



Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil: KCC-C55-270

Údar: Donal Knight

Stádas: Submitted

Aighneacht: Efficient land use

Comhairliúchán:

Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

Efficient and effective use of land

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

Ábhair: energy

Kildare County Council is to be congratulated on the production of a comprehensive development plan. The purpose of my submission is to emphasise the necessity to think even beyond the term of the plan as actions now will have consequences far into our children's future.

There is pressure from higher authorities to address the need to tackle climate change and rightly so. Decisions made now need to assess our assets and use them to the best possible advantage, not just for the county but for society as a whole.

Recent events have highlighted the need to be independent in terms of food and energy.

Ireland is ideally placed geographically in terms of both. We already produce more food than we consume and are able to sustain our neighbours as well. The potential to be self-sufficient in energy is there, but for various reasons including the easy availability of oil, gas and electricity at reasonable prices we have been slow to capitalise on this.

Without adequate back-up we leave ourselves vulnerable to unexpected events.

With effective planning we could be net exporters of energy as well as food. Renewable electricity accounted for 69% of all renewable energy used in 2020.

'Wind energy is currently the largest contributing resource of renewable energy in Ireland. It is both Ireland's largest and cheapest renewable electricity resource. In 2020 Wind provided over 86% of Ireland's renewable electricity and 36% of our total electricity demand. It is the second greatest source of electricity generation in Ireland after natural gas. Ireland is one of the leading countries in its use of wind energy and 2nd place worldwide in 2020, after Denmark.' (SEAI)

Ireland has enormous potential for off-shore generation of electricity either from wind or wave.

Inland, and particularly in Co. Kildare where there are 24,300 ha of bogland, some of which must be reserved for ecological protection and recreational use; but much of it, particularly that which was used commercially could be retained as an energy generator. For many years, Bord na Mona has provided both heat and energy from the bog. By the judicious use of wind and solar generation of electricity together with the already available power distribution network from the bogs, we continue to benefit from this natural resource while allowing nature to regenerate itself for

the next 30 years at least. As the land was not used for human habitation or food production there will be no detrimental impact on the area. With no activity on the bog other than maintenance of equipment, flora and fauna can co-exist with the development with little human interference.

Wind and solar energy are by their nature, variable so storage facilities could also be accommodated at or near present power station infrastructure and away from residential areas.

Re-purposing land that has for many years provided us with heat and light to continue doing so in a more sustainable way would be an example for the rest of the world to follow.

On a practical level, it will be some years before we become independent of fuel for the internal combustion engine. We have 113,765 ha of agricultural land in Kildare but this is a diminishing resource as some will need to be used for housing a growing population and all that goes with it in terms of infrastructure (schools, shops, etc.)

Some of the most fertile and productive land in the country is in Co. Kildare and whilst this is available it can be used flexibly to produce food, nurture the important equine industry and produce bio-energy. For example, rapeseed is a very valuable crop that can be used either as food or as fuel for the previously mentioned internal combustion engines.

Biomass is increasingly used in countries such as Denmark to provide communal heating in towns thus helping to eliminate the need for coal, oil and gas.

Common sense would dictate that land that can be used to feed us or provide fuel for engines but can be used for different purposes year on year gives us flexibility of purpose. It also gives us the opportunity to react quickly to any natural or human-induced crisis.

Lower quality land that cannot be used in such a way should then be used to advantage for production facilities, housing or energy generation. There is a lot of roof space in the county that can be used for solar generation of electricity and encouragement should be given to owners of suitable property to avail of the opportunity to do so.

Where long-term change of use of land is deemed necessary in the case of solar farms, care must be taken to ensure that land can be restored to its previous quality by scientifically testing soils before installation and after decommissioning. Kildare County Council should also take adequate steps to ensure that it is not saddled with the cost of either decommissioning of an installation nor the restoration of land to its previous quality.

Any new structures, particularly in areas of outstanding natural beauty and close to public amenities should be sited unobtrusively.

This would comply with the draft plans in Chapter 9 (Our Rural Economy).

Main opinion:

Judicious use of land for the production of energy and food.

Main requests:

Grade land according to its suitability for food production and use lower grade land for other purposes.

Main reasons:

Land is a diminishing resource and its use needs to be carefully planned for in the long term.

Documents Attached: Níl