



County Kildare
LEADER PARTNERSHIP

**CKLP Submission to Kildare County Development Plan
May 2022**

Kildare County Council
Planning Department
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County Kildare LEADER Partnership (CKLP) is a Local Development Company funded by the Irish Government and charged with the delivery of a range of programmes whose aim is to support specific target groups with a view to making a positive difference in their lives. The company was set up in January 2009 as part of the process of restructuring of the local development sector nationally.

The main purpose of County Kildare LEADER Partnership is to promote support both urban and rural communities, promote social inclusion, support enterprise development and employment creation, facilitate access to education, training and lifelong learning and assist community groups in identifying needs and developing local solutions. Our mission statement states that "our mission is to facilitate individuals and communities to participate fully in social, economic and cultural activity by supporting a vibrant and inclusive society in County Kildare".

Two of the main programmes which are delivered by County Kildare LEADER Partnership are delivered in a partnership with Kildare County Council and the LCDC. These are the Social Inclusion Community & Activation Programme 2018-2023 and the Rural Development Programme (LEADER). They both have an important role in developing innovative responses to local problems, and in building local capabilities to address local needs and develop local resources and services.

County Kildare LEADER Partnership welcomes the consultation process in place for the development of the County Development Plan and sees significant areas of synergy between its work and the overall objectives of the Plan. It welcomes the references to the SICAP Programme and to the Kildare Integration Strategy in Chapter 10 but sees a numbers of other areas where it can be a key partner in achieving the objectives of the Plan.

Chapter 4 Resilient Economy & Job Creation

Amendment RE 014: *Promote the 2023 LEADER Programme, which supports rural and economic development and the 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme (or any successor to same), which prioritises tackling vacancy in towns and villages, remote working and supporting town centre living.*

Rationale for Amendment: The LEADER programme is, alongside the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, a key part of the National Government strategy for rural areas. In Kildare the LEADER Programme is a strategy ratified by the LCDC and implemented by County Kildare LEADER Partnership.

A successful rural strategy in the county needs to ensure harmony between the different programmes funded by the same Government Department

Amendment RE 033: *In conjunction with the LEADER Programme, Encourage and support start-up enterprises in tourism across Kildare.*

Rationale for Amendment: The LEADER programme has supported a significant number of tourism providers in the county in the past 25 years and will continue to do so in the new LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027.

New Objective RE P8 : *Promote the development of the SMART Village process in the county building on the work of the recently formed West Kildare Smart Rural Alliance(SRA) and support the SMART Strategy for the Peatland Communities of West Kildare developed by them.*

Rationale for Insertion: Smart Villages are communities in rural areas that use innovative solutions to improve their resilience, building on local strengths and opportunities. They rely on a participatory approach to develop and implement their strategy to improve their economic, social and/or environmental conditions, in particular by mobilising solutions offered by digital technologies.

The SMART Village concept in an important one in EU rural policy. The EU Action for Smart Villages initiative was launched by the European Commission in 2017. The concept is also closely aligned to Ireland's new 'Smart Community' initiative, launched by the Department of Rural and Community Development & the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment in January 2019. The EU Observation Note on Irelands Cap Proposal has recently asked Ireland to outline its vision and approach for Smart Villages and this should be reflected in policy at local level. Some reference to this should be included in the Plan.

New Objective RE 068: *In conjunction with County Kildare Leader Partnership support the development of the Social Enterprise sector in the county*

Rationale for Insertion: *Social Enterprises are an important part of the Governments objectives for rural areas* and are ideally placed to respond to gaps in services in rural areas. It is overseen by the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019 -2022. County Kildare Leader Partnership supports a network of social enterprises in the county and provides training and mentoring to them.

Amendment RE 0127: *Support in conjunction with Offaly County Council, Laois County Council, local communities and all other relevant stakeholders such as Bord na Mona, Coillte and the NPWS, any proposal for a new National Peatlands Heritage Park centred in Kildare on Bord Na Mona cutaway bogs in Kildare, Laois and Offaly.*

Rationale for Amendment: The development of a National Park has the potential to develop the midlands as a significant attract for visitors, particularly in the strongly emerging eco-tourism sector promoted by Fáilte Ireland. Proximity to Dublin means that Kildare is uniquely placed as a gateway to the Midlands for tourist arriving in Dublin who traditionally have leap-frogged the area to visit the West or South-West of Ireland.

Local communities need to be explicitly referred to and considered a key stakeholder in the development of all plans concerning the Peatland Park and the Just Transition area. This tripartite planning mechanism – between local communities, Bord na Mona and the Council was explicitly referenced in the Local Just Transition Plan for west Kildare, commissioned by Kildare County Council.

CKLP sees itself as ideally placed to work with local communities to ensure their participation in these processes.

Amendment RE P20: *Continue to work closely with key stakeholders in the tourism industry including Kildare Fáilte, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, County Kildare Leader Partnership and the National Parks and Wildlife Services, in order to develop the Barrow Blueway for tourism and recreation and ensure ease of access to this amenity.*

Rationale for Amendment: County Kildare Leader Partnership led out and funded the development of the Barrow Blueway Economic Plan, funded by LEADER Programme funds. It successfully launched this Plan in conjunction with Kildare County Council and Waterways Ireland. It continues to work with these partners to develop the Blueway and

is currently in the process of funding a Placemaking Plan to support the development and identity of the Blueway. County Kildare Leader Partnership Tus workers also play a key role in communities along the Blueway to maintain the pathways.

Amendment RE 0137: *Work with Waterways Ireland and Kildare Leader Partnership to progress the delivery of the (i) Naas to Sallins Greenway and (ii) Naas to Corbally Harbour Greenway and to develop the harbour itself for amenity purposes*

Rationale for Amendment: County Kildare Leader Partnership can play a key role in supporting community engagement with this project, in supporting any Social Enterprises which may emerge and in funding Feasibility Studies related to the work.

New Objective: Tackling Long Term Unemployment

Work with education and training providers, employment support agencies and employers to support local initiatives to engage the long term unemployed in employment including local training initiatives, encouragement for the employment of local labour and engagement with local communities.

Chapter 9 Our Rural Environment

The **Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2022 (RDP)** is part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a common set of objectives, principles and rules through which the European Union (EU) co-ordinates support for European agriculture. The CAP framework is comprised of two complementary pillars, with Pillar 1 responsible for direct payments to farmers and market measures while Pillar 2 covers rural development measures, including those related to the environment and climate change. In Kildare this Pillar also covers the wider rural community development initiatives delivered under the LEADER programme. Due to delays in the CAP negotiations a two year transitional period and the associated rules were agreed at EU level at the end of 2020 to cover the period 2021 – 2022.

The LEADER Programme has existed in Kildare for the last 25 years has been very successful, supporting economic, social, and environmental development, by providing

the financial, mentoring, and training resources necessary for rural communities to support their own development and develop initiatives at local level. The Programme, delivered firstly by CKLP Partnership, and more recently by **a partnership between County Kildare Leader Partnership, Kildare County Council and the LCDC** has maximised the drawdown and impact of EU funds, in keeping with the LEADER approach and evaluated as very successful by EU institutions. **The Programme operates on the basis of a Rural Development Strategy** which was drawn up by CKLP in consultation with local stakeholders and adopted by the LCDC. A new LEADER Programme will run from 2023 – 2027 and will similarly develop a new Rural Development Strategy for the county to cover that period. The Programme is overseen by the Department of Community and Rural Affairs. Supporting the work of the LCDC and by implication any strategy adopted by it is explicitly an objective of the County Development Plan as referenced in SC P1.

This new LEADER Programme 2023-2027 will continue this community-led local development (CLLD) approach to rural development in Kildare, by animating and funding initiatives that emerge at a local level to address local challenges and needs. Ireland's CAP SWOT Analysis and Needs Assessment identified several challenges in rural Ireland for which the LEADER approach can assist with the delivery of Government objectives. These include the need to support private enterprises and communities to improve the quality of life and economic activity in rural areas; and the need to create and sustain employment in rural Ireland with a focus on social inclusion and climate change mitigation.

The Government report "Summary of Rural Development Programme Ireland, 2014 – 2020", states: *Leader has formed part of the policy framework for rural development in Ireland since its inception in the 1990s and has proven to be an effective tool for supporting the economic and social development of rural communities by providing the resources necessary for communities to support their own development.*

The LEADER programme aims to foster community-led local development (CLLD). This includes the development of the capacity of communities in rural areas, development of citizen engagement and the training of leaders from local communities and communities of interest.

Based on this development work the LEADER Programme has also supported the ideas and initiatives generated by individuals and communities in the areas of enterprise, tourism, community facilities and the environment. Since 2016 more than €4 million of LEADER funds has enabled over 80 different projects, to create jobs, start-up or expand businesses, and enhance services and facilities in rural areas

The LEADER Programme in Kildare has also focused on the development of effective partnerships to enable the delivery of initiatives and the creation of networks. This has given rise to initiatives such as the Barrow Blueway Economic Strategy, overseen by a Steering Group comprising of CKLP, KCC and Waterways Ireland, the Kildare Community Biodiversity Project which delivered training sessions in 10 towns/villages in County Kildare and the preparation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans for each place, overseen by CKLP and KCC, and the creation of Kildare Food and Craft Networks in partnership the LEO.

The LEADER Programme in Kildare sees itself primarily as a strategic and development programme and can do this through the development of in-house initiatives. Since 2018, 11 such Projects have been developed in-house including training for the Craft and Food sector developed with the LEO.

It therefore sees that it has a significant part to play in the rural development element of the County Development Plan and that this needs to be reflected in the text.

Amendments:

1. Refer to the EU long term **Vision for Rural Areas** and the national **Rural Development Programme** 2014 – 2022 in the "Planning Policy Context" Section
2. Refer to the local the local **Rural Development Strategy** developed to cover 2014 – 2022 and the future strategy which will be developed to cover 2023 – 2027
3. Refer to the **LEADER Programme, delivered by CKLP** as an Implementing partner with KCC and the LCDC as a key component in rural development in the county.
4. Explicit reference to the LEADER programme could be included in sections RDP1, RDO1, RDO3, RDO4 and RDO6:

Amendment RDP1: *Working closely with the LEADER Programme, support and promote rural enterprises and encourage appropriate expansion and diversification in areas such as sustainable agriculture, forestry, peatlands, food, crafts, renewable energy at suitable locations in the county, particularly where they contribute to a low carbon and resilient economy.*

Rationale for Amendment: The LEADER Programme is a central element of the Government's Our Rural Future Strategy and is overseen in the county by the LCDC based on a local Rural Development Strategy.

Amendment RDO1: *In conjunction with the LEADER Programme encourage the development of appropriately scaled alternative rural based small-scale enterprises that are appropriate in rural areas. All planning applications for one off enterprises in rural areas shall have regard to the criteria listed in Table 9.1 of the Plan.*

Rationale for Amendment: A key component of the LEADER Programme is to provide mentoring and financial support for the development of small scale rural enterprises.

Amendment RDO3: *In partnership with the County Kildare LEADER Partnership provide training and capacity building to promote resource efficiency and support the shift toward a low-carbon and climate resilient economy in the agriculture (including signpost farms), food, and forestry sectors in County Kildare.*

Rationale for Amendment: The shift to a carbon neutral economy will demand training and building the capacity in individuals and communities and will not occur with a change in understanding.

Amendment RDO3: *Working closely with the LEADER Programme, encourage and facilitate the sensitive re-use of vernacular houses or farm buildings for farm diversification, agri-tourism, and other appropriate rural-based development.*

Rationale for Amendment: The LEADER Programme has been particularly effective in its support for farm diversification over the past 25 years. Since 2016 a number of significant projects have been supported in areas of eco-tourism, adventure-based tourism, tourism accommodation and equine related activities.

5. The LEADER Programme has been especially effective in supporting Farm Diversification and thus sees a clear supporting role in objective RD O10

Amendment RD10: *Alongside the LEADER Programme, facilitate the development of alternative farm enterprises, and appropriate small scale start-up rural enterprise in the countryside with the intention to supplement existing farm incomes e.g., converting 1Food Vision 2030 redundant farm buildings for other farm-based activities such as agrifood, tourism, crafts, and energy whilst balancing this with the need to protect, promote, and enhance the viability and environmental quality of the existing rural economy and agricultural land.*

Rationale for Amendment: As mentioned, one of the main objectives of the LDCC-KCC-CKLP LEADER Programme is to support small-scale rural enterprise development and farm diversification.

6. In a similar way, the 25 years of the LEADER Programme has seen significant support for equine facilities and thus should have a supporting role in RD O16.

Amendment RD16: *With the LEADER Programme, promote and encourage the development of activities that relate to the equine industry in the county such as riding schools, pony trekking and the development of bridle paths.*

Rationale for Amendment: Over the past 25 years the LEADER Programme has given significant financial support to the development of equine related initiatives such as these.

The Just Transition and Peatlands

County Kildare Leader Partnership believes that Kildare has a significant opportunity to develop around the traditional peatlands communities a unique, vibrant eco-based and activity-based tourism Destination.

We argue that this should be a significant part of the overall Just Transition strategy for peatland communities in parallel with the development of the Blueway and the Greenways.

There should be a reference to the Kildare Local Just Transition Plan - commissioned by Kildare County Council - in the County Development Plan. We strongly support the priority in that Plan to develop a formal working partnership with all stakeholders, including local communities to consider any future development of Just Transition areas.

County Kildare Leader Partnership is uniquely placed to support the development of this partnership having significant experience in the development of communities' capacity over the past 25 years.

We strongly argue for the development of the capacity of traditional peatlands communities to enable their voice to be heard as true partners in the future developments.

We support the work of the West Kildare Smart Rural Alliance and their SMART strategy for Peatlands Communities.

County Kildare Leader Partnership strongly supports the balanced development of Kildare's significant peatlands resource, with the development of wind energy being proportionate alongside the development of this eco-based tourism offering.

We welcome the references to the development of the proposed National Peatlands Park, and the way that this recognizes its potential for local communities, tourism, biodiversity and climate targets.

We support a prioritization of eco-based, sustainable tourism for the former Bord na Mona industrial peatlands, alongside a proportionate wind farm development in elected areas as being the best way forward.

This unique tourism offering in the areas of the county will involve working closely with the communities which were traditionally dependent on peat extraction as the main industrial activity, alongside similar communities in Offaly and Laois.

CKLP **strongly supports** objective **RD027**: *Encourage the re-wetting, restoring and/or re-wilding of former cutaway bogs and peatlands with an emphasis on promoting biodiversity and carbon sequestration.* We strongly believe that rewilding offers a huge potential for the county in terms of the tourism created by wild areas, and that it has the potential to save many parts of rural Kildare from the creeping decline that has been a feature in recent years. This rewilding can help Ireland meet its restoration and climate targets, restoring degraded ecosystems and thus improving the health and resilience of our ecosystems to turn the tide against biodiversity loss. Rewetting peatlands can function as natural carbon sinks which strongly contribute to the achievement of carbon targets. This carbon sequestration. Is even more urgently required in the light of recent data on the heating up of the planet.

We strongly believe that the re-wetting of Kildare bogs creates a synergy between the biodiversity and climate crisis agenda by focusing on a biodiverse ecosystem with significant carbon storage and sequestration potential, while at the same time creating a tourism offering which has the potential to allow the Midlands compete with the Wild Atlantic Way.

We further believe that this strategy responds to the observations made by the European Commission in their comments on Ireland's draft CAP submission where they state that it is a "matter of urgency to halt the serious deterioration of Ireland's peatlands"

Amendment RD029: *Consider the development of renewable energy (wind and solar) on a percentage/no more than 50% of former industrial peatlands/cutaway bogs, in appropriate locations, subject to relevant environmental assessments and the development of eco-based tourism in peatland areas linking in with the development of the Blueway and Greenways.*

Rationale for Amendment: The development of Wind energy needs to occur alongside the development of an eco-based tourism vision for the former industrial peatlands and with due regard for environmental, bio-diversity birdlife and animal habitat.

Amendment RD031: *Support 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.*

Rationale for Amendment: The development of a National Park has the potential to develop the midlands as a significant attract for visitors, particularly in the strongly emerging eco-tourism sector promoted by Failte Ireland. Proximity to Dublin means that Kildare is uniquely placed as a gateway to the Midlands for tourist arriving in Dublin who traditionally have leap-frogged the area to visit the West or South-West of Ireland.

Chapter 10 Community Infrastructure and Creative Places

10.3 Local Context: Suggested amendment to acknowledge extension of SICAP to 31st December 2023 and the new Kildare Integration Strategy 2021 – 2026 which replaces the 2014 – 2019 strategy.

10.12 Request for the addition of a further objective: "To explore the potential for a Training Centre for County Kildare to provide dedicated facilities for vocational training and apprenticeships" County Kildare has been disadvantaged by a lack of adequate facilities for further education and training.