



**Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil:** KCC-C55-408

**Údar:** Creative Rathangan Meitheal

**Stádas:** Submitted

**Aighneacht:** Networks, Just Transition and West Kildare

**Comhairliúchán:**

Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

**Dáta a cuireadh isteach:** 24.05.2022 - 12:45

## Litir Chumhdaigh

Since its establishment in 2016 Creative Rathangan Meitheal (CRM) has devoted a significant part of its annual programme of activities to answering the question 'What happens when BnM ends its peat extraction activities?' - What does this mean for workers, communities, for employment opportunities and for the environment? The closure of the Shannonbridge and Lanesboro Power Stations and Bord na Mona's move away from peat extraction came far more quickly than we had anticipated and brought an end a 70 year old partnership between BnM and the ESB which had transformed communities across the Great Midlands Region.

Starting in 2017 CRM has run at least one annual seminar focusing on aspects of BnM's socio-economic impact on the area. In 'The Vanished and the Vanishing?', we explored the socio-economic impact of BnM on the area, and in 'Walking Off A Paper Landscape', the potential of BnMs railway beds to act as greenways. This led to the establishment of an ad hoc group to develop the proposal, a number of informal meetings with BnM, and the ongoing apping of these routes via a series of stop strat films. The potential of rewetted peatlands to act as carbon sinks was explored in 'Healing The wound', and the possibilities and potentials of this post-industrial landscape in 'Imagining a Landscape'. During 2020 CRM moved online and in Layers 1 explored bogs through Macro-Photography, Archaeology and Ecology; in Layers 2 explored History, Story, Memory, and Identity; and in Layers 3 Titled 'Remnants, Brownlands and Wetlands' focused on Just Transition with an opening message from President Michael D Higgins.

CRM collaborates with a range of organisations including (1) BnM and in particular its Ecology Team, who have facilitated site visits and on-site workshops with pupils from local schools, Transition Year Students, adults and Students from Maynooth University; as well as actively participating in our seminars/conferences, (2) the Geography and History Departments in Maynooth University, (3) the Irish Peatlands Conservation Council and (4) the Community wetlands Forum.

Through our mmebrship of the Community Wetlands Forum CRM has met with Kieran Mulvey Just Transition Commissioner to discuss the barriers to participation facing communities in the Just Transition area. CRM actively supports the principles of networking and collaboration, and is actively involved in the newly established West Kildare SMART Rural Alliance,

CRM is currently collaborating with the Geography Department Maynooth on a cross county oral history project funded by the RIA. It is also a partner Gnáthóga Nádúrtha (Natural Heritage), an Arts Council funded Climate Action and place-based initiative led by Carlow Co Council with Kildare and Meath Co Councils which brings environmental activists, artists and community mapping experts together. An earlier collaboration between artist Monica de Bath and Dr Patrick Bresnihan is included in 'Earthwritings' - which has just the Geographical Society Book of the Year Award for 2022.

## Tuairimí:

### Referencing Kildare Co Co's Just Transition Plan for West Kildare in the CDB Plan

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

**Ábhair:** 1. Introduction

CRM welcomes the plan's focus on harnessing our natural assets in a manner that responds to the climate and biodiversity crises.

CRM welcomes Kildare Co Co's initiative in developing a Just Transition Plan for West Kildare, and notes the Council's role within the EMRA which will manage the delivery of the next round of EU Just Transition Funds. This should be referenced in the County Development Plan.

As West Kildare is part of a region with a particular socio-economic history there is considerable scope for cross-county projects. This is an area where Kildare Co Co could help broker/facilitate partnerships by committing to cross county projects, and encouraging agencies to avoid treating Just Transition as a winner-takes-all competition for resources. In this context CRM welcomes Kildare Leader's initiative in promoting the SMART Village concept and looks forward to its support of West Kildare's SMART Rural Alliance and the brokering of connections with its counterparts in Laois and Offaly.

CRM welcomes the inclusion of Peatways in the Draft CDB Plan and notes their potential to link the Royal, Grand and Barrow Blueways to former BnM/ESB communities in West Kildare and beyond. The Peatways also have the potential to enhance access to the proposed Peatlands Park, and CRM welcomes Kildare Co Co's support for this proposal. This access must take account of the need to protect sensitive sites, flora and fauna - particularly in areas such as the Clonruisk raised bog remnant near Ballydermot BnM Works.

CRM views the National Peatlands Park, Blueway, Peatways and Greenways as central to delivering a Just Transition in West Kildare; and to building the area's reputation as an eco-tourism destination. However, while the Draft County Development Plan aims to respond to our climate and biodiversity crises, CRM notes that the County's Biodiversity Plan is out of date as is the County's Landscape Character Map (and its impact assessment criteria) - both need to be updated as a matter of urgency.

Finally CRM notes that social dialogue and equipping people/communities with the skills to participate in, and benefit from, the future net zero economy are two of the key principles in policy framework set out in the Climate Action Plan. They are also central to Just Transition and should be embedded in the County Development Plan and in the CDB's approach to Just Transition.

#### *Príomh-thuairim:*

CRM welcomes Kildare Co Co's initiative in developing a Just Transition Plan for West Kildare, and notes the Council's role within the EMRA which will manage the delivery of the next round of EU Just Transition Funds. This should be referenced in the County Development Plan. CRM views the National Peatlands Park, Blueway, Peatways and Greenways as central to delivering a Just Transition in West Kildare; and to building the area's reputation as an eco-tourism destination.

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#### *Príomh-iarratais:*

That Kildare CDB update its Biodiversity and County Landscape Character Map (including its impact assessment criteria) as a matter of urgency.

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*Main reasons:*

Kildare CDB's Draft Plan is a forward looking document and has many innovative features. However, a failure to update the County's Biodiversity Plan and the County's Landscape Character Map (and its impact assessment criteria) would fatally undermine the potential of its Core-Stepping-Stones- Corridor Green Infrastructure strategy.

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## Peatlands Possibilities and Resources

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

**Ábhair:** communication

### Change Objective No EC 050 to read

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 in a manner consistent with the principles of Just Transition. (To include Arts & Heritage Funding)

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*Príomh-thuairim:*

Kieran Mulvey's most recent report as Just Transition Commisioner identifies a number of barriers experienced by communities in relation to the Just Transition to process date. Unless Social dialogue and capacity building/support for communities are part and parcel of the apporach to Just Transition decisions around funding will be driven by the priorities of other stakeholders

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*Príomh-iarratais:*

That communities most affected by the transition from peat are treated as equals in the process, and that responses to the end of the BnM/ESB partnership and of peat harvesting focus on the longterm rather than on a set of timebound funds.

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*Main reasons:*

Unless the communities most affected by the endiing of the BnM/ESB partnerhsip, which was based on peat extraction, are supported to be agents of change they will be its victims.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl

**Teorainneacha Gafa ar an léarscáil:** Níl