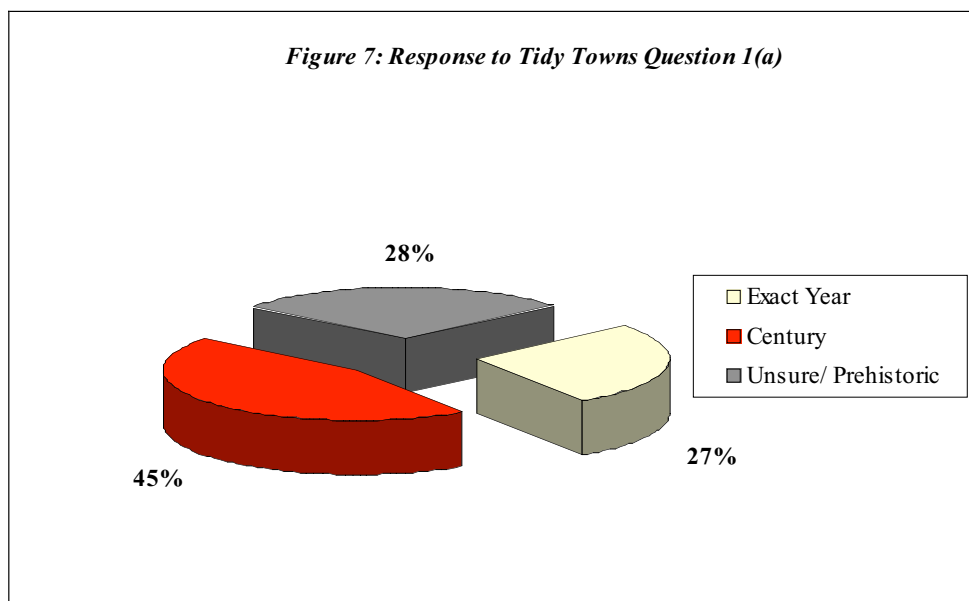
In the '*further comments*' supplied by the LEADER/ Rural Development Groups, it was felt that VDSs would be of benefit to their schemes that fund the enhancement and development of rural villages. There is recognition by some of the respondents of the usefulness that the VDS could play in coordinating and targeting these funds. There was some concern expressed that there was a lack of experience on planning and design, and architectural matters by community development officers. It was also felt that these skills were lacking at a local level in communities.

These concerns highlight the need for multidisciplinary training (potentially to be provided by the Heritage Council), to redress this lack of skills or perceived lack of skills within the community. Comments also alluded to the potential success or failure of a VDS being linked to the relationship with the Local Authority. Indeed, it was perceived by some respondents that the Local Authority has a crucial supportive role to play not only in the preparation of a VDS, but also in its implementation/delivery.

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK FROM TIDY TOWNS GROUPS

*Q1 (a) When does your village date from, i.e. how old is the settlement?*

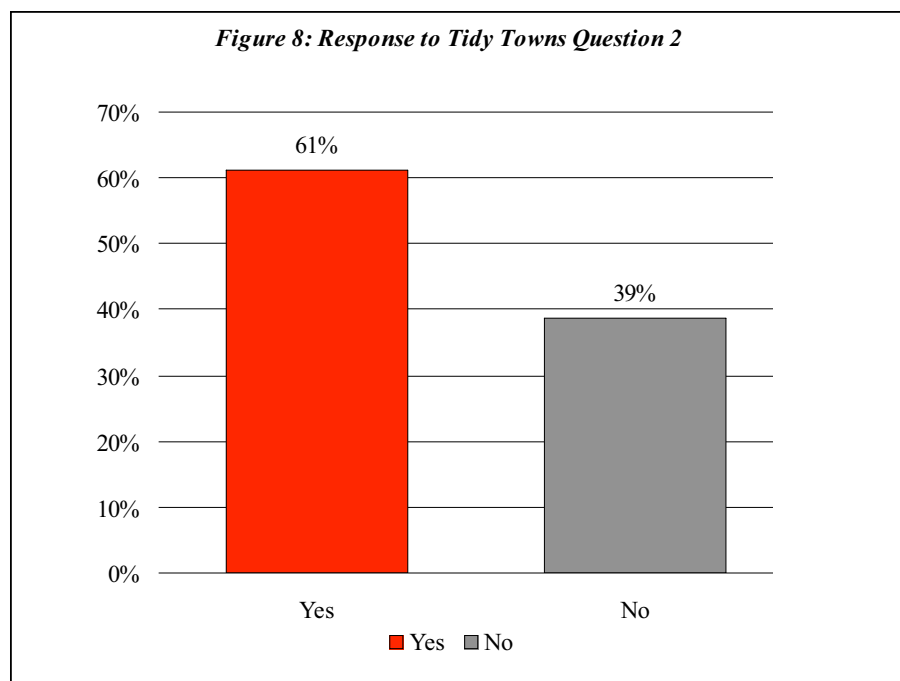
In *Figure 7*, it can be seen that the majority of Tidy Towns respondents (72%) were able to date the establishment of their settlement to an exact year within a particular century. It was felt that this was an important question as it gives an idea of the awareness and sense of place that the respondent has about their particular area.



*Q1 (b) Where is your village located?*

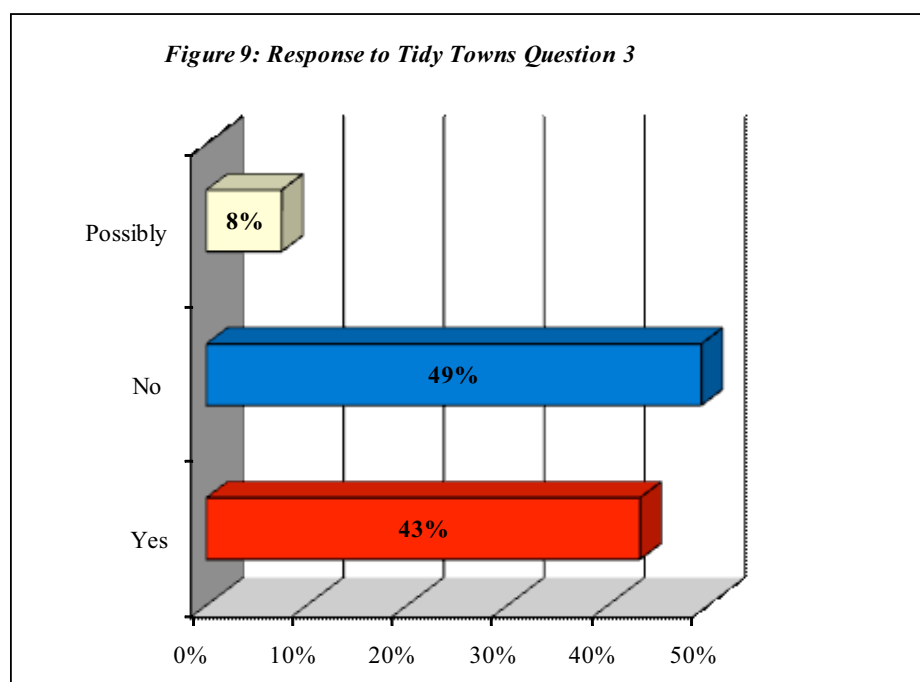
Question 1 (b) was again important in analysing the ‘sense of place and identity’. In answering this question, the majority of respondents located their settlement by naming the County it was located in and stating the nearest large town. Others used National Primary or Secondary Routes to locate their village. It was interesting that only six respondents used the landscape in some way to locate their area, For example near a major river, harbour, mountain range or bay.

*Q2. Does your village have an existing Tidy Towns Committee?*



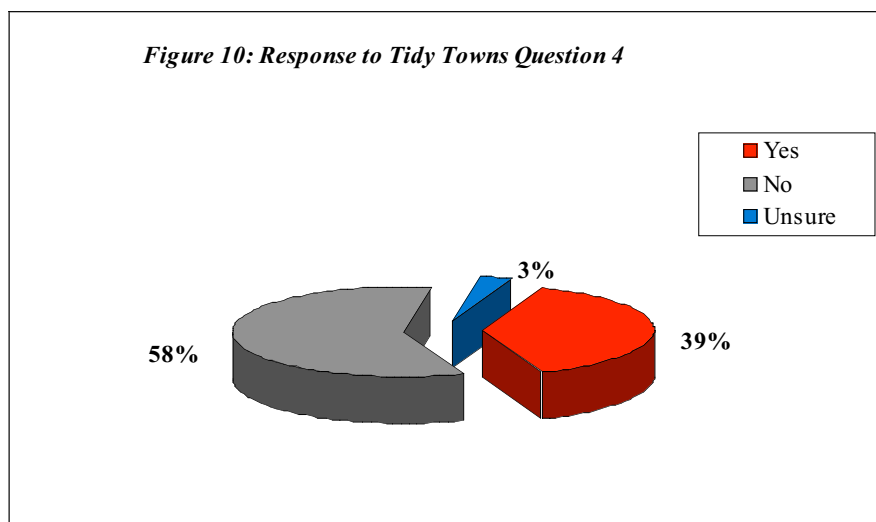
In Question 2, 61% of Tidy Towns respondents had an existing [formal] committee. This gives an indication as to the level of current activity within a community. Although the majority of settlements do have a committee, it is somewhat lower than expected from 'signed-up' Tidy Towns members.

*Q3. Are you planning to prepare a VDS in 2009/2010?*



The response to Question 3 is encouraging, as even though the national Village Design Program II has yet to be launched about half of respondents are indeed planning or thinking about preparing a Village Design Statement (VDS) within the next eighteen months. There is a great deal of openness within communities to the idea or concept of Village Design Statements.

*Q4. Are there plans for a Local Area Plan (LAP) for the village?*



In the majority of villages (58%), there are no such plans for Local Area Plans (LAPs). This is probably due to the fact that for the majority of settlements the local authorities are not obliged to carry one out, as under the provisions of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*<sup>8</sup> Section 19 (1)(a) and (b), states in *Box 1* that;

***Box 1: Legislative Provisions for the Preparation of Local Area Plans (LAPs)***

- a) A local area plan may be prepared in respect of any area, including a Gaeltacht Area, or an existing suburb of an urban area, which the planning authority considers suitable and, in particular, for those areas which require economic, physical or social renewal and for those areas likely to be subject to large scale development within the lifetime of the plan.*
- (b) A Local Area Plan shall be made in respect of an area which-*
- (i) is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census,*
  - (ii) has a population in excess of 2,000 people, and*
  - (iii) is situated in the functional area of a planning authority which is a county council.*

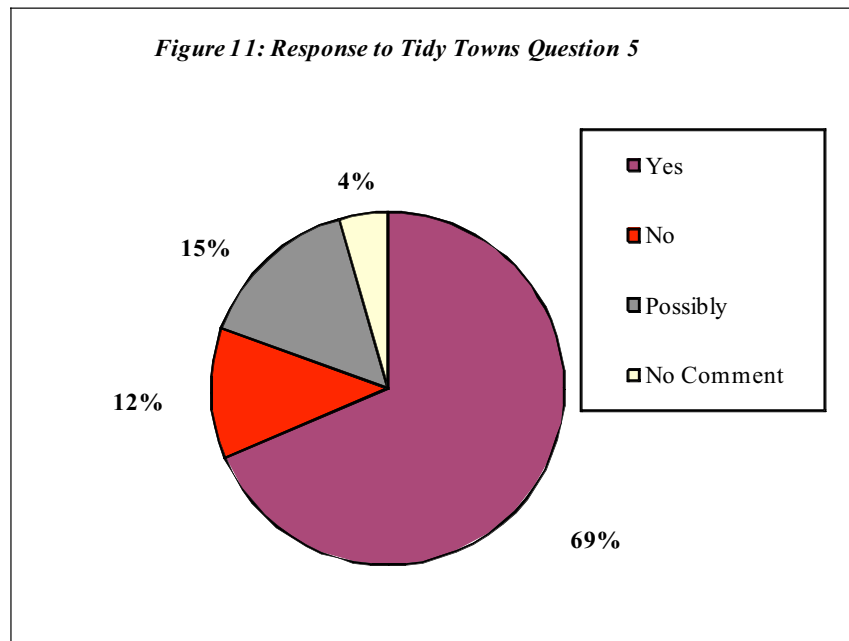
Further changes to LAPs are proposed under the provisions of the *Planning and Development Bill 2009*<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0030/sec0019.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=11970&&CatID=59>



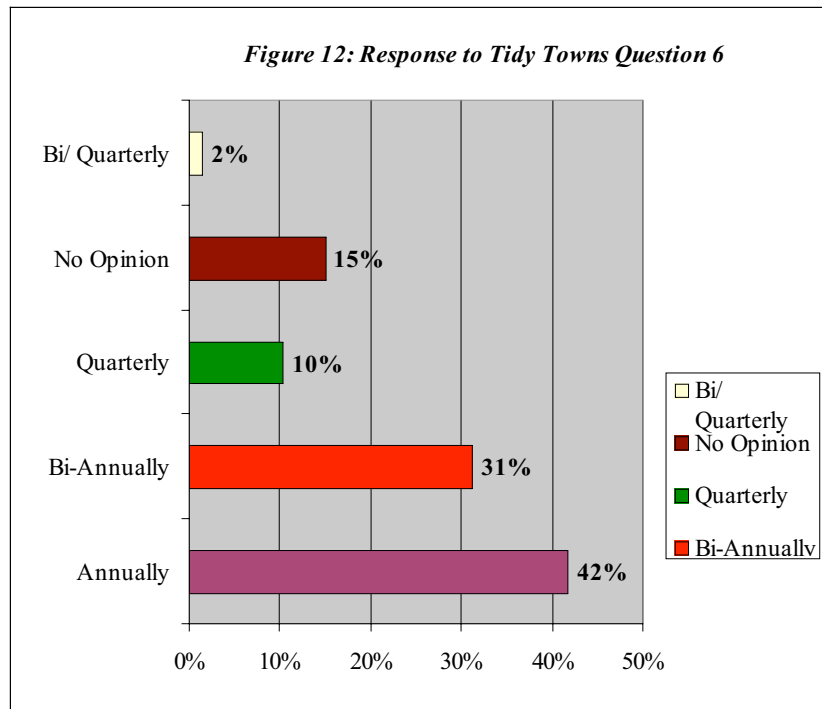
*Q5. Would you be interested in attending multi-disciplinary VDS training in 2009/2010?*



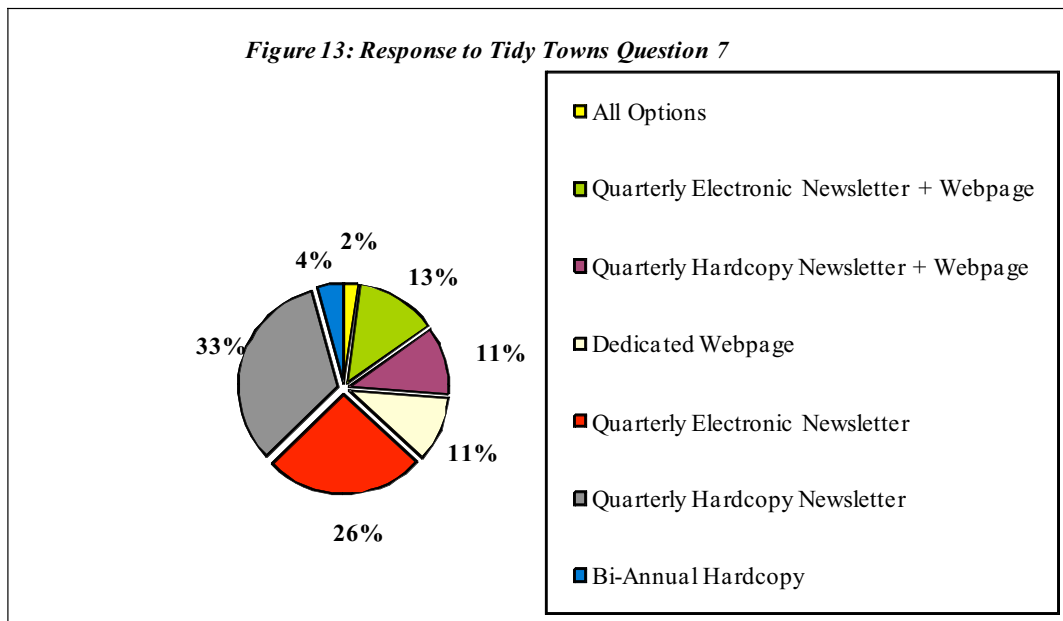
The majority of respondents (69%) are open to multi-disciplinary VDS training. Of the 15% who say 'possibly' it was a conditional 'yes' answer but timing, cost and locational reasons were stated as having an impact on their possible attendance (similar to the answers given by respondents to LEADER Question 4). Also, a desire was expressed to have the training located in the various regions i.e. not to have it centralised in one particular place such as Dublin.

*Q6. How often do you feel the Village Design Group should meet in full – bi-annually, annually, etc?*

Over two-thirds of respondents favoured an annual or bi-annual meeting of the national village design group – see *Figure 12 overleaf*. 10% stated a preference for quarterly meetings.



*Q7. What would be your preferred method of correspondence between the various parties involved in the VDS Programme?*



As shown in *Figure 13* there was a multiplicity of responses from the Tidy Towns groups to Question 7. A preference for a quarterly newsletter of some form was expressed by 94% of respondents. Also, a webpage as part of the Heritage Council website was preferred by 35% of respondents.

This could be an efficient way to keep people updated as any people could be informed of any new developments relatively quickly. The electronic quarterly newsletter would also be easily uploaded. In the interests of accessibility for those who don't have access to the Internet the production of a hard copy of any newsletter may also have to be considered.

*Q8. Further Comments in relation to the future delivery of the VDS Programme in Ireland?*

In relation to further comments, 31% (21 out of 67) of the Tidy Towns respondents provided further views on the VDS programme. The vast majority of these comments were positive and liked the idea that it was aimed at voluntary groups that were '*on the ground*'. There was a small number of responses that were somewhat negative (3 no.) which for either reasons such as lack of community spirit or lack of confidence in VDS, did not think that the VDS would be a useful tool in a village's future development. There was also concern expressed about the level of awareness amongst other important stakeholders. The Heritage Council sought to address this problem by also sending the Village Design Pack to County Managers and Directors of Planning in every Local Authority in the Country.

Tidy Towns responses related to: the idea of the village design initiative itself; planning and economic development in village issues; awareness issues and other issues that were not directly related to Village Design. For the purpose of this study they have been placed into common categories in *Table 2* below.

**Table 2: Analysis of Tidy Towns Respondents' Further Comments**

Theme	Further Comments
<b>The VDS Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Brilliant initiative – giving support from the 'bottom-up'.</i></li> <li>• <i>Will be supportive of any initiative that supports voluntary groups.</i></li> <li>• <i>Great Concept.</i></li> <li>• <i>Not sure of the need for VDS or its usefulness</i></li> <li>• <i>Would be interested in carrying out a VDS at some stage in the future</i></li> </ul>
<b>Planning and Economic Development in Villages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>VDSs should be mandatory for all villages where there is pressure for development.</i></li> <li>• <i>VDSs need to consider economic viability of villages also.</i></li> <li>• <i>Service providers need to be included for such a plan to succeed.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Awareness of VDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public awareness needs to be raised.</i></li> <li>• <i>Local Authorities and other state bodies need to be made aware (i.e. FÁS).</i></li> </ul>
<b>Other Issues Raised</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Would like to be kept informed with developments in the VDS Programme.</i></li> <li>• <i>Complete apathy in some villages.</i></li> <li>• <i>Need more time to consider.</i></li> </ul>

## 5. A COMPARISON OF THE VDS RESPONSE RATE AND LEVELS OF VOLUNTEERISM IN EACH COUNTY IN IRELAND (CENSUS 2006)

The most important factor in the promotion of a village's enhancement and the development of its facilities is a strong sense of community spirit and civic mindedness, which, in turn is heavily linked to levels of volunteerism within a community. The 2006 Census in Ireland was the first such census to contain a section that specifically dealt with the theme of community volunteerism, either in a sporting, religious, charitable or civic capacity (See *Appendix 6*, Source: Dr Brendan O'Keeffe, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick).

A comparison between the levels of volunteerism in individual counties, as outlined by the Census 2006 data and the VDS questionnaire responses, could prove useful in establishing whether these figures tally on a local scale, albeit from a small sample size of 76 no. respondents. From the analysis of our feedback there was responses from twenty-five of the twenty-six traditional counties, of these the top three respondents came from Cork, Tipperary and Mayo (See *Table 3*, below) who together make up for 23% of all respondents.

*Table 3: Top Three Counties in Terms of Percentage of Total Respondents to the Questionnaires.*

County	Percentage of Total Respondents
Cork	8%
Tipperary	8%
Mayo	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23%</b>

There is a positive correlation between the level of VDS responses from each county and volunteerism levels, as illustrated in *Appendix 6*. It can be seen that indeed Cork, Tipperary (both North and South) and Mayo have among the highest levels of volunteerism in the country. Other counties that had high rates of response were Limerick and Carlow, which both accounted for more than 5% of respondents. Overall, a general picture emerges in both the census data (2006) and our sample that the rural counties tend to have a higher rate of volunteerism at present than urban areas.



## **6. KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE VDS QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS**

### ***General Overview***

An analysis of the VDS questionnaires reveals that community and rural development groups alike are supportive of the concept of Village Design Statements (VDSs). There appears to be a great willingness and openness to embrace new ideas that can potentially improve the quality of life and environment for people living in these smaller settlements. The many concerns and issues raised particularly by the Tidy Town groups, are well placed, as they either have been foreseen by the Heritage Council i.e. engagement with Local Authorities, or will be dealt/ built into the planned *National Village Design 3-Year Draft Action Plan 2010-2012*.

### ***Overview of Tidy Towns Groups***

There is concern that some respondents, particularly Tidy Town groups, were not completely clear as to the statutory function of a Local Area Plan (LAP). Some were unaware of the process of making a submission to a local authority formulating a LAP i.e. having a voice in the shaping of an LAP. This is critical, as the national evaluation of the VDS programme undertaken in 2008 has shown that VDSs would and should work best if they are supplementary or prepared in parallel to a Local Area Plan (LAP). This is not always possible or practical in small settlements, but nevertheless it is crucial that these stakeholders be fully informed and engaged in the preparation of planning documents such as County Development Plans and Local Area Plans, that guide and influence their areas development.

### ***Overview of LEADER/Rural Development Groups***

The responses from the LEADER/ rural development groups were particularly encouraging. It is seen that their community development officers have first-hand experience in the area of village design development/ enhancement. Many have had a presence on the ground for over a decade and therefore have the confidence of the communities (including Tidy Town groups) with whom they work. The LEADER groups also operate in areas that are most in need of regeneration and enhancement. Also, there is secured funding that has been allocated to the enhancement of villages until 2013 (see response to Q1 in Section 3). These LEADER/ rural development groups would represent an ideal partner for the Heritage Council in our aim of progressing a collaborative approach in rolling out the National Village Design Programme II in the coming years.

### ***Further Information***

For further information on the National Village Design Statement Programme II, please do not hesitate to contact Alison Harvey, Planning and Development Officer (Programme Manager) 056 7770777, Mobile 087 419 3458 or email [aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie) or visit [www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning).

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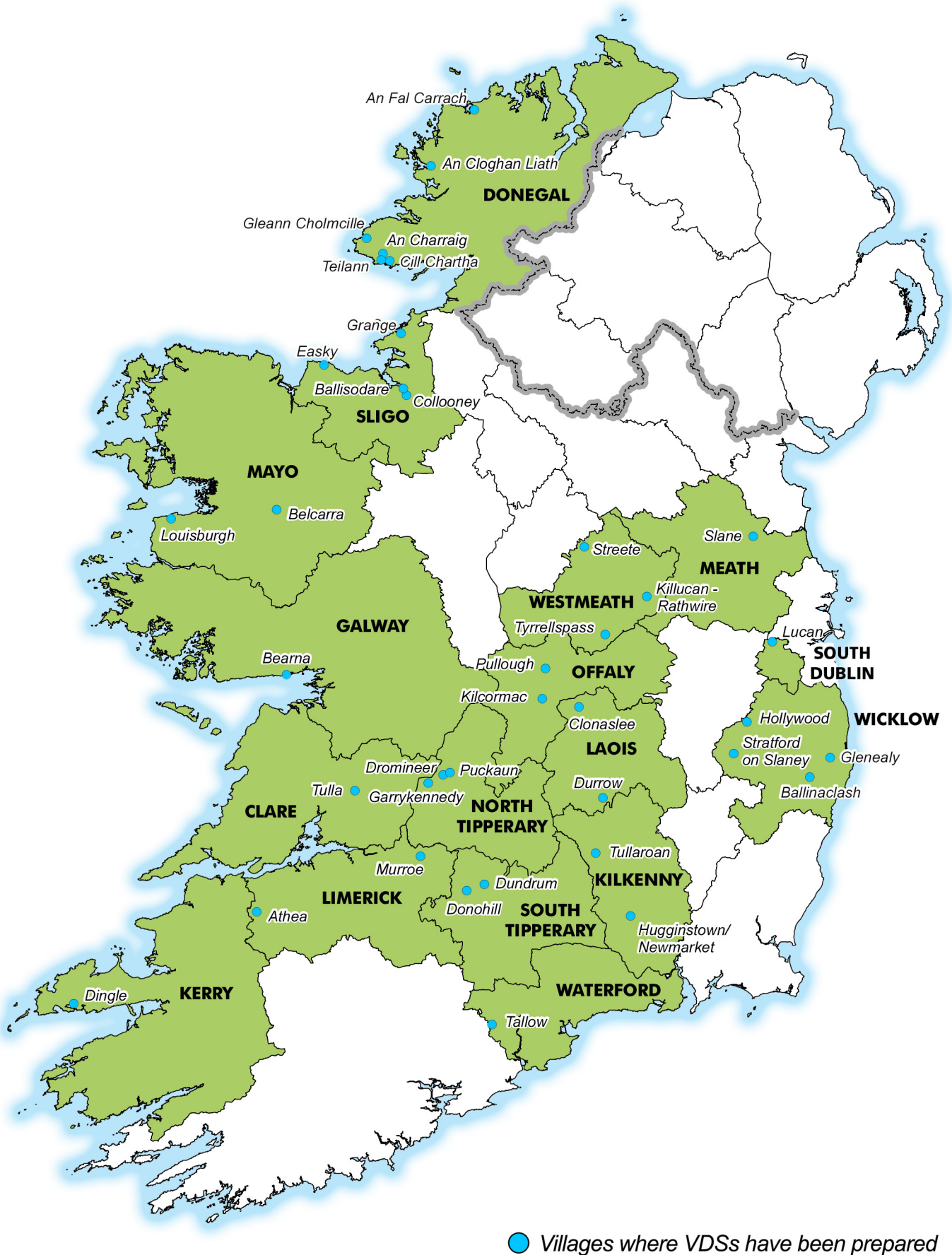
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# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Location of Village Design Statements (VDS) in Ireland



## **Appendix 2: Advantages of a Postal Questionnaire**

- Relatively Inexpensive.
- Avoids the problem of interviewer training and bias.
- If you are interviewing a similar unit (i.e. Organisation branches) where you want all sides and opinions, you are more likely to reach all potential respondents.
- People are more likely to answer questions honestly – as they are less likely to give an expected answer in order to please the interviewer.
- Can reach a sample that is widely spread geographically.
- Can contact people who are difficult to reach during working hours.
- Good when you have a large sample.

*Source: Alreck & Settle (1985)*

### Appendix 3: Cover letter sent to Tidy Town Groups, February 2009<sup>1</sup>

To whom it may concern,

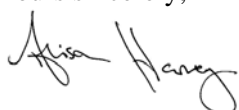
Re: **Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages: Village Design Statements: The Way Forward?**

Following on from the successful **National Village Design Conference** held in Slane Castle on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2008<sup>2</sup> and a national evaluation of the village design statement programme in 2008, the Heritage Council is committed to the delivery of a revised and updated *Village Design Programme* during 2009-2011. Please find enclosed two copies of the summary booklet on the national evaluation, entitled *Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages – Village Design Statements: The Way Forward?* (An earlier version of the booklet was provided in the conference pack at Slane.)

The Heritage Council aims to facilitate and enable unique village planning and design projects during 2009-2011. In pursuit of this aim, we are currently undertaking an in-depth consultation with key stakeholders including local authority planning departments, tidy town committees, LEADER groups etc., in order to form the basis of a *draft 3 Year Action Plan 2009-2011* for the village design programme. It is intended that the *Draft Action Plan* will be circulated to all interested parties in June 2009 before being finalised in September/October 2009. Council feels that this is an opportune time to focus on the development of our small towns and villages as the recently published *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines* (December 2008) states that Villages Design Statements can provide a meaningful role in maintaining the distinctive qualities of our smaller villages and settlements (pp.42-44).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information – my office and mobile numbers are 056 7770777 and 087 419 3458. I look forward to hearing from you and to meeting you at future Heritage Council events in 2009.

Yours sincerely,



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Alison Harvey  
Planning & Development Officer  
<http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/>

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<sup>1</sup> Information pack also sent to Directors of Planning and County Managers in each Local Authority

<sup>2</sup> Please see <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/events/> for background to Slane Conference, speakers, presentations, photographs, etc.

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## Appendix 4: Questionnaire sent to LEADER/ Rural Development Groups

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



### **Slane Village Design Conference** **Village Design Statements in Ireland – The Way Forward?** **Questionnaire to inform delivery of VDS Programme in 2009/2010**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Tel No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 Are you involved in any –programmes for the improvement/ enhancement of villages and small towns in your area? Yes/ No  
If 'yes' please give details

\_\_\_\_\_

- 2 Have you participated in the making of plans or frameworks either statutory or non-statutory for your area? Yes/ No  
If 'yes' Please give details

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 3 Are there plans for the preparation of a statutory Local Area Plan (LAP) to be prepared for the area? Yes/ No?  
If 'yes' Please give details

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Would you be interested in attending multi-disciplinary VDS training in 2009/2010?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 5 How often do you feel the Village Design group should meet in full – bi-annually, annually, etc.?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 6 What would be your preferred method of correspondence between the various parties involved in the VDS Programme – please mark/tick preferred method.

Dedicated web page as part of the Heritage Council's website	
Quarterly Newsletter (electronic)	
Quarterly Newsletter (hard copy)	
Other – please state	

7. If you have any further comments in relation to the future delivery of the VDS Programme in Ireland, please provide details over leaf

**Thank you for your time and co-operation.**  
It is greatly appreciated. [aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie)

## Appendix 5: Questionnaire sent to Tidy Towns Organisations

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



### **Slane Village Design Conference** **Village Design Statements in Ireland – The Way Forward?** **Questionnaire to inform delivery of VDS Programme in 2009/2010**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Tel No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 (a) Where is your village located and when does your village date from, i.e. how old is the settlement?  
(b) Where is your village located?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 2 Does your village have an existing Tidy Towns Committee? Yes/No

- 3 Are you planning to prepare a VDS in 2009/2010? Yes/No

- 4 Also, are there plans for a Local Area Plan (LAP) for the village? Yes/No

If 'yes' please give details

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 5 Would you be interested in attending multi-disciplinary VDS training in 2009/2010?

- 6 How often do you feel the Village Design group should meet in full – bi-annually, annually, etc?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 7 What would be your preferred method of correspondence between the various parties involved in the VDS Programme – please mark/tick preferred method.

Dedicated web page as part of the Heritage Council's website	
Quarterly Newsletter (electronic)	
Quarterly Newsletter (hard copy)	
Other – please state	

- 8 If you have any further comments in relation to the future delivery of the VDS Programme in Ireland, please provide details below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

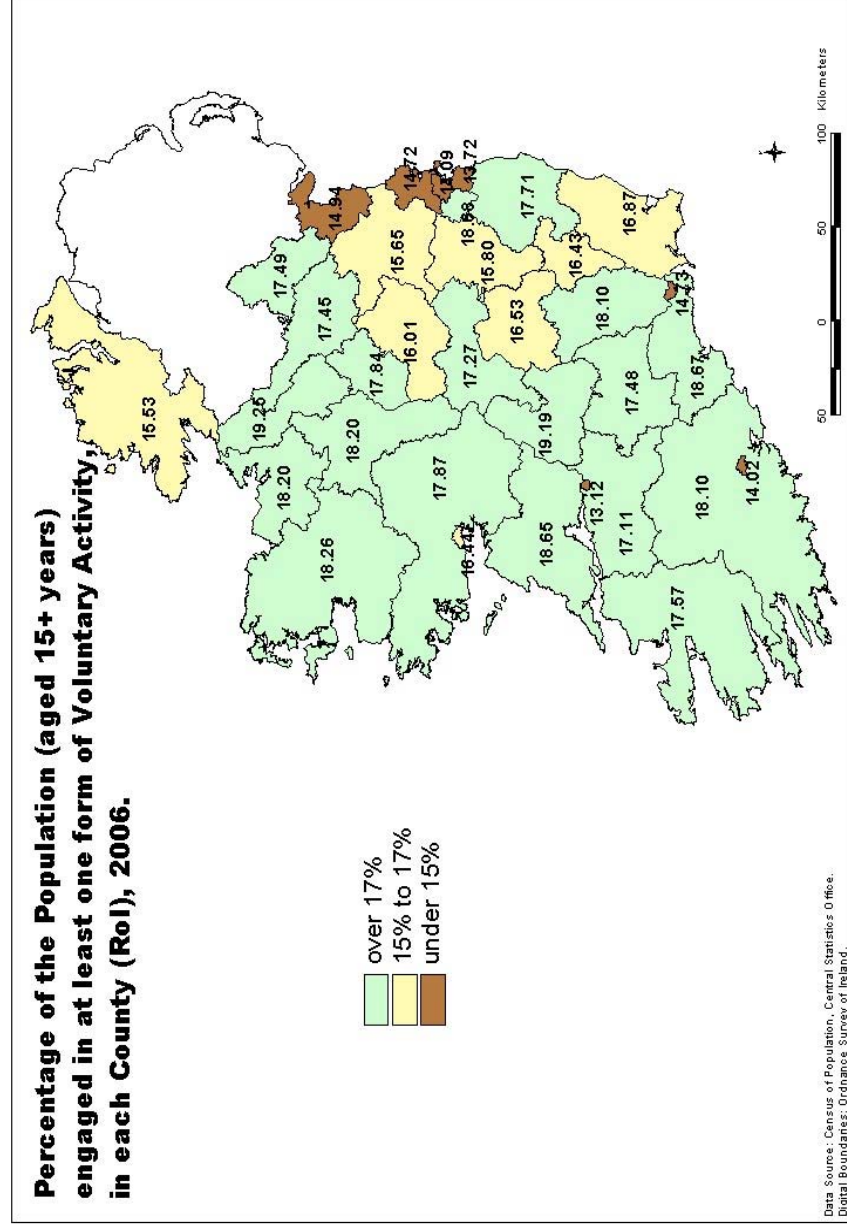
**Thank you for your time and co-operation.**

**It is greatly appreciated.**

[aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie)



## Appendix 6: Volunteerism Levels in Ireland – Census 2006



Map prepared by Brendan O'Keefe (2006) Dept. of Geography, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick