



Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil: KCC-C55-181

Údar: Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park CLG

Stádas: Submitted

Aighneacht:

Promoting Sustainable Tourism to West Kildare as a Gateway to the Midlands & protecting our peatland biodiversity

Comhairliúchán:

Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

Litir Chumhdaigh

Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park is a social enterprise day visitor attraction offering over 60 acres of serene woodland / peatland trails and several exhibitions, in Ireland's most famous peatland, the Bog of Allen in West Kildare. The Park is a key resource in the region providing community services, local employment, training and a range of visitor experiences such as education on peatland biodiversity and history, as well as leisure and play. The facility caters for visitors of all ages, school tours at primary, secondary and third level, language schools, families, corporate events, and international tour groups. Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park is a national award-winning enterprise (Irish Tourism Industry Confederation Best Environmental Tourism Innovation Winner 2017) and attracts over 50,000 fee paying visitors annually.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 and commend Kildare County Council on supporting tourism, peatlands, biodiversity / climate goals and the inclusion of a National Peatlands Park across multiple chapters. We firmly believe that the Bog of Allen's former industrial peatlands, if protected and rehabilitated are a true hidden gem whose potential has remained untapped. The bogs of West Kildare can help deliver Just Transition to local peatland communities, much needed habitats of scale for native species, EU climate / biodiversity objectives and become a complimentary new eco tourism and activity based offering for the County.

Tuairimí:

Introduction - Inclusion of Local Just Transition Plan West Kildare 2022.

Caibidil: Volume 1 - chapters» 1. Introduction and Context

Ábhair: 1. Introduction

Please include reference to the Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare 2022.

Chapter 4 West Kildare as an eco-tourism / activity based destination and gateway to the Midlands

Caibidil: Volume 1 - chapters» 4. Resilient Economy & Job Creation

Ábhair: job
economy, creation

4.21 Tourism

Add blue text:

"The key focus for the Midlands / Failte Ireland region will be the further development and promotion of the local culture, heritage and **eco-tourism**."

Reason for amendment: Failte Ireland recognises sustainable eco-tourism as a growth market with great potential for Ireland - Kildare has a unique opportunity with rehabilitation of former industrial peatlands in West Kildare and the development of Blueways.

4.21.1 Tourism Attractions in Kildare

Add blue text:

"Kildare currently has a varied tourism portfolio with a position of excellence in heritage, golf, equine, **peatlands based eco-tourism**"

Reason for amendment: Established attractions such as the IPCC and Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park which is a key attraction in Irelands Ancient East, won a national award for environmental innovation and attract thousands of international and domestic visitors every year.

Objectives

Add blue text:

RE 095: "Support the expansion and development of tourism in Kildare, investigating the feasibilities of key opportunities such as those centred on.....**peatlands**."

Reason for amendment: Existing peatland related attractions and potential for Kildare of eco-tourism to rehabilitated peatlands and a National Peatland Parks to showcase biodiversity, culture and importance as a carbon store.

4.24 Peatland Tourism

Add blue text:

Change National Peatlands Heritage Park to **National Peatlands Park**. Following second paragraph ending "National Peatlands Park".....**Kildare is well positioned due to its close proximity to Dublin as a gateway county for the Peatlands to millions of international visitors annually and approx. 2.5 million residents in surrounding counties. The designation of an inter county National Peatlands Park, protection and further development of existing facilities and new activities such as the Blueway and Greenways have the potential to become a world class peatland's / activity based experience. This could greatly assist in changing Ireland's global eco - tourism position and stimulate further visitor experiences to complement Kildare and Ireland's current offering.**

Reason for amendment: Reflects potential of proposal and Failte Ireland core goals - "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025" and Peatland Eco-Tourism Research - final report due May 2022.

Objectives

Add new Objective:

After RE 0127

Support the West Kildare Smart Rural Alliance and access for peatland communities to the European Network for Rural Development's Smart Village initiative in conjunction with Offaly County Council, Laois County Council, Leader companies in each county and all other relevant stakeholders.

Reason for Amendment: To assist in the delivery of Just Transition and a collaborative approach to realise the potential for peatlands tourism. The inter County approach is important as it reflects shared peatland landscape, related culture and similar socio-economic challenges for the region. See attached Draft Map of West Kildare Smart Rural Alliance.

4.25 The Barrow Blueway

Add new Objective:

After RE0131

Support and facilitate the development of Rathangan as a Blueway destination town based on its natural and built heritage, proximity to the peatlands and Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park and collaborate with the National Transport Authority and Local Link to provide connectivity.

Reason for Amendment: Rathangan has the potential to benefit greatly from the Blueway given its appeal on the river Slate and Grand Canal, ancient ring fort, Georgian architecture, Quaker connection and more recent Bord na Mona history with Ballydermot Workers Camp (undeveloped at present - owned by Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park) and the surrounding Killinthomas Woods. A submission for a new bus service starting in Allenwood and connecting Lullymore, Rathangan, Monasterevin and Kildare town is currently being assessed by the National Transport Authority. This would provide access to Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park to the Blueway towns of Allenwood, Rathangan and Monasterevin.

Attachments:

KCC-C55-181-10419 - Draft Smart Villages Map - Bogs and Blueways May 2022.jpg

Chapter 7 Protection of existing tourism assets and potential growth.

Caibidil: Volume 1 - chapters » 7 - Energy & Communications

Ábhair: energy, communication

7.12.7 Peatlands

Add Text in Blue:

EC P17	Support the preparation of a comprehensive “after use” framework plan for the industrial peatlands and associated workshops, office buildings, industrial sites and power stations in Kildare, acknowledging the significant contribution that these expansive lands make towards the special landscape of the Bog of Allen and <i>Insert its potential to further the growth of tourism to the County.</i>
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EC O50	Prioritise the sourcing of E.U. and National funding to support projects which assist the transition of the industrial peatlands and the communities traditionally dependant on them, to sustainable after uses.
EC O51	Support Bord na Mona, <i>Insert the local communities and other key stakeholders</i> in the preparation of a long-term strategic plan for the former industrial peatlands.
EC O52	Support Bord Na Mona (and their company Powergen) with their redevelopment proposals for their headquarters at Newbridge, with a view to Kildare County Council promoting the area as a Green Energy Hub, which focuses on the higher order aspects of the renewable energy industry and a climate action training centre.
EC O53	Support the implementation of the recommendations contained in the National Peatlands Strategy 2015 and any subsequent revisions.
EC O54	Require an Ecological Impact and <i>Insert Landscape</i> Assessment to be carried out and submitted with any planning application for energy infrastructure projects (e.g., wind and solar developments) on bog /

New Objective after EC057

Add text in blue

Support the preservation of the visual and environmental assets surrounding existing tourism venues or planned tourism development on the Bog of Allen and estimate the tourism related impacts of proposed large scale renewable energy projects on the delivery and growth of their services.

Reason for Amendment: While recognising the need for green energy - this should not be at the expense of established and growing tourism amenities or future sustainable tourism plans which bring multiple environmental, economic and social benefits to Kildare.

Chapter 9 Realising the potential of West Kildare as an eco-tourism / activity based destination

Caibidil: Volume 1 - chapters » 9 - Our Rural Economy

Chapter 9 Rural Economy

Insert blue text

Background 9.1

Kildare is well positioned.....as a gateway Peatlands and the west from Dublin to contribute more to the tourism sector with the development of Greenways, Blueways, Peatways and the potential of a National Peatlands Park on former industrial cutaways providing an alternative eco-tourism and activity based experience.

RD O11	Support the implementation of the objectives identified in the County Biodiversity Plan 2009-2014 and any relevant local action plan.
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Amendment : Support the implementation of the objectives identified in the reviewed County Biodiversity Plan and the West Kildare Local Just Transition Plan 2022

Reason :

A new County Kildare Biodiversity Action Plan will be published by 2024

Reason; The County Biodiversity Plan is out of date and a central Kildare resource containing biodiversity aims, objectives and initiatives is essential. This document will illustrate the large reach, responsibility and accountability of the Council and partner organisations for biodiversity, *healthy rivers, water quality* and the protection of nature. This new enhanced objective to reach 27% of land for nature should provide the cornerstone of the Plan with milestones for the achievement of this target. A published document will help inform the public, ensure implementation and form a tool to keep track of progress.

West Kildare Local Just Transition Plan 2022 is not included.

Bogs and Peatlands 9.8

Insert blue text

Peatlands form a distinctive aspect of Kildare’s landscape.....

The cessation of peat extraction by BNM provides tangible opportunities for West Kildare as a gateway county to the Midland Peatlands and the West. The potential of a National Peatlands Park and the development of the Blueway can greatly assist a Just Transition for peatland communities and lead to economic regeneration and a sustainable local economy. The creation of a successful community-led tourism destination supported by Kildare Offaly and Laois County Councils, Failte Ireland and other stakeholders following the Blueway and encompassing peatland areas to the west as part of an inter county National Peatlands Park has the potential to offer the visitor a unique experience to get “lost in wilderness” in a relaxed environment away from urban life. The Council recognises that the development of a range of outdoor activities based around our natural amenities of bogs, canals and rivers and the discovery of the area’s natural and built heritage would significantly support the future growth of tourism in Kildare and the midlands.

REASON: More specific with peatlands – “peatlands rehabilitation and sustainable peatland related tourism”

RD 08

REASON: Include morecontinued roll out of the National Broadband Scheme -and initiatives such as the EU Smart Villages Initiative.

RD O31	<p>Investigate the feasibility of the development of a Peatland National Park in co-operation with Bord Na Mona, NPWS and other relevant stakeholders as per recommendation 9 of the BOGLAND Report from the EPA in 2011 and action A28 of the National Peatland Strategy 2014.</p> <p><i>Amendment : Support the development of a National Peatlands Park in co-operation with Bord Na Mona, NPWS, Inland Fisheries Ireland, local community groups and other relevant stakeholders as per recommendation 9 of the BOGLAND Report from the EPA in 2011 and action A28 of the National Peatland Strategy 2014 and subsequent reports such as the Local Just Transition Plan for West Kildare 2022.</i></p> <p><i>Reason : Collaboration between stakeholders and use of latest reports will lead to best results e.g. monitoring of Slate, Upper Barrow, Figile and Cushaling rivers with Inland Fisheries Ireland following peatland rehabilitation to show expected benefits for river biodiversity, water quality and flood mitigation.</i></p>
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Chapter 10 Peatlands potential as recreational amenity

Caibidil: Volume 1 - chapters » 10 - Community Infrastructure & Creative Places

Chapter 10 – Community Infrastructure & Creative Spaces

It is the policy of the Council to:

Add text in blue:

SC P2	Require the delivery of a range of universally accessible and well- connected social, community, cultural, and recreational facilities, close to the communities they serve through the designation and safeguarding of specific land uses at appropriate strategic and optimised locations in settlement plans and mandatory Local Area Plans in County Kildare.
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New Objective after SC018

Reason: Reconnection with communities and local peatlands and potential of peatlands to become an important recreational amenity.

	Support and encourage community and schools involvement in the rehabilitation, restoration of former industrial peatlands and in the planning for future recreational amenity.
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New Action after SCA4

	Support the establishment of an inter county National Peatlands Park and the implementation of the objectives identified in the West Kildare Just Transition Plan 2022 and objectives in the new County Biodiversity Plan.
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Chapter 13 Importance of our Peatland Landscape.

Caibidil: Volume 1 - chapters » 13 - Landscape, Recreation & Amenity

Ábhair: landscape, recreation, amenity

Chapter 13

Add text in blue:

LR O13	Recognise that some cutaway and cut-over boglands may represent degraded landscapes and/or brownfield sites and thus are may potentially be fit to absorb a variety of development provided that the development proposal does not increase Green House Gas emissions or damage protected habitats or species.
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Reason for amendment: Recognition of the rehabilitation success of many cutaways which are now significant areas of biodiversity and effective carbon stores as evidenced by numerous sites in West Kildare including Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park and research carried out in Lullymore's Carbon Flux project since 2016.

Insert new action to implement objective in LR040

LR A 13 Engage with the Department of Housing , Local Government and Heritage and other County Councils and relevant stakeholders to advance the delivery of a new National Peatlands Park (see EC A7)

13.3 Landscape Character Assessment

Actions

It shall be an action of the Council to:

LR A1	Review and update the County Landscape Character Assessment, within two years of the adoption of this Plan ¹ , having regard to the European Landscape Convention Florence 2000, in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance documents and to ensure consistency with the forthcoming National and Regional Landscape Character Assessment. All landscape character designations will be fully reviewed having regard to updated best practice guidance, LCAs of adjoining Local Authorities and other local relevant considerations, including clusters of biodiversity rich areas.
LR A2	Investigate the feasibility of preparing a Historic Landscape Characterisation of the county.
LR A3	Plant gateway roundabouts within the county with innovative design themes, having regard to traffic safety.

Change: Reevaluate West Kildare Bogs to Class 5 and postpone developments which would impact the landscape until an updated County Landscape Character assessment is completed. This would ensure the Bog of Allen's potential for rewilding and tourism is not irreversibly damaged by any proposed developments in the intervening period.

Reason: The original LCA was undertaken in 2004 at time when industrial peat extraction was prevalent and it undervalues the Bog of Allen's historical, cultural, religious and environmental importance. It also fails to reflect the significant rehabilitation and scientific research carried out in many of these peatlands and the growth of both domestic and international tourism to West Kildare over the past 18 years. It is also now widely accepted that Irelands raised bogs have global significance as a carbon store and ecosystem treasures and that their protection and rehabilitation is the first line of defence in mitigating climate change and protecting biodiversity.

34	Views of the Bog of Allen including the Lullymore / Allen Bog group and the Hills of Allen, Grange and Dunmurry along the	Allenwood middle, Allenwood south, Lullymore
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R403 and R414 from Allenwood to Rathangan.	East, Lullymore West, Barnaran, Drumsru, Cappanargid, Killyguire and Newtown.
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Change: The inclusion of the Lullymore / Allen Bog Group is important as this is the view looking westward from Lullymore which is an established peatland tourism hub in West Kildare.

Reason: The panoramic and uninterrupted views across the Bog of Allen to the west are celebrated and promoted internationally by Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park (which attracted over 54000 fee paying visitors in 2019) and the IPCC.

Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

LR O37	Promote and enhance public access for all7 to the upland areas, rivers, lakes and other natural amenities of County Kildare, in conjunction with the relevant landowners and agencies, while protecting environmental sensitivities and ecological corridors.
LR O38	Ensure the biodiversity value of all sites are considered and protected in the development of outdoor recreational facilities including greenways through the preparation of an Ecological Impact Assessment which shall guide the location and design of such facilities.
LR O39	Support Coillte, Bord na Mona, Waterways Ireland and other state agencies to explore the provision of more recreational infrastructure at appropriate locations to include access ways and nature trails with a view to opening up state lands for recreational use.

LR O40	<p>Investigate the feasibility of developing a Peatlands National Park in consultation with Offaly County Council, Bord na Móna, Coillte, NPWS, local landowners and all other relevant stakeholders to include areas of (inter alia) high nature value, amenity, education/science and eco-tourism potential.</p>
LR O41	<p>Support the proposed Umeras Peatlands Park development of Umeras Community Development and explore links between the bog and nearby blueways and greenways, whilst ensuring nearby properties would not be negatively affected, in consultation with Offaly County Council, Waterways Ireland and all other relevant stakeholders.</p>
LR O42	<p>Lead and support the extension and interconnection of Greenways, Blueways, Peatways and trails within and outside County Kildare in consultation with Coillte, Bord na Móna and all other relevant stakeholders. The creation of an eco tourism destination supported by Kildare, Offaly and Laois County Councils, Failte Ireland and other stakeholders following the Blueway and encompassing peatland areas to the west as part of a National Peatlands Park has the potential to offer the visitor a unique experience to get “lost in wilderness” in a relaxed environment away from urban life. The Council recognises that the development of a range of outdoor activities based around our natural amenities of bogs, canals and rivers and the discovery of the area’s natural and built heritage would significantly support the future growth of tourism in Kildare and the midlands.</p>

Reason: Multiple environmental, community and socio-economic benefits for present and future generations.

Pictures attached are view from Peatland Biodiversity Boardwalk and Peatlands Exhibition.

Location Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park - Photographer Michel Anderton (both pictures).

Attachments:

KCC-C55-181-10421 - DSC_6940b1.jpg

KCC-C55-181-10422 - Bog Cotton1.jpg

quality and creation of habitats of scale.

Caibidil: Volume 1 - chapters » 12 - Biodiversity & Green
Infrastructure

Ábhair: green
biodiversity, infrastructure

General Comment on peatland rehabilitation:

In Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park, we have witnessed the success of peatland rehabilitation on former industrial cutaways on a small scale. In 2011, we undertook very simple and low cost rehabilitation on 46 acres of industrial peatlands by blocking drains with the assistance of Bord na Mona. The construction of 2 km of recycled plastic boardwalk has allowed us to celebrate Peatland biodiversity with hundreds of thousands of international and domestic visitors since 2011 and win Best Environmental Tourism Innovation Award at the Irish Tourism Industry Awards in 2017. The transformation of this area since then has been spectacular and it is now a favourite location for many visitors to the Park. A carpet of peatland flora and Birch, Willow and Scots Pine has covered the bare peat helping to store carbon (Carbon Flux research ongoing in Lullymore since 2016) and led to an explosion of biodiversity which has grown annually. Mammals including hare, red squirrel and pine marten are now resident, birds like skylark, lapwing, meadow pipit have nested and an abundance of insect life is thriving with Moth studies from Butterfly Conservation Ireland recorded annually and showing an increasing variety of species and even the discovery of a once thought extinct species "Suspected" in 2018 (please see Irish Examiner piece attached). Peatland rehabilitation will also improve water quality and assist in improving the health and biodiversity of our local rivers. With improved rehabilitation techniques, PCAS and community led initiatives can transform many of these former industrial areas which have the scale and potential to deliver on biodiversity and as a carbon store, Just Transition and tourism related employment. They will also be a place of valued amenity for peatland communities and a habitat of scale for native species to thrive.

New Biodiversity Action Plan needed

Insert : **Publish a new County Kildare Biodiversity Action Plan by 2024**

Reason; The County Biodiversity Plan is out of date and a central Kildare resource containing biodiversity aims, objectives and initiatives is essential. This document will illustrate the large reach, responsibility and accountability of the Council and partner organisations for biodiversity, *healthy rivers*, *water quality* and the protection of nature. This new enhanced objective to reach 27% of land for nature should provide the cornerstone of the Plan with milestones for the achievement of this target. A published document will help inform the public, ensure implementation and form a tool to keep track of progress.

BI A10 Work with Teagasc and landowners throughout the county in order to identify suitable 'Hare's Corner' projects which would create pocket sized habitats in order to enhance biodiversity.

Insert new Action : Publish updated list of County Biodiversity Sites in the County Biodiversity Action Plan and identify areas including Harristown Common and the Allen-Lullymore Bog Group of sufficient scale as Special Amenity Areas under Ministerial Order.

Attachments:

Teorainneacha Gafa ar an léarscáil: Níl