

**Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil: KCC-C55-172**

**Údar:** Umeras Community Development

**Stádas:** Submitted

### Aighneacht:

Submission from Umeras Community Development CLG  
(UCDCLG) on 2023-2027 Kildare Draft County Development Plan

### Comhairliúchán:

**Dáta a cuireadh isteach:** 21.05.2022 - 20:58

Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

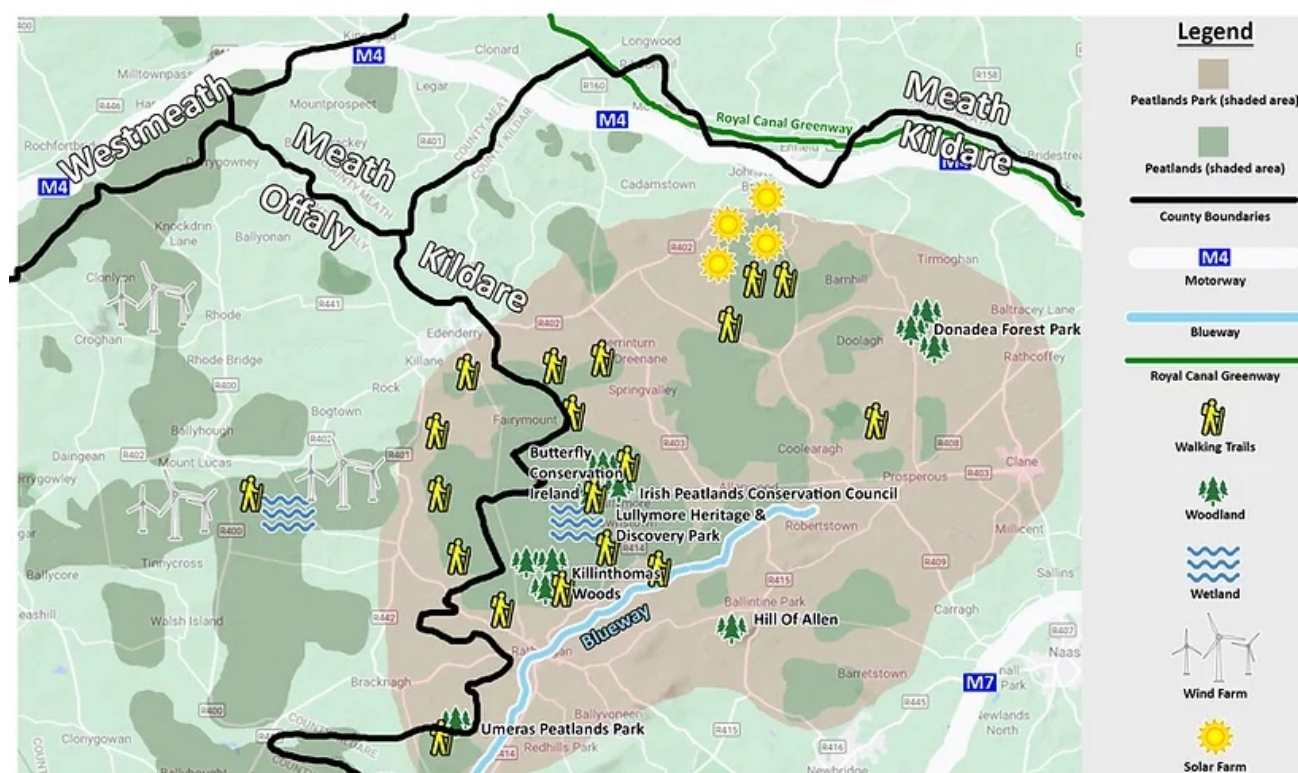
## Comments on Chapter: Volume 1 – chapters: 1. Introduction & Context

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

## Ábhair: 1. Introduction

We welcome the leadership of KCC which recognizes the need to harness our natural assets for nature, the environment and the public good.

The once in a lifetime opportunity to create new biodiversity areas from the Bord na Mona decommissioned peatlands should be central to the target to achieve 27% of the county for nature up from the current 3%. The once in a lifetime opportunity of rewilding state-owned land held by Bord na Mona creating a National Peatlands Park (see map below) of scale, will not only help Kildare achieve its carbon and biodiversity targets - it also has the potential to transform the lives of rural communities, reconnect people to their landscape and other sustainable employment for generations to come.



This target can only be achieved if peatlands are central to the initiative. It is clear from the Green Infrastructure Map in Chapter 12 that the main opportunities for the development of new protected areas are in the decommissioned peatlands and associated peat soils on agricultural land, floodplains of major rivers, and Coillte forests as a large portion of the county is given over to intensive agriculture.

The core-steppingstone-corridor model is very innovative but needs to adopt a landscape approach to biodiversity enhancement and nature tourism.

Umeras Community Development CLG (UCDCLG) are partners in an innovative FarmPEAT Environmental Innovation Partnership (EIP) which seeks to enhance biodiversity on farms surrounding Umeras Bog. UCDCLG has also received positive feedback from both Bord na Mona and Coillte on developing Umeras Peatlands Park on Umeras Bog and linking the bog to the Blueway through adjacent Coillte forestry. There is an opportunity for partnerships between UCDCLG, Bord na Mona, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, Kildare County Council and local landowners to enhance biodiversity across the whole landscape through a mosaic of habitats with enhanced conservation.

The objective of 50% of peatlands to be excluded from development does not make sense as one cannot for example create a protected area on a decommissioned bog to protect threatened bird species such as Curlew, Lapwing, Hen Harrier, etc. while simultaneously hosting wind turbines on a portion of the same bog. There is a clear need for 100% of certain bogs to be separately designated as protected areas for biodiversity separate from industrial development. The National Peatlands Park group has identified bogs in West Kildare which should receive full protection and this should be recognized in the new County Development Plan.

### **Main Comment**

The innovative Core-Stepping-Stones-Corridor Green Infrastructure strategy provides an opportunity to designate important biodiversity and nature tourism sites and routes in the county that should be offered enhanced protection. KCC needs a vision that extends beyond the life of the next County Development Plan up to 2050 which will see economically-depressed communities in West and South Kildare be regenerated by nature-tourism zoning of these Green Infrastructure areas. This has already been recognized in the Barrow Blueway Economic Plan, West Kildare Just Transition Plan and Revised Kildare Tourism Strategy. We believe that communities need to be at the centre of these initiatives as there is considerable capacity in County Kildare to regenerate out county using our human and natural resources.

### **Main Requests**

#### **1.8.1 Overarching Guiding Principles: Add new Guiding Principle:**

**Develop the Green Infrastructure Strategy to protect and enhance the natural assets of the county to create a strong nature-tourism brand in the county using the backbone of our canals as corridors joining significant nature and tourism sites to regenerate economically-depressed areas close to the canals, forests and bogs of Kildare and achieve a target of 27% protected areas for biodiversity.**

Main Reasons:

Under the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, EU Member States are required to designate 30% of their land and marine areas for conservation and biodiversity. This target should be explicitly stated in Chapter 1.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl