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Could Ireland's Village Shops Become Community Hubs Once Again?

New initiative explores a practical model to strengthen rural communities, support local businesses and improve access to everyday services.

As rural Ireland continues to evolve, many towns and villages are facing a common challenge. Local services are disappearing, town centres are becoming quieter, digital technology is replacing face-to-face support, and many residents—particularly older people—are finding it increasingly difficult to access the information and services they need close to home.

A new initiative believes the solution may not lie in building something new, but in rediscovering one of Ireland's most familiar and trusted places: the local village shop.

The **Local Link – Rural Digital Hub Initiative**, developed by Final Resurrection Ltd., is exploring how existing independent retailers could gradually expand their role beyond traditional retail by becoming modern community hubs offering practical digital support, local information, business promotion and community services alongside their existing activities.

Rather than competing with local businesses or public services, the initiative has been designed to strengthen them by creating additional reasons for people to visit local shops, spend more time within their own communities and support local enterprise.

The concept is intentionally flexible. Every participating community would shape its own local hub according to local needs and opportunities. Potential services could include visitor information, digital assistance, AI-supported information services, local business promotion, parcel collection, community noticeboards, event information and signposting to public and voluntary services.

Project founder Morris Wagner believes rural communities already possess many of the assets needed to succeed.

"For generations, the local shop was much more than a place to buy everyday essentials. It was where neighbours met, information was exchanged and communities stayed connected. We believe today's technology offers an opportunity to strengthen that role rather than replace it."

The project is now entering its next stage of development and is seeking conversations with people and organisations who share an interest in the long-term future of rural Ireland.

These discussions may include:

- Community organisations
- Rural development professionals
- Independent retailers
- Tourism organisations
- Local authorities
- Business leaders

- Potential local co-founding partners
- Philanthropic organisations
- Corporate sponsors
- Grant-making bodies interested in rural innovation

Rather than launching a fixed national programme, the initiative aims to work collaboratively with local stakeholders to identify suitable pilot communities where the concept can be developed, tested and refined in partnership with local people.

The organisers believe that successful rural regeneration is most effective when it builds upon existing businesses, trusted community relationships and local knowledge rather than introducing one-size-fits-all solutions.

Further information about the Local Link – Rural Digital Hub Initiative is available at:

<https://ireland.finalresurrection.ie/local-link-retail-revitalization-driven-by-emotion/>

About Final Resurrection Ltd.

Final Resurrection Ltd. is an Irish research and innovation company that develops practical concepts designed to support rural communities, strengthen local enterprise and explore new opportunities for sustainable regional development. The company also publishes independent research and analysis relating to business, investment, relocation and life in Ireland.

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