

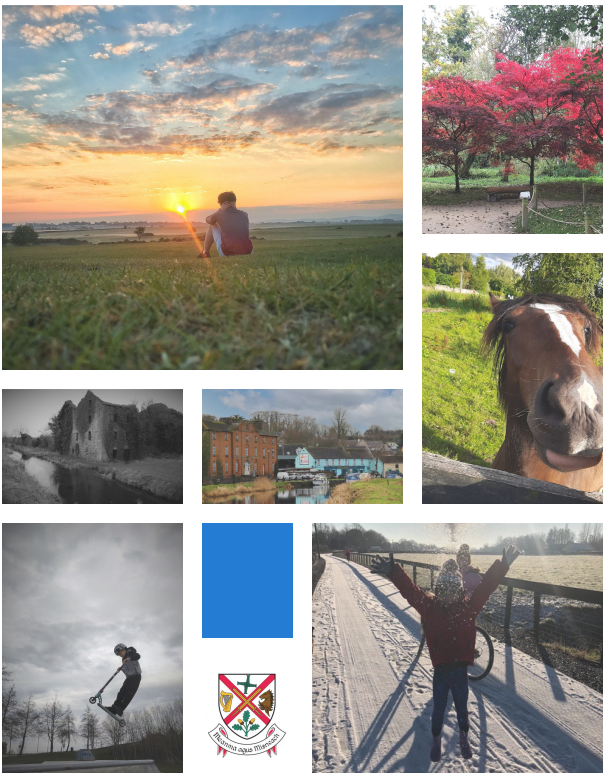


Chief Executive's Report on Submissions/Observations received to Proposed Variation No.4 (Landscape Character Assessment)

31st March 2026



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council



**Planning Department
Kildare County Council**



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Submission from the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AA	Appropriate Assessment
CDP	Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 (as varied)
EMRA	Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
IPCC	Irish Peatland Conservation Council
KCC	Kildare County Council
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
NPF	National Planning Framework
OPR	Office of the Planning Regulator
OPW	Office of Public Works
MARA	The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
UÉ	Uisce Éireann

1 Introduction

This report relates to the issues raised in submissions received from members of the public, prescribed authorities and key stakeholders following the publication of the Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 (as varied) pursuant under Section 58 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended).

This report is furnished to the Elected Members of Kildare County Council for their consideration alongside the Proposed Variation.

1.1 Legislative Requirements

In accordance with Section 58(11) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), the Chief Executive is required to prepare a report on the submissions received during the public consultation period in respect of the Draft Plan. This report should:

- List the persons who made submissions,
- Summarise the recommendations and submissions made by the Minister, the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), the regional assembly and the National Transport Authority,
- Summarise the issues raised in the submissions made by any other persons,
- Give the response of the Chief Executive to the issues raised, taking account of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the statutory obligations of the planning authority and any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the Government or of any Minister of the Government,
- Set out the recommendations of the Chief Executive as to how any recommendations made by the Minister and the Office of the Planning Regulator in any submissions made by them should be dealt with,
- Where required, include the assessment of the chief executive of the proposed variation for the purposes of strategic environmental assessment or appropriate assessment, taking into account the submissions received under this section

1.2 Public Consultation

Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 (as varied) (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Variation') was placed on public display from Thursday, 12th February 2026 to Thursday, 12th March 2026.

A public notice was published in the Irish Independent on Thursday 12th February 2026 notifying members of the public that the Proposed Variation was on public display from the 12th of February 2026 to 12th of March 2026.

The following documents were placed on display:

- Proposed Variation No. 4 Amendments to Volume 1 of Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 (as varied) including amendments to Appendix 2 – Wind Energy Strategy and the inclusion of Appendix 13 – Landscape Character Assessment (2025)
- Landscape Character Assessment (2025)
- An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (DIR 92/43/EEC) and Determination
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report in accordance with the SEA Directive (DIR 2001/42/EC) and pursuant to Land Use Planning –Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2025. (S.I. 456/2025) and Determination

Documents for the Proposed Variation were displayed at the following locations:

- Planning Office, Áras Chill Dara, Naas, County Kildare
- The County Council's dedicated online public consultation portal at:
<https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/browse>.

A total of 24 submissions / observations were received during the public consultation period, which can be viewed at:¹

<https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/consultation/proposed-variation-no-4-kildare-county-development-plan>

1.3 Contents of the Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive's Report is set out, as follows:

Section 1: Introduction to the Chief Executive Report.

Section 2: List of persons or bodies who made submissions.

Section 3: Submission from the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).

Section 4: Submissions from the Prescribed Authorities.

Section 5: Summary of Submissions from all other Persons or Bodies.

Section 6: Chief Executive's Recommendation.

Section 7: Composite List of Minor Modifications to the Proposed Variation.

Appendix A: Submission from the Office of the Planning Regulator

¹ Submission No. 1 was withdrawn.

1.3.1 Chief Executive's Recommendations – How to Read

In response to submissions received, the Chief Executive may recommend changes to the Draft Newbridge Settlement Plan. The recommended deletions are shown in ~~strikethrough red~~ and recommended new text is shown in *italics green*.

1.4 Next Steps

Within six weeks of receiving the Chief Executive's Report, the Elected Members of the Kildare County Council must consider Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 (as varied) and the Chief Executive's Report (this report).

Following consideration of the above, the Elected Members may, where it appears that the Proposed Variation should be made, may, by resolution make the Proposed Variation. Or where it appears that a modified version of the Proposed Variation should be made, may, by resolution make a modified version of the Proposed Variation.

If the Elected Members make a modified version of the proposed variation and the modification to the proposed variation constitutes a material alteration, the variation shall be deemed not to have been made. A further period of public consultation not later than two weeks after the passing of a resolution will be necessary, and the Planning Authority shall determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Appropriate Assessment (AA) is or is not required to be carried out in respect of the modifications that constitutes a material alteration of the Proposed Variation.

The public display period for any modification that constitutes a material alteration of the Proposed Variation is a minimum of four weeks. Submissions will be invited with the respect to any material alterations and following the statutory public consultation period a Chief Executive's Report will also be prepared for consideration. The Elected Members, acting in the interests of the common good and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, must, in accordance with the '*Code of Conduct for Councillors*' (July 2019) prepared under the *Local Government Act 2001* (as amended), carry out their duties in a transparent manner, must follow due process and must make their decisions based on relevant considerations.

2 List of Persons/Bodies who made Submissions

During the public consultation period a total of 24 valid submissions were received. The list of persons, prescribed authorities and stakeholders who made valid submissions are listed below in Table 2.1.

Kildare County Council would like to take the opportunity to thank those who made written submissions on the proposed variation.

Table 2.1: Persons/Organisations Who Made Submissions

Sub No.²	Name / Organisation
2³	Community Campaigner David Barton
3	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
4	Paul Barry
5	Department of Defence
6	Meath County Council
7	Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park CLG
8	Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)
9	Office of Public Works (OPW)
10	Uisce Éireann (UÉ)
11	The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)
12	Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC)
13	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
14	An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland
15	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
16	Mohamad Roomy Shahull Hameed
17	Harristown Coughlanstown Community Group
18	Energia
19	Hugh Dillon and Eleanor Wauchob
20	Bord na Móna (BnM)
21	The Castletown Foundation
22	Deirdre Brett
23	Fáilte Ireland
24	Office of Public Works (OPW)

² Each reference number associated with a submission or observation starts with 'KCC-C456' and is followed by a unique reference which is reflected in the submission numbers referred to in Table 2.1.

³ Submission No. 1 was withdrawn.

Chief Executive's Report on Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment)
of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 (as varied)

Sub No. ²	Name / Organisation
25	Anne Cowley

3 Submission from the Office of the Planning Regulator

This section summarises the submission received from the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) to Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied). The Chief Executive's response and recommendation is also provided.

Submission No. 8 – Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)

There are no recommendations or observations from the OPR on Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment).

A summary of the submission is outlined below:

- The Office welcomes the updated Landscape Character Assessment prepared in response to County Development Plan Objective LR A1.
- Supports the identification of ten distinct landscape character areas, along with the associated objectives to protect and enhance their special qualities.
- Welcomes the proposed updates with the strategic objectives of both the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025).
- Further welcomes the updated Wind Energy Strategy and the positive steps taken to facilitate renewable energy development within the county and the expansion of areas designated as Acceptable in Principle for wind energy development.
- States the RSES is due to be reviewed and will include the preparation of a regional landscape character assessment (RPO 7.27) and identification of Strategic Energy Zones (RPO 7.35). The landscape character assessment of the County Development review process may require further consideration to ensure full alignment with emerging regional policy.

Chief Executive's Response

The submission from the Office of the Public Regulator (OPR) is noted. As part of the preparation of the next County Development Plan and the move to 10-year development plans, all provisions in the Plan including alignment with regional policy will be reviewed.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

4 Submissions in respect of the Prescribed Authorities

During the public consultation period 14 submissions or observations were received from the prescribed authorities (in addition to the OPR) as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Prescribed Authorities and Public Bodies who made Submissions or Observations

Sub No.⁴	Prescribed Authority
3	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
5	Department of Defence
6	Meath County Council
9	Office of Public Works (OPW)
10	Uisce Éireann (UÉ)
11	The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)
12	Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC)
13	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
14	An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland
15	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
20	Bord na Móna (BnM)
23	Fáilte Ireland
24	Office of Public Works (OPW)

The response and recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised are set out under each submission. The existing text remains in black, the Chief Executive's recommended deletions to the Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) are shown in ~~strikethrough red~~ and recommended new text is shown in *italics green*.

Submission No. 3 – Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)

Issues Raised

- Recommends an editorial check on the text as the M9 has been omitted from the documentation (example: LC4 Transport Corridor).
- In relation to the Greenway, consultation with the Councils own internal project and/or design team is recommended.

Chief Executive's Response

The issue raised regarding the text addition of the M9 Motorway in the proposed variation are noted.

⁴ Each reference number associated with a submission or observation starts with 'KCC-C456' and is followed by a unique reference which is reflected in the submission numbers referred to in Table 4.1.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Include Minor text amendment LCT4 – Transport Corridor in Table 13.1 to reflect LCA Maps:

This LCT has a strong linear form and is associated with transport corridors. The M4 Motorway and the Dublin-Sligo rail line run east to west along the Kildare-Meath border and the M7/M9 Motorway (*as per Map V1-13.1*) and rail lines to the south and west traverse the county in an east-west and north-south direction.

Submission No. 5 – Department of Defence

Submission with regards to Proposed Variation No. 4 was completed following consultation with Air Corps colleagues at Casement Aerodrome and includes an attachment outlining issues as follows:

Issues Raised:

- States considering planning applications for tall structures, including wind turbines, it is crucial to account for the operational needs of Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell, Dublin which lies less than 4km from the Kildare County line.
- Further states that most of County Kildare lies beneath airspace designated for use by the Irish Defence Forces as outlined in S.I No. 806/2007 – Irish Aviation Authority (Designated Areas) Order, 2007 and Section 5 and 68 of the IAA Act 1993.
- Adds that much of Casement Aerodrome Obstacle Limitation Surface and protected flight procedure surfaces including Approach and Take-Off climb surfaces fall within the jurisdiction of Kildare County Council.

Submission highlights that Northeast Kildare (particularly areas east Rathangan and north of Naas) is sensitive to the development of tall structures such as wind turbines and as such, any development of tall structures (>45m) should be sent to Property Management Branch, Dept. of Defence for military aviation assessment.

Chief Executive's Response

The Department's issues in relation to Casement Aerodrome are noted. It is a policy of the Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) 2023-2029 (as varied) to safeguard the current and future operational, safety and technical requirements of Casement Aerodrome (TM P16, refers).

Map 5.2 of Volume 1 of the Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) 2023-2029 (as varied) refers to 'Areas of Aviation Significance & Aerodrome Context' and includes EI-R15 (approaches into and out of Casement, from ground level to 3,000 ft above sea level).

In relation to wind energy developments, Section 3.4.2 of the Wind Energy Strategy states that any wind farm application within the Military Operating Area (which covers the majority of the County including approaches to Casement) will be considered on its own merits in accordance with Development Plan standards and consultation with

the Department of Defence. It is important to note Section 3.4.2 is not a proposed amendment of this variation.

Furthermore, under the CDP, Objectives TM O151 and TM O152 require any significant proposed development within 6km of Casement Aerodrome's runways and any development of greater than 45m height above ground level within 37km of Casement Aerodrome, to be referred to the Department of Defence.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 6 – Meath County Council

Issues Raised:

Submission requests that Kildare County Council has due regard to the following sections of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027:

- Chapter 08 Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy
- Appendix 05 Landscape Character Assessment
- Appendix 10 Protected Views and Prospects

Submission concludes Meath County Council has no further observations to make at this stage.

Chief Executive's Response

The comments made in relation to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 are noted, in particular Chapter 08 and Appendices 05 and 10.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 9 – Office of Public Works (OPW)

The submission includes an attachment and is made specifically concerning flooding and flood risk management.

The OPW has reviewed the documents of Proposed Variation No. 4 and notes that any changes as a result of this variation are unlikely to impact the level or nature of flood risk.

Submission states should any changes to zoning designations in areas of flood risk be implemented in the future, it is important that a flood risk assessment is carried out to an appropriate level of detail.

Chief Executive's Response

The submission from the Office of Public Works (OPW) is noted.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 10 – Uisce Éireann (UÉ)

The submission includes an attachment and welcomes:

- The updated Landscape Character Assessment prepared in response to LR A1 Objective of the County Development Plan and alignment with objectives of the RESES and NPF
- The updated Wind Energy Strategy, contributing to national renewable energy and climate targets.

Chief Executive's Response

The submission from Uisce Éireann is noted.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 11 – The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)

The submission (includes an attachment) states MARA are satisfied that Variation No. 4 will not directly interact with or impact on, the maritime area.

Chief Executive's Response

The submission from The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority is noted.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 12 – Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC)

The submission from the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) includes an attachment and outlines that the Council was established in 1982 with the aim to conserve a representative sample of intact peatlands. The submission outlines the following:

- Only 25% of Ireland's original peatlands are deemed worthy of conservations (75% have become degraded).
- Peatland originally accounted for approximately one-fifth (1/5th or c.1.2m ha) of the habitat in Ireland, but with only 25% of peatland functioning ecologically and hydrologically Ireland has experienced severe biodiversity loss.
- The Government officially announced a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in 2019.
- The Bog of Allen was originally c. 115,000ha and covers much of the east-midlands. The Ballydermot/Lullymore area within the Bog of Allen was once a large area of raised bog and associated habitats and its decimation has had massive effects on local indigenous wildlife and biodiversity decline nationally.

- Intensive extraction of peat has contributed to much of the decline as reflected in last National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) report to the European Commission “The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland 2025”.
- Raised Bog (active) and Degraded Raised Bog, are rare and specialised habitats within Europe, have an overall status of “Bad” in Ireland with their “Range” also “Bad” and unchanged since 2019.
- The raised bog within the Lullymore Bog, which is out of production, should be restored as fully as possible with special attention given to the return of displaced and lost species.

Issues Raised:

The submission raises issues which are outlined below:

A: Capacity to Absorb Development

- Submission states the new LCA and LCT framework introduces landscape capacity and sensitivity mapping with peatlands classified as “Medium to High Sensitivity” the plan also states that “some cutaway and cut-over boglands may represent degraded landscapes and/or brownfield sites and thus are potentially fit to absorb a variety of development...”
- Contends this creates policy tension and can open the door to industrial, energy or infrastructural uses that undermine the restoration goals to reverse the climate change and biodiversity emergency.

B: Wind Energy Strategy - Classes of Landscape Sensitivity

- Further states the new Wind Energy Strategy sensitivity classes have only 3 categories. This could potentially downplay the highest sensitivity class and reduce the perceived protection of peatlands especially where they fall into “Medium Landscape Sensitivity”.
- Asserts this increases the risk of development pressure where there is ambiguity between classes.

C: Appropriate Development After-Uses

- Submission notes Objective LR O11 states that “...the management, rehabilitation and restoration/re-wetting of significant tracts of peatlands in conjunction with appropriate development after uses, in accordance with the guidance and recommendations for peatlands contained in Appendix 13 Landscape Character Assessment (2025) for the county....”
- Contends that appropriate development after-uses for cutaway and cutover have not been defined and this ambiguity can weaken peatland protection.
- States this should be clarified by setting out what types of after-use are compatible with peatland restoration, climate and biodiversity objectives, and which are not.

D: Cumulative Impacts

- Submission states cumulative effects can be a major issue for peatlands such as habitats loss, habitat fragmentation, hydrology and morphological changes.

- Notes that the document encourages community initiatives and Just Transition Actions (LCA4 Guidance) but does not address multiple renewable energy developments, developments in adjacent LCAs.

E: Brownfield Sites

- Submission notes Objective LR O13 states that “cutaway and cut-over boglands may represent degraded landscapes.... potentially fit to absorb a variety of development...” and to “Refer to peatland landscape character areas (LCAs) and sensitivity classes in evaluating all project proposals”.
- Asserts that this has potential to impact on national peatland restoration policy encouraging development in areas that need to be re-wetted and treating peatlands as “available” lands.
- Further asserts that within the LCA for the Bog of Allen, which is classed Medium to High Sensitivity, there is near intact raised bog alongside cutover raised bog, potentially putting high value nature at risk from development.

Conclusion

- Submission requests that Kildare County Council strengthen the protection of peatland within Proposed Variation No. 4 by ensuring the policy language, sensitivity classification and development guidance fully reflect the ecological, hydrological and climate importance of these habitats.
- Submission states to prevent further degradation of the peatland landscape, and support national commitments to biodiversity, water quality and climate change mitigation the peatland are afforded the level of protection they deserve.

Chief Executive's Response

The issues raised in the submission received in relation to the Bog of Allen and landscape sensitivity are noted.

The Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2025) has been prepared in accordance with the Reframe Landscape Character Assessment Toolkit, which was launched by the EPA in 2024. Subsequently, through an open tender process the authors of the Toolkit were procured to update the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2004). The process of preparing the LCA Report identifies and explains the combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinct from one another by mapping and describing Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which required the revision of the LCA and LCT boundaries following desktop research, GIS mapping and analysis and fieldwork.

This process also fed into the Landscape Character Sensitivity assessment for each LCA, which in terms of sensitivity and/or capacity and impact evaluation is a distinct and separate process. In that regard, Annex A of the Landscape Character

Assessment (2025) comprises a technical paper that includes Landscape Character Sensitivity Assessment Tables that demonstrate clearly how the recommendations for landscape management for each landscape character area (LCA) and landscape character type (LCT) have been arrived at. The technical paper then used a range of established parameters that create an overall evaluation of landscape sensitivity and value to confer overall Landscape Character Sensitivity for each LCA and LCT. The resulting classification was then used to produce an evidence-based Landscape Sensitivity Map.

With reference to the Bog of Allen LCA, the technical paper indicates an overall landscape character sensitivity of Medium-High and a Class 2 - Medium Landscape Sensitivity in the updated Wind Energy Strategy, which reflects the classification in the current Wind Energy Strategy.

It should also be noted that the proposed variation has strengthened the intent of Objective LR O13 by stating that the peatland landscape character areas and sensitivity classes be referred to in evaluating all project proposals. It is noted that an iteration of Objective LR 013 was included in the Kildare County Development Plans for 2011-2017 and 2017-2023. The requirement for the setting out of appropriate development after-uses for cutaway and cutover is outside the remit of the proposed variation.

In relation to the cumulative effects of multiple renewable energy developments, a Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) as part of the EIAR process undertaken at planning application stage ensures that impacts arising from other developments are fully assessed, as well as interactions between the relevant environmental factors, as required under the EIA Directive.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 13 – Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

This Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine support the review and update to the Landscape Character Assessments in accordance with updated best practice guidelines. Submission states the retention of biodiversity rich areas should be at the forefront of environmental considerations during the planning process and alignment with the Green Infrastructure Strategy is an essential step.

Chief Executive's Response

The submission from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is noted.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 14 – An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland

The submission from An Taisce includes an attachment and raises issues as outlined below.

Issues Raised:

- Submission notes objective LR O13 mandates some forms of development on cutover bog areas “some cutaway and cut-over boglands may represent degraded landscapes and/or brownfield sites and thus are potentially fit to absorb a variety of development...”
- States this may introduce a concerning precedent to over-development of current cutover bog areas capable of restoration/rehabilitation.
- Further states the classification of peatland as medium/high sensitivity under LCT 7 could lead to contradictions and ambiguity in planning for development on these sites.
- Requests that cut-over peatland sites of rehabilitation/restoration potential are mapped and protected to achieve Ireland’s legally binding nature restoration obligations under the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) (2024/1991). This need requires integration into the County Development Plan.
- Submission quotes research conducted by Renou-Wilson *et al* (Peatland Properties Influencing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Removal, EPA, 2015) demonstrating the importance of rehabilitating/restoring cutover bogs via rewetting and blocking of drainage etc., to reinstate their essential carbon sequestration function.
- Requests that the framing of Objective LR O13 is reconsidered with essential peatland restoration requirements to the forefront to ensure forward planning anticipates the potential for adverse development pressures upon peatland areas throughout the county of greatest potential for NRL implementation.
- Asserts other objectives should be assessed in this regard, with additional focus on cumulative impact effects from various development types such as agriculture, forestry, urban development and renewable energy development.
- Further asserts the amended Table 13.4 which provides guidance on the likely compatibility between land use classes and landscape areas classified by sensitivity but LCA 4: Bog of Allen is considered as medium sensitivity to forestry, rural housing, urban expansion, industrial projects, wind energy and solar.
- Submission states this is an underestimation of the degree of impact to such an ecologically significant bog complex which, while currently degraded, is likely to be capable of rehabilitation/restoration potential and seeks a re-designation of this sensitivity classification to “High” or “Most” sensitive across each of these activity categories.
- States The Bog of Allen is also currently designated a “Low” sensitivity to quarrying activity and considered to be underestimated and seeks a much higher sensitivity designation to “High” at least given the environmental impact of quarrying.

- Submission concludes the variation as proposed leaves a large degree of ambiguity regarding the extent to which development is considered acceptable upon cut-over bog areas, without serious consideration of critical nature restoration needs and evaluation/protection of sites of greatest rehabilitation/restoration potential.

Chief Executive's Response

The issues raised in the An Taisce submission are noted.

In relation to Objective LR O13, it is noted that an iteration of that objective has been included in the Kildare County Development Plans for 2011- 2017 and 2017 – 2023. However, the Proposed Variation has strengthened the intent of Objective LR O13 by stating that the peatland landscape character areas and sensitivity classes be referred to in evaluating all project proposals. The request that Objective LR O13 be reconsidered with essential peatland restoration requirements is noted. While the formal process for integrating the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) into Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is not yet established, existing environmental frameworks should serve to guide restoration principles. On the submission of Ireland's NRL Plan to the European Commission in September, integration will commence through a review of biodiversity and sustainability commitments in the National Planning Framework (NPF) to ensure alignment with restoration objectives and efficient embedding of restoration targets within local development strategies. In the interim, local authorities must rely on a common-sense approach and development proposals on each site should be assessed on its individual merits including statutory public consultation.

With reference to the LCA 4: Bog of Allen, the submission seeks a re-designation of likely compatibility between a range of land-use classes and landscape areas classified by sensitivity in Table 13.4. The re-designation of the Bog of Allen to 'High' sensitivity could result in the sterilisation of the LCA in circumstances where there may be areas within the LCA so degraded that they are beyond restoration. The Council will, through the development management process adopt a balanced, sustainable development approach to the development of the LCA in the advance of the integration of the NRL into the County Development Plan and Landscape Character Assessment.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 15 – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The submission from the EPA includes an attachment and the issues raised are outlined below.

Issues Raised:

- Submission notes the EPA guidance document which is updated regularly and sets out key recommendations for integrating environmental considerations into Local Authority land use plans. (SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources' and advises this document is taken into account when finalising the SEA screening determination.
- Notes SEA Regulations and guidance on the SEA and recommends taking these into account in making the SEA determination and after making determination make it available for public inspection and sent to the relevant environmental authorities consulted.
- Submission notes documents Good Practice Guidance for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening (EPA, 2021) and Good Practice Guidance for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Landscape (EPA, 2023).
- Submission states adequate and appropriate critical service infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed and authorised during the lifetime of the plan.
- Further states plan should align with national commitments on climate change mitigation and incorporate recommendations in sectoral, regional and local climate adaption plans.
- Submission asserts where changes to the plan are made prior to finalisation, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects.
- Submission states the plan should comply with the requirements of the Habitat Directive and where an AA is required the key findings and recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and the plan.

Chief Executive's Response

The issues raised in the EPA's submission are noted. An SEA Determination and SEA Screening Report were placed on public display as part of Proposed Variation No. 4 and referred to environmental authorities and neighbouring planning authorities. An Appropriate Assessment (AA) and associated AA Determination were also published. Any future material alteration will be screened for likely significant effects on the environment. On adoption, a SEA Statement will be prepared.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 20 – Bord na Móna (BnM)

The submission from Bord na Móna (BnM) states as a commercial Semi-State it is mandated by the Government to strengthen Ireland's security of energy supply and deliver on climate action objectives by growing renewal energy capacity. The submission contains an attachment with issues raised as follows:

Issues Raised:

- Submission refers to BnM land within County Kildare which sit within a range of classifications namely:
 - Bog of Allen (LCA 4) with BnM lands classified as Peatland and Semi-natural Vegetation (LCT 7)
 - Barrow-Grand Canal Corridor (LCA 5) with BnM lands classified as Peatland and Semi-natural Vegetation (LCT 7)
 - River Liffey Valley and Plains (LCA 3) with BnM lands classified as Peatland and Semi-natural Vegetation (LCT 7) and Lowland Plains (LCT 2)
- Notes the proposed change to landscape sensitivity of the Barrow-Grand Canal Corridor (LCA 5) from the current *Low Sensitivity* in the CDP to *Medium Sensitivity* under Proposed Variation No.4.
- States this results in a change to its compatibility with wind and solar developments from *High Compatibility* in the current CDP to *Medium Compatibility* under Proposed Variation No.4.
- Submission requests greater clarity on why the sensitivity of the Barrow-Grand Canal Corridor (LCA 5) has increased given the potential of this proposed change to impact on the development of renewal developments within this LCA.
- States that the variation proposes the updating of mapping in Section 4.5 of the Wind Energy Strategy of the CDP and Bog of Allen (LCA 4) and the River Liffey Valley and Plains (LCA 3) is classed as 'Open for Consideration' to wind farm developments and 'Acceptable in Principle' within the Barrow-Grand Canal Corridor (LCA 5).
- Submission welcomes that the zoning for wind farm designation on BnM lands however, given the scale of Ireland's legally binding national climate and renewal energy targets, requests that the greatest consideration is given to the expansion of 'Acceptable in Principle' zones within the county in any future CDP reviews or proposed variations.

Submission states that BnM is committed to ensuring that renewal energy infrastructure is planned and delivered in a way that protects the distinctive Kildare landscape.

- Notes that Landscape Capacity has been further defined in the proposed variation as 'the extent a landscape can absorb change without significantly altering its character or type'.

- Further notes the proposed amendments to Section 13.3 regarding the definition of Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and the proposed additional of Landscape Character Types (LCT) as defined in Table 13.1.
- States the BnM landbank provides a unique opportunity to deliver on key national, regional and local targets by development a range of beneficial commercial, environmental and social uses.

Further states a number of uses can be co-located providing enhanced economic and environmental benefits to the areas in which such developments are located including employment opportunities.

Chief Executive's Response

The submission from Bord na Mona is welcomed.

In relation to the request for clarity on the justification for the increase in sensitivity of the Barrow-Grand Canal Corridor (LCA 5), the process of classifying Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and Landscape Character Types (LCTs) for sensitivity and compatibility is set out in the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2025), which is in accordance with the Reframe Landscape Character Assessment Toolkit that was launched by the EPA in 2024.

Subsequently, through an open tender process the authors of the Toolkit were procured to update the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2004). The process of preparing the LCA Report identifies and explains the combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinct from one another by mapping and describing Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which required the revision of the LCA and LCT boundaries following desktop research, GIS mapping and analysis and fieldwork.

This process also fed into the Landscape Character Sensitivity assessment for each LCA, which in terms of sensitivity and/or capacity and impact evaluation is a distinct and separate process. In that regard, Annex A of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025), which will form Appendix 13 to the County Development Plan, comprises a technical paper that includes Landscape Character Sensitivity Assessment Tables that demonstrate clearly how the recommendations for landscape management for each landscape character area (LCA) and landscape character type (LCT) have been arrived at. The technical paper uses a range of established parameters that create an overall evaluation of landscape sensitivity and value to confer overall Landscape Character Sensitivity for each LCA and LCT. The resulting classification was then used to produce evidence-based Landscape Sensitivity and Compatibility Maps.

The request that the greatest consideration is given to the expansion of 'Acceptable in Principle' zones within the county in any future CDP reviews or 'proposed variations of the CDP is noted.

In recognition of the increased emphasis on the importance of renewable energy development and the emerging technologies and infrastructure needed to support this in the National Planning Framework First Revision 2025 (NPF), a number of new or amended National Policy Objectives (NPOs) have been proposed in order to achieve this objective. NPO 74 requires each Regional Assembly to plan, through their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, to set out how and where to deliver the required capacity set out in Table 9.1 by identifying renewable energy capacity allocations for each local authority in its area, in order to meet the overall national target. These provisions will be included in the review of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, which will inform the review of the County Development Plan.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 23 – Fáilte Ireland

The submission from Fáilte Ireland contains an attachment with issues raised outlined below.

Issues Raised:

- Submission welcomes inclusion of Table 13.4 with tourism projects are included as a land use and are deemed must compatible across all 10 LCA areas.
- Submission notes the Landscape Character Assessment identifies four classes of sensitivity whereas the previous Landscape Character Assessment had five. The Barrow Grand Canal Corridor has moved from "special" sensitivity to "medium" sensitivity,
- Further notes the four classifications of landscape listed in the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2025) are now being converted into three classifications for the purposes of the updated wind strategy.
- Submission asserts this translation is potentially at odds with the landscape classification and provides a level of ambiguity and inconsistency.
- Provides example the Barrow Grand Canal Corridor as proposed would move from a high landscape sensitivity – Class 4 to Class 1 – low landscape sensitivity.

Submission states the Irish landscape is one of the primary assets for tourism in the country.

- States overseas visitors to Ireland rate scenery as an important reason for their trip (91%) and natural/unspoilt environment rated highly also (82%) [Fáilte Ireland research].

- Asserts the future sustainability of Ireland's tourism industry is linked to the maintenance of the character and scenic qualities of the Irish landscape.
- Notes County Kildare has a broad mix of natural, cultural and built heritage and potential changes in landscape character are an important consideration from a tourism perspective.
- Further notes key tourism amenities which are 'landscape based' such as River Barrow, Grand and Royal Canal, Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park, Donadea Forest Park etc.
- Asserts the protection and management of landscape character becomes as much about protecting economic and cultural asset, as it is about physical context of those landscape features.

Chief Executive's Response

The comments from Failte Ireland, in its role as the National Tourism Development Authority and as a prescribed body in the planning process, are welcomed.

The suggestion that due regard should be had to the national and regional tourism policy documents it should be noted that numerous policies and objectives contained within the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 with reference to the positive contribution that tourism, recreation and the equine industry make to the economic and social wellbeing of the county (Chapter 4 Resilient Economy and Job Creation) and (Chapter 9 Our Rural Economy).

The concern relating to the reclassification of landscape sensitivity attributed to the Barrow Grand Canal Corridor (LCA 5) is noted. The review and update of the Landscape Character Assessment (2004) was informed by the Reframe Landscape Character Assessment Toolkit, which was launched by the EPA in 2024. The review included, *inter alia*, updating of landscape character areas (LCAs) and the designation of landscape character types (LCTs), which required the revision of the LCA boundaries following desktop research, GIS mapping and analysis and fieldwork. This process also fed into the Landscape Character Assessment Sensitivity assessment for each LCA, which in terms of sensitivity and/or capacity and impact evaluation is a distinct and separate process. In that regard, Annex A of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025), which forms Appendix 13 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied), comprises a technical paper that includes Landscape Character Sensitivity Assessment Tables that demonstrate clearly how the recommendations for landscape management for each landscape character area (LCA) and landscape character type (LCT) have been arrived at. The technical paper uses a range of established parameters that create an overall evaluation of landscape sensitivity and value to confer overall Landscape Character Sensitivity for each LCA and LCT. The resulting classification was then used to produce evidence-based Landscape Sensitivity and Compatibility Maps.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 24 – Office of Public Works (OPW)

The submission from the Office of Public Works (OPW) includes an attachment and is made specifically with regard to the Heritage Services portfolio. In total, the area in State ownership and in the care of the OPW now encompasses 462 acres of demesne lands and parkland at Castletown and 19 acres at Donaghcumper. The issues raised in the submission are outlined below.

Issues Raised:

- Submission notes the local sensitivities associated with National monuments located throughout the county.
- Further notes Castletown and Donaghcumper demesnes are located in LCA 2 Slí Mhór Corridor and together with St Wolstan's they are valuable composite landscape centred on the River Liffey.
- Further states LCA 2 Slí Mhór is described as having medium to low landscape sensitivity, medium to high capacity for change, and from this arises the sensitivity to different land use types.
- The submission notes text in the variation "it should be noted that all developments are unique and at micro/local level, landscapes vary in terms of their ability to absorb development, and each site should be assessed on its individual merits".
- Submission agrees with the designated landscapes of Castletown, Donaghcumper and St Wolstan's are of high landscape sensitivity and asserts that views from the demesnes contribute to their significance.
- Submission recommends that Table 13.2 LCA 2 Slí Mhór Corridor should include reference to the designed landscapes and demesnes of Castletown, Donaghcumper and St Wolstan's Demesnes are mentioned in the summary for LCA 3 but needs to be strengthened in relation to LCA 2.
- Notes that suitability for wind energy use must take into account the views from Castletown, Donaghcumper and St Wolstan's and a distance of 25km turbines is appropriate for assessment.
- The submission requests that the following are added as Guidance Principles in relation to LCA 2 Slí Mhór Corridor on page 16 of the draft Variation:
 - Give recognition to the demesnes associated with country houses as important contributors to the historic landscape character and ecology of the area. Support the landscape of demesne parkland through continued replacement tree planting and woodland management.
 - Continue to protect and maintain the views from Castletown House to the River Liffey and to protect the integrity of the designed landscape at Castletown Demesne, as set out in objectives AH024 and AH025, and Map V1-11.2, of this Plan.

Ensure that the linked demesnes of Donaghcumper and St. Wolstan's, historically linked to Castletown Demesne, are protected. Treat the three demesnes as a composite landscape.

Chief Executive's Response

The comments relating to the Slí Mhór Corridor LCA and the Castletown House and the Donaghcumper House demesnes together with St. Wolstan's are noted. These historic demesnes comprise designed landscapes and form a composite landscape of heritage value.

While it is not intended to preclude development within the historic landscape areas, Kildare County Council seeks to *“encourage conservation, renewal and improvement which enhances the character and setting of parks, gardens, and demesnes of historic interest within the county”* (AH O26).

The submission requests that the following are added as Guidance Principles in relation to LCA 2 Slí Mhór Corridor on page 16 of the draft Variation:

- Give recognition to the demesnes associated with country houses as important contributors to the historic landscape character and ecology of the area. Support the landscape of demesne parkland through continued replacement tree planting and woodland management.
- Continue to protect and maintain the views from Castletown House to the River Liffey and to protect the integrity of the designed landscape at Castletown Demesne, as set out in objectives AH024 and AH025, and Map V1-11.2, of this Plan.

Objectives AH O24 and AH O25 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied) seek to safeguard the amenities of the three demesnes, the amenities of the Wonderful Barn and maintain views from Castletown House as shown on Map V1-11.14) and it is not considered necessary to duplicate these elsewhere in the CDP.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

5 Summary of Submissions from all other Persons or Bodies and the Chief Executive's Response and Recommendations

The following Table 5.1 lists the submissions/observations made during the public consultation period for Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 (as varied), from all other persons or bodies.

Table 5.1: All other Persons or Bodies who made Submissions

Sub No.⁵	Name / Organisation
2⁶	Community Campaigner David Barton
4	Paul Barry
7	Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park CLG
16	Mohamad Roomy Shahull Hameed
17	Harristown Coughlanstown Community Group
19	Hugh Dillon and Eleanor Wauchob
21	The Castletown Foundation
22	Deirdre Brett
25	Anne Cowley

The response and recommendations of the Chief Executive in relation to the issues raised are set out under each submission. The existing text remains in black, the Chief Executive's recommended deletions to the Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) are shown in ~~strikethrough red~~ and recommended new text is shown in *italics green*.

Submission No. 2 – Community Campaigner David Barton

Issues Raised

- The submission outlines the authors role as a community campaigner promoting both the existing Built Historic Environment and Traditional Vernacular Architecture (TVA) / Traditional Architecture as a key feature across UK-wide local authorities. States that the submission is considered to be consultation feedback who hopes that it represents an 'umbrella representation.'
- Submission outlines the background of the submitter including successful campaigns in the UK to promote and protect historic buildings.

⁵ Each reference number associated with a submission or observation starts with 'KCC-C456' and is followed by a unique reference which is reflected in the submission numbers referred to in Table 2.1.

⁶ Submission No. 1 was withdrawn.

- States that the submission is supported by 32 Appendices. It is noted that these have not been included with the submission. However, hyperlinks to websites have been provided for the majority.
- Submission calls for the establishment of design codes based on TVA principles and that local authorities should partner with key stakeholder organisations. Outlines a range of suggestions about to policy in this regard, including the non-demolition of pre-1950s buildings.
- Regarding conservation areas, the submission outlines the need for enhanced conservation efforts in designated areas. Outlines a range of suggested actions including a streamlined process for listed building consent, the preservation of historic street furniture and financial incentives for maintaining/restoring buildings.
- Highlights role of historic buildings in combatting climate change and suggests a range of actions, including a focus on increasing the stock of carbon-rich old buildings, retrofitting historic buildings and financial incentives for the demolition of carbon poor contemporary buildings.
- Outlines actions that could be taken on historic buildings including the creation of a Designated and a Non-Designated Heritage Asset List and a scheme to rebuild long lost buildings.
- Suggests a range of actions that can be taken to promote traditional value architecture.
- Regarding to the planning system, the submission emphasises the need to identify applicants which have a history of harming civic heritage and states that this should be a consideration in the granting of permission. Requests Local Authorities to collaborate with the community and heritage bodies to give these people a voice.
- Submission concludes by identifying a range of miscellaneous issues which are aimed at supporting the historic built environment. These include support for well-designed car parking, the utilisation of specialist skills and the creation of a Top 10 Buildings at Risk Register.

Chief Executive's Response

The issues raised in the submission are noted. Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage of the County Development Plan (CDP) contains a range of objectives and provisions which seek to safeguard the built heritage of County Kildare (AH O20, AH O21 and AH O22), including vernacular structures which are not on the Record of Protected Structures (AH O39, AH O54 and AH O55). Furthermore, as part of the preparation of the next CDP and the move to 10-year development plans, all provisions in the Plan relating to the built heritage of the county will be reviewed.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 4 – Paul Barry

The content of the submission are noted and issues outlined in this submission are as follows:

Issues Raised:

- Refers to Wind Energy Strategy and areas identified as “Acceptable in Principle”, “Open for Consideration” and “Not Normally Permissible” and maps indicating a spatial plan-led approach to wind energy development and states this spatial framework is undermined by the amended policy wording and objectives introduced as part of variation.
- Outlines Objective LR O2 requires all wind farm development applications be accompanied by a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment but does not distinguish between areas identified as suitable in principle in areas identified as having higher landscape sensitivities.
- Further outlines Objective LR O30 states wind energy structures in upland character areas will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that residual adverse visual impacts are minimised and mitigated.
- States this wording establishes a very high evidential threshold when read alongside the Plan and the broader emphasis on inherent landscape sensitivity, landscape capacity being assessed on a case-by-case basis and the potential for development to have disproportionate visual impacts.
- Further states the combined effect of LR O2 and LR O30 is that the mapped Wind Energy Strategy zones appear to carry limited practical weight as follows:
 - With areas identified as “Accepted in Principle” the objectives imply that permission may only be forthcoming where visual impacts are minimal, regardless of zoning.
 - Creates an internal policy tension between the spatial strategy set out in the maps and the impact-based approach set out in objectives.
 - Reduces certainty for communities, applicants and decision-makers.
- Submits that the quality and resolution of several maps are very poor, with some maps being difficult or not possible to read and review of the variation was difficult to complete due to the inability to understand spatial implications of the proposed changes.
- Further submits clear and readable maps are essential to meaningful public consultation and informed assessment of the development plan variation.

Solar:

- Outlines Table 13.4 referencing solar energy in the context of landscape and visual impact assessment requirements.
- States there is no accompanying strategy (like wind energy), no spatial identification of areas where solar development may be appropriate and no further detail to guide the assessment of solar proposals beyond general landscape sensitivity.

- Further states Table 13.4 provides only high-level, non-spatial guidance and subject to case-by-case assessment and offers limited clarity as to how solar development is intended to be accommodated within the county with significant reliance on discretionary assessment.

Chief Executive's Response

The issues outlined in Submission No. 4 are noted.

With reference to the comments in relation to the requirement for a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), Objective LR O2 stipulates that the requirement to submit a LVIA in support of significant development proposals relates, in the first instance, to areas of High landscape character assessment. Thereafter, a LVIA should accompany applications for significant development proposals in other parts of the county, on a case-by-case basis (e.g. housing development, wind energy and solar array developments, extractive industry, telecommunications infrastructure, afforestation and replanting of commercial forestry proposals); and smaller scale developments taking account of the landscape sensitivity of an area and/or concerns regarding potential negative landscape or visual impacts.

The overall landscape character sensitivity for each landscape character area (LCA) is illustrated on Map V1-13.2A LCA Sensitivity, assigned from low to high sensitivity, which in turn, informs the consideration of landscape character capacity. The process of determining the landscape character sensitivity and capacity of each LCA was an outcome of the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2025), which was prepared in accordance with the Reframe Landscape Character Assessment Toolkit that was launched by the EPA in 2024. Subsequently, through an open tender process the authors of the Toolkit were procured to update the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2004). The process of preparing the LCA Report identifies and explains the combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinct from one another by mapping and describing Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which required the revision of the LCA and LCT boundaries following desktop research, GIS mapping and analysis and fieldwork.

This process also fed into the Landscape Character Sensitivity assessment for each LCA, which in terms of sensitivity and/or capacity and impact evaluation is a distinct and separate process. In that regard, Annex A of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) comprises a technical paper that includes Landscape Character Sensitivity Assessment Tables that demonstrate clearly how the recommendations for landscape management for each landscape character area (LCA) and landscape character type (LCT) have been arrived at. The technical paper then used a range of established parameters that create an overall evaluation of landscape sensitivity and value to confer overall Landscape Character Sensitivity for each LCA and LCT. The resulting classification was then used to produce an evidence-based Landscape

Sensitivity and Capacity Maps. Thereafter, principles for landscape character are proposed for each LCA and LCT in Table 13.3 *Specific Landscape Character Area Guidance Principles*. The process also included a review of the objectives of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied) where relevant to the landscape including Objective LR O30.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 7 – Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park CLG

The submission is entitled 'Importance of Bog of Allen LCA 4 in proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) KCDP 2023 – 2029.'

The submission supports text in the County Development Plan for the Bog of Allen as follows:

"This LCA includes important areas of bog that are of great historical, cultural and ecological importance. Recognising and retaining these values whilst supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, including Just Transition initiatives is key to retaining the character of this LCA. The dominant open character and large skies are important features of this LCA; new development proposals should be sensitivity sited and designed to reflect and enhance the local character. Large bulky developments would require a landscape and tree plan to offer screening of large-scale buildings."

Issues Raised:

- Submission states that the Bog of Allen LCA 4 should be designated as **Least Compatible** and **High Sensitivity** in the **Quarrying** and **Wind Energy** columns in Proposed Amendment No.5 relating to Table 13.4 in the proposed variation.
- Further states this change will help protect the landscape and assist the Bog of Allen in reaching its potential for native biodiversity, climate mitigation and tourism with ongoing rewetting/rehabilitation efforts and a growing sustainable eco-tourism market.

Chief Executive's Response

The issues raised in the submission received in relation to the landscape sensitivity and compatibility of the Bog of Allen LCA 4 as set out in Proposed Amendment No.5 is noted.

By way of background, the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2025) has been prepared in accordance with the Reframe Landscape Character Assessment Toolkit, which was launched by the EPA in 2024. Subsequently, through an open tender process, the authors of the Toolkit were procured to update the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2004). The process of preparing the LCA Report

identifies and explains the combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinct from one another by mapping and describing Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which required the revision of the LCA and LCT boundaries following desktop research, GIS mapping and analysis and fieldwork.

This process also fed into the Landscape Character Sensitivity and Capacity assessment for each LCA, which in terms of sensitivity and/or capacity and impact evaluation is a distinct and separate process. In that regard, Annex A of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) comprises a technical paper that includes Landscape Character Sensitivity Assessment Tables and demonstrate clearly how the recommendations for landscape management for each landscape character area (LCA) and landscape character type (LCT) have been arrived at. The technical paper then used a range of established parameters that create an overall evaluation of landscape sensitivity and value that informs a broad evaluation of landscape character capacity at a strategic level to confer overall Landscape Character Sensitivity and Capacity for each LCA and LCT. The resulting classification was then used to produce an evidence-based Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Maps. Thereafter, principles for landscape character are proposed for each LCA and LCT. With reference to the Bog of Allen LCA, the technical paper indicates an overall landscape character sensitivity of Medium-High in the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) and a Class 2 - Medium Landscape Sensitivity in the updated Wind Energy Strategy, which reflects the classification in the current Wind Energy Strategy.

The Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 supports the protection of the landscape and seeks to assist the Bog of Allen LCA in reaching its potential for biodiversity, climate mitigation and tourism and a growing sustainable eco-tourism market (RE O135). It is noted that Table 13.3 Specific Landscape Character Area Guidance Principles of the Proposed Variation states that *“The industrial heritage associated with peat extraction such as industrial buildings and narrow-gauge railways are important cultural and landscape features, restoration and awareness about this industry should be supported and enhanced, reflecting the strong community associated with the peatlands. Support community groups in local landscape initiatives and landscape scale proposals to improve water quality and landscape scale restoration in the LCA. Support actions including in the Just Transition programme.”*

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 16 – Mohamad Roomy Shahull

The submission includes an attachment with an Appendix and broadly states there are critical gaps that must be addressed to ensure the variation withstands legal scrutiny and delivers sustainable development. The issues raised are outlined below.

Issues Raised:

SEA/AA Screening

Submission states the Council claims that neither SEA/AA screenings required for the LCA variation and risks Judicial Review, plan quashed, 12–24-month delay.

Submission states to rectify the procedure deficiency and avoid legal challenge it is recommended to:

- Withdraw the current SEA and AA screening determinations
- Commence full SEA and AA processes on the Proposed Variation
- Suspend consideration of the variation until assessments are complete
- Publish draft SEA environmental report and AA Natura Impact Statement for public consultation

Climate Change Integration

Submission states LCA acknowledges climate drivers but lacks binding mitigation commitments and risks infrastructure failure and legal non-compliance with Climate Act 2021.

Submission states this a critical omission given the requirements outlined in the Climate Action Act 2021, National Adaptation Framework and Draft Kildare Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 and recommends amending Chapter 12 and Appendix 13 to include:

- Binding policies requiring climate impact assessment for all developments affecting landscape character areas
- Mandatory nature-based solutions for flood management in river corridors
- Carbon sequestration targets linked to landscape management (peatlands, hedgerows, woodlands)
- Annual monitoring of landscape climate resilience.

Landscape-Led Regeneration

Submission states LCA identifies values but lacks implementation pathway for heritage-led development and risks investment and jobs.

Submission recommends a Landscape-Led Regeneration Implementation Plan that:

- Identifies priority landscape areas for investment
- Develops project pipelines for EU funding applications
- Establishes a Landscape Regeneration Task Force with stakeholders
- Sets measurable targets (jobs created, hectares restored, tourism revenue)

Contradiction with Variation No. 3

Submission notes Variation No.4 values hedgerows and landscape infrastructure but asserts alteration 11 of Proposed Variation No. 3 weakens hedgerow protection by

allowing removal for “agricultural improvement” without adequate assessment. Further asserts this contradiction undermines both variations.

Submission recommends integration of Variation No. 4 with Variation No. 3 by:

- Deleting Alteration 11 or amending it to require landscape and biodiversity assessment for hedgerow removal.
- Designating hedgerows as “landscape infrastructure” with protected status
- Link hedgerow protection to LCA policies in Chapter 12.

Section I: Introduction & Context

Submission states the variation risks legal challenge and misses critical opportunities for sustainable development with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), climate adaptation commitments and landscape-led regeneration pathways.

Submission notes critical case law as follows:

- CJEU Case C-127/02 Waddenzee: AA threshold is “any possibility” of significant effects. The Council's AA screening for LCA fails this test.
- CJEU Case C-323/17 People Over Wind: Mitigation cannot be considered at screening stage. The LCA's reliance on future project-level mitigation is unlawful.
- CJEU Case C-461/17 Holohan v An Bord Pleanála

Section Iii: Critique Of Proposed Variation No. 4

Submission notes Council states “it has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is not required for the Proposed Variation” and “An Appropriate Assessment (AA) is also not required for the Proposed Variation”. States the LCA (2025) is not merely descriptive it establishes a framework for development by identifying 10 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) with specific sensitivities, providing “landscape character capacity” assessments for each LCA, setting “landscape character capacity” assessments for each LCA, identifying scenic routes, views and heritage assets. Asserts the SEA is mandatory as this is a “plan or programme setting framework for future development consent” under the SEA regulations.

Landscape Pathways To European Sites:

The submission states the LCA (2025) identifies direct landscape connections to SACs as follows:

- **Bog of Allen (LCA 5):** European site connection with River Barrow SAC, River Nore SAC through hydrological connectivity and peatland systems. Submission asserts landscape change affects water quality, nutrient loading and downstream habitat integrity.
- **River Barrow Corridor (LCA 6):** European site connection with River Barrow SAC and River Nore SAC. Submission asserts floodplain development affects aquatic habitats, riparian zones, and species migration.
- **Curragh (LCA 8):** European site connection is indirect connection via groundwater to River Barrow SAC. Submission asserts changes to

grassland management may affect hydrological regimes. Further asserts these established pathways demonstrate, at a minimum, “any possibility” of significant effects under the Waddenzee test and AA screening is mandatory, not discretionary.

Section IV: Climate Integration — Missed Opportunity

Submission states the LCA (2025) acknowledges climate change as a driver of landscape change but contains no binding adaption or mitigation policies which is a critical omission given:

- The Climate Action Act 2021 requires all public bodies perform their functions in a manner consistent with climate objectives
- The National Adaption Framework mandates sectoral adaptation planning
- The Draft Kildare Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 commits to nature-based solutions.

Refers to international models in Denmark (Copenhagen – The Cloudburst Management Plan) and Germany (Leipzig – “The Leipzig 2030” plan)

Section V: Landscape-Led Regeneration — Economic Case

Submission states the LCA identifies high-value landscapes but provides no implementation pathway for heritage-led regeneration and asserts it misses:

- EU funding: ERDF, Just Transition Fund and LEADER programmes
- Employment: Direct and indirect jobs from heritage tourism, green infrastructure maintenance and ecosystem services.
- Alignment: National Development Plan 2021-2030 prioritises “enhancing landscapes and heritage” as a strategic investment.

Refers to examples in Austria (Vienna – integrated landscape planning into social housing) and Sweden (Hammarby Sjöstad – closed-loop urban metabolism with landscape as core infrastructure)

Section VI: Contradiction With Variation No. 3 (Hedgerows)

Submission states Variation No.3 weakens hedgerow protection by allowing removal for "agricultural improvement" without adequate assessment. Asserts hedgerows are:

- Core landscape features in multiple LCA areas
- Critical biodiversity corridors
- Carbon stores supporting climate targets
- Cultural assets.

Chief Executive's Response

SEA/AA Screening.

As outlined in Section 3.1 of the SEA Screening Report, S.I. No. 456 of 2025 adopts the definition of “plan” set out in Section 198(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2024, which includes a development plan or a variation thereof. However, SEA is

mandatory only for specified plans. For other plans or variations, SEA Screening is required to determine whether significant environmental effects are likely. This determination is made having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, together with submissions from environmental authorities. The fact that a plan may set a framework for future development consent does not, in itself, trigger a mandatory SEA. It is this screening assessment that determines whether SEA is required, and that assessment criteria has been correctly applied in this instance.

The submission raises concerns regarding potential impacts on the River Barrow SAC and River Nore SAC arising from alleged landscape change, floodplain development and changes to grassland management, with reference to the Bog of Allen (LCA 5), River Barrow Corridor (LCA 6), and the Curragh (LCA 8). Variation No. 4 does not introduce any new objectives or policies relating to landscape change, development within floodplains or grassland management nor does it propose or consent to any particular development at any particular location. The LCA is a technical assessment of the existing landscape with outputs informing the policies of the CDP. As such, there is no basis for the assertion that the Variation gives rise to any possibility of significant effects on European sites. The conclusion of the AA Screening Report – that Appropriate Assessment is not required – is therefore robust and correct, and there is no substantive basis for an alternative conclusion. On adoption of Variation No. 4, a SEA Statement will be prepared.

Climate Change/Integration

Climate change and its integration in planning in County Kildare is primarily implemented through the Kildare County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, which establishes the actions to be delivered by the Council, business and citizens in the County in response to the climate challenge. The ambition of this Climate Action Plan is aligned to the Government's National Climate Objective which seeks to achieve the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 frames Ireland's legally binding climate ambition to deliver a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by the year 2030. The Plan addresses both climate mitigation and adaptation measures. Kildare County Council integrates climate considerations into all major plans and policies, including land use plans, transport strategies and infrastructure programmes.

Landscape-Led Regeneration

The Landscape Character Assessment is intended to identify, describe and evaluate distinctive character and sensitivity of the county's landscapes in order to inform planning policy and development management decisions. It is not a regeneration strategy and does not identify or prioritise areas for investment or development.

Rather, it provides a framework to ensure that any future development or land use change is undertaken in a manner that respects and responds to the existing landscape character.

Contradiction with Variation No. 3

Proposed Variation No. 4 is a targeted variation that relates exclusively to modifications to some of the objectives and maps in Chapter 13 Landscape, Recreation and Amenity and the incorporation of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025), which will form Appendix 13 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied).

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 17 – Harristown Coughlanstown Community Group

The submission by Harristown Coughlanstown Community Group is regarding landscape features of Harristown, Coughlanstown and Mullacash and contains a report entitled 'Landscape and Visual Appraisal to support the inclusion of further landscape protection in Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029' prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Landscape Architects. The issues in the submission are outlined below:

Issues Raised:

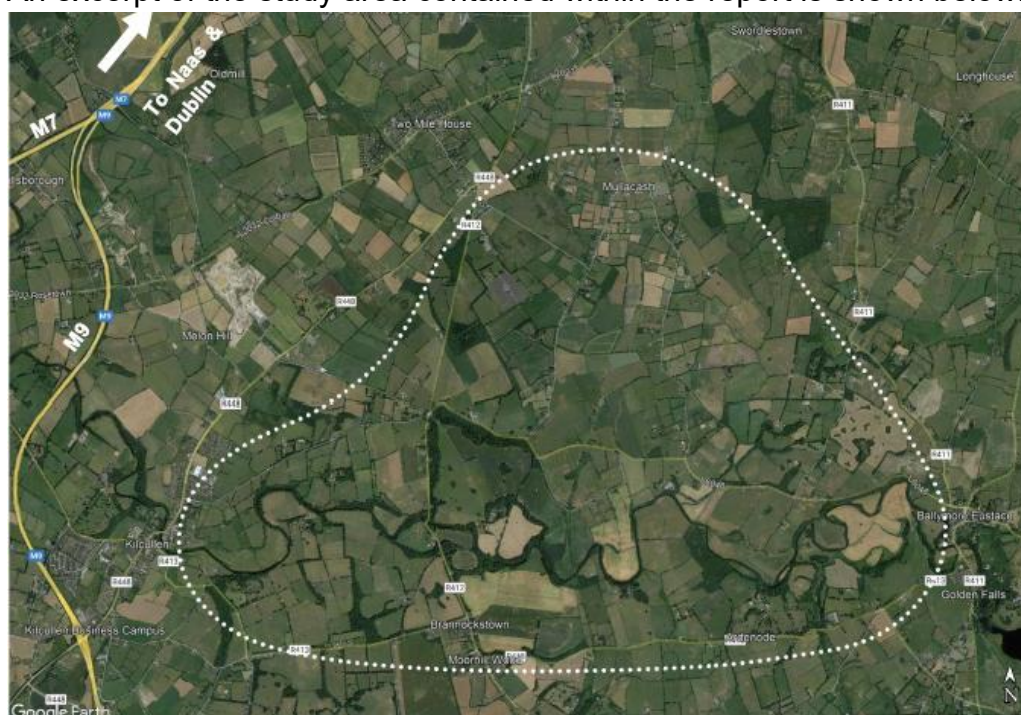
- Submission requests consideration of notable landscape features of Harristown, Coughlanstown and Mullacash, and additional PVs, to be included in the updated LCA.
- Further requests consideration of Mullacash Hill and Harristown Hill (L6044) as Protected Viewpoints which offer uninterrupted views to the Wicklow Mountains.

The report attached to the submission - Landscape the Visual Appraisal - (dated May 2022) – was submitted during the consultation process of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Submission No. 467 Draft Stage) and available here: <https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/consultation/draft-kildare-county-development-plan-2023-2029>

- The report provides clear, evidence-based information on the area and seeks to outline the wealth of landscape built and cultural heritage in an area from Ballymore Eustace to R412 / New Abbey, and north to Mullacash Hill to the R413 south of the River Liffey.
- Provides an overview of planning policy, maps illustrating the relevant points of interest and photos in Appendix 1, Local policy in Appendix 2 and a copy of The Civil Parish of Coughlanstown by local historian Katerine Mehigan.
- Two recommendations of the report — are outlined below.

1. A protected viewpoint is identified at Harristown and included in the List of Protected Viewpoints in the County Development Plan.
 - The purpose of this protection would be to protect prospects east to the Eastern Uplands and Wicklow Mountains and the intervening landscape that provides the setting to the upland backdrop.
2. An expanded zone of increased sensitivity – Class 4 Special Sensitivity – north and south of the Liffey Valley, covering the study area should be acknowledged and included as a local variation to the sensitivity in the Eastern Transition Lands reflecting the interrelationship of the study area with both the Liffey Valley and Eastern Uplands.
 - The purpose of this protection would be to protect the landscape character from inappropriate developments and land use changes of significant scale that erode its rural qualities.

An excerpt of the study area contained within the report is shown below:



- The report provides a description of the study area with images included under the headings - Field Pattern and Vegetation; Topography and Drainage; Access; Built and Cultural Heritage (Historic Community Infrastructure, Tullow – Sallins Railway, Earlier History, Historic Demesnes); Land Use (Recreational Amenity, Visual Amenity)
- The landscape values of the study area are listed under Conservation Values and Enhancement Values.
- An analysis concludes the study area lands are in a high-quality condition. Although a working rural landscape, there is a strong sense of place, of continuity and local pride.

- The large local demesnes and large blocks of local woodland create structure and integrity in the landscape.
- Local minor undulations in topography provide elevated viewpoints at locations to enjoy panoramas and vistas of this rich resource, contrasting with intimate local green roads and lanes and the wooded Liffey Valley.
- The landscape is rich in built and cultural heritage and robust in terms of minor changes that are part of its character – local housing, farm buildings, centres for local enterprise, tourism etc.

Chief Executive's Response

The submission includes a Landscape and Visual Appraisal, which is dated May 2022, relates to a large area that extends eastwards from Ballymore Eustace to Brannockstown to Kilcullen and northwards to Mullacash and returns to Ballymore Eustace and includes the River Liffey that runs eastwards from Ballymore Eustace to Kilcullen. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal was initially submitted during the preparation of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied).

The submission relates to an expanded zone of increased sensitivity north and south of the Liffey Valley, covering the study area should be acknowledged and included as a local variation to the sensitivity in the Eastern Transition Lands reflecting the interrelationship of the study area with both the Liffey Valley and Eastern Uplands; and a new viewpoint at Harristown be included in the list of protected views of the County Development Plan.

The Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2025) was prepared in accordance with the Reframe Landscape Character Assessment Toolkit that was launched by the EPA in 2024. Subsequently, through an open tender process the authors of the Toolkit were procured to update the Kildare Landscape Character Assessment (2004). The process of preparing the LCA Report identifies and explains the combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinct from one another by mapping and describing Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which required the revision of the LCA and LCT boundaries following desktop research, GIS mapping and analysis and fieldwork. This process also fed into the Landscape Character Sensitivity assessment for each LCA, which in terms of sensitivity and/or capacity and impact evaluation is a distinct and separate process. In that regard, Annex A of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) comprises a technical paper that includes Landscape Character Sensitivity Assessment Tables that demonstrate clearly how the recommendations for landscape management for each landscape character area (LCA) and landscape character type (LCT) have been arrived at. The technical paper then used a range of established parameters that create an overall evaluation of landscape sensitivity and value to confer overall Landscape Character Sensitivity for each LCA and LCT. The resulting classification was then used to produce an evidence-based Landscape

Sensitivity and Capacity Maps. Thereafter, principles for landscape character are proposed for each LCA and LCT in Table 13.3 *Specific Landscape Character Area Guidance Principles*.

The subject area is located in the Naas and Liffey Foothills LCA 3, which is classified as being of Medium sensitivity in Map V1-13.2A *Landscape Sensitivity*. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria that consider topography, landscape pattern, historical landscape, relationships to existing settlements and presence of natural habitats. It is also noted that the Kildare County Council Green Infrastructure Strategy includes the River Liffey and its tributaries as green corridors. Corridors are the connectors providing vital linkages in the green infrastructure networks. Harristown Common is identified as a stepping stone, which are smaller geographical areas but either critically important because of their environmental quality (i.e. local native woodlands, intact bogs/peatlands, wetlands), local amenity value (i.e. urban parks) or because of their scale as undeveloped areas, such as Coillte forestry plantations.

The preparation of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) also included, *inter alia*, a review of the objectives of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied) (CDP) where relevant to the landscape and a review of the Scenic Routes and Protected Views in Tables 13.5 – 13.7 of Chapter 13 and Appendix 7 of the CDP. The subsequent review process determined that all those listed merited continued inclusion, which included Scenic Route 13 (Views to the River Liffey on the R413 from Brannockstown Cross Roads to Ballymore Eustace). The review did note the area identified as (Mullacash/Harristown) is located within the Naas and River Liffey Foothills LCA 3 and that the area around the Harristown estate is attractive with some filtered views of Wicklow to the east and bounded by walls and peripheral woodland associated with the estate. In summary, it is an attractive, localised view. However, from a review of the visual elements, such as the views to Wicklow to the east, estate walls, narrow road with mixed fields and occasional entrances to large properties, it is not in itself as outstanding as many of the other scenic routes that were assessed during the process.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 18 – Energia

The submission from Energia contains an attachment and states to increase clarity and support the delivery of climate and energy objectives, the following recommendations are made:

Issues Raised:

- Clear cross reference between Chapter 13, Appendix 13 (LCA 2025) and Appendix 2 (Wind Energy Strategy)

- Be implemented having regard to the RSES commitments on the transition to low-carbon and clean energy (NSO 8,9)
- Include explicit support for repowering, life extension and colocation (including BESS and grid stability assets) / improved mapping and data clarity.
- Submission further reiterates that the LCA and Wind Energy Strategy be used as a guidance tool rather than a rigid requirement for development.
- States the written statement now requires a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for “significant development proposals” and should accompany applications for ‘wind turbine and solar array developments’.
- Asserts the text in 13.3.2 (Impact of Development on Landscape) be used in order to scope viewpoints and mitigation early (screening, hedgerow retention, layout and height control) with LVIA as the aid to decision making.
- Further asserts the Plan should clearly define what constitutes ‘significant development proposals’ as the term is not given an operational or measurable definition, which may lead to inconsistent interpretation in development management.
- Submission welcomes Table 13.4 (Landscape Character Assessment Sensitivity and Land Use) which screens a specific ‘Solar’ land use category against each LCA’s sensitivity class.
- Submission states the LCA anticipation in the ‘increase in number and scale of windfarms and solar farms’ in the county and notes that up to c.30% of cutaway boglands may be development for economic purposes including renewable energy. Asserts while this type of development has the potential to affect the landscape there is prospect for any potential landscape impact to be balanced against the ecological (and other) benefits to the area.
- States that Case Law (Coolglass Windfarm Ltd v An Bord Pleanála [2025] IEHC 1 and Coolglass Wind Farm Ltd v An Comisiún Pleanála [2026] IESC 5) established that landscape impacts alone do not outweigh the wider benefits brought about by renewable energy developments. The Supreme Court has confirmed that public bodies must act in conformity with national climate action plans and that renewable energy applications should almost always be granted unless prohibited by law.
- Further states the SEA/landscape implications table at pg. 151 energy development (including solar) is associated with effects on visual amenity and ‘perceptual changes from ... glint and glare’ and coping is currently considered alongside LVIA where aviation, road, rail or residential receptors have the potential to be affected.
- Contends at local level the LCA’s “Drivers of Change” identify where solar applications are already occurring or likely to be located and this narrative allows for an LCA led siting and mitigation strategy which prioritises enclosed lowland farmland and brownfield/energy contexts ahead of exposed skylines.
- Submission requests to aid clarity and consistent application, it would be helpful to specify thresholds that trigger detailed assessment, outline the

preferred viewpoint selection and photomontage methodology and confirm how cumulative change should be evaluated across adjacent character areas.

- Asserts that there are opportunities to signal where repowering, colocation and use of emerging technologies (such as Battery Energy storage) could be accommodated in lower sensitivity contexts, subject to design evolution, embedded mitigation and adherence to the guidance principles set out in the LCA.
- Asserts for decision making certainty, the Strategy should provide mapping and legend clarity, support repowering/lifetime extension, colocation of technologies, enabling grid infrastructure and where appropriate, the strategy should include how the plan will contribute to national targets while avoiding blanket landscape exclusion (such as Coolglass Case Law).

Chief Executive's Response

While it is acknowledged that 'significant development' is not defined in legislation, the term is commonly used where development proposals require an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), an EIAR may be required for projects where the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) sets out the criteria for determining whether a development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. Furthermore, all development proposals must be screened for Appropriate Assessment and shall be subject to full Appropriate Assessment where they have the potential to have significant adverse impacts on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/42/EEC.

The requirement to specify thresholds that trigger a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment such as the preferred viewpoint selection and photomontage methodology and how cumulative change should be evaluated across adjacent character areas is not considered appropriate in terms of a policy requirement. It is recognised that there is an increased emphasis on the importance of renewable energy development and the emerging technologies and infrastructure needed to support this in the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025). A number of new or amended National Policy Objectives (NPOs) have been proposed in order to achieve this objective. NPO 74 requires each Regional Assembly to plan, through their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, to set out how and where to deliver the required capacity set out in Table 9.1 by identifying capacity allocations for each local authority in its area, in order to meet the overall national target. Table 9.1 sets regional renewable energy capacity allocations for wind and solar energy. It is noted that the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) has recently commenced the review of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). As part of the preparation of the next County Development Plan and the move to 10-year

development plans, all provisions of the Plan including alignment with regional policy will be reviewed.

The comments in relation to improvements in mapping and data clarity are noted.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

All final maps will be reviewed for clarity including legends and associated data as suggested.

Submission No. 19 – Hugh Dillon and Eleanor Wauchob

The submission contains an attachment with pictures and the issues raised regarding the Naas and Liffey Foothills (Section 4.9 LCA) are outlined below.

Issues Raised:

- Submission requests that consideration be given to include the hilltop view from Mullacash Hill on the L6044.
- Asserts the topography of the land in Kildare means views are special and rare but under threat from pressures caused by increased development and changes to land use making and further asserts their protection is vital.
- States local legend suggests that Cromwell surveyed the Kildare area of horseback from the summit of Mullacash Hill.
- Submission further asserts the views at the southern end of the L6044 (where the road meets L6074 Carnalway adjacent to the Harristown estate) are also special, providing a backdrop of the Wicklow Hills.
- States route is frequently used by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders who appreciate the scenery.
- Requests the L6044 deserves consideration as a scenic route due to its unique character.

A series of photographs have been provided with the submission.

Chief Executive's Response

The preparation of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) included, *inter alia*, a review of the Scenic Routes and Protected Views in Tables 13.5 – 13.7 of Chapter 13 and Appendix 7 of the CDP. The subsequent review process determined that all those listed merited continued inclusion, which included Scenic Route 13 (Views to the River Liffey on the R413 from Brannockstown Cross Roads to Ballymore Eustace). The review did note the area identified as (Mullacash/Harristown) is located within the Naas and River Liffey Foothills LCA 3 and that the area around the Harristown estate is attractive with some filtered views of Wicklow to the east and bounded by walls and peripheral woodland associated with the estate. In summary, it

is an attractive, localised view. However, from a review of the visual elements, such as the views to Wicklow to the east, estate walls, narrow road with mixed fields and occasional entrances to large properties, it is not in itself as outstanding as many of the other scenic routes that were assessed during the process.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 21 – The Castletown Foundation

The submission from Castletown Foundation includes an attachment outlining that the Foundation is one of the key stakeholders in relation to Castletown, and a partner with the OPW in the development of the House and demesne. The recommendations and issues raised in the submission are outlined below.

Issues Raised:

- Submission is concerned that the LCA has not fully recognised the international importance of the historic landscapes of Castletown House and demesne, and the linked demesnes of Donaghcumper and St. Wolstan's.
- Asserts if unchanged it would lead to internal conflicting objectives and policies in the overall County Development Plan (CDP) (Chapter 11 and amended Chapter 13) which could create a situation in which future development might take place within the demesnes that would be inimical to their historic designed landscapes.
- Further asserts in the "Landscape Values" section of the Assessment (4.3.6) no mention is made of the preserved axial views from Castletown House to the Connolly Folly and the Wonderful Barn, nor are Donaghcumper and St. Wolstan's mentioned. There are specific policies in the CDP that refer to these (AH024 and AH025)
- Submission is concerned that the proposed variation sets out in Section 13.3.1 and Table 13.3 "Specific Landscape Character Area Guiding Principles" as criteria that the Council will take into account in assessing proposals for development, but there is no reference in this section of the provisions of Chapter 11 of the CDP nor objectives AH024 and AH025.
- Submission outlines the planning history of Castletown (KCC decision ref 2417 Castletown Demesne) and Donaghcumper (An Bord Pleanála decision ref, no. 233937 and 236613 in relation to Donaghcumper demesne) where development proposals were made that were refused.
- Asserts there would be conflicting objectives and policies in the overall CDP and clearly undesirable and may encourage persons proposing development within these historic demesnes to argue that the more recent Variation No. 4 supersedes the provision in Chapter 11, on the basis that the Variation is more recent.

- Further asserts, at worst, it could lead to judicial review where there are conflicting objectives in the CDP as to whether any such development represents a material contravention of the CDP.

Requested amendments to the Variation

- Submission requests amendments, by inclusion of the following three bullet points / Principles to Table 13.3 (Specific Landscape Character Area Guidance Principles) to the section on the LCA Slí Mhór Corridor, on page 16 of the draft Variation:
 - *Give recognition to the demesnes associated with country houses as important contributors to the historic landscape character and ecology of the area. Support the landscape of demesne parkland through continued replacement tree planting and woodland management.*
 - *Continue to protect and maintain the views from Castletown House to the River Liffey and to protect the integrity of the designed landscape at Castletown Demesne, as set out in objectives AH024 and AH025, and Map V1-11.2, of this Plan.*
 - *Ensure that the demesnes of Donaghcumper and St. Wolstan's, historically linked to Castletown demesne, are protected and that no development that would compromise these historic landscapes shall be permitted.*

Chief Executive's Response

The submission from the Castletown Foundation as one of the key stakeholders in relation to Castletown House and Demesne and the linked demesnes of Donaghcumper and St. Wolstan's is noted. So, too, is the reference to the planning history of the Castletown and Donaghcumper demesnes.

The scope of work of the review and update of the County Kildare Landscape Character Assessment included, *inter alia*, the preparation of a Historic Landscape Characterisation of the county, which includes many references to the Demesnes of Castletown and Donaghcumper.

Castletown House and Demesne and Donaghcumper House and Demesne in Celbridge are located immediately adjacent to each other, divided by the River Liffey. Therefore, they are deeply connected from a heritage and ecology perspective and share the same sensitivities relating to the River Liffey and embankments. Each side caters to a rich historical asset to the landscape. Together with St. Wolstan's Abbey, the landscape in this section of the River Liffey comprises some structures and buildings in ruins, as well as remnants of old demesne trails and river walks. In that regard, Objectives AH O22 and O23 of the CDP seeks to safeguard the amenities of Castletown House including the main avenue, Donaghcumper, St. Wolstan's and the River Liffey environs as shown on Map V1-11.14 along with the amenities of the

Wonderful Barn, and protect the integrity of the designed landscape at Castletown Demesne, including pathways, avenues and views, including the axial views between Castletown House and Connolly's Folly, the Wonderful Barn, to the River Liffey and the Donaghcumper and St. Wolstan's lands.

Furthermore, Kildare County Council is clear in its view on the historic, cultural and landscape importance of the linked demesnes through its policies and objectives. The Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied) (CDP) is explicit in promoting the need to safeguard the amenities of the linked demesnes and the Wonderful Barn within Section 11.14 (Architectural Heritage), 11.15 (Protected Structures) and 11.16 (Country Houses and Demesnes) and includes reference to the *Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)* within objective AH O21 and Map Ref: V1-11.14 maps the composite landscape of the three demesnes. The CDP also recognises the sensitive and unique quality and importance of Castletown House and its demesne and history as a unique element of heritage, tourism and educational potential, to ensure that the integrity of the house and its demesne, as well as its collection of buildings, artefacts, landscapes, views and prospects, is fully protected, and to ensure that any future development within or without the demesne and its environs which impact on it, is appropriate to its status as a house and demesne of national and international significance (RE O159) and to protect key sites and tourist facilities in the vicinity such as the Wonderful Barn (RE O160). Furthermore, it is the policy of the Council to 'Promote appreciation of the landscape and historical importance of traditional and historic gardens, demesnes and parks within County Kildare and particularly where they constitute an important and intrinsic value to the setting of a protected structure' (AH P7).

Chapter 13 of the CDP includes the views of the River Liffey from the Main Avenue of Castletown House as a protected view in Table 13.5 and Appendix 7.

There is particular recognition of the wider Liffey Valley landscape, which contribute to the rural setting and scenic quality of the estates. In that regard, a Feasibility Study has been prepared, which aims to assess and evaluate Phase One of the wider Liffey Valley Park Strategy to explore opportunities for connecting the public open spaces, parks and existing adjacent destinations which can serve as part of the 'Park' concept.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 22 – Deirdre Brett

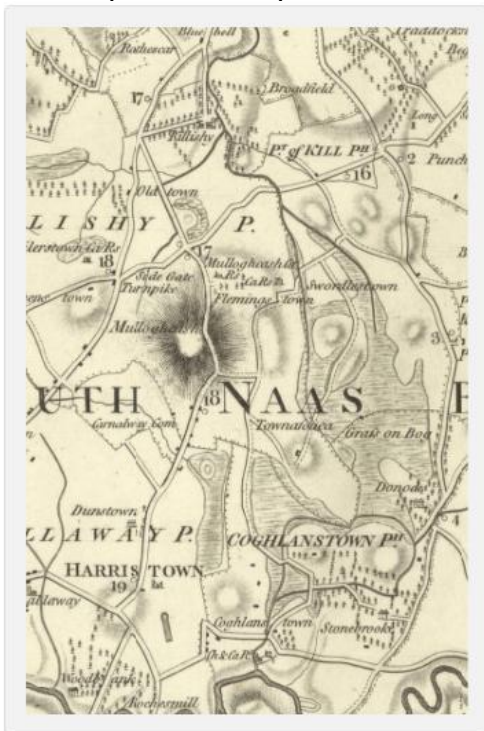
Submission attaches a map and states a submission was made previously about the issue in May 2022. The issues raised in the submission are outlined below:

Issues Raised:

- Submission proposes that Mullacash Hill is allocated a Protected View status.
- States the view from Mullacash Hill is enjoyed by many people who cycle, run, walk and drive this route with an unspoiled, uninterrupted view of the Wicklow Mountains and agricultural land with no development on it and its popularity is clear to see as it has a segment on Strava.
- Further states the Landscape Character Analysis carried out in 2003 (appended to the 2005 CDP) makes reference to Mullacash Hill at 18.5.1 and lists it as one of the main hilltops in that areas at 171 O.D.
- Asserts the scenic views from Mullacash Hill are worthy of protection and aligns with the analysis of 2003 that “elevated vantage points along the long roads provide long-distance views of the Kildare lowlands” and “the area is generally perceived as being important and special in landscape terms”.

Submission states Taylor’s map of 1783 (map shown below) clearly shows Mullacash hill as a prominent land feature.

An excerpt of the map is shown below:



Chief Executive's Response

The preparation of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) included, *inter alia*, a review of the Scenic Routes and Protected Views in Tables 13.5 – 13.7 of Chapter 13 and Appendix 7 of the CDP. The subsequent review process determined that all those listed merited continued inclusion, which included Scenic Route 13 (Views to the River Liffey on the R413 from Brannockstown Cross Roads to Ballymore Eustace). The review did note the area identified as (Mullacash/Harristown) is

located within the Naas and River Liffey Foothills LCA 3 and that the area around the Harristown estate is attractive with some filtered views of Wicklow to the east and bounded by walls and peripheral woodland associated with the estate. In summary, it is an attractive, localised view. However, from a review of the visual elements, such as the views to Wicklow to the east, estate walls, narrow road with mixed fields and occasional entrances to large properties, it is not in itself as outstanding as many of the other scenic routes that were assessed during the process.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

Submission No. 25 – Anne Cowley

Issues Raised:

- Submission asserts it is inexplicable that the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Appropriate Assessment (AA) have been screened out.
- States the LCA (2025) identifies direct landscape connections to SACs and alteration to the landscape affects the environment and biodiversity.
- Supports An Taisce submission and the comment that cutover peatland sites of rehabilitation/restoration potential are mapped and integrated into the County Development Plan.
- Asserts the hilltop view from Mullacash hill should be designated a protected view as requires protection.

Chief Executive's Response

The content of the submission is noted and the support for the An Taisce submission in relation to cutover peatland sites.

As outlined in Section 3.1 of the SEA Screening Report, S.I. No. 456 of 2025 adopts the definition of “plan” set out in Section 198(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2024, which includes a development plan or a variation thereof. However, SEA is mandatory only for specified plans. For other plans or variations, SEA Screening is required to determine whether significant environmental effects are likely.

This determination is made having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, together with submissions from environmental authorities. The fact that a plan may set a framework for future development consent does not, in itself, trigger a mandatory SEA. It is this screening assessment that determines whether SEA is required, and that assessment criteria has been correctly applied in this instance.

The submission raises concerns regarding potential impacts on the River Barrow SAC and River Nore SAC arising from alleged landscape change, floodplain development and changes to grassland management, with reference to the Bog of Allen (LCA 5), River Barrow Corridor (LCA 6), and the Curragh (LCA 8).

Variation No. 4 does not introduce any new objectives or policies relating to landscape change, development within floodplains or grassland management nor does it propose or consent to any particular development at any particular location. The LCA is a technical assessment of the existing landscape with outputs informing the policies of the CDP. As such, there is no basis for the assertion that the Variation gives rise to any possibility of significant effects on European sites.

The conclusion of the AA Screening Report – that Appropriate Assessment is not required – is therefore robust and correct, and there is no substantive basis for an alternative conclusion. On adoption of Variation No. 4, a SEA Statement will be prepared.

The preparation of the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) included, *inter alia*, a review of the Scenic Routes and Protected Views in Tables 13.5 – 13.7 of Chapter 13 and Appendix 7 of the CDP. The subsequent review process determined that all those listed merited continued inclusion, which included Scenic Route 13 (Views to the River Liffey on the R413 from Brannockstown Cross Roads to Ballymore Eustace). The review did note the area identified as (Mullacash/Harristown) is located within the Naas and River Liffey Foothills LCA 3 and that the area around the Harristown estate is attractive with some filtered views of Wicklow to the east and bounded by walls and peripheral woodland associated with the estate. In summary, it is an attractive localised view. However, from a review of the visual elements, such as the views to Wicklow to the east, estate walls, narrow road with mixed fields and occasional entrances to large properties, it is not in itself as outstanding as many of the other scenic routes that were assessed during the process.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

No change recommended.

6 Chief Executive's Recommendation

Following a review of Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) it is recommended that Variation No. 4 be adopted subject to minor modifications.

7 Composite List of Minor Modifications to the Proposed Variation


Include Minor text amendment LCT4 – Transport Corridor in Table 13.1 to reflect LCA Maps:

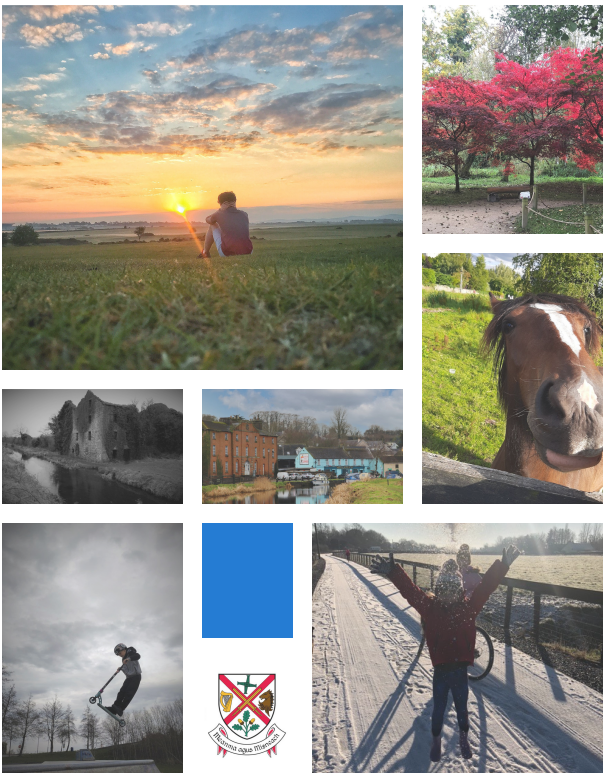
This LCT has a strong linear form and is associated with transport corridors. The M4 Motorway and the Dublin-Sligo rail line run east to west along the Kildare-Meath border and the M7/M9 Motorway (*as per Map V1-13.1*) and rail lines to the south and west traverse the county in an east-west and north-south direction.



Appendix A:

**Submission of the
Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)
(Submission No. 8)**





**Planning Department
Kildare County Council**





Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

6th March 2026

Senior Executive Office,
Planning Department,
Kildare County Council,
Áras Chill Dara,
Naas,
Co. Kildare.

**Re: Proposed Variation No. 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) of the Kildare
County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied)**

A chara,

Thank you for your authority's work in preparing the Proposed Variation No. 4 (proposed Variation) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (County Development Plan) (as varied).

As Kildare County Council (Planning Authority) is aware, a key function of the Office of the Planning Regulator (Office) is the assessment of statutory plans to ensure consistency with legislative and policy requirements relating to planning. The Office has evaluated and assessed the proposed Variation pursuant to Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act) and its functions under section 546 and this submission has been prepared accordingly.

Recommendations issued by the Office further to section 58(9) of the Act relate to clear breaches of the relevant legislative provisions, of the national or regional policy framework and/or of the policy of Government. As such, planning authorities are requested to implement or address recommendation(s) made by the Office in order to ensure consistency with the relevant policy and legislative provisions.

Observations issued by the Office pursuant to section 546 of the Act may take the form of a request for further information or justification on a particular matter, or clarification regarding particular provisions of a plan on issues that are considered necessary to ensure alignment

with policy and legislative provisions. Planning authorities are requested by the Office to action an observation.

A submission can also include advice on matters that the Office considers would contribute positively to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Planning authorities are requested by the Office to give full consideration to the advice contained in a submission.

On adoption of the Variation, the Office will assess it in accordance with the statutory framework in section 63 of the Act.

The Office welcomes the updated Landscape Character Assessment prepared in response to County Development Plan Objective LR A1. The identification of ten distinct landscape character areas, along with the associated objectives to protect and enhance their special qualities, is supported. The proposed updates also align with the strategic objectives of both the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025), which is welcomed by the Office.

The Office also welcomes the updated Wind Energy Strategy and acknowledges the positive steps taken to facilitate renewable energy development within the county. In particular, the expansion of areas designated as Acceptable in Principle for wind energy development will enhance the county's capacity to contribute to national renewable energy and climate targets.

As the Planning Authority will be aware, the RSES for the EMRA is due to be reviewed. This review will include the preparation of a regional landscape character assessment (RPO 7.27) and the identification of Strategic Energy Zones (RPO 7.35). In this context, the landscape character assessment may require further consideration during the County Development Plan review process to ensure full alignment with emerging regional policy.

As you are aware, the report of the Chief Executive of your authority prepared for the elected members under section 58(11) of the Act must summarise these recommendations and how the Chief Executive proposes they should be dealt with.

Where the Planning Authority makes a variation, it is required to notify the Office **within one week** of the decision to adopt the Variation. Where your authority decides not to

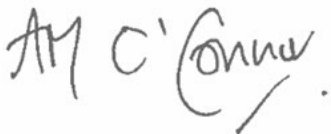
comply with the recommendations of the Office, then it shall inform the Office as soon as practicable and provide reasons for the decision not to so comply.

Your authority is also required to send the Office a copy of the Variation and any submissions made by the Minister, the relevant regional assembly and the National Transport Authority during the Variation preparation process.

Please be advised that planning authorities are also required to publish notice of the Variation within a week of the adoption, stating that a copy of the County Development Plan as varied will be available for inspection on a website and at a place specified in the notice no later than five weeks after the date of adoption.

Please feel free to contact the staff of the Office in the context of your authority's responses to the above, which we would be happy to facilitate. Contact can be initiated through plans@opr.ie.

Is mise le meas,

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Anne Marie O'Connor

Deputy Regulator and Director of Plans Evaluation

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015