

Offaly
Local Economic & Community
Plan 2024 – 2029
FRAMEWORK LECP



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly Local Community Development
Committee

CONTENTS

Section 1:	Introduction	Page
	i. Introduction from the Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council	
	ii. Foreword from the Chair of Offaly Local Community Development Committee	
	iii. Message from the Chief Executive of Offaly County Council	
Section 2:	Background and Context	7
	2.1 Executive Summary	
	2.2 Context	
	2.3 Consultation Process Report	
	2.4 Offaly Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027	
	2.5 Overriding Status of the Plan	
Section 3:	Socio-Economic Summary	21
	3.1 Socio-Economic Summary	
	3.2 SCOT Analysis	
Section 4:	Consistency of LECP	38
	4.1 Sustainable High-Level Goals	
	4.2 Alignment with RSES and County Development Plan	
	4.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)	
Section 5:	LECP Framework 2024-2029	45
	5.1 Strategic Vision for the LECP	
	5.2 High Level Goals	
	5.3 LECP Framework	
Section 6:	Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Process	51
Section 7:	Appendices	56
	Appendix A Summary of Key Data Sources	
	Appendix B List of Acronyms	
	Appendix C Membership of Relevant Bodies	

This LECP is accompanied by and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- LECP Socio-economic Profile and Statement
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Final Determination
- Natura Impact Assessment Screening Report and Final Determination

All documents can be viewed online at: www.offaly.ie/lecp

Section 1: Introduction

i. Introduction from the Cathaoirleach

The overall vision for Local Government is set out in *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government* which includes the need “to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”. This Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) sets out a pathway for achieving this for county Offaly over the coming six years 2024-2029.

The purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant Local Authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

As the framework for the economic development and local/community development of county Offaly, the LECP will be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant actions arising from national and regional strategies and policies that have a local remit.

Offaly County Council published the first Local Economic and Community Plan in 2016 and the process of developing the second LECP provided all stakeholders with the opportunity to reflect and build on the experiences of the intervening period. This new Plan is informed by the learning and experiences of all relevant stakeholders through both internal and public consultation to ensure a robust LECP for the next 6-year period and has been developed in accordance with guidelines provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

On behalf of the elected members of Offaly County Council I warmly welcome the Framework Local Economic and Community Plan 2024-2029 for county Offaly and I look forward to the delivery of the 2-year Implementation Plans by the Local Authority, the LCDC and the other key stakeholders in the coming years. Successful implementation of the LECP will benefit all our communities and businesses as we face the challenges that lie ahead.



Councillor Eddie Fitzpatrick,
Cathaoirleach,
Offaly County Council

ii. Foreword from the Chair of Offaly Local Community Development Committee

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for the establishment of Local Community Development Committees in each local authority area. One of the primary functions of the LCDC is to develop, implement and monitor the community elements of a six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for the local authority area.

The LECP sets out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of County Offaly over the next six years. The Plan will serve as the primary strategy guiding development in County Offaly.

Economic development and local and community development, while separate functions, which involve different challenges and approaches, are mutually supportive in creating strong communities and local economies. The LECP represents an integrated plan, and its implementation will require ongoing integration between the two components to ensure a coordinated delivery of actions for both economic and community development.

The LECP will enable a targeting of resources which are under the direct management of the Local Authority, under the management of LCDC partners, and under the direct management of other publicly funded local development agencies and bodies not on the LCDC. It will be action focused and will be delivered through the integrated and collaborative delivery of local authority programmes and the programmes of other stakeholders.

As Chairperson of Offaly LCDC, I wish to thank the members of the LCDC; the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC, the LECP Advisory Steering Group, Council staff and all stakeholders for their contributions to shaping this Plan which will help to achieve our vision of creating a sustainable and competitive county that we can be proud of.



Councillor John Leahy,
Chair of Offaly Local
Community Development
Committee

iii. A Message from the Chief Executive of Offaly County Council

The Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan sets out a comprehensive strategy and provides a clear vision of the ambitious priorities we want to achieve in county Offaly over the next six years and beyond.

The strategy recognises the urgency of acting now to respond to the climate change mandates if we wish to achieve our vision of a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral county by 2050¹.

Economically, the Plan incorporates our vision that Offaly will become an established Cleantech enterprise county with a reputation for rapidly building, scaling and anchoring technology companies that address climate change across multiple sectors, enhance competitiveness and deliver shared sustainable prosperity through collaborative initiatives.²

This Plan is complementary to key national and regional strategies such as Project Ireland 2040, the National Climate Action Plan, the Town Centre First Policy and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Our local response to national strategy will enable us to become sustainable and competitive which will help us to attract public and private funding to achieve our goals which are identified in this Plan.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the LCDC, the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC, Offaly PPN and the statutory and non-statutory bodies who have contributed so much to the preparation of this Plan.



Anna Marie Delaney,
Chief Executive,
Offaly County Council

¹ Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

² Offaly Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2027

Section 2: Background and Context

2.1 Executive Summary

This is the Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2024-2029. It has been jointly prepared by the Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC in Offaly County Council.

The preparation of the LECP was directed by the LECP Advisory Steering Group which consisted of representatives of the Local Community Development Committee and the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee.

The development of the Plan has been based upon National Guidelines for the preparation of local economic and community plans and involved extensive public and stakeholder consultation including with organisations and agencies responsible for public services, representatives of the community and business sectors, older persons, and young people. The feedback received through the consultations are reflected throughout the LECP document.

The purpose of a Local Economic and Community Plan is to set out, for the period 2024 – 2029, the objectives and actions which are needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of County Offaly. The LECP is the primary mechanism at local level to transfer relevant actions arising from EU, national, regional and local strategies and policies to a County Offaly context.

This is an integrated plan containing an Economic Plan prepared by the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC and a Community Plan prepared by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

The LECP is developed and implemented in partnership between Offaly Council and other economic and community stakeholders and therefore, it provides an enabling framework that supports collaborative working between the economic and community sectors and across all stakeholders. It therefore helps to bring community and economic stakeholders together, to strategically align and work towards shared goals in a collaborative way.

2.2 Context

This LECP provides a six-year roadmap that will directly impact the needs of those who live, work, and recreate in the county. It will assist both local government and others to target national, regional and local initiatives, programs, and projects towards improving the quality of life of the people living and working in Offaly.

This is Offaly's second Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). It builds upon our first LECP 2016-2021 Plan and provides us with a new framework to deliver positive change within the County.

The Plan presents our Vision and accompanying High Level Goals and Objectives. These reflect our understanding of the socio-economic issues and opportunities documented in our Socio-

Economic Statement and summarised in this Plan. They capture the views of all the residents, businesses and stakeholders who contributed to an extensive process of consultation and engagement in 2023.

Our High-Level Goals			
Sustainable Empowered Communities	Healthy Place Making	Economic Opportunity	Climate Action
			
Offaly will be a county which supports sustainable, inclusive and empowered communities	Offaly will improve the physical and social infrastructure to create places that are healthy and attractive to live, work and invest in	Offaly will strive to spread economic opportunity and prosperity to all sections of society	Offaly will pro-actively address climate change and work to reduce emissions by 51% by 2030 and support transition to net zero by 2050

LECP 2016-2021

Offaly County Council adopted the first LECP on 14th December 2015 which covered the period from 2016 to 2021. It contained a set of goals and objectives to be achieved through the implementation of 261 actions under an Economic Plan and a Community Plan. The 6 High Level Goals included:

Community Plan	Economic Plan
(1) Education, Training & Skills	(4) Employment, Enterprise & Innovation
(2) Local & Community Development	(5) Tourism & Promoting Place
(3) Empowering Communities	(6) Green Economy & Sustainable Living

The Local Government Reform (Amendment) Act 2014 also included the requirement for the LECP to be reviewed once during 6-year lifetime of the Plan. A Review of the LECP 2016-21 was completed by Offaly LCDC in May 2021 and by the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC in October 2021.

Some of the key lessons from the Review included:

- LECP needs to be a key part of linked national, regional and local plans
- Other Plans such as Age Friendly, Healthy Offaly Plans need to be complementary to LECP
- LECP needs to identify and include key local priorities
- Need to establish a mechanism for interagency implementation of actions
- Keep implementation simple – no meeting burnout!
- Develop goals which are directional rather than aspirational
- Ensure relevance of actions for the implementing agency
- The implementing agency must have the capacity and resources to implement actions
- Reduce high number of goals – 261 in Offaly LECP
- Ensure goals are relevant for full term of the Plan

- Need clear guidance on mid-term review process
- Ensure integration of community and economic goals

Guidelines for LECP 2024-2029

New Guidelines were issued to local authorities by the Department of Rural and Community Development in November 2021 following extensive consultation with many of the stakeholders who were engaged in the initial process. The Guidelines provide an outline of the steps to be completed to develop a fully integrated LECP at local level and reflect many of the issues identified in Offaly in the course of the Mid-Term Review. They were issued under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and therefore have a statutory basis. The Guidelines provide detailed advice and support in relation to the LECP process including ongoing implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The LECP 2024-2029 incorporates goals and objectives that are consistent with and complementary to the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and relevant national strategies and policies. The LECP provides a Framework which will guide the preparation and delivery of three 2-year Implementation Plans. This provides the agility and flexibility required to be in a position to react to emerging needs and opportunities on an ongoing basis.

The guidelines support the participative and consultative process which Offaly County Council has undertaken to develop a Local Economic and Community Plan that is appropriate for Offaly. Under the Guidelines the LECP process consists of two parts including;

- a) the **LECP Framework** details the High-Level Goals and Sustainable Community and Economic Objectives as well as considering outcomes and high-level indicators for the 6-year LECP period. Consideration of potential actions has formed part of the development of the High-Level Goals and Objectives in the LECP Framework. This LECP Framework builds on the lessons of the last LECP whilst adapting previous goals to ensure that LECP 2024-2029 encompasses future changes in priorities, opportunities and challenges.
- b) The **Implementation Plans** detail the inputs, actions and resources required for the Implementation Plan period as well as relevant specific key performance indicators to facilitate evaluation. The Implementation Plan process outlines the specific, time-bound and measurable actions to be delivered in that period based on evidence-based prioritisation and takes into consideration the resources available in that plan period.

For Offaly it is important to promote sustainable recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and adopt new ways of living and working in a world facing the enormous challenge of climate change.

These priorities are reflected in Ireland’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021) which incorporates the European Union’s response “to address the economic and social impact of the pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions”.

The LECP 2024-2029 provides a comprehensive framework, identifying strategic priorities and, at the same time, being flexible to respond to new challenges that may emerge. In 2022, the war in Ukraine brought another unexpected challenge. It brought an influx of refugees to Ireland, broken

supply chains for food products and high energy costs. Currently, the local authority is leading the coordination of the local services response in the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

Increased migration to Ireland from other parts of the world that are also in war situations or facing humanitarian crises are further examples of increased challenges. Other factors include faster cycles of economic growth and recession and Ireland’s vulnerability to external shocks, as an open economy and island nation; higher interest rates; demographic change including an ageing population and greater population diversity; and the impact of disruptive technologies which bring opportunities but can also leave some areas and sections of the economy and society behind.

Lessons from the experience of COVID-19 point to the strength of community in Ireland. In Offaly it helped form a partnership between national and local government and the community and voluntary sector. The Community Response Forum was set up at great speed and delivered co-ordinated support to vulnerable people. Inter-organisational structures made a significant difference to the ability to co-ordinate and deliver rapid local responses. The community and voluntary sector played a key role in the work of identifying and supporting the vulnerable.

The learning from the Community Call initiative has important longer-term implications for improved ways of working. Our recent experiences showed the functions that can be brought back to local village centres and towns and the possibilities to live and work in the same place. Our experiences also showed the need for quality outdoor space and recreation, and the importance of social interaction to mental health and wellbeing. The possibilities for education, business, healthcare, culture and arts and social networks opened by expanding the use of digital technologies and creating the skills and infrastructure to make services available online were clearly demonstrated.

Changes have also had adverse impacts on certain groups in society such as children, young persons and families and older persons without the equipment and skills to access services such as education, healthcare, banking and other services online; women and children affected by domestic violence; people experiencing rural isolation; people in International Protection Applicant Service (IPAS) Accommodation centres; and vulnerable people and families with complex social problems, suffering from addiction, with mental health problems, lacking their own accommodation or the homeless.

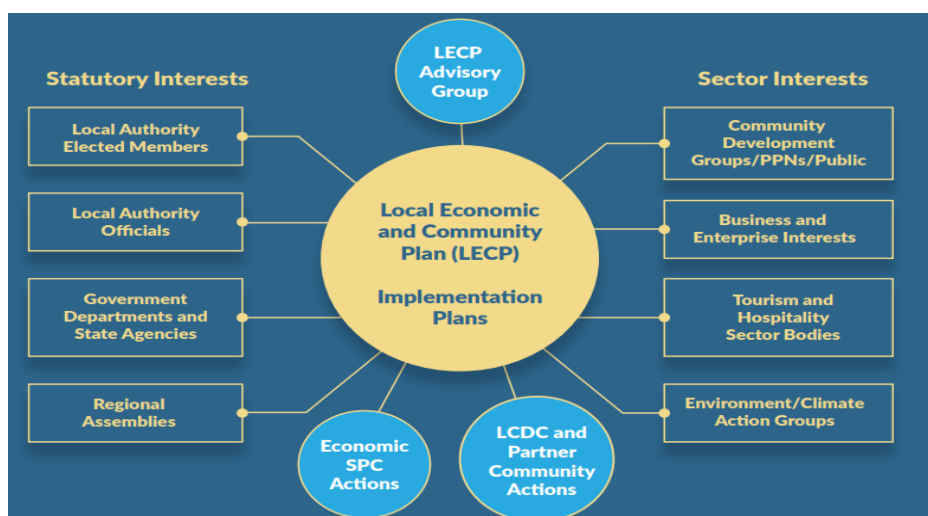


Fig.1. Overview of the LECP process

2.3 Consultation Process Report

A comprehensive public consultation process underpinned the development of the LECP as required by the Local Government Act 2014. Meaningful community participation and consultation is one of the guiding principles that underpins the LECP. This approach will be developed further during the lifetime of the LECP and during preparation of 2-year Implementation Plans and progress will be measured as part of the monitoring and implementation phase of the LECP process.

The consultation process incorporated guidance provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development in its publication - *A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making* issued in 2022 and a workshop was held in April 2023 for LCDC members and local authority staff on how to implement the Guide.

Other parallel consultation processes ongoing in Offaly, including the Offaly Local Development Strategy, the Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027, County Development Plan, Offaly Climate Action Plan, Offaly Age Friendly Strategy, etc were consulted to ensure that all information relevant to the LECP, from whatever source, was considered.

The consultation process commenced in 2022 and has included a range of measures including:

- The Offaly Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027 was completed by OCO Global consultants for the LEO office. OCO Global facilitated workshops and consultations with key Offaly County Council departments, sectoral players, elected and Oireachtas members, local business communities, large employers and the public sector agencies/institutions that all play a role in the local economy. This involved consultations with 50+ stakeholders including Industry, Government Agencies, Students and Diaspora.
- An LECP Advisory Steering Group (ASG) was established which has met to prepare and draft the LECP. The ASG will also oversee the implementation and monitoring of the Plan over the coming years.
- Consultation was held with members of the LCDC, the Municipal Districts, the Community, Culture and Emergency Services SPC, and the Community Response Forum members.
- A Socio-Economic Statement, Socio Economic Profile and Economic Strategy for Offaly were prepared in 2023 and a comprehensive report prepared on the issues arising from the process.
- Individual meetings and discussions were held with representatives of key stakeholder groups
- Consultation documents were circulated to agencies and community groups seeking feedback
- Online submissions were received via Submit.com from May until August 2023
- Public Consultation was advertised via Public Notices in local Newspapers.
- Targeted emails were sent to PPN community groups, elected members, Community Forum, Age Friendly Alliance, Council staff, Key NGO and social enterprises.
- Regular Facebook/Instagram notices were posted.
- County Councillors were updated regularly.
- Emails inviting submissions were sent to LCDC, SPC's, Community Response Forum members.

- The Socio-Economic Statement and High-Level Goals were also available for public viewing at each of our eight public Libraries.

Among the Sectors Consulted were:

- Business community
- Industry
- Government Agencies
- Children, young people & students
- PPN, Community Centres & Family Resource Centres
- New communities
- Neurodiverse
- Affected by housing affordability
- LGBTQIA+
- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- Economically disadvantage / NEETs/ Disengaged from labour market
- Travellers
- Students
- Diaspora

The initial round of public consultation was undertaken in parallel with the process for the Local Development Strategy (LEADER Programme). From this consultation process, an original set of High-Level Goals was developed. They were informed by the outcome of the socio-economic profile, the review of the policy environment, and the experience of the LCDC regarding the delivery of the previous LECP. The original set of HLGs was subsequently amended and improved through an open process inviting the public, business sector, agencies, and organisations to offer further input. A mix of online surveys, individual meetings and written submissions was used to encourage further elaboration on the economic and community elements of the LECP.

2.4 Offaly Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027

It is a time of great change. The COVID-19 pandemic, accelerated decarbonisation, climate change and Brexit have brought a responsibility to re-evaluate and reset the way we shape our economic recovery, build resilience and advance a more diversified, vibrant and sustainable economy in Co. Offaly with a connected and engaged local business base and focused regional leadership.

The Offaly Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027 provides the framework for an overarching strategy and an action focused roadmap to build an inclusive economy of the future for County Offaly. Ultimately, the Strategy and Action Plan will support the activities, investments, and programmes that drive economic recovery. By focusing on high potential strengths and opportunities, we create the foundation for a strong, adaptive, sustainable, and thriving future for our county. The Strategy provides:

1. A **clear vision** for economic development in Offaly County Council with validated principles to underpin that vision.
2. Clear **cross-departmental mapping of activities** related to economic advancement and/or coordination of resources.

3. A clear **internal and external engagement and communications** proposition
4. An assessment of sectoral strengths, infrastructural strengths and deficits, economic opportunities, and key priority areas (geographic and sectoral).
5. **Alignment with Regional Strengths:** The strategy and plan build upon existing regional activities and align with local strengths. This approach aims to leverage competitive advantages in both domestic and international markets.
6. **Market-Driven Approach:** Prioritising the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and industry stakeholders is crucial. Academia, government, and investors should align with this market-driven approach to foster effective clusters.
7. **A focus on smart specialisation** – to help position Offaly as a leader in key areas of strength and opportunity.
8. **Early Value Creation:** Initially funded by public sources, the strategy aims to demonstrate value through programs and services within a short timeframe. As constituents recognise value, they contribute financially, leading to a sliding scale model.
9. **Robust Governance Model:** The overall framework includes a governance structure that remains accountable to government funders. It also allows for agile, impact-oriented delivery.
10. **Resources focused** – the Strategy and Action Plan’s ambition will be realised through resource planning and maximising external funding awards.
11. **Securing Commitment from Key Players:** The plan involves collaboration among diverse stakeholders within each sector, aiming to achieve economic outcomes. Whole system transformation in Offaly necessitates comprehensive collaboration to design effective programs and create networks that foster talent, skills, and technology competencies for long-term economic contribution.
12. **Aligning Cluster Strategy with Policy:** The strategy ensures strong alignment with national, provincial, and local green economy policies and strategies while maintaining independence from the government.
13. **Developing Strong, Mission-Driven Branding and Marketing:** The plan envisions implementing a brand for the county as an independent agent of change. This brand will have a clear mission, supporting collaboration efforts, program activities, and international marketing.
14. **Developing Strategic Funding Models:** The strategy leverages both public and private capital to support cluster activities and benefit cluster constituents.
15. While the plan is strategic and action focused up to 2027, it also includes a **long term view and outline an economic vision for the County up to 2030 and beyond.**

Fittingly, the stimulation of economic activity is a cross departmental ambition in Offaly County Council, covering the key areas of Enterprise and Business, Local Economic Development Services and Local Enterprise Office, Community, Arts and Culture, Planning, Environment and Tourism. Each area contributes to ensuring a healthy and culturally rich environment and inclusive socio-economy.

Of particular importance in informing the economic goals and objectives of the LECP is the Offaly Economic and Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027. This document addresses the economic areas which the LECP is intended to address. It involved consultation with a broad range of stakeholders which are the same stakeholders relevant to the economic component of the LECP. A broad consultative process was used to produce this plan and it was not considered appropriate

that this plan and a separate LECP with alternative goals, objectives and actions would exist side by side and ultimately be in competition.

The LECP has, therefore, adopted and endorsed the Economic and Development Strategy 2022-2027 and has sought to identify areas of additionality on which it can focus in the economic area.

The six areas of focus in the Economic Development Strategy are as follows -

1. Construction and Engineering (the Built Environment)

The significance of the Built Environment for residential and commercial is becoming greater throughout the world. The advent of zero carbon building is achievable and in the Mount Lucas National Construction Centre, Offaly already possesses an asset to develop and evolve a greater national and international role in this field. This report proposes a distinct area of focus for the industry to secure the Offaly position in the industry.

2. Rural Green: Energy Generation and Storage

The development of rural energy and conservation technologies is essential to be trialled and tested in scale operations. Offaly already possesses the Rhode Green Energy Park which can be used as a fulcrum for such national and international activities. A green economy is one that provides economic opportunities and improved human well-being in harmony with the sustainable management of all natural resources. The transition to green rural economies is about improving people's lives and livelihoods in rural areas, balancing natural resource use with maintaining incomes, and trading the risks of making a change with the opportunities that change will bring.

3. Medtech and Wellbeing

In the coming decades, elderly people will account for an increasingly important share of the European population. At the same time, working age population will proportionately shrink. As a result, old-age dependency ratio will increase, that is, fewer working age people will have to support more seniors. These factors combined with budget constraints require new innovative solutions to keep ensuring high quality of seniors' life.

Midlands Regional Hospital Tullamore is a fulcrum of the Midlands Healthcare system and is in an ideal position to pioneer the development of sustained living at home for older people. In conjunction with Community Services such as the Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons (ICPOP), the Chronic Disease Management Programme (CDM) and Connecting for Life, a Mental Health Services Programme in line with Slainte Care.

4. ICT Sector

Ireland is currently the EMEA headquarters for many of the world's largest tech companies. The fundamental driver in the industry is skills and this remains the core bottleneck in the industry worldwide. The new technologies mean that skills unique to humans such as creativity, teamwork, empathy, and innovative thinking will become increasingly more valued by employers. The Remote Working Strategy for Business whilst targeted at all sectors sees a natural synergy with the ICT sector and could be an important steppingstone for business model changes in the next years as it is unlikely that full central office usage will resume.

Offaly needs to "pitch" this opportunity in a pragmatic but structured manner to ICT companies throughout Ireland. At the same time, there must be a shift in the industry –

academia engagement moving beyond skills provision to research that drives innovation in the community and becomes attractive for companies to engage in Offaly as a place for their business.

5. Food and Nutrition and the technologies that support them

The Food industry has undergone significant changes in the past decades with changing consumer sentiment pushing an agenda for food that opens real possibilities for the future of Food production and packaging. Technology is rapidly being integrated into every part of the food industry. But accelerating adoption of existing technologies, as well as a suite of new technologies emerging, creates both opportunities and challenges for food businesses. Data analytics and digital platforms offer businesses the opportunity to understand customer preferences in a way that was not previously possible.

One area where technology can enable businesses to better fulfil consumer preferences is through personalised catering en masse. This is especially important in the context of increasingly complex consumer dietary requirements. Offaly is at the centre of the Midlands Food potential and the combination of the industry working with technology provides the ideal opportunity for novel products and services. The anchor for such an initiative should be the Ferbane Food Campus. The development of the zero-carbon dairy and beef farm is remarkably close.

6. EcoTourism and Creative Experiences

Tourism, as an industry, has changed. This is in the global context of growing tourism worldwide which are compelled by several factors. These factors are changing how tourism value is realised and in truth, some types of tourists are simply worth more than others. The analysis of Mastercard aggregated data worldwide showed that the tourism sector comprising hotels, restaurants and other hospitality services made up 30% of expenditures on a trip. The remainder were experiences – sport, leisure, arts, crafts, and healthy living.

This was also related to a timing question of vacation time with most of the spending coming after day 3 in a location and increasing thereafter. Offaly needs to reposition itself in this sector – offering experiences and sport opportunities to Tourists who will spend more.

The three pillars in the Economic Development Strategy are as follows -

1. A NATIONAL LEADER IN INNOVATION & CREATIVITY

In key national sectors.

2. TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF OUR NATIONAL CONNECTIONS AND ASSETS

Exploiting our role as a national gateway from east to west with key assets

3. STRONGER CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH

Spreading opportunity and prosperity to all sections of Offaly society

Under each of these pillars a series of areas of activity have been identified, and these and their associated goals or outcomes have been used to identify objectives and KPIs for the economic elements of the LECP, though not exclusively.

The comprehensive plan hinges these pillars that collaborate with government agencies, diverse industries, and academia. These pillars aim to achieve the following objectives:

Sustained Enterprise Growth and Value: Fostering resilience, innovation, and productivity in businesses, both small and large, while enhancing Ireland’s competitiveness. This includes measures to support domestic SMEs, attract foreign direct investment, and drive digital adoption.

Expanding Business Activity within SME Sectors: Facilitating growth within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by improving productivity, internationalisation, exporting activities, and digitalisation.

Enhancing Employment Opportunities and Skills: Creating more and better employment opportunities, attracting new talent, and developing human resources aligned with specific sectors. Additionally, efforts to improve governance and sustainability of the local economy are emphasised.

This multifaceted approach aims to propel sustainable enterprise development, boost employment, and elevate Ireland’s economic competitiveness. County Offaly has demonstrated its potential for economic growth through successful companies and innovative new companies. These companies have not only established themselves in Offaly but have also ventured into exporting and developing new markets.

Several notable projects highlight Offaly’s commitment to change:

- Rhode Green Energy Park
- Food campus in Ferbane
- Shannonbridge Energy Storage developments
- I-LOFAR in Birr
- Co-working Hubs
- County Council Robotics projects in secondary schools

The current strategy aims to create a vibrant, robust, and diversified economy. By transforming key sectors, such as Green Energy and Food, Offaly seeks to shift its narrative from a place people leave to one they actively choose to go to.

Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024

The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 was launched in March 2022. It includes projects and initiatives across the four Midlands counties (Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly). It includes three key strategic objectives, with discrete actions developed for each.

Strategic Objective 1: Climate Action – Transition to a climate neutral economy

Strategic Objective 2: Build on achievements to date in sectors in which the region has a competitive advantage through Smart Specialisation and wider adoption of digitalisation within business, leveraging the new Technological University of the Shannon-Midlands Mid-West

Strategic Objective 3: Placemaking – Position the Midlands as a community of choice in which to live, create, study, work, visit, and invest.

Linkages with TUS

A significant development in the region has been the establishment of the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West (TUS: Midlands Mid-West), a merger between Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT).

TUS: Midlands Mid-West is home to strategic research institutes such as Materials, Bioscience, and Software – along with Technology Gateways (APT and COMAND). TUS: Midlands Mid-West will facilitate local and regional higher education access and course choice with university level qualifications for students in the Midlands Region and will greatly assist in attracting enterprise, skills retention, increased direct investment, and strengthen linkages with the existing enterprise base, including through the recently established Advanced Technologies in Manufacturing (ATIM) cluster.

It has been agreed that partnership working will take place between TUS as the region's University and Offaly County Council, OLDC and LOETB in supporting Offaly towards a Just Transition through research and development initiatives.

Areas of cooperation may include:

- Assisting communities and groups most affected by JT
- Combined funding applications
- Keeping County Offaly at the forefront of national awareness
- Targeted education and upskilling initiatives
- Community specific capacity building and skills development activities
- Identification of Just Transition Fund (JTF) opportunities, such as: bioeconomy, peatlands and carbon capture, and community and enterprise schemes, etc.
- Restoring and reimagining the wetlands
- Housing and demographic/ social reinvention
- Place making based on a distinct shared culture and history
- Combined research activities: an action-research based laboratory, providing evidence base and fore-sighting/ forecasting services

Climate Change

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 has set ambitious legally binding sectoral and societal targets for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reductions and energy efficiency increases. Local Authorities are recognised by both the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) 2024 and the Climate Action Plan 2024, as being uniquely placed, owing to their distinctive capabilities, to translate and lead on delivery of the national climate objective for the broadest local impact.

Offaly County Council has prepared the Offaly Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in accordance with the provisions of The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 and the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) 2018. The Offaly Climate Change Strategy was adopted by Offaly County Council in 2019.

Offaly County Council’s Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

In 2024 Offaly County Council published the statutory Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 which is aligned with the Government’s national climate objectives, and which seeks to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050. This Climate Action Plan was developed in close collaboration with a range of stakeholders including Elected Members, Council Management and Staff, together with external stakeholders including Offaly Public Partnership Network, communities, adjoining Local Authorities, Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), as well as sectoral groups and local businesses.

The Climate Action Plan sets actions towards achieving a reduction in emission (by 51%) and an increase in energy efficiency (to 50%) across its own assets, services and infrastructure for which it is directly accountable. The Plan also identifies actions in which Offaly County Council and elected representatives have a leadership role in influencing, advocating and facilitating other sectors in achieving their own climate targets and ambitions. Offaly County Council is also committed to assisting, supporting and empowering local communities and individuals to become climate resilient and embrace the variety of opportunities presented by climate change.

Each Local Authority is also required by Government to designate a “Decarbonising Zone” (DZ) which will act as a testbed of new technology, innovation and ambitious approaches to climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity enhancement at a local community level which may be scaled up across the county and further afield. Tullamore has been chosen as the DZ for Offaly, and an initial Register of Opportunities (ROO) has been identified within this plan, from which detailed implementation plans and stakeholder mapping/engagement will help deliver on emission and energy targets within the DZ.

Actions have been designed to complement SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) and cover six high level strategic goal thematic focus areas and twenty high level objectives – all of which reflect the level of climate action ambition held by Offaly County Council. The six areas of thematic focus are:

1. Governance & Leadership
2. Built Environment
3. Transport
4. Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
5. Community Resilience & Transition
6. Sustainability and Resource Management

The delivery of the Plan will be steered by the Climate Action, Environment and Transportation SPC on behalf of the Council. Offaly County Council will continue to work collaboratively and in partnership with a range of key external stakeholders to support the delivery of this Plan and will report on overall progress to Offaly LCDC at regular intervals.

Housing For All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland 2021

Housing for All is the Government’s plan to increase the supply of housing to an average of 33,000 per year over the next decade. The delivery of new social and affordable homes is a key priority of the plan and will form an important element of the overall housing delivery.

The policy has four pathways to achieving these targets and objectives of housing for all:

- Supporting home ownership and increasing affordability
- Eradicating homelessness, increasing social housing delivery, & supporting social inclusion
- Increasing new housing supply
- Addressing vacancy and efficient use of existing stock

Housing for All includes a commitment to deliver 90,000 social homes by 2030. This includes over 10,000 social housing homes each year over the next five years, with an average of 9,500 of those being new-build social homes. Housing for All also commits to a very significant increase in the delivery of affordable homes (for purchase and rent), by local authorities, the Land Development Agency and Approved Housing Bodies.

2.5 Overriding Status of the LECP Plan

Implementing this Plan will involve Offaly County Council helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans setting out public policy for sustainable development, including that relating to the economy, communities, infrastructure, land use, tourism and environmental protection and environmental management.

This Plan is situated alongside this hierarchy of statutory documents that has been subject to environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment, as appropriate, and forms the decision-making and consent-granting framework. The Plan does not provide consent or establish a framework for granting consent and will not be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent.

The Plan fully aligns with the provisions of the existing National Planning Framework, Ireland 2040, National Climate Action Plan 2024, Housing For All 2021, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 and the current County Development Plan, all of which have been subject to legislative requirements relating to public consultation and environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment. As such, the Plan is wholly subject to the requirements of the provisions set out in these documents, including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents, including through SEA and AA processes, and does not introduce any alterations or additions to those provisions.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sectors) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework. It is a specific provision of this Plan to ensure that all the provisions from the County Development Plan identified in the accompanying

Screening for SEA and AA reports shall be complied with throughout the implementation of this Plan.



Cycling in the Slieve Bloom mountains near Kinnitty

Section 3: Socio- Economic Summary

The Socio-Economic profile is based on a wide range of socio-economic data sets including: CSO Census 2011, 2016 and 2022; POBAL datasets; the Labour Force Survey; Live Register; the quarterly national household survey; Offaly County Council Development Control Plan, and additional up-to-date statistics from other local government and state agencies including the EMR Reports, HSE, IDA and Enterprise Ireland among others.

Important information arising from the Census 2022 results will necessitate on-going analysis to ascertain any implications for the LECP which has had to be drafted in advance of release of the full Census 2022 data.

Population

- *The total population of Offaly is increasing, albeit at a slower rate than the State level.*
- *Population growth is most evident in central and east of Offaly, lower population growth in rural areas and in West and South Offaly*
- *Along with this increase in population, there is continuing increase in ethnic and national diversity.*
- *Almost one third of the population is aged 40 to 64.*
- *Offaly's age profile highlights the need to invest in services for older people and targeted social inclusion projects*

The population of Offaly is 83,150 (Census of Population 2022), which equates to 1.61% of Ireland's overall population. This is an increase of 4,707 (+6%) since 2016. This was made up of a natural increase (i.e. births minus deaths) of 2,704 and an estimated net inward migration (i.e. population change minus natural increase) of 2,003. This was a lower rate of growth than the EMR (up by 8.6% or 200,841 people), and the State (up by 7.6% or 361,671 people).

Of this population, 41,522 were female and 41,628 were male. The average age of Offaly's population in April 2022 was 39 years, compared with 37.2 years in April 2016. Nationally, the average age of the population was 38.8, up from 37.4 in April 2016. The number of people aged 65 and over continues to grow. This age group increased by 22% to 12,958 in Offaly, and by 22% to 776,315 at a national level since 2016.

Place	Population	% of Total Population
Tullamore	15,598	19%
Edenderry	7,888	9%
Birr	4,726	6%
Clara	3,403	4%
Banagher	1,907	2%
Ferbane	1,324	2%
Daingean	1,223	1%
Kilcormac	1,051	1%
County Offaly	83,150	

Population distribution of County Offaly 2022

In Offaly, the number of dual Irish citizens increased from 1,130 to 1,972 while non-Irish citizens accounted for 9% of the county's population. Nationally, dual Irish citizenship increased by 63% from 104,784 to 170,597 people in 2022 and non-Irish citizens made up 12% of the population. The proportion of separated and divorced people in Offaly remained steady at 6% of the population (aged 15 and over), the same as in 2016. The national comparison was 6% in both 2022 and 2016.

According to 2022 Census results Tullamore MD recorded a population of 30,958. Tullamore Town is the largest settlement in County Offaly, serving as the main source of employment and sustaining the largest population and is designated as a Key Town under the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 and plays a strategic role in the regional context as part of the 'Linked Gateway' with Athlone and Mullingar. Clara fulfils a supportive economic function to Tullamore, benefitting from its advantageous proximity to the M6 (Dublin-Galway) route.

According to 2022 Census results Edenderry MD recorded a population of 25,188. The main towns of Edenderry, Portarlinton, and Daingean, are complemented by an arrangement of villages and rural hinterlands.

According to 2022 Census results Birr MD recorded a population of 27,004. Birr MD encompasses the largest geographical area among the three districts and includes numerous settlements such as Birr Town, Shinrone, Ferbane, Banagher, and Kilcormac, as well as a network of villages and rural areas.

Population growth has been most prevalent in the centre of the county – in Tullamore and its environs and in rural Ireland and in communities to the east of the town. Population growth is also evident in Edenderry and around Portarlinton. Lower levels of growth have occurred in and around Birr, and, to a lesser extent, in and around Clara and Banagher. Levels of growth have been much lower in rural communities, and several rural EDs in West and South Offaly have experienced population decline over the past 40 years (OLDC LDS).

Health and Wellbeing

- ***Of the three Municipal Districts, Edenderry had the lowest proportion of people reporting good or very good health.***
- ***The disability rate was particularly high in Tullamore compared to Birr and Edenderry.***

According to the Census 2022, in Ireland the majority of the population considered themselves to be in very good (57.1%) or good (31.8%) health. In 2022, 89.2% of men felt their health was good or very good compared with 88.5% of women. Compared to the State, the proportion of people reporting good or very good health was lower in Birr (87.8%), Edenderry (87.5%) and Tullamore (88.3%).

At the State level, 1.9% of people reported themselves to be in either bad (1.5%) or very bad (0.4%) health. Compared to the State, the proportion of people reporting bad or very bad health was lower in Birr (2.2%), Edenderry (2.2%) and Tullamore (2.2%).

According to the Census 2022, 21.5% of the population reported having a disability in Ireland. It is important to note that there is a common assumption that "People with Disabilities" refers

only to people with physical disabilities. However, many disabilities are invisible such as acquired brain injury, chronic illness, etc. Many people with mental health difficulties often experience isolation and marginalization, and suicide and self-harm can go hand in hand with poor mental health.

Compared to the State figure, the proportion of people with a disability was higher in Birr (23.4%), Edenderry (22.0%), and Tullamore (27.6%).

Economy, Enterprise and Labour Force

- ***Of the three Municipal Districts, Edenderry had the highest proportions of people at work.***
- ***All three municipal districts had consistently lower unemployment rates compared to the State.***

Economic strengths include the presence of indigenous enterprise, and adaptation to new and emerging sectors including sustainable energy and green technologies. Offaly is home to several multinational companies providing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which provide employment opportunities and contribute to the local and regional economy as well as attracting additional FDI. There is also a comparatively high uptake of technical and vocational education and training in the County.

Recent key changes in the County's economy has necessitated an increased focus on tourism, including promoting attractions including: Clonmacnoise, Birr Castle and Gardens, Lough Boora Discovery Park, Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trail, Grand Canal Greenways, the River Shannon, and Tullamore D.E.W. Distillery. Offaly's economy was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the hospitality and tourism sectors being particularly affected.

There were 35,248 people (aged 15 and over) at work in Offaly, an increase of 4,961 people (+16%) between 2016 and 2022. Nationally, there were 313,656 additional people (+16%) at work.

In 2022, the proportion of people at work was lower in Birr (52.2%), Edenderry (55.1%) and Tullamore (54.2%), than the State (56.5%). Between 2016 and 2022, this proportion increased in Birr (3.0%), Edenderry (4.1%) and Tullamore (3.2%). The proportion of people unemployed having lost or given up their previous job was higher in Birr (4.5%), Edenderry (4.7%), and Tullamore (4.5%), than the State (4.3%).

The proportion of people in full-time education was lower in Birr (10.0%), Edenderry (11.1%), and Tullamore (10.2%), than the State (11.2%).

Comparison of the types of jobs carried out by the population of the catchments revealed Offaly County has high proportions of people working in manual and agricultural employment and low proportions of employers, managers, and professional workers.

In recent years, Offaly has seen investment and support from both local and foreign direct investors. In 2021, Offaly had a total of 5,358 jobs were supported by IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and client companies. While there was a slight decline of these jobs between 2018 and 2020, there was an increase in both from 2020-2022.

Employers and managers were lower in County Offaly (14.9%), than the EMR (21.0%) and the

State (18.3%) as were higher professional (with 4.7% in County Offaly compared to the EMR (9.6%) and the State (8.4%). Lower professional workers and non-manual skilled labour were also lower in than EMR and the State. However, Silverbrook ED, Screggan ED, Gorteen ED all reported higher proportions of employers, managers, and higher professional workers than the state average.

The proportion of manual skilled employment was higher in County Offaly (15.2%), than the EMR (10.2%) and the State (11.1%) as was semi-skilled employment at 12.1%, compared to 9.0% in the EMR and 10.2% in the State.

The farming sector is significantly higher in County Offaly (8.9%), than the EMR (2.3%) or State (5.8%). The proportion of farmers was highest in Birr (14.4%) followed by Edenderry (6.6%), and Tullamore (6.1%). The proportion of farmers was particularly high in Barna (53.0%), Dromoyle (43.1%), Cangort (38.9%). Agricultural workers were also noticeably higher in County Offaly at 1.6% than the EMR (0.5%) or State (0.6%).

In 2019, 63% of the enterprises in Offaly had fewer than 50 employees. 21% of the businesses were medium sized (50 to 249 employees) and 16% were large (250+ employees).

Across the catchment, women were more likely to work in managerial and technical roles than men (with 39.6% women compared to 34.3% of men). Women were more likely to work in non-manual (39.6%) compared to men (16.5%). While men were more likely to work in skilled manual roles at 26.7% compared to women at 15.4%.

According to the 2022 Census, the unemployment rate in the County Offaly was 9.4%, this was higher than the State (8.3%). The unemployment rate was, higher in Birr (9.5%), Edenderry (9.1%), and Tullamore (9.5%), than the State (8.3%). Between 2016 and 2022, the unemployment rate declined in Birr (-5.7%), Edenderry (-7.3%), and Tullamore (-6.6%).

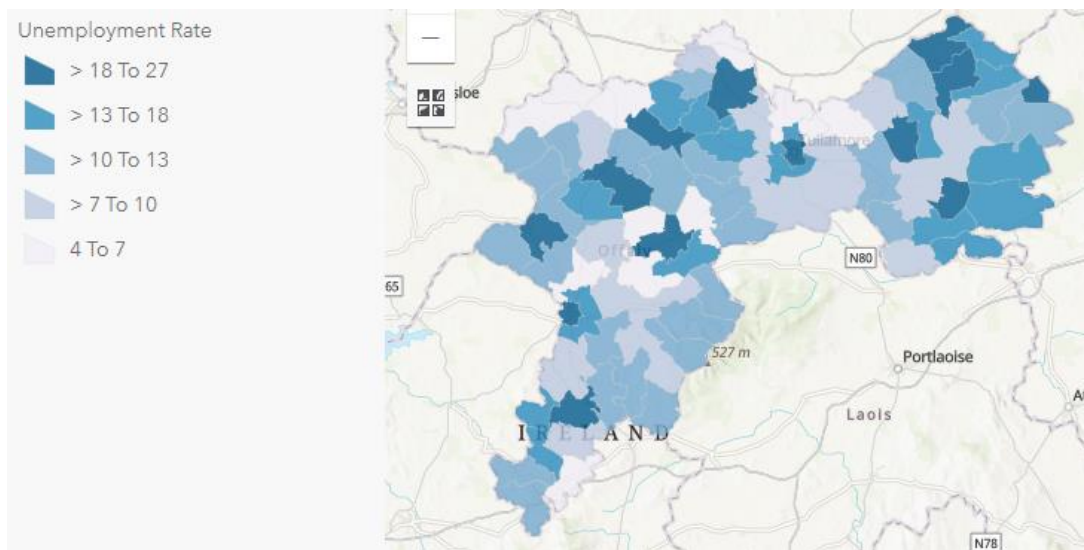
However, the County experienced a significant decline in unemployment of 6.5% between 2016 and 2022. Despite being high the unemployment rate saw a rapid decrease (-6.5%) in County Offaly, higher than the -4.6% decrease in the State. In terms of Total Jobs: Resident Workers ratio, Tullamore has 1.48, which is relatively high compared to the EMRA average of 0.82. Birr has a good balance with a ratio of 0.96 while Edenderry 0.63 and Portarlington 0.43 indicating a large proportion of outward commute.

Energy generation, closely related to Bord na Móna's activities, has traditionally been a major source of employment in Offaly. Due to climate adaptation requirements, this sector is undergoing significant transformation with cessation of peat extraction and developments in relation to alternative green energy production including wind and solar energy development.

Coillte, another major landowner, maintains forests in rural areas, with the Slieve Blooms expected to provide opportunities for harvesting and transport as the forest stock matures. Coillte owned forestry in Offaly is a total of 8,972 hectares and Coillte managed forestry in Offaly is 513 hectares.

Offaly offers a strong and expanding tourism experience. In the western part of the county, Clonmacnoise and the River Shannon are major attractions, while the Slieve Bloom Mountains, straddling the Laois/Offaly border, entice visitors for recreational walking and road cycling. There is ongoing work in delivering a planned 100km mountain bike experience across Offaly and Laois, as well as walking trails and opportunities for horse riding. Lough Boora Discovery Park, located in the west, showcases a rehabilitated cutaway bog with high biodiversity value, serving as an

excellent tourism amenity. The new Tullamore Dew Distillery Visitor Experience and distillery tour opened in 2022, with the old visitor centre in Tullamore town now open as The Old Warehouse, a destination venue bar and restaurant.



Offaly possesses a rich and diverse range of natural resources that not only hold ecological and environmental significance but also contribute to the tourism product. The Grand Canal, running the length of the county, serves as a recreational and ecological corridor, offering opportunities. In addition to all of these natural resources, the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 provides for the creation of a Wilderness Corridor through peatlands which will provide further natural amenities and opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

In Offaly in 2022, 8,324 people (aged 15 and over) worked from home at least one day a week in 2022. This represented 24% of the workforce. The national figure was 32%.

Housing

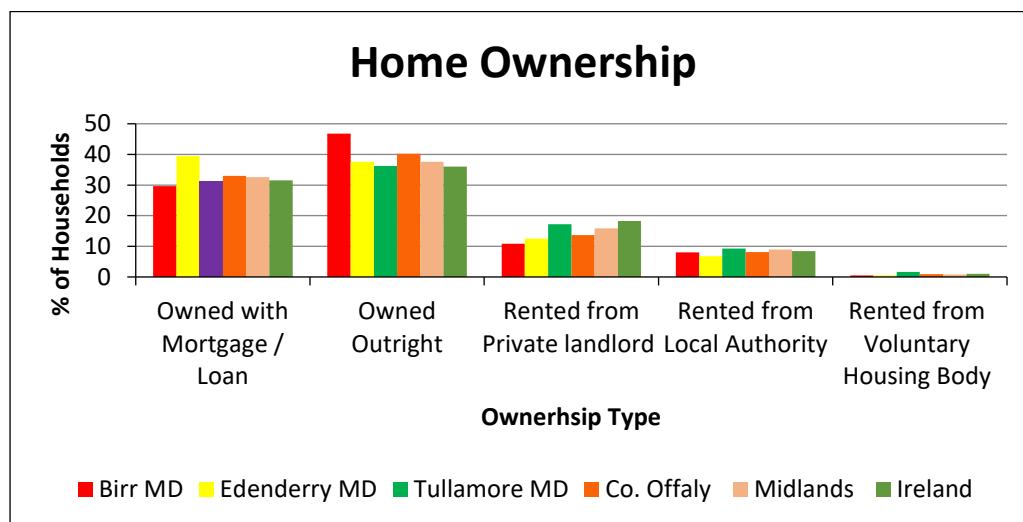
- ***The proportion of occupied dwellings was higher in County Offaly than the State, and particularly high in the Edenderry Municipal District.***
- ***Between 2016 and 2022, Tullamore had slower growth in dwelling stock than the rest of the County.***
- ***Tullamore had a high proportion of social housing compared to Birr, Edenderry and the State.***

The total housing stock in Offaly in April 2022 was 32,151, of which 34.3% were in Birr, 28.7% were in Edenderry, and 37.0% were in Tullamore. This shows an increase of 1,411 (+4.6%) since 2016. There were 2,663 vacant dwellings, which was 23 more than in 2016 (+0.87%). This does not include holiday homes, of which there were 211.

The 27,359 houses/ bungalows were distributed across Birr (9,269), Edenderry (7,961), and Tullamore (10,129). Of the 1,338 apartments, 365 were located in Birr, 393 were located in Edenderry, and 580 were located in Tullamore. Of the 5 bed-sits 1 was in Birr, 1 was in Edenderry, and 3 were in Tullamore. Of the 221 caravans 93 were in Birr, 65 were in Edenderry, and 63 were in Tullamore.

Compared to the State in 2022 (87.4%), the proportion of occupied dwellings was higher in Birr (88.5%), Edenderry (91.6%) and Tullamore (91.0%). In 2022, in Offaly 72% of households owned their own home, with a further 22% renting. This compared with 66% of households owning their home nationally and 28% renting. According to the CSO (2023), there were 416 new dwelling completed in Co. Offaly.

Home Ownership Status for Selected locations (Census 2016)



In 2016, the proportion of single people in County Offaly (52.2%) was lower than the EMR (55.0%), and the State (53.6%). Conversely the proportion of people married in County Offaly (38.7%) was higher than the EMR (36.6%), and the State (37.6%).

The average household size was slightly larger in County Offaly (2.86 people) than in the EMR (2.85 people), and in the State (2.79 people). Average household size was particularly high in Edenderry (2.96).

Permanent Private Housing Stock by Year Built in Co. Offaly

Period Built	Households	Persons	Households (%)	Persons (%)
Pre 1919	2,362	5,572	8.69	7.20
1919 - 1945	2,100	4,863	7.73	6.28
1946 - 1960	2,076	4,882	7.64	6.31
1961 - 1970	1,586	3,903	5.83	5.04
1971 - 1980	3,137	8,019	11.54	10.36
1981 - 1990	2,472	7,187	9.09	9.29
1991 - 2000	3,693	12,194	13.59	15.75
2001 - 2010	7,770	25,276	28.58	32.65
2011 or Later	473	1,428	1.74	1.84
Not stated	1,515	4,080	5.57	5.27
Total	27,184	77,404	100.00	100.00

Source: Census of Population (2016)

31% of houses in Offaly have a BER of A1-A3, while 9% have a BER of F-G. This suggests that uptake of retrofitting and similar schemes will be well received.

Built Environment & Transport

- *The rate of car ownership was higher in Birr and Edenderry compared to Tullamore and the State.*
- *Across the County, the most common mode of transportation to school was by personal vehicle.*
- *Edenderry is more reliant on personal vehicles for transport to work than Birr and Tullamore.*
- *Commute times in Tullamore are particularly short in comparison to Birr, Edenderry and the State.*

The county is well served by strategic road access including the M7 (Dublin to Limerick) and M6 (Dublin to Galway). Offaly is also where some key national secondary routes interconnect – the N52 (Dundalk to Nenagh) and the N80 (Enniscorthy to Moate) routes. Offaly is also served by an excellent rail network with stations in Tullamore, Clara and Portarlinton. Further, Offaly is at the crossroads of almost all of the Country’s major electricity network grids.

Offaly is served by both bus and train routes. However, public transportation is limited in much of the County. This likely contributes to the high levels of car dependence seen in the County and leads to an inefficient transport sector.

The most common mode of travel to work in County Offaly was by personal vehicle (motorcycle or scooter, car driver, car passenger, van) with 81.8%. This was much greater than the equivalent proportions in the EMR (65.3%) and the State (73.1%). This suggests a high reliance on personal vehicles and a lack of public and active transport in the County.

This car reliance was particularly high in Birr with 89.7% of households having at least one car, compared to only 84.4% across the State. Between 2021 and March 2023, only 282 electric vehicles were licensed in County Offaly as private cars.

At the State level, 32.9% of people reported having a commute of less than 15 minutes. Comparatively, this proportion was higher in Birr (41.4%), lower in Edenderry (32.8%), and higher in Tullamore (46.7%).

In order to mitigate against climate change, the Irish government and European Commission have promoted the ‘greening’ of the car fleet throughout Europe. Figure 26 provides an overview of the proportion of new private cars licensed for the first time by fuel type in Co. Offaly in 2022. Overall, 1,285 new private cars were registered with the local authority in 2022, with the vast majority being 43 either petrol (26.53%; n = 341) or diesel (34.47%; n = 443) cars. In Co. Offaly, very few electric private cars (11.28%; n=145) were registered with the local authority. For hybrid vehicles, the most popular type was petrol and electric, with 252 registrations during 2022.

According to the CSO, people in Offaly live further away from everyday services compared to the State, on average. People in the County have further to go to reach hospitals, GPs, and pharmacies. In particular, the average distance to a 24/7 Garda station is higher in Offaly (12km) compared to the State (8km).

Although Offaly is centrally located and well connected to other Counties via the National Road network, intra-connectivity is still a challenge. As a predominantly rural county, Offaly has limited public transport options for many residents, particularly in the south-west of the County. This

explore outreach programmes, the establishment of service or information hubs, or other innovative solutions.

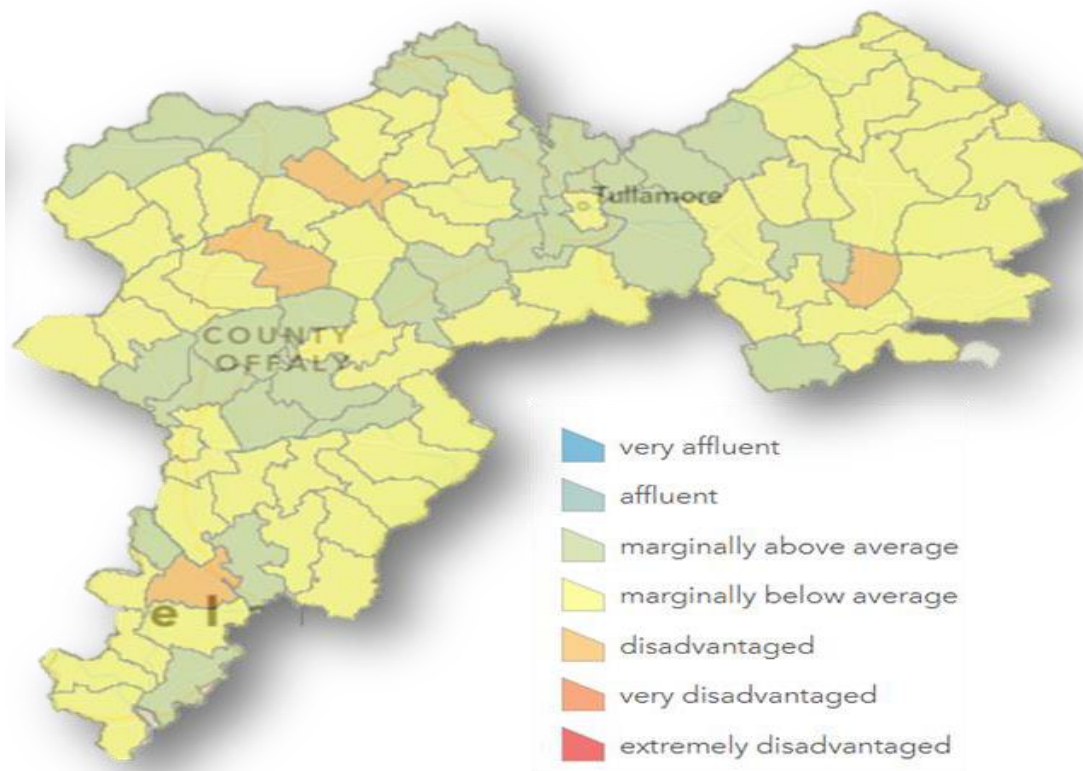
Deprivation, Poverty and Social Exclusion

For analysis, income ranges are divided into five categories: very low (€0 - €33,450), below average (€33,451 - €42,290), average to above average (€42,291 - €51,500), high (€51,501 - €64,200), and very high (€64,201 - €105,950). In 2016, the median household income of County Offaly (€41,271) was in the below average category, and 8.8% lower than the State median (€45,256). Disposable household income was also lower in Offaly at €16,908 in 2019, compared to the State (€22,032). At the ED level, the highest median income was in Durrow (€60,828), followed by Silverbrook (€58,750), and Mounterin (€58,264) while the lowest median income was in Shinrone (€33,421), followed by Birr Urban (€34,479), and Srah (€34,908), all of which recorded relatively high unemployment.

According to the 2016 Pobal deprivation index, County Offaly rates as Marginally below average. Some areas, particularly suburbs of Tullamore and Birr towns, were marginally above average. The electoral divisions of Gallen, Raheenakeeran, Shinrone and Srah, all were rated as disadvantaged.

County Offaly has lower employment rates compared to the EMR and the State. The proportion of people at work in Offaly is lower, and there are higher rates of people looking after the home/family or who have lost their previous jobs. Unemployment rates have improved but still

Deprivation Index



remain higher than the state average, particularly in certain areas such as Srah ED, Gallen ED, Kilcormac ED, Birr Urban ED, Edenderry Urban ED, and Tullamore Urban ED. County Offaly has a relatively low median household income compared to other counties in Ireland. The median income is below average, and the disposable household income is lower compared to the state average. There are variations in median income across different areas within Offaly, with some areas having higher incomes and others experiencing relatively high unemployment rates.

Those living in areas with higher deprivation: Offaly scored marginally below average according to the HP Pobal Deprivation Index, indicating the County has marginally more deprivation relative to other counties. Clusters of higher deprivation levels were observed around Gallen, Raheenakeeran, Shinrone and Srah.

Education and Training

- ***Educational attainment among women was generally higher than among men.***
- In the 2022 Census the proportion of men with no formal education or primary education was higher (14.6%) than women (11.3%)
- The proportion of women that had no formal education or primary education only was higher in Birr (11.8%), Edenderry (11.5%), and Tullamore (10.6%) than in the State (9.6%). The proportion of men with no formal education or primary education only was higher in Birr (16.2%), Edenderry (14.4%), and Tullamore (13.4%) than in the State (11.5%).
- In Birr, upper secondary accounted for the highest level of education for the largest proportion of women (22.1%) and of men (20.6%)
- In Edenderry, upper secondary accounted for the highest level of education for the largest proportion of women (23.6%) and lower secondary of men (22.8%)
- In Tullamore, upper secondary accounted for the highest level of education for the largest proportion of women (21.0%) and of men (21.9%).

There is comparatively early cessation of education, with a higher proportion of people ceasing education at under 15 years old compared to the EMR and the State. There is a gender divide in early school leavers, with men more likely than women to have no formal or primary school-level education only. However, there is a relatively high proportion of people with technical and vocational qualifications compared to the region and state.

In relation to childcare, there were 17,167 children aged 15 and under in Offaly in April 2022. Of these, 5,623 (33%) were in childcare, compared with 33% nationally.

County Offaly had the second highest proportion of people whose education ceased at under 15 years (9.5%) in the EMR. Education ceased comparatively early in Offaly at 19 years old and positions the county in the bottom 5 counties in terms of average age of those who ceased education. In all MDs, there is a gender divide in early school leavers, with men being more likely than women to have no formal or primary school-level education only. This is reflected in low proportions of people with university qualifications and a high proportion with no formal or only primary education. However, there is a high proportion of people with technical and vocational qualifications compared to the region and State.

At 16.3% the proportion of people with low educational attainment (no formal/primary only) was higher than the EMR (12.1%), and the State (13.3%). Birr MD had the highest proportion of the population with low educational attainment and at the ED level, the proportion of the population with no formal education was in Letter (8.2%), followed by Roscomroe (6.0%) and Broughal (5.6%).

At 10.1% the proportion of people with technical or vocational qualifications was higher than the EMR (9.0%), and the State (9.4%)

At 14.3% the proportion of people with Bachelor's degree qualifications was lower in County Offaly than the EMR (21.4%), and the State (19.6%)

At 6.1% the proportion of people with Postgraduate, PhD or higher qualifications was also lower than the EMR (24.7%), and the State (10.8%).

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are a key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. The overall purpose is to improve outcomes for children and young people through local and national inter-agency working.

Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils in all Local Authorities of the country designed to enable young people (under the age of 18 years) to have a voice on the delivery of local services, policies and issues that affect them in their local area.

Ethnicity and the Traveller Community

- ***County Offaly has the second highest number of Travellers per 1,000 of total population in the state***
- ***Both the Birr and Tullamore Municipal Districts had significantly higher populations of Irish Travellers than the State.***
- ***Tullamore was the most ethnically diverse Municipal District in County Offaly, though still less ethnically diverse than the State.***

In 2022 the proportion of non-Irish nationals was lower in Birr (6.4%), Edenderry (10.4%), and Tullamore (10.6%), than the State (12.9%). The most prevalent non-Irish nationality was Other EU 28 (2.2%) in Birr, Other EU 28 (4.8%) in Edenderry, and Other EU 28 (4.0%) in Tullamore.

In 2022, the proportion of White Irish was higher in Birr (90.0%) than the State (81.6%). The remaining population comprised of White Irish Travellers (2.0%); Other White (6.2%); Black or Black Irish (0.2%); and Asian or Asian Irish (0.7%). The proportion of White Irish was higher in Edenderry (85.7%) than the State (81.6%).

The remaining population comprised of White Irish Travellers (0.2%); Other White (10.3%); Black or Black Irish (0.8%); and Asian or Asian Irish (1.2%). The proportion of White Irish was higher in Tullamore (82.8%) than the State (81.6%). The remaining population comprised of White Irish Travellers (2.0%); Other White (9.5%); Black or Black Irish (1.1%); and Asian or Asian Irish (2.8%).

Tullamore Rural had the most ethnically diverse community, with 37.7% of the population identifying as an ethnicity other than White Irish, followed by Edenderry Urban (30.8%) and Tullamore Urban (26.8%).

County	Total Irish Travellers (No.)	Irish Traveller Males (No.)	Irish Traveller Females (No.)	No. per 1,000 of total population
Irish State	32,949	16,172	16,777	6.5
County Offaly	1,174	574	600	14.2

Census 2022: Irish Travellers usually resident and present in the State

In 2022 the proportion of Irish Travellers was higher in Birr (20.3 persons per 1,000), lower in Edenderry (2.3 persons per 1,000); and higher in Tullamore (20.3 persons per 1,000), than the State (6.9 persons per 1,000). At the ED level, Birr Rural had the highest proportion of White Irish Travellers within the catchment area (66.1 people per 1,000), followed by Birr Urban (58.8 people per 1,000) and Tullamore Urban (45.9 people per 1,000).

The demographic analysis highlighted the growth of new communities in Offaly, with immigration accounting for approximately three quarters of the population growth between 2016 and 2022. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, there has also been a growing population of Ukrainian refugees in the County, with the majority located in Tullamore. There is also a high proportion of Irish Travellers, particularly in Birr and Tullamore, and growing ethnic diversity across the County overall.

Municipal District	Number	% of Population
Birr	443	0.53
Tullamore	597	0.72
Edenderry	340	0.41

Ukrainian Refugees by Municipal District (24 January 2024)

Irish Speakers. A total of 28,231 people (aged 3 and over) stated that they could speak Irish in 2022, compared to 27,807 in 2016. Within this figure 586 said they spoke Irish daily, while 1,536 said they spoke Irish weekly. In 2016 7,556 people reported speaking a language other than English at home, of which 21.8% were in Birr, 32.7% were in Edenderry and 45.5% were in Tullamore.

Irish Traveller. The number of Irish Travellers in the state in Census 2022 was 32,949, an increase of 6% from 30,987 in the 2016 census. Of these, 1,174 Irish Travellers lived in county Offaly, accounting for 14.2 per 1,000 of the total population. The proportion of Irish Traveller population was particularly high in Birr (15.4 persons per 1,000) and Tullamore (15.9 persons per 1,000), compared to the State (6.5a persons per 1,000). In 2022, 89.5% of Travellers were living in permanent private households, with 10.5 % living in temporary private households. The average size of a Traveller household in Offaly was 4.23 in 2022, compared to 4.0 in the state.

Climate Change

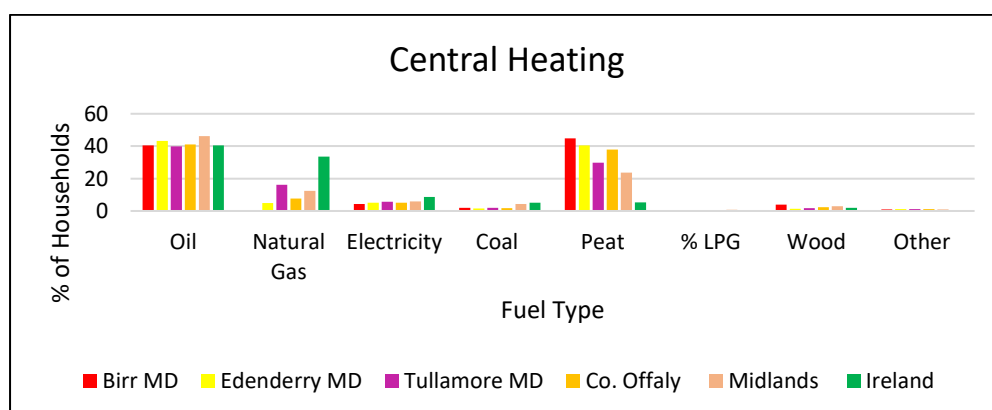
The EPAs ‘Water Quality in Ireland 2013 – 2018 provides a comprehensive overview on the quality of river, lake and groundwater bodies in Ireland. In Co. Offaly, 35 river water bodies were classified as either ‘high’ or ‘good’ whilst 14 river water bodies were recorded as being ‘poor’. No river water bodies in Co. Offaly were recorded as being ‘bad’. According to the EPA (2019), the ground water in Clara Bog, Co. Offaly failed to meet the quantitative status objective. This was due to historical regional and local drainage schemes. Clara bog was only one of two groundwater bodies in Ireland to have failed to meet the quantitative status objective.

County Offaly is home to a number of renewable energy projects, and includes onshore wind farms at Mount Lucas with capacity of 84MW; Leabeg 5MW; Meenwaun 11MW; Cloncreen 75MW, and Cloghan c.40MW. Under construction are Yellow River 104MW; Moanvane approx. 60MW; Derrinlough approx. 105 MW and Cushaling approx. 56MW.

Offaly currently boasts c.1,300MW of renewable energy (wind, solar), and energy storage (battery) that is either operational or permitted for development. Other permitted developments include a hydrogen electrolyser, biomass methanisation plant, gasification plant, and synchronous compensators. The Offaly County Development Plan has committed to a target of 466 MW of wind capacity, 145 MW of solar capacity and 445 MW of battery storage capacity by 2027.

Co. Offaly is renowned for its bogs, with 21% of its land area covered by peatlands. In recent years, the Irish government have initiated a number of schemes / programmes in order to rejuvenate and restore peatland habitats which had been destroyed or damaged for the purpose of energy production. In 2021, Bord na Mona rehabilitated nearly 5,200 hectares of peatland in Ireland, thereby capturing 7.5 million tonnes of carbon. Approximately half of the peatland restoration initiated by Bord na Mona occurred in Co. Offaly (2,519 hectares).

Permanent Private Housing by Central Heating



2016 Census of Population

Just Transition Fund

The EU and the Government of Ireland have established the Just Transition Fund (JTF) to facilitate

a just transition towards a low-carbon economy across the Midlands. Key Objectives of the EU JTF are:

- To provide new employment opportunities for workers and communities that were heavily dependent on peat
- Support the diversification of the economy to enable development, and help impacted workers and communities adapt to a changing labour market
- Provide opportunities for employment, to create an inclusive, attractive, healthy & sustainable place to live, work and visit

The full county of Offaly is included under the Fund. This will offer opportunities for funding in the JTF area across a range of policy areas.

- The JTF aims to build the capacity of communities in Offaly to achieve the objectives of the JTF
- To build community capacity for operations which support economic, social and local/community development within the Local Authority area of Offaly.
- To implement local and regional development strategies including the Local Economic and Community Plan and Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan through partnership between the Local Authority and its partners including OLDC, LOETB & TUS.



Digital Connectivity

- ***The proportion of households without internet access was high in Birr compared to Edenderry, Tullamore and the State.***

As per OCC Digital Strategy, in 2019 there was a faster rate of growth in households with internet access in Offaly compared to the State, resulting in 80.9% of households having internet access in the County and with growth in the information and communications sector, opportunities to support the increase of digital skills and literacy will be particularly relevant.

In 2019, there were 35.51% of households that reported not having a PC. This indicates that access to digital hubs or other locations with PCs will be important for some cohorts to avail of remote working opportunities.

Offaly has remote working, co-working and business workspaces in Tullamore, Birr and Edenderry. These spaces provide digital learning services and training opportunities to the local community and are designed to suit residents, entrepreneurs and visitors alike.

In 2022 across the State 86.2% of households had a broadband connection and 4.3% had another internet connection, while 9.5% reported no access. Compared to the State (9.5%), the proportion of households without internet access was higher in Birr (15.5%), Edenderry (11.9%), and Tullamore (11.1%). No internet access was highest in Shannonbridge (25.0%), followed by Letter (24.1%), and Raheenakeeran (22.7%).

Within the county, the Birr (37.3%) reported the highest proportion of households with no personal computer, followed by Edenderry (34.6%), and Tullamore (34.1%). Likewise, Birr (29.9%) reported the highest proportion of households without internet access.

Offaly's public libraries are now vital community hubs at a local level, with the digital resources and spaces offered by Offaly County Council's eight public libraries making a significant contribution to the vibrancy and level of community participation in the county. The public library service is a major resource for lifelong learning in the county at local level, offering resources, study space, ICT and professional and knowledgeable staff.



3.2 SCOT Analysis

The following key Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats were derived following consideration of the policy context and an analysis of the Socio-Economic profile for the county together with the stakeholder submissions and views received as part of the public consultation

process. These were identified also in the context of the vision for the county and the key areas of focus of the LECP as outlined above.

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Centrally located and highly accessible County ▪ National corridor for road infrastructure within 45 minutes of Dublin airport and port, and 2 hours of New Ross, Rosslare & Waterford ports ▪ Strong Agricultural industry ▪ Internationally significant Peatlands, Lakeland and Inland Waterways and Monastic Sites ▪ Good quality of life ▪ Powerful network of volunteer groups and community groups ▪ Strong natural heritage and rural landscape including Slieve Bloom, Parklands, Rivers, Canals, greenways and Lough Boora ▪ Effective communication and continuity between statutory agencies within Offaly ▪ Good collaboration and involvement with community groups and higher needs groups ▪ Strong interagency groups ▪ Recent public realm improvements in Towns and Villages ▪ Access to hospital and health care ▪ Strong Public Participation Network (PPN) and LCDC ▪ Innovative county across specialist areas ▪ Talented workforce ▪ Strong volunteer base ▪ Social enterprise around tourism, Slieve Bloom & Lough Boora, castles & waterways ▪ Breadth and depth of natural assets and opportunities to exploit those assets ▪ Offaly's importance as a cultural hub – history, heritage ▪ History of science and discovery ▪ The future – clean energy, energy storage, new industries from old ▪ Tourism assets, MAN, I-LOFAR, some co-working hubs ▪ The Arts ▪ Growing population of county ▪ High quality natural water ▪ Relatively low unemployment rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accommodation availability both residential and tourist ▪ Attracting employment and investment for job creation ▪ Relatively high rates of social welfare dependency ▪ Dependence on volunteer sector ▪ Generally lower education rates, particularly in comparison to other Counties in the Eastern and Midlands region ▪ Closure of local bogs ▪ Public transport, particularly in more rural locations ▪ Lack of marketing and promotion ▪ Vacant and derelict houses and high vacancy rates of towns and villages. ▪ The loss of young people for employment and education outside of the county ▪ Poor communications infrastructure leaving rural areas without connections to reliable, high speed broadband ▪ High rates of both young and old age dependency rates. ▪ Reliance on manufacturing and agricultural industries for job opportunities ▪ New communities require increased availability of social inclusion supports ▪ Cost of living crisis and poverty ▪ Lack of third-level education located within the County ▪ Rural infrastructure and supports and services ▪ Lack of affordable accommodation for both residents and visitors ▪ No third level institution in the county ▪ No economic resilience ▪ Skillbase out of time ▪ Bord Na Mona / ESB (dependency) ▪ Two counties in one ▪ Fragmented governance and structures ▪ Need for greater access in towns for people living with disability ▪ Poor provision of public transport in rural areas ▪ Very little safe cycling infrastructure

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emerging industry of renewable energy both in wind and solar, grid services, storage and emerging technologies ▪ Maximise funding under LEADER Programme and Just Transition Fund ▪ Potential utilisation of large peat bogs for tourism and renewable energy ▪ Greater use of remote working ▪ Development of integrated network of walking and cycling routes ▪ Improved co-ordination of services ▪ Apprenticeships and training programmes ▪ Tourism potential – promoting the cultural and heritage potential assets of the county, its landscape, artisan food and drink ▪ Promoting the quality of life – heritage, landscape, culture, and international significance of our bogs & waterways ▪ Targeted supports for disadvantaged community groups ▪ New roles for universities in regional development ▪ Dispersal of offices to locations where cost time and quality meet ▪ Diaspora willingness to help on enterprise development if asked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High disability rate, ageing demographic and lower health rates requiring proper infrastructure and supports ▪ Weakness in provision of inclusive education and training opportunities that cater to diverse learning abilities and styles ▪ Climate change ▪ War in Ukraine ▪ Decline of rural towns ▪ Increasing elderly population with increased dependency ratio. ▪ Insufficient housing supply in appropriate locations ▪ Migration of young people from Offaly ▪ Too many agencies with different plans and strategies ▪ Poor economic resilience ▪ Rural depopulation and decline and the increasing challenge that this poses to rural towns, villages and communities ▪ Need to increase number of accessible electric vehicle charging points



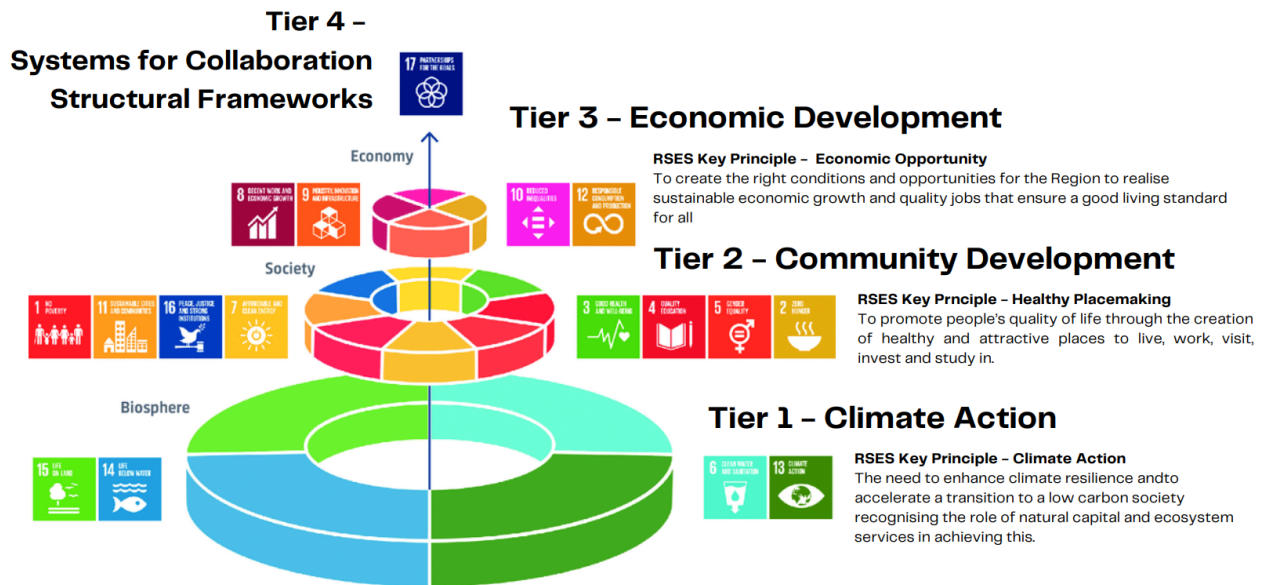
Section 4: Consistency of LECP

4.1 Sustainable Development Goals



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a principal element of the LECP. Since 2015, Ireland has been a signatory for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which frame national agendas and policies to 2030. The UN have set seventeen goals as set out above. SDG recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go together with strategies that improve health, education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Green Offaly has produced the following schematic which reflects how the LECP Goals, Targets & Indicators are interconnected via the SDG's.



The National Climate Action Plan 2023 (the second annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action 2019) provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050. The Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon the 2023 Plan by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings.

Climate policy at global, national, regional and local level is driven by the need to reduce GHG emissions. Some areas of the EMRA show zero to negative CO2 emissions – these areas represent carbon sinks, or areas which can remove CO2 from the atmosphere, such as bogs and large areas of forestry. Some of the largest sinks occur in the Slieve Bloom Mountains, as well as in pockets throughout the Midlands. The main emissions sources which are relevant to the EMRA Region include electricity, built environment, the transport sector and agriculture.

Ireland emissions target reductions by 2030:

- Electricity - 62-81%
- Transport - 42-50%
- Buildings - 44-56%
- Industry or Enterprise - 29-41%
- Agriculture - 22-30% reduction
- Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF): 37-58%

In accordance with the commitments set out in the SDG National Framework Plan 2022-2024 and in coherence with the National CAP23 each objective under the Implementation Plan in the Offaly LECP has been assessed for SDG impact at SDG target level. The overall contribution of the Offaly LECP 2024-2029 to the progression towards meeting the 17 SDG’s was evaluated. The Offaly LECP 2024-2029 will progress towards meeting 16 out of the 17 SDG’s.

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (‘the Duty’) is a statutory obligation for public bodies including Local Authorities. Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 requires public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the

need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of staff and people availing of their services.

Section 42(2) requires public bodies to assess, address and report on progress in relation to equality and human rights in their strategic plan and annual reports in a 12 manner that is accessible to the public. Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders engaged with the LECP process must fully consider their responsibilities regarding Public Sector Duty and ensure that the objectives and actions detailed in the LECP are designed to support these responsibilities where appropriate.

Offaly County Council has identified the following as the most pertinent aspects of its business to which human rights and equality considerations apply³:

- Access to housing services
- Access to arts, cultural and library services
- Access to fire and emergency service
- Access to potable water

Offaly County Council will continue to work with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to provide training and information for elected members, staff and stakeholders on the Public Sector Duty. Offaly County Council plans to establish a cross-functional working group to address the implementation of our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. This group will support the organisation to assess, address and report on human rights and equality issues relevant to its functions as a service provider and as an employer. The IHREC (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission) and the Local Government Management Agency will be asked to support this process.

Offaly County Council will also participate in the IHREC funded research project with Inclusion Ireland which aims to improve the opportunities for people with intellectual disability to live more inclusively and independently in the communities of Offaly. In 2016, 14.3% of people in Offaly had a disability. Offaly County Council will complete an audit of access to Council services for People with Disabilities using the Public Service Accessibility Checklist, provided by Inclusion Ireland, as a guide.

4.2 Alignment with RSES and County Development Plan

This LECP is influenced by a hierarchy of national, regional and local level plans and strategies. Consideration was given to these during the preparation of the Plan. The Guidelines from DRCD require that the LECP must be consistent with the National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040; the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031, and with the core strategy and objectives of the Offaly County Development Plan.

Offaly County Council has ensured that the High Level Goals and Objectives included in the LECP are closely aligned with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), as shown in the figure below. The four High Level Goals under the LECP are:

1. Community – Offaly will be a county which supports Sustainable, Inclusive, and Empowered Communities

³ [Offaly County Council Corporate Plan.indd](#)

2. Healthy Place Making – Offaly will improve the physical and social infrastructure to create places that are healthy and attractive to live, work and invest in
3. Economic Opportunity – Offaly will strive to spread economic opportunity and prosperity to all sections of society
4. Climate Action – Offaly will be proactive in addressing Climate Change and will work to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030 and support transition to a low carbon Region by 2050

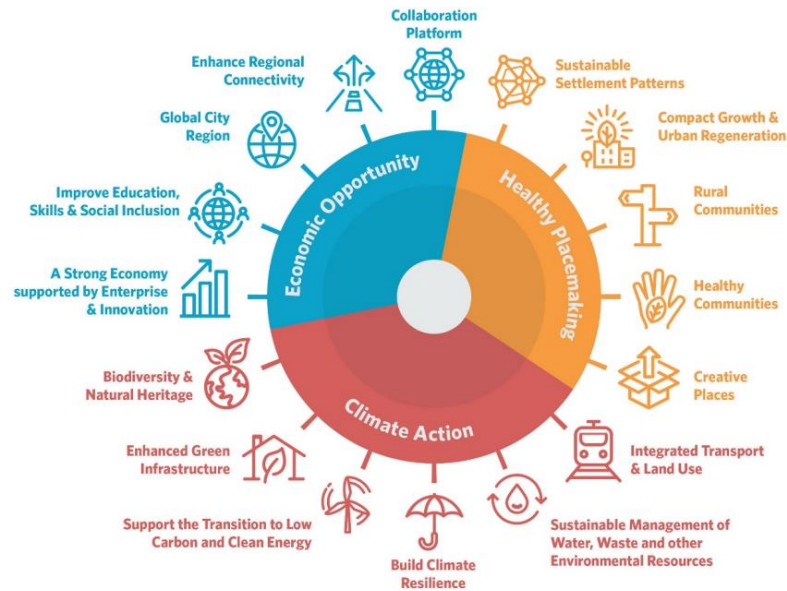


Fig. Regional Strategic Outcomes of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (Source EMRA)

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth throughout the Region. The overall vision of the Strategy is to create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunity for all.

The vision is framed around the three Key Principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity. A primary statutory objective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF), alignment with the investment priorities of the National Development Plan 2021-2030 (and thus Project Ireland 2040), by coupling new development with the requisite investment in services and infrastructure.

The RSES is of critical importance for the delivery of Project Ireland 2040, given that it is the succeeding tier of policy delivery in Ireland. The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region presents a Spatial Strategy, devised and informed by a complementary Economic Strategy, which provides a framework for future growth, ensuring the delivery of effective regional development through the realisation of viable and vital places.

This includes promoting a network of large economically active Key Towns that provide employment and services to their surrounding areas. In relation to County Offaly, the RSES identifies Tullamore as a Key Town located in the Gateway Region as set out in the RSES settlement and growth strategies.

Tullamore acts as a key population 3 and employment centre for the surrounding hinterland. It is located on the Dublin to Galway rail line, in close proximity to the M6 Dublin/Galway Motorway with the N80 and N52 providing important and essential intra-regional linkages to motorways, the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone and the Key Towns of Portlaoise, Mullingar and Longford.

The town is flanked by the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the south and Lough Boora Discovery Park to the west, and thus offers significant quality of life advantages. The town has a high ratio of jobs to resident workers, reflecting its role as an employment centre and the extent of its area of influence. As detailed in the RSES, continued employment and population growth coupled with placemaking and regeneration are key priorities for Tullamore.

Section 3.2 of the RSES identifies the key Growth Enablers for the Region which include a number of measures relevant to County Offaly as follows:

- Promote global connectivity and regional accessibility as part of an integrated land use and transport strategy, with a focus on protecting national assets and enhanced inter-regional connectivity.
- Promote compact urban growth to realise targets of at least 30% of all new homes to be built, to be within or contiguous to the other urban areas apart from Dublin.
- Embed a network of Key Towns throughout the Region, which have the capacity to deliver sustainable compact growth and employment for their catchments in tandem with enabling public transport, infrastructure and services.
- Promote balanced growth in a limited number of economically active settlements which have the identified capacity and potential for self-sustaining growth.
- Promote targeted 'catch up' investment to support self-sustaining local employment, and in services, sustainable transport and amenities in places that have experienced rapid commuter driven population growth.
- Promote regeneration and revitalisation of small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural areas.
- Support rural areas by harnessing natural resources to develop renewables, recreation and tourism opportunities including green infrastructure planning and the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways.

In addition to the above, Section 3.2 of the RSES specifies key Growth Enablers for the Gateway Region which include a number of measures relevant to County Offaly as follows:

- 'Catch up' investment to promote consolidation and improvement in the sustainability of those areas that have experienced significant population growth but have a weak level of services and employment for their residents.
- Regeneration of small towns and villages, with a focus on the identification of rural town, village and rural regeneration priorities to bring vibrancy to these areas.
- Diversification and growth of smart specialisation of local economies with a strong focus on clustering including sustainable farming and food production, tourism, marine, energy and renewables, bioeconomy and circular economy, with a focus on publicly owned peatlands in the Midlands, to support a 'Just' transition and realise the benefits of green technologies.
- Promote the Region as a key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities and support the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and

peatways while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced.

The Economic Strategy of the RSES has five key principles which include smart specialisation, clustering, placemaking, orderly growth and future proof. The Strategy also includes a retail hierarchy for the Region which identifies Tullamore as Level 2 (Major Town Centres and County Town Centres), and Birr and Edenderry as a Level 3 (Town and/or District Centres and Sub-County Town Centres) within the retail hierarchy.

In relation to community development, the RSES outlines support for community and adult education providers who are already providing formal and non-formal education to targeted disadvantage groups and who have already identified the barriers to participation in lifelong learning such as childcare, transport and rural isolation to increase participation rates and support progression into further education and employment.

The RSES also highlights the importance of recreation and sporting facilities including blueways and greenways, including the Grand Canal Greenways, Blueways and Lough Boora Discovery Park, Charleville Castle Demesne, Durrow High Cross, peatways, the planned Midlands Cycle Destination – Offaly and the Slieve Bloom Mountains, including the National Mountain Bike Trail (MTB) centre.

Offaly County Council has also considered the alignment of the LECP with the County Development Plan 2021-2027 and has ensured that the LECP will support the County Development Plan to achieve its spatial and development objectives for the county.

Under the Local Government Reform Act, Offaly County Council submitted a draft LECP to the Regional Assembly for consideration, and the Assembly has adopted a statement on the draft LECP. The LECP is consistent with the core strategy of the County Development Plan and will support the Council's Mission Statement within the County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The LECP will support the implementation of the County Development Plan to achieve the following aims:

Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Housing Strategy

To ensure that the development objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives as set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019).

Climate Action and Energy

To achieve a transition to an economically competitive, low carbon climate resilient and environmentally sustainable county, through reducing the need to travel, promoting sustainable settlement patterns and modes of transport, and by reducing the use of non-renewable resources, whilst recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

Biodiversity and Landscape

Protect and enhance Offaly's natural assets of clean water, biodiversity, landscape, green infrastructure, heritage and agricultural land.

Economic Development Strategy

That Offaly County Council, within its capacity, will positively contribute towards the promotion of the maintenance and growth of employment across every sector in County Offaly that is

sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient, so that the people of Offaly will have access to a range of quality employment opportunities enabling them to live and work in the county.

Tourism and Recreational Development

To promote County Offaly as a quality place to visit and stay with a wide variety of high-quality tourist attractions and visitor facilities and infrastructure.

Retail and Town Centre Strategy, and Regeneration

To provide a clear framework for retail development in County Offaly in acknowledgment of its role in employment, economic activity and vitality in towns and villages.

Sustainable Transport Strategy

Offaly County Council will strive to support enhanced regional accessibility; the use of sustainable modes of transport; the integration of spatial planning with transport planning; the transition to a low carbon transport system; and the development of a safer, more efficient, effective and connected transport system within Offaly.

Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development

To promote settlements and communities where people can live and work, with access to a range of quality community and cultural facilities which are a vital component in increasing social inclusion and contributing to the quality of life for all.

Built Heritage

The Council will continue to promote the conservation, management and preservation of our built heritage for its intrinsic value and as a support to economic renewal and sustainable employment while also revitalising the historic cores of our towns and villages by bringing historic buildings back to use.

Water Services and Environment

Offaly County Council is committed to working with Irish Water in the provision of water services for the sustainable growth of the county and delivering on the key principles of environmental protection and climate action as a backdrop to sustainable growth.

Land Use Zoning

It is an objective of the Council to ensure that development progresses in accordance with the land use zoning objectives as set out in the Plan - 'develop sustainable, connected, economically thriving and proud communities with the consideration of climate change embedded into all of our policies and services'. To this end it will support the realisation of economic and social benefits of new infrastructure and residential and commercial development in a sustainable way, promoting the compact growth of our county through the strengthening of our rural economies and communities.

The LECP acknowledges the economic strategy of the Development Plan and its identification of the industry sectors which will be key to its future economic development and employment growth. The LECP also aligns with several local strategies, a number of which will be refreshed and revisited over the lifetime of the LECP. The economic elements of the LECP have been developed by the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development (SPC), while the LCDC has developed the community elements.

Section 5: LECP Framework 2024-2029

5.1 Strategic Vision for the LECP

“To create a sustainable and competitive county that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to employment opportunities supported by high quality accessible housing and physical, social and community infrastructure for all, in a climate resilient manner and with respect for our biodiversity.”⁴

The strategic vision is supported by four high level goals that have been identified and divided across the economic and community streams of this plan.

High Level Goals

Four High Level Goals have been adopted to help achieve the Vision. These Goals are representative of a collective and inclusive vision for County Offaly which is shared by all stakeholders.

1. Community – Offaly will be a county which supports Sustainable, Inclusive, and Empowered Communities
2. Healthy Place Making – Offaly will improve the physical and social infrastructure to create places that are healthy and attractive to live, work and invest in
3. Economic Opportunity – Offaly will strive to spread economic opportunity and prosperity to all sections of society
4. Climate Action – Offaly will be proactive in addressing Climate Change and will work to reduce emissions by 51% by 2030 and support transition to a zero net carbon Region by 2050

LECP Framework

The LECF Framework details the High-Level Goals and Sustainable Community and Economic Objectives as well as consideration of high-level indicators for the 6-year LECF period. The LECF Framework represents the strategic part of the plan for the full six-year period.

Determined through analysis and consultation, four High-Level Goals are included in the LECF for Offaly. The Framework includes a series of Sustainable Development Objectives (both economic and community) to be achieved over the period through inputs, actions and outputs which will be outlined in the subsequent Implementation Plan.

High Level Goal 1	Sustainable Communities – Offaly will be a county which supports Sustainable, Inclusive, and Empowered Communities
Objectives	Outcomes
1.1 Support vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, empowered and self-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of opportunity for older people, those living with a disability and all minority groups. • Increased participation of minority groups in employment and education

⁴ Offaly County Development Plan, Volume 1 Written Statement Full Copy .pdf (offaly.ie)

determining communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased level of engagement of marginalised and minority groups with Offaly County Council and other key stakeholders. • Improved diversity Including female representation on Offaly County Council and in political activity in Offaly. • An ongoing coordinated response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis including the operation of a community and inter-agency forum to co-ordinate service delivery, address gaps in service provision and to address the provision of emergency accommodation. • Increased cultural, literacy and community engagement via Offaly’s extensive library branch network. • Build community capacity and maintain community services
1.2 Transform the quality of life and opportunity for people living in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the presence and activity of Offaly Community Response Forum • Numbers experiencing social exclusion and inequality reduced and the levels also reduced. • Community capacity enhanced through training and animation through the LEADER Local Development Programme and other programmes. • Community facilities throughout the county upgraded including in respect of energy efficiency and universal access.
1.3 Make Offaly a great county where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offaly Age Friendly Strategy implemented. • Offaly Age Friendly Alliance supported and strengthened. • Offaly Older Peoples Network active and with a high membership . • Appropriate Age Friendly Initiatives developed as set out in the Age-Friendly Strategy, and funding sought for opportunities for projects that can increase the participation of older people in the social, economic and cultural life of Offaly. • Healthy Offaly Plan implemented.
1.4 Reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of funding targeted at areas and groups identified as having acute levels of poverty and deprivation. • Increase in groups and individuals that are most vulnerable to poverty and exclusion benefiting from SICAP and similar programmes

High Level Goal 2	Healthy Place Making – Offaly will improve the physical and social infrastructure to create places that are healthy and attractive to live, work and invest in
Objectives	Outcomes
2.1 Ensure good access to health, education and services for all ages,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of active sustainable communities based around a strong network of community facilities and amenities. (CDP xii)

abilities and backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Increase in the number of students attending third level education and a broadening of the sectors of society from which they come. • The Adult Literacy For Life Strategy 2021 being implemented and its goals being reached • Targeted youth supports and services provided, particularly in rural areas. • Improvement in the supports provided for mental health and wellbeing. • Increased library membership to improve access to quality educational and wellbeing resources through the <i>Skills for Life</i> programme.
2.2: Support the provision of adequate housing and shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in high quality housing of a sufficient scale, mix, tenure, sequence, and density, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate infrastructure, services and amenities. (CDP viii) • Reduction in the number of long term vacant and derelict houses. • Increase the provision of social housing and affordable housing in line with Housing Delivery Action Plan • Housing targets set out in the Offaly Traveller Accommodation Plan being met • Slainte Care Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme successfully rolled out
2.3 Promote arts, culture and heritage led regeneration as key to our identity and the character of places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced and regenerated towns and villages being developed with improving streetscapes and public realm and creating attractive urban spaces to develop a sense of place. • Targeted social, cultural and recreational initiatives and programmes provided to improve quality of life and wellbeing • Increase in the number and scale of community arts and cultural actions • Offaly's heritage preserved through implementation of Offaly Heritage Plan 2023-2027 • Goals of Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan being reached • Provide welcoming and accessible spaces and services in our Libraries to support the people of Offaly in their pursuit of knowledge, culture, skills and recreation
2.4 Promote good urban design to create vibrant urban centres and attractive safe and accessible public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attractiveness, quality, design, viability, vibrancy, and liveability of the county's settlements. (CDP vi) • The Town Centre First policy being implemented. • Enhanced accessibility and more inclusive communities built • Progress implementation of Offaly's Housing Delivery Action Plan • More attractive, accessible public spaces and playgrounds in the county being provided

2.5 Provide good connectivity and digital infrastructure to attract investment and diversify local economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase provision and use of digital infrastructure and services throughout Offaly and in all parts of society through the delivery of the National & Local Digital Strategy • Develop and support pathways for education, training and lifelong learning for all community members
--	---

High Level Goal 3	Economic Opportunity – Offaly will strive to spread economic opportunity and prosperity to all sections of society
Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs)	Outcomes
3.1 Re-evaluate and build resilience for a more diversified, vibrant and sustainable economy in Co. Offaly with a connected and engaged local business base and focused regional leadership	<p>The Offaly Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, 2022-2027, and subsequent iterations being implemented and its goals achieved in the six identified areas of focus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construction and Engineering (the Built Environment) 2. Rural Green (Energy Generation and Storage) 3. MedTech and Wellbeing 4. ICT Sector 5. Food & Nutrition and the technologies that support them 6. EcoTourism and the Creative Arts <p>Actions within the 6 areas will be aligned to 3 Strategic Pillars</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attain National & International Leadership Recognition b. Take Full Advantage of National Connections & Assets c. Create Stronger Conditions for Business Growth
3.2 To develop and sustain a positive enterprise ecosystem at local level throughout the county that will in particular drive new added-value start-ups, the further growth of small and micro enterprises and enhance local economies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the LEO Offaly Enterprise Development Plan 2021-2024 and subsequent iterations. • Increase in the role and scale of sustainable local enterprise with local micro and small business being at the heart of job creation in Offaly • Increase in business start-ups and creation of a ‘can-do’ business culture • Increase in the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses • Increase in the number of innovative businesses with potential to export • A progression pathway for clients to Enterprise Ireland High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs) developed and strong links maintained with TUS and its Athlone Campus in particular and with the Midland Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC) • Appropriate enterprise training to enhance Capability and Management Development delivered • A pro-business enterprise message being delivered across Offaly County Council by collaboration with Members and different departments of the Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An entrepreneurial culture emerging across the county, at all levels • All opportunities to leverage additional funding for Enterprise Supports being leveraged • Particular focus given to the following sectors: Sustainability, Green Energy/Technologies, Food & Beverages, Engineering, Science and Big Data, Tourism & Creative Industries • Economic Infrastructure enhanced through the provision of additional Co-Working Hubs, Industrial & Business Parks, Data Sets, Connectivity Reports, Promotional Material • Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan Objectives being achieved through collaborative actions and a focus on place-making, Smart Specialisation and climate action.
3.3 Develop Tourism as a tool of social and economic regeneration to provide for a more balanced transition to sustainable living for communities and businesses.	<p>Offaly Tourism Strategy 2023-2027 being implemented through engagement with stakeholders regarding 4 Strategic Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Development & Maximisation • Gateway, Cluster and Attraction Development • Industry Development and Support • Marketing and Communications
3.4 Explore and progress transformative projects that align with strategic aims and sustainability goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Astronomical Observatories of Birr, Dunsink and Armagh designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site through a collaborative proposal • Large scale renewables energy projects in development and/or in place • Iconic Tourism Projects identified and developed • Grand Canal Harbour Tullamore developed as a sustainable tourism resource

High Level Goal 4	Climate Action – Offaly will be proactive in addressing Climate Change
Objectives	Outcomes
4.1 Implement the goals of the Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024-2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced system of governance, leadership and partnerships for Climate Action developed and in operation • Carbon emission and energy efficiency targets for 2030 and 2050 on track • Climate adaptation and climate resilience being embedded in communities and organisations throughout the county • Climate Action resources embedded in the community via the library branch network • Climate Action mobilised in local communities • Climate Action mobilised in enterprise and on track to transition to an inclusive, Net Zero and Circular Economy

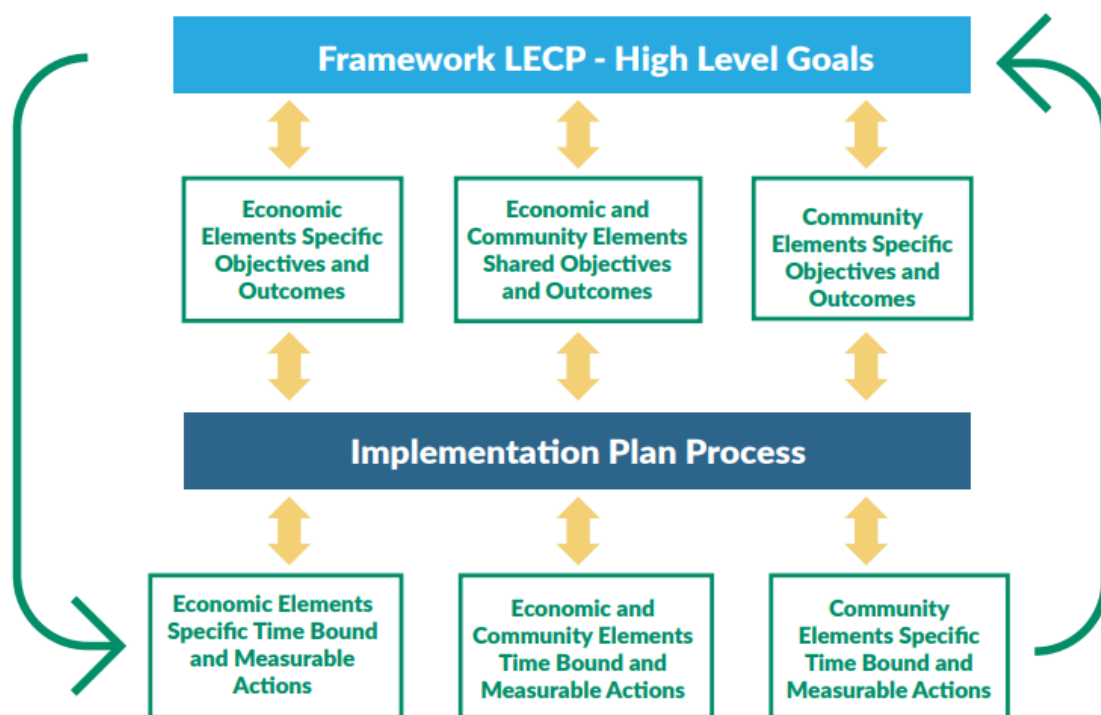
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'Just Transition' achieved particularly for communities that may be socially and/or economically disadvantaged by decarbonising projects
4.2 Promote sustainable settlement patterns to achieve compact urban development and low energy buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More compact settlement forms emerging to avoid undesirable and inefficient sprawl. (CDP) • Increased establishment and growth of enterprises through the use of a Smart Village approach. • Greater preservation and conservation of Offaly's natural resources and biodiversity achieved.
4.3 Integrate the concept of green infrastructure and ecosystem services into development and land-use plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased diversity in agriculture and farm family economic activities. • Increased role of the green economy in the overall economy of Offaly. • Development and expansion of the rural, artisan and micro food sectors
4.4 Address flood risk to ensure resilience of critical infrastructure and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood-risk assessment and management responses in place. • Water resources being proactively protected and preserved. (CDP) • Improved quality of all waterbodies • Lower levels of flood risk and fewer and less damaging flood events
4.5 Achieve modal shift towards public transport, walking and cycling and roll out EV charging infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active transport (walking, cycling) on the increase and the transition to sustainable transport use taking place at an appropriate pace • Safe, accessible walking and cycling routes developed.



Section 6: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

While the LECP Framework Plan will operate over a six-year period from 2024 to 2029, the Implementation Plans will be developed every two years. These Implementation Plans will contain clear and measurable actions based on the High-Level Goals and Objectives in the Framework Plan and reflect the submissions received through the public consultation process and up-to-date policy positions.

The Implementation Plans will be developed by the LCDC and Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC and the Advisory Group. Responsibility for driving implementation, monitoring and reviewing the LECP rests with all participating bodies, the members of the LCDC, the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC and is supported by the staff of Offaly County Council.



The Implementation Plan process identifies specific actions to assist in achieving the High-Level Goals and Objectives agreed for the six years to 2029. The first Implementation Plan is for a two-year period from 2024 – 2025 and will be closely monitored and evaluated before being reviewed and revised to assist in the preparation of the second Implementation Plan 2026 – 2027.

This new more flexible approach to the implementation of the LECP will allow Offaly County Council and its partners to identify actions that may be underperforming or not resulting in the expected impact and replace them with actions that may be better aligned to achieving the overall vision and goals of the plan. The review will also allow new actions to be added where policies or circumstances dictate and to respond to changing trends, new funding opportunities and new priorities.

Initial Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan sets out a series of actions against each objective that we believe will make an individual and collective impact in delivering the outcomes associated with each objective. Actions have been prioritised, so that the goals of the LECP will be addressed by a wide number of programmes, strategies, organisations and groups in Offaly, regionally and nationally. Actions have therefore been prioritised through a process of engagement with those agencies who have been and will continue to be responsible, alongside the Council, for supporting change and growth in Offaly. The list of actions will be reviewed and amended where necessary on a regular basis.

The organic nature of the LECP means that it will be possible to identify additional actions where they are necessary to respond to changing circumstances and funding opportunities, or are identified as important by our stakeholders, businesses and citizens. The identified actions will be refreshed through the process of annual monitoring over the full six-year duration of the Plan. They do, however, provide an important starting point to ensure there is accountability and a commitment to progress.

Collective responsibility

Many of the actions will be led by the Council because it is responsible for delivering change and realising established targets for change and growth through its corporate objectives, responsibilities, and existing strategies. This includes for example its contribution to national targets established to demonstrate its commitment to addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis. There are, however, a significant number of other actions which will be led by other organisations and agencies with which the Local Authority will cooperate.

The successful delivery of the actions will be co-dependent on several factors, in particular adequate resources being provided and allocated to named actions, and the co-operation of and collaboration between agencies and organisations in the delivery of the actions agreed. Under-resourcing and lack of co-operation will slow down the delivery of actions within the agreed timeframes and may prevent them being satisfactorily achieved at all.

It is envisaged that all organisations which are identified as having a role in the delivery of actions will allocate appropriate resources to help deliver the priority actions, along with their core area of activity. Lead agencies will report, as appropriate, to the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC and to the LCDC in relation to their progress in the implementation of actions. The role of those organisations which are identified as the lead partner in an action will vary from action to action. For some actions the lead partner will be the primary provider of resources; for other actions all partners will be expected to make a similar contribution and the lead partner will primarily be acting as convenor of a Steering Group or similar.. Every effort will be made in the early days of the implementation of each action to bring clarity to what is expected of each partner so that misunderstandings are minimised and unreasonable expectations avoided.

The LECP will be implemented over the six-year period from 2024 to 2029. Priority actions will be identified in the Initial Implementation Plan which will commence within the first two years of this period. A number of these actions will complete within this time period while others will be delivered over a longer period and potentially over the full lifetime of the LECP. The monitoring of progress of individual actions will therefore be critical in ensuring that the LECP and the Implementation Plan are responsive to change and in holding those who have committed to

delivering actions to account. This will facilitate a process of continuous evaluation alongside more formal reporting mechanisms and outputs.

The key monitoring responsibilities are as follows:

The monitoring of Sustainable Communities (High-Level Goal 1) will be the responsibility of Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), given its wider corporate responsibilities to report on performance against national targets on this issue.

The monitoring of the Healthy Placemaking (High Level Goal 2) will be the responsibility of the County Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). This will include liaising with those Lead Partners outside of the Council who are responsible for these actions.

The monitoring of the Economic Opportunity (High Level Goal 3) will be the responsibility of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC. This will include liaising with those Lead Partners outside of the Council who are responsible for economic actions.

The monitoring of the Climate Action (High Level Goal 4) will be the responsibility of the Climate Action, Environment, Water & Transportation SPC in Offaly County Council. This will include liaising with those Lead Partners outside of the Council who are responsible for actions impacting on climate change.

The LECP Advisory Steering Group, comprising representatives of the LCDC and Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC, will have the responsibility for co-ordinating the monitoring process and preparing associated reporting outputs. This Group will draw upon support staff from the LCDC and the SPC as required to prepare the annual monitoring reporting outputs.

Monitoring outputs

It is expected that those responsible for monitoring will collate information throughout the year to inform an annual monitoring process. Information assembled will be drawn together and presented to the SPC and the LCDC at their meetings throughout the year as a means of feedback and monitoring progress. Any issues arising will be actioned through these meetings. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will help ensure the LECP is aligned with and supports county, national, EU and other key strategies. It will also ensure that lessons learned are systematically captured to improve future actions and outcomes.

Drawing upon the process of continuous monitoring the Advisory Group will prepare an annual Monitoring and Evaluation Document..

Where applicable metrics / performance evidence against the High-Level Outcomes will be provided by way of a simple dashboard. For those Outcomes which do not lend themselves to quantified measurable indicators a concise summary of performance will include:

- A progress update against each action, including evidence to support progress against the identified KPIs.
- A Red, Amber, Green (RAG) assessment of the progress of each action.
- An explanation where actions have not progressed as envisaged.
- Proposals for actions to be removed from the Plan where they are satisfactorily completed or are no longer applicable or realistically deliverable.

The report will also include:

- An overall summary of progress.
- Clear review of Objectives where there are concerns around the level of progress.
- Identified constraints which need to be considered and are impacting on performance including suggested actions to address these.
- The identification of additional actions to be included in the Implementation Plan.
- The report will be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening processes as appropriate. This will ensure the LECP Implementation Plan will conform to the Regional Strategy and the County Development Plan. The Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report will be presented to a joint meeting of Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC and LCDC for approval at their first meeting each year.

Monitoring the implementation of the actions will be critical to ensure they remain relevant and on track, and to identify potential gaps. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) indicators will be further developed. SMART indicators will be appropriate to the High-Level Goals and Sustainable Objectives detailed in the LECP Framework and will support the monitoring and evaluation of the LECP.

It is intended that reporting on progress by lead agencies will be provided twice a year to the LCDC and to the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC. This will occur in early June and early December. Similarly, assessment of the overall goals, objectives and desired outcomes of the LECP will be conducted by the Advisory Group, approved by the LCDC and the SPC and presented to Offaly County Council annually after presentation of the December update.

In relation to the actions outlined in the Implementation Plan, the monitoring will focus on both the overall action and the related KPIs with attention also given to the specific timeframe outlined in the Implementation Plan.

The timeframes are as follows:

Short term (ST)	to be completed within 2 years	Implementation Plan 2024-25
Medium term (MT)	to be completed within 4 years	Implementation Plan 2026-27
Long term (LT)	to be completed by 2029	Implementation Plan 2028-29

In certain cases, lead agencies may be requested to specifically start recording information in support of the KPIs. This information should then be shared for reporting purposes. The reporting provided by the lead agencies will contribute to an overall assessment of progress towards the goals, objectives and desired outcomes for the entire LECP period.



Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Key Policies and Strategies

National Policies & Plans

20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030
Building Future Skills: The Demand for Skills in Ireland’s Built Environment Sector to 2030
CAP Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027
Civil Defence - Towards 2030
Climate Action Plan 2024
Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan
Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors, the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023 - 2027
Enterprise 2025 Renewed - Building resilience in the face of global challenges
European Green Deal 2019
Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025
Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland 2021
Housing Options for Our Ageing Population 2019
IDA Ireland: Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021 – 2024
International Financial Services Strategy
Ireland’s Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025
LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021
Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy
National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021
National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
National Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025
National Broadband Plan
National Carers Strategy
National Dementia Strategy
National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021
National Economic Plan (NEP)
National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024
National Migrant Integration Strategy
National Planning Framework
National Policy Framework on Children and Young People 2023-2028
National Policy Statement the Bioeconomy
National Positive Aging Strategy (NPAS)
National Public Library Strategy 2023-2027: The Library Is The Place
National Recovery and Resilience Plan
National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022
National Strategy for Women & Girls
National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021
Pathways to Work Strategy 2021 - 2025
People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025
Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2021 – 2030
Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government
Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan Sustainable
Development Goals National

Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025
Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - Our Rural Future
Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023
Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020
Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024
Town Centre First Policy National Development Plan 2018 - 2027
Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy
Waterways Ireland 10 Year Plan 2023-2032: Reimagining Our Waterways
Youth Justice Strategy 2021 - 2027

Regional Policies and Strategies

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027
Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031
Territorial Just Transition Plan

Local Policies and Strategies

Accessible Offaly – Survey by Offaly Disability Equality Network 2022
Offaly Age Friendly Strategy 2024-2029
Offaly Arts Plan 2024-2028
Offaly Biodiversity Plan
Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
Offaly County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024
Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027
Offaly Digital Strategy 2020-2023
Offaly County Council Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022-2027
Offaly Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2027
Offaly Heritage Plan 2023-2027
Offaly Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022 – 2026
Offaly Local Development Strategy (LDS) 2023-2027 (OLDC)
Offaly LECP 2016-2021
Offaly Library Strategy - Creating Space: Offaly Libraries' Development Plan 2024-2028
Offaly Local Enterprise Strategy
Offaly Migrant Integration Strategy 2018-2021
Offaly Playground Strategy 2022
Offaly Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme 2018-2023 (SICAP)
Offaly Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Active Offaly
Offaly Tourism Strategy 2023-2027
Offaly Traveller Accommodation Plan 2019-2024
Offaly Traveller Accommodation Plan 2025-2029

Appendix B – List of Acronyms

<p>AF – Age Friendly PPN – Public Participation Network CYPSC – Children and Young People’s Services Committee CNN – Comhairle na nÓg HI – Healthy Ireland OLSP – Offaly Local Sports Partnership CI – Creative Ireland SICAP – Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme SE – Social Enterprise CEP – Community Enhancement Programme OVC – Offaly Volunteering Centre JPC – Joint Policing Committee CRF – Community Response Forum RSES: Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy</p>	<p>LEADER: LEADER Rural Dev Programme TJTP: Territorial Just Transition Plan EMRA: Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly MREP: Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan CDP: County Development Plan CP: Corporate Plan OEDS: Offaly Economic Development Strategy GLs: LECP Guidelines LLECP: Last LECP SICAP: Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme SSNS: Smart Specialisation National Strategy TJTP: Territorial Just Transition Plan safe, accessible, walking and cycling routes</p>
---	---



Appendix C – Membership of Relevant Bodies

Members of the LCDC	
John Leahy, M.C.C. (Chairperson) Declan Harvey, M.C.C. Cllr Noel Cribbin, M.C.C. Anna-Marie Delaney, C.E. Orla Martin, LEO Anne-Marie Keane, Laois/Offaly ETB Con Feighery, Teagasc Celine Kirwan, Dept. of Social Protection Ann Sheerin, HSE Sylvia Sweeney (Vice-Chair), PPN Community & Voluntary	Fiona Fitzpatrick, PPN Community & Voluntary Deirdre Arnold, PPN Social Inclusion Olive O’Sullivan, PPN Social Inclusion Rebekah Keaveny, PPN Environment Brendan O’Loughlin, OLDC Mark Cronin, CIF Richard Scally, Offaly IFA Fechin Daly, Construction Industry Philip O’Brien, Offaly Tourism Marketing
Members of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC	Members of the LECP Advisory Steering Group
Eamon Dooley, M.C.C., (Cathaoirleach). Sean O’Brien, M.C.C. Eddie Fitzpatrick M.C.C., John Carroll, M.C.C., Frank Moran, M.C.C., John Leahy, M.C.C. John Clendennen, M.C.C. Pat Walsh, Farming Rep Dominic Doheny, Business/Commercial Development/Construction Rep Don Gibney, Trade Union Rep Anna Orman, Offaly PPN	Brendan O’Loughlin, OLDC, Chairperson Eamon Dooley, M.C.C. John Clendennen, M.C.C. Ann Dillon, Offaly County Council Andrew Murray, Offaly County Council Anne Marie Keane, LOETB Ann Sheerin, HSE Rebekah Keaveney, Green Offaly Orla Martin, Offaly County Council Lourda Giles, Offaly County Council Lorraine Mitchell, Offaly County Council



Boating on the Shannon near Clonmacnois



Cycling on the Grand Canal Greenway



Clonony Castle